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Editors

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND 4

Consciousness

*From Perception to Reflection
in the History of Philosophy*

 Springer

CONSCIOUSNESS

From Perception to Reflection
in the History of Philosophy

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Volume 4

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CONSCIOUSNESS

From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy

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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Contributors</i>	xi
Introduction	1
Historical Sensitivities	1
‘Consciousness’	6
Intentionality	10
Subjectivity	14
Reflexivity and Reflection	20
Naturalizing Consciousness	23

PART I: ANCIENT AND ARABIC PHILOSOPHY

1. On Plato’s Lack of Consciousness	29
<i>Amber Carpenter</i>	
1.1 Losing Consciousness	29
1.2 Why What-It’s-Like Doesn’t Matter	33
1.3 Our Kind of Soul	38
1.4 The Consequences of Mind (<i>Philebus</i>)	41
1.5 Conclusion	47
2. The Problem of Consciousness in Aristotle’s Psychology	49
<i>Juha Sihvola</i>	
2.1 Perceptual Consciousness	51
2.2 Emotions and Thinking	57
2.3 Self-Consciousness and its Limits	62

3. Ownness of Conscious Experience in Ancient Philosophy	67
<i>Pauliina Remes</i>	
3.1 Subjective and Objective?	69
3.2 Branches of Ownness	78
3.3 Conclusion	93
4. Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness: Before and After Avicenna	95
<i>Jari Kaukua and Taneli Kukkonen</i>	
4.1 The Greek Commentators on Reflection and Perceptual Awareness	97
4.2 Avicenna on the Internal Senses and Animal Self-Awareness	101
4.3 After Avicenna: Self-Evidence and Self-Inspection	112
PART II: MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY AND EARLY MODERN THOUGHT	
5. Intention and Presence: The Notion of <i>Presentialitas</i> in the Fourteenth Century	123
<i>Joël Biard</i>	
5.1 From Duns Scotus to Peter Aureoli	127
5.2 From Aureoli to Peter of Ailly	136
6. The Structure of Self-Consciousness: A Fourteenth-Century Debate	141
<i>Mikko Yrjönsuuri</i>	
6.1 The Act of Awareness	143
6.2 William Ockham's Theory	144
6.3 Walter Chatton's Critique	147
6.4 Further Problems	149
6.5 Adam Wodeham's Postscript	150
7. Augustine and Descartes on the Function of Attention in Perceptual Awareness	153
<i>Deborah Brown</i>	
7.1 Modern Psychological Perspectives	155
7.2 Augustine	158
7.3 Descartes	168
7.4 Conclusion	174

8. Orders of Consciousness and Forms of Reflexivity in Descartes	177
<i>Vili Lähteenmäki</i>	
8.1 Introduction	177
8.2 Consciousness as Thinking of Thinking	183
8.3 Rudimentary and Reflexive Consciousness	186
8.4 The Three Types of Consciousness and Infinite Regress	194
8.5 Reflexivity as Intentional Structure of Consciousness and as Phenomenal Givenness	197
8.6 Relation of Reflexive Consciousness to Attentive Reflection	199
9. The Status of Consciousness in Spinoza's Concept of Mind	203
<i>Jon Miller</i>	
9.1 Consciousness in the Seventeenth Century	204
9.2 The Problem	211
9.3 Two Solutions	212
9.4 Philosophy of Mind <i>Sans</i> Consciousness	219

PART III: FROM KANT TO CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSIONS

10. Human Consciousness and its Transcendental Conditions: Kant's Anti-Cartesian Revolt	223
<i>Kenneth R. Westphal</i>	
10.1 Introduction	223
10.2 The Modern "New Way of Ideas"	225
10.3 Kant's Transcendental Grounds for Rejecting Cartesianism	229
10.4 Conclusion	243
11. The Living Consciousness of the German Idealists	245
<i>Susanna Lindberg</i>	
11.1 Fichte	248
11.2 Schelling	253
11.3 Hegel	259
11.4 Conclusion	264
12. The Heidelberg School and the Limits of Reflection	267
<i>Dan Zahavi</i>	
12.1 The Higher-Order Theory	267
12.2 The Heidelberg School	270

12.3 Tugendhat's Criticism	279
12.4 Conclusion	281
13. Contemporary Naturalism and the Concept of Consciousness	287
<i>Neil Manson</i>	
13.1 Epistemic Consciousness	288
13.2 Subjective Qualitative Consciousness	291
13.3 Naturalism	292
13.4 Contemporary Naturalism and the Concept of Consciousness	297
13.5 Conclusion	307
14. Selfhood, Consciousness, and Embodiment: A Husserlian Approach	311
<i>Sara Heinämaa</i>	
14.1 The Transcendental Ego: Act-Pole, Person, and Monad	313
14.2 Personhood and Embodiment	321
 <i>Bibliography</i>	 329
<i>Name Index</i>	355
<i>Subject Index</i>	359

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INTRODUCTION

SARA HEINÄMAA, VILI LÄHTEENMÄKI AND PAULIINA REMES

This book is about consciousness. It illuminates the concept in its complexity and richness, capturing its theoretical and philosophical significance as well as its problematic aspects. By taking a new look into the history of concepts, the collection questions several deep-seated assumptions about consciousness – assumptions both thematic and methodological. It argues that, even though our predecessors did not formulate their philosophical queries in terms of consciousness, they have much to offer to our current disputes concerning its central features, such as reflexivity, subjectivity and aboutness, as well as related themes, from selfhood to attention and embodiment. At the same time, the collection demonstrates that consciousness is not just an issue in the philosophy of mind, but is bound to ontology, epistemology and moral theory. We can find premodern and early modern concepts and arguments that are interesting and even crucial to our own philosophical concerns, but we should not assume that these belong or contribute to any theory of mind isolated from metaphysical and ethical discussions: an argument that for us provides insightful descriptions of perception or self-awareness might to its writer have meant not just a theoretization of the soul or the mind, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a contribution to ethics or ontology. The study of the past shows that our contemporary notion of consciousness has long and complex roots; some of these roots go back to medieval and ancient discussions, but some branch off closer to our era and relate to other historical disputes.

HISTORICAL SENSITIVITIES

A common strategy in the history of philosophy today is to argue that our predecessors did not have the concepts with which we operate. This approach was developed as a critical reaction to early twentieth-century universalism, which claimed that we can find seeds of all our philosophical

problems and concepts in works as early as those of Plato and Aristotle. The universalists believed that the best service that a philosopher could do his ancient predecessors was to provide a rational reconstruction of their thoughts and arguments. Contemporary historical sensitivity problematizes such attempts as anachronistic, and argues that we cannot simply assume that the philosophical tools which we have developed to solve our own problems capture, without any difficulties, the core content or sense of past discussions. Instead of a rational or intellectual reconstruction, the task is to provide a historical reconstruction that takes into account the philosophical context, conceptual framework and cultural environment in which the discussion developed.¹ Such studies have shown that many contemporary concepts have no clear counterparts in ancient, medieval or even early modern discussions. The concept of consciousness is a good example: our modern ancestors Descartes and Locke, for example, defined this concept in a way that was partially similar to ours, but the use that they had for it differed significantly. Their primary interest was not in contributing to any philosophy of mind or in developing a theory of the mental, but in reforming metaphysics and moral theory.

Today, this historical sensitivity is shared equally by analytical philosophers and continental thinkers. Through different routes, both have come to realize that philosophy is not a set of eternal and unchanging problems, nor a cumulative science, but includes the continual task of interpretation and reinterpretation. The task of interpretation is understood in different ways by these two schools or traditions. In the analytical tradition, interpretation is primarily understood as semantic work with linguistic and logical units, such as propositions, arguments and theories. Thus, the analytical history of philosophy can be said to share the general analytical tendency for understanding philosophical problems – in this case the problems of historicity and traditionality – in semantic terms. The aim is to explicate the philosophical concepts and theories of our predecessors, and to learn from their analyses and reasoning.² In the continental movement, interpretation is

¹ Skinner, Quentin, “Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas”, *History and Theory* 8 (1969), 3–53; Rorty, Richard, “The historiography of philosophy: Four genres”, in R. Rorty, J. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 49–75.

² Simo Knuutila characterizes this approach generally by the term ‘philosophical-historical semantics’, and tracks it back to Richard McKeon’s early article on the methods used in history of philosophy. See Knuutila, Simo, “Kadonneet merkitykset – filosofinen historiallinen semantiikka”, in S. Heinämaa, M. Reuter and

understood as an existential task which, in addition to conceptual work, includes the challenge of change and becoming. The ancient text is not just an object of investigation, but also an active expression, which imposes its categories on the interpreter and forces him to question his own philosophical habits and prejudices. The reading of the text does not aim at any sort of reconstruction – rational or historical – but rather works to destroy the naiveté with which we use our contemporary concepts.³

Contemporary historians of philosophy are not interested in obvious cases of conceptual history: it is hardly surprising to learn that the concepts of sense datum, qualia, neural network and unconsciousness are relatively novel. Rather, the historian tries to tackle concepts which are more central to our theoretical disputes and which structure larger areas of phenomena and facts. Consciousness and related concepts, such as selfhood and subjectivity, are excellent targets for such critiques. These terms have multiple usages in current theorizing, they structure whole fields of investigation, from psychology to cognitive science, and they have several functions even in everyday discussions. The radical historical claim is that these concepts are modern or pre-modern innovations, arising from the writings of Augustine and Descartes, and missing from the works of Plato and Aristotle. Some researchers argue that the concept of consciousness emerged because of extra-philosophical social, political or economical changes: certain non-philosophical practices and interests developed and affected philosophical

M. Yrjönsuuri (eds.), *Spiritus Animalis: kirjoituksia filosofian historiasta* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2003), 19–28; Knuuttila, Simo, “Hintikka’s view of the history of philosophy”, in R.E. Auxier and L.E. Hahn (eds.), *The Philosophy of Jaakko Hintikka* (Chicago, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 2006), 87–105; cf. McKeon, Richard, “Historical semantics and philosophical semantics”, in *Freedom and History: The Semantics of Philosophical Controversy and Ideological Conflict* (New York: Noonday Press Inc., 1952), 19–42. For the historical roots of analytical philosophy, see Michael Dummett’s influential work *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1993).

³ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), original *Sein und Zeit* (1927); Gadamer, Hans Georg, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), original *Wahrheit und Methode* (1975); Foucault, Michel, “Nietzsche, genealogy, history”, trans. J. Harari, in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 76–100, original “Nietzsche, la généalogie et l’histoire” (1971).

questioning, thus creating a new topic.⁴ The converse intuition is that certain intra-philosophical developments led to the emergence of new problems, and the concept of consciousness was discovered as a solution to these purely theoretical problems.⁵

The issue here is not whether people in antiquity experienced themselves as conscious beings or as subjects of actions and thoughts; it seems clear that they did, perhaps not exactly as we do but in a manner which is similar or comparable to ours. The question is rather whether this experiential fact attracted any theoretical interest or philosophical attention, and if so, how it was approached. Scholars have disagreed, for example, on whether Aristotle had a concept of phenomenal consciousness. One strategy has been to provide as accurate as possible a characterization of the current concept and investigate whether we can find a historical counterpart, i.e. a fairly consistent terminology concerning the same phenomena. In this vein, some commentators argue that Aristotle had neither a word for consciousness nor a fixed terminology to refer to the kind of phenomena that we would today entitle ‘conscious’.⁶ In response to this, the proponents of consciousness point out that, despite the terminological gap, Aristotle was well aware of the difference between alert wakefulness and being asleep or senseless, and that he often refers to this difference in his discussions on living beings.⁷ Deborah Modrak, for one, argues that Aristotle provides a fairly systematic account of psychological states, which includes the phenomena of unity,

⁴ Influenced by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century French history of science, Michel Foucault argues in *The Order of Things (Les mots et les choses, 1966)* that the whole conceptual framework of contemporary human sciences and life sciences is a modern construction, and has no counterparts or prototypes in ancient discussions. Thus, the concept of the human being as well as the concepts of consciousness, subjectivity and intentionality are modern, and have no universal or cross-temporal sense. Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), original *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines (1966)*.

⁵ For an argument in this vein, see Berrios, German E. and Markova, Ivana S., “The self and psychiatry: A conceptual history”, in T. Kircher and A. David (eds.), *The Self in Neuroscience and Psychiatry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9–39.

⁶ Wilkes, Kathleen, “-, yishi, duh, um, and consciousness”, in A.J. Marcel and E. Bisiach (eds.), *Consciousness in Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 16–41.

⁷ Caston, Victor, “Aristotle on consciousness”, *Mind* 111 (2002), 751–815.

self-awareness, intentionality and awareness of relations between cognitive objects.⁸

Without taking a stand on these particular questions, it should be noted that often in such debates two underlying implicit assumptions seem to be at work. First, it is assumed that we can know what we mean by ‘consciousness’ independently of such historical inquiries. It is as if we could first decide amongst ourselves what ‘consciousness’ must mean, and only then consult our predecessors to see if they had any idea of this particular meaning. Secondly, consciousness is taken to be a relatively simple issue, which is either thematized or bypassed by our predecessors.

This book questions these two assumptions. It shows that we do not always know what we mean by the word ‘consciousness’ when we tend to agree or disagree about its appearance in history, and it argues that our main resource for the understanding of our current intuitions is tradition.⁹ It also questions the assumption that consciousness is a relatively simple issue by disclosing a complicated genesis and a large set of features that fall under the rubric, including phenomenality, aboutness, reflexivity, reflection, unconsciousness, attention, selfhood, ownness, subjectivity and objectivity, and synchronic and diachronic unity. The complexity of these features is emphasized by methodological considerations: should consciousness be approached from the first- or third-person perspective, is it an empirical issue or a transcendental problem, and how does it accord with the project of naturalization?

Today, we are in the happy position of having learnt from decades of scholarship on the history of philosophy that philosophical problems come to us from a rich and multi-layered tradition. Thus, there is a new opportunity to ask why – despite terminological and conceptual diversity – certain paradigmatic examples and case studies re-emerge in philosophical debates from antiquity to the present day. The lesson learned from historical sensitivity helps us to avoid anachronistic attempts to treat the concept of consciousness as diachronically fixed or synchronically clear-cut: the philosophical contexts in which conscious activity has been discussed prove to be very diverse and different from our own philosophical context, and this breeds healthy skepticism concerning the applicability of the concept of consciousness. Yet the diversity of terms and the multiplicity of usages should not be taken to imply that the concept is useless or merely a transient cultural

⁸ Modrak, Deborah, “An Aristotelian theory of consciousness?”, *Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1980), 160–170.

⁹ Cf. Gadamer 1989; Knuuttila 2003, 2006.

formation, for the network of phenomena designated or indicated by ‘consciousness’ is hardly explained by a history of words; a lack of terminology corresponding to our notion is only an argument *ex silentio*, and does not prove that the phenomena themselves were lacking or were ignored.

Rather than showing that the concept is a fabrication, the polysemic nature of ‘consciousness’ suggests that a historical approach must reach beyond the terms to what they name: if we are capable of disentangling the different phenomena embraced by the term, then these phenomena themselves can be studied and articulated in whatever conceptual apparatus they lend themselves to be expressed in. The focus of investigation is thus shifted from the multiplicity of terms to the relations between the phenomena or things under investigation. This does not mean that a terminological history would be insignificant; on the contrary, it is a good starting point for thematic and methodological clarifications. Thus, we begin with a brief account of how the term ‘consciousness’ entered philosophical discussions in the seventeenth century.

‘CONSCIOUSNESS’

The English term ‘consciousness’, a derivative of the Latin *conscientia*, was first used in a technical philosophical sense by Ralph Cudworth in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678).¹⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the philosophical sense of consciousness as “a condition and concomitant of all thought, feelings, and volition”, and ascribes the first occurrence of this sense to Cudworth. According to Cudworth’s own characterization, consciousness affords “a Being to be Present with it self, Attentive to its own Actions, or Animadversive of them, to perceive it self to Do or Suffer, and to have a *Fruition* or *Enjoyment* of it self”.¹¹ However, it is indicative of the unsettledness of the term, and Cudworth’s consequent indecision concerning its precise meaning, that he often provides a number of roughly synonymous terms together with ‘consciousness’, as for instance in grouping together the following: “*Animal Fancy* or *Synaesthesia*, express *Consciousness* and *Self-perception*”.¹²

The fact that conscious mentality in its own right was not the specified subject of inquiry for Cudworth and other seventeenth-century English

¹⁰ For the philosophical uses of the Latin term *conscientia*, see Kahn, Charles, “Sensation and consciousness in Aristotle’s psychology”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966), 43–81.

¹¹ Cudworth, Ralph, *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678), 159.

¹² Cudworth 1678, 160.

philosophers serves to explain, for its part, the polysemy of the term. In and after the seventeenth century, consciousness figured in a central argumentative role in at least four fairly distinct themes: personal identity,¹³ immortality of the soul,¹⁴ epistemic certainty,¹⁵ and transcendental conditions of experience.¹⁶ In the early eighteenth century, the notion attracted the attention of few commentators. In 1728, *Two Dissertations Concerning Sense and the Imagination with an Essay on Consciousness* was published, a work which is arguably the first English-language essay devoted exclusively to studying the phenomenon itself.¹⁷ The author's noticeable caution in introducing consciousness as the sole topic of a philosophical essay is revealing with regard to the hesitance about the significance of the concept: from the fact that extensive accounts of consciousness were lacking from discussions concerning the mind, he concluded that either there is nothing worth considering in consciousness, or insofar as there is, it may be "so obvious to the meanest capacity at first sight, that it needs not to be particularly declared, or it does not admit of any sort of explication".¹⁸ The author nonetheless presents an account of consciousness of some 90 pages, including a definition of consciousness as "that inward sense and knowledge which the mind has of its own being and existence, and of whatever passes within itself, in the use and exercise of any of its faculties or powers".¹⁹ Furthermore, he points out that the term refers also to the *appearance* of objects to the perceiver.²⁰

¹³ See, e.g. Martin, Raymond and Barresi, John, *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁴ See, e.g. Michael, Emily and Michael, Fred S., "Two early modern concepts of mind: Reflecting substance vs. thinking substance", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989), 29–48.

¹⁵ See, e.g. Mijuskovic, Ben Lazare, *The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974). Mijuskovic's discussion touches all of the four thematics.

¹⁶ See Chapter 10 in this book.

¹⁷ *Two Dissertations Concerning Sense and the Imagination with an Essay on Consciousness* (London, 1728). The authorship of this essay has been attributed to Zachary Mayne, but this attribution has recently been disputed. For an argument to the effect that the author of the Essay is Charles Mein, see Buickerood, James G., "Two dissertations concerning sense, and the imagination, with an essay on consciousness (1728): a study in attribution", *1650–1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 7 (2002), 51–86.

¹⁸ *An Essay on Consciousness* 1728, 142.

¹⁹ *An Essay on Consciousness* 1728, 144–145.

²⁰ *An Essay on Consciousness* 1728, 146.

A similar indication of the lack of devoted discussion on consciousness, and the consequent unsettledness of the term, was expressed by John Maxwell in 1727. Maxwell distinguished several different senses in which ‘consciousness’ was applied in the controversy between Samuel Clarke and Anthony Collins at the beginning of the century.²¹ As Maxwell’s distinctions into five different senses suggest, ‘consciousness’ was subject to various uses as an argumentative item in the dispute. Maxwell regarded “reflex act” as the most correct sense of the term, and understood it as directedness at one’s own thoughts by which one knows the thoughts to be one’s own, but he found that the term is also used in reference to “simple sensation” and the “direct act of thinking”.²² Thus, in addition to an inner, reflexive use, the notion was applied in reference to awareness of external objects. Moreover, both Maxwell and the author of the *Essay* also associated consciousness with a *power*, either such that consciousness itself is understood *as* a power of the will to begin a motion,²³ or such that the mind has a conscious “express regard” of its power of will in its acts of volition.²⁴

Regardless of how Cudworth may have influenced these authors, we can see that they participate in the tradition, as they apply the term in reference to broadly similar phenomena. It is worth emphasizing that Cudworth did not come up with the notion from nothing, either. Obviously, the term itself had been used in English in various other senses before him as well.²⁵ However, Cudworth adopted it for a distinctively philosophical use, and made direct reference to the philosophical tradition in two ways. He explicitly

²¹ The controversy was about whether thinking can inhere in a material system. Clarke argued against such a possibility, whereas Collins defended it. See, e.g. Uzgalis, William, “Anthony Collins”, in E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2004 Edition) (URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2005/entries/collins/#2>).

²² Maxwell, John, “Appendix I: a summary of the controversy between Dr. Samuel Clark and an anonymous author, concerning the immateriality of thinking substance”, in Richard Cumberland, *A Treatise of Laws of Nature*, trans. with introduction and appendix by John Maxwell (1727), ed. J. Parkin (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 759.

²³ Maxwell 2005, 759.

²⁴ *An Essay on Consciousness* 1728, 156. Confining the requirement of explicit awareness to the will allows the author of the *Essay* to maintain that perceiving, understanding and remembering do not require any explicit awareness of these powers or functions.

²⁵ See C.S. Lewis’ illuminating entry “Conscience and conscious”, in his *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1960] 1967).

opposes Descartes' ontological division into *extension* and *cogitation*, where cogitation is understood to consist of "express consciousness", and he strives to replace Descartes' dualism with a dualism of *activity* and *passivity*, arguing for a subdivision into conscious and unconscious activity.²⁶

It has also been argued that Cudworth adopted the notion of consciousness from the more distant past. Udo Thiel points out that Cudworth's 'consciousness' is a translation of the Greek *sunaisthēsis*, used by the late antiquity thinker Plotinus to describe a specific type of self-relation.²⁷ With various philosophical terms available, Plotinus attempted to conceptualize something close to consciousness and self-consciousness. Of these terms, *sunaisthēsis* was probably adopted from the Stoics, with the original meaning of bodily self-perception.²⁸ Plotinus' reinterpretation of the term, however, came closer to the subsequent early modern discussions on reflexivity and self-reference. Furthermore, Catherine Glyn Davies argues that terminologically speaking, Cudworth's use of 'consciousness' and its cognates is in the first place indebted to Marsilio Ficino: for instance, Cudworth's occasional use of 'Con-Sense' originates in *consensus* or *consensia*, which is how Ficino translates *sunaisthēsis* from Plotinus' *Enneads*.²⁹

Even this brief overview shows that 'consciousness' did not have a clear-cut and commonly received meaning for early modern English philosophers, but it also makes it clear that the variety of mental phenomena to which the term referred was not so great as to make the concept philosophically useless for them. Likewise, the fact that Cudworth adopted notions from Plotinus does

²⁶ Cudworth 1678, 159, 175.

²⁷ Thiel, Udo, "Cudworth and the seventeenth-century theories of consciousness", in S. Gaukroger (ed.), *The Uses of Antiquity* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 81.

²⁸ Other terms used by Plotinus, besides mere *aisthēsis*, include *parakolouthēsis* (to follow with one's mind). See Warren, Edward W. "Consciousness in Plotinus", *Phronesis* 9 (1964), 83–97; Smith, Andrew, "Unconsciousness and quasicconsciousness in Plotinus", *Phronesis* 23 (1978), 292–301; Schroeder, Frederic M., "Synousia, synaisthēsis and synesis: Presence and dependence in the Plotinian philosophy of consciousness", in W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 36.1 (Berlin, New York: de Gruyeter, 1987), 678–699; Long, Anthony, "Representation and the self in Stoicism", in S. Everson (ed.), *Psychology, Companions to Ancient Thought* 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 102–120; Remes, Pauliina, *Plotinus on Self: The Philosophy of the 'We'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 2.1.

²⁹ Davies, Catherine Glyn, *Conscience as Consciousness: The Idea of Self-Awareness in French Philosophical Writing from Descartes to Diderot* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1990), 42–43.

not show that the rendering of a single Plotinian term into seventeenth-century English is unproblematic, but it strongly suggests an extant historical connection as regards the cluster of phenomena subsumed under the Plotinian *sunaisthēsis* and Cudworth's *consciousness* and its cognates.³⁰

The chapters in this book will further clarify the relations between ancient and modern concepts, and at the same time illuminate their similarities and dissimilarities to medieval, Enlightenment and nineteenth- and twentieth-century concepts. But to proceed to study these historical connections more closely, we need an initial understanding of the spread of the concept of consciousness as it is used in contemporary philosophy. The list of phenomena given earlier – phenomenality, aboutness, reflexivity, reflection, unconsciousness, attention, selfhood, onness, subjectivity and unity – is not meant as a summary or as a final conclusion, but merely to function as an aid to memory. The present introduction frames this multiplicity tentatively by focusing on the three most prominent aspects of consciousness: aboutness, subjectivity and reflexivity.

INTENTIONALITY

One central feature of consciousness is its intentionality or aboutness: conscious beings relate to the world in a specific way; they are not just causally influenced by external objects, but are also informed by things and their environments. We modern thinkers tend to conceive of this relation as an active intending or directing of oneself toward the object. However, not all our predecessors agreed with this assumption. In other words, it has not always been considered as evident that the subject of perception has the active role in an encounter which results in a conscious experience. The receptivity of perception was not accounted for using the terms of efficient causality, but neither was it understood as any kind of construction or creation. Thus, the history of the concept of intentionality is an example which nicely illustrates the dialectics between the historical diversity of the concept and the reappearance of certain dilemmas about our nature and relation to the world.³¹

In ancient philosophy, the basic account of how conscious states or mental contents derive from the world is rather particular. The Aristotelian tradition

³⁰ Cudworth (as well as Ficino) is admittedly an adherent to *philosophia perennis*, and for this reason it is presumably unproblematic for him to use English translations of Plotinian terminology.

³¹ Cf. Perler, Dominik (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Köln: Brill, 2001).

takes the mind as essentially receptive, thus accentuating the way in which the structures and formations of the world take part in the constitution of conscious states. Perception is reception rather than outward-directed grasping, and what is thus received is not a representation of the environmental object, but the form of the object itself. In perceiving a horse, for example, the human soul does not entertain a representation or a thought *about* the horse, but in a way becomes the form of the horse itself. Interestingly, this form is received without matter and thus in a highly different mode than the one it has in the object, and thus this Aristotelian paradigm may include interesting parallels with modern and contemporary discussions of intentionality. However, whether the Aristotelian reception of form without matter can be interpreted as a step towards the idea of the intentional object or not is a contested issue.³²

The concurrent Platonic tradition interprets both perception and cognition in more active terms: the form coming from the object of perception is accompanied by the extension of the sight or ray of vision from the perceiver towards the object, and similarly the object of thought is not merely imprinted

³² Victor Caston has argued that even ancient philosophers used the metaphors of ‘striving towards something’ and ‘being outwardly directed towards something’ in the context of describing mental functions. In the course of history, the doctrine of appearance or *imaginatio*, in Greek *phantasia*, has grown into a theory of mental (re)presentations directed to something else, thus leaving the door open for a construal in which the mental is conceived as an intentional state. Caston, Victor, “Towards a history of the problem of intentionality”, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1993), 213–265; “Aristotle on intentionality”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998), 249–298; “Something and nothing: The Stoics on concepts and universals”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999), 145–213; “Augustine and the Greeks on Intentionality”, in D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Köln: Brill, 2001), 23–48.

Furthermore, there is a debate over the question of to what extent perception involves a real physical change which has repercussions for the way in which the act of perception is conceptualized. Cf., e.g. Sorabji, Richard, “From Aristotle to Brentano: the development of the concept of intentionality”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplement (1991), 227–259; Burnyeat, Myles, “What happens when I see red or hear a middle C?”, in M. Nussbaum and A. Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1995), 421–434; Sorabji, Richard, “Aristotle on sensory processes and intentionality”, in D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Köln: Brill, 2001), 49–61.

upon the soul but grasped by cognitive powers innate to the soul.³³ Although in this theory some explicit outward directedness is involved, it is hard to find precise similarities to and differences from the full-blown theories of intentionality typical of late modernity. The stances taken by different scholars in the debate reveal differing views as to what is central for intentionality, be that directedness, representationality (itself a tricky term to define), striving or something similar. This already enriches the sophistication with which the notion of intentionality should be approached.

In this book, Amber Carpenter's and Juha Sihvola's chapters explicate the two paradigmatic ancient views of the soul–world relation: the Platonic and the Aristotelian. Amber Carpenter argues in “On Plato's Lack of Consciousness” that in Platonism, even perception is always “minded”, i.e. informed by perceiver's soul. To judge how things are, will be or have been is to be trying to make sense of them, to perceive them *as* one thing or another, *as* being one way or another, relating in this or that way to ourselves, our past projects and plans for future, our place in the world and our understanding of that world. For this reason, there is no point in studying perception separately from the (rational) abilities of comparing, relating, etc.

Juha Sihvola's chapter “The Problem of Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology” shows that Aristotle's account of perception implies the idea of a conscious subject who has mental states and faculties. However, the perceiving subject understood in this way lacks the creative role typical of modern accounts of intentionality: the perceiver and his perceptions do not constitute the perceived world in any active sense, but on the contrary, perceptions are effects of or responses to the perceivable world, which has the objective capacity to actualize the sensory faculties of humans and animals.

With respect to the conceptualization of the subject–object relation, the philosophers of the Middle Ages came up with significant theoretical innovations. Joël Biard's chapter “Intention and Presence: The Notion of *Presentialitas* in the Fourteenth Century” reveals the level of subtlety reached by medieval philosophers in discussing the relation between subject and object. We learn that, although the philosophy of the era already displayed explicit interest in the notion of *intentio*, its manner of conceiving the

³³ Plato, *Theaetetus*, 156e; *Timaeus*, 45b–c. Cf., e.g. Frede, Dorothea, “The philosophical economy of Plato's psychology: Rationality and common concepts in the *Timaeus*”, in Michael Frede and Gisela Striker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 29–58. This results, among other things, in differences in the two theories of concept formation. See Tuominen, Miira, *Apprehension and Argument: Ancient Theories of Starting Points for Knowledge*, Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind 3 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

being of an object and its presence to the mind differs from modern articulations, which take the asymmetry of these relations for granted.

In the nineteenth century, the ancient understanding of the mind–world relation was reinterpreted by Franz Brentano using the concepts of intentionality.³⁴ Brentano’s interpretations and elaborations are a common heritage of today’s philosophy of mind; they are used and discussed by analytical philosophers, such as John Searle, Daniel Dennett and Jerry Fodor, as well as continental thinkers from Jacques Derrida to Michel Henry. Contemporary thinkers seldom share Brentano’s conceptual distinctions or his epistemological–ontological conclusions, but most accept the basic idea that the intentional relation is an important structural feature of many, if not all, conscious states and processes.³⁵

The tools that are used today to articulate the intentional relation vary greatly: the naturalist causalist concepts of information, symbol system, reference and cause are very far from the phenomenological distinction between the noetic act and noematic object, but all parties agree that some special set of concepts is needed to explain how conscious states and processes relate to their environmental objects. The chapters in this book demonstrate

³⁴ Brentano, Franz, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and L.L. McAlister, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1995), original *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* 1874 (II 1911, III 1928).

³⁵ For Brentano, intentionality was the defining, necessary as well as sufficient, feature of the mental. Two principal arguments have been made against this definition: on the one hand, philosophers have argued that Brentano’s definition of mentality is too narrow as we clearly have conscious mental states, such as moods and feelings, which lack well-defined intentional objects, e.g. Searle, John R., *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). This argument comes close to Heidegger’s early critique, which problematized the subject–act–object distinction central in Husserlian reinterpretation of intentionality. On the other hand, it has also been argued that Brentano’s definition is too broad, as the criterion of directness or aboutness includes all linguistic units, from spoken words to literary volumes. The relations between these two types of aboutness, the linguistic and the mental or psychological, is a highly controversial topic, and is discussed vigorously by many twentieth-century thinkers, in both the analytic and continental traditions. Wilfrid Sellars, e.g., argues that the logical or conceptual home of our intentional vocabulary is in the semantic uses of the terms ‘about’ and ‘refer’; see his “Empiricism and philosophy of mind”, in A. Marras (ed.), *Intentionality, Mind, and Language* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, [1956] 1972). Cf. Brandom, Robert, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

that the idea of intentional relation has roots in Aristotle's reflections on the nature of finite souls, and that even Plato's *Theaetetus* is a relevant source for anyone interested in the history of intentionality.

SUBJECTIVITY

The concept of consciousness is also closely linked with the concept of subjectivity in contemporary debates, and not just in one way but in several different and conflicting ways. 'Subjectivity' itself has multiple meanings. According to one understanding, subjectivity is the defining characteristic of consciousness: it is the "feeling quality" or the "phenomenal quality" that we supposedly find in all our conscious mental states. The pain in my leg is not just information or stimuli from the injured body part, but is also given to me in a special way inaccessible to all other humans and animals. It is not just mine in the sense of property, but is more intimately bound to me, as if it were more inner to me or more constitutive of me than any other belonging. Similarly, my emotions and beliefs are not just directional states referring to their objects, but are also given to me in a special qualitative way, and it feels like something to have them. Analogously, we can think that a bat which flies through the night air experiences its own body, its wings and the environment in a special way that we cannot grasp and no other bat can experience. Thomas Nagel formulates this idea in his often cited essay "What is it like to be a bat?" (1974) by stating that "an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something it is like to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism".³⁶

Nagel's view is often rephrased with the terminology of 'feel' and 'qualia' ('quale' in singular).³⁷ 'Feeling' in this context does not need to be restricted to sensations, but can refer to the private qualitative aspect or content that is supposedly tied to all structural features of conscious experience. Even if you and I can both believe in the existence of one and the same God, our beliefs are not interchangeable: I do not, and cannot, know what it is to have your belief, and you cannot share all the elements of my believing.

³⁶ Nagel, Thomas, "What is it like to be a bat?", *Philosophical Review* (1974), 435–450, reprinted in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 165–180, 166.

³⁷ This use of the term 'qualia' seems to stem from the 1920s. C.I. Lewis defined qualia as "recognizable qualitative characters of the given" in *Mind and the World-Order: Outline of a Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929). The qualia-terminology has been connected to, or confused with, the idea of sense-data as put forward by G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell in the 1910s. See, e.g. Moore, G.E., *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (1910–1911 lectures) (London: George, Allen and Unwin, 1953); Russell, Bertrand, *The Problems of Philosophy* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912); *The Analysis of Matter* (London: Kegan Paul,

According to this line of thinking, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘phenomenality’ are synonymous terms for having this kind of strictly personal or individual aspect in one’s consciousness. Thus understood, subjectivity makes consciousness unique and private: no one else can consciously relate to things and to the world in the very same way as I do.³⁸

Many contemporary philosophers agree that subjectivity, understood in this way, is the last barrier to the project of naturalizing all being. The common conviction today is that we can give natural scientific explanations for all living functions, and that we can also account for the origin of life by strictly physicalist non-teleological concepts. Moreover, it is argued that the social norms of behavior and linguistic meanings can be naturalized. In contrast, the subjective or phenomenal aspect of consciousness seems to fall outside the natural scientific framework of explanation. Depending on their methodological and metaphysical backgrounds, philosophers draw very different conclusions from this common intuition. Some argue that the irreducibility of subjectivity shows that the naturalistic project is inadequate and based on conceptual inflexibility or, worse, metaphysical dogma. Others claim, on the contrary, that any such quality or phenomenon that cannot be publicly shared and observed or objectively measured is nonsensical and

Trench, Trubner, 1927); cf. Crane, Tim, “The origins of qualia”, in T. Crane and S. Patterson (eds.), *The History of the Mind–Body Problem* (London: Routledge, 2000), 169–194.

Many contemporary critics of subjective qualia, e.g. Daniel Dennett, are influenced by the Wittgensteinian tradition that attacked “privatism” in its different versions. This tradition includes, e.g. Barnes, W.H.F., “The myth of sense-data”, in R.J. Swartz (ed.), *Perceiving Sensing and Knowing: A Book of Readings from Twentieth-Century Sources in the Philosophy of Perception* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1944–1945); Ryle, Gilbert, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949); Sellars, Wilfrid, [1956] 1972; Anscombe, G.E.M., “The intentionality of sensation: A grammatical feature”, in R.J. Butler (ed.), *Analytical Philosophy: First Series* (Oxford: Blackwell 1965), reprinted in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind: Collected Papers*, Vol. II (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

³⁸ The dominant problem of contemporary philosophy of mind is how qualia can be understood within a physicalist ontology. There are several competing solutions to this problem operating with different concepts, such as epiphenomenon, emergency, function and sensory information. Jaegwon Kim, e.g., argues that qualia are non-functional emergent mental properties, see, e.g., Kim, Jaegwon, *Physicalism, or Something Near Enough* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 26–27. Tim Crane defines qualia as the non-intentional aspect of sensory states, *Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76–77.

should be eliminated from scientific ontology.³⁹ For some, the crucial question is ontological; for others, it boils down to the debate on the explanatory or theoretical role of the qualia.

These disputes concern the reality and efficacy of consciousness, and subjectivity or phenomenality as its defining characteristics. This approach is dominant, but it also has interesting alternatives in twentieth-century philosophy. Two influential developments stem from the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Edmund Husserl. Following Descartes and Kant, Husserl argued at the beginning of the century that all agreement and disagreement about the reality and being of conscious mental states and processes must be founded on transcendental inquiries into the constitutive function of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his later thinking, developed an equally fundamental argument while claiming that all disputes about the reality of the mental must be preceded by an investigation into the use and function of mental concepts, or “psychological” concepts, as he called them.⁴⁰ The chapters in this book show that these metaphilosophical arguments about the role and function of mental concepts have roots far back in history. They also offer several viable alternatives to the qualia view of consciousness by demonstrating how differently our predecessors have understood and explained the idea of subjectivity.

³⁹ For example Dennett, Daniel, “Quining qualia”, in A. Marcel and E. Bisiach (eds.), *Consciousness in Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42–77; *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1991).

⁴⁰ In his late works, *Philosophical Investigations* (1954) and *Zettel* (1967), Ludwig Wittgenstein questioned his early account of meaningfulness and argued that sensation sentences, and psychological sentences more generally, are meaningful even though we cannot compare them with any type of reality – physical, behavioral, or mental. Wittgenstein warned that we should not assume that mental concepts function in the same way as the concepts that describe material objects and material reality. Sensation verbs, such as ‘to feel’ and ‘to sense’, do not refer to any inner entities with special inner properties, states, or relations. These terms do not pick up any realm of mental objects or events with mental qualities, noumenal or phenomenal. Their function is fundamentally different from that of object terms, and it differs in different sentential and discursive contexts. Wittgenstein’s arguments problematize all attempts to explain consciousness by reference to some inner property, whether one calls it ‘subjective’, ‘phenomenal’, or ‘qualitative’. See, e.g. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 66–67; cf. also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), original *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (1954); *Zettel*, ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967).

Another way of approaching the *subjective* aspect of consciousness is to follow its root forms, *subject* and *subjectum*. Thus understood, the subject of consciousness would be the substrate that supports and connects experiences and conscious states – desires, feelings, beliefs, cognitions and perceptions – and unites them so that they form the whole of a conscious life. Such a substrate has been seen both as the principle of individuation between different conscious beings and as the principle of temporal permanence of a conscious life. One can also start from the ideas of ownness and belonging and simply ask what makes different experiences someone's own or belonging to someone. Pauliina Remes' chapter in this book, "Ownness of Conscious Experience in Ancient Philosophy", shows that although ancient philosophers recognized the incorrigibility of first-person reports of feelings and mental states, they always emphasized their communicability and the shared nature of the contents of perceptions and thoughts. Consequently, the identification of experiences or thoughts as one's own was given alternative explanations, and the idea of being the originator of one's acts was considered to be philosophically more crucial.

Several different theories have been put forth in the tradition of Western thinking regarding the subject of experiences or mental states. Some ancient philosophers understood the soul as an immaterial entity that "has" mental properties and mental states in a basically similar or analogous way as material things have their properties. However, the ancient legacy also includes several alternatives which emphasize the dynamic character of the soul. What is at issue in these different approaches is the question of whether the subject should be reified in some way or not. This problem is part of our philosophical heritage, and our intuitions still lead in opposite directions: for and against reification. Some contemporary Aristotelians, for example, propose that the subject of experience is a special type of movement and change; others claim that the subject must be understood as a special "pole" or "node" which merely ties together conscious experiences and does not add any matter or content to them. On the other hand, it has also been argued that the subject is one of the intentional objects of consciousness, and thus comparable to other objects, such as natural things and cultural artefacts.⁴¹ Moreover, philosophers disagree about the

⁴¹ Sartre is well known for this argument. See *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, trans. F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), original *La transcendance de l'ego: esquisse d'une description phénoménologique* (1936–1937); cf. Zahavi, Dan, "Self and consciousness," in D. Zahavi (ed.), *Exploring the Self: Philosophical and Psychopathological Perspectives on Self-Experience* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000), 55–74.

temporal nature of the subject: some see it as a stable, unchanging and self-identical structure; others argue that it evolves and develops in time.

The conceptual field of subjectivity is further complicated by the fact that the concept of subject partially overlaps with three other concepts: *agent*, *person* and *self*. The concept of *agent* is tied to the concept of activity, and is usually understood and defined as the subject of acts and actions, as opposed to passions and affects. More particularly, the concept is used for the performer of external or publicly observable behavior. The idea of agency is, however, complicated by the fact that the distinction between activity and passivity is not unproblematic and has several different formulations in the history of philosophy. The concept of person is also complex, and combines at least two different ideas: on the one hand the person is understood as an outer public shape or gestalt of the subject, and on the other hand, it is defined as the temporally evolving form of the subject. According to the first understanding, personality is linked to embodiment, and according to the second it is connected to the temporal ideas of change and development.⁴² Both meanings come together in the etymological source of the term: the Latin *persona* means a human being but also, and more originally, a mask used by a character in drama.

Perhaps the most problematic of the concepts linked to consciousness today is that of the *self*. In the twentieth century, the idea of selfhood has

⁴² Locke's influential discussion of person can be found in chapter XXVII paragraphs 1–26 of his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). For Hume's discussion of the concept of personal identity, see sections IV.II and IV.VI of the first book, section I.XI of the second book and the Appendix of his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740). For the history of contemporary disputes on person and personality, see Seigel, Jerrold, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Martin, Raymond and Barresi, John, *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2000). Influential contributions to twentieth-century analytic philosophy include Frankfurt, Harry, "Freedom of the will and the concept of person", *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, 1 (1976), 5–16; Williams, Bernard, "Bodily continuity and personal identity", *Analysis* 21 (1960), 43–48, reprinted in *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956–1972* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Rorty, Amélie, *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976); Parfit, Derek, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Shoemaker, Sydney and Swinburne, Richard, *Personal Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984). For a phenomenological account of persons and their bodies, see Heinämaa, Sara, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003b).

been subjected to many different types of critique, for example, pragmatic, semantic, transcendental and post-modern. Without taking a stand on these discussions, it must be emphasized that the history of the concept covers many different topics and questions, from good life and mortality to reflexivity and attention.⁴³ There is also the methodological controversy of whether subjectivity and selfhood should primarily be taken as empirical concepts or as transcendental ones. In this book, Kenneth Westphal's chapter "Human Consciousness and its Transcendental Conditions" offers a forceful explication of Kant's theory of the transcendental conditions of human experience. Westphal shows that Kant's transcendentalism includes unexploited means for breaking down the Cartesian vestiges still operative in much contemporary philosophy of mind. Furthermore, Sara Heinämaa argues in her "Selfhood, Consciousness and Embodiment" that Husserl's phenomenology includes a viable non-Cartesian account of the transcendental conditions of selfhood, personhood and personal existence.

As has been pointed out already, several philosophers agree that we cannot think of conscious subjects in the same way as objects. This argument occurs in many different variations in the twentieth century, but the basic idea refers back to the works of Kierkegaard, the German Idealists, Hegel and Kant. All these thinkers argue, in one way or other, that if we try to approach the experiencing subject with the same conceptual and methodological tools with which we study the objects of the spatial-temporal world, or the realm of ideal being, we misconceive its essence or its way of being. Susanna Lindberg's chapter "The Living Consciousness of the German Idealists" discusses Fichte, Schelling and Hegel's different attempts to avoid the objectification of subjectivity. Lindberg shows the implications these attempts had for philosophizing: the German idealists abandoned the atemporal transcendental subject and emphasized the dynamic character of the transcendental operation.

Historically, two possible conclusions have been drawn from the arguments against reification. Some philosophers have decided that we cannot think subjects and subjectivity at all, our intellectual and reflective capacities cannot capture this area of experience. The only possibility that remains is to live through our own subjectivity. We can accept the core of our subjectivity as a given, go on living and thus repeat and reinterpret that which has already been created – perhaps, at best, examining its effects on those levels of mentality and life that are within the reach of our powers of reflection; alternatively, we can engage in this task more actively, by construing, constructing

⁴³ For the history of the concepts of *self* and *selfhood*, see Seigel (2005); Sorabji, Richard, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Chapter 1.

and creating ourselves. Other philosophers have argued that even if the categories of objects are inadequate for the understanding of subjectivity, we are able to take a specific attitude towards ourselves and other subjects, which is different from all our attitudes towards objects. Many thinkers have seen this as an ethical possibility, but some have argued that it is also a theoretical option, and that we can develop a specific method that allows us to approach our own subjectivity and the subjectivity of others without objectifying them.

REFLEXIVITY AND REFLECTION

The concept of reflection and its derivatives are used in contemporary debates to characterize two different aspects of consciousness. On the one hand, philosophers use the concept of reflexivity for the special form of self-reference supposedly involved in many, if not all, conscious states; on the other, the concept of reflection is used for a separate type of intellectual, cognitive or voluntary activity, which intends or objectifies other mental states. Both uses stem from the same Latin verb *reflecto* [*reflecto -flectere -flexi -flexum*], which means to bend back, to turn back and to divert, and in intransitive use to yield or to retreat. The common origin partly explains the sometimes confusing variety in the use of these terms, ranging from bare self-reference to deliberate reflection, from an internal structure of all conscious states to the separate act of thematizing or focusing on one's own mental states. However, the connection between the basic level of self-reference and the level at which interests, preferences and motivations come into play does not arise merely from etymology, but also from certain philosophical concerns.

Reflexivity is related to the functions of indexicals, i.e. to expressions which are directed back to the person, time or place of the act of utterance and which hence display a particular sensitivity to the context in which they were uttered. Here, philosophy of mind and philosophy of language meet in an intimate and undeniable way. From Nietzsche and Wittgenstein onwards, the special way in which the pronoun 'I' functions in verbal communication and philosophical argumentation has attracted critical attention. It has been argued, for instance, that 'I' differs radically from all other demonstratives, and on the other hand, that it is indispensable for goal-directed action.⁴⁴ Within philosophy of mind, reflexivity in the bare sense of self-referentiality has been considered as a feature of mental and psychosomatic operations as

⁴⁴ See, e.g. Wittgenstein 1967; cf. Davidson, Donald, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sorabji 2006. For Nietzsche's radical critique of ego and agency, see, e.g. his *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 2003): "'Reason' in philosophy", esp. §5, 47–48, original *Götzen – Dämmerung* (1888).

diverse as kinaesthesia and proprioception or perceptual awareness and thought, forming a layer of mentality upon which higher functions are founded. Some scholars argue that such self-referentiality is not reducible to third-person or objective approaches; others develop philosophical concepts and methods to include it in the objective order of things.⁴⁵

There is a cluster of recurring problems connected to the concept of reflexivity, a brief inquiry into which will also reveal the basic differences in the ways of using this concept. Let us enter the field from the point of view of a particular question, namely whether the mind's capacity to reveal itself – in addition to an external object – includes another, as it were higher-order act, or rather belongs to the *primary act* which gives the external object. The first appearance of this problem in historical sources is probably Plato's discussion on the perception of perception in the *Charmides* (167c–8a). The participants in Plato's dialogue find the notion of a second-order perception of one's own perception absurd, like “seeing that one sees” or “hearing that one hears”, if this implies that higher-order perception is actually empty of all (normal) content. The relational or structural suggestion is, hence, found to be problematic. The other option may not at first sight seem any more promising. If perceiving an object is enough for the mind to be aware of itself, then perception must be understood as a rather complicated and subtle relation to the object, the nature of which is either taken as primitive or demands some other kind of clarification.

Aristotle insists that awareness is not a separate function from sense perception, but somehow belongs to perception as a feature or aspect. His argument has ever since been bothersome for second-order solutions: in order to make the whole mind conscious of itself, one would have to go on *ad infinitum*, postulating higher functions that account for the awareness of all primary functions already acknowledged and postulated.⁴⁶ In medieval philosophy, several

⁴⁵ Castañeda, Hector-Neri, “‘He’: a study in the logic of self-consciousness”, *Ratio* 8 (1966), 130–157; “On the phenomenologic of the ‘I’”, *Proceedings of the 14th International Congress of Philosophy* 3 (University of Vienna, 1969), 260–266; Shoemaker, Sidney, “Self-reference and self-awareness”, *Journal of Philosophy* 65, 19 (1968), 555–567.

⁴⁶ In one instance, however, Aristotle seems to claim that something like the so-called *sensus communis* or *koinē aisthēsis* responsible for cross-modal unity of perception is also the source of the awareness of sensory affections. This has left some interpreters free to construe a two-level Aristotelian solution to the problem. The second-order operation of “being aware” is directed to a mental act or state of “perceiving an object” (Aristotle, *De an.* 3.2.425b12–26; *De somno* 455a12–23; Arist. *EN* 9.9.1170a25–b1). For a full explication of this idea in Aristotle, see Sihvola's chapter in this volume.

different distinctions and arguments were developed to solve this problem. Mikko Yrjönsuuri's chapter, "The Structure of Self-Consciousness", highlights, for instance, Ockham's idea that infinite regress is in fact avoided, since human minds and human capacities are finite. Vili Lähteenmäki explicates Descartes' influential discussion of the structures of the mind. In "Orders of Consciousness and Forms of Reflexivity in Descartes", he argues that, in Descartes' account, the mind includes several different levels of reflexivity that correspond with different ways of being conscious. Analogous discussions on reflexivity emerge in contemporary debates. As we shall see, many contemporary analytic philosophers opt for two distinct levels of mental operation in the explication of self-awareness, but there are also those who take Aristotle's argument to be conclusive. The Heidelberg school, for instance, strongly opposes all multi-level approaches, as Dan Zahavi shows in his chapter "The Heidelberg School and the Limits of Reflection".

The discussion on the perception of perception or, to put it in modern terms, consciousness of mental states, is complicated by the fact that it is connected to the idea of the conscious mind being aware not merely of the contents of perceptions and thoughts, but somewhat more strongly of its own *activity*, of itself or even of its fundamental essence. This awareness, too, can be considered to belong to the primary (first-order) experience or thought itself, or, alternatively, to another mental operation, the object of which is the subject of the primary experience or thought. Analyzing self-consciousness through the latter relational model may, too, be liable to infinite regress if it is construed as an objectifying relation in which the (objectifying) consciousness always requires a higher-order consciousness in order to be grasped. These problems are clarified from several viewpoints in this book. We learn how discussions of reflexivity relate historically to the problems of selfhood and oneness. In "Sense-Perception and Self-Awareness: Before and After Avicenna", Jari Kaukua and Taneli Kukkonen demonstrate how the Arabic philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) and his commentators developed a distinct idea of an individual essential self, setting out from the Aristotelian and late Platonic accounts of the human soul and its reflexivity.

Conventionally, references to ancient sources follow one or other of the following two abbreviation systems: *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* or *Greek–English Lexicon* by Liddell and Scott (any of the editions may be consulted, although the later editions are more complete). It should be noted, however, that within scholarship on ancient philosophy there are some conventions that deviate from both of these systems. Importantly, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics* are usually referred to as *EN* (sometimes also *NE*) and *EE*, and his *De Anima* sometimes as *DA* (as in Sihvola in this volume) rather than *De an.* Plato's *Republic* is sometimes abbreviated as *Rep.* rather than *Resp.* or *R* and, e.g., *Philebus* as *Phil.* rather than *Phlb.*

Regardless of how self-awareness is structurally explained, reflexivity should be distinguished from another form of mental orientation towards oneself, namely reflection or introspection. Where reflexivity can be described as immediate, and sometimes automatic or passive, reflection is rather a kind of cognition directed towards one's mental states deliberately and from a critical distance. It is often conceived of as mediated by conceptualizations or representations, and its particular feature is the way in which the subject actively and deliberately engenders the relation. It is voluntary rather than automatic, active rather than passive.

Reflection is sometimes identified with the objectifying function, which multi-level accounts of self-awareness introduce to explain mind's relation to itself. It should be noted, however, that a multi-level theory may also leave open whether the higher operation already involves deliberation or whether yet further mental levels must be postulated to reach a deliberate and voluntary function. In any case, the capacity for reflection has been most emphatically attributed to human beings. Whereas many of our predecessors acknowledged the possibility that animals may enjoy reflexive mental functions, most have argued that only humans are able to relate and refer to their own mental operations in a deliberate and epistemically pregnant sense.

Finally, the question of the deliberate or voluntary aspects of consciousness brings in another crucial issue, that of attention. Again, attention would seem to happen on at least two levels of consciousness: there exists something akin to the phenomenon of selective attention, namely the near-to-automatic ways in which the perceiver forms salient patterns out of sensory givens, and the heightened attention paid deliberately by the agent. The latter is attributed to the capacity of reflection rather than mere sensation, but is often connected to the lower sensuous level and claimed also to be dependent upon it. In this book, Deborah Brown compares Descartes' understanding of attention to that of Augustine. She argues in "Augustine and Descartes on the Function of Attention in Perceptual Awareness" that even though these two premodern thinkers differed considerably in their analyses, they shared certain basic intuitions about the structures of human perception and emotion. According to Brown, these discussions of attention include fresh insights which may prove useful, if not crucial, to contemporary projects of naturalizing consciousness.

NATURALIZING CONSCIOUSNESS

The most dominant debate in twentieth-century philosophy of mind concerns the way in which conscious processes relate to the natural processes of material reality. Historically, the problem has been framed and discussed in many different ways, in terms of mind and body, mind and brain, spirit and nature, meaning and causation, organism and mechanism, and software and hardware.

Whereas the intentional and reflexive nature of consciousness is certainly considered challenging to the project of naturalizing reality, subjectivity or phenomenality is seen as the final obstacle to this enterprise. David Chalmers formulates this view by stating that a “mental state is conscious if it has a qualitative feel – an associated quality of experience [. . .] The problem of explaining these phenomenal qualities is just the problem of consciousness. This is the really hard part of the mind-body problem”.⁴⁷

With respect to the dualistic ontologies of early modern and modern philosophy, the problem is typically formulated as a problem of interaction between the ontologically independent realms of the spiritual or mental and the material. However, the ontological framework of contemporary naturalism is characteristically monistic, and thus it transforms the mind–body problem into an explanatory problem of how two seemingly different types of phenomena are related to each other and how they can be understood as belonging to the same natural order. It has even been claimed that the strive to “naturalize consciousness” in the twentieth century is a non-starter, as it is more or less taken as a given that there are no non-natural entities or processes.⁴⁸ Moreover, most forms of contemporary naturalism are committed to the idea that only natural sciences or physical sciences can offer theoretically sound views of what there is.⁴⁹ In this light, the problem becomes how we can accommodate consciousness with all its features so that they comply with our causal–functional explanations about the rest of natural phenomena.

The monistically materialistic or physicalistic ontology of contemporary naturalism leaves basically two options to deal with consciousness: the naturalist can either try to do away with it, or, if he is reluctant to “eliminate” consciousness from reality, he is bound to treat it as natural through and through. In the twentieth century, theoretical and methodological concepts of elimination, reduction, epiphenomenon and emergence have been used to account for the place and role of consciousness in natural (scientific) reality. This paradigm has dominated contemporary philosophy of mind since the 1950s. Neil Manson even argues in his chapter “Contemporary Naturalism and the Concept of Consciousness” that the naturalistic approach is so ubiquitous that it shapes and directs in numerous implicit ways the modes

⁴⁷ Chalmers, David, *The Conscious Mind: In Search for a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

⁴⁸ Searle, John, *Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, Bradford Books, 1992), 93.

⁴⁹ In *Naturalism in Question*, the editors, Mario De Caro and David Macarthur, state this view by writing: “the entities posited by acceptable scientific explanations are the *only* genuine entities that there are” (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University 2004), 7.

in which we conceive of and discuss consciousness. On the other hand, Jon Miller shows in “The Status of Consciousness in Spinoza’s Concept of Mind” how much progress one can make in philosophy of mind without the concept of consciousness.

It is worth emphasizing, however, that the progress and success of the project of naturalizing consciousness does not depend merely on our understanding of conscious processes, but equally on our concept of *nature*. Historically, the notion of nature has undergone considerable conceptual transformations. Aristotle, for example, defined nature (*physis*) by separating it from human artefacts and products (*technē*). In contrast to our current conception, for him the natural meant what humans could not produce, and this included the perceptual capacities of humans and animals. In contemporary discussions on naturalization, the distinctions between the given and the produced, appearance and reality, are understood in a fundamentally different way than they were in premodern eras, and thus the prospects of including consciousness in the natural order appear in a very different light, as do the implications of such an inclusion.

Even a brief look into the literature shows that the contemporary “science of consciousness” readily acknowledges the diversity of conscious phenomena and explanatory problems, and uses several different methods and models in approaching consciousness. The explanatory tasks are not uniform, but stem from different fields of investigation, such as cognitive science, neuroscience and neurology, psychology and psychiatry. Moreover, most theorists today believe that consciousness can only be understood if philosophy and these sciences join their strengths and excellences: philosophical rigor must be combined with empirical and experimental insight.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ See Gulick, Robert van, “Consciousness”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2004 Edition), ed. E.N. Zalta (URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2004/entries/consciousness/>). Ronald de Sousa, e.g. distinguishes between 12 forms of subjectivity for the purpose of showing that in a “piece-meal solution lies the hope of solving the so-called problem of subjective consciousness”. See, Sousa, Ronald de, “Twelve varieties of subjectivity: Dividing in hopes of conquest”, in J.M. Larrazabal and L.A. Pérez Miranda (eds.), *Language, Knowledge, and Representation*, Philosophical Studies Series 99 (Amsterdam: Kluwer 2004), 149–164, 161; see also William G. Lycan, “The plurality of consciousness”, in J.M. Larrazabal and L.A. Pérez Miranda (eds.), *Language, Knowledge, and Representation*, Philosophical Studies Series 99 (Amsterdam: Kluwer 2004), 93–111.

We believe that such rigor should also involve historical inquiries which disclose the origins of our concepts and offer a wealth of examples of their complex interrelations. Our conviction is that a historical, diachronic perspective ought to be added to the synchronic approach if consciousness is to be understood in all its richness. We hope that this book functions as an opening in this direction.

PART I

ANCIENT AND ARABIC PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER ONE

ON PLATO'S LACK OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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1.1 LOSING CONSCIOUSNESS

From our contemporary perspective, it is a curiosity of Ancient Greek that it lacks a word for consciousness. Not only is there no exact match of our word 'consciousness', but also every Greek word that might be taken to be getting at some aspect of what we capture with our 'consciousness' has a distinct meaning other than consciousness. Contemporary scholars sometimes find nevertheless a "theory of consciousness" in Aristotle, built from the resources available from his philosophy of mind and philosophical psychology. But it is unclear to what extent this is fostered upon him by our own interests, rather than actually illuminating the structure of Aristotle's thought. 'Consciousness' may be one of those cases in which the language was lacking because there was no conceptual work for it to do within the framework available.

Plato was, however, an inventive thinker, at times perfectly capable of not letting the contingencies of Greek language or Greek culture dictate what he thought, or even what was thinkable. He was not afraid of using commonly accepted words in uncommon ways, and is able – even eager, at times – to specify precisely the sense in which he wishes his usage of a word to be understood. In the *Theaetetus*, for example, Socrates introduces a new grammatical construction, formed from an interrogative meaning 'how qualified', and uses it to mean 'quality' (*Tht.* 182a3–b8).¹ In such cases, Plato is usually careful to have Socrates offer some sort of gloss of the new word. In a passage from the

¹ See note on the passage in McDowell, John, *Plato: Theaetetus*, trans. with notes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 180. For abbreviations, see note 46 in the Introduction.

Philebus, with which we will be concerned later, Socrates uses a common enough expression for insentient, or oblivious; but noting that the literal meaning of the expression ('escape the notice of') implies there was a perception that has been pushed aside, he revises his statement into the clunkier but more precise locution 'non-percipient' (*Phil.* 33d–e). So Plato could have made space for the concerns of "consciousness" even if language was working against him. Unlike with Aristotle, however, scholars show little inclination to father a "theory of consciousness" upon Plato, and indeed they would be hard-pressed to do so. For nowhere does Plato display the least temptation to formulate the question "What is consciousness?", nor does he ever seem to feel the need to carve out (or cobble together) anything remotely equivalent to our 'consciousness', with which he might have posed the questions ordinarily cast in terms of consciousness today. For Plato, consciousness is not a problem.

This surprising situation may lead us to the conclusion that Plato has nothing interesting to say on the subject of consciousness, except perhaps in a negative way; for it is already interesting that he feels no need for the concept. Considering Plato's discussions of several issues now often related to consciousness, and seeing how this discussion takes shape and how questions are posed and addressed without availing himself of a distinct notion of "consciousness", should force us to become more clear about exactly what it is we are asking for when we ask for a theory of consciousness, or what sort of answer we seek that would satisfactorily address the problem (whatever *the* problem is) of consciousness. In this indirect way, we may find that the Platonic dialogues do, after all, have something more constructive to offer us on the subject of consciousness.

First, let us consider the questions consciousness raises, for there are several. One might simply ask about consciousness what it is, but this is not a question about which Plato is likely to have anything interesting to add. Posing such a question requires, as Plato teaches us in the *Meno*, that the thing inquired into be already part of one's working vocabulary. But there are other questions raised by consciousness, or rather to which "consciousness", whatever it is, seems to be the answer.

For example, how do we describe and explain the fact that we seem to be able to perceive our own perceptions, or be aware that we are aware of something? Is there a separate, "inner" perceptual organ designed to perceive perceptions of any kind whatsoever? The fact that sensory perceptions are of different and exclusive kinds, or modalities, seems to make it impossible that there could be any such single organ or faculty which did not essentially distort the distinct natures of visual, auditory, tactile, and other sensations. If it is indeed a single organ, then it must lack just those features of the different sense organs that differentiate them – and so their deliverances – from each

other qualitatively; on the other hand, if this supposed single receptive and co-ordinating faculty is able to capture the features distinctive of each sense modality, then it would seem that its singularity is compromised, and therewith its co-ordinative capacity for which it was postulated in the first place.

But if that is right, then we are in an even worse position than we thought: not only can we not explain second-order perceptions, we cannot even explain the possibility of cross-modal judgements – that is, the sort of everyday judgements such as “this red thing is heavy”, which we know we make all the time. Cross-modal unity of perceptions or co-ordination of information at a moment seems problematic, as do momentary events of self-perception, for example, being aware that I am seeing a church in front of me, or being aware that I am smelling this rose. Both of these issues seem to press for some additional feature of our mentality (broadly construed), such as consciousness, to explain them.

But another sort of unity also seems to want some faculty such as consciousness to explain it. This is a different sort of cross-modal unity, the sort in which faculties for perceiving things temporally must be mixed and related. How can I know that the person I see before me is the same person I saw yesterday – how, in fact, can I even formulate the thought? Or better, *who* is this ‘I’ able to relate some preserved perception now past to some currently occurring perception? We might pose the same question with respect to the future: if perception, memory, and anticipation are three distinct modes of mental engagement, what or who is the agent responsible for co-ordinating the different deliverances of these faculties? How is it that each of us, through all our various shifting experiences, has a sense of oneself as *one self*? To be conscious, we might think, just is to be able to make these sorts of co-ordinating judgements, and thereby to be the unifying force, or source of unity in a life as one experiences it.

This last, rather cumbersome locution brings in the final issue concerning consciousness which I wish to raise. What exactly we are trying to explain, usually about ourselves, in claiming we are conscious is not always clear. On the one hand, we want to pick out with ‘consciousness’ the fact that there is a phenomenal character to our experiences – that there is something that it is *like* for some, but not other events to occur. How can we articulate and explain the “what-it’s-like” aspect of experience, and the difference between having it (as we, and presumably familiar four-legged mammals such as dogs and cats have) and lacking it (as, presumably, tree stumps and boulders)? On the other hand, the phenomenal character of experience that we consider can only be the phenomenal character of our, typically human experiences – we haven’t access to any other sorts of experience. But “what-it’s-like-for-us” seems to rely heavily on the particularities of human psychology and capacities – to

what extent, and in what ways is unclear, and worth investigating. For instance, it may be that what experience is like for us, its typical or inevitable phenomenal character, is as of something world-directed – that is, it comes to us as being *about* something;² it may be, further, that this aboutness, as we experience it, is by its nature conceptually laden. Or, one might take it that what it is *for us* to be conscious, our peculiar way of experiencing, is marked by self-consciousness, the capacity to take one's own states as objects of attention,³ and this is the truly interesting question of consciousness.

Is the consciousness we are interested in the quality of being a subject of experience, rather than a mere object of action; or are we interested in explaining and describing the structure of *our* experience? Crudely put, in a theory of consciousness, are we interested in what we share with sheep – who on most accounts can actually *feel* pain – or are we interested in what distinguishes us from sheep – who do not have concept-rich experience, much less a self-conception, or an ability to stand aloof from and merely observe their own observations?⁴ And can we legitimately move from study of the one, to conclusions about the other?

Since our experiences are cross-modal and cross-temporal, and include experiences of perceiving our perceptions, and not merely having them, we might say that all of these themes could be loosely gathered together as concerned with *experiential* quality and nature of experience, and particularly of those experiences that we are either most familiar with, or else for some other reason recognize as being distinctively “our own”.⁵

When broken down in this way, we see several themes emerging from the heading ‘consciousness’, about many of which Plato did indeed have something to say, both explicitly and implicitly. He does not ever seem to collect them together into a single concern, but through the various discussions we

² This could be called the ‘intentionality’, or ‘intentional structure’, of consciousness; thus we might move easily from a consideration of the phenomenal character, the what-it’s-like-ness of *our* experience, to *phenomenology* in the specific sense it later acquired. (See the Chapters 12 and 14 by Zahavi and Heinämaa in this book.)

³ Strictly, it may be that one must attend to one’s states *as one’s own states*.

⁴ Contemporary analytic philosophy has begun to distinguish more clearly between these two questions. See, for example Rosenthal, David, “Two concepts of consciousness”, *Philosophical Studies* 49 (1986), 329–359; Dretske, Fred, “Conscious experience”, *Mind* 102 (1993), 263–283; Block, Ned, “On a confusion about a function of consciousness”, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 18 (1995), 227–287.

⁵ Are these various topics interrelated in fact? Or is it mere historical accident rather than the unfolding of any inner logic in our various conceptions of mentality and experience? This book may help to bring this to light.

find a common thread tying together several of the issues now collected together under the term 'consciousness'. 'Soul' or *psyche* often does the same work for Plato that consciousness does today, particularly in the soul's "use" of *nous* – that is, intellect, mind, or reason. The soul, on Plato's view, uses mind to co-ordinate the various sorts of "information" provided by other faculties, particularly by different sense-modalities, by memory, and foresight or anticipation. Because soul has the capacity thus to relate various experiences, it becomes able to distinguish itself from any one of them. We are thus able to recognize our perceptions or memories as such, to become aware of our various experiences as perceptions, memories, and so on. Moreover, Plato acutely sees that some such power is necessary not only to explain cross-modal judgements and cross-temporal judgements, but even to explain any comparative judgements within a single sense-modality or tense. It is on account of this that mind runs through the whole of the soul's activity, and thus enables one to have a sense of oneself as a single person, existing over time, in and through otherwise disconnected experiences.

1.2 WHY WHAT-IT'S-LIKE DOESN'T MATTER

We begin with a consciousness question that *didn't* worry Plato: the difference between being an object interacting with other objects in a causal universe and being a subject experiencing these interactions. On certain views, or under the pressure of certain lines of questioning, it begins to seem mysterious that there should be such a thing as subjectivity at all, unclear what exactly it is, and even uncertain whether we could actually tell the difference between having and lacking it. If I think, for example, that a highly sophisticated machine could replicate perception without being alive, or that some simpler creatures although alive have perceptual experiences of this mechanical sort – that is, of a sort which, compared to us, might be described as 'missing something' – then I will be pressed to ask, "What makes our experiences different from *this*?" and "What must be added to this to get perception such as *we* experience it, or to get what we *really mean* by 'perception'?" And it will be tempting to answer "consciousness" – or some sort of awareness of these perceptions, distinct from the perceiving itself which is on this account altogether too mechanical to be the sort of thing we are looking for.⁶

It is not that Plato does not recognize any difference between being an object acted upon and a subject of experience. It is only that the sheer fact of subjectivity, the fact that there is a phenomenal quality to certain events

⁶ For a similar line of argument with respect to Aristotle and consciousness, see Hardie, W.F.R., "Concepts of consciousness in Aristotle", *Mind* 85 (1976), 388–411.

in the world, did not seem especially mysterious, or in need of some additional explanatory resources beyond those necessary to explain the world generally. For Plato, there is no mystery for two very different reasons: on the one hand, inasmuch as the *feeling* quality of an experience is contrasted with its intelligible character, which can be made articulate and shared through discussion and reasoning, then it is no wonder that there is nothing to say about it. Positing some extra thing, on top of perception itself, as a way to indicate that phenomenal or qualitative nature of perceptual experience, will not add any further explanation. Perception is all there is, at least if what we are asking is what makes it the case that perceptions *feel* various ways. With perception itself, we have whatever awareness or mental state, or phenomenal state or experiences that there are to be had (by us).

And this brings us to the second, more interesting reason, that subjectivity is non-mysterious on the Platonic account. If we ask why there should be such a thing as subjectivity at all, or what it is, or how it differs from other events in the world, the answer is given in terms already at work in the overall view: certain events have perception, with its attendant feeling states, as one aspect because of where in the universe they occur. Experiences occur when events happen in souls, rather than elsewhere. The fact that an experience, say a perception, arises in one sort of soul rather than another is enough to account for any differences in “what it’s like”. This, of course, is merely a frame of reference for the sort of view Plato takes on the matter. We will look later in more detail at what that view is, and how it displaces questions that would be cast in terms of the phenomenal quality of consciousness.

It may seem that such a view simply rejects the question of phenomenal states, rather than answers it. If this is so, then considering how and why it does so should at least force us to re-examine the question: Why is it *not* enough to say simply that there are various sorts of properties, objects, and events in the universe, some of these are perceptions and their being such just means they have the property, among others, of being *felt*? It may be that it is only when we have a systematic account of nature, and that account appears to make *all* events and objects of the same type *except* perceptions and phenomenal properties, that the pressure arises for some special explanation of this feature of consciousness.

Theaetetus I. The first part of the *Theaetetus* contains an extended discussion of the nature of perception. The excuse for the discussion is the investigation of the thesis that “knowledge is perception”, a thesis which Socrates aims to refute. It is important that the picture of perception presented there is developed, by Socrates, as a supplement to his absent opponents’ view. For the theory is crucially incomplete, and the aspect in which the view of perception is incomplete explains why it suits the false theory that perception is

knowledge. Before looking at what is left out of the theory of perception presented in the *Theaetetus*, however, we will look at the theory as it is presented, in order to see Plato's take on phenomenal character.

According to Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, the sophist Protagoras claimed that "man is the measure of all things: of those which are, that they are, and of those which are not, that they are not" (*Tht.* 152a2–3).⁷ To believe this amounts, claims Socrates, to believing that knowledge is perception. The two theses become aligned through their shared reliance on the privacy of perceptions. Each person can plausibly be taken as the ultimate authority of all her judgements only if the things to be judged, the objects about which judgements are made, are more readily apparent to her than to anyone else. Such a "Protagorean" view requires, in fact, that the objects judged be *transparently* apparent to their subject. For even if, for example, I am best-placed to make judgements regarding my inner life, I might still get it wrong on occasion, if that life does not present itself to me clearly, fully, and unambiguously.

The answer for the Protagorean, then, is a mechanical picture of perception. Perceptions arise unfailingly accurately, distinct causes having distinct effects. As Socrates colourfully describes it, two "parents" – the eye (or organ of perception generally) and a visible object (or corresponding perceptible object) – are jointly responsible, by their coming into contact, for two offspring: the perception and the perceptible qualities.⁸ Both the whiteness of the object and the perception of that whiteness are simultaneously generated by the "approach" of an eye and a visible object. This process is possible at all because the eye is exactly suited to visible objects. It is not even "possible to arrive at a firm conception, as they say, of either of them, taken singly, as being anything" (*Tht.* 157a4–5). As a consequence, perceptions generated in such a way are not subject to external interference, and so there is no possibility that they have been distorted along the way to being perceived, by some other influence.

Socrates emphasizes from the beginning the absolute uniqueness of any arising perception on such a view. Any perception – a seeing of this white right now – "would never have come into being if either of the former

⁷ Translations of the *Theaetetus* are taken from McDowell (1973), unless otherwise noted.

⁸ Perceptions: "seeings, hearings, smellings, feelings of cold, feelings of heat; also what are called pleasures, pains, desires, fears, and others" (*Theaetetus* 156b4–7). We shall return to the wide scope of 'perceptions' later. Perceptibles: "colours of every kind with seeings of every kind, sounds with hearings in the same way, and the other perceived things with the other perceptions" (*Theaetetus* 156c1–3).

pair”, eye and visible object, “had come up against something different” (*Tht.* 156d5–8). The consequences of this come out more clearly as the conversation unfolds (*Tht.* 158e–160c). If my eye, or the object of sight, is in a different state from one time to the next, then their contact from one time to the next will also result in different perceptions. Now if there were an external standard, which could determine whether an eye – or an object – were in a *good* condition or a *bad* one, then we would be able to say that some perceptions – those that resulted from diseased eyes – were false, even for the person who had them. In order to deny that a perception could be false, and so to hold to the thesis that man is the measure, the Protagorean denies such a standard, and attends instead to the fact that in each case, diseased eye or no, a unique perception indubitably arises. That perception is certainly real. And thus knowledge is perception.

This is not a good argument for relativism, and Socrates proceeds to show this. What interests us, however, is the way that the theory of perception so far described presents experiences of all sorts – for what counts for sensory perceptions, including desire and pain, would count equally for memory and anticipation – as somehow private. These experiences are “inner” in the sense that they are not susceptible to any shared standard. There is something surd about perception alone – perception as it would be for unminded souls; something essentially and by its nature unshareable with others, my own and subject to no external standard, or shared standard by which I could measure my perceptions against others’. If this were not the case, then perception would not, in Plato’s view, be so inadequate as a candidate for knowledge; perceptibles would not be so unknowable and perception would not be so *alogon*⁹ if there could possibly be some measure by which we could compare, share, explain, and make them intelligible to one another.

But the qualities of this ineffable “feelingness” of sensations interest Plato very little. Perhaps he thinks that exploring what it might consist in, in any given case, is a matter of poetry (in the pejorative sense) rather than philosophy; or perhaps he thinks that it cannot be articulated at all, so that once you have said this about it there is nothing more to be said on the matter. Explaining the source of this intractability to reason or explanation is interesting to Plato – the *Timaeus* makes a heroic effort to explain how the world we find ourselves in, like we ourselves as a part of that world, seems to be both intelligible, well-ordered, and at the same time resistant to

⁹ Cf. for example *Timaeus* 69d4, *aisthēsei de alogōi*.

satisfactory explanations. For our purposes, however, it may be enough to recall how frequently and consistently Plato associates physicality, change (or liability to change), and unintelligibility. It is the fact that perception is necessarily (in part) bodily that accounts for the remainder of “unmeasure” or the incommunicable *affect* in experience, over which each of us is, Plato concedes, the incontrovertible authority. This sort of “authority”, however, is epistemologically and morally inconsequential, perhaps even meaningless.

But the picture of perception attributed to Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* is not Plato's view, not exactly. He may share it, so far as it goes, but it is incomplete, and his refutation of Protagorean relativism shows the way in which it is so. For perceptions to arise, or be generated, it is not actually enough for an eye to come into contact with a visible object, the ear to approach an audible object, etc. It must be *someone's* eye that is affected, and the experiences must have someone to belong to, if they are to arise at all. And this brings us to the more interesting reason why the subjective quality of experiences is not mysterious: perception, luminosity, and all, is simply what happens when changes occur in embodied souls.¹⁰ Change in the velocity of water makes waves, changes in the position of the sun with respect to a solid body makes lengthening shadows, and change in the activity or attention of the soul makes subjective experiences. Just as surely as differences in the state of the same eye at different times cause the same objects to give rise to different visual sensations, so differences in the nature and state of the soul receiving that visual stimulus determine how that event is experienced, the nature of the qualitative, as well as objective qualities that experience has.

Perceptions must generate a movement in a soul, and this just is the fact and nature of phenomenal experience. What that movement of soul amounts to, and what its consequences are, depend upon the collective capacities that constitute that soul. In creatures such as ourselves, in souls such as ours, I shall argue, the movement of soul draws attention to itself. Because of the kind of soul we have, we can't help but *notice* such movements. That is, for the soul to be moved is for it to be recognizing some change in the information it receives through the various tools available to

¹⁰ We must be careful here, because it is not the case that all changes in body occasion changes in soul; those bodily changes which do not immediately affect the soul (such as our hair growing longer) are not perceived. *Philebus* 33a ff., where Plato explicitly recognizes this, will be discussed in the final section.

it. This noticing, or attending, however, is not a function of the whole soul, but is something the soul does with its mind.¹¹

1.3 OUR KIND OF SOUL

This does not explain consciousness, but so far merely indicates what occupies the theoretical space in Plato's psychology in place of consciousness. In order to explain the fact of phenomenal qualities, and the sort of qualities that we are familiar with, Plato does not offer "consciousness" but rather the fact that "we have such-and-such kind of soul". Which kind of soul? – one justly asks. Well, a *conscious* one, is the modern answer – and with that we can dispense with talk of souls. How does Plato's answer differ? How does his view of the sort of soul we have account for our experiences, not just our perceptual or sensory experiences, but also the way we experience ourselves as being, thinking, and acting? To answer this, we shall have to look at the details of Plato's analysis of human soul.

The notion of 'kinds of soul' is most familiar from Aristotle, and applying the notion directly to Plato may ride roughshod over some important differences in his overall metaphysics. According to the degenerative creation story of the *Timaeus*, all other animals are reincarnations of the immortal bit of soul granted originally to human beings. In this sense, anything alive – or at least any animal – has immortal soul in it, and so has intelligent soul in it, for it is the intelligence that makes it immortal. Being intelligent and being alive are manifestations of a single principle.¹² This might seem to make talk of 'kinds of soul' otiose. For it suggests that there is only one sort of soul, whose activities may vary according to the bodily resources available to it. In fact, however, the picture is not so clear. In the *Timaeus*, a 'mortal soul' is introduced alongside the immortal intelligent soul, and the various capacities and activities characteristic of being a living animal are ascribed to this mortal soul. Insisting that soul, and not body, accounts for these experiences is in line with the refined theory of perception in the *Theaetetus*. Naturally, once two "parts" of a single animal's soul are introduced, we have introduced also difficulties about how these two different elements, mortal and immortal, form the single soul of a

¹¹ "by our souls and through reasoning" (*Sophist* 248a9). The expression in the *Theaetetus* actually has "the mind itself, by means of itself, considers these things [. . .]" (e.g. 185e1–2; e8); this might further support the view that, in the last analysis, Plato thinks that who we really are – or what our souls really are – is the immortal and purely intelligent divine soul which dispenses with the 'mortal part of the soul' at the same time that it sheds the body. (See Shields, Christopher, "Simple souls", in E. Wagner (ed.), *Essays on Plato's Psychology* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001), 137–156.)

¹² Broadie, Sarah, "Soul and body in Plato and Descartes", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 101, 3 (2001), 295–308.

single animal. Plato only works this out in any detail with respect to human beings, and we shall look at that in dealing with mental unity. In human beings intellect is itself part of the fabric of everyday experience – it is a capacity at our disposal to use, or misuse. It is difficult to say whether this should count as a categorically different kind of soul; but it indicates a difference in psychic make up sufficient to articulate the sort of experiences distinctive of human soul. In order to explore the nature of intelligent soul and the consequences of having one, we return to the *Theaetetus*, before turning to the *Philebus*.

Theaetetus I revisited. The final refutation of Protagoras begins with Socrates clarifying that ears and eyes on their own do not see and hear. “We perceive each set of things by means of” these organs. Who are we, though? Or what is this ‘we’ that uses the sense-organs? Socrates says it is “some one kind of thing, a soul or whatever one ought to call it” (*Tht.* 184d3).¹³ The importance of this, as John McDowell points out in his commentary, is that we thus preserve the possibility of some one person being able to both see and hear, for example.¹⁴ Socrates focuses on the ability to make judgements that are in some way or another comparative, across different sense-modalities. This focus on judgements indicates that the centralizing, or co-ordinating faculty, “soul or whatever one ought to call it”, is essentially *cognitive*. So, for example, we might be able to judge of a sound that it is occurring now, and also of a sight or vision that it is occurring now. And in so doing, we recognize that we are attributing the very same property to two different events. More obviously comparative, one is able to think “that each is different from the other and the same as itself” (*Tht.* 185a11), and “you are able to raise the question whether they are like or unlike each other” (*Tht.* 185b4).

This is only possible because there is some one thing, intelligent soul, with capacities – in this case, conceptual resources – proper to itself, and applicable to whatsoever life may throw up. In making comparative judgements, the intellect draws together the soul's activities,¹⁵ and orders them by relating them as same, different, more, less, before, after, and so on (*Tht.* 185c10–d2). The very process of becoming an experience for us, a fully conscious one, is constituted in part by the mind's synthetic activity.¹⁶ The principles used to order these perceptions are those that are equally applicable to any, or at least several of the types of sense-perception. Thus the very same activity that introduces abstraction into the immediacy of experience –for example, not

¹³ McDowell has ‘mind’ for *psychē*, which I have here translated in the less tendentious way as ‘soul’.

¹⁴ McDowell 1973, 186.

¹⁵ Or events, *pathē* – that is, what happens in and to the soul in various ways.

¹⁶ Though the mind is at work in this way whether or not we become explicitly conscious of the composite information, or explicitly form a proposition capturing it.

just seeing, but judging that we are seeing, or as Socrates' locution has it, that 'being' belongs to the seeing – draws together otherwise unrelated experiences into a single soul. The activity of abstracting, or distancing from the “brute” character of experience is the activity of becoming a single, whole person.

It is important to note the very wide range of judgements which exercise this power, and how basic they are. Perfection in them may require training, but some version of such judging activity pervades a great deal, perhaps all, of our experience. So, while the *Theaetetus* focuses on obviously higher-order, or abstract judgements, it brings out the extent to which these are implicit in our simple comparative judgements. The *Republic*, starting from common perceptible qualities, emphasizes the same.

In Book VII, Socrates calls attention to certain sorts of predicates. These are qualities of objects which are never instantiated unambiguously. For an object to possess one property, it thereby possesses the opposite property. Socrates' examples are largeness and smallness, thickness and thinness, hardness and softness, lightness and heaviness (*Rep.* 523e2–6, 524a9). Each of these perceptible qualities is implicitly relational (often they refer us to some norm, so that they are at the same time normative judgements). Because these predicates are intrinsically relational, they vary in their applicability according to the tacit or explicit referent, so that the same sense “declares to the soul that it perceives the same object to be [e.g.] both hard and soft” (*Rep.* 524a3).¹⁷ Because objects are always embedded in complex contexts, an indefinite number of possible *relata* immediately present themselves. The result is that “sense perception indicates that what is light is also heavy, and what is heavy, light” (*Rep.* 524a9–10). The soul is unable to rest, it is perplexed (*aporein* 524a7) and the indeterminacy draws the faculties of mind in, to adjudicate. Plato's thought here is not that mind is only engaged when such relational predicates are at issue; rather, among sense perceptions some “certainly summon the help of intelligence (*noēsis*) to examine them because sensation does not achieve a sound result” (*Rep.* 523b1–3).¹⁸

¹⁷ Translations of the *Republic* follow G.M.A. Grube (*Plato's Republic*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974), unless otherwise noted.

¹⁸ In fact, Socrates does say here that “among our sense impressions there are some that do not call upon the intellect (*noēsis*) to examine them because the decision of our perception is sufficient” (*Republic* 523a10–b1). If this is not a loose way of speaking, intended to draw a contrast between obvious, necessary cases of intellectual intervention, and others, then Plato must, as McDowell (1973, 185) suggests, have realized and corrected his mistake in the *Theaetetus*, when he recognizes that no perceptions are devoid of intellectual contribution (*Theaetetus* 182a–b).

These two discussions show us how the soul requires the active engagement of the mind in order to complete simple assessments of existence, number, sameness, relative size, shape, beauty, texture, pitch, and so on. Without involvement of mind, such perceptions are incomplete, or indeterminate. Later, we shall ask whether they deserve to count as perceptions at all – and indeed, whether they can even arise for us. Judgements, of course, are something the soul does through or with the mind, in virtue of being “minded”, and they pervade much more of what we took to be merely sensory experience than we might have supposed.

As soon as the *Theaetetus* begins the final refutation of relativism, ‘mind’ is introduced into the discussion for the first time. One might be able to (in theory) “disintegrate” souls, making Socrates-at- t_1 different from Socrates-at- t_2 ; but one cannot similarly disintegrate mind, for what one is left with would not in any sense be mind, or intellect. But with the introduction of mind, the primitiveness and brute privacy of experiences can no longer be maintained without qualification.

1.4 THE CONSEQUENCES OF MIND (*PHILEBUS*)

“It would be strange”, Socrates says in the *Theaetetus* (184d1–4), “if we had several senses sitting in us, as if in wooden horses, and it wasn’t the case that all those things converged on some one kind of thing, a soul or whatever one ought to call it: something with which we perceive all the perceived things by means of the senses”. The *Theaetetus* and *Republic* argued from judgements and experiences familiar to us, to the need for some centralizing activity. The *Philebus* offers to consider the matter from the other direction: since there is some such centralizing faculty, then for us to have an experience is to become involved in an attempt at relating, co-ordinating, classifying, and understanding the material presented by other capacities of a living person.¹⁹ The *Theaetetus* (186c–d) had described this activity as acquired “with difficulty and over a long time, by means of a great deal of troublesome education” (*Tht.* 186c4). But the *Philebus* suggests that the difficult task is in *successfully completing* the “calculations” and organization of one’s experiences; incompletely beginning the same sort of mental work is pervasive. Even the *Republic* did not get at the extent of it, for the focus remained largely with judgements. The *Philebus* explores *feelings* – emotions, pleasure, and pain – more directly, and shows that even these are not had by us

¹⁹ One must start somewhere, however, and our souls are not such that we can ever not already have made some beginning in this direction.

without intelligence.²⁰ It was misleading, therefore, to suggest above that perceptions are *totally* unknowable; it is only partially that perceptions remain intractable to reason. Since feelings are had by souls such as ours – namely, minded souls – they are had *as* objects of comparison and contrast with one another, objects of reflection, objects to be ordered and thereby to be made sense of through meaningful relations to each other. They are thus partially knowable, or at least intelligible, to the extent that they can be co-ordinated, related to one another, made sense of in a way that can be made public.

If genuine unity of the soul is to be made possible through mind, then this is necessary. The difficulty lies in teasing out just how it is that the fact of our rational capacity informs the nature of *all* our experiences, and not just our propositional judgements, however primitive.

Mental unity in the Philebus: The work of intelligent soul. First of all, the *Philebus* makes most explicit that the soul must be involved in any experience, including perceptions. Perceptions must be ‘of the soul’, if they are to be anything for us at all. “You must realize”, says Socrates (*Phil.* 33d2–5), “that some of the various affections of the body are extinguished within the body before they reach the soul, leaving it unaffected. Others penetrate through both body and soul and provoke a kind of upheaval that is peculiar to each but also common to them both”.²¹ What a physical change, on the one hand, and a psychic change, on the other, amount to is a different sort of thing: on the one hand, motion, on the other emotion, or experience. But some changes in our bodily state become changes in our psychic state, or our souls, and of course vice versa.²² Those bodily changes that occasion no movement of soul simply leave

²⁰ The claim is made more baldly, though without explanation, or exploration of what it means, at *Timaeus* 64b: disturbances of the body (*pathē*) are perceptions when they are transmitted through to intelligence (*to phronimon*), but not otherwise. Denis O’Brien sees this as reason to argue that *phronimon* (usually ‘the intelligent part or thing’) here means *merely* ‘consciousness’, discarding any connotations of intelligence; Luc Brisson argues against this that terminating in *intelligence*, rather than any mindless awareness, is distinctive of *human* perception. (O’Brien, Denis, “Perception et intelligence dans le *Timée* de Platon”, in T. Calvo and L. Brisson (eds.), *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1997). See especially 208–303. Luc Brisson’s “Perception sensible et raison dans le *Timée*” is in the same volume, of which 313–316 are most relevant to this point.)

²¹ Translations of the *Philebus* follow Dorothea Frede (*Philebus*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), unless otherwise noted.

²² Thomas Johansen argues that, in the *Timaeus*, this is unproblematic because “Both soul and body are spatially extended and move in space. Because both body and

us unaffected. By calling attention to the etymology of 'oblivious' (33d8–34a2, below), Socrates gives himself the opportunity to emphasize that such bodily changes are *nothing* for us, if they do not affect the soul:

SOCRATES: Are we fully justified if we claim that the soul remains oblivious of those affections that do not penetrate both [body and soul], while it is not oblivious of those that penetrate both?

PROTARCHUS: Of course we are justified.

SOCRATES: But you must not so misunderstand me as to suppose I meant that this 'obliviousness' gave rise to any kind of forgetting. Forgetting is rather the loss of memory, but in the case in question here no memory has yet arisen. It would be absurd to say that there could be the process of losing something that neither is nor was in existence, wouldn't it?

PROTARCHUS: Quite definitely . . .

SOCRATES: So instead of saying that the soul is oblivious when it remains unaffected by the disturbances of the body, now change the name of what you so far called obliviousness to that of *nonperception*.

But what does it mean for bodily changes to affect the soul? What is the nature, and what are the consequences of this affecting?

The *Philebus* is famous, or rather infamous (to the extent it is known at all) for its claim that pleasures can be true or false.²³ Not only *can* pleasures, and pains, be false; "we will not find any other way to account for badness in the case of pleasures unless they are false" (*Phil.* 40e8–10). While this claim, and Plato's arguments for it, might be and have been hotly contested, and severely criticized, our concern will be rather with the ramifications of adopting such a position. Plato explores these through his discussions of false pleasure, particularly of emotions as false pleasures (*Phil.* 47d–50e); and also through articulating a distinctive metaphysical picture which places us as complex wholes squarely in the middle of a complex, unified cosmos (*Phil.* 28c–30e). Like the cosmos, human beings owe whatever unity they have to the presence of mind at work within them. This means that emotions, too, and all pleasures and pains become a part of the person through the activity of mind; they become something for us by becoming intelligible.

soul move in space we can see how the motions of the soul may affect the motions of the body and vice versa. Body and soul may have different spatial properties [. . .] but there is no fundamental ontological difference between the two" ("Body, soul, and tripartition in Plato's *Timaeus*", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 19 (2000), 92).

²³ The extensive discussion begins at *Philebus* 36c, and is not concluded until *Philebus* 55c.

Human beings are not simple entities. Their bodies and souls are each complex, and interact in complex ways to form a unity.²⁴ Like any complex whole, parts – and parts of parts – are mutually supporting, and therefore mutually illuminating. That is, the true identity, or nature of each part is brought out through their collectively constituting some whole. Socrates' initial examples of such complex wholes appeal to crafts or sciences – phonetics, and music; but the point applies to any object of knowledge – it was introduced to explore the complexity of Man, Ox, Beauty, and Good (*Phil.* 15a5).²⁵ According to the final example, Theuth – credited with discovering the phonetic system – knows each of the kind of letter he had identified because of the ways that, through their relations, they are capable of explaining spoken sound. “As he realized that none of us could gain any knowledge of a single one of them, taken by itself without understanding them all, he considered that the one link that somehow unifies them all [. . .]” (*Phil.* 15c10–d1). The metaphysical counterpart to this claim is that each part only actually *becomes* determinately *this* or *that*, or has the determinate properties it has, in virtue of its being well related to other parts in order to constitute a whole. Outside the context of a complex, intelligible whole, so-called constituent parts are indeterminate (*apeiron*, at *Philebus* 24b–d) or abstract and unspecifiable (as *peras* is, *Phil.* 25d–e).

Such wholes must, Plato claims, owe their unity to something distinct from their parts. The force of ‘distinct’ here is to insist on non-reductive explanation. Heaps of parts do not count as complex wholes, and so explanation of unity cannot be had exclusively by reference to independently specifiable parts. Something apart from the parts themselves accounts for the fact that just these parts in just these relations enable each to be the sort of thing it is, playing the role it has in constituting a well-ordered whole, and specifically therefore constituting just *this* well-ordered whole. Identity tracks unity. That something, says Socrates at *Philebus* 29b–30e, is intelligence, or mind (*nous*), the cause responsible for fact that many can become one.

The lesson from considering human beings as complex wholes of the relevant kind is twofold: first, no parts, or parts of parts, can be understood for

²⁴ At least this rather uncontroversial point is clear in the otherwise perplexing “cosmological” argument of *Philebus* 29a–30d.

²⁵ Plato does not see any significant difference between understanding the unity of planks and nails to form a bed; the unity of categories and relations to form a science; the unity of kinds and properties to form a concept; and the unity of complex bodies and souls to form organisms. In all cases parts of distinct kinds, well-related to one another form a whole which has powers beyond any of its parts, and allows each part to come into its own, and express its distinctive characteristics.

what they are – or even be what they are – in isolation; and second, that genuine, irreducible unities owe their unity to their rational coherence. Human beings have bodies and souls, and this relation brings along with it a multitude of capacities and propensities.²⁶ Since human beings are irreducible complex wholes, something must be responsible for the unity of these various things – body parts, soul parts – accounting for the way in which all these together form a single person; and this same thing will thereby be responsible for the identity of this person.

Just as, in general, intelligence is the cause of complex unity, intelligence in us – which we each enjoy as a characteristic of our own souls – is most directly responsible for our psychic unity. “Reason”, Socrates has concluded, after a tortured cosmological–analogical argument (*Phil.* 28c–31a), “belongs to that kind which is the cause of everything” (*Phil.* 30d6). This sounds grandiose at the cosmological level – it is “a certain cause, of no small significance, that orders and coordinates the years, seasons, and months, and which has every right to the title of wisdom and reason” (*Phil.* 30c5–7). But looking at the very mundane consequences of this claim – namely, in the nature of pleasure – we will see just how seriously Plato intends it.

In arguing for the possibility of false pleasures, Plato has Socrates appeal to the claim that all seeing is *seeing as*. At any rate, I take it that this is at least one lesson to be drawn from his “humunculizing” depiction of human judgement (*Phil.* 39a–c): judgement is described as the act of “some scribe” in our soul, scribbling furiously, and accompanied also by an equally diligent painter (*Phil.* 39b). The metaphor is designed to show how complicated an affair simple judgement is, in particular by suggesting that whenever we judge we never *just* record some proposition. We always at the same time picture to ourselves the judgement we are making – we “provide illustrations to the words in the soul” (*Phil.* 39b5–6). This illustration, if it does anything at all, depicts the content of the proposition as determinate in some way that the mere words leave open. It is easiest to see this going on when the referent of the judgement is not currently being perceived, although Socrates insists that the basic mechanics hold good for all tenses (*Phil.* 39e1–2). When I consider some future I hope for, I conceive of it as being in a certain way – not just good or bad, but delightful in this respect, exciting in that way. If the soul judges ‘that it will be hot’, it also at the same time represents to itself something of what precisely it is like, and what it means, for it to be hot, to the person judging. To judge how things are, will be, or have been – even in simple

²⁶ A similar point is argued more concretely by Johansen, considering the physiology of the *Timaeus* (2000, especially 101–105).

perceptual judgements – is to be trying to make sense of them, to perceive them *as* something or another, as being in some way or another, relating in this or that way to ourselves, our past projects and plans, our place in the world and our understanding of that world. This lends them on the one hand affective qualities, and on the other hand an intelligible connection to our cognitive lives. This is, then, one reason why pleasures, pains, and perceptions, can be true and false.

Because mind actively informs the context in which new perceptions arise, each case of *seeing as* is an incorporation of a new memory, hope, or perception into a rational structure.²⁷ This is why, when our hedonist interlocutor considers what it would actually be like to have pleasant sensations devoid of any judgement, belief, memory whatsoever, he is aghast, and agrees it is “not a human life” at all (*Phil.* 21c6–7). The capacity for categorizing in general gets to work immediately we perceive or imagine something, finding a place for it in our overall psychic structure and understanding of the world. But it is *our* psychic structure and understanding, yours in your case, mine in my case, into which your new “data” and mine must respectively fit. This is why, although “there could be no wisdom without soul” (*Phil.* 30c9), in our case it is “mind [which] among us imports the soul and provides training for the body” (*Phil.* 30b3). While mind as such requires a soul to belong to, in us mind grants us the particular soul we have. This is because how my mind is disposed right now – the beliefs, hopes, values, concerns that constitute my understanding of the world – and how I am using my mind, affect how I perceive the world presenting itself to me. My state of mind partially determines the meaning of my experiences. Thus “wicked people as rule enjoy false pleasures, but the good among mankind true ones” (*Phil.* 40c1–2). Having good values and a solid sense of reality, the good man imagines a future very much as it is likely to occur, both in its events, and in the meaning of and feelings occasioned by those events. Lacking this well-integrated psyche going into it, the bad man’s anticipations of the future most often turn out to be wildly off the mark – even if he gets what he wants, it just doesn’t feel as he had expected.²⁸

²⁷ Again, the *Timaeus* offers the complementary physiological tale: *Timaeus*, Johansen argues, “attempts to show how an essentially rational soul works within the body by using those motions that the body necessarily gives rise to in order to further our rationality while embodied . . . [thus] our rational self extends to those other parts while we are embodied” (2000, 106, 107).

²⁸ I argue for this in detail in “Hedonistic persons: The good man argument in Plato’s *Philebus*”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006), 5–26.

1.5 CONCLUSION

Souls are the principle of life in living things, and the sort of soul one has explains the sort of experiences available to one. Being ensouled just means that bodily motions have psychological correlates – a single event can involve changes peculiar in kind to body and *psychē*. It is “a kind of upheaval that is peculiar to each but also common to both” body and soul. There is no mystery here about the phenomenal aspect of experience, in principle. That among the various sorts of events and properties in the world there should be some that are phenomenal – that have a “what-it’s-likeness” to them – does not on the face of it seem to raise any special questions, or demand any special explanations. Why, after all, shouldn’t there be some such in the universe? Only when we seem to have available a systematic natural science able to explain everything *except* this fact of phenomenal character, do we feel a sense of mystery and bafflement, and start reaching for special explanations.

Plato does of course think that science is possible, and that there is a unified account of the universe. So it might seem that he should feel the pressure just as much as we do. Granted, his universe, and his notion of what a unified account looks like, includes rationality and reasoners (souls as agents and bearers of active reason). But even within that rather differently structured reality, he allows that there is something uniquely unintelligible about perceptual “feels”. Should he not, then, feel the need for something more, something to explain why there should be these events in a rationally ordered universe that defy rational articulation?

In a way, Plato does feel the tension; and this is manifested in the contortions of the *Timaeus*, which openly admits its incapacity to give a single, linear account of the natural world. Somehow “the cause of reason” and “the cause of necessity” must both be accommodated, related to one another but not assimilated to either one category or the other. But by the time the question is formulated in this way consciousness, and its phenomenality, no longer seem like the natural concepts to reach for in order to articulate the problem. For the question is now the general one: How can anyone who believes reality is fundamentally rational account for real inexplicability?²⁹

Insofar as Plato is concerned with problems similar to those raised by consciousness today, with experience as such, the sort of experience we have and

²⁹ Consider, for example, the absurdity Hegel is driven to, in concluding that the rational is the actual and the actual is the rational. Johansen’s “Body, soul, and tripartition” (2000) attempts to show how the *Timeaus* tries to do justice to both facets of our embodied existence – the rationality embedded in it, and the elusiveness of full rational explanation.

why, his appeal to souls has great explanatory power; for the principle that soul explains experience implies that soul-type explains experience type. And this specifying principle holds at any level of generality or specificity. If we want to understand something about sense-experience as such, we look to the sorts of souls capable of having only that; if we want to examine the phenomenology of human desire,³⁰ or what makes human perception distinctive, or how we experience ourselves as temporally extended and modally varied we look at human souls, and the ceaseless activity of reason present in that sort of soul. And if we want to understand why the world appears this way to you, but that way to me, we look to the state of your soul, and of mine.

It is true that, for the most part, we today do not believe in souls. This creates a great barrier for us in adopting Plato's perspective as our own, even if we do bear in mind that Plato's souls are not necessarily immortal, God-given Christian souls. The extreme reluctance to add to our ontology anything not adequately described by the physical sciences has created space for wondering about consciousness. In creating consciousness, we have therefore replaced something we no longer believe in with something we cannot explain.

³⁰ Here, simply how human desire is experienced, what it is like to experience desire; not 'phenomenology' in the specialized sense it later acquired.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN ARISTOTLE'S PSYCHOLOGY

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There is no single term in Aristotle's works or other classical philosophical texts that could be translated as 'consciousness' on all occasions. No wonder that there have been some modern philosophers who have denied that Aristotle even had a notion of consciousness.¹ However, the notion of consciousness is far from unambiguously understood and defined in today's philosophy. There is a wide variety of uses for the term reaching from knowledge in general to intentionality, introspection, and phenomenal experience. The question whether Aristotle had a notion or a theory of consciousness cannot be informatively answered before explicating the kind of consciousness we are looking for.

If we connect consciousness to the Cartesian distinction between body and mind, understood as two different types of substances the one of which is extended and non-thinking and the other as thinking or conscious and non-extended, it is relatively easy to agree with those who have noticed that this particular distinction is absent from Aristotle's works. Aristotle does not subscribe to the Cartesian notion of consciousness defined with a reference to properties in which no bodies can share. He operates with a distinction of body and soul in his psychology and understands the activities of the latter as actualizations of capacities inherent in a living body. Whatever

¹ See, e.g., Rorty, Richard, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 34–38, 51–56. Others who deny the notion of consciousness from Aristotle include Hamlyn, D.W., *Aristotle, De Anima, Books II and III*, translated with introduction and notes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), and Wilkes, Kathleen V., “– yishi, duh, um, and consciousness”, in A.J. Marcel and E. Bisiach (eds.), *Consciousness in Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 16–41.

consciousness might be for Aristotle, it would be related to the activities of the soul, and these activities cannot, at least for the most part, even conceptually be separated from the capacities of the living body.² It is also clear that Aristotle's approach to the problems related to consciousness was rather different from Cartesian interests in many other ways as well. In his psychology, Aristotle was primarily interested in explaining perceptual and cognitive activities as objective ways of receiving information from the outside world, and he had, as we shall see, peculiar metaphysical reasons for doing so. The metaphysical background of Aristotle's psychology directed the method and the structure of his studies in such a way that there was not much space for many modern problems related to consciousness, such as subjectivity, privacy, and indubitability, even to emerge.

It is, however, clear as well that there is abundant material in Aristotle's works concerning the problems that are even nowadays discussed under the label of consciousness. If the notion of consciousness is understood simply, e.g., as the opposite of being asleep or otherwise incapable of using one's senses, Aristotle had no difficulties in giving an account of this distinction (see, e.g., *De Somno* 2, 455b2–8; 3, 456b9–13). But he went further than this. He is concerned with reflexive awareness that occurs in all instances of perceptual, cognitive, and other mental acts. Aristotle most typically expresses this reflexivity by claiming that whenever we perceive something we also perceive that we perceive.

This reflexive consciousness involved in all perceptual acts will be the starting-point for discussion here. I shall begin with reviewing some rather serious problems of interpretation in Aristotle's texts and explicating the most plausible way of understanding Aristotle's view. I shall then show that the idea that a certain reflexive awareness is intrinsic to all perceptual acts can be generalized to other forms of mental acts, including thinking and emotions. I shall further argue that Aristotle also had a notion of self-consciousness, implied by his views concerning perceptual and cognitive consciousness. Finally, I shall show how and why Aristotle's notion is different from most modern views, especially those of the Cartesian type, and why

² See, e.g., Kahn, Charles H., "Sensation and consciousness in Aristotle's psychology", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966), 43–81 (reprinted in J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji (eds.), *Articles on Aristotle 4: Psychology and Aesthetics* (London: Duckworth; 1979), 1–31); Sorabji, Richard, "Body and soul in Aristotle", in J. Barnes et al. (1979), 76–92; Frede, Michael, "On Aristotle's conception of soul", in M.C. Nussbaum and A. Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 93–109.

many central problems related to consciousness in those views never emerge in Aristotle's philosophy.

2.1 PERCEPTUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

There are various passages among Aristotle's discussions on perception in which he refers to a kind of perceptual consciousness or awareness that is connected to all instances of animal perception. All animate beings, and only they, are altered "in the manner of the senses" (*kata tēs aisthēseis*), when they perceive perceptible qualities of objects in their environment. The inanimate things are also somehow altered by the perceptible qualities, but they are never altered in the manner of the senses. Alteration by perceptible qualities in the manner other than the senses is possible for animate things too, but it is not perception. But whenever a genuine case of perceiving happens, the alteration brought about by it cannot escape the perceiver's notice (*ou lanthanei paschon*). This perceptual awareness is something very general. Without requiring any special attention, it accompanies all animal perception. It does this in a temporally continuous way, and it is related to the special phenomenal way in which the animal experiences its activity of perception (*DA* II 12, 424b17; *De Sensu* 2, 437a26–29; 7, 448a26–30; *Phys.* VII 2, 244b12–245a2).³

At the beginning of the *De Anima* book III chapter 2, there is an important passage on perceptual awareness. It is worthy of being quoted in full. Here is the translation by D.W. Hamlyn:

Since we perceive that we see and hear, it must be either by sight that one perceives that one sees or by another [sense]. But in that case there will be the same [sense] for sight and the colour which is the subject for sight. So that either there will be two [senses] for the same thing or [the sense] itself will be the one for itself. Again, if the sense concerned with sight were indeed different from sight, there will be an infinite regress or there will be some [sense] which is concerned with itself; so that we had best admit this of the first in the series. But this presents difficulty; for if to perceive by sight is to see and if one sees a colour or that which possesses a colour, then, if one is to see that which sees, that which sees primarily will have colour. It is clear then that to perceive by sight is not a single thing; for even when we do not see, it is by sight that we judge both darkness and light, though not in the same way. Moreover, even that which sees is in a way coloured, for each sense-organ is receptive of the object of perception without its matter. That is why perceptions and imaginings remain in the sense-organs, even when the objects of perception are gone. (*DA* III 2, 425b12–25)

Even though the passage goes a long way to clarify Aristotle's view, it also gives itself to very different lines of interpretation. This is partly due to the

³ For abbreviations, see note 46 in the Introduction.

terminological and other ambiguities in the passage itself, partly to the various possibilities to connect it to other passages in which Aristotle refers to the consciousness of perceptual and other cognitive acts.

In a rather condensed way, Aristotle is concerned with a dilemma that he thinks we face, if we perceive that we see or hear or perceive in any other way. This awareness of seeing, hearing, and other forms of perception is based on either the same sense as plain seeing or a different sense. In the latter case, there are two difficulties. First, if one perceived that one sees by a sense different from sight, there would be “two senses for the same thing”. This would constitute an unnecessary reduplication of faculties that Aristotle is reluctant to accept. But even worse, in this case there would be an imminent danger of an infinite regress. If one perceives that one sees by a sense other than sight, there should be yet another sense by which one could perceive that one perceives that one sees and so on ad infinitum. This is clearly not acceptable for Aristotle or anybody else, so there has to be a limit for the higher-order senses. It is, however, not possible for Aristotle to admit the existence of perceiving that is not perceived, since he has clearly stated as his view that whenever there is perceiving one also perceives that one perceives. It is then necessary that there is a sense that is also concerned with itself. It could in principle be located at whatever point in the ascension of higher order senses, but in accordance with a principle of parsimony, Aristotle remarks that one should “admit this of the first” in the series.

Now we are back with the first option, according to which we perceive that we see by sight, and in the same way with the other senses. This horn of the dilemma has difficulties of its own. Assuming that each of the five senses has its proper objects at which it is necessarily directed, and accordingly sight is directed at colors, we have to conclude that “that which sees has a colour”. Aristotle seems to have some doubts about this, but accepts that “that which sees is in a way coloured”, since the sense-organ is able to receive the object of perception – or a perceptible form – without its matter. He also admits that “to perceive by sight is not a single thing for even if we do not see, it is by sight we discern darkness and light, although not in the same way”. The sentence seems to indicate that sight is not just concerned with colors but has other functions, such as the recognition of darkness and light as well as the self-reflective capacity to recognize the fact that one sees. Without much developing his view, but slightly revising the assumption concerning the proper objects of senses, Aristotle finally accepts that it is by sight that we perceive that we see, and analogously with the other individual senses.

It is, however, not this simple. I have intentionally ignored an important problem of interpretation in the passage which derives from the ambiguity of

the crucial Greek terms sense, *aisthēsis*, and sight, *opsis*. It is possible to use both terms with a reference to either (i) the capacity or faculty in question, or (ii) the activity of the capacity. Aristotle is well aware of this ambiguity inherent in Greek language, and in other contexts he is concerned with making the distinction explicit.⁴ Here he is not, and one may wonder why. There are clearly references to both capacities and activities in the passage, and this has been appreciated by the translators, but interpretations in which the most occurrences of the two terms have been understood as referring to capacities have predominated in both translations and commentaries. This might be understandable given that the passage is located in a context in which Aristotle is reflecting on whether the five senses are sufficient to account for our perceptual abilities or whether new faculties should be introduced.

Victor Caston has in his detailed survey of Aristotle's argument in the *De Anima* book III chapter 2 defended an interpretation according to which *aisthēsis* and *opsis* should be interpreted as referring to activities of the sensory soul and sight, i.e., perceptions and acts of seeing, instead of capacities.⁵ What he calls the "capacity reading" does not satisfy him for several reasons. If Aristotle, on the one hand, had exclusively been talking about capacities in the passage, this would imply that to perceive that we see should be interpreted as our capacity to recognize that we have a capacity of sight. This would be a fairly reflective capacity and it would be difficult to conceive that all perceiving agents would have such a one, as Aristotle seems to assume in the text. On the other hand, we might admit a couple of references to activities into the passage to the effect that the capacity to perceive that we see would only take the activity of sight as its object. Aristotle would then have been rapidly alternating between capacities and activities in the passage, which sounds artificial, especially given that Aristotle was well aware of the distinction between them. Moreover, the conclusion that we perceive that we see by the capacity of sight seems inconsistent with the passage in *De Somno* in which Aristotle argues that perceiving that we see belongs "to a common capacity" (*koinē dunamis*) accompanying individual senses (2, 455a15–22). So Caston suggests an alternative reading of the text in terms of activities instead of capacities as follows:

⁴ See, e.g., his definition of the soul as the first actuality of a natural body capable of life, clarified with a reference with a distinction between sight as a capacity to see and the activity of this capacity (the *DA* II 1, 412a21–28, 412b17–413a1). Even later in the *De Anima* book III Ch. 2 Aristotle mentions that the term *aisthēsis* is spoken of in two ways, as potential and as actual, i.e., as faculty and as its activity, and he criticizes those who have not noticed the difference (*DA* III 2, 426a20–26).

⁵ Caston, Victor, "Aristotle on consciousness", *Mind* 111 (2002), 751–815.

Since we perceive that we see and hear, it is necessarily either by means of seeing that one perceives that one sees or by another [perception]. But the same [perception] will be both of the seeing and of the colour that underlies it, with the result that either two [perceptions] will be of the same thing, or it [sc. the perception] will be of itself. Further, if perception of seeing is a different [perception], either this will proceed to infinity or some [perception] will be of itself so that we ought to admit this in the first instance. (425a12–17, translated by Caston)

The “activity reading”, although rare in scholarship, makes good sense of the arguments. Aristotle first argues against the unnecessary reduplication of perceptual acts. This is only avoided, if there is a perception of a visible object that is also a perception of itself. There cannot be two distinct perceptions, one of the visible object and another of the perception itself, since a perception of a perception is also of what the original perception is of, and, therefore, both of these two perceptions would include the visible object among their objects. Second, Aristotle rejects the distinctness of the perception that we see from the original perception of a visible object, since it implies an infinite regress. If a perception of a perception were distinct from the original perception, there would be an infinite chain of perceptions, since Aristotle assumes that we have a perception of each perception we have. But infinite chains are plainly impossible. There has to be a perception of itself at the end of the chain, and it is most economic to assume that the original perception has this reflexive property.

The problem of the “activity reading” is to explain its point in the actual context of the third book of *De Anima* where Aristotle is concerned with the sufficiency of the five individual senses to account for our perceptual abilities. The general problems raised in this section are much more focused on capacities than on their particular activities. The same goes with the discussion in the *Parva Naturalia*. Let us have a closer look at the *De Somno* passage we referred to earlier:

Each sense possesses something which is special and something which is common. Special to vision, for example, is seeing, special to the auditory sense is hearing, and similarly for each of the others; but there is also a common power which accompanies them all, in virtue of which one perceives that one is seeing and hearing. For it is not by vision, after all, that one sees one is seeing; nor is it by taste or by sight or by both that one judges, and is capable of judging, that sweet things are different from white ones; but it is by some part which is common to all the sense organs. For there is one faculty of sense, and one master sense organ, although the being of sense is different for each genus, e.g., for sound and colour. (455a12–22)

The passage is a direct continuation of the reflections of *De Anima* book III chapter 2 on perceiving that we perceive, and more generally, a culmination of

the project begun in *De Anima* in order to construct a theory of a general faculty of perception. Aristotle refers to this faculty by various terms including common power (*koinē dunamis*), common sense (*koinē aisthēsis*), sensation proper (*kuria aisthēsis*), and the primary capacity of sense (*to prōton aisthētikon*).⁶ Aristotle begins his exploration of the sense faculty in the *De Anima* from the five individual senses whose function is external and cognitive, to provide information from the outside world. The general faculty is only briefly referred to in the third book of the *De Anima* in the context of discriminating between various special senses, but not directly in the discussion of perceptual awareness.⁷ In the *Parva Naturalia*, especially in the *De Sensu*, the *De Memoria*, and the *De Somno*, Aristotle explains how the general faculty of perception, or rather the perceptual system as a whole, with the heart as its central organ, has various functions: on the one hand, the recognition and discrimination between the functions of the special senses, and, on the other hand, the sense of time, imagination, and memory, and the power of dreaming, which are not dependent on the simultaneous activity of the special senses, but on the persistence of perceptions or images received from them.⁸

In the *De Somno* passage, it is explicitly denied that it is by vision that we perceive that we see. Reflexive perceptual awareness, together with the capacity to demarcate between the objects of individual senses, such as white and sweet, is ascribed to the common power, i.e., the general perceptual faculty or the perceptual system as a whole. So one can agree with Caston that the capacity reading of the *De Anima* book III chapter 2 is flatly inconsistent with the

⁶ On common sense, see *DA* III 2, 425a27; III 7, 431b5; *De Mem.* 450a10; *Part. An.* 686a31. In the *De Anima* passages, 'common sense' refers in a more restricted way to the perception of the so-called common perceptibles (*koinē aisthēta*), i.e., to properties such as shape and motion that are recognized through more than one of the individual senses. 'Common sense' does not seem to have been a technical term for Aristotle, but it becomes such in its later history beginning from Plotinus, Augustine and the Neo-Platonic commentators of Aristotle. See Caston 2002, 800–804. On sensation proper, see *De Som.* 456a6. On the primary capacity of sense, see *De Mem.* 450a11, a14, 451a16; *De Som.* 454a23. cf. *De Insom.* 459a12.

⁷ Aristotle argues in the *De Anima* book III Ch. 2 that one cannot judge by two separate faculties, taste and sight, that sweet is different from white, but both of these qualities have to be evident to some single faculty (426b8–21). This is an anticipation of what later emerges as the general perceptual faculty in the *Parva Naturalia*.

⁸ For an instructive account of the Aristotelian perceptual system, see especially Kahn 1966. Cf. Everson, Stephen, *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 139–186; Modrak, Deborah K.W., *Aristotle: The Power of Perception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 55–80.

De Somno passage⁹, or alternatively, one should explain the divergence with a reference to some kind of developmental hypothesis or the preliminary and aporetic nature of the discussion in the third book of *De Anima*.¹⁰ If we, however, accept the “activity reading”, we can easily fit the two passages together.

In *De Anima*, Aristotle is interested in perceptual awareness related to singular acts of perception through the external senses. According to the “activity reading”, his main claim is that we perceive that we see through the very same act of seeing through which we see ordinary visible objects, so that this act includes two aspects: (i) the seeing of a visible object, and (ii) the reflexive consciousness of the act itself. This consciousness is both intrinsic, i.e., included in the original perceptual act, and higher-order, i.e., intentional and relational by being reflexively directed to the perceptual act itself. In *De Anima*, Aristotle does not yet provide an answer as to what kind of faculty the reflexive aspect of perceptual activity is due to. That it is intrinsic to singular acts of seeing or hearing does not imply that it is a function of these individual perceptual faculties. If we distinguish between the tokens and the types of perception, we can argue with Caston that perceptual consciousness does not require any further token activity above the ordinary acts of the individual senses, but it still belongs to a different type of perception from plain seeing or hearing in being a function of the general perceptual faculty rather than any of the individual senses.¹¹

If the “activity reading” is accepted, we do not have to regard the discussion of the *De Anima* book III chapter 2 as aporetic but rather inconclusive. The crucial difference with respect to the *De Somno* is that the exploration concerning the general faculty of perception is excluded or rather postponed to the *Parva Naturalia*. We can, however, accept the arguments in the *De Anima* passage as sound and applicable to the evaluation of the more comprehensive theory of the *De Somno*. The reduplication and regress arguments have implications as to how to interpret the common power or the general faculty of perception. It does not sound quite right to follow Charles S. Kahn and others in comparing it to the Lockean inner sense or “perception of what happens in a man’s own mind”.¹² The common power refers to the activity of the perceptual system as a whole, and Aristotle, unlike many of his followers since the late antiquity, was not concerned in postulating any specific inner senses.

⁹ Caston 2002, 763–764.

¹⁰ See Kahn 1966, 10–11. Cf. Osborne, Catherine, “Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.2: How do we perceive that we see and hear?” *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983), 401–411.

¹¹ Caston 2002, 776–779.

¹² Kahn 1966, 13, 24. Cf. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Bk. II, Ch. 1, sect. 19.

Aristotle's view of perceptual consciousness can be summarized as follows. Whenever a sentient animal sees a visible object by sight, one and the same perceptual act of seeing is directed to both the visible object (i.e., a color) and in a reflexive way to itself. Through this act the animal becomes aware both of a particular color in its environment and of the perception itself. The single perceptual act simultaneously belongs to two different types of perception. As an act of seeing, it is an act of the faculty of sight, and as an act of reflexive perceptual consciousness, it is an act of the primary faculty of perception or the common sense or the common power of the perceptual system as a whole. The act is simultaneously intrinsic to ordinary perception, and higher-order, i.e., taking the first-level perception as its intentional object.

2.2 EMOTIONS AND THINKING

So far we have only been talking about perceptual consciousness related to perception through the external five senses. One may wonder whether the same model of consciousness could be extended to other mental activities including imagination, memory, desire, emotions, and other affective states and thinking. Unfortunately, Aristotle's discussions on these issues are much less systematic than those on ordinary perception. I shall here focus on what he says on emotions and thinking.

Aristotle discusses emotions in the context of rhetorical persuasion. Book II of his *Rhetoric* is the first extended analysis of individual emotions in Greek philosophy. The discussion is structured to serve the rhetorician's purposes, but there is no serious reason to doubt Aristotle's philosophical commitment to the psychological theory of emotions in the background.¹³ The analysis of pleasure and distress in the *Rhetoric* I 10–11 serves as an introduction for Aristotle's treatment of the emotions, since pleasant or unpleasant feelings are taken as constituent parts or aspects of occurring emotions.¹⁴

¹³ On the discussion about the reliability of the *Rhetoric* as a source for Aristotle's psychology of emotion, see especially Cooper, John M., "Ethical-political theory in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*", in D.J. Furley and A. Nehamas (eds.), *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 193–210; Nehamas, Alexander, "Pity and fear in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*", in Furley and Nehamas 1994, 257–282; Striker, Gisela, "Emotions in context: Aristotle's treatment of passions in the *Rhetoric* and his moral philosophy", in A. Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 286–302.

¹⁴ On Aristotle's theory of emotion in general, see especially Knuuttila, Simo, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 24–47.

Aristotle does not present a general definition or a systematically structured theory of emotion anywhere in his preserved works. There are, however, similar elements that emerge in his accounts of 12 individual emotions in the second book of the *Rhetoric*.¹⁵ Simo Knuuttila has argued that Aristotle's theory of emotion can be classified as compositional since all emotions involve the following constituents: (i) an evaluation stating that something positive or negative is happening to the subject (or someone else in a way which is relevant to the subject), (ii) a pleasant or unpleasant feeling or awareness of the content of the evaluation, (iii) a behavioral suggestion towards action, and (iv) certain bodily changes.¹⁶

The modern discussion on Aristotle's theory of emotion has for the most part been concerned with the nature of evaluation involved. Scholars disagree on whether (i) a belief or judgment is needed for an emotion or (ii) whether an unreflective presentation such as appearance (*phantasia*) or perception could be sufficient to arouse an emotion.¹⁷ However, from our point of view, it is more important to explore the feeling aspect of an emotion. Materials for this exploration can be found in the discussion on pleasure in the *Rhetoric* I 11. Here Aristotle operates in an interesting way with a

See also Knuuttila, Simo and Sihvola, Juha, "How the philosophical analysis of the emotions was introduced", in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (eds.), *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1998), 1–20; Nussbaum, Martha, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹⁵ These emotions are anger (*orgē*), calmness (*praotēs*), love or friendliness (*philia*), hatred (*misos*), fear (*phobos*), confidence (*tharsos*), shame (*aischunē*), kindness (*charis*), pity (*eleos*), indignation (*nemesis*), envy (*phthonos*), and emulation (*zēlos*). There are also references to but not full accounts of some other emotions, e.g., Schadenfreude (*epichairekakia*). On special problems in the analysis of individual emotions, see Cooper, John M., "An Aristotelian theory of the emotions", in A. Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 238–257; Konstan, David, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Knuuttila 2004, 32.

¹⁷ Those in favor of (i) include Nussbaum 1994, Knuuttila 2004, whereas (ii) is supported, e.g., by Sorabji, Richard, *Emotions and the Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000) and Charles, David, *Aristotle's Theory of Action* (London: Duckworth, 1984). For an attempt to mitigate between the two views, see Sihvola, Juha, "Emotional animals: Do Aristotelian emotions require beliefs", *Apeiron* 29 (1996), 105–144.

somewhat analogous notion of perceptual consciousness to the one that he later uses in the *De Anima*.¹⁸

Aristotle defines pleasure (*hēdonē*) at the beginning of the *Rhetoric* I 11 as a perceptible movement (*aisthētē kinēsis*) through which the soul as a whole is brought into its natural state, and pain (*lupē*) as the opposite of pleasure (1369b33–35), and later in the same chapter that an enjoyment of a pleasure (*hēdesthai*) is located in the perception of a certain kind of emotion or experience (*en tōi aisthanestai tinos pathous*). He refers to the idea, originally presented in Plato's *Philebus*, according to which pleasures and pains are modes of awareness connected to processes of restoration and disintegration in the body and the soul, but also remarks that those things are also pleasant that are habitual or not forced (1370a5–9).¹⁹ In his later analyses of pleasure in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, books VII and X, Aristotle rejects the Phileban restoration model and connects pleasures to unforced activities. However, this does not imply rejecting the idea that a pleasure involves a certain kind of awareness of what is happening to the subject. Bodily pleasures and pains involve an affective awareness of something taking place in one's body, whereas more complex emotions are analogously related to what is happening to oneself, or those close to oneself, in a personally significant situation. The experience towards which the affective awareness is directed can be either simultaneous or non-simultaneous since remembering or expecting something can be sufficient to arouse pleasure or pain (1370a30–31). The feeling aspect of emotion figures prominently in the accounts of individual emotions in the *Rhetoric* II. It is especially pain that is a central element of many emotions; in fact, six of those mentioned – fear, shame, pity, indignation, envy, and emulation – are defined as certain kinds of pains.²⁰

¹⁸ Even though there is no consensus about the chronology of Aristotle's works and the developmental hypotheses concerning his thought have become more and more unpopular, it seems clear that the *Rhetoric* was written much earlier than the *De Anima*. We cannot straightforwardly assume that Aristotle had developed all of his views on psychology when he was writing the *Rhetoric*.

¹⁹ On Plato's *Philebus* as the predecessor of Aristotle's analyses of the emotions, see Fortenbaugh, William W., *Aristotle on Emotion* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Knuuttila 2004, 18–24.

²⁰ See Cooper 1996, 245; cf. Nussbaum 1994, 88–90, who questions the status of the feeling aspect as a constituent part of an occurrent emotion with a reference to the general definition of emotion at the beginning of the *Rhetoric* II (1, 1378a19–22), according to which emotions are “accompanied by pain and pleasure”. However, later parts of the book clearly confirm an essential role to pleasures and pains in individual emotions.

In *De Anima* Aristotle emphasizes that in a perception happening through external senses, one both receives information and is aware of this reception happening. Analogously, when one experiences an emotion, one both receives information of a certain kind of situation in one's environment and is aware that this is happening. For example, if I experience an emotion of fear, there is something in my environment that appears to me seriously destructive of my happiness, and simultaneously, I am unpleasantly or painfully aware of this impending destruction appearing to me. There are, however, two things to be noticed. First, awareness related to emotions is affective, i.e., it is felt as pleasant or unpleasant, whereas we are aware of the ordinary perceptions in a neutral way. Second, and more importantly, it is not quite clear from what Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* whether the awareness related to the emotions is intrinsic to the cognition that individuates the emotion in question.

In other words, it is not obvious whether we can generalize from our conclusions about plain perceptual awareness to emotions in a straightforward way. On the one hand, Aristotle lets us understand that the affective awareness involved in a pleasure is a kind of perception in his discussion of pleasure in the *Rhetoric* I 11. On the other hand, the cognitive aspect of emotion is at least in many cases, if not always, an evaluative judgment by reason or a belief, not merely a perception or appearance.²¹ If an emotion involves both an evaluative belief and an affective perception, this might be taken to support the view of those who compare Aristotle's notion of consciousness to a Lockean inner sense or an internal monitoring faculty that is perceptually aware of what is going in our minds.²² The scarce evidence Aristotle provides us does not, however, allow us to take a definitive stand on whether affective awareness involved in an occurrent emotion is intrinsic to the evaluative judgment that individuates the emotion in question, or whether it should be understood as at least conceptually a distinct mental act.

Let us now address thinking. There is an important passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (IX 9, 1170a29–b1) in which Aristotle discusses our awareness of our thinking. Unfortunately, it is a difficult one, and there is not even a consensus on a correct reading of the Greek. It is necessary to give two different translations. The first is by Kahn and the second by Caston.

1. The man who is seeing perceives that he is seeing and the one who is hearing (perceives) that he is hearing, and the one who walks (perceives) that he walks, and similarly for other activities there is something which

²¹ See note 17, on the controversy concerning the nature of the cognition required by Aristotle for an emotion.

²² See Kahn 1966.

perceives that we are acting, so that if we are perceiving (it perceives) that we are perceiving, and if we are thinking (it perceives) that we are thinking. But (to perceive) that we are perceiving or thinking is to (perceive) that we exist – for our life and being (as men) has been defined as perceiving or thinking.

2. The person seeing perceives that he is seeing, the person hearing [perceives] that he is hearing, the person walking [perceives] that he is walking, and similarly in other cases there is something that perceives that we are in activity, so that we will perceive that we perceive and think that we think. But [to perceive] that we perceive, or [to think that] we think is [to perceive or think] that we are (for in this case to be is to perceive or to think).

Kahn's translation is based on commonly accepted emendations of the Greek texts of the manuscripts. In the last sentence, two optatives (*aisthanoimeth' an, kai nooimen*) have been replaced with subjunctives (*an aisthanōmeth', kan noōmen*) with the result that an implicit "perceive that" can be interpreted as covering both perceiving and thinking in the sequence. Caston, on the contrary, is happy with the manuscripts and reads "we perceive that we perceive" and "we think that we think".²³ Both alternatives, obviously, have serious doctrinal consequences. Kahn can support his idea of consciousness as a function of the common sense even with the activities of the intellectual soul, whereas Caston is able to fit intellectual awareness to his view according to which consciousness is intrinsic to all mental activities.

There is not much evidence outside of the passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* for the solution of the controversy. However, what we have rather seems to support Caston's reading of the text. In the *De Anima* book III chapter 4 there is a passing reference to the intellect itself as an object of thought (*DA* 429b26–430a3), but it is not clear whether reflexive awareness of intellectual activity is at stake or whether Aristotle actually speaks of the first-order apprehension of the intelligible object.²⁴ In the *Metaphysics* XII, Aristotle remarks that "knowledge (*epistēme*), perception (*aisthēsis*), opinion (*doxa*), and thinking (*dianoia*) are all primarily directed to something else as their objects, but may refer secondarily to themselves" (9, 1074b35–36). Kahn rejects this passage as a merely dialectical and aporetic discussion in the context where the main issue is the self-intellection of the divine mind, and therefore, does not see it as relevant for understanding the nature of reflexive awareness in human beings. The conclusion seems too hasty, given that the list includes capacities such as opinion and perception that are

²³ Kahn 1966, 78–80; Caston 2002, 775.

²⁴ See Modrak 1987, 146–147.

obviously human. In any case, the awareness of intellectual acts in human beings must also involve perceptual activities, since the human intellect thinks the forms in images (*phantasmata*) (*DA* III 7, 431b2). It is not possible for humans to exercise the capacities of their reason without the continuous help from the perceptual faculty, which provides the materials for the intellect. Even though the activities of the intellectual soul have a reflexive aspect, the reflexive awareness of thinking as a whole involves both intellectual and perceptual elements.

2.3 SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS LIMITS

So far we have been discussing Aristotle's views concerning the consciousness of singular perceptual and other mental acts. Aristotle, however, also provides us with some material concerning the consciousness of the self. Here it is important to notice that, although Aristotle holds that perceptual consciousness is intrinsic to an ordinary perceptual act, the idea is not that the acts themselves are conscious. Aristotle is emphatic that it is the perceiving subject as a psychophysical whole, not the soul or any of its parts or aspects, which becomes conscious through its mental activities. He writes in the first book of *De Anima*:

To say that the soul is angry is as if we were to say that it is the soul that weaves or builds houses. It is certainly better to avoid saying that the soul learns or thinks, but it is the human being who does this through the soul. (4, 408a11–15)

The consciousness of the self is also referred to in the passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* we discussed earlier: “But [to perceive] that we perceive, or [to think that] we think is [to perceive or think] that we are (for in this case to be is to perceive or to think)” (IX 9, 1170a32–34).²⁵ Aristotle seems to assume that a human being that is awake is necessarily continuously aware of his existence. This becomes especially clear from a passage in the *De Sensu* 7, in which this assumption is used to support a view according to which even the briefest periods of time are perceived:

It is not conceivable that any portion of time should be imperceptible, or that any should be unnoticeable; the truth being that it is possible to perceive any instant of time. For if it is impossible that a person should, while perceiving himself or anything else in a continuous time, be at any instant unaware of his own existence, and if there is in the time-continuum a time so small as to be absolutely imperceptible, then it is clear that a person

²⁵ Caston's reading of the text has here been accepted instead of Kahn's, but from the viewpoint of self-consciousness, it does not make a big difference which alternative we pick up.

should, during such time, be unaware of his own existence, as well as of his seeing and perceiving. (448a24–30)

Some commentators have seen “a truly Cartesian ring” in these comments.²⁶ It is true that Aristotle held that the ability to recognize oneself as the subject of one's own perceptual and cognitive states as well as other activities is a capacity that is always actual in all human beings, and probably other animals too, and with respect to which no error is conceivable, at least if one is not seriously mentally disturbed.²⁷ This is made clear in a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* III:

A human being can be ignorant of who he is, what he is doing, what or whom he is acting on, and sometimes also what (e.g., what instrument) he is doing it with, and to what end (e.g., for safety), and how he is doing it (e.g., whether gently or violently). Now of all of these no one could be ignorant unless he were mad, and evidently also he could not be ignorant of the agent, for how could he not know himself? (1, 1111a3–7)

So self-consciousness for Aristotle consists of the recognition, shared by all normal human beings, of the incorrigible fact that they are themselves the subjects of their mental states and actions. One may reasonably think that this view somehow anticipates the Cartesian *cogito*, but there is still a very long way to go before the emergence of many central problems in Cartesian and other modern views of consciousness. There is nothing particularly subjective or individual in the Aristotelian recognition of oneself as a subject of cognition and action. Aristotle does not seem to be interested in the qualitative nature of perceptual experiences and other mental events. Nothing corresponding to the problem of qualia is discussed in Aristotle's works. The privacy of consciousness does not concern him either. Finally, the relation between the mind and the external world does not seem to present itself as a particularly problematic one for Aristotle. All this justifies a conclusion that Aristotle's conception was very different from most modern conceptions.²⁸

²⁶ Kahn 1966, 48.

²⁷ Aristotle briefly discusses an exception to this incorrigibility in the *De memoria*. He mentions Antiphon of Oreus and others mentally deranged as referring to other people's imaginations and memories as their own. This kind of person is apparently mistaken as to who is the real subject of the mental states in question (1, 451a9–12). See also Annas, Julia, “Aristotle on memory and the self”, in M.C. Nussbaum and A. Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 297–313.

²⁸ On differences between Aristotelian and modern conceptions of consciousness, see Kahn 1966, 71–80; Modrak 1987, 149–152.

Differences between Aristotle and modern philosophy can, to a large extent, be explained by differences in metaphysical assumptions behind psychological theories. Aristotle subscribed to a very strong form of objective perceptibility and intelligibility of the world. The world is potentially perceptible and intelligible for sentient and rational beings. The potential perceptibility of the world is actualized in perceptual activities in ways determined by the objective properties of perceptible objects and the natural perceptual capacities of perceivers. In perception, the very same perceptible form that is inherent in perceptible objects is actualized in the perceptual soul. Analogously with thinking: the potential intelligibility of the world is actualized in intellectual activities in ways determined by the objective properties of intelligible objects and the natural intellectual capacities of intelligent beings. In thinking, the very same intelligible form that is inherent in intelligible objects is actualized in the intellectual soul.

So the world expresses itself just as it objectively is for those beings that have natural capacities to perceive and understand it. Perceivers and thinkers seem to be more or less passive receivers of cosmic perceptibility and intelligibility. The question whether the world really is such as it is perceived or understood cannot easily be raised within this kind of metaphysical framework. It is not possible to make comparisons between what we perceive and understand, on the one hand, and what the world really is, since, by definition, they are the very same thing. This conception about the natural intelligibility of the world was only challenged in the later middle ages. Philosophers such as Duns Scotus and William Ockham gave a much more active and constructive role for human reason in understanding reality.²⁹

It is relatively easy to see how the strong metaphysical assumptions concerning intelligibility structure Aristotle's psychological studies. The assumption that perceptible and intelligible faculties are potentially what their objects are actually determines the order of Aristotle's explorations:

If we ought to say what each of these is, for instance, what the intellectual capacity is or the perceptual or the nutritive, we ought to say before this what thinking and perceiving are, for, by definition, activities and actions are prior to capacities. If this is so, even more prior to these we should have con-

²⁹ See especially Alanen, Lilli and Knuuttila, Simo, "The foundations of conceivability in Descartes and his predecessors", in S. Knuuttila (ed.), *Modern Modalities: Studies in the History of Modal Theories from Medieval Nominalism to Logical Positivism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), 1–59; Knuuttila, Simo, *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993).

sidered the corresponding objects, for we ought to give an account of them, e.g., food, and the objects of perception and thought. (*DA* II 4, 416a16–22)

Aristotle's perspective to problems of consciousness might seem rather limited to many modern philosophers, and it is obvious that these limitations mostly follow from the peculiar metaphysics of the soul on which he built his theories. However, our study should have shown that there is abundant material with fresh philosophical insights for those interested in the philosophy of consciousness in Aristotle's works.

CHAPTER THREE

OWNNESS OF CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

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In the first part of Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Theaetetus discuss the sophist Protagoras' proclamation that "man is the measure of all things, of those that are, that they are, and of those that are not, that they are not", interpreting it to mean that individual sensible appearances are always unerring, that is, that they are true for the person who has them:

SOCRATES: ... Now doesn't it sometimes happen that when the same wind is blowing, one of us feels cold (*tou autou ho men hēmōn rigōi*) and the other not? Or that one of us feels rather cold and the other very cold?

THEAETETUS: That certainly does happen.

SOCRATES: Well then, in that case are we going to say that the wind itself, by itself (*auto eph' heautou*), is cold or not cold? Or shall we listen to Protagoras, and say it is cold for the one who feels cold, and for the other, not cold?

THEAETETUS: It looks as if we must say that.

SOCRATES: And this is how it appears (*phainetai*) to each of us?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: But this expression 'it appears' means 'he perceives it' (*aisthanesthai*)?

THEAETETUS: Yes it does.

SOCRATES: The appearing of things (*phantasia*), then, is the same as perception (*aisthēsis*), in the case of hot and things like that. So it results, apparently, that things are for the individual as he perceives them. (*Tht.*¹ 152b2–c3, translated by M.J. Levett, revised by M. Burnyeat)

¹ For the abbreviations used, see note 46 in the Introduction.

The conclusion arrived at (but challenged later in the dialogue) is most unpleasant for ancient philosophical taste. It renders univocal non-ambiguous discussion about the world problematic, for nothing secures that we are actually talking about the very same world and the same entities and features of it. Broadly speaking, ancient philosophy is marked by perceptual realism: perceptible qualities of the world are actualised in perceptions. What the perceiver is aware of is the qualities themselves, not some inner, purely mental items. Moreover, Protagoreanism would seem to imply a notion of truth that most ancient philosophers would reject as confused or that they thought was nonsensical: a truth that was entirely internal to one thinker and agent, one mind, that did not correspond to any independently existing reality but was relative to persons holding it and ultimately incommunicable to other rational souls.² Unsurprisingly, also this version of the suggestion that perception is knowledge is found wanting in the course of the dialogue. As many interpreters hold, one of Plato's points is to insist on a reality that exists independently of the perceiving mind.

Protagoras' position here is rare in ancient philosophy, but even though it is, from the Platonic point of view, faulty, it does conceal a grain of truth. By separating truth from appearance Plato not only highlights a conception of truth he deems more plausible, he also makes room for a notion of appearance as something different from truth. *Appearances* about the world would seem to differ. Regardless of the fact that the objects of our perception and thought are shared, the feelings of hot and cold, for example, depend in some manner upon the perceiving subject – that is, they are not simply objective (meaning here something shared and available for any perceiving subject). Plato once considers the possibility that animal perceptions of, for instance, colour differ from human perceptions of them, and that based on this one might, further, argue that perceptions of colour could be proper (*idion*) only to an individual perceiver.³ Moreover, it would seem to be the case that the subject's claim to his or her own feeling of cold cannot be reasonably challenged. The perceiver would seem to enjoy, in contemporary parlance, a privileged access to this feature of perception. Later in antiquity, as we shall see, both Cyrenaics and Sceptics made much of the distinction between the objects in the world and the affections (*pathē*, a term used for this purpose by the Cyrenaics) or appearances (*phantasiai*, also sometimes *phainomena*, terms favoured by the Sceptics in this context) they produce

² For the *Theaetetus* and its discussion of Protagoras, see Chapter 1 by Carpenter in this book.

³ See *Tht.* 154a. I am grateful to Amber Carpenter for this reference.

vis-à-vis the subjects of perception.⁴ They noted that the objects themselves may well be inaccessible to our souls whereas we are in direct contact only with their effects in us.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, there is a lively scholarly discussion about whether we can find something like the modern notions of ‘subjective’ and ‘subjectivity’ in ancient philosophy and whether ancient philosophers considered (some) states of the soul as subjective. A run through the crucial claims made within this debate will shed light, among other things, on the question of whether ancient views regarding affections or appearances entail *representationalism* as well as the question of whether the distinction between the objects and their effects or affections, combined with the idea about privileged access, amounts to a notion of *subjectivity* of experience. As will become apparent, ancient philosophers emphasise the objective character of the contents of both perceptions as well as thoughts, and believe that these are both public or shared and that they usually involve a real object. Second, regardless of this overall picture, conscious states of the soul are regarded as someone’s own, as belonging to someone. They happen within the life of some particular soul and are identified as belonging to that soul. This “ownness”⁵ is conceptualised in different manners. The latter part of the chapter will examine some such conceptualisations. It will be argued that the inquiry in ancient conceptions around this topic should centre, rather than on the tricky – and later – notion of subjectivity, on two issues: (1) What determines the content of perception and thought? What is the role of the subject and object of perception or thought in it? and (2) What renders perceptions and thoughts truly *mine*?

3.1 SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE?

In his commentary on the *Theaetetus*, John McDowell⁶ points out, in passing, that although the perceived qualities Plato discusses in the dialogue are in some sense private to the perceiver, this privacy should be understood in a specific manner. For example, the seen qualities are not in the mind but they consist of a physical process, a passage from the object to the eye that ends in the causal affection of the eye. This allows us to make an important opening: to begin with, the states of the soul and the contents of the soul’s processes should be

⁴ For the terminology and possible translations, see Fine, Gail, “Subjectivity, ancient and modern”, in J. Miller and B. Inwood (eds.), *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 216, n. 20.

⁵ Cf. footnote 29 for this term.

⁶ McDowell, John (trans. with notes), *Plato: Theaetetus* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1973), 143–144.

considered as something different from mental states and mental contents of present philosophical discussions, because in antiquity they are not primarily mental, but direct results of an interaction between the world and the perceiver.

In an influential article, Myles Burnyeat has argued on a more general level that ancient philosophers did not accept the idea that truth could be obtained within the subjective experience, and, further, that subjective states were not something they thought one could *know*.⁷ ‘True’, he claims, in antiquity always means ‘true of a real objective world’, thus embodying a rather strong assumption of realism.⁸ It is only in Augustine that one may find something like a subjective state which gives certain knowledge precisely because it is subjective.⁹ Finally, it was Descartes who put subjective knowledge at the centre of epistemology, consciously transcending the limitations of the ancient tradition (what Burnyeat once calls brute realism).¹⁰

Stephen Everson¹¹ holds a more radical position. According to him, ancient appearances and affections are wholly and only objective. He concedes that especially the Cyrenaics did distinguish between the objects of the world, and our affections of them, quoting the Sceptic Sextus Empiricus’ testimony of their doctrines:

The Cyrenaics, then, say that the criteria are the affections and these alone are apprehended and infallible, whereas none of the things which have brought about the affections are apprehended or infallible. For, they say, it is possible to say infallibly and incontrovertibly that we are whitened or sweetened – but that the thing which brings about the affections is white or sweet, it is not possible to show. For it is likely that one might be affected to become

⁷ Knowledge is here understood as a cognitive relation of not only holding something as true, but of that knowledge also being certain. This is often what *epistēmē* means. Sources do have other, less demanding words for something *like* knowledge. *Gnōsis*, for example, seems (along its other usages) sometimes to be used for a human being’s acquaintance with her inner feelings of pain or pleasure or something such like. This kind of “knowledge” may be certain in the sense that someone else cannot dispute it, but it lacks other features demanded of true knowledge.

⁸ Burnyeat, Myles, “Idealism and Greek philosophy: What Descartes saw and Berkeley missed”, *The Philosophical Review* 91 (1982), 3–40 *passim*, especially at 32.

⁹ Burnyeat 1982, 28, referring to Matthews, Gareth B., “Consciousness and life”, *Philosophy* 52 (1977), 13–26.

¹⁰ Burnyeat 1982, 33.

¹¹ Everson, Stephen, “The objective appearance of Pyrrhonism”, in S. Everson (ed.), *Psychology, Companions to Ancient Thought 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 121–147.

white by something which is not white and sweetened by what is not sweet...
(Sext. Emp. *Math.* VII 191–192)¹²

Furthermore, the domain into which our cognitive access is limited seems to constitute an inner realm distinct from the world:

For each apprehends his own affection (*hekastos gar tou idiou pathous*), but as to whether this affection arises from a white object in him or his neighbour, he cannot say without receiving his neighbour's affection – and nor can his neighbour without receiving his. (Sext. Emp. *Math.* VII 196)

Yet there is an important difference between the ancient understanding and the early modern or modern one. Everson declares that for Aristotle, what the subject is aware of are not any distinctively mental objects but the material changes brought about by the object.¹³ Let us suppose that Everson means that we are aware of the object somehow through its causal and material effects in us. Crucial is that these changes do not depend merely or even exclusively on the conscious mind but are caused by the external world according to the same material laws and constraints as any other material causation in the world. Even though the Cyrenaics may disagree with Aristotle on whether the affections reveal the objects in the world, the affections themselves are understood by both as familiar states of material objects, just of particular kinds of objects – or so Everson argues. In the classical picture, the perceiving subject is directly linked with, or even part of, the material world around him through perception. Everson claims that even the Cyrenaics do not doubt the existence of causal interaction between the object and the perceiver, but merely the notion that the affection would reveal the true features of the object itself. For this reason, affections are not detached from the world, much less could they ever constitute an inner mental realm or an encapsulated, solipsist mind.

This understanding of perceptions and affections, Everson argues, is not restricted to the Cyrenaics. The Sceptics distinguished appearances (*phainomena*) from external objects, and seemed to think that only the former are available for the perceiving subject (e.g. LS¹⁴ 71D2). But these appearances, Everson claims, are not some mental correlates of the objects in the world but the direct affections or causal results of them. In the same vein, the heavy Epicurean

¹² Translations of those passages of Sextus that Everson discusses are the ones Everson himself uses in his article. They are adapted from Julia Annas' and Jonathan Barnes' translations by Everson.

¹³ Everson 1991, 131.

¹⁴ Here and throughout this chapter: LS = A.A. Long and D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vols. I and II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

claim that ‘all perceptions are true’ relies on the idea that senses are passive and the objects in the world imprint themselves on a passive receiver (Sext. Emp. *Math.* VII 203; see also Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* 50–52). The object, rather than the subject, determines the nature of *pathos*. Even though the Stoics do not regard all perceptions as equally reliable, their special kind of reliable appearances, *phantasiai kataleptikai*, are appearances which “arise from what is and which [are] stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is, of such a kind as could not arise from what is not” (*Math.* VII 248).

In general, since the states of the soul are material affections caused by the world and thus not any specifically mental entities, Everson concludes that there are no specifically subjective states. The inaccessibility of your experiences to me is not due to their subjective features or any distinctive subjective “feel” but to the fact that they happen in your material body, not mine.

Everson’s article is valuable for the ways in which it highlights ancient philosophers’ basic intuitions around this topic. But there are some problems in his reading. First, one may wonder to what extent the opposition between material and mental Everson uses is itself a modern inheritance (generated by Descartes, Hume and others), and whether the ancients would assent to something being “merely material”.¹⁵ Appealing to material changes within one body rather than another runs the risk of rendering experiences and other physiological changes within the same body, like digestion, indistinguishable. The difficulty involved in these issues becomes apparent already in the quotation of the *Theaetetus* this article started with: when inquiring whether the wind feels cold to someone, ancient Greek uses the verb *rigō*, which signifies both ‘shivering with cold’ (an externally visible and material thing) and feeling cold (some kind of internally felt coldness not available to the other person who does not feel cold in the same weather conditions). Ancient conceptualisation may not leave room for something being a mere mental item, or for its particularly qualitative aspect as something crucial, but neither does it reduce the feeling of cold to its material expression, namely the human body’s shivering. If it did, Protagoras’ position would not be even *understandable* to the reader of the *Theaetetus*, and hence not something that could be discussed.

Second, precisely because the Cyrenaics do distinguish between the objects in the world and our affections about them, and claim that we have reliable information only about the latter, they present an interesting departure from

¹⁵ Burnyeat (1982, 28), for instance, notes that that the idea of splitting Cyrenaic notion of experience into separate mental and physical (objective) components seems anachronistic. See also Fine 2003, 197.

the common reliance on the perceptions as reporting the world truthfully. Third, already in antiquity the Cyrenaics were, in fact, blamed for having a theory which separates the soul from the world in an unhelpful manner. Plutarch, in discussing the views of the Epicurean Colotes, describes the Cyrenaics as those who “withdrew as in a siege from the world about them and shut themselves up in their responses – admitting that external objects ‘appear’ but refusing to venture further and pronounce the word ‘are’” (*Mor. Adv. Col.* 1120c).¹⁶ Finally, perhaps Everson’s view about the passivity of senses in ancient philosophy is in general overstated: already in Plato’s *Theaetetus* the view of the soul receiving perceptions as a passive lump of clay is disputed (191a–196d), and more often than not, perception is described as an interaction between the perceiver and the object. The perceiving power may be described in terms of passivity and reception, but it must be of such a kind as to be able to receive the object and to be actualised by it. The stone warmed by the sun does get warm but does not experience the warmth. (*DA* I 4, 408b16–16; II 5, 417b16–26; III 4, 429a22–24; and a late Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias in *De Anima* 84, 25–85, 5.)

The topic of affect (*pathos*) and appearance (*phantasia*) is not, of course, restricted to the Cyrenaics and Sceptics. Let us briefly explore its relevance for the discussion at hand in the context of other schools of thought. An interesting theory of appearance is propounded by the Stoics and held later also by the Neoplatonists. An appearance (*phantasia*) is engendered in the soul through the senses or through thought. The Stoics say that it reveals itself and its cause, that is, makes the perceiver aware of the perception and its object (LS 39A&B). The founder of the Neoplatonic school, Plotinus, argues that the human mind functions like a mirror. If this surface is even and bright, the images of the objects of sense and thought are clear, but if it is not, there is no conscious apprehension. Appearing in a sense completes the sense-perception, thus contributing to our consciousness of it (*Enn.* I.4.10.7–10; 14–22; IV.4.8.17–21).¹⁷ For both schools of thought, appearance is not just a physical blow in the soul but something that causes sensory awareness. The Stoics recognise even the kind of appearance (imagination, *phantastikon*) which arises in the soul without any cause in the external world (LS 39B1,5). Furthermore, the later Neoplatonists talked about the soul as projecting (*proballein, proballesthai*) on the faculty of

¹⁶ I am grateful to Miira Tuominen for this reference.

¹⁷ The word itself does not occur in Plotinus, but he does use for the mind a metaphor of a surface of water acting as a mirror, reflecting some real items better or worse depending upon the calmness of the surface (Plot. *Enn.* I.4.10.6–1; 12–19).

appearance as if in a mirror.¹⁸ This projecting, too, can happen without an actual object present:

Then [he shows] that imagination [*phantasia*] is not the same as sense perception, since the latter for its own activity always needs the presence of objects stirring the sense organs, whereas imagination is sometimes stimulated by itself even when they are not present, and projects [*proballein*] the objects of cognition, having this capacity in common in a way with the rational faculties. ([Ps.-] Simplicius in *DA* 202, 2–6, trans. H.J. Blumenthal)

In a sense, then, the appearance presents an object or an imaginary object to the soul. Since the Neoplatonists were anti-materialists, the projecting which is meant is not a metaphorical way of describing what is actually a material change, but a metaphor for something else, for a presenting or visualising that is an important part of perception and conscious awareness. What exactly happens to the content of the perception in this phase is never explicitly stated, suggesting, perhaps, that for the most part the features of the object are presented as they truly are. But what both the Stoic Posidonius and Plotinus do tell us is that the faculty of appearance is that which presents the objects in an emotion-triggering way (Galen *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 5.6.24–26; Plotinus *Enn.* IV.3.32.1–6), depicting the objects of the world as frightening or desirable, etc.¹⁹ This is not a property of the object itself, but something added to it by the soul. Hence the content of perception cannot remain thoroughly intact in the process in all cases, and the object does not enjoy exclusive privilege in determining it.

Yet the main thrust of Everson's argument should not be forgotten: by and large, in antiquity appearances or affects are not representations in the modern sense of being purely mental items, but causal effects imprinted in the soul by the objects. Especially the Aristotelian tradition, but perhaps ancient philosophy in general, emphasises the *receptivity* of the soul in perception and thought.²⁰ Even the capacity to imagine without having

¹⁸ Sorabji, Richard, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 A.D.* Vol. 1: *Psychology (with Ethics and Religion)* (Ithaca, New York: Duckworth, 2005), 2f. From here onwards, references to Sorabji without any year of publication are to this sourcebook.

¹⁹ For a likely background, see Plato's *Philebus* (especially 38) which contains the famous suggestion of a "painter" inside the soul, one who illustrates the "scribe's" words to the soul. See also Ch. 1 by Carpenter in this book.

²⁰ See Tuominen, Miira, "External senses in antiquity", in S. Knuuttila (ed.), *Sourcebook for the History of Philosophy of Mind* (forthcoming); Tuominen, Miira, *Apprehension and Argument: Ancient Starting Points for Knowledge*, *Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind* 3 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), especially pages 163–167, 188, 200–204.

sense-objects present seems to be dependent upon sense-perception. For instance, Augustine notes that without having an experience of the taste of strawberries or cherries it would be impossible to imagine what they taste like (*Letter 7*, chapter 3.6 Goldbacher CSEL 34, 17, 4–22 = Sorabji 2j 1).

Recently, Gail Fine²¹ has argued that there is, in fact, a notion of subjective in ancient philosophy, and that some ancient philosophers, like the Cyrenaics and the Sceptics, even consider that the notion of truth can be applied to appearances. Her interpretation of the Cyrenaic position deviates from that given by Everson. According to her, the states that the Cyrenaics are studying are not wholly and only physical; rather, these states are subjective, described under a subjective mode or presentation. She points out, among other things, that the examples that the Cyrenaics offer include not merely being whitened or sweetened (whatever that means as a physical change in the perceiving soul), but also a madman's seeing the sun double, and his eye being, hence, "doublened" (Sext. Emp. *Math.* VII 192–193). As it is even harder to understand the act of eye-jelly being doubled as it is to understand it being whitened or sweetened, it is more reasonable to suppose, she argues, that what is described is a subjective state of seeing two suns rather than a mere physical event. Fine's discussion brings forth, among other things, the fact that from mere materialism it does not necessarily follow that the theory is non-subjectivist. The material changes may or may not be further understood as subjective, and there is good reason to think that the Cyrenaics did, in fact, signify something like subjective states with affections.

Fine also proposes a working account of subjectivity, based on the accounts of Thomas Nagel and John McDowell. According to the former, subjective states have a characteristic phenomenal feel to them, according to the latter, subjectivity has two essential features, "representational bearing on the world and availability to introspection". Subjectivity also seems to involve a privileged status of the perceiving subject – if the wind feels cold to me, it feels cold to me – be that infallibility, incorrigibility or incontrovertibility.²² Are these criteria met by ancient philosophical thinking? According to Fine, the evidence she gathers on Sceptics and Cyrenaics is enough for a notion of subjectivity. Let us look at the criteria a little closer. We have seen Protagoras and Plato draw our attention to the particular and private nature attached to the experience of cold and warm. The issue was, thus, discussed although it was not a central question that the ancients would have thought demanded

²¹ Fine 2003.

²² Fine 2003, 193; Nagel, Thomas, "What is it like to be a bat?", *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974), 435–450; McDowell, John, "Singular thought and the extent of inner space", in P. Pettit and J. McDowell (eds.), *Subject, Thought and Context* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1986), 137–168, sections 4–5.

clarification. As to the availability to introspection, this would seem to be a commonplace in antiquity, since many philosophical therapies, for instance, depended upon critical inspection of appearances.²³ Representational²⁴ bearing on the world is a more complicated issue. As Fine points out, the madman's state would seem, in a way, to present the sun as double, and, moreover, the Sceptics do leave room for the possibility that the external substances which are not perceived by themselves but through affection are “*another than the object of presentation (phantaston) which produces it*” (Sext. Emp. *Math.* VII 364–367).²⁵ Although the Sceptical approach prevents them from promoting this idea as the true one, it is presented as a plausible alternative. According to it, then, whatever is in the soul would not be the quality of the external entity but something that presents or represents it.

Finally, incorrigibility does seem to be an explicit part of at least the ancient Sceptical outlook. The Sceptics argue, among other things, that it would be rash to try to convince someone who is joyful or in pain that he is not joyful or in pain (Sext. Emp. *Math.* VIII 475). As both Burnyeat and Fine point out, appearance statements are *azētētos*, that is, immune to question or inquiry (negation *a + zēteō* = to ask, inquire; Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* I 22).²⁶ With this fourth and last feature we can note that all the criteria for a notion of subjectivity do appear in ancient philosophy, although certainly not *as* criteria of subjectivity. Perhaps its use in the context of ancient philosophy is, finally, a matter of taste: the necessary ingredients for such a notion are to be found in ancient philosophy, and in some philosophical schools, like Cyrenaic and Sceptical attitudes, they are even central for the approach chosen. But if the notion immediately brings with itself the idea of self-enclosed mind or private sensory

²³ The most extensive treatment of a therapeutic approach of Hellenistic philosophy is surely Nussbaum, Martha, *Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

²⁴ It should be noted that the notion of representation is heavily loaded. For scholars of later philosophical eras, it has precise meanings, sometimes connected to the idea that the representations formed in the mind are thought's true objects rather than the objects in the world. In the ancient model, and especially in the Aristotelian model, this is not the case. The mind grasps the very same forms as are in the world, although in another mode. Yet it is perhaps possible, due to a lack of a more convenient term, to use this term in a less specific way. It can simply signify a function of the soul to form images or conceptual presentations of the sensible or intelligible objects, thus creating an intermediate step in between the subject of perception and thought and the object in the world.

²⁵ For the text, see also Tuominen (forthcoming).

²⁶ Burnyeat 1982, 130; Fine 2003, 207.

data typical of modern thought, it might be more cautious to refrain from using it. At least the reservations here ought to be spelled out.

Here it has been possible to give only a rather crude assessment of the detailed arguments of the participants in this debate. What hopefully emerges, though, are three things that characterise ancient conceptions of soul: First, that the presence and causal efficacy of the objects of the world is constitutive of the states of the soul. Ancient philosophers are not too bothered by or interested in states or features of states that would be wholly independent from the external world. Abstract thoughts, too, albeit not necessarily concerned with the particulars of the sensible world, involve intelligible structures of the universe that are as real as, or, as in Platonism, more real than, material objects.²⁷ Second, nonetheless, the qualities of the object may not function as exclusive constitutive factors for the content of perceptions. In revealing or projecting the appearance to the soul, the faculty of appearance (*phantasia*) may, as it were, colour the perception in some manner, that is, making it desirable or avoidable, emotion triggering, etc. Third, ancient philosophers recognise the incorrigibility of the subject's experiences, that is, they observe that we seem to have a privileged relation to our own experiences. This privilege qualified by the objectivity of most perceptual and intelligible contents is not, however, a central mark for their ownership. Ownness of experiences and acts of the soul may not primarily reside in their private character.

²⁷ When ancient philosophers, especially in late Hellenistic and late antiquity, do turn towards their soul, this often involves structures that belong to the world: what self-inquiry displays are such personal features that arise from and are a part of the world in so far as persons are a part of it. Personality and selfhood are closely connected to one's place in the universe and society. See, e.g., Gill, Christopher, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), as well as his latest book *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Hadot, Pierre, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1995), 206–213. Especially in Platonism and Neoplatonism, the aim is to gain, ultimately, a clear vision of the intelligible structures of the universe that also belong to the soul's innate toolery, shared by all rational souls, rather than an understanding of the subtleties of the personal and changing self. Something like the pure subject pole appears as the awareness of the "subjecthood" of one's own activity: see for example, Crystal, Ian, *Self-Intellection and its Epistemological Origins in Ancient Greek Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Remes, Pauliina, *Plotinus on Self: The Philosophy of the "We"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 4.2.

3.2 BRANCHES OF OWNNESS

As has become clear, ancient thinking does incorporate a strong realist assumption (although not materialist or causal in the contemporary sense of the words) as well as the idea that the contents of perceptions and thoughts are, for the most part, objective. The notion that mental contents involve aspects that are only available for the perceiving and thinking subject is not totally missing, but it lacks the centrality and interest that it gained after a gradual internalisation of the mind which happened somewhere along the way from the Stoic thinkers, through Plotinus and Augustine, to Descartes, Locke and Berkeley.²⁸ Let us now approach this issue from a somewhat different angle. Even if we would agree with the harshest reading that there simply is no notion of subjectivity in ancient philosophical psychology, it must be conceded that ancient philosophers did conceive some or even most of soul's conscious functions as belonging to someone, as someone's *own*. That is, even though the objects of our awareness were shared, consciousness itself was hardly understood as shared. The inquiry at hand attempts to map the ways in which ownness²⁹ was conceptualised. If it was not understood primarily through the idea of subjectivity of certain features of mental contents, it should be examined through the kind of notions through which it acquired its expression.

Before embarking on ancient material, however, a basic distinction within ownness is in order: it would seem to be the case that ownness can be discussed

²⁸ See, for example, Cary, Phillip, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of the Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Remes, Pauliina, "Inwardness and infinity of selfhood: From Plotinus to Augustine", in P. Remes and J. Sihvola (eds.), *Ancient Philosophy of the Self* (forthcoming).

²⁹ I am coining this term in order to avoid use of 'possession' which already presupposes a certain view of ownness, in which ownness is understood through the notions of property-ownership: there is someone, a possessor, who owns objects. Mental ownness may or may not be conceived in those terms. Unfortunately, to an extent, 'ownness' does suffer from the same predicament as 'possession', or at least the verb 'to own' does. The adjective 'own' has here been chosen over such alternatives as 'private', 'individual', 'personal' or 'particular', which all have their more or less specific philosophical meanings, and of which at least 'private' and 'personal' carry with them modern and present connotations unsuitable for ancient philosophical psychology. What is sought for here is merely the idea of mental states being someone's own, a phenomenon that can then be analysed differently – as, for example their privacy, incorrigibility or particularity – by different philosophical approaches.

at two different levels, so to speak. First, as Harry Frankfurt puts it, there are things that occur within us, in the history of one persons' mind as opposed to another's. In one way or the other, the mental goings on of a person belong to that particular person. But there is another question about the ownership of our mental happenings, and one that is deemed more crucial by Frankfurt. We may ask which of our mental happenings are such that we *identify* ourselves with them, that we somehow also consider our own doings.³⁰ Although the distinction may not be quite rigid – a theory might claim that in one way or the other, we must identify with all of our experiences – it is good to bear in mind that these can be considered as two separate questions.

The inquiry will fall into two parts: the ancient terminology of ownness and privacy and their antonyms used in psychological contexts, and the philosophical concerns involved in its conceptualisation, to be treated in turn. The emphasis is on Greek material, and only occasional references are made to Latin sources.

First is the excursion to ancient terminology. In Greek, there are at least the following ways of talking about ownness. Greek *idion* means something that is one's own, pertaining to oneself, private or personal. It is often used without any value judgement included, simply to denote, for example, one's private property. But the term is also the root for the adjective *idiōtikos* which means not only private but also unprofessional and uninstructed, as well as for the substantive *idiologia* which Epicurus, for instance, uses as an equivalent for *alogia*, 'senselessness', 'folly' (Ep. 2 P 36 Usener).³¹ One does not need to be too imaginative to infer that the usages accentuate the general suspicion the ancients felt towards whatever was wholly private and disconnected from other people, from the world – hence also the negative connotations of '*idiosyncratic*' (sometimes eccentric rather than merely personal). This reserve is visible in the *Gorgias*, where Plato contrasts an experience that two or more people have in common to one that is held only by one person, one that is *idios*:

Well, Callicles, if human beings didn't have experiences (*pathos*) that were the same, some sharing one, others sharing another, but one of us had some unique experience (*idion ti pathos*) not shared by others, it wouldn't be easy for him to communicate what he experienced (*pathēma*) to the other. (*Gr.* 481c–d)

³⁰ Frankfurt, Harry, "Identification and externality", in his *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 58–68, especially 59.

³¹ For the terms, see Liddell, Henry George and Scott, Robert, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised and augmented by H. Stuart Jones, with the assistance of R. McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

Socrates' motivation in the discussion is to find some common ground with his interlocutor, Callicles, who disagrees about almost everything Socrates says. Socrates is thus not denying that there couldn't be experiences that were completely one's own, or that there necessarily is anything wrong about them as such, but noting that such experiences may be incommunicable, and thus bad starting-points for a discussion or a shared inquiry. Yet as we saw earlier, the Cyrenaics, for example, bite the bullet and hang on to the idea of affect or appearance that is one's own (*to idion pathos*). This is contrasted with what is shared or common, *koinon*: "so that what appears is not always common to all" (Sext. Emp. *Math.* VII 196–198).³² This particular usage differs greatly from the one recurring a couple of times in Aristotle's *De Anima*, where *idion* is what is proper to (any) soul, rather than to an individual – a usage probably more common in antiquity (*DA* I 1, 402a9; 403a4).

There is also a highly interesting Greek term, one that is central for Stoic philosophers, of *oikeios*. Basically, it means domestic (derived from *oikos*, household, home), but also 'near', 'personal', 'private', 'proper', 'fitting' and 'suitable'. The Stoics formed a whole theory about *oikeiōsis*, a term somewhat cumbersome to translate. One suggestion which, although too long for all contexts, neatly sums up its different aspects is "recognition and appreciation of something as belonging to one".³³ To give a rough idea, the philosophical background for this term was that animals as well as human beings were considered as having an impulse to act in ways which are both self-sustaining and other-related. In order to live and survive, the animal must recognise itself as something to be preserved. This self-appropriation extends to those nearest to the animal (especially offspring), and for human beings it can also function as an ethical model, a call to treat the "furthest Mysian" as one treats oneself. At the most basic level, the self-recognition and self-appropriation in question involve self-perception of one's body, its constitution, central features and limits, but in rational human adults it has developed into an appropriation of one's rational nature, thus including features which are not directly explicable with first natural impulses we share with animals. A special class of actions appropriate to self-preserving and rational human beings is distinguished.³⁴ For the present purpose, what is

³² The Cyrenaics do not underline communicability, and may well here have something more like unobservability in mind. Plato's point, as I take it, is to say that certain unobservable features are also uncommunicable.

³³ Striker, Gisela, "The role of *oikeiōsis* in Stoic ethics", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983), 145.

³⁴ For *oikeos* and *oikeiōsis*, see LS 57, with comments.

significant is the role of recognising something as one's own or as oneself, as well as, more broadly, fitting or suitable for oneself. Without this recognition the animal would not function properly. The discussion on *oikeiōsis* may not be explicitly used to explain the ownness of the states of the soul, but it is based on views about the reflexive nature of primary impulse (*hormē*) and bodily self-perception (*sunaisthēsis*), making the foundation of our (moral) psychology reflexive.

What is in accordance with one's own nature is sometimes contrasted with what belongs to another or is foreign or alien, *allotrios*. Again, the term is sometimes used in a damning tone, denoting something strange, unnatural, or even an enemy, but it can also denote simply the opposite of *oikeios*, something not belonging to oneself or to one's true nature. This latter usage appears, for instance, in Alexander of Aphrodisias when he argues that the intellect has no specific nature of its own. If it had a nature or some specific character of its own, it could not become identical with any other nature (and this is the ultimate condition of knowledge), and thus it could not really grasp anything alien (*allotrion*) to it but just its own nature (*De Anima* 84.15–17). A more normative usage is in Plotinus who delineates the true self from the body and from any emotional disturbances of the soul. In doing so the person does not externalise anything truly belonging to itself, but an element foreign to itself (*allotrion*; Plot. *Enn.* I.2.4. especially line 7).

A third cluster of terms has been somewhat controversial. It has been a commonplace within some general expositions of history of philosophy that ancient philosophers did not use the distinction of inside–outside (*endon*, *exon*) to conceptualise the difference between the human being as a perceiving subject and the world or universe.³⁵ However, the idea of self-possession was from early on expressed with the help of the notion 'inner': self-possessed is the one that is "inside oneself" (*endon en hautou*; e.g. Antipho 5.45). In philosophical literature, already Plato calls reason the "inner man" (*ho entos anthrōpos*) in the *Republic*, and defines justice as doing things not externally (*exō*) but with regard to that which is within (*entos*) (*Rep.* 9.589a–b; 4.443c–d). Opposed to the inner realm are the things outside or external, as in the *Theaetetus* where Socrates contrasts a man counting to himself with one counting some "real" external things (198c). In Plato's *Ion*, being in one's right mind is contrasted to being beside or outside oneself (*exō heautou* 7.535b). In Latin, Seneca points out that in action, external factors (*aliquid extrinsecus*) are not in our power (*Ben.* V.v.4). Also the means of arousing

³⁵ For example, Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Chapters 6–7.

emotions lie not in our jurisdiction, but *outside* us (*Ep.* 85.10–11). Within a more clearly psychological context, Sextus Empiricus, in explicating Stoic philosophical psychology, distinguishes an appearance that is of external things and one which is of our own affections (*hē phantasia ginetai ētoi tōn ektōs ē tōn en hēmin pathōn*; *Math.* VII 240). As we shall later discuss, the Roman Stoic Epictetus and the Neoplatonist Plotinus both make almost a whole theory about things external and internal to us.

To list the pairs *idion* and *koinon*, *oikeion* and *allogrion* and ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ is in no way to suggest that the scope of these terms would always be the same. They are sometimes used to clarify the same issues, namely distinguishing the subject from the world and, further, explicating what is own or proper for the person in his experiences and in the world, but they sometimes map this area differently. Moreover, none of these terms belong exclusively or even primarily to psychological vocabulary. Yet they are sometimes used in contexts that interest us. A thorough survey of the usage of the terms as well as their Latin equivalents is a matter for future research, here it suffices to suggest that this terminology exists, and to give some examples of how these terms are used in the context of soul’s experiences, acts and contents.

Let us proceed to the conceptualisations of ownness and their philosophical implications. Even though ancient philosophers did not often explicitly discuss the topic of ownness of the powers and states of the soul, they did more than imply that these do belong to someone, a particular soul, subject or person. There were at least four ways to conceptualise this phenomenon.

1. *Location in place and position in the ontology of things.* It can be argued that the ancients put the matter in *local* or *ontological* terms. Since the universe includes several human beings, the functionings of one soul belong to that soul *in* which they happen. From this perspective, the ontology of souls is primary, and the distinctiveness of their operations follows from the existence and separateness of the souls themselves. This way of thinking is well captured (although perhaps not accepted) by Plato’s wax block model of the soul in the *Theaetetus* (194c ff.). The world imprints itself in the soul as in a wax block, and each soul is composed of its own particular chunk of wax. The appearances two people have are not separated by the shape or content of the imprints but they can be told apart by the pieces of wax they are realised in. This metaphor might be cashed out in two different ways: according to some philosophers human beings are individuated by their material body (in one interpretation Aristotle, the Stoics); according to others it is the soul that, first and foremost, individuates human beings (according to one interpretation, Aristotle, and at least the Neoplatonists). Accordingly, the experiences and acts of a soul are either individuated by the material location in the world they happen in, that is, the particular bit of matter

embodied by the soul in each case, or by the ontological “position” endowed by the specific soul in which they happen. Since ancient philosophers were keen on distinguishing the body parts proper for different living and conscious functions (especially after developments in medical research, e.g. the discovery of the neural system), the literal material place or location was often meant. As we have seen, McDowell’s and Everson’s positions are variants of this view. The “privacy” of one’s own perception relies on the specific journey it makes from the object into the perceiving organ and embodied soul. Since this journey is structurally the same in every token perception, what seems crucial for privacy is the specific location in which it happens.

The general idea that the ontological position in someone’s soul renders the experiences particular to that soul seems a very concrete understanding of something that is nonetheless not conceived as material. If the order of the universe relies on non-material principles of organisation, and if, as in some interpretations of Platonism, also place within this order is ultimately intelligible rather than spatial or material, then the individuating factor is a position within this intelligible order, as one particular soul in it. This latter view is, one might argue, a step closer to the idea, familiar from early modern philosophy, of soul-substances which ultimately determine their mental contents.

One might want to add that the terminology of inner–outer seems to enforce the location view: inside one person and one soul are powers and operations that belong to that in whom they happen, outside are things which do not belong to the “region” of that person. For example, for Marcus Aurelius the things or happenings of the world, be they fortunate or unfortunate, cannot touch us because they are *outside* us, in comparison to our judgements about them which truly belong to us (*Meditations* VI.52).

2. *Expert appearances and states of the soul.* There is a reason, however, why the local approach cannot exhaust the question of ownness of the states or happenings of the soul. When two ontologically distinct souls perceive the same, say, animal, according to ancient philosophers the appearances they have about it may differ considerably, and not merely with respect to the region of the universe this perception happens.³⁶ What does interest the ancient philosophers a great deal is the *level of expertise* of the perceiver and thinker as well as the possibility of cognitive failure and knowledge. This is

³⁶ Sorabji, Richard, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Chapters 7, 15 and 16 argue for ownership against mere location in slightly different contexts.

tied to the teleological and normative nature of ancient philosophy. Since a widely accepted goal of human life is to become more knowledgeable about the universe and its intelligible order, and since evidently there are differences of opinion and levels of expertise or wisdom with respect to this goal, it must be the case that souls have a very different relation to objects of knowledge independently of their spatial location. This is, for instance, something Socrates insists on against Protagorean theory which does not leave room for any kind of comparison, be that qualitative and normative or not, between two persons' experiences and beliefs. Socrates uses this as a weapon against Protagoras who does, after all, propound his own theory as the right one, by noting that most people do not agree with Protagoras, who, in turn, must believe that they are wrong in doing so. Thus, against his own theory, Protagoras engages in comparing beliefs and their plausibility, and rightly so (*Tht.* 170a–b; d).³⁷

In its simplest form, the difference between people's opinions and the level of their expertise could be reduced to the difference between knowing and believing. According to this view, some exclusive group of people have a relation to the objects of knowledge while others must manage without. Although ancient philosophy does raise sages well above the level of ordinary people, this explanation does not fare well in explaining the grades of cognitive differences, and would, in general, be highly disappointing for anyone trying to understand learning and knowledge acquisition. There are also more fine-grained differences in the soul, in its cognitive abilities and in the content of the experiences. In the *Theaetetus*, a rudimentary model is given to this effect: there are qualitative differences in the wax that constitute different persons' soul-block. In some people the wax is too hard, in others it is excessively fluid, and accordingly these people are either slow learners but good at remembering or quick at learning but also adept at forgetting (*Tht.* 194e). Going a step further, the Cyrenaics place the differences in the constitution of the sense:

For possibly while I am so constituted as to get a feeling of whiteness from that which impresses me from without, the other man has his sense so constructed as to be otherwise affected (*heteros de houtō kateskeuasmēnē echei tēn aisthēsīn hōste heterōs diatethēnai*). (Sext. *Emp. Math.* VII 197, trans. R.G. Bury)

In both views, what matters is not the mere particular place where the perception occurs but the material or corporeal *construction* of the senses. As Sextus

³⁷ McCabe, Mary Margaret, *Plato and his Predecessors: The Dramatisation of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially 37–40.

goes on to reiterate, the Cyrenaics point out that diseases affect the ways people perceive the same objects. Although the Cyrenaics themselves may not wish to make any claims about the normative quality of such perceptions, we are free to infer that illnesses may affect the perceiving organs and thereby the quality of perceptions. Analogous to the people with particular illnesses (type), the Cyrenaics argue that an individual's (token) perceptions may differ depending upon the *constitution* of his or her senses. Not only does a perception have a separate location in the universe, in addition it has particular or even individual qualities due to the construction of that location.

The examples here underline the material base wherein the perception and appearance take place as that which determines the quality and details of the perception. The content of the perception is not determined only by the object but in part by the (material) particularities in the perceiving subject. It is in relation to the level of beliefs that the insufficiencies of such a picture (and Plato's reasons for abandoning it) start to emerge. The metaphor of a lump of matter is not dynamic enough to say anything interesting about the interrelations of imprints. The wise man is not wise just because his imprints are clear and lasting but because his knowledge is more systematic or better organised – that is the whole point of *elenchus* and in general of the examination of the (logical) relations of interlocutors' beliefs in Plato's dialogues. The differences between the beliefs of two people rely not merely on the content of any one belief but on the relations that the belief has to his or her other beliefs. Plato's dialogues may not tell us much about the kind of psychological operations and features at the background of these wider cognitive differences, but they raise pressing questions about logical relations of beliefs as well as, and in particular for our purposes, the possible difference the complex system of beliefs might make to the content of each singular perception or belief.

To explain such differences on a level that is helpful for dilemmas about systematicity, it is not sufficient to specify the location where the mental goings on take place, or even its particular (material) construction. To begin with, it would seem to be the case that once several beliefs or perceptions are involved, a more dynamic view of the mind has to be adopted. Plato's suggestion towards this view, the metaphor of which is the aviary in the *Theaetetus* (196d–199c), is taken seriously both by later Platonists and by Stoics. Cicero depicts the mind as capable of seizing and storing appearances, of arranging them by their likeness, and “with the addition of reason, logical proof and a multitude of innumerable facts, cognition of all those things manifests itself [. . .] Therefore it [the human mind] makes use of the senses and creates the expert skills as second senses [. . .]” (Cic. *Academica* 2.30–1 = LS 40N2,4). According to the Stoic picture the mind has inner

powers that store, classify and interrelate appearances so that the mind gradually perfects itself towards expertise and knowledge. This capacity entails a number of levels particular persons have reached with respect to the ideal end, the state of a true sage. In discussing memory, the neoplatonist Plotinus repeats a similar point, and since his ontology, unlike the Stoic one, is non-materialist, he attributes the cause of differences not just in the material constitution but in the (non-material) powers of the soul:

[. . .] the differences between men in respect of memory are due to the fact that their *faculties* of appearance are differently developed, or to the degree to which they *attend* or do not attend to them, or to the presence or absence of certain bodily temperaments, and whether they change or not and, so to speak, produce disturbances. (*Enn.* IV.3.29.33–36)³⁸

In addition to material and bodily constitution, the powers of the soul, like retention of appearances or the capacity to focus one's attention, may function in different degrees of efficacy, depending, among other things, upon practice and (voluntary) attempts.

Interestingly, the Stoics further argue that also new information gets interpreted differently depending upon the state of the soul in question. They distinguish a class of technical appearances which require a certain level of expertise from the perceiving subject: "Also, some appearances are expert (*technikai*) and others not (*atechnoi*): a work of art is viewed in one way by an expert and differently by a non-expert" (Diogenes Laertius 7.51 = LS 39A7). The world, then, does not imprint itself similarly on every soul because of the state of the soul enjoying the experience.³⁹ And because it is imaginable that there are different levels of expertise, the distinction is not merely between a perfect expert appearance and, as it were, a totally "ignorant" appearance. We can conceive of a multitude of cases in between depending upon the level of aptitude acquired. (Whether nearly expert appearances merit the name of *techikai* or whether this term is reserved exclusively for the true sage's appearances is another matter.) What is significant is that the already acquired knowledge and belief-set determine, together with the object, the resulting appearance.

For the epistemological and ethical purposes – for search of knowledge and for self-improvement – it is vital that the contents of different persons' thoughts are not just shared and communicable, but that they also have features proper to the owner, thus determining his particular standing vis-à-vis

³⁸ Translations of Plotinus are my own or adapted from A.A. Armstrong's translation of the *Enneads*.

³⁹ LS 41, comments at 259.

the normative goals. Especially the whole set of beliefs, memories and appearances a person has, and the complex system they form, display particularities proper to the individual who has this set, but that system, so the Stoics argue, also has repercussions for the content of any token new experience. Even if the perceiver would not actively identify him- or herself with each new experience, they belong to him or her in a special way, because from the beginning, they are affected by the state of the soul experiencing them, and thus they are never in isolation but always already parts of a whole.

Often in ancient philosophy, although not always, the particularity of appearances is taken to be a mark of cognitive failure. The clearest expression of this can perhaps be found in Epicurus, whose bold statement that all perceptions are true is accompanied by the idea that all falsehood must be due to an addition to the perception. In his letter to Herodotus (51.6–9), after explicating the way in which the object produces the appearance, he says: “And error would not exist unless another kind of movement too were produced in ourselves (*en hēmin*), closely linked to the apprehension of images, but differing from it” (trans. C. Bailey). If everyone perceived things correctly and had a completely logical set of beliefs, the contents of our minds would connect with the intelligible world order just as it is, and thus they would resemble one another. Error as well as qualitative particularity is, thus, often seen as the mind’s complement to the sense-perception which in itself reports the world reliably and objectively.

3. *Commitment and control.* The teleological features of ancient philosophy would seem to render qualitative particularity and privacy of acts and experiences of the soul a deficiency rather than as something positive, like originality or uniqueness. The extreme individualist expectations of some modern or contemporary thinkers are not met. Yet to have appearances and thoughts that are *one’s own* is not derogatory in antiquity, on the contrary, for instance Plato seems always to demand that the inquiry should concentrate on beliefs that someone truly holds, and that the cognitive achievement the persons experience within the dialogues be their own, not given by Socrates or by the gods.⁴⁰ What could this “better kind” of ownness consist of?

M.M. McCabe has argued that from the Platonic point of view, *commitment* to beliefs is promising for ownership and authority. The authority to accept, deny and subject to reflective scrutiny makes beliefs mine, and distinguishes them from your beliefs over which I have no such control. This requires a belief-set with internal relations and order, and my authority over

⁴⁰ See, for example, Woolf, Raphael, “The self in Plato’s *Ion*”, *Apeiron* 30 (1997), 189–210.

them.⁴¹ Indeed, authority and control do seem to be held in high regard by Plato. In the *Ion*, a distinction is drawn between the beliefs or states of the soul that happen through divine inspiration and those over which the agent has rational control. The latter spring from himself, the former from a foreign, although divine, source (532–534).⁴² Now all this, of course, tells nothing about the psychological basis which makes some beliefs such that they are within the bounds of my (rational) control rather than yours, were I to exercise such control – that is, their built in self-reference, the fact that they happen in my life history or stream of consciousness. However, it does yield a specific approach to ownness: perhaps ownness of states of the soul in Plato is not primarily a feature of their material or even psychological make-up, but a quality that they have in relation to believing, making judgements, being a rational subject capable of engaging in conversation and dialectic. This would involve a whole context of beliefs as well as commitment to them. It is closer to the second kind of ownness distinguished earlier in this chapter, namely the kind which Harry Frankfurt has claimed to involve some kind of identification with experiences and beliefs (and thus not mere occurrence in my life history or stream of consciousness). Properly my own are such experiences with which I form a relation with by assenting or identifying myself with them.

Moreover, it seems that what is at issue in Platonism is not a given and automatic ownness but something one can have in different degrees, and that may require effort. First, our thoughts and actions would seem to be more properly our own when they spring from a unified soul, the aspects of which are integrated into one agent which acts as a unified source of his or her own activities. Unified agents are also in full control of themselves, not hindered by internal discord or vacillation. In this integration, reason has a pivotal place due to its capacity for a unified understanding of the ordered universe. It has been argued, further, that systematic knowledge of everything there is to know implies a kind of holism that renders the knower self-sufficient and in control of a whole body of knowledge.⁴³ One could claim that acquisition of knowledge is a progress towards a set of beliefs that does not just correspond or coincide with the objects of knowledge or the intelligible universe, but one with which the believer, as a whole, can identify himself with. It is a set which is his or her own not because it would in any way be individual or

⁴¹ McCabe 2000, 49.

⁴² For example, Woolf 1997.

⁴³ Korsgaard, Christine, “Self-constitution in the ethics of Plato and Kant”, *The Journal of Ethics* 3 (1999), 1–29; McCabe 2000, especially Chapter 8.

qualitatively inaccessible to others – on the contrary, objects of knowledge are paradigmatically shared and universal – but in the sense of being completely assented to by the knower, and in full rational control of it. Because the philosophical level and question of rational agency would extend our discussion beyond the main topic of this chapter, we must pass by this branch of ownness with these somewhat brusque remarks. Yet interestingly the idea also occurs at the level of theory of the soul. The notions of inner and outer as well as *oikeios* are used in relation to the experiences, acts and states of the soul, not just in relation to rational subjects or agents. It is to this discussion that we shall now turn.

A psychological approach to control is provided by the ancient discussion on that which is in our power (*eph' hēmin*). Intriguingly, Aristotle instigates it in an ethical context by noting that an action is in our own power when its *origin* (*archē*) is in the agent (*Nicomachean Ethics* III 1, 1110a15–18). Unfortunately, he does not specify in which way the agent must be the origin. A later commentator suggests that the origin itself must be up to us.⁴⁴ Again, what would such an origin be like is not revealed. In the Stoic theory, being “up to us” gains a much more central role, and thereby the term is also analysed more carefully. The idea is roughly that such actions which the rational capacity has assented to are in our own power. The origin and cause of such actions is in our own rational capacity: “but the impulse of deliberations and thoughts, and even actions are regulated by one’s own will and the characteristics of one’s mind” (*voluntas quibusque propria et animorum ingentia moderantur*; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* VII.ii.11–12). The Neoplatonist Plotinus is a late proponent of “up to us” and says:

[. . .] so that also in practical actions self-mastery (*autexousion*) and being up to us (*to eph' hēmin*) is not referred to practice and to that which is outside (*oud' eis tēn exō*) but to the inner activity (*tēn entos energeian*), thought and contemplation (*noēsin kai theōrian*) of virtue itself. But one must say that this virtue is a kind of intellect and not count in with it the passions which are enslaved and measured by reason. (*Enn.* VI.8.6.19–24)

Paraphrasing the late Roman Stoic Epictetus,⁴⁵ it is not wealth, status or anything of the like that result in self-mastery, but rational judgements which are up to us. Plotinus maintains that it is solely the pure and passionless reason

⁴⁴ For the notion of *eph' hēmin*, see Eliasson, Erik, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us in Plotinus and Its Background*, dissertation presented at Uppsala University, 2005, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Uppsala Universitet.

⁴⁵ Epict. Arr. *Diss.* 4.1.62ff.

that is truly up to us and free (*eph' hēmin, hekousion*; III.1.9.12). By using yet more Stoic terminology, he concludes that only its actions are truly “our own doing” (*to hēmeteron ergon*, III.1.9.9, 13). This capacity or impulse is our “own” and “inner” (*oikeios, endothen*) in contrast to that which comes from or is directed at the outside, at “elsewhere” (*allothen*; III.1.9.13–14).⁴⁶ In this late ancient thought, external are not only emotions and desires but, as we already saw in the context of that which was alien (*allotrion*), the whole body. This is precisely because all the body’s inclinations have at least part of their origin outside, in the world.

The inner activity of thought is, in a special way, unlike any other capacity in us. As such, of course, being good at control or self-control are things that themselves may *not* be in our control. Having a weak will is something that is difficult to cure with that same (weak) will. The idea here is that pure reason is always capable of a certain self-sufficiency. Its control relies in the fact that it is not dependent on anything outside itself, but has its origin in itself. Weak will must therefore reside in our bodily nature, and should, hence, be externalised. The demanding therapy is to gradually understand correctly what is and is not one’s own, and only what is truly in our control is what is properly our own.

Note that here identification with a certain set of one’s experiences is taken as a normative tool. The theory is concerned with which experiences one *should* identify oneself with rather than with which one in fact does identify. The normative goal is to become as independent as possible, and as “own” are accordingly identified such activities that fulfil this demand – the activities of reason and intellect.

4. *Actions versus passions.* There are further reasons why and in which specific way reason is selected as the thing most truly our own. During antiquity, there emerges a tendency to think of *acts* and *actualisations*, that is, functions that have their origin in the subject herself, as more “own” than passive happenings or experiences. In the Plotinus quote earlier, ‘up to us’ and that which is our own (*oikeion*) was identified with inner activity (*energeia*). This idea is grounded in two classical distinctions.

⁴⁶ This seems to amalgamate Stoicism with Platonism. Epictetus uses the terminology of ‘outside’ or ‘foreign’ (*ta exō, ta allotria*; LS 66F) of the things beyond our control. In a similar fashion, Marcus Aurelius, as Hadot says, “insists on the total exteriority of things with respect to us” (Hadot, Pierre, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 106). Plato calls reason the ‘inner man’ in the *Republic* 589a–b, and earlier in 4.443c–d he has defined justice as doing things not externally (*exō*) but with regard to that which is within (*entos*).

One is between acting or doing (*poiein*) and being affected (*paschein*). The sensible world of bodies is one in which, like Plato says in the *gigantomachia* of the *Sophist*, things affect and are being affected, or do and have something done to them (248). Perceptions as well as emotions were often considered as affections (*pathos*, pl. *pathē*), connected to the already underlined emphasis on receptivity of the soul's cognitive capacities. As such, this distinction need not yield any evaluative results – on the contrary, for our perceptions to be accurate, as we have already seen, it is important that the receiving subject does not blur the pure perceptible qualities arriving to the soul.

Another background is the distinction between potentiality (*dunamis*) and activity (*energeia*). In the *De Anima*, Aristotle distinguishes the following levels of potentiality and actuality: (i) *dunamis* (power or potentiality), for example the capacity to acquire knowledge, (ii) *hexis* (state) or a first actuality, for example the power to exercise that capacity, and finally, (iii) *energeia* (actuality, activity) or the second actuality, for example the active use of the knowledge one has acquired (II 5, 417a21–b1). Although this distinction, too, is free from any necessarily normative nature, it is easy to see that the final phase, the actualisation of capacities, is significant, as unused capacities are good for nothing.

Building on the Aristotelian notion of things being in our power when their origin is in us, late antiquity testifies a view in which the active side of mental goings on is explicitly more properly our own than the passive one. Notions of passivity and activity, and the value hierarchy they often carry with them in the context of agency, are paralleled by the same distinction and the same hierarchy within the soul.⁴⁷ By the time of Plotinus, the boundaries of the *self* seem dependent on the distinction between (i) things that the agent does himself and (ii) necessary affections a person undergoes (*tina men hēmeis ergazometha, tina men paschomen ex anangkēs*; III.1.5.23–24). Doing is engaging in things where the soul is the true origin of its actions, actively engendering the mental happenings in question. This means especially theoretical rational thinking, the so-called intellection. All other kinds of acts are prompted by the world, and have, hence, a feature that makes the subject a passive recipient rather than a true origin and a master of her acts. Control becomes equated with mere acts of the soul:

⁴⁷ There is much indirect evidence for this, and sometimes the opposites are explicitly stated. Although, for instance, Seneca does not contrast doing and being affected, he does use the opposition *ratio* (reason) and *adfectus* (affect or passion), arguing the former is in our power (*in nostra potestate*), and only through it can we master and control the latter (e.g., *De ira* I.viii.3.28–30).

Contemplation (*theōria*) alone remains free of enchantment (*agoēteutos*) because no-one who is self-directed is subject to enchantment (*gegoēteutai*): for he is one, and that which he contemplates is himself, (*eis gar esti, kai to theōroumenon autos esti*) and his reason is not deluded, but he makes what he ought and [he makes] his own life and work (*tēn hautou zōēn kai to ergon poiei*). But in practical life there is no self-possession (*ou to autou*), and the reason does not produce the impulse, but the irrational also has an origin in the premises derived from the affection (*pathos*). (*Enn.* IV.4.44.1–9)

Plotinus is referring to the higher kind of reason which alone is capable of an unclouded picture of the world. He is considering especially the pure paradigm thought, *noēsis*, which is a full actualisation of intelligible contents, and not directed at nor vulnerable to any external dependencies. Everything which is directed to something else is also led by that something, and all practical life is in this sense captivated by things external to oneself.⁴⁸ In the following text, Plotinus contrasts acts and passive happenings:

When therefore, the soul is altered by external causes (*para tōn exō*), and so does something, and does something in a sort of blind rush, neither its action nor its disposition is to be called free, this applies too, when it is worse from itself and does not altogether have its impulses right or in control. When, however, in its impulse it has as director its own (*oikeion*) pure and untroubled reason, then this impulse alone is said to be up to us and voluntary (*eph' hēmin kai hekousion*); this is our own act (*to hēmeteron ergon*) which does not come from somewhere else but from within our soul when it is pure, from a primary principle which directs and is in control, not suffering error from ignorance or defeat from the violence of the passions, which come upon it and drive and drag it about, and do not allow any acts to come from us any more but only passive responses (*ouketi erga eōsin einai, alla pathēmata par' hēmōn*). (*Enn.* III.1.9.9–17)

Reason's proper activities are particular in two senses. They *spring from itself*. This activity is, further, an innate activity directed towards itself, towards the innate truths, and is, therefore, secure, unlike activities in which outside influences are the true causal factors. In the latter, the external world acts upon us rather than vice versa, and thus the origin of the action is not in us. Therefore they are not properly our own mental happenings. Soul's acts that are truly our own do not have their origin in the external world, and, moreover, in the paradigm case they are also *self-directed*. According to Plotinus, the kind of paradigmatic thought or intellection is full actuality directed to internal objects of true knowledge. It does not happen by inspiration or stimulation by something seen in the external world, nor does it

⁴⁸ Plotinus *Enn.* IV.4.43.13–21; 44.9ff.

involve things external to the subject. It is completely self-originated and self-sufficient in its functioning. The self-originated self-directedness yields *noēsis* self-sufficiency and self-possession. The paradigm of ownness is to be free and not dependent on anything beyond one's own control.

This intuition to hold self-originated and -sufficient acts as in our proper control runs counter to the idea of feelings as being what is most properly our own. It claims that universal activities of intellect could be more one's own than private features of experiences. It elevates and restricts ownness to the level of pure theoretical intellection. But in doing so it highlights another understanding, or perhaps another level of ownness, one which is based on control and being the true and active origin of one's thoughts. The first lesson to be learned is the Platonic one already encountered: Plotinus, too, claims that if one concentrates on what is particular (*idion*) rather than on what is shared, then one is necessarily thinking less than everything (*Enn.* VI.7.33.7). Choosing to be narrow and ignorant is hardly something to be chosen for its own sake or to be preferred over systematic knowledge and the control it implies. Second, the idea of something being one's own can also be construed through activity, through the idea of being the true origin of one's acts.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In antiquity, the ownness of acts and experiences of the soul is not primarily a matter of their privacy or inaccessible qualitative features. Such features are discussed, but they are not seen as good starting points for inquiry or for such knowledge that would be about the world we share. One might claim that the parameters used are, rather, *location, origin and direction*, as well as *activity and passivity*. As "one's own" are understood things which happen within the limits of one's particular nature, be that the body or a kind of soul-substance, or which have individual features due to the individual constitution of that particular location. Or, "own" are understood states or impulses that have a proper self-relation, that is, which are reflexively directed towards the self. Another way is to hold most properly "own" those acts (rather than affects or passions) which have their true origin in the subject rather than in the world, for this implies control. And better yet, purely "one's own" are those actions that are both engendered by and directed towards the subject, thus wholly remaining within the realm of the soul in question.

However, while the content of perceptions and thoughts is primarily determined by their objects – for this secures their relation to the world – ancient philosophers recognise different cases and ways in which something

about the subject determines the final features of the perception or thought in question. In particular, they want to leave room for individual cognitive differences and emotional responses. To become conscious of something is a result of mind's receptivity to the objects of sense and thought, as well as of the mind's capacity to reveal and present these objects to itself.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Earlier versions of this chapter have been presented in two different seminars of the History of Mind Research Unit, Academy of Finland (headed by Simo Knuuttila), as well as in the colloquium *Self and Unity in Early Modern Philosophy*, Department of Philosophy, University of Turku, 3 December 2005 (organised by Olli Koistinen and Arto Repo). I am grateful to the audiences of these gatherings for their observations. Special thanks are due to Amber Carpenter and Sara Heinämaa for their helpful comments on the penultimate versions, as well as to Lisa Muszynski for improving, again, my English.

CHAPTER FOUR

SENSE-PERCEPTION AND SELF-AWARENESS: BEFORE AND AFTER AVICENNA

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It is sometimes regarded as distinctive of the premodern philosophical tradition that it tends to treat the various psychological phenomena according to the capacities or faculties (Gr. *dunamis*) a living being has for apprehending the world and for coming to terms with it. In short, the faculty psychology approach has it that reality comes laid out in layers of varying complexity and abstraction – it has sensible as well as intelligible properties, etc., and for each aspect of reality with which a living being has to contend, a corresponding psychological capacity is posited that is responsible for the reception and processing of that specific type of information. A seminal argument in this vein can be found in Aristotle's *De Anima*, the second book (II 5–12), where five proper sensibles and five sensory organs are distinguished in correspondence with the five types of sense-impressions we routinely receive, and in the third book (III 1), where this list is put forward as being exhaustive.

However, this liberal propensity – liberal both analytically and ontologically – for postulating discrete faculties for each type of psychological operation would seem to have the effect of compromising the soul's unity. The problem is brought out by the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Bājja's (d. 1138 CE) way of dealing with sensation: Ibn Bājja actually speaks of the "visual soul" when describing the eye's operations, and the trouble is that from an Aristotelian point of view he is not very far off the mark.¹ If each sense has

¹ Cf. his *Kitāb al-nafs*, 102–103 with Everson, Stephen, *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 60ff.

a world of its own to inhabit, then how are these impressions to converge in a unitary experience belonging to a single subject? And if each of the five senses directly responds and corresponds to its proper sense-objects, then what is it that allows us to go beyond mere sensations of red, fragrant, and smooth and to recognise an apple for an apple (even better, for this particular one)? Moreover, if the perceptual faculties of the soul as a whole proceed along parallel lines to the motive ones (these latter being the ones that dictate the direction of our appetites and spirits), then how is one to understand the unitary mental operation captured in the wording, “I perceived and became angry?”²

This, in short, is the backdrop against which late ancient and early Arabic questions concerning consciousness and awareness were posed. The challenge lay in explicating what it is that gives our experience of the world a degree of unity. The response, more often than not, came wrapped in the evolving doctrine of the internal senses, an Aristotelian answer to an originally Aristotelian problem.³ But the Platonist commentators of late antiquity would also transform the discussion surrounding perceptual awareness with their insistence on reason and opinion as the twin sources of rational and animal judgement, respectively. At the same time, a different sort of consciousness enters the picture from another corner of the Aristotelian universe: based on Aristotle’s comments in the 12th book of *Metaphysics* (XII 9) concerning the identity of the knower and the known in (as well as with) the Unmoved Mover’s act of knowing, it came to be thought that intellect (*nous*) has unmediated access to itself in a way that the rest of the psychological faculties do not. This notion proved attractive to Platonists, as it could be used to weld ideas about the rational soul’s true home in the intelligible world onto an Aristotelian framework.⁴

² The first problem is phrased thusly by Proclus (*In Tim.*, ed. Diehl 1:249); the second by Avicenna, e.g., in *Shifā’*: *Al-nafs* 5.7, ed. Rahman 253–254 (=van Riet 159).

³ On the internal senses the seminal account remains Wolfson, Harry A., “The internal senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew philosophical texts”, *Harvard Theological Review* 28 (1935), 69–133.

⁴ For Aristotle see Juha Sihvola’s contribution to this book; for Plotinus and the incorporation of Aristotelian *nous* into a Platonically framed quest for self-discovery, Remes, Paullina, *Plotinus on Self: The Philosophy of the “We”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Ch. 3; Sorabji, Richard, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD.: A Sourcebook, Volume 1: Psychology (with Ethics and Religion)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 134–171 offers source materials for assessing the thought of the commentators.

The two lines of investigation converge in Ibn Sīnā's (the Latin Avicenna, 980–1037) psychological works, which provide ample materials for reflecting on self-awareness and related issues. This chapter tracks some of the developments leading up to Avicenna's bold systematisation and its subsequent reception in the Islamic world. It will be seen that whereas questions related to our everyday awareness tended to highlight our affinity with the other animal species, our presumed privileged access to our intellectual souls came to be viewed as an entry point into a higher realm of being altogether, and subsequently came to propose a kind of proto-idealism. The two tendencies sit uneasily with one another, something that the post-Avicennian discussions readily acknowledge: it is to be hoped that future studies will further illuminate these connections between late ancient and Arabic discussions.⁵

4.1 THE GREEK COMMENTATORS ON REFLECTION AND PERCEPTUAL AWARENESS

The doctrine of the internal senses has its beginnings in Aristotle's common sense (*koinē aisthēsis*), which was first introduced in an effort to account for the perception of common sensibles and the incidental way in which the different senses can touch upon identical objects (*De Anima* III 1–2). In his treatise *On Dreams*, Aristotle adds to these functions of the common faculty the capacity for second-order perception, i.e. one's ability to perceive one's own perceptions, and the capacity for discriminating between the various sensibles (455a12–20). What this affords is an account of the perceptual field that is essentially unitary: the five senses ultimately are not to be viewed as independent faculties but rather as converging lines joined at the centre in a single, generalised faculty of sense. Charles Kahn explains the matter:

Thus when one directs one's attention outward, the several senses appear entirely distinct from one another, operating through different bodily channels and focussed upon entirely different kinds of objects; yet when the gaze is turned inward, one sees that they actually converge – in concrete experience, as we would say – in the unifying and discriminating activity of a single centre. And it is, of course, in virtue of this union at the centre – in "consciousness", let us say – that the special senses are able to share in the "common perception" of the same common sensibles, as well as to perceive one another's objects incidentally in a single simultaneous act.⁶

⁵ In what follows, Taneli Kukkonen is primarily responsible for the sections concerning the ancient and later Islamic discussions, Jari Kaukua for the section on Avicenna.

⁶ Kahn, Charles H., "Sensation and consciousness in Aristotle's psychology", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966), 56.

The majority of the late ancient commentators would have accepted this description as far as it goes; but they would have liked to go further. The world we experience is rich with conceptual content as well, the Platonist commentators noted, and such materials cannot be arrived at through the constantly shifting parameters of sense-perception. To tag a sunset as ‘red’, to pick an example, requires simultaneously both more and less of our cognitive capacities than what is made available to us through the infinite hues on display in nature. Such acts of identification are accomplished through the projection (*proballein*) of concepts from the active mind, the Platonists taught, and to them the implication was clear. The reach of reason, our most exalted power, must extend all the way down to sense-perception.⁷

There are many things that can be said in favour of this view, not the least of which is its implicit recognition that our mental apparatus profoundly influences the reception even of our most primitive sensations. But for all of this, the reversal from Aristotle’s original doctrine is nothing short of astonishing. Far from being abstracted from the physical world, even the most ordinary perceptual judgements we make are projections of our own mind onto the perceptual field. What they tell us about first and foremost is the contents of our own minds, not the outside world. Correspondingly, an increase in our understanding will lead in-, not outwards.

But if this is so, can the requirement of having the common sense account for second-order perception not be dropped? Abandoning the earlier Peripatetic explanations of Alexander of Aphrodisias, later Platonist commentators were prepared to do so: only with the rational (*logikē*) kind of perception is there a possibility of perceiving that one perceives. Reflexivity is in the first place a characteristic of the rational soul, and self-knowledge and immediate consciousness are attributed firstly to the intellect; they are then extended to discursive reasoning, and only then to the sense-perception that attaches to the “more perfect” animal capable of aspiring to the first two.⁸ The upshot is that for animals there is no second-order awareness, and hence no true access to the coveted return (*epistrophē*) of the sensible to the intelligible.⁹

⁷ The notion goes back to Iamblichus: see Priscian, *Metaphrasis in Theophrastum*, ed. Bywater 7.11–22, and for further materials Sorabji 2005, 39ff.

⁸ See, e.g., [Ps.-]Simplicius, *Simplicii in libros De Anima commentaria, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 11. Ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1882), 173.1–7, 230.11–29. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the ancient commentators are to the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (Berlin 1882–1909).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.27–31, 290.6–8.

Whatever images or opinions (*doxastikoi logoi*) animals may hold of the world – and the Neoplatonist commentators were typically willing to grant them more in this regard than Aristotle was – these will not amount to an ability to reflect upon the world in the true sense of the word.¹⁰ We may characterise this difference by saying that even though a multitude of animals are able to co-ordinate their lives according to the structure that their primitive awareness lends to their variable sensations, only humans enjoy the kind of self-awareness that allows them to assume a reflective distance towards these immediate impulses.

This peculiar ability to approach perception from a distance is exemplified in those instances when we become aware of the fact that we do not perceive as we should. Sight, for instance,

perceives itself, both not seeing anything and seeing; it perceives itself acting, clearly, when it sees, and at the same time it has perceptual awareness of its own activity, and in the case when it does not see it perceives itself being not entirely inactive (otherwise it would not be simultaneously aware because awareness is in addition to some activity), but as trying to see, and in trying it is in act not in respect of the seeing but of the trying, so that the awareness is not of seeing, but of the trying which is, so to speak, failing: so the sense of sight makes the judgement that it is not seeing. ([Ps.-]Simplicius, *In De Anima*, 189.22–28)¹¹

So what might account for this ability on our part to attend to our own perceptions, opinions, and even thoughts? In true Aristotelian fashion the commentators developed a picture according to which this was due to yet another power, this time an attentive one (*to prosektikon*). There was some disagreement as to whether this ability counted as a separate sixth rational faculty:¹² but what was thought to be clear was that the attentive power derives its strength from being a second-order function, of attention being lavished upon the lower faculties from the inside, as it were, as well as from above. For instance, *sunaisthēsis* occurs in touch when we

¹⁰ [Ps.-]Simplicius, ed. Hayduck 209.18–28 indicates that the worm may not have imagination at all, while in the ant or bee it is of an indiscrete sort (see *Met.* I 1, 980a27–b25 – given that memory presupposes imagination – and *De part. an.* 648a6–7). Canine or equine imagination can be fairly developed, as can that of Aristotle’s wild animals (*op. cit.* 211.28–29, for which see *De Anima* 428a23).

¹¹ Cf. 106.17 and 135.3–7; also Priscian, *In Theophrastum*, 5.5–9.

¹² The fullest account of the discussion is given by [Ps.-]Philoponus, *In De Anima*, ed. Hayduck 464–465; for comments see Bernard, Wolfgang, “Philoponus on self-awareness”, in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 154–163.

become aware of “some part of us” – presumably our skin – heating or cooling upon coming into touch with an object: and while sense-perception may have “true cognition of the special sensibles – e.g., sight has cognition that a thing is white – it is not capable of perceiving that it is cognising correctly. The cognition of a thing and the apprehension that the cognition is true are not the same”.¹³ It is the latter judgement which is peculiar to humans.

Yet all of this discriminative activity is in the end but a distraction from the rational soul’s primary goal and activity, which remains its unadulterated reflection upon the intelligibles. In this connection, and by way of closing off this thumbnail sketch of the late ancient discussions, it is useful to make note of an historical gloss Simplicius offers to Epictetus’ *Handbook*. According to Simplicius, the Pythagoreans insisted on silent contemplation for the same reason that some people close their eyes when they are told to pay attention (*prosektikon*) to their soul. Both realise that ordinary perception only serves to impede one’s awareness of one’s true self.¹⁴ For purposes of understanding later medieval developments it is important to note that this was the meaning habitually attached to Plotinus’ famous lamentation concerning the forgetfulness that the souls experience upon their turning away from their origin (5.1.1.1–4). In the Arabic version of Plotinus that came to circulate under the name of the *Theology of Aristotle*, for instance, the redactor finds occasion at this juncture to elaborate on how sense-perception in actuality keeps us from self-awareness.¹⁵ Before the souls’ fall into generation they were possessed of an “intellectual sense” (*ḥiss ‘aqliyy*): but now, their attention has turned to other matters, which acts to their detriment.¹⁶ These and similar remarks opened up the possibility of postulating a primitive kind of intellectual self-awareness that could be reached through shutting off the outside world altogether. As we shall see, this possibility is seized upon by Avicenna.

¹³ [Ps.-]Simplicius, *In De Anima*, 177.33–35 and 204.36–205.2.

¹⁴ *In Ench.*, ed. Dübner 112, 114; for comments, Blumenthal, Henry J., *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the De Anima* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 107.

¹⁵ *Aflūṭīn ‘inda al-‘arab, mīmar* 9, ed. Badawī 132–133; English translation by G. Lewis in the Henry-Schwyzler *editio maior* of Plotinus, 2:289.

¹⁶ *Aflūṭīn ‘inda al-‘arab, mīmar* 5, ed. Badawī 67–68 (=Henry-Schwyzler 2:433).

4.2 AVICENNA ON THE INTERNAL SENSES AND ANIMAL SELF-AWARENESS

As compared to the Arabic Plotinus, whose fortunes are now relatively well charted,¹⁷ we are not yet in a position to appreciate fully the impact the late ancient commentators had on the evolution of Arabic Aristotelianism. What is well known is that the psychological works of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius were widely read; some of the views of the late Alexandrian commentators evidently came under discussion as well, but here the waters get decidedly murkier. The pull was generally in a Platonising direction when it came to questions of the soul's substantiality: still, a predominantly Aristotelian framework prevailed in handling the actual faculties, perhaps due to the continued dominance of the Peripatetic commentators Alexander and Themistius. For purposes of exploring the Muslim philosophers' views on consciousness and awareness it is perhaps safest at this stage to treat them as constituting a fresh start.

The central figure in the development of Arabic philosophical psychology is Avicenna: whatever he may have taken from previous thinkers, Avicenna's talent for synthesis and systematisation made sure that after him virtually all philosophers in the Islamicate world would take his views as a starting point. What is more, in questions concerning self-awareness Avicenna's meditations mark a new beginning.

Avicenna shows considerable systematicity in his classification of the internal senses. He begins by positing three criteria for distinguishing between them. First, to each distinguishable type of object of sensitive cognition there must be a correspondent faculty of cognition designed to apprehend that very type of object exclusively. According to Avicenna, we can distinguish between two different types of object of sensation, the sense qualia proper and the intentions (*ma'nā*, pl. *ma'ānī*) inherent in them. Second, we must distinguish passive faculties from active faculties, i.e. we must distinguish faculties capable of passively receiving or retaining sense qualia or intentions from faculties capable of actively synthesizing and analysing them. And third, we must further distinguish, in the class of passive faculties, those faculties which are capable of receiving their objects and those which are capable of retaining or storing them. This last criterion is

¹⁷ See in this connection especially Adamson, Peter, "Aristotelianism and the soul in the Arabic Plotinus", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001), 211–232.

essentially a material one. All sensitive faculties are corporeal in the sense that they operate by means of a corporeal organ, and for Avicenna it is a simple fact of physics that the material mixture required for receiving sensible forms differs from the one which is needed for retaining them (a relatively fluid and a relatively stable mixture, respectively).¹⁸

On the basis of these three criteria Avicenna makes a fivefold classification of internal senses. First, there is the common sense (*al-ḥiss al-muštarak*) which receives and unites the various sense qualia from the five external senses into one wholesome act of sense perception. Second, there is the so called formative or imaginary faculty (*al-quwwa al-muṣawwira, al-khayāl*) which retains the sense qualia received by the common sense. Third, there is the estimative faculty (*al-wahm, al-quwwa al-wahmiyya*) which receives the intentions inherent in what is perceived by the common sense.¹⁹ Fourth, there is memory (*al-dhikr*) which stores the intentions received by the estimation. Finally, in addition to these two pairs of receptive and retentive passive faculties we have one active faculty which is called imagination (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) in reference to sensitive beings in general and cogitation (*al-fikr*) in specific reference to its function under rational governance. This faculty is able to analyse and synthesize sense data and the intentions inherent in them more or less autonomously.

To get closer to the relation between the operation of the internal senses and the phenomenon of self-awareness, we consider two case examples. Let us first examine an example Avicenna himself uses, i.e. the lamb perceiving a wolf. In a nutshell, the problem is to explain the lamb's instinctive fugitive reaction. There is nothing in the merely sensible qualities of the wolf by reference to which we could understand the lamb's reaction. The wolf is simply a creature of certain spatial dimensions and coloratura, it produces certain sounds, and given contact close enough, would also have a certain smell and

¹⁸ For a more elaborate discussion with references, see Black, Deborah, "Imagination and estimation: Arabic paradigms and Western transformations", *Topoi* 19 (2000), 59–60.

¹⁹ Avicenna says that intentions are present in the sense data but not apprehended through the senses: "The difference between the apprehension of a sensible form and the apprehension of an intention is that the form is something which the inner soul and external sense apprehend together – the external sense merely perceives it first and transmits it to the soul – whereas the intention is something the soul perceives from sensible things without the external sense having first perceived it". *Shifā': Al-nafs* 1.5, ed. Rahman 43 (=van Riet 86).

taste as well as certain tactile qualities. However, regardless of the richness of this field of sense data nothing in it seems to necessitate any fugitive reaction in the lamb. What is needed is the apprehension of threat or hostility in the sensible appearance of the wolf. This is where Avicenna brings intentions and estimation into play. In the field of the sense data which represents the wolf, the lamb's estimation apprehends an intention of hostility towards the lamb itself. Apprehending this intention of hostility, the lamb instantly attempts to flee from the presence of the wolf.

Now, let us consider the same wolf as perceived by an armed hunter. For the sake of the argument we can neglect all factual differences in the respective sensitivities of the hunter's and the lamb's sense faculties, and assume that the sense data for the hunter would be in all relevant aspects similar to the sense data for the lamb. Although the hunter might apprehend the wolf as hostile towards himself and feel a corresponding urge to flee from its presence, this apprehension will not necessitate flight as it did in the case of the lamb. The difference between the lamb's and the hunter's respective perceptions of the wolf is due to the fact that the hunter apprehends another intention which is different from hostility but equally inherent to the sense data which represents the wolf. For the hunter, the wolf does appear hostile, but it also appears as an animal the hunter himself is capable of terminating.

Of interest here in regards to the Avicennian theory of self-awareness is the fact that the intentions are relative to the percipient being. The lamb perceives the wolf as hostile *towards the lamb itself* and estimates a potential contact with the wolf as fatal *to the lamb itself*. Correspondingly, the hunter perceives the wolf as something that *he himself is able to kill*. Intentions are always based on a relation which holds between the object and the subject of perception.²⁰ Can we thus say that Avicenna ascribes some kind of self-awareness to animals in his conception of estimation and intentions? Avicenna himself does not seem to be quite decided on the subject, and certainly does not dwell on it at any great length. The following two passages contain the core of what he has to say on the topic:

Every animal is aware of its soul as one soul (*yastash'iru nafsa-hu nafs-an wāhida*) which orders and rules the body it has. If there were another soul which the animal was not aware of, which was not aware of the animal

²⁰ See *Shifā'*: *Metaphysics* 3.10, ed. Marmura 118, and cf. Black, Deborah, "Estimation (*Wahm*) in Avicenna: The logical and psychological dimensions", *Dialogue* 32 (1993a), 248, n. 16.

(*wa lā hiya bi-nafsi-hi*)²¹, and which was not occupied with the body, it would not have any relation with the body, for the relation can only hold in this way. (*Shifā'*: *Al-nafs* 5.4, ed. Rahman 234 (=van Riet 125))

Let us turn to the animal's grasp (*idrāk*) of itself – if there is genuine (*al-ṣaḥīḥ*) animal self-awareness. Although estimation is on the throne of the rational (*al-nāṭiqa*) cognitive faculties which the animal has it is conjoined to the body so that it cannot be distinguished from or undressed of it. Estimation is different from the animal soul which is primarily aware (*al-shā'irati al-ūlā*), and it does not estimate (*yatawahhama*) itself or affirm itself, nor is it aware of itself. (*Mubāḥathāt* §305, ed. Badawī 184 (added emphasis))

The first passage seems to affirm animal self-awareness in general whereas the second voices an explicit hesitation. Allowing for the possibility that Avicenna may not have had a fully developed theory of animal self-awareness, we may still construe an interpretation that brings the two texts into mutual agreement.

First, why does Avicenna say that it is the animal soul as a whole that is aware of itself? One of his central concerns with the phenomenon of self-awareness seems to be to guarantee a coherent unity of experience. Avicenna is constantly on guard against positing several cognitive faculties, each of which would be self-aware in and for itself, in one and the same soul. For each subject of experience there must be a unifying centre of awareness in the scope of which all the faculties work.²² None of the cognitive faculties of the sensitive soul can function as such a centre, for the simple reason that they are not capable of apprehending their own operations.²³ This has an important consequence: if the internal senses of the animal exhaust the field

²¹ This follows Rahman's textual emendation, cf., however, van Riet's remarks to the Latin Avicenna (125–126, n. 27). In Rahman's translation the parallel passage in the *Najāt* goes as follows: "And every living being is conscious that he has a unique soul which governs and controls him, so that if there be another soul of which the living being is not conscious, neither is it conscious of itself, nor does it occupy itself with his body – then such a soul has no relationship with his body, for the relationship only subsists in this way". If the crucial passage "neither is it conscious of itself" means "neither is the soul conscious of itself as governing and controlling the body of the living being", then the passage in *Najāt* can easily be read as being in agreement with the corrected text in the *Shifā'*. Both texts will be elliptical, but in different respects.

²² Cf. *Najāt*: *Al-nafs*, tr. Rahman 64–68 and notes *ad loc.*

²³ This is because the cognitive faculties of the sensitive soul are corporeal and thus capable only of apprehending corporeal things: they are therefore incapable of apprehending their own operation which, though taking place through a corporeal instrument, is still a mental occurrence. In a mediated sense a sensory

of its possible cognitive objects, it cannot have itself as an object. How then can the animal soul be said to be aware of itself?

Let us study the first passage carefully: “every animal is aware of its soul as one soul which orders and rules the body it has”. We are dealing with an experiential presence for the animal of a unified governance of this bodily being that the animal is, i.e. an experience of being both the cognitive subject of one’s own embodied experience and the agent of one’s own actions. But since no cognitive faculty directed at an object – which all the internal senses are – can grasp this experience, being a subject of experience cannot become the object of the animal’s experience. In other words, although the animal soul as a particular kind of cognitive subject does figure in its experience as one of the two relata necessary for any intention, there can be nothing like subjective points of view or awareness thereof for the animal. The animal’s experience of the world, i.e. of the other relatum in its intentional experience, presents the only world there is for it. But due to the first of the two intentional features inherent in the experience, i.e. the animal as a particular cognitive subject, that world is still a world for someone, or something, although this being for something can never become an object of experience for the animal. It is implicitly present in animal experience as that for which something appears the way it does and for the sake of which the animal must act as it does. If we take seriously this limitation of animal experience – a limitation which can only be grasped from the outside, from the point of view of a psychological theory – Avicenna’s somewhat vague references to the animal’s natural or instinctive awareness of intentions²⁴ and of themselves as relata inherent in the intentions receive a determinate psychological meaning. Instinctive awareness comes to mean roughly the fact that the awareness cannot become thematically aware of itself, and hence cannot transcend its own limited point of view of the world. To put it

faculty may be able to observe the operation of other faculties, and possibly even its own; however, this will not solve the problem, as it will not yet allow for a perception of the *experiential* phenomenon. All it allows access to is the physical occurrence, something which is not – to borrow a contemporary phrase – immune to misidentification. My seeing, by contrast, is unmistakably *mine*. (See *Najāt: Al-nafs*, tr. Rahman 51–52.) The Ash‘arite theologian Al-Juwaynī (1028–1085) in his *Kitāb al-irshād* or *The Book of Guidance* (73–74) reports that it was his school’s custom to argue for the distinctive nature of sensory qualia from the fact that there is something special that attaches to being in pain oneself as opposed to knowing that somebody (else) must be in such a state – say, the dentist observing tooth decay in the patient’s mouth.

²⁴ For instance, in *Shifā’: Al-nafs* 4.3, ed. Rahman 184 (=van Riet 38–39).

in another way, the phrase ‘the world as it is for the animal’ does have a sense and is meaningful but – setting aside the question of animal beliefs – has no meaning to the animal. For the animal, its world is the only one there is. To characterise animal self-awareness in still another way we can borrow a technical term from contemporary phenomenology and say that it is prereflective, with the qualification that it cannot become reflective, not even in principle.²⁵

This may be the key to understanding Avicenna’s hesitation in the second quote here. From the point of view of prereflective self-awareness, there may be no essential difference between human self-awareness and animal self-awareness.²⁶ What is specific and essential to human self-awareness is that it is capable of taking itself as an object of consideration. Let us briefly return to the case of the hunter. If we assume that the hunter is a normal human being, we must assume that in his encounter with the wolf he has, at least in principle, the possibility of changing his stance towards the wolf. For instance, he can conceive of the wolf as a natural being of great intrinsic worth, and come to believe that the killing of the wolf should only be taken as the last resort. What does such a possibility entail? At the very least, the hunter must have a capacity to perceive the sense data under different possible intentions. At the same time, provided that intentions are relative to perceivers in the way suggested earlier, this possibility entails the capacity to take different stances toward oneself. After all, the wolf stays the same. Seeing the wolf in the light of contrasting intentions involves a change of perspective, in our example that of stepping from the hunter’s shoes to those of an environmentalist. This change does not necessarily have to involve explicit consideration of oneself but for the moment it is important to notice that such a change is entailed by the capacity to switch between different intentions.

Before we can grasp the ultimate reason for this difference between animal and human self-awareness, we have to take a slightly closer look at the nature of human self-awareness. For this, a brief recourse to the function of self-awareness in human beings proves helpful. Let us first take a look

²⁵ For the notion of prereflective self-awareness, the constituents of the phenomenon, and the complex relations between prereflective and reflective types of self-awareness an excellent introduction is Zahavi, Dan, *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

²⁶ In *Mubāḥathāt* §421, ed. Badawī. 220–221, Avicenna claims that we humans are aware of our seeing or hearing “through the animal soul by means of the estimative faculty”. On the other hand, the general ontological function of self-awareness in human souls is radically different to that in animal souls, as will be argued shortly.

at Avicenna's famous discussion of the so called flying man in its most common version, to be found in the psychological part of the *Healing*:

We say: one of us must imagine (*yatawahhama*) himself as created all at once and perfect but with his sight veiled from observing external things, and as created floating in the air or the void so that he would not encounter air resistance which he would have to sense, and with his limbs separate from each other in such a way that they neither meet nor touch each other. He must then reflect upon the question whether he would affirm the existence of his essence (*wujūda dhāti-hi*).

He would not hesitate to affirm that his essence exists (*li-dhāti-hi mawjūda*), but he would not thereby affirm any of his limbs, any of his internal organs, whether heart or brain, or any of the external things. Rather, he would be affirming his essence (*dhāta-hu*) without affirming for it length, breadth or depth. And if in this state he were able to imagine (*yatakhayyala*) a hand or some other limb, he would not imagine it as part of his essence or a condition for his essence (*sharṭ-an fī dhāti-hi*).

Now, you know that what is affirmed is different from what is not affirmed and what is close is different from what is not close to him. Hence the essence the existence of which he has affirmed is specific to him in that it is he himself (*huwa bi-'ayni-hi*), different from his body and limbs which were not affirmed.

Thus, one who is attentive (*al-mutanabbih*) has the means to be awakened (*yatanabba-hu*) to the existence of the soul (*wujūd al-nafs*) as something different from the body – indeed, not a body at all – and to be acquainted with and aware of it (*anna-hu 'ārifun bi-hi mustash'ir-un la-hu*). (*Shifā'*: *Al-nafs* 1.1, ed. Rahman 16 (=van Riet 36–37))

Presuming that the general course of Avicenna's thought experiment is clear enough, let us focus on the conclusions Avicenna thinks can be drawn from it.²⁷ If I have imagined the depicted experience according to Avicenna's instructions, I should be forced to affirm the *existence* of my self or my essence²⁸ in the absence of the existence of anything else whatsoever. Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence is well known: essences

²⁷ The following exposition is inspired by Ahmed Alwishah's forthcoming dissertation work.

²⁸ The Arabic word *dhāt* can mean, among other things, both 'self' and 'essence'. The choice of translation is not unproblematic in a topic as difficult to articulate as self-awareness. However, as is argued in the following, there is a systematic relation between these two senses of the term. Due to this systematicity, Avicenna must have held the semantic ambiguity of *dhāt* as particularly convenient, for the term is capable of referring simultaneously to the two aspects of the existence of human essence: its first personal givenness through the meaning 'self' and its third personal ontological function through the meaning 'essence'.

(with the exception of that of the Necessary Existent) do not exist in themselves but only by becoming concrete in individual instantiations. In becoming concretely existent an essence receives a number of accidental determinations that individuate it, such as those of being generated in a particular time and place, in a particular position in the sublunar causal chain, informing a particular volume of designated matter, and so on. Thus, existence amounts to being individuated through characteristics not essentially inherent in what exists. What I affirmed in following Avicenna's instructions is my individuated existence, even if I lack full knowledge of what exactly it is that exists in that very individuation.²⁹ Such knowledge would presuppose a psychological theory of the human soul, but while I can be entirely ignorant of psychology I cannot doubt *that* my essence exists. The question becomes, how is the existence of my essence present to me? Here the ambiguity of the Arabic word *dhāt* (Engl. 'essence', 'self') seems particularly appropriate to Avicenna's purpose: the existence of my essence is my awareness of myself.

There is a curious text in the *Ta'liqāt* which corroborates the identification of self-awareness with the mode of being peculiar to human souls:

Self-awareness is essential to the soul (*al-shu'ūr bi-l-dhāt dhā'iyy-un li-l-nafs*), it is not acquired from outside. It is as if, when the essence (*dhāt*) comes to be, awareness comes to be along with it. [. . .] Our awareness of ourselves is our very existence (*shu'ūru-nā bi-dhāti-nā huwa nafsu wujūdu-nā*). [. . .] Self-awareness is natural (*gharīza*) to the self (*dhāt*), for it is its existence itself, so there is no need of anything external by which we perceive the self (*dhāt*). Rather, the self (*dhāt*) is that by which we perceive the self (*dhāt*). (*Al-ta'liqāt* 160–161)³⁰

Thus, self-awareness has a peculiar ontological function in human souls, for it is that as which the general essence is instantiated. This entails a number of consequences, but there is one implication which is particularly puzzling and deserves our attention. If self-awareness amounts to the individual existence of human souls, and if the existence of an individual human soul is continuous – which there is no reason to doubt, for the contrary assumption would mean that there are moments in our life during which we do not exist, and this would be just as problematic for Avicenna as it is for us – then also human self-awareness must be continuous. Thus, even states in which we seem to be unconscious and unaware of ourselves as well as of all other

²⁹ Cp. what is said of al-Rāzī's theory in section 3(a).

³⁰ The importance of this text has been highlighted by Deborah Black, who analyses the passage in a pair of forthcoming articles.

things, such as states of deep dreamless sleep, would be self-aware states by Avicenna's definition. And in fact, Avicenna seems to embrace this implication wholeheartedly. Consider the following passage, preceding the flying man discussion in the *Pointers and Reminders*:

Return to your self (*dhāt*) and reflect whether, being whole, or even in another state, where, however, you discern a thing correctly, you would be oblivious to the existence of your self (*dhāta-ka*) and would not affirm your self (*nafsa-ka*)? To my mind, this does not happen to the perspicacious – so much so that the sleeper in his sleep and person drunk in the state of his drunkenness will not miss knowledge of his self, even if his presentation of his self to himself does not remain in his memory. (*Al-ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*, ed. Forget 119)³¹

Now, a conception of self-awareness which entails such a strong continuity may appear strikingly extravagant, even fantastic to a modern reader. But let us pause to consider what it really is that we lack in dreamless sleep. One possible formulation would be that we have no intentional content of experience. There is no world – not even a dreamt one – of possible objects of experience to inhabit, nor a body through which to participate and act in any such world. But does this warrant us to conclude that there is no awareness whatsoever? Avicenna would vehemently answer in the negative. According to him there would still be the first-personal dimension of possible experience, that self-awareness independent of all possible objective content of experience to which our attention was directed at by means of the flying man.³²

The ontological function of self-awareness is to account for the individual existence of human souls. But what does this self-awareness amount to, what kind of description does Avicenna give of it? Some features are already obvious from the preceding discussion. Being continuous, the self-awareness in question cannot mean reflective self-awareness in any objectifying sense. States of reflection are intermittent and have a relatively short duration within the more extensive span of the whole of our mental existence. However,

³¹ See also *Mubāḥathāt* §381, ed. Badawī 210.

³² In modern literature, the continuity of self-awareness – or related to that, the continuity of personal existence – is often tied to memory. Not so with Avicenna (see *Mubāḥathāt* §380, ed. Badawī 210). Incidentally or not, this has interesting parallels with contemporary phenomenological ideas of continuity of self-awareness. Like Avicenna, some phenomenologists are willing to distinguish the continuity of the most primitive level of self-awareness from that of memoratively coherent *personal* existence which already contains a more or less explicit conception of oneself.

we have a constant access to a higher order reflective awareness of our concurrent mental states. Avicenna discusses this access in terms of Aristotelian proximate potentiality, or potentiality “close to actuality”:³³

You know that anything which understands (*ya'qulu*) something understands by potentiality close to actuality that it understands that thing (*anna-hu ya'qulu-hu*), and that is what understanding of the thing is *for it* (*wa-dhālika 'aql-un min-hu li-dhāti-hi*). (*Al-ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*, ed. Forget 132 (added emphasis))

This and other similar passages testify to the necessity of distinguishing between different types of human self-awareness in Avicenna.³⁴ In fact, the possibility of a higher order reflective self-awareness seems to constitute the most important phenomenal difference between animal self-awareness and human self-awareness. But the difference is not merely phenomenal, because the very same reason that explains why human self-awareness can become an object of reflection also explains why it has the sort of ontological importance entirely lacking in animal self-awareness.

For Avicenna, the human soul is an immaterial substance which, although genetically dependent on a human body, subsequently exists independently of it.³⁵ This means that it is capable of intellectual apprehension the objects of which are immaterial and cannot be grasped by means of a corporeally operative cognitive faculty. But more importantly, the human soul's immateriality also enables it to function as an *object* of intellectual apprehension. Thus, the human soul, unlike the animal soul, can have its primitive self-awareness as an object of reflection because the restrictions of corporeally operative cognition do not concern it, either in regard to its being the subject or in regard to its being the object of reflection. The human soul does rely on the corporeally operative cognitive faculties of the sensitive soul in its reception of the corresponding objective content, but as the case of the flying man is supposed to show, it remains aware of itself even in the absence of all such content. More importantly, the human subject can take its self-awareness as an object of consideration without any kind of mediation and

³³ Consider the closely related treatment of the three senses in which man is potentially knowing in *De Anima* II 5, 417a21–b1. For potentiality close to actuality in general terms see *Shifā'*: *Metaphysics* 4.2, ed. Marmura 134–135.

³⁴ Cf. for instance *Mubāḥathāt* §381, ed. Badawī 210.

³⁵ For an overview of this Avicennian doctrine as it is elaborated in the psychological part of the *Shifā'* see Druart, Thérèse-Anne, “The human soul's individuation and its survival after the body's death: Avicenna on the causal relation between body and soul”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000), 259–273.

thus constitute the genuine type of self-awareness that Avicenna hesitated to grant to animals.

We may conclude by restating the two important differences between animal and human – or sensitive and rational – self-awareness. First, in Avicenna's theory of the soul the type of self-awareness which characterises the human soul has an ontological function completely lacking in the animal soul. The animal soul is individuated by a volume of designated matter, in the same way as any Aristotelian material form, but the human soul is an independent immaterial substance which requires an immaterial principle of individuation. Matter has a part in the initiation of the existence of the human soul but does not suffice to explain its existence. Something else is needed, and for Avicenna, the phenomenon of self-awareness is sufficient to do the work.

This leads to the other difference between human and animal self-awareness, which is possibly more problematic. For given the radical ontological difference between animal souls and human souls, i.e. the difference between a material form and an immaterial substance, also the types of self-awareness respective to each seem to be radically divergent. Thus, although they might seem phenomenally similar, animal self-awareness and human self-awareness are brought about in different ways and hence constitute two fundamentally different things. In their relation to the body, both the human and the animal soul contain an awareness of being the governing agent of the body. But, as Avicenna constantly emphasises, the self-awareness of the human soul contains something more, it is entirely independent on the soul's relation to the body and prevails even in the absence of the latter. This surplus in human self-awareness also enables it to arise to genuine self-awareness, i.e. to take its awareness of itself as an explicit object of reflection, something the animal is incapable of. It may even be that this exclusively human potentiality of reflection is also sufficient to distinguish human self-awareness from animal self-awareness in such a way that the two cases of self-awareness are similar only in name.³⁶

³⁶ Another problem usually pointed out in Avicenna's theory of self-awareness concerns the question how an individual thing can be an object of intellection which is universal by nature. This epistemological problem cannot be discussed within the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say, however, that a careful distinction of different types of self-awareness is a necessary prerequisite for dealing with this problem. If we take primitive self-awareness in the sense of mineness inherent to any act of intellection as a simple feature of intellectual acts, the problem would only concern the reflective type of self-awareness. This problem is discussed more thoroughly in Kaukua, Jari, *Avicenna on Subjectivity. A Philosophical Study* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2007).

4.3 AFTER AVICENNA: SELF-EVIDENCE AND SELF-INSPECTION

Avicenna's account of the psychic faculties proved epoch-making, as thinkers both in the Islamic world and in Latin Europe followed his lead in classifying the various powers of the soul, their localisation, and their co-operation.³⁷ For present purposes the Arabic reception of Avicennian psychology can be grouped under three headings: (i) the Andalusian Peripatetic revival, (ii) the adoption of Avicennian psychological terminology into Islamic philosophical theology, chiefly through writers such as al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and (iii) the foundation of Illuminationist (*ishrāqiyy*) epistemology upon characteristically Avicennian modes of argument. A brief account of these three directions follows: it will turn out that as far as the question of consciousness is concerned, the first two represent a step away from Avicenna's innovations, rather than an advancement of them, whereas the third directly builds upon Avicenna's hints and pointers concerning the soul's unmediated access to itself. In a way this is curious, for the Illuminationist school by and large wished to dissociate itself from what it deemed to be Avicenna's excessive adherence to the Peripatetic tradition.

1. From the point of view of the transmission of Arabic thought into the Latin world, the most significant developments occur in the Western lands of the Maghreb. In many ways, however, the impetus here shifts back onto more familiar Peripatetic territory; the discussions do not appear to pick up on many of Avicenna's most significant innovations. This is emphatically the case in regards to self-awareness. For instance, in Ibn Bājja's copious works on psychology the notion of reflexive awareness is attached only to the intellect, and this on wholly Aristotelian terms. Ibn Bājja notes that it is peculiar to the intellect to have the faculty itself perceive its own operations: the intellectual soul can, as Aristotle had intimated, "perceive that it perceives" and "think that it thinks". For the rest of the psychic powers, the bodily faculty may well sense something, yet this does not amount to an apprehension, properly speaking, still less to a perception *of* perception. The operation of every other mode of perception needs to be established from the vantage point of another faculty. Still, talk in both cases is of a second-order operation.³⁸

³⁷ For the Latin history, see Hasse, Dag, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West* (London: The Warburg Institute, 2000); a full account of post-Avicennian Islamic philosophical psychology remains to be written.

³⁸ Ibn Bājja, *On Establishing the Agent Intellect, Fourth Way*, in: *Opera metaphysica*, 108–109.

In Ibn Rushd's, or the Latin Averroës' (1126–1198) psychological writings there is a similar retreat into a Peripatetic position on the model of Alexander. Accordingly, the Commentator's remarks on the self and on self-awareness yield little that is new. Averroës connects self-knowledge with the *differentia* that separates humans from other species of animals – i.e. human rationality:

The quiddity (*māhiyya*) of the human being is knowledge and knowledge is the thing known in one respect and is something other in another: thus if someone is ignorant of a certain object of knowledge, that person is ignorant of a part of his essence (or himself: *dhāti-hi*), and if he is ignorant of all the intelligibles then he is ignorant of his essence altogether. And to deny the human being this knowledge amounts to the same as denying a human's self-knowledge altogether, for if the thing known is denied to the knower insofar as the thing known and the knowledge are one and the same thing, that human's self-knowledge itself is denied. (*Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, 336.10–14)

What is being suggested here in the first place is that one deserves the honorary title of human inasmuch as one engages in theoretical thought – a familiar philosophical conceit. But the passage also cuts another way: without *things* to think about, the whole notion of self-knowledge becomes vacuous.³⁹ Averroës sees no need for immediate acts of individual self-awareness, only a participation in the life of an agent intellect common to all humanity and eternally possessed of all the intelligibles. This aspect of Averroës' psychology represents a genuine return to Peripatetic principles; consequently, for a fuller appreciation of Avicenna's legacy we need to turn to less self-consciously Aristotelian authors.

2. One might think that the *kalām* theologians' distinctive ontology would have deterred the Muslim theologians from making much use of Avicenna's psychology. That this is not the case becomes evident from even a cursory survey of post-Avicennian theological works. We may regard as representative Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 1209) *Book on the Soul and the Spirit and Explication of their Faculties*. While al-Rāzī's psychological exposition assumes an atomist and occasionalist framework of substances and accidents, he makes ample and explicit use of the philosophical psychology of the *falāsifa*, especially that of Avicenna.⁴⁰

³⁹ This reflects the thought of Alexander and, it would seem, Philoponus: see *Mantissa*, ed. Bruns 109–110 and Philoponus, *De intellectu*, ed. Verbeke 20–21 (in William of Moerbeke's translation).

⁴⁰ For an admission of the philosophical background see al-Rāzī's *Kitāb al-naḥs*, 77–78. Another prime conduit will have been the treatise on The Jerusalem Ascent (*Ma'ārij al-quds*) attributed to al-Ghazālī: on the work and its authorship see now Afifi (2004).

In the fourth chapter of the first part of the *Book on the Soul*, array of proofs is amassed to demonstrate that the quiddity of the soul's substance is something distinct from the body and its parts. Prominent among these are proofs that point to certain psychic functions only operating successfully on condition that the soul is unitary in nature. Al-Rāzī claims that it is intuitively (*badīhiyy*) evident that when one uses expressions such as “I heard” and “I understood” a single particularised essence is indicated; yet rational examination also shows the same to be true. For instance, if there were no single subject to which both anger and appetite were attributed, there would be no reason why one function should push the other out of the way. That this in fact happens is testament to the fact that these faculties are diverse attributes of a single substance. Likewise, only the fact that the one to whom perceptions are attributed (*ṣāhib al-idrāk*) is at the same time also the possessor of appetite and anger explains how perception gives rise to action. More generally,

if the seer was one thing and the one who understands a second thing, the one who desires a third thing and the mover yet a fourth, then the seer would not understand, the one who understands would not desire, and the one who understands would not move. But [. . .] we know necessarily that the seer of the things envisioned is “I” and that when I see these objects I understand them; that when I understand them I desire them; and that when I desire them I move to attain them. (*Kitāb al-naḥs*, 31.6–11)

All of this is ultimately traceable back to Avicenna.⁴¹ But how does al-Rāzī confront the ticklish question about the extent to which animals are privy to such interiority in handling these information processes? True to the example laid out by Avicenna, al-Rāzī gives contradictory answers to the question.⁴² What cannot be denied, however, is that the human soul, specifically, is “one thing”, “seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching: it is specifically characterised by the powers of imagination, cogitation, recollection, and the governance and maintenance of the body”.⁴³ The soul uses the

⁴¹ Cp., e.g., *Kitāb al-naḥs*, 28–29 with *Shifāʾ: Al-naḥs* V 7 and parallels.

⁴² *Kitāb al-naḥs*, 29.12ff. denies that animals enjoy an awareness similar to humans, while 31.14ff. affirms the very same thing. The divergence appears to stem from different answers to the disputed question of whether awareness (*shuʿūr*) of some thing's being beneficial or harmful requires the ability to discriminate – i.e., whether will (*irāda*) necessarily entails choice (*ikhtiyār*). It may be significant that al-Rāzī consistently calls this discriminating capacity ‘human’: see, e.g., 76.15ff., 80.11–13.

⁴³ *Kitāb al-naḥs*, 29.17–20.

different organs as one does instruments (*a'dā'*) and tools (*ālāt*): the two are essentially separate, operationally conjoined.⁴⁴

This has important consequences for self-awareness. Al-Rāzī contends that one can earnestly say “I cogitated, I reasoned, I fathomed” and confirm being cognisant of one’s particular essence (*‘ālim-an bi-dhāti-hi al-makhṣūṣa*) while at the same time remaining unaware (*ghāfil*) of one’s bodily features and dimensions – one’s face, hands, heart, brain, and other bodily members and organs.⁴⁵ The argument is loosely modelled on Avicenna’s flying man: it does not hinge on a thought experiment, however, but instead appeals to everyday experiences concerning the way in which we sometimes get lost in thought. This phenomenon could not occur if intellectual operations were tied to bodily functions, al-Rāzī contends: that I can verify having entertained thoughts (the past tense is important here) while having no recollection of my body testifies to a continuous consciousness independent of the body. It is this rational disembodied soul that is the recipient of the realities of things (*al-ḥaqā'iq*), and true self-knowledge ultimately is referred to this entity and the way it stands at the heart of all our activities.⁴⁶

All of this points in the direction of a reversion to an intellectualist Neoplatonism of a late ancient stamp: yet in what remains of his work, al-Rāzī spends little time contemplating such intellectual self-knowledge. Instead, he shifts gears and begins cataloguing the ways in which we should monitor and regulate our appetites and desires – hence the book’s subtitle, “On the science of morals” (*fī al-'ilm al-akhlāq*). This refocusing of the ideal of self-knowledge from an emphasis on intellectual consciousness to practical reformation owes its origins to Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), who in many ways had a decisive influence on the theological reception of Avicenna and especially his psychology. Al-Rāzī’s reflections are but one example of al-Ghazālī’s contribution to the resurgence of the “reformation of morals” literature in Islam.

Al-Ghazālī’s peculiar aversion to dwelling on self-knowledge in the intellectual sense is due to his insistence on the essential passivity of the human mind in receiving illuminations from the intelligible world. Because such gifts are in the final analysis a result of divine mercy, the sought-for transparency of the rational soul to itself is at best a fleeting experience during this life. Better to concentrate on the rational governance of the lower soul, something which is truly up to us. As for human life as a whole, it is indeed true that the unitary

⁴⁴ *Kitāb al-naḥs*, 32–33.

⁴⁵ *Kitāb al-naḥs*, 35.3–6, 40.4–11.

⁴⁶ Cf. pt. 1, Chs. 5 and 8–10.

nature of its experiences is due to a kind of primitive self-awareness. But this is nothing to boast about, as even brute animals have an awareness (*shu'ūr*) both of themselves and of other things.⁴⁷ They, too have a unifying principle called the soul, and their identity too stays the same through failing memory and bodily parts. This shows that such considerations have nothing to do with proving the immateriality and immortality of the human soul.⁴⁸

To al-Ghazālī, human consciousness appears essentially as a field of contending and opposing forces, forces of which the subject can become more or less aware. Just as our understanding of the relation our sensations bear to the sensory organs varies over time and according to the amount of attention we give to these organs, so also our understanding of our own baser motives – equally of our true selves – waxes and wanes according to the circumstances.⁴⁹ Self-awareness on this understanding becomes less of a philosophical problem on the phenomenological model and more of a Pietist undertaking of constant self-examination.⁵⁰

3. Perhaps the most interesting appropriation of Avicenna takes place within the Illuminationist school. The foundations of this school of thought are laid in the works of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191). Suhrawardī puts forward a distinctive epistemology that draws both on a peculiar ontology of light and on a series of psychological principles deriving from Avicenna. Although space does not allow for a full appreciation of the discussions involved, even a cursory overview will indicate that the Illuminationist philosophers have much to say on the topic of self-awareness, and much that relies on Avicenna.

⁴⁷ See *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. Marmura 107.12–13. A parallel in the commentary on the *Beautiful Names of God* confirms that the contention is not accidental: self-awareness (*shu'ūr bi-nafs*) is something that belongs to every living thing so properly called (*Maqṣad*, 142). In the epistemological introduction to his *Book of Guidance* al-Juwaynī, who was once al-Ghazālī's teacher, similarly notes that one's knowledge of oneself (presumably, one's own existence) is evident and not subject to doubt, in the same way that rudimentary sense-perceptions and logical axioms are routinely assumed as a starting point for making sense of the world: see *Kitāb al-irshād*, 11.

⁴⁸ *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 188–189, 196–197.

⁴⁹ *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, 192–193.

⁵⁰ See Kukkonen, Taneli, “The self as enemy, the self as divine: Al-Ghazālī and the Neoplatonic heritage”, in P. Remes and J. Sihvola (eds.), *The Self in Ancient Thought* (forthcoming) and, e.g., the comparison drawn between divine and human awareness of the world in *Maqṣad*, 112.

Suhrawardī's theory of knowledge starts from the presumed priority of a "knowledge by presence": whatever is more present (*ḥādir*) to a thing is more evident to it, and whatever is more evident, is more fully possessed both of reality and of epistemic warrant. According to these principles reality unfolds as a series of diminishing lights, at the summit of which stands Avicenna's Necessary Existent as God or "the Light of Lights" (cf. the famous light verse in the Qur'ān, 24:35). Standing in the middle rank of this grand metaphysical scheme, the human soul's awareness both of other things and of herself is less than perspicacious: yet Suhrawardī presumes to point the way to a secure path to knowledge. A human being's knowledge of herself, Suhrawardī contends, is immediate and not subject to mediation through the apprehension of some specific form that she might possess. As opposed to the Peripatetics' purported knowledge of humanity in general this is assuredly knowledge of an "I", not merely of some "It".⁵¹

Suhrawardī claims to have received the keys to this revelation from Aristotle himself in a dream. What he finds on its basis is an entire metaphysics and noetics that is non-Aristotelian to the core.⁵² The perception of things in the end is not about abstracting universals at all, but instead about recognising something for what it is, immediately and without mediation. The model for all such intuitive knowledge (*ḥads*) is the cognising subject's indisputable and direct access to itself as a conscious subject. Avicenna's flying man argument thus finds a standard place in the Illuminationists' expositions on psychology; here it is made to serve the purpose of establishing the primacy and immediacy of one's self-consciousness.⁵³ Interest in the nature of the conscious agent's essence does not extend much beyond the common notion that it is nothing material, as the main point of the exercise is epistemological.

What does get a great amount of play is the notion that a creature's transparency with regard to itself is a measure of its being. Suhrawardī expends a good deal of energy laying out this alternative ontological hierarchy in his *Philosophy of Illumination*:⁵⁴ its adherents more or less subscribe to a modified

⁵¹ See, e.g., *The Book of Radiance*, 24–25, 39; *Hayākil al-nūr* ("The Shape of Light") 1, §§1–2.

⁵² For an account of the dream see *Al-talwīḥāt* ("The Intimations"), in *Opera*, 1:70–74; Walbridge, John, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2000), 225–229 offers an English translation as well as a useful synopsis of Suhrawardī's project.

⁵³ For a representative case see Ibn Kammūna's (d. 1284) commentary on Suhrawardī's *Intimations: Al-tanqīḥāt*, 337–340.

⁵⁴ Suhrawardī, *Illumination*, pt. 2, First Discourse, ed. Walbridge and Ziai 79ff.

version of the Plotinian dictum that “everything in nature strives to contemplate” (3.8.1). For instance, Suhrawardī’s God on these terms is the most fully self-aware being there is or could be.⁵⁵ From this point on down, a lack in a being’s constant and immediate access to its own essence signals a corresponding lapse in the creature’s being. On these terms, self-awareness acquires a kind of salvific significance. Mullā Ṣadrā (1572–1640) in his *Elixir of the Gnostics* puts the view in stark terms:

Indeed, the soul’s ignorance is her death, and her knowledge is her life, since intellect is nothing other than conception and imagining. Whenever a soul lacks intellect, she fails to find her essence. Whoever fails to find his essence is dead. (*Elixir*, pt. 4, ch. 9, ed. Chittick 86.11–13; tr. modified)

The expressed sentiment is in some ways analogous to Ibn Rushd’s, cited earlier: and yet the directionality is somewhat different. Ibn Rushd desires conjunction with the Agent intellect, whereas Mullā Ṣadrā, like the majority of the Illuminationists before him, believes that every encounter with an outside object only ever manages to throw light on a hitherto unilluminated part of the soul’s self-consciousness. In this respect the *ishrāqī* thinkers can be seen to revert to something like a late Neoplatonist position. The self-divided soul goes into the world only to achieve re-integration with what it already possesses.

This leads to a final observation regarding the historical place of the Illuminationist school. Like much of the philosophical commentary tradition based on Aristotle, the Illuminationists placed much emphasis on the unity of experience. But whereas many of the Peripatetic commentators were willing to acknowledge a real ontological diversity in the various sensory and cognitive faculties (the inner and outer senses) and to multiply the amount of faculties needed accordingly, the *ishrāqī* thinkers seem content to stop the division process just as soon as they can. In Mulla Ṣadrā’s account of the soul, for instance, the five outer senses are all disparate and do not come into conversation: thus the one who sees is deaf, the one who hears is blind, and neither one of them touches or smells. By contrast, the inner senses act in co-operation and convey an impression of the whole: they form “as it were one individual, cogitating, conceiving, recalling, and wise”.⁵⁶ Now Descartes, in a well-known exchange with Hobbes, maintains that understanding, willing, imagining, and sensation “all come under the common

⁵⁵ *Opera*, 2:124.

⁵⁶ *Elixir*, pt. 2, ch. 6, ed. Chittick 24.18–19.

principle of thought (*cogitatio*), perception (*perceptio*), or consciousness (*conscientia*)".⁵⁷ It would perhaps be worthwhile to meditate a while further on how Avicennian philosophical psychology and its account of a unitary awareness could have come to influence two clearly separate strands of Western philosophy in such apparently similar ways at the very same point in time.

⁵⁷ *Third Objections* to the *Meditations*, reply to second objection (AT VII, 176).

PART II

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY AND EARLY MODERN THOUGHT

CHAPTER FIVE

INTENTION AND PRESENCE: THE NOTION OF *PRESENTIALITAS* IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

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This chapter discusses intention and presence in medieval philosophy. It introduces and analyses a high-level debate on intentionality and the mode of presence of the object in the fourteenth century. The medieval philosophers discuss, among other things, the notion of *intentio* as tending towards, as well as the difference between presence in the strict sense (the object being really present) and presentiality, namely the mode in which an object (both present and absent) can be present to a thinker or a mind. In addition to introducing dilemmas which, later, triggered the modern scholarship on intentionality through Franz Brentano, the medieval particularities become apparent in the article. For instance, before William of Ockham the philosophers insist on a symmetry or reversibility of the intentional relation: the subject's tending towards the object is matched by the object's presence to the subject, and the conscious subject is thus not given any focal significance in the inquiry.¹ (The editors)

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The notion of *presentialitas*, which I have always found both interesting and enigmatic, was used from the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards, especially by Duns Scotus and his followers. One can, of course, find some

Joël Biard, Originally published in French as 'Intention et présence: la notion de *presentialitas* au XIV^e siècle', in D. Perler (ed.), 2001, *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Brill, Leiden), pp. 256–282.

¹ The text is translated into English by Olli Sinivaara and the translation has been modified by the editors.

occurrences in Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent or Peter Olivi, but too few to be of any significance. Because *presentialitas* evokes presence, obviously the heart of the problem is the relation between intention and presence. Only a relation of this kind authorises one to speak not only of intention, in the often equivocal sense of the medieval *intentio*, but possibly of intentionality. But is *presentialitas* just presence? Evidently not: in Latin, there is the term *presentia*. At first sight, what the suffix suggests is that *presentialitas* is a kind of equivalent of the quiddity of presence (but I say “equivalent” because presence is not an essence, the quiddity of which one could define); thus its aim would be to express what presence, in the most primordial manner, actually is. A difficulty arises, however, because presence contains a factuality which seems to doom us to the most flat immediacy. Surely, the metaphysical exigency will not necessarily come to a halt at this platitude. But in any case the distance, in the first instance admissible, between a human being and humanity seems not to be appropriate between presence and presentiality, whatever the logico-linguistic or metaphysical pathway through which that distance is afterwards surmounted. Are we thus dealing with a simple linguistic redundancy which, after all, is quite conceivable? Or does this duality, which easily fades away, manifest any specific problems, and if so, what problems? One can try to see this by following the principal moments of appearance and usage of this notion against the backdrop of the relation between intention and presence.

Whoever says ‘presence’, says in effect ‘presence to’. It can be presence to a subject or to what occupies the place of a subject when the concept as such has not yet been formulated; it can be presence relative to a point of reference, if this is understood in a temporal sense (as in the Augustinian soul), or even in the form of a grammatical temporality where the formulation of a proposition determines a given segment of time that will serve as a point of reference for other temporalities. Thus presence as *presence to* is the inverse of intentionality, because the latter also supposes a point of reference from which one *tends towards*. But one of the essential questions is, can one think this inverse as being symmetrical and reversible?

In the Middle Ages there are two series of terms or concepts, which are interrelated but do not wholly overlap one another, that suggest something like a theory concerning intentionality. The first one is deployed in the large register of the term *intentio* in its variety of usages, taking into account the ambiguities the term contains once it has been introduced in translations from Arabic; the other series of terms, more restricted, is based on the *esse intentionale*, as one of the synonyms of the *esse representativum* or the *esse objectivum*. In the beginning, intentional being was a simple designation or qualification of the mode of being of intentions, whatever the ontological consistency of this mode of being. But in the early fourteenth century, it

came to cover, in a certain number of theories, *objective* being as far as this is distinguished from *subjective* being. The concept of *intentio* itself does not, by itself, carry any theory of intentionality in this sense. As proof I want to point out that the term can be used as nothing more or less than a simple synonym of conceptual sign, as is done by William of Ockham. In this case it has a status of real being (which in the Middle Ages was called “subjective”, in other words subsisting as a real quality or act) and it carries semiotic qualities due to a relation of causality or resemblance. Thus theory of intentionality is reabsorbed and finally annulled into a simple theory of the conceptual sign: the question comes to be that of only knowing how a psychic being refers to another being. Even though this line of thought has surely borne fruit in a logical and semantic perspective, at the same time it annuls all possibility of reflecting on *intentionality* as an irreducible quality of the noetic relation between that which later on will be called a subject or a consciousness and the world.

But side by side with this extremely wide usage of the term *intentio*, one can find, especially in the first quarter of the century, reflections on the intentional structure as such.

In the latter case, everything begins with an insistence on the fact that *intentio* supposes and conveys a particular structure which, in order to be meaningful, has to suppose and convey the idea of *tending towards*. Of course, this idea is close to the idea of semantic reference, because each of these imply duality and reference, but it raises certain particular questions: what meaning should this idea of *tending* be given, and correspondingly, are not some primordial forms of reflexivity needed in order to formulate this idea? These two questions are manifest in the model which, since Augustine, recurrently serves to thematise the idea of *intentio* before applying it to knowing. This model is the act of will. To prove this I will cite a text central to all reflections on intentions in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. This text is *De secundis intentionibus* of Hervaeus Natalis, written about 1313, and its role is central to the debate on the nature and function of intentions that took place in Paris during the years 1300–1310:

One must know, therefore, that “intention” pertains both to the will and the intellect. And because “intention” seems to designate tending towards some other thing, it applies both to the will which tends towards its object, and to the intellect in relation to its object. (Hervaeus Natalis, *De sec. intent.* I, 1a qu., sol.)²

² Sciendum ergo quod intentio pertinet tam ad voluntatem quam ad intellectum. Et quia intentio videtur importare tendentiam in quoddam alterum, intentio convenit tam voluntati tendenti in suum obiectum quam etiam intellectui respectu sui obiecti.

Thus intentionality as the foundational structure of intention rests on a movement towards. And the model of this movement is the will, more precisely the act of will, which here means the spontaneity of something (the intellect). This spontaneity is assigned as the point of departure of this movement. That is why we are dealing with a relation which is at the same time dynamic and asymmetric. In this period of medieval thought (that is to say before William of Ockham tries to radically challenge the problematic),³ an essential part of the debates on intention revolves around precisely this problem of the symmetry or the reversibility of the intentional relation, when these two are made problematic by the elements of reflexivity which the volitional model of intention seems to imply. Thus Hervaeus Natalis will examine the intentional relation “from two sides”.

Considered *ex parte intelligenti*, intention is “that which, in the mode of representation, guides the intellect to the knowing of a thing”; “from the side of the thing understood”, intention is “that very thing understood”, as far as intellection tends towards the thing as (being-)known by an act of intellection.⁴ A little further Hervaeus introduces a new distinction, concerning being in the intellect. This distinction is between that which is in the intellect subjectively (as a *species* or an act of intellection) and that which is there objectively (the thing understood). Thus when the intention is no longer considered in terms of *tending towards*, but from the side of the thing understood which is *present to* (something), one is able to characterise it with objective being:

Intentionality, by which first intention is called ‘intention’, does not add anything upon the thing which is understood except the objective existence in the intellect. (*De sec. intent.* I, 2a qu., de vera opinione)⁵

Regardless of this insistence on the “thing (it-)self”, one has to immediately measure the limits of any closer connection to a phenomenological attitude in a modern sense, as far as this attitude, at least in its Husserlian version, works in the immanence of consciousness. This immanence does not of course *ipso facto* imply a solipsist attitude, however, the ontological status of the thing has to be put into parentheses and consciousness given priority. To this

³ See Biard, Joël, “Intention et signification chez Guillaume d’Ockham: La critique de l’être intentionnel” (1997a), in A. de Libera, A. Elamrani-Jamal and A. Galonnier (eds.), *Langages et philosophie: Hommage à Jean Jolivet* (Paris: Vrin, 1997), 201–220.

⁴ At this stage, Hervaeus introduces, in addition, numerous distinctions between formal and material, concrete and abstract intention etc.

⁵ *Intentionalitas qua prima intentio dicitur “intentio”, super rem quae intelligitur non addit nisi ipsam esse obiective in intellectu.*

consciousness we must allow phenomena and the things themselves to appear.⁶ What is being scrutinised here is a strict reversibility between the noetic and the noematic point of view (which does not mean it is easy to be assured of it).

5.1 FROM DUNS SCOTUS TO PETER AUREOLI

In what does an act of knowing terminate? This formulation, which is at the center of the gnoseological reflections of the fourteenth century, invites an interlacing of reflections on presence, intuitive knowledge and the *species*. In relation to this, there is a point where the difficulties and the solutions of different authors or even of different theoretical currents condense. This point is notoriously the definition of intuitive knowledge.

Scotus is the one who fixes the distinction between intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge and gives it its importance.⁷ As it has been often pointed out, this indicates a turning point in the medieval theories of knowledge, even if this course of thought was already prepared by Henry of Ghent. A number of later authors will again take up and utilise this terminological distinction. Above all, it poses anew the question concerning the presence of the object to that which grasps it and represents the object to itself. Scotus introduces this distinction in a theological context. It is a question of thinking, from the noetic point of view, what the beatific vision implies.⁸ Thus the direct and immediate understanding of God by the blessed serves as the model for intuitive knowledge, even if this model necessarily turns out to be inapplicable to the knowledge of sensible substances on this earth. Scotus's first criteria is precisely the *presence* or the *non-presence* of the thing as object (he uses the term *objectum*), that is, as it faces the intellect. He distinguishes, in consequence, two acts of the intellect. The first is defined by indifference towards existence or non-existence:

One [type of act] can be indifferently about an existent object or a non-existent one, and indifferently about a not really present object or a really present object. (Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones quodlibetales* VI, a. 1, n° 18; 1968, p. 212)⁹

⁶ See Husserl, Edmund, *L'Idée de la phénoménologie: Cinq leçons*, trans. A. Lowit (Paris: PUF, 1970), Lectures 1 and 2.

⁷ On the history of this distinction, see Day, Sebastian, *Intuitive Cognition: A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1967).

⁸ On the history of this problem, see Trottmann, Christian, *La Vision béatifique des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1995).

⁹ Unus indifferenter potest esse respectu obiecti existensis et non existentis, et indifferenter etiam respectu obiecti non realiter praesentis sicut et realiter praesentis.

Duns Scotus gives as an example the thinking of a universal which, as such, does not exist, or which at any rate can be thought independently of the fact whether it is or is not exemplified by some individual. But in order to explicate and be more precise, he uses the idea of presence. From a certain point of view existence and presence can be synonyms (a past thing does not exist any more). But they are not totally synonymous, because an existing thing can be absent. Therefore presence implies a point of reference in relation to which it is presence to. Intuitive knowledge, on the contrary, is defined by the presence of the object:

There is also another act of understanding, which however we do not experience as certainly in ourselves; but such an act is nevertheless possible. For it concerns a present object as present, and an existing one as existing [. . .] and I say that this understanding can properly be called intuitive, since it is seeing the thing as existing and present. (ibid.)¹⁰

We may not be sure to experience such a knowledge on this earth. But in the beatific vision it is possible and even required, and this determines a sort of model: the model of knowledge as a direct vision of the thing itself, without any intermediate or any diminution in the being or consistency of the thing thus understood.

Thus Scotus establishes a theory of representation as diminished presence – which will be ferociously challenged by Ockham. For this reason one cannot here, in spite of terminological recurrences, assimilate these two views. One also has to avoid the equivocalities of speaking about “a theory of representation” that would constitute a common basis of the epoch, because there are just simply so many different standpoints.

For me this correlational insistence on the presence as such is essential here, in its double aspect of given to and of temporal actuality. This thematics will characterise all the gnoseological reflections of the following decades, through the idea of intuitive knowledge or through some theological thematics related to it (the problem of beatific vision or the problem of knowledge of God). But here the insistence on the presence is not conceived without, precisely, the emergence of a notion of representation as diminished being. Taken together, these ideas will be at the heart of reflection on intentionality (and no longer only on intentions) in the work of a certain number of fourteenth century authors.

¹⁰ *Alius autem actus intelligendi est, quem tamen non ita certitudinaliter experimur in nobis; possibilis tamen est talis, qui scilicet praecise sit objecti praesentis ut praesentis, et existentis ut existentis [. . .] ista inquam intellectio potest proprie dici intuitiva, quia ipsa est intuitio rei, ut existentis et praesentis.*

With respect to this Peter Aureoli is the central author, because in his work the *presentialitas* will deviate from a simple redoubling of the fact of presence, which so far had been its primary meaning. This deviation is a complex process.

First I will briefly recall how Aureoli approaches the question of intentions beginning with a conception of perception which is characterised by the so-called perspectivist optical theories (even if he does not enter into the technical details). For Aureoli, the act of intellect *poses* the thing in a being which he qualifies as being *intentionale*, *conspicuus*, or *apparens*, different from the real or subjective being. This thesis is justified by eight experiments which for the most part are founded on optical illusions¹¹ but which, in principle, do not in any way try to undermine the certainty of knowledge – it can be that certain theses provide the basis for a further development of a suspicion concerning the certainty of knowledge, but this is not the intention of Peter Aureoli, who on the contrary sees it as a means of avoiding general scepticism.¹² These particular experiments reveal a process at work in every perception and every thought. This process is the positing of the thing in the *esse apparens*, which is to say appearance understood not as illusion but in the primordial sense of the appearing of the thing as it is given to an intellect. Normally these two forms of being coincide in the noematic correlate of knowledge. In some cases – as in the experiments evoked here – they somehow detach from each other. For Aureoli the *esse apparens* is the means to avoid positing *species* as representative intermediates. He is with Ockham one of the two authors who refuse to make of the species an element or a condition of intellectual knowledge (even if he elsewhere admits its existence).¹³ But this positing in the intentional being is not, as such, a subjective act in the sense that it would depend on the spontaneity of an understanding or an intellect. From the direction of the thing, it is precisely the appearing of this thing to consciousness that is designated by the *esse apparens*: neither another thing nor a real being independent of the

¹¹ Peter Aureoli, *Scriptum in I Sent.*, dist. 3, s. 14 (ed. Buytaert, vol. I, 696–701).

¹² Et universaliter qui negat multa habere esse intentionale et apparens tantummodo, et omnia quae videntur putat esse extra in rerum natura, negat omnem ludificationem et incidit in errore dicentium quod omnia sunt quae apparent (ibid., 697).

¹³ He admits, for example, that in the dreams the vision terminates into a *species* produced by imagination; in this case, the thing is not given in its presentiality [*presentialitas*]; see *Scriptum*, Prooem., I, s. 2 (ed. Buytaert, vol. I, 206). See also Tachau, Katherine H., *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham* (Leiden, New York, Kobenhavn, Köln: Brill, 1988), 89–100.

appearing. Thus Peter Aureoli agrees with Hervaeus Natalis in considering that intentions are not mental entities; he only finds that Hervaeus still overly distinguishes the real being from the apparent being by turning the intentional being into a product of the relation of the thing to the intellect (from which there follows the polemic the text of which Dominik Perler has edited).¹⁴ Aureoli tries to proceed to a radical simplification of the idea of intentional being as a mode of being of the intentions. Not *species* nor *tertium quid* as William of Ockham believes or feigns to believe, but simple positing of the thing in its *esse apparens* by the fact that it appears, that is to say, is perceived or conceived. According to Aureoli this simplification avoids those apories that had been weaved in the debate concerning the ontological status of intentions. In its radicality this simplification is equal to the Ockhamian one, but it is just, as it were, its inverse. It is not a matter of going back to a semiological conception (with the causalist and naturalist implications of such a reduction), but of redirecting the question. And this redirecting is done using the intentional relation as a ground plan, and thinking it in terms of the model of vision.

But when this course of thought reaches its extreme point, we encounter at the same time its greatest speculative force and its limits, that is, a certain number of difficulties and contradictory exigencies which can be found in other theories of the epoch. As regards these difficulties, this course of thought tries to integrate some of them, but partly leaves them out of its scope. If the heart of the Aureolian thought is to refuse all reification of the *esse apparens*,¹⁵ its extreme point leads to a separation of the presentiality (*presentialitas*) from presence. Because of this hiatus some scholars have been able to see in Aureoli the fourteenth century thinker of objectivity¹⁶ as such, *par excellence*. This process, which is in fact the real originality of Aureoli (and not a common trait of the epoch), is already manifest in his analysis of illusory experiences. But it can also be found in his definition of

¹⁴ Perler, Dominik, "Peter Aureol vs. Hervaeus Natalis on intentionality: A text edition with introductory remarks", *Archives d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale du Moyen Age* 61 (1994), 227–262.

¹⁵ See Trottmann, Christian, "Vision béatifique et intuition d'un objet absent: des sources franciscaines du nominalisme aux défenseurs scotistes de l'opinion de Jean XXII sur la vision différée", *Studi medievali* 34, 2 (1993), 670.

¹⁶ 'Objectivity' refers here to the position of something which stands in front of, as an object to, the intellect. (Editors' note.)

intuitive knowledge which is developed, as in Scotus, in the context of the beatific vision. In the passage dedicated to this subject, Peter Aureoli criticises the Scotist position. The basis of the critique is that for him (as for Ockham) the difference between intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge cannot reside in a difference between the objects nor in the presence or absence of the thing, but has to be *in the acts themselves* or in the *modes of knowing*. It is worthwhile to follow this critique in some detail, although it is well known, in order to note the role of the Aureolian idea of *presentialitas* in it.

Summing up what he takes from the critical discussion of Scotus, Peter Aureoli expresses himself in the following way:

From the foregoing it follows that abstractive knowledge is not defined well, if it is said to be that which does not terminate in the existence and present actuality of a thing, but abstracts from them. For it was proven above, at the end of article 2, that actuality, presentiality and existence of a thing can be cognised abstractively. (ibid., n° 102, p. 203)¹⁷

Despite certain arguments in favor of Scotus, Peter Aureoli wants above all to show, against Scotus, that an intuitive knowledge can take place when the thing is absent and not actually present:

Despite all this, it must be said that intuitive knowledge can be had when the thing is absent and not actually present. (ibid., n° 80, p. 198)¹⁸

Throughout this argumentation one has the impression that Aureoli takes up again the term of presentiality in its Scotist acceptation. The question concerns the relation between intuitive knowledge and presentiality or existence. The first one of these terms is thereby anchored in real and effective presence, existence (even if the meaning of this term in the Middle Ages would demand a meticulous analysis).¹⁹ This is the case at the end of “five experiments”, showing simply that one cannot tie intuitive knowledge to

¹⁷ Ex praedictis patet quod non bene definitur abstractiva notitia, dicendo quod est illa, quae non terminatur ad rei existentiam et actualitatem praesentem, sed abstrahit ab eis. Probatum enim fuit supra, in fine secundi articuli, quod immo actualitas, praesentialitas et existentia rei possunt cognosci abstractive.

¹⁸ Istis non obstantibus, dicendum est quod intuitiva notitia fieri potest re absente nec actualiter praesente.

¹⁹ Est enim intuitiva quae concernit rei presentialitatem et existentiam, et terminatur ad rem ut in se existentem. Abstractiva vero dicitur quae abstrahit ab esse et non esse, existere et non existere (*Scriptum*, Prooem., s. 2, art. 2, n° 52 [Buytaert, vol. I, 191]).

this presentiality²⁰ and of the a priori demonstration following them, meant to show that “God can preserve an absolute intuition of this kind, once the relation has been destroyed and when the presentiality of the thing does not exist”.²¹ But what interests me here is not the distinction that has to be established between the act of understanding and the appearing of the thing. Appealing to the divine almightiness as capable of substituting itself for the presence of the thing and the *de potentia absoluta* possibility of an intuitive knowledge without the presence of the thing does not appear to me to be what is essential to clarify what is at stake in the noetical reflections of Peter Aureoli. Instead, what is important is the status of appearing and presence.

It seems difficult for Aureoli, on the contrary, to positively define intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge. When he tries to do it, he uses the term *presentialitas* a little differently, which is to say he deviates from the Scotist assimilation of presence and presentiality. Intuitive knowledge is defined as “*cognitio directa praesentialis eius super quod transit obiective actuativa*”, direct presential knowledge, actualising that to which it directs itself as the object.²² This enigmatic definition is elucidated by the model of vision, whereas abstractive knowledge is elucidated by the model of imagination (which is not to say that the two types of knowledge should be totally assimilated to their models). Thus the difference between the two is not in the object,²³ but they differ as two ways of knowing the same thing. In order to make these two modes more precise, Aureoli underlines four traits of intuitive knowledge, which he defines, in the first place, in relation to the model of vision. The first one is *rectitudo*: here the term actually means immediacy; next, we find *presentialitas* – that is why it is necessary to be meticulous here; I will come back to this. Finally, we encounter *actuatio obiecti* and *positio existentiae*.

Visual knowledge is brought to the present in the presential mode, and to the absent too in the presential mode, which is clear in delusions and all the experiments shown above. For although the objects are absent, if there is

²⁰ See *ibid.*, n° 81–87: *Probatum est multiplici experientia quod intuitio sensitiva separari potest a reali presentialitate obiecti; ergo multo fortius intuitio intellectus poterit separari.*

²¹ *Ergo deus poterit conservare intuitionem huiusmodi absolutam, corrupto respectu et rei presentialitate non existente (ibid., n° 93, p. 201).*

²² See *ibid.*, n° 103 (Buytaert, 204).

²³ See *ibid.*, n° 104 (Buytaert, 204).

vision in the eyes, they would be brought to it in a presential mode, as is clear. (ibid., n° 106; Byutaert, 204)²⁴

Consequently, the way in which Aureoli exposes his own position distances presentiality from presence in the strict sense. So when a general definition of intuitive knowledge is given later, it is precisely this concept of presentiality that has to be understood:

Turning further to the intellect, there are two modes of cognition there. The first, namely, is that which directly makes the presentiality, actuality and existence of the thing appear. And indeed this cognition is nothing other than some presential and actualizing appearance, and the direct existence of the thing; and this mode is intuitive. The second, however, is that which makes the thing appear neither directly nor by itself, neither presentially nor actualisingly; and this is abstractive. (ibid., n° 110; Byutaert, 205)²⁵

Wanting to break down an overly narrow determination of intuitive knowledge through presence, Aureoli thus defends (against Scotus) a paradoxical idea of presentiality that concerns the absent object as well as the present one. It only matters that the object is thought of or posed (actuated) as present. One can see both the speculative scope and the difficulties of this thesis. On the one side, there is an attempt to establish a primordial structure of the intentional relation and its correlate, the presence-to, independently of what is empirically given. But on the other, what does it mean to think an absent thing as present? It seems that here the present is reduced to a being-given with neither temporal determination nor factuality of existence, but this does not resolve all the difficulties.

The difficulty is expressed in other passages (which I have discussed elsewhere in connection with the divine science)²⁶ where Peter Aureoli gives his explanation of the relation of understanding by the intellect. In distinction 35,

²⁴ Ocularis autem notitia fertur super praesens modo praesentiali, immo et super absens modo presentiali, sicut patet in ludificatis et in cunctis experienciis superius inductis. Quamvis enim obiecta sint absentia, si visio sit in oculo, feretur super ea modo praesentiali, ut patet.

²⁵ Transferendo itaque ad intellectum, ibi sunt duo modi cognitionis. Primus videlicet qui directe apparere facit rei praesentialitem, actualitatem et existentiam, immo non est aliud illa cognitio nisi quaedam praesentialis et actualiva apparitio et directa existentia rei; et iste modus est intuitivus. Secundus vero qui non directe nec ex se, nec praesentialiter nec actualive facit res apparere; et hic est abstractivus.

²⁶ See Biard, Joël, “La science divine comme paradigme du savoir chez quelques auteurs du XIV^e siècle: Pierre d’Auriolo, Grégoire de Rimini”, in R. Rashed and J. Biard (eds.), *Les Doctrines de la science de l’Antiquité à l’Âge classique* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 189–209.

article 1, he asks himself what it means for the creature to understand (by the intellect). Evidently his answer can be understood only in relation to the appearing being. “Understanding does not, strictly speaking (*formaliter*), include in a determined manner something *in recto*, but connotes only something as appearing to that which is said to understand”.²⁷ Thus the appearing being is evoked with the aid of the idea of connotation. This implies a difference between a signification (or here more exactly a content of thought) *in recto* and a signification (or content of thought) which is associated to it in an *indirect* or *lateral* manner. Thereby the term ‘intellection’ designates an intellect that finds itself in a certain way modified, and it connotes something that *appears* to it. From this follows a proposition which gathers all these elements:

[. . .] in actual understanding three things meet. One as if preceding, namely the presence²⁸ of the object in the apparent being, the other as for foundation, that is the intellect informed by similitude. The intellect thus informed is followed by an objective appearance. The third, for its part, is a completion, namely the appearance. (Peter Aureoli, *Comment. in I Sent.*, dist. 35 art. 1, 751B)²⁹

Therefore the act of understanding requires firstly the presence of an object, but as far as it is considered in the *appearing being* or *objective being*, as far as it is understood by the intellect; secondly an intellect, which thereby receives a form; thirdly an act that joins these two aspects. Obviously the last point is to be understood more as actuality or actualisation than as an operation of a subject, that is, as the *apparitio* of the object to the intellect.

In this sense the intellect normally terminates in something, and even in “something absolute in the creature”, *aliquid absolutum in creatura*.³⁰ Further on, however, an important distinction is introduced between two ways of understanding – *terminative* and *denominative*:

Here one has to take into account that some things are said to be understood terminatively, some on the other hand denominatively. For the thing is understood terminatively in respect to that being which it has through the

²⁷ Peter Aureoli, *Comment. in I Sent.*, dist. 35, art. 1, 751B (1596). See *ibid.*: “if in fact nothing appeared objectively to our mind, no one would say he understands something”.

²⁸ The incunabular text has *potentia*; correcting it to *presentia* was suggested to me by Elizabeth Karger.

²⁹ [. . .] ad intelligere actuale tria concurrunt, unum quidem quasi previum, videlicet presentia obiecti in esse apparenti, aliud vero ut ad fundamentum, scilicet intellectus informatus similitudine. Sequitur namque intellectum sic informatum apparitio obiectiva. Tertium vero ut complementum, scilicet apparitio.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 753A.

mode of being looked at, which is being in the soul and diminished being; it is understood denominatively, on the other hand, in respect to the being that it has as an external thing, which is true and real, and although the thing is the same, being and intentional being are nevertheless not the same being. (ibid., 776B)³¹

The foundation is again the distinction between two modes of being. These two modes are being *per modum conspicuum* or *in anima* or *diminutum*, on the one hand, and being *in re extra*, on the other. But this distinction is noetically doubled: one understands *terminatively* a real being (one could once again say *in esse subjective*), but in its *esse apparens* the same thing is understood *denominatively*.

Up until this point everything goes well. But from the noetical side there emerges – without evoking here the difficult transposition of this scheme in the divine science, which in fact expresses these difficulties – a breach between terminative knowledge and denominative knowledge, even though these two are normally inseparable. And this breach is the same as the one between real being and apparent being.

This is shown by two examples that explicate this complex relation. One is the rose, the canonical example to investigate the question of intellection of an absent thing. Here, on the contrary, we are situated in the most elementary case of actually existing roses. Its diminished being in the mind terminates the intellection that the intellect has of the rose, and particular roses are said to be understood by the intellect denominatively. The other example concerns the vision in a mirror: the image has an objective being and it terminates the vision, but the *res extra* is at the same time seen *denominatively*. This makes it possible for Aureoli to insist on the fact that this relation is not less important than the relation to the image: for when looking in the mirror, I can touch my face, draw its contours, etc. Thus everything happens as if the face itself (*ipsamet facies*) were in the mirror. However, one understands very well that there is a limit to this “as if”: what should appear in the *esse apparens* is the thing itself; however, a duality is introduced which can make way for distortions (for examples deforming visions) or for illusions (problems of scale, etc.) which Aureoli himself evoked among his *experientiae* justifying the position of the *esse apparens*.

³¹ Ubi considerandum est quod aliquid dicitur intelligi terminative, aliquid vero denominative. Terminative quidem res erat quantum ad illud esse, quod habet per modum conspicui, quod est esse in anima et esse diminutum; denominative vero quantum ad illud esse quod habet in re extra quod verum est et reale, et licet sit eadem res, non tamen esse et esse intentionale sunt idem esse.

5.2 FROM AUREOLI TO PETER OF AILLY

Will the Aureolian thematics of *presentialitas* have any posterity or effects in the epistemic field of the fourteenth century? The notion does not disappear (one can find echoes of it in Gregory of Rimini), but it finds itself integrated into a somewhat different approach. This is shown by the example of Peter of Ailly, whom I will now consider. As so often, Aureoli's influence on the cardinal of Cambrai by-passes Gregory of Rimini, who in his manner once more takes up the distinction between intuitive vision, on the one hand, and knowledge that supposes a representative *medium*, on the other.³²

We must remember that the originality of the Ockhamist definition, in contrast to the Scotist definition, was that it no longer characterised the intuitive knowledge by the presence and the abstractive knowledge by the absence of the object – at least not only and not principally by this criterion. It is well known that William of Ockham transposes the simple and immediate relation of the intellect to the presence or the absence into a difference between judgements which are made possible by two types of apprehension of terms (and thus two modes of the relation of these terms to their signifieds). This is what, in his thought, legitimates the idea of intuitive knowledge of the non-existing, even if this latter – this point can never be repeated enough – does not take place in the natural course of things and even if it is introduced only in the role of a conceptual instrument for authorising new relations between the world of signs and the world of things. Concerning this conception of the difference between intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge, it seems that William of Ockham has very few followers; it is the Scotist definition that continues to nourish not only the position of Aureoli, but also to a great extent those of Gregory of Rimini and Peter of Ailly. In his definitions of intuitive and abstractive knowledge, Peter of Ailly in his turn makes use of the originally Scotist doubling between knowledge *in se* and representative knowledge.

In his *Commentary on the Sentences* (namely on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard),³³ Peter of Ailly closely follows William of Ockham, which has

³² Cf. Biard, Joël, “La science divine entre signification et vision chez Grégoire de Rimini” (1997b), in C. Marmo (ed.), *Vestigia, Imagines, Verba: Semiotics and Logic in Medieval Theological Texts (XIIIth–XIVth Century)*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 393–408.

³³ Several medieval authors wrote commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. In this article, there are three: the commentary Peter Aureoli, that of Gregory of Rimini and that of Peter of Ailly. (Editors' note.)

been shown by Ludger Kaczmarek in his edition of the passage concerning this question.³⁴ The two kinds of knowledge must not be distinguished by that which they concern. They must not even be opposed, as though one would concern existence and the other an object that is indifferent to existence or non-existence. At this stage, it is not even possible to say that one concerns the object in its completeness or as it is in itself, and the other a diminished resemblance.³⁵ But after having established these points, Peter of Ailly introduces a new distinction, which is not found in William of Ockham. According to him, there are two kinds of abstractive knowledge:

The third distinction is that there are two kinds of abstractive knowledge that are naturally possible for us. For one is that by which the thing is immediately cognised in itself and to which the knowledge terminates as the object, so that nothing else, distinct from it, would terminate the knowledge. The other is that by which the thing is not cognised in itself but in another, and neither does it terminate immediately to the thing itself but to its species, or its image existing in the mind. (ibid., 414)³⁶

Peter of Ailly's exact thought is not easy to grasp here. What appears to be clear, however, is that in reintroducing the distinction of knowledge *in se* and *in alio*, Peter of Ailly is already crossing (if not juxtaposing) the Ockhamist and the Scotist traditions on the matter.

In the *Treatise on the Soul*, written a few years later, Peter of Ailly again takes up formulations that are closer to those of Gregory of Rimini in his *Commentary on the Sentences*. Intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge are first defined in relation to sensation and only then in relation to intellection.

Although people speak in different ways about the difference between these types of knowledge, as I have mentioned elsewhere, probably one could nevertheless say that intuitive knowledge is simple knowledge by which something is formally cognised immediately in itself, but abstractive knowledge

³⁴ See Kaczmarek, Ludger, "Notitia bei Peter von Ailly, Sent. 1, q. 3. Anmerkungen zu Quellen und Textgestalt", in O. Pluta (ed.), *Die Philosophie im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam: Verlag Grüner, 1988), 385–420.

³⁵ Pierre d'Ailly, *Sent. I*, qu. 3, in Kaczmarek 1988, § 10 and § 14, 408–411.

³⁶ *Tertia distincto est quod duplex est notitia abstractiva nobis naturaliter possibile. Nam quaedam est, qua res ipsa immediate cognoscitur in seipsa et ad ipsam obiective terminatur, ita quod nihil aliud ab ea distinctum terminat illam notitiam. Alia est, qua res ipsa non in se cognoscitur, sed in alio, nec ad ipsam rem immediate terminatur, sed ad eius speciem, seu eius imaginem in anima existentem.*

is simple knowledge by which something is formally cognised in some representative medium. (Peter of Ailly, *Tr. de an.*, c. 11; ed. Pluta, 70)³⁷

The first difference lies therefore between immediate presence and representation in or by another thing. Peter of Ailly insists on the fact that one must not understand intuitive knowledge only as vision in the strict and restricted sense of the term, but that it has to be enlarged to accommodate any direct sensitive apprehension whatsoever. But what about the mode of givenness of the object in such a conception of knowledge?

In intuitive knowledge (still continuing with sensation) “the thing itself, as present immediately by itself stands before the one who knows (*ipsa res quasi presens immediate in se ipsa cognoscenti obicitur*)”.³⁸ One could reflect more on the “*quasi presens*”, but we will simply underline the relation of objectality [*objectalité*]³⁹ thus placed in the foreground.

What about the abstractive knowledge, of which it has already been said that it is *in medio representativo*? How is it introduced? Here Peter of Ailly insists on the fact that it is not said to be abstractive because it would take no account of the existence of the thing, but because it takes no account of its “objective presentiality”:

Abstractive knowledge is not called abstractive because of abstracting from the existence of the thing or its singular conditions – as if existence and singularity could not be cognized abstractively – but because in some way it abstracts from objective presentiality of the thing, in so far as the thing itself is cognized in another representative medium, as if it was absent. (*ibid.*)⁴⁰

Thus the Scotist distinction between immediate knowledge and knowledge *in medio* is complexified by the fact that presence or absence in the first sense is not sufficient as the only criterion. Knowledge is not abstractive because the thing would not exist or would not be given in its singular conditions, but because it takes no account of the “objective presentiality”. Thus one cannot see in this expression a simple verbal doubling of the presence, nor the

³⁷ Licet de differentia harum notitiarum sint diversi modi dicendi, ut alibi tetigi, tamen probabiliter potest dici quod notitia intuitiva est notitia simplex, qua formaliter aliquid immediate in se ipso cognoscitur, abstractiva vero est notitia simplex qua formaliter aliquid in aliquo medio representativo cognoscitur.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ This term is coined in order to avoid the modern notion of ‘objectivity’ which means something altogether different. (Editors’ note.)

⁴⁰ Notitia abstractiva non dicitur abstractiva, quia abstrahat ab existentia rei vel a condicionibus singularibus, quasi existencia vel singularitas rei non possit abstractive cognosci, sed quia aliquo modo abstrahit a presentialitate obiectiva rei, in quantum res ipsa quasi absens in alio medio representativo cognoscitur.

simple exhaustion of a presentiality without presence, but rather the idea that the presence of the representative *medium*, image or sign, makes absent, “absentiate” the existing thing. This is the reason why Peter of Ailly’s originality in these questions lies, as I have elsewhere tried to show,⁴¹ in the assimilation of knowing, signifying and representing. Such an assimilation is possible only through a complex interplay of immediate presence and representation. The term ‘representation’ is thereby charged with an importance unknown to earlier authors, and it is deployed not only at the psycho-noetical but also at a semio-linguistic level.

After this the established scheme is extended to intellection, with enrichments which are secondary for our proposal:

We can understand a thing in many ways. In one way, immediately in itself, and in another way in a cognized medium. And the latter is possible in two ways, for either the medium is a species of the thing received from the thing, or it is some concept made up or formed by the intellect itself. (*Tr. de an.*, c. 12; ed. Pluta, 76)⁴²

Does this imply a simple return to the Ockhamist position? Evidently not, and this is not only because Peter of Ailly gives a role to the *species*. On the point that has attracted us from the beginning, he insists on the necessity of something that stands before, in the sense of objectality. Here lies the origin of the passages where he says that all abstractive knowledge is, all the same, intuitive in relation to something. This is illustrated in connection with memory, which is always a touchstone in these questions:

For when one remembers an external thing seen elsewhere, although the thing is immediately remembered so that it does not happen through the mediation of some object other than that which is remembered, it is, however, through the mediation of some thing which one cognizes, that is through the mediation of a species, which becomes the immediate object to one. And so that remembering is knowledge of an absent thing, and it is an abstractive knowledge of it and remembering, and it is also knowledge of a present thing, and is an intuitive knowledge and clear vision of it. (*Tr. de an.*, c. 10; ed. Pluta, 59)⁴³

⁴¹ Biard, Joël, “Présence et représentation chez Pierre d’Ailly: quelques problèmes de théorie de la connaissance au XIVe siècle”, *Dialogue* 31 (1992), 459–474.

⁴² *Multipliciter contingit nos aliquam rem intelligere. Uno modo immediate in se ipsa, alio modo in medio cognito. Et hoc dupliciter, quia vel illud medium est species illius rei recepta ab illa re vel est aliquod conceptus fictus seu formatus ab ipso intellectu.*

⁴³ *Unde memorans de re extra alias visa, licet immediate recordetur de re illa sic, quod non mediante aliquo obiecto alio, de quo recordetur, tamen mediante aliquo, quod ipse cognoscit, scilicet mediante specie, quae sibi immediate obicitur, et sic recordatio est notitia rei absentis et illius est notitia abstractiva et recordatio et est notitia rei praesentis et huius est notitia intuitiva et clara visio.*

Thus leaving out presentiality demands that some substitute takes the position of the object, and thereby supports the presentiality that is lacking from the thing itself.

In conclusion we can see that the notion of presentiality is, in this line of reflection stretching from Scotus to Peter of Ailly and passing through Aureoli (and Gregory of Rimini), particularly significant to problems which are at the centre of reflections on intentionality as far as this latter is intention of something.

If a theory of intentionality is indispensable for a conception of thinking (a hypothesis which I have provisionally accepted and which I have not pronounced), then it cannot be done without a theory of the presence and should not, at this point, be content with the self-evidences of common sense.

Without comprehending a theory of intentionality in the strict sense (for the concept is not really reflected as such), we can notice that certain medieval doctrines face questions that according to us can belong to the domain of such a theory. To this extent it is significant that the question about the mode of givenness of the object sometimes flourishes in these discussions, especially in the doctrinal sequence I have followed.

From a historical point of view, Aureoli's situation is in this respect particularly interesting. But he must not too quickly be elevated into the position of being an interpretative model for the whole century, because this would run the risk of projecting into the whole period an idea of representation that is too vague to be a key for understanding positions which, by confronting each other, express in their different manners an exigency that makes sense in the epistemic configuration of the epoch. By doubling, in the domain of each pole, the distinction between intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge, Peter of Ailly in his manner responds to the demand of formulating the relation of the *presence* to correlative of every *intention of*. This is the effect of the Aureolian reflection, as far as it surpasses the Scotist position. But on the other hand, he displaces the problem and tries to resolve the difficulties of Aureoli's position by reinserting the system of presence, presentiality and representation in an approach that is essentially semio-linguistic to the detriment of a properly noetical or pre-phenomenological approach. Whether the whole aporia is thereby nullified, I am not sure. But through this point it perhaps becomes manifest that even though the problematic of intention cannot, as in my opinion, be reduced to the problematic of the sign – otherwise one loses a certain number of questions concerning the specific nature of intentionality – it is not, in return, possible to explore it very long without being conducted to reinsert intentionality back into the language which supports it.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STRUCTURE OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY DEBATE

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Augustine tells, in the eighth chapter of his *De trinitate* XI (PL, c. 996), that he often notices after reading a page or a chapter that he does not remember at all what he has read. He has to read the text again. According to Augustine's explanation of the phenomenon, if one is not interested, the text does not reach one's memory. The eyes are reading, but the mind does not follow the thoughts read.

Another example given by Augustine is equally familiar in the life of a philosopher. If you think about something else when you are walking, you might not even notice that you are moving. This is not because you would not see your environment, since in that case you would have to feel your way ahead, as in darkness. Rather, Augustine says, you see, but you cannot remember that you had seen anything.

The problem Augustine addresses by these examples concerns the possibilities of the human mind of knowing what takes place in the mind itself. Generally Augustine seems to defend the position that we always know ourselves, and the contents of our minds, by some immediate manner. With respect to this position, these examples are problematic: they bring forth cases where we are not conscious of our own sensations.

Philosophical discussions have treated the phenomenon of self-consciousness in very different ways. The histories of philosophy usually place a central turning point in historical development at René Descartes' argument *cogito, ergo sum*. The classical description of this argument is to be found in his *Metaphysical Meditations* (1641). The meditator, who follows the advice given in this book, will notice that his own existence is indubitable and infallibly certain, as it would be for any thinker. When one thinks that one thinks and thus exists, one cannot be mistaken. If one doubts this, the very doubt is already a thought and consequently misplaced.

Descartes' contemporary, Antoine Arnauld, points out in his comments to *Metaphysical Meditations* that the argument can be found in Augustine, and thus, it is no novelty (AT VII, 197–198). In his later works, for example in *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), Descartes admits that earlier philosophers had noticed that, for each person, one's own existence is "more certain than anything else". Descartes tells us that the novelty here is primarily that as a thinker one must at this point "understand oneself merely as a mind" (*Principia philosophiae* I, 12). Thus, to show that one's own awareness is indubitably known is not the historical turning point. Rather, the novelty lies in the use and the significance that this idea receives in the whole philosophical system of Descartes.

It seems that all main scholastic philosophers acknowledge that one's knowledge of one's own thoughts is indubitable, and even has some kind of epistemologically privileged status. This is clear for Avicenna¹, Averroes², Thomas Aquinas (e.g., *Summa theologiae* I, q. 87, a. 1)³, Duns Scotus (e.g., *Quodlibet* q. 14, a. 3)⁴ and William Ockham (e.g., *OTh* I, 40–44)⁵.

In this chapter, I do not intend to go through all, or even a few, of the descriptions of the structure of self-consciousness given by these philosophers. Nor will I pay attention to the metaphysical distinction between the intellect, which understands, and the lower part of the soul, which senses. This distinction is important to Augustine and other thinkers, but I will not pay attention to it. Instead, I will approach the theme through a single debate. William Ockham and Walter Chatton are known as central contributors in early fourteenth-century English philosophy. One of the disagreements between them concerns our theme: how to understand the awareness we have of the activities of our own minds. In this context these authors refer to Augustine's above-mentioned examples, reading them as cases of intellectual unawareness of one's own intellectual activity.

¹ Cf. Marmura, Michael, "Avicenna's 'flying man' in context", *The Monist* 69 (1986), 383–395.

² Cf. Black, Deborah L., "Consciousness and self-knowledge in Aquinas's critique of Averroes's psychology", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31, 3 (1993b), 349–385.

³ Cf. also Black 1993b.

⁴ Duns Scotus, John, *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions*, translated by Alluntis and Wolter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 336–343.

⁵ All references to Ockham's *Opera Theologica (OTh)* and to the works of Adam Wodeham and Walter Chatton indicate page numbers.

6.1 THE ACT OF AWARENESS

Let us start with a more exact description of the problem. Let us think about an example in which I follow a path. The path makes a curve before a bridge. I am deep in my thoughts, but instead of walking straight to the river, I see the bridge and turn left to it. We can describe my visual perception as a relation between my mind and the bridge. If we study it closer, we notice that as a relation it has at least three constituents: it contains at least (i) the mind, which is thinking, or the subject of awareness, (ii) the bridge, which is thought of, or the object of awareness, and (iii) the mental event or act of awareness connecting the former two. Schematically we can present this awareness in the following way:

$$S \rightarrow O$$

Here 'S' refers to the subject of awareness (me), 'O' to the object of awareness (the bridge), and the arrow to the mental act, by which the subject is directed at the object (visual perception). This scheme does not yet contain self-consciousness, by which the mind would be aware of its visual perception. The scheme describes only the awareness of the bridge. To depict self-consciousness we have to develop a suitable additional construction to the scheme, or to elaborate its structure further in some other way.

However, we must first notice that awareness of visual perception is a special kind of awareness of oneself. It differs from the awareness one has when one notices that one's feet are tired or eyes dazzled by the bright sun. These simpler types of self-consciousness can be described quite unproblematically with the scheme given above, so that something in the human person himself (e.g., feet, eyes) is the object of awareness.

Awareness of visual perception also differs from the awareness which is directed to the subject itself. We can depict this latter awareness by a scheme, in which we draw a circular arrow from an S back to the S itself:



This scheme designates how the mind perceives itself as a subject, or as exactly that which perceives something. In traditional terminology this amounts to perceiving the essence of one's own soul. Augustine discusses problems like this in book X of *De trinitate*, when he tries to show that the supposition that the human mind is material is against what we can perceive of ourselves (see especially chapters 7 and 10).

In medieval discussions this kind of awareness of the mind itself was usually understood to be very limited. Furthermore, it was often thought that it

can be reached only indirectly. Thomas Aquinas points out in *Summa theologiae* (I, q. 87, a. 2) that the human mind can perceive only its own activity, although on this ground it also comes to know its own singular existence. The human mind is not able to perceive its own essence. Aquinas makes a distinction between the mind perceiving itself, and the mind perceiving its activity, and points out that the former is impossible for human beings. It seems that the distinction was relatively commonplace in medieval scholasticism, even if explanations as to why the mind does not perceive itself varied.

Let us here limit ourselves to the awareness that is of an act of awareness. By having this kind of awareness one becomes aware of *seeing* a bridge, and not only its visual characteristics and location. Perhaps the most usual way to express this kind of awareness schematically is to draw another arrow from the subject to the arrow which is directed from the subject to the object:



Here consciousness of one's own mental act is depicted by a structure added onto the basic structure of awareness. However, it seems natural to ask whether we should rather elaborate further on the original direct act of awareness. Is awareness of visual perception not somehow included already in visual perception itself? On the other hand, if we opt for an additional structure, is the reflected arrow the correct solution? What does the reflection of the arrow express, if anything? The word 'reflection' comes from the analogy of a mirror, but surely there are no literal mirrors in the mind? What is this reflection?

Ockham and Chatton debated on exactly these kinds of questions in the 1320s, and now I turn to this debate.

6.2 WILLIAM OCKHAM'S THEORY

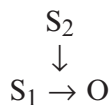
Ockham's *Ordinatio* starts in the standard way with a discussion about the nature of knowledge. In this discussion he takes up the kind of knowledge that has as its object the mind's own activity (*OTh* I, especially 39–47, 65–69). Ockham points out that the statement 'I understand' (*ego intelligo*) is a piece of knowledge that is evidently known to me. However, the statement is contingent, and it cannot be proven with any other more immediately known premises. Thus I must have some kind of immediate and direct experience by which I know that it is true. Ockham calls such immediate direct experience 'intuitive knowledge' (*notitia intuitiva*). He uses this concept mainly in connection to sensory-based perception of external things, but the argument in *Ordinatio* broadens the concept to apply also to the mind's perception of its own activity. According to Ockham, my certainty

that I think, and my certainty that there is a white paper in front of my eyes are structurally similar, and based on similar grounds. In both cases a certain thing is perceived in an evident way (see especially *OTh* I, 40–41).

Ockham discusses three problems within this model (*OTh* I, 53–54). First, if the nature of the mind's knowledge of itself is reflexive, it seems strange to explain it by characteristically immediate and direct intuitive knowledge. Reflexion means thinking about something indirectly, through another thought, which is direct. As an answer to this problem, Ockham claims that there is no reflexive knowledge if the concept of reflexivity is understood strictly (*proprie loquendo et stricte*). All understanding reaches its object directly without any reflexion. The concept can also be taken more loosely (*large*), and in this case we can call 'reflexive' all those acts of cognition the object of which is an act of cognition in the same mind. However, then we must remember that reflexive awareness is essentially similar to direct awareness. Intuitive knowledge of one's own thought is just a perception of one's own thought as an object of thought (*OTh* I, 65).

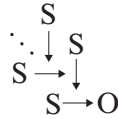
Let us suppose that angels are able to read each other's minds. As Ockham admits, from his model of self-consciousness, it follows that an angel is aware of its own thoughts in a similar manner as it is aware of the thoughts of another angel whose mind it is reading. Structurally, a direct awareness of an external object does not differ from a reflexive awareness of one's own thought. They are basically similar acts of awareness directed at different objects (*OTh* I, 65; cf. also *OTh* IX, 36–45).

In terms of the above-presented schematic form, Ockham's solution to the problem requires that the arrow depicting reflexive awareness be straightened out. The scheme becomes like the following:



This scheme can depict equally well a case of mind-reading as a case of self-consciousness. In the former case S_1 and S_2 are different subjects, in the latter case they are, in some sense, the same subject.

From the viewpoint of this scheme, it is relatively easy to understand the second counter-argument discussed by Ockham. The problem is as follows: If reflexive awareness (downward from S_2) is similar to direct awareness (the arrow from S_1 to right), it should also be an object of awareness for another act of awareness (horizontal arrow towards the vertical arrow). In its turn, this awareness should also be the object of another act of awareness (vertical arrow towards the horizontal arrow). If each act of awareness is perceived by another act of awareness, we are led to an infinite regress:



Ockham does not really solve this problem in *Ordinatio*. He just points out that it is encountered by all theories explaining how the intellect knows that it knows something. He refers to Augustine, who describes the problem quite nicely: “Who says ‘I know that I live’, says that he knows one thing. When he then says: ‘I know that I know that I live’, they are two. But that he knows these two, is to know a third thing. In this way we can add a fourth one, and fifth, and innumerably many”. Even though Augustine offers this illuminative formulation, he does not try to solve the problem (*De trinitate* XV, 12; *PL* 42, c. 1074). It should also be pointed out that Thomas Aquinas discusses the same problem without a real solution (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 87, a. 3).

As his own solution, Ockham quite simply remarks that the regress does not extend to infinity, because it is, for some reason, limited. He says that by experience we know the nature of these things to be such that when one thing is understood, understanding another thing is impeded (*intellecta una re impeditur intellectio alterius rei*) (*OTh* I, 53–54, 65–68). Ockham’s point seems to be that in an infinite mind the infinity could indeed arise, but because of the limited human capacities, it remains a contingent fact that we can rise only to a second or perhaps to a third level of reflexion. It is noteworthy that he does not say that the mind is capable of only one act at a time, but only that understanding one thing limits the capacity of understanding another: there is only limited space in the mind for those acts to occur.

In the twentieth century, the so-called higher order thought (HOT) theories of consciousness were often criticized for implying a similar infinite regress. However, in the recent discussions it is often claimed that the whole of infinity would be needed for consciousness; Ockham obviously did not think so. In his view, the first order act already makes one aware of the external object, like for example, the path that one is following. The second order act, if it arises, makes one aware of one’s own seeing, and the third order act makes one aware of one’s own reflexive awareness. Given that it is even difficult to express in plain English what one would be aware of on the fourth level, it is no surprise that Ockham chooses to say that such awareness is beyond our limited cognitive capacities.

The third problem discussed by Ockham is simpler. It may be pointed out that it does not seem possible to explain self-consciousness by a separate intuitive knowledge of one’s own acts of awareness, since this would imply that we see, by intuitive knowledge, the difference between the direct act of

awareness and the reflexive act of awareness. As two acts, we should see them by two separate acts, if we are able to look at our acts of awareness. Ockham's answer is simply to admit that intuitive knowledge is not always so clear and perfect that we can distinguish between different acts of awareness. One's knowledge of the activity of one's own mind is somewhat obscure even if it is based on intuitive knowledge. Ockham admits that it may be equally difficult to distinguish between love and pleasure (*amor et delectatio*) (*OTh* I, 54, 68–69).

6.3 WALTER CHATTON'S CRITIQUE

Ockham's presentation in *Ordinatio* draws a picture of a mind which is aware of its own activity by a gaze that is similar as its awareness of external reality. In terms of our paradigm example, when I come to the place where the path makes a curve, I see the bridge and turn left. If I, in addition, notice that I see the bridge, this is because of a basically similar perception as the visual perception itself, even if the object is in this case internal to my mind.

For Walter Chatton this way of treating the issue seems strange. In his so called *Collatio*, he criticizes Ockham fiercely (Chatton 1989, see especially 117–129; *Prol.*, q. 2, a. 5). However, his straightforward arguments against Ockham's position are for the most part versions of the infinite regress argument mentioned earlier. More interesting is the fundamentally different manner in which Chatton approaches the problem of self-consciousness.

Chatton's starting point is the claim that no separate perception is needed to account for experiencing one's own act of awareness. When I see a bridge, for example, I experience this visual impression and do not need to perceive it separately. The way in which the human mind experiences its own acts is indistinguishably included in these acts themselves. Whatever happens in the mind is also experienced (Chatton 1989, 121).

One possible way to interpret this idea would be to claim that self-referentiality is some kind of special characteristic of thought. Chatton discusses this solution through a formulation, in which every act of cognition is called 'cognition of itself' or 'apprehension of itself' (*cognitio sui ipsius*; *apprehensio sui ipsius*). Chatton does not accept this formulation, because he thinks that the logical properties of such self-referential systems would be incoherent. The simplest version of his argument is connected to the so-called liar paradox. Chatton thinks that the paradox can be resolved only if mental sentences cannot be true for themselves (*pro se ipsa*) (Chatton 1989, 22–27; *Prol.*, q., a. 1).

According to Chatton, thoughts are not self-referential. The experience of one's own thought is not based on a structure in which the thought is the

object of an intentional act – not even its own object. He points out that in order to experience a thought, one does not need any cognitive act directed at it. The thought must only come to the mind and be received there: “experiencing this, namely an act of loving or of understanding, is nothing but reception of the act” (Chatton 1989, 27). In the reception, the activity of the mind is not that which is understood. When a man loves, for example, his experience of this love does not include a thought of this love. Rather, according to Chatton, the soul experiences its love without any thought (*cognitio*) whatsoever simply because the love is in the soul (Chatton 1989, 26).

If self-consciousness has this structure, it follows that there are two kinds of experience. Chatton recognizes this: “the soul experiences something in two ways, since it experiences something as an object and something the way a living subject experiences its own acts” (Chatton 1989, 121 also quoted in translation by Adams 1987, 513). On the one hand, the experience is directed at things, which are the objects of acts of awareness. On the other hand, the experience is also directly about the activity of the soul itself. Chatton’s division between two kinds of experience seems to be closely analogous to certain modern divisions between objective and subjective experience.

In our example, when I turn left to the bridge because I see it there, my visual perception is structured in such a way that its object is the bridge, which I see. However, in the very same experience I also experience my visual perception. From Chatton’s viewpoint, we must draw the picture representing the structure of consciousness so that it includes the experience of the act of awareness. One alternative is the following:

$$S \text{ >-> } O$$

This scheme must be understood so that it includes only three elements: the subject (S), the object (O), and the act of awareness (>->), which involves two different kinds of experience.

As I see it, the difference between Ockham’s model and Chatton’s model is most naturally understood as a difference in how much content the acts of awareness are assumed to have in themselves. Ockham seems to think that an act of awareness is fully transparent, and as such it does not disclose to the subject anything else than the object. When I think of a bridge, this thought is fully transparent: the attention is fully on the bridge and not at all focussed on my own thinking. Consequently, in order to notice the thought itself, I have to look at it as from the outside, by another act of awareness.

It seems that in Chatton’s model, acts of awareness have some kind of qualitative content, and it is this content which is experienced. When I think of a bridge, this means that I experience in my mind an act of awareness, which is a thought about a bridge. I do not have an experience of the bridge

only, but also of the thought, since thoughts have their own subjective qualities. Consequently, I do not need to perceive my thought as an object in order to know it. It is sufficient that I subjectively experience it.

6.4 FURTHER PROBLEMS

Chatton's criticism of Ockham's theory is based on the idea that it is unnecessary to posit separate perceptions of acts of awareness. From his viewpoint, I can evidently know that I think even if I do not perceive my thoughts, because I *experience* my thoughts. Chatton uses Ockham's well known razor to shave off perceptions of thoughts. From his viewpoint, the above-described infinite regress also seems to be a problem for Ockham. Since perceptions of thoughts are not directly experienced any more than perceptions of external objects are, they must also be perceived if the mind is to be aware of them. This creates the infinite regress.

Ockham's response to this type of criticism is fairly simple. He points out that higher-order perceptions are not perceived. The mind sees a stone and sees that it sees a stone, but Ockham assesses that it is impossible for the mind to see that it sees its own seeing. In his *Quodlibet*, he says that the infinite regress does not arise, because the human mind is not infinite. God's mind is, and God has the relevant infinity of thoughts. Ockham thinks that the human mind encounters its natural limit of thinking about thinking already after the second order thoughts, and in any case there is nothing problematic in claiming that there is such a natural limit (*OTh IX*, 80; cf. also *OTh V*, 392–393).

This kind of answer implies that the mind can have acts of awareness that remain unconscious. I am aware of seeing a bridge, when I perceive that I see it. According to Ockham, I am not always aware of perceiving that I see, I am only aware of the things seen. In order to have a conscious awareness of something, it is not sufficient that the thing is present in my mind, since in order to be conscious of perceiving the thing, I have to have a second act of awareness directed at the perception instead of the first object. If I only see the bridge without paying attention to the seeing itself, it may happen that I do not even notice that I see it. Ockham compares this example of an unconscious thought to Augustine's example of the reader who is not aware of what he reads. The thoughts read are present in the mind, but the mind does not perceive them (*OTh IX*, 78–82).

For his part, Chatton faces a difficulty if unconscious thoughts are possible. According to his model, such a case would seem to amount to an experience that is not experienced. For his part, Ockham claims that our general experience clearly shows that we have unconscious acts of awareness.

He thinks that our awareness of our own acts of awareness requires that we want to draw our attention to what we are thinking about (*OTh* VIII, 177–178).

Let us consider a thought experiment. Suppose that a person has only one act of awareness. He is thinking of a stone. Now we can ask him: do you know that you are thinking? According to Ockham, the answer should be negative. He, however, emphasizes that this holds only for the instant of time in which the person has only one thought. At that instant he is thinking only of a stone, and he does not perceive his thought. Only after the question has been posed, the person may want to pay attention to his thoughts. Then he perceives his thought, and because of this perception, he can answer affirmatively to the question (*OTh* V, 387–389).

It seems that Ockham's arguments force Chatton to admit that sometimes one does not notice that one thinks (*non advertit se intelligere*). Chatton explains this phenomenon by saying that, in these cases, the person does not formulate in his mind the statement 'I am thinking'. The person experiences his thought, but still it is not natural to say that he assents that he is thinking, because he does not formulate a separate thought to which this assent (*assensus*) would be given (Chatton 1989, 124–125).

Chatton's explanation is not altogether pacifying. In particular, we have to ask what he means by 'experience'. If he says that a subject can experience a thought without noticing its presence, the experience he speaks of appears quite empty. Does 'experience' signify for him something more than that the subject has the act? Presumably it should, since he claims to disagree with Ockham. And even Ockham accepts that every thought is located in some person's mind, and this location is what makes my thoughts my thoughts. In some such sense to experience a thought is to have it as one's own thought. But should we claim with Chatton that one 'experiences' one's thoughts in some stronger sense, even when one does not even notice the thoughts one 'experiences'? What is it to experience a thought without noticing it, apart from unconsciously having the thought? To make his theory plausible, Chatton would owe us an answer to these dilemmas.

6.5 ADAM WODEHAM'S POSTSCRIPT

Ockham's close disciple Adam Wodeham discusses the debate between Ockham and Chatton in his *Lectura secunda*, dated to the early 1330s (Wodeham 1990, 50–64; *Prol.*, q. 2, a. 2, §9–15). Wodeham's position is close to Ockham's, but his discussion also provides a fitting postscript to the debate.

Wodeham claims that the presence of an act of awareness in the mind is not, as such, a vision, an understanding or an experience of it. When an act of awareness is in the mind, the mind experiences only its object.

Experiencing an act of awareness is to have it as an object of another act of awareness. All experience is, according to Wodeham, experience of an object, and there is no reason to postulate a separate category of subjective experience (Wodeham 1990, 58–60).

For Wodeham, the category of subjective experience seems ontologically problematic. The problem is not that the mind is a separate immaterial entity. His argument is based on a purely formal discussion of the structure of an act of awareness.

For Wodeham, the ontology of an act of awareness contains three entities: the subject, the act of awareness, and the object. Experience is based on the act of awareness, but what is experienced by means of this act, is the object. There seems to be no ontological locus for subjective experience, unless some fourth entity is postulated, but this would mean just returning to Ockham's model, where the awareness of an act of awareness needs a separate act of awareness. Furthermore, the experience achieved through this kind of act is characteristically objective: the thought is perceived as an object (Wodeham 1990, 59).

As empirical evidence against Chatton, Wodeham takes up Augustine's example of the person walking without consciousness of visual perceptions (Wodeham 1990, 59). The basic theme of the example is unconscious acts of awareness, which is just what Ockham discusses. Still, with this example we get a better final grasp of the problem.

I come to the place where the path makes a curve and I see the bridge. I have in my mind an act of awareness, which has the bridge as its object. If I am interested in my environment, I notice that I see the bridge, but if I am deep in my thoughts, I fail to notice that I see the bridge. Our problem is: how do these two cases differ in respect to the structure of the relevant acts of awareness?

In Ockham's model, which is defended by Wodeham, the difference can be explained as follows. In the latter case, my will directs my attention elsewhere, and I do not care to perceive the thoughts connected to what I see. Instead, my will lets these thoughts direct my steps unconsciously. The cognitive structure which is concerned with the bridge and walking towards it lacks reflexivity.

According to Chatton's model, in the latter case I do not formulate thoughts about whether I see something. I perceive the bridge and experience this perception. I am not walking in the dark. However, I do not notice that I experience this perception, because I do not have in my mind a thought like 'I am thinking of a bridge'.

Which model is more plausible? As I see it, Chatton's case is weaker. His model limits the area of unconscious thought either too narrowly or too widely. If self-awareness does not require the separate thought 'I am thinking',

his model has no space for unconscious cognitive activity. If such a separate thought and assent (*assensus*) to it is needed, most of everyday experience seems to fall into the field of unconscious. This seems to be unnecessary. Ockham's case seems stronger since, in his model, awareness of one's own thought requires only inarticulated perception, or intuitive knowledge (*notitia intuitiva*).

It seems that the critics of subjectivity won this battle fought in early fourteenth century.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AUGUSTINE AND DESCARTES ON THE FUNCTION OF ATTENTION IN PERCEPTUAL AWARENESS

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To the extent that ancient and medieval thinkers were even concerned with what we nowadays call perceptual consciousness or awareness, it was in relation to specifying the functions of sensation and its relationship to thought that the matter arose. Sensory awareness was generally thought to be a transitive relationship, awareness of particular things, shared by humans and animals, and, for many, the model for thought in general. Within the Aristotelian tradition, even self-awareness was thought to depend ultimately on the awareness we have of particular objects that impinge upon our senses and provide us, thereby, with the occasion for reflecting on our thoughts, our own particular souls and the nature of the soul in general.¹ The idea that cognition might be at base a passive process was, however, tempered by the desire to acknowledge the active functions of the intellect and, in the animal soul, the activity of the so-called “internal” senses. The temptation to impose divisions within the soul between lower and higher faculties, sensory and intellectual, and between active and passive powers within each faculty, did not arise from chauvinism so much as from a need to demarcate boundaries between what came from without and what was contributed from within, and from the need to make sense of conflict within the soul. Those who succumbed to the temptation were not left with passive accounts of sensation and nor were those who advocated more active theories left denying a passive element in the sensory process. That wasn’t how the logical space was or could be divided.

¹ This picture of self-knowledge as depending on empirical knowledge is elaborately defended by Thomas Aquinas. See, for example, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 87 and *De veritate*, q.10. 8, 9.

The problem was not just one of accounting for how the *forms* of sensible things, the colours, sounds, shapes, textures and so on, passively received into the sensitive part of the soul made it into the intellect without some assistance from the intellect, but rather of accounting for how the intellect avoided being swamped by more sensory information than it could handle. Philosophers have for a long time harboured a suspicion that we perceive more than we could ever notice, and, as a result, one of the traditional if often implicit problems in the theory of perception was the problem of *selective attention*. Partitioning off the sensitive faculties from the intellectual ones offered one mechanism for holding back the tide of sensory forms; invoking the internal senses to structure patterns of salience among sensory data was another. In one form or another, anyone working on sensation was inevitably drawn into identifying some factor that would account for the difference between what an animal passively sensed and what it was aware of, and, if it were the right kind of animal, what it could thereby reason about.

This chapter is an attempt to identify at least two ways in which the nature of attention was historically theorised, one which assigned the mind an active role in structuring patterns of salience among sensory stimuli, and the other which emphasised the passive influences on the mind's attention. In their different approaches to attention, Augustine and Descartes are grappling with a distinctively modern problem: specifying the extent to which attention is stimulus-driven (*exogenous* orienting of attention) or depends on intentional or voluntary factors (*endogenous* orienting of attention) and end up on different sides of the debate. Interestingly, however, they converge on key points, demonstrating in part how hard it is to separate the active and passive elements that orient attention in embodied beings. Both are working out their understanding of the functions of attention without subscribing to the faculty psychology or partitioned-mind models of the Aristotelians, and in such a theoretical framework discriminating purely endogenous versus exogenous factors is unlikely to make much sense. Both agree, moreover, on the essential epistemic role of attention in the acquisition of empirical knowledge and in enabling the mind to identify the being present in clear and distinct ideas, enabling the light of the "inner teacher" to illuminate being for us, as in Augustine's Christianised Platonism, and both, as a result, conceive of self-perfection as in good measure a matter of gaining control over the processes that orient attention. Differences aside, therefore, their mutual interest in attention and in the important role it plays in the acquisition of empirical and non-empirical knowledge unites them in a common project, understanding the processes that make knowledge possible for beings like us "in this life".

7.1 MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

To appreciate the continuity between Augustine and Descartes and modern psychological interest in attention, let us consider how the history of attention is generally presented. Within the history of psychology, interest in attention is typically regarded as beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century with psychologists like Oswald Kulpe, Edward Titchener and William James. As Harold Pashler has argued, these thinkers were concerned with the influence of attention on conscious experience and on the speed of responses to presented stimuli, and with the phenomenon of divided attention.² Their main tool of investigation, *introspection*, proved, however, to be methodologically limited. Unless James (1890) is right that attention and conscious awareness are inextricably related, the method of introspection will not reveal anything interesting about the structure of attentional mechanisms. But behavioural clues, overt signs of inner acts of selection, such as eye movements or postural adjustments, are also not covariant enough to be useful. Shifts of attention are possible without these overt signs. The information-processing models that emerged in the second half of the last century made it possible to theorise about sensation as the flow of information in and out of various subsystems or modules, and to raise the possibility of separate but related functions for attention and awareness. Much of the work being carried out in cognitive psychology on the notion of attention today is concerned with demarcating the functions of attention as part of a functional analysis of a broader network of cognitive processes.

Here are some examples. Within broadly information-theoretic approaches, the function of selective attention is primarily to facilitate the detection and identification of stimuli, and responses to those stimuli.³ Whether attention is coupled with conscious awareness or not is an open question. Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris argue from cases of *change blindness* (our inability to detect large changes to objects and scenes between saccadic eye movements) and *inattention blindness* (our inability to detect large and even dynamic events when our attention is focused elsewhere) to the conclusion that we are not perceptually aware of that which does not receive our focused attention⁴.

² Pashler, Harold E., *The Psychology of Attention* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 5.

³ Kentridge, Robert W., Heywood, Charles A. and Weiskrantz, Lawrence, "Attention without awareness in blindsight", *Proceedings of the Royal Society Series B: Biological Sciences* 266 (1999), 1808–1811, 1805; Pashler 1998, 13.

⁴ Simons, Daniel J. and Chabris, Christopher R., "Gorillas in our midst: Sustained inattention blindness for dynamic events", *Perception* 28 (1999), 1059–1074.

While there have been several studies which support this conclusion that attention is required for conscious awareness of stimuli,⁵ the converse is not obvious. Blindsight subjects with a damaged striate cortex detect, discriminate and respond on demand to stimuli presented in their blind fields despite reporting no awareness whatsoever. Robert Kentridge, Charles Heywood and Lawrence Weiskrantz⁶ were able through cueing experiments to direct the attention of blindsight patients below the threshold of awareness. Interestingly, with attentional direction and a sufficiently salient stimulus, they were able to increase subjects' awareness (albeit still minimal compared to normal perceivers) of stimuli in the blind field. These results are compatible with attention being a necessary condition for awareness, but even this weaker claim about the connection between attention and awareness is in dispute. Michael Posner argues that attention is coupled with awareness only when attention is voluntarily directed.⁷ Pashler argues that the reported if somewhat inconclusive claim by subjects in attention tests that they see more than they can attend to or report seems to support the idea that the domain of awareness is a broader than that of attention.⁸ For example, in whole-report tasks, where subjects are asked to report as many letters or digits as possible from an array flashed before them, subjects often claim having been aware of more than they could discriminate. If these reports are taken at face value, attention and conscious awareness are at best contingently coupled; and even if these reports are not taken at face value, the fact that they are made is interesting and needs to be explained. One conclusion that is supported by studies investigating the relationship between attention and conscious awareness is that without attention, information about the stimulus is not fixed in memory for later use in reasoning or analysis.

The interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors in orienting attention is a fascinating area of psychological research. What is often referred to as "voluntary" control of attention may strike a philosopher as a bit too liberal to deserve the name since it is rarely taken to involve anything like a deliberate or wilful decision to attend to some stimulus. The point is rather to distinguish the effects of attitudes, expectations, goals and incentives, as well as the effects of prior sensory and conceptual processing on attention, in contrast with the effects of events in the sensory field that capture attention on their own. For an everyday illustration of endogenous orienting of attention, consider the following familiar cases. If you are looking

⁵ See, for example, Mack, Arien and Rock, Irvin, *Inattentional Blindness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

⁶ Kentridge, Heywood and Weiskrantz 1999, 1809–1810.

⁷ Posner, Michael, *Cognitive Neuroscience of Attention* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004).

⁸ Pashler 1998, 9.

for someone, then the chances of their standing out from the crowd are greatly enhanced, particularly if they contribute with some wild arm-waving. If you are not looking for them but are engaged in some other task, then chances are not even wild arm-waving in the focal area will do the trick. This is not to say that attention cannot be captured by a stimulus without any voluntary expectations in place, although it is very hard to test for.⁹ Some psychologists have argued that involuntary (*exogenous*) shifts of attention are the exception rather than the norm and tend to be linked to novel or unexpected events in predictable sequences of stimuli. These events cause orienting responses, changes in eye and head movements that facilitate the acquisition of new sensory information.¹⁰ It appears that where subjects have no incentive to avoid orienting, their orienting responses are drawn to novel stimuli.¹¹ But according to some, it is the interplay of endogenous and exogenous attentional mechanisms that are most often responsible for capturing attention in everyday life.¹² Conceptual or imagistic processing prior to a task has been found, for example, to prime subjects to search for instances of the concept or image, even when it is disadvantageous to the new task they are set.¹³ If you're told not to think of an elephant, not only will you think of an elephant but, whether you want to or not, you'll also start to look for one. These two approaches (top down and bottom up) are not, however, incompatible. With repeated stimulation, the predictable features of scenes increase, and, one would expect, increase the capacity for endogenous influences on attention.

At the level of theory building, psychologists divide on whether selective attention occurs prior to, and contributes to, the identification of stimuli

⁹ Franconeri, Steven L., Simons, Daniel J. and Junge, Justin A. ("Searching for stimulus-driven shifts of attention", *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review* 11 (2004), 876) point out that the problem for psychologists attempting to test whether or not attention can be driven solely by properties of the stimulus lies with excluding the possibility that the search task itself induces "a top-down incentive to intentionally prioritize dynamic events". By running experiments in which subjects were given no reason to anticipate a dynamic event accompanying a new search, they showed that some dynamic events capture attention even when there is no reason to prioritise them, although the absence of all top-down influences is, they admit, probably impossible to establish.

¹⁰ Hinde, Robert A., *Animal Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966); Rohrbaugh, John W., "The orienting reflex", in R. Parasuraman and D.R. Davies (eds.), *Varieties of Attention* (New York: Academic Press, 1984), 323–373; Pashler 1998, 245.

¹¹ Berlyne, Daniel E., "Attention to change, conditioned inhibition, and stimulus satiation", *British Journal of Psychology* 48 (1957), 138–140.

¹² Serences, John T., Shomstein, Sarah, Leber, Andrew B., Golay, Xavier, Egeth, Howard E. and Yantis, Steven, "Co-ordination of voluntary and stimulus-driven attentional control in human cortex", *Psychological Science* 16 (2005), 114.

¹³ Pashler 1998, 249–250.

(*early selection theories*)¹⁴ or is posterior to the identification of stimuli and functions to make them accessible for conscious awareness, memory and response (*late selection theories*).¹⁵ Early selection theories see the massive amount of sensory input as competing for limited processing resources and attention as the mechanism that resolves this conflict. On late selection theories, identification of stimuli as falling into familiar categories is not an attentional matter. Failures of recognition or identification of stimuli are not failures of attention. These are theories at opposite ends of a spectrum of theories, with other theories representing more of a compromise between the two extremes. Some argue, for example, that unattended stimuli are partially identified;¹⁶ others that when attention is divided, stimuli are identified more slowly because of having to share processing resources.¹⁷ The common assumption in all these models, however, is that attention is some sort of filtering mechanism, which determines either what stimuli are identified as relevant by the system at all or which already or partially categorised stimuli make it into other subsystems for further processing, storage and manipulation. Although the conceptual apparatus used in modern information-theoretic approaches is new, this assumption that attention provides a filter for sensory information has late antique and early modern adherents.

7.2 AUGUSTINE

1. *Augustine's theory of perception.* Before we turn to how questions concerning attention arose in Augustine's theory of perception, it is necessary to situate the notion in his broader theory of perception. A starting point for ancient and medieval theories of sense perception was the idea that all sensing was basically a form of touch. Something had to account for how it was possible to sense objects at a distance from the perceiver (without allowing action at a distance) and modelling all perception on touch offered an escape from this quandary. Some, including Augustine, carried the metaphor further than others, particularly in relation to vision. Theorists influenced by Plato flirted with the idea

¹⁴ See, e.g., Broadbent, Donald E., *Perception and Communication* (London: Pergamon Press, 1958).

¹⁵ See, e.g., Deutsch, J. Anthony and Deutsch, Diana, "Attention: Some theoretical considerations", *Psychological Review* 70 (1963), 80–90; MacKay, Donald M., "Visual stability and voluntary eye movements", in R. Jung (ed.), *Handbook of Sensory Physiology* 8, 3 (Berlin: Springer, 1973), 307–331; Duncan, John, "The demonstration of capacity limitation", *Cognitive Psychology* 12 (1980), 75–96 and Pashler 1998, 14–17.

¹⁶ Treisman, A., "Contextual cues in selective listening", *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 12 (1960), 242–248.

¹⁷ Kahneman, Daniel, *Attention and Effort* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1973).

that visual sensing is initiated by the eyes sending forth rays of light which, when mixed with external rays of light, produce a new body that touches the visible object. For Plato in the *Timaeus*, motions from the visible object resonate back through this body and mix with the emanations from the eyes accounting for the impression the object makes on the soul.¹⁸ Sensation is the product of these motions from the visible object and the counter-motions produced by the soul. Although other traditions favoured the idea of touch as the model for sensation generally, few were attracted to the “extramission” or “ray” theory of vision. Considerations of parsimony more than anything else made the idea of emanations from the eyes implausible. As Jack Macintosh has argued, by the thirteenth century a consensus had formed around the idea that since something had to come to the soul from the visible object – the form or visible species – and when there is light the emanations from the object are continuously present, there is no need to assume that something comes from the eye in addition.¹⁹ When it is sufficiently well lit, the medium itself became, on Aristotelian theories, for example, the body through which a human being touches a distant visible object. It is the medium that makes it possible for the soul to come into *direct* contact with the form of the visible object because it is the form that is impressed upon the medium at each successive point. But how the soul sees by receiving a form from the medium which it does not see and at the point at which it could not see anything (where the retina meets the medium) could be argued to be a case of one mystery replaced by others.

Augustine was impressed by the Platonic theory of vision and in particular with the idea that perception is the product of motions from the visible object and counter-motions from the soul. Sensory awareness just is the soul’s awareness of changes in this extended body caused by the sensory stimulus in conjunction with the counter-motions produced by the soul (*quant. an.* 41; 48).²⁰

¹⁸ *Timaeus*, 45b–46c; 67c–68a.

¹⁹ MacIntosh, Jack, “Perception and imagination in Descartes, Boyle and Hooke”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 31 (1983), 329.

²⁰ I have adopted the general practice of referencing the works of Augustine and Descartes. Abbreviations of Augustine’s texts from the *Patrologiae Latinae*, edited by J.-P. Migne, Vols. 32–47 (Paris: Jacques-Paul Migne, 1844–55), hereafter PL, used in this article are as follows:

<i>c. Acad.</i>	<i>contra Academicos</i> PL 32
<i>civ.</i>	<i>de civitate dei</i> PL 41
<i>conf.</i>	<i>confessiones</i> PL 32
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>de Genesi ad litteram</i> PL 34
<i>lib. arb.</i>	<i>de libero arbitrio</i> PL 32
<i>mag.</i>	<i>de magistro</i> PL 32
<i>mus.</i>	<i>de musica</i> PL 32
<i>ord.</i>	<i>de ordine</i> PL 32

Augustine's endorsement of the extramission theory of vision is, as Gerard O'Daly has argued, part of a broader commitment to the primacy of touch as the model for understanding all sensory modalities.²¹ The emanations from the eyes occur at great speed arriving almost instantaneously at the objects seen even if they are very far away (*ser.* 277.10; *ep.* 137.8; *quant. an.* 43). Augustine seems to have been motivated in part at least by mechanical considerations – the eyes can neither see themselves nor things immediately pressed upon their surfaces and so the soul must traverse a space in order to see an object. Because a perception is the product of the soul moving the body in a manner counter to the motion produced in the body by the stimulus, it can occur only in those parts of the body permeated with enough fine matter or air (the *pneuma*) to not resist the soul's causing a movement there. It is for the latter reason that we only feel what happens in the soft tissue of the body and not in places like hair or toenails (*mus.* 6.15). Augustine locates the act of sensing at the point where the rays meet the object (*quant. an.* 43). O'Daly points out that it is not the eyes that for Augustine sense but the sight they produce, which occurs at the point of contact with the object.²² Just as we say that we touch an object with the end of a stick and *at* the end of the stick even though that isn't where our hands are, so too we can say that we see an object where the emanations from the eyes meet the visible object, even though the eyes themselves are located elsewhere. The eyes “exercise sensation where they are not, or, rather, [. . .] they are acted on where they are not” (*quant. an.* 59; trans. Colleran 1950, 86).

2. *Augustine on attention.* The active quality of sense perception on the Augustinian account is needed not only to explain those modes of perception whose object is spatially distant, but also to account for the phenomenon of attention. Augustine presses the Trinitarian model to work in the analysis of sense perception by distinguishing between three components of visual sensation: the visible object, the vision – “the sense informed by the object that is perceived” – and a third, active element which is proper to the

<i>quant. an.</i>	<i>de quantitate animae</i> PL 32
<i>retr.</i>	<i>retractationes</i> PL 32
<i>ser.</i>	<i>sermones</i> PL 38–39
<i>trin.</i>	<i>de trinitate</i> PL 42

References to Descartes' texts are from *Œuvres de Descartes*, 12 volumes, edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (1897–1913), hereafter AT. Translations of Augustine have been borrowed from various sources as indicated. Unless otherwise stated, translations of Descartes' texts are my own.

²¹ O'Daly, Gerard, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 82.

²² O'Daly 1987, 82–83.

mind alone, *attention* or *intention*. Attention is “the power that fixes the sense of sight on the object that is seen as long as it is seen, namely the attention of the mind” (*trin.* 11.2; trans. McKenna 1963, 316).²³ That attention is a function of the mind can be seen from the fact that it can be directed voluntarily even when the bodily sense is not functioning, as witnessed in those who may still try to see even though their sight has been lost (*trin.* 11.2). The attention of the mind is not the same as the form impressing itself upon the sense but a *voluntas* which “directs the sense to the sensible thing and keeps the vision itself fixed upon it” (*trin.* 11.5; trans. McKenna 1963, 321). There is thus a passive and an active component in ordinary perception. The change the body undergoes when a sense is affected by an external object and of which the mind is aware is, at some level of description, a *passio corporis* (*quant. an.* 48). But rather than see the external cause of a sensory stimulus and the passive bodily reception of an image as occurring prior to the mind’s awareness as distinct elements, we should see them as parts of the same unified process, on account of which we judge that we see the external object and not merely the image. Attention unites the image of the visible object and the form of the body seen so closely that they can hardly be separated “except when reason intervenes as a judge” (*trin.* 11.5; trans. McKenna 1963, 321).

Augustine’s language suggests to a modern ear that every act of sensing is an act of will, but we need to be careful about what we read into this discussion. It is highly contentious whether Augustine’s will is anything like that which later medievals (e.g. Anselm) would recognise. If nothing else, it is a broader concept which incorporates a range of intentional, cognitive or emotional attitudes. Augustine’s use of ‘voluntas’ is closer to what contemporary psychologists refer to as the “voluntary” orienting of attention, and what he is really trying to articulate is a theory of how attention is endogenously oriented. Whether the wilful attention involved in perception amounts to anything like an act of *assent* to an impression or proposition is unlikely, and it would be wrong to think that conflicting sensations, say between a visual and tactile impression of one and the same object, would divide the soul against itself.²⁴ Augustine seems keen to establish only that attention belongs to the mind, in contrast with the images impressed on the

²³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. S. McKenna (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1963).

²⁴ False recollections, ones in which we are confused as to whether we actually experienced what we “recall” (like Pythagoras’ recollections of experiences from a previous life), are further evidence of the mind’s capacity for productive or creative (though not necessarily intentional) attention to images drawn from memory (*trin.* 12.24).

body through the sense organs, and that it is a power by which the mind is directed to objects that impinge upon the senses. When attention is particularly violent, for example, it may be called love, or desire, or passion, suggesting that *voluntas* is closer to the emotions than a deliberate judgement (*trin.* 11.5). Augustine generally conflates the notion of willing with notions for emotions like desire and joy, fear and grief (*Gn. litt.* 9.14.25; *civ.* 14.6; O'Daly 1987, 89). Attention can be directed because of our natural incentives to pursue or avoid certain things, incentives which make some stimuli more salient or relevant than others.

Attention may be directed to a stimulus either because it is one we desire or because it is one we desire to avoid. The latter incentive, Augustine suggests, makes certain kinds of sensory stimuli particularly impelling to the mind's attention.

But these impressions of images are produced not only when the will is directed towards such things by desiring them, but also when the mind, in order to avoid them and to be on its guard against them, is impelled to look upon them so as to flee from them. Accordingly, not only desire but also fear causes the senses of the body to be informed by sensible things, and the eye of the mind by the images of sensible things. And, therefore, the more vehement the fear or the desire, the more clearly is the eye informed, whether in the case of him who experiences the sensation from the body that lies close to him in place, or in the case of him who conceives from the image of the body which is contained in the memory. (*trin.* 11.7; trans. McKenna 1963, 325)

The attention of the mind is the most powerful influence the mind has over the body. So great is its "influence in turning and changing the quality of the garment [the body]" that it can distract us from normal perception and normal functioning, make us cry out as if we were in distress or pain, and make perceptions recalled or composed from memory seem as real as if they were currently derived from the activity of the sense organs (*trin.* 11.7; *Gn. litt.* 12.12.25). Given this influence, it is not surprising that control over attention is of paramount importance to the person seeking mastery over bodily influences on behaviour. To see this, however, we need first to understand the relationship between attention and memory.

The functions of attention are inseparable from those of memory, both long-term and short-term or working memory. When the mind voluntarily turns its gaze to species stored in (long-term) memory so as to be "formed by it from within" rather than from without by a body presented to the senses, its attention again plays the role of unifying two elements: a memory (more precisely, a species stored in memory) and an "inner vision", the likeness of the object originally perceived formed in "the eye of the mind" that remembers (*trin.* 11.6). Attention is the lynchpin of this second trinity of the

outer person, albeit one more “interior” than the trinity of the sensible object, sensory image and attention.²⁵ But memory is also involved in every perception, no matter how short. Unlike mere sensation, perception, which involves the mind’s enduring awareness of sensible forms, involves attention and, as a result, memory. Every perception has duration and memory is required to hold the temporal parts of the perceived object, parts that cannot be perceived simultaneously, together. The functions of attention are inseparable from those of this working memory. It is not the stimulus which holds our attention, for that is constantly passing away, but the mind which actively stores and recalls these fleeting images of temporal and spatial parts of objects, giving us the experience of one and the same object enduring through time and across space.

Therefore, although we first see an object which we had not previously seen, and from that moment its image, by means of which we can recollect it when it is not there, begins to be in our mind, it is not the object which produces the same image of it in the mind, but the mind itself which produces it in itself with singular rapidity . . . as soon as it has been seen by the eyes, its image is formed in the percipient’s mind before an instant of time has elapsed. (*Gn. litt.* 12.16.33; trans. O’Daly 1987, 88)

Memory is thus involved in all acts of perceptual awareness but also in all acts of understanding corporeal things that we have not personally experienced from descriptions by others, for when they relate their experiences to us, we can only understand them by recalling forms drawn from our own experience (*trin.* 11.14).

3. *Attention and self-control.* It is through this connection between attention and memory that the mind is able, within limits, to direct the movements of the body and affect what it is aware of. The *voluntas* that combines body and sense, on the one hand, and memory and sense, on the other, can also divide and separate them. The mind can to some extent separate a sense from the perceptible bodies by averting the gaze of the eyes or turning away any of the other senses. Augustine suggests that the limitations on this process depend in part on the severity of the stimulus. Excessive pain, for example, may leave no act for the mind but endurance. The mind’s attention can also be directed away from a sensory stimulus through the separation of memory from sense when the mind is intent on some other task. This is the phenomenon of distraction.

²⁵ Teske, Roland, “Augustine’s theory of memory”, in E. Stump and N. Kretzman (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001b), 155.

[F]or when someone is speaking to us and we are thinking of something else, it often appears as if we had not heard him. But this is not true; we did hear, but we did not remember, because the speaker's words slipped immediately away from the perception of our ears, being diverted elsewhere by a command of the will which is wont to fix them in memory. And, therefore, when something of the kind occurs, it would be more correct to say, "We did not remember", rather than, "We did not hear". (*trin.* 11.15, trans. McKenna 1963, 336)

The soul's ability to separate sensation and memory is important, Augustine goes on to explain, because in those tasks which we perform automatically, the task could not be performed, or performed so easily, without sensation, but memory need not always be unduly occupied in the process.

So, too, people while walking, whose will is fixed on something else, do not know where they have got to; for if they had not seen, they would not have walked to this place, or they would have felt their way while walking with greater attention, especially if they passed through unknown places; but because they walked easily, they certainly saw; yet because the memory was not applied to the sense itself in the same way as the sense of the eyes was applied to the places through which they had passed, they could in no way recall even the last thing that they had seen. Hence, to wish to turn the gaze of the mind away from that which is in the memory means nothing else than to not think of it. (*trin.* 11.15; trans. McKenna 1963, 337)

In performing a routine task, like walking a familiar route, attention to the presented stimuli is not necessary, nor is any cognitive processing requiring the use of memory. Is conscious awareness required? It would be strange indeed to think that a person performing a routine task without attending to it was unconscious or completely unaware of the objects in the environment they manage to negotiate so easily. And yet it certainly *seems* to us as if we have not been aware of what we are doing. Could such tasks also be performed without some classification of the stimulus? Augustine's example suggests that attention is not necessary for sensory awareness. Awareness that is not coupled with attention is not awareness of a stimulus that we can recall, not even immediately afterwards, because our awareness does not utilise the resources of memory sufficiently for any full-blown identification of the stimuli. But if attention is required to unite an image of the object with a species in memory, it seems that classification of the stimulus is also not required for tasks performed automatically.

Augustine's discussion of distraction is interesting and a little mysterious. The account is puzzling because the explanation of distraction suggests a passive form of sensation, and yet Augustine is generally adamant that the soul is not acted on by the body through sensation but rather that sensation occurs because the soul pays attention to the actions undergone by the body

(*mus.* 6.5.8–10; *Gn. litt.* 7.19.25). If distraction is not a case of divided attention rather than absent attention to incoming stimuli, it follows that sense impressions can exercise some degree of control over behaviour with neither attention nor classification of the stimuli. This reading is consistent with Augustine reserving the name ‘perception’ for those cases where sense and memory are united through attention. But whether sense could exercise control over behaviour without classification of the stimulus is highly dubious, and Augustine’s usual approach to classification requires attention to unite sense with a form stored in memory, consistent with an “early selectional” approach. Another possibility is that in cases of distraction, the mind attends sufficiently to know that *something* is happening to the body, something is being said, without attending sufficiently to complete the processes required for *specific* classification. The separation of memory and sense that occurs through a lack of attention would, on this (in my view, less plausible in the absence of clear supporting texts) reading, be a matter of attention being divided but primarily occupied by something else, which makes it difficult to attend to a stimulus to a degree sufficient to unite it with a definite form in memory, and creating, thereby, the impression of the sensation “slipping away” before being adequately categorised. This would be consistent with Augustine subscribing to the view that unattended stimuli might be partially categorised or categorised more slowly than attended stimuli (sufficiently so though for practical purposes) because of the competition for the limited resources of attention and memory. Whichever way we go on this issue, the importance of attention for our ability to rationally manipulate sensory inputs is clear, since without attention and the associated functions of memory, we cannot recall what it is that we have seen or heard, and what, therefore, could function as a reason in our deliberations or object of scientific inquiry.

4. *Attention and empirical knowledge.* The capacity of the mind to direct its attention offers it a degree of cognitive freedom from the overwhelming flow of sensory information to which it is continually subjected, and to engage in scientific inquiry and the contemplation of eternal truths. Distraction is unlikely to be an effective means of acquiring this distance if it is directly willed; indeed, any deliberate attempt to shut off the normal effects of memory may be counterproductive. (Consider trying to instruct *yourself* not to think of an elephant.) In any case, complete dissociation from our senses is not necessary for us to perceive the Truth, even when it “resides in us”. What is important is for us to recognise that the sources of knowledge are neither things that are presented to the senses nor words spoken in testimonials from others, but an “inner Truth” (*mag.* 11.38). Just as we see corporeal things by means of the external light, so too we see intelligible things, to which our souls are joined by God, by a kind of incorporeal

light within us (*trin.* 12.24). But although the soul is created to be “receptive” to this light, it is not passive in its knowledge; it requires instead a willed orientation and rational love of the mind toward the object of knowledge (*trin.* 10.11). O’Daly notes the way the following passage explicates the groundwork for the mind’s apprehending truths:

Because [the mind] is an intelligible nature and is joined (*connectitur*) not only to intelligible but also to immutable objects, and has been formed in an arrangement such that when it directs itself towards those objects with which it is linked, or towards itself, it gives a true report concerning these, to the extent that it sees them. (*retr.* 1.8.2; trans. O’Daly 1987, 202)

True empirical knowledge consists not, therefore, in uniting, through attention, an image and a form present in memory, such as is sufficient for a veridical perception of a corporeal thing, but an active “attending to itself” of the mind (*c. Acad.* 1.23; O’Daly 1987, 208) or “turning towards” God and the truth contained within the mind (*ord.* 1.22). Discovering the truth about how the mind functions and where knowledge arises from depends, therefore, on understanding the relation between sense, memory and the truths that are in memory, and needs only to be actualised to be known. In the quick student, the truth can be so quickly perceived and committed to memory upon the occasion of the lecturer’s words that she will be inclined to mistake those words, rather than the inner Teacher, for the source of her knowledge (*mag.* 14.45). Augustine’s “illumination theory” of knowledge of a priori principles does not, however, keep him from recognising the importance of acquaintance with sensory particulars in the acquisition of empirical knowledge. We must make use of our experience and history to uncover the realm of intelligible being discoverable through our perceptual experiences so as to understand the natural world.

One place where we see this strong connection between attention and the acquisition of empirical knowledge is in Augustine’s comparison between attentional mechanisms in animals and humans. As in humans, animals too are capable of endogenous orienting of attention: viz., of directing their attention to changes in their bodies caused by sensory stimuli and even of becoming aware of their senses and the state of activity of their senses. An animal could “in no way open its eye and move it to look at what it desired to see unless when the eye was closed or not so moved, it perceived that it did not see it” (*lib. arb.* 2.10). Since no sense perceives itself, a special internal sense, the *sensus communis*, is invoked to explain an animal’s ability to be aware of events occurring within the external senses (or of what it is not sensing) (*lib. arb.* 2.8; O’Daly 1987, 90). The function of the common sense is to produce “judgements” about what is sensed in order to guide certain kinds of pursuit or avoidance behaviour (*lib. arb.* 2.8–13). These judgements,

like the judgements of rational agents, also draw on the resources of memory, by means of which animals recognise stimuli and act appropriately (*Gn. litt.* 12.9.20). These judgements are not the rational judgements humans make about the proper objects of the senses, and if they involve assent, it is a kind of assent not to be equated with that given in rational judgement. At least in Augustine's early writings, the common sense, by means of which an animal is aware of the sensations it derives from its external senses, is common to humans and animals.²⁶

If some mode of awareness and indeed, endogenous orienting of attention within the sensorium, is common to animals and humans, what is distinctively human is the kind of heightened awareness that is made possible through the attention of the mind, and which makes rational thought about the contents of perception possible.

Even beasts can perceive corporeal things outwardly through the senses of the body, can recall them when they are fixed in the memory, can seek for what is beneficial in them, and flee from what is unpleasant. But to make note of them, to retain them not only as caught up naturally, but also as deliberately committed to the memory, and to impress them again by remembrance and reflection, when they are gradually slipping away into forgetfulness, in order that, as the thought is formed from that which the memory bears, so too this very same thing, which is in the memory, may be firmly fixed in thought; to combine also imaginary visions by taking pieces of recollection from here and there and, as it were, sewing them together, to see how in this kind of thing the probable differs from the true, and this not in spiritual but in corporeal things themselves – these and similar operations, although performed in sensible things, and in those which the mind has drawn from them through the sense of the body, are yet not lacking in reason, nor are they common to men and beasts. (*trin.* 12.2; trans. McKenna 1963, 344)

The similarities between humans and animals disappear when the functions of sense, attention and memory are considered in relation to the broader spectrum of epistemic functions in each. The ability of humans to return to

²⁶ On the importance of the common sense in Augustine's theory of perception and whether he retains the notion in later texts, see O'Daly's excellent discussion (O'Daly 1987, 91–92). O'Daly argues that attention is Augustine's "new formulation of the concept of the internal sense's reflexive power" (O'Daly 1987, 91). It is, however, likely that attention and the *sensus communis* are two powers. Consider, for example, the performance of automatic tasks without attention. It seems reasonable to allow that our ability to perform such tasks successfully presupposes the effective co-ordination of sensory information by the common sense, even though no attention is involved. Augustine's account of distraction is not, however, entirely clear or convincing for reasons outlined earlier in this chapter.

the contents of memory, to draw connections between thoughts not naturally connected, to fixate on a subject beyond what is needed for survival, and to examine the limits of concepts through consideration of *possibilia*, is here described as indistinguishable from their reason. The images of corporeal things may be caught in the net of attention “naturally” in either humans or animals, but it is only in humans that attention is within our control sufficiently so as to make possible our conceiving of combined forms not found in nature and of the realm of possibility generally. Animals seem to have a kind of knowledge, as when the dog recognises his master after 20 years (*quant. an.* 26), but this is not knowledge proper but only a semblance of knowledge (*civ.* 11.27). The recognitional capacities of animals presuppose only the functions of sense and memory whereas the recognitional capacities of humans presuppose access to the intelligible objects with which the human mind is joined and which serve as the standard for judging the truth or falsity of sense perceptions.

Knowledge of the natural world, one of the proper functions of human souls, is not, therefore, reducible to our passive reception of the eternal exemplars, Ideas in the mind of God. We must use experience and reason to guide us as well as the freedom of the mind to direct its attention inward, to the real source of truth. Our natural ability to make reasonable predictions about the future is not grounded in our knowledge of eternal exemplars, per se, as if we were prophets or soothsayers, but in our ordinary perceptions of events and relations among them (*trin.* 4.21). Scientific knowledge depends on the processes of sense, attention and memory. It is not derived from that “unchangeable wisdom, but from the history of times and places” (*trin.* 4.21); from the mind orienting attention to the “belly” of memory which stores images of corporeal things for later recollection and reflection, and feeding what it learns from the encounter with itself into the various branches of empirical knowledge (*trin.* 12.24).

7.3 DESCARTES

1. *Descartes and wonder.* Like Augustine, Descartes recognises the importance of attention for a proper account of sensation and also the importance of the notion for showing how scientific knowledge is possible. Something has to account for which information from the vast amount available from the senses is stored in memory, identified and made available for the mind’s consideration. Both thinkers attempt to conceptualise the nature and function of perception in the context of a dualism between the mind and the body, and both want to preserve a degree of independence of the mind from the body in accounting for what, if anything, is known through sensation,

namely the principles of nature and laws of numbers and measurement (*conf.* 10.19; compare Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* IV, 203; AT VIIIA, 325–326). The mind, for Descartes, needs also to be “attentive” if it is to perceive what is clear and distinct in its ideas (*Principles of Philosophy* I, 45; AT VIIIA, 21–22). But in the theory of perception, Descartes is more inclined to treat attention as exogenously controlled. It is a passion, wonder (*l'admiration*), which is primarily responsible for orienting attention rather than any action of the soul. We should, however, view this as primarily a difference in emphasis between endogenous and exogenous factors. Perceptual and cognitive priming, as well as other tasks or thoughts the mind is engaged in performing, endogenous factors, will also contribute to what, in a given situation, the mind finds salient.

The mind is, for Descartes, the kind of thing that can be acted upon by the body. Being “a sudden surprise of the soul which makes that it [the soul] carries itself *to consider with attention the objects that seem to it rare or extraordinary*”, wonder is, in the first instance, a reaction to a novel or marvellous stimulus (AT XI, 380; my emphasis). Like the modern notion of attention, wonder, for Descartes, acts as a filter on sensory information. Unless accompanied by wonder, or by an act of will, sensory information will not be preserved in memory at all, and so will escape both classification and consideration by the mind.

For when a thing which was unknown to us presents itself anew to our understanding or our senses, we do not retain it at all in our memory unless the idea we have is fortified in our brain by some passion [wonder], or by the application of our understanding that our will determines to one attention and reflection in particular. (AT XI, 384)

Although this passage suggests that attention may have either a passive or an active source, the tenor of Descartes' discussion is such that it is the passive source that he thinks of as primary. The will is able to recall things that are stored in memory and to attend to objects of sensation but *noticing* something unusual or different in the first place depends on a stimulus interrupting a familiar pattern of stimulation and expectation. Such familiar patterns have their physical reality in hardened patterns of grooves in the brain, which cause the animal spirits, those fine particles of matter that flow through the nerves, to flow through lazily and not draw attention. Novel stimuli, by contrast, affect untrammelled softer regions of the brain causing rapid movements among the animal spirits, and, in turn, produce wonder in the soul (AT XI, 381–382). If the will is to fix the sense organs and the muscles in a state of attention on an object it wishes to consider, it must have some way of mimicking the effects of wonder on the body. The will can only, moreover, apply the understanding to a stimulus if it has some representation

of the stimulus presented to it. Willing, as Descartes explains to Regius, is impossible without understanding what we will. Willing is to understanding as activity and passivity of one and the same rational substance are to each other (AT III, 372). It is only through the passion of wonder that the mind can be pre-conceptually drawn to objects.

Wonder is the “first of all the passions” because it presupposes no prior knowledge of the object as beneficial or harmful (AT XI, 373). There is reason to suspect also that wonder presupposes no knowledge of the object at all. It may seem as if some minimal conceptualisation of the object “as rare or extraordinary” must take place for the mind’s attention to be captured, but it is important to see that it is not this conceptualisation that motivates the attention of the mind. Coming to see an object as rare or extraordinary is the effect of wonder rather than its cause. Wonder is the “sudden surprise” of the soul caused by the effects of a new stimulus on the brain rather than a passion caused by the soul’s understanding that the object does not fit its already tried and true perceptual categories. Although Descartes is elsewhere happy to talk of images in the corporeal imagination as “ideas” insofar as they “give form to the mind itself” (AT VII, 161), it would be wrong to suppose that this means that sensory stimuli are semantically categorised in the brain and pre-packaged for shipment to the soul, or that all the effects on the soul of images in the brain are representational. The discussion of wonder suggests that the soul is drawn to consider something primarily because it is presented with something it hasn’t yet categorised, in virtue of which it is taken by surprise.

If this interpretation is correct, Descartes is friendly both to the idea that attention is, at least in those cases where it is oriented through a passion, stimulus-driven, and to the idea that attention selects stimuli “early”, that is, prior to conceptualisation and is indeed part of the story about how the stimulus comes to be conceptualised. The domain of sensory awareness is, for Descartes, broader than the domain of attention because it includes those familiar things that the mind receives without finding novel or interesting. Perceptual attention is not “voluntary” in Descartes’ theory of mind, which includes a robust conception of a will according to which the acts of the soul are acts of assent and dissent to judgements or actions. Augustine’s acts of attention are, however, closely related to emotions, and, in this regard, both can be seen as having been sensitive to the extent to which the functions of emotions and sensations are interrelated. Descartes’ account of the relationship between attention and memory is similar to Augustine’s in an important respect: attention is necessary to activate working memory long enough for the stimulus to be classified. Wonder is, moreover, for Descartes, the “first passion” in the sense of being that upon which

all other passions depend. If the stimulus is accompanied by pleasure or pain, the subsequent classification will include some evaluation and wonder will transform into one of its species, esteem or contempt, depending on whether the object is viewed as great or not, or give way to other passions, such as desire, love, hatred, joy and sadness, the six “primitive” passions, their species, or combinations of primitives (*Passions of the Soul*, articles 53–61; AT XI, 373–376). In Descartes’ moral psychology, control over the passion of wonder is thus crucial: controlling what we esteem is ultimately our only means of controlling all our other passions that depend upon what we value.

2. *Wonder, self-control and empirical knowledge.* By rendering attention a function of a passion rather than of an action of the soul, Descartes, unlike Augustine, might seem to be making the noblest part of the human being, the rational soul, dependent upon and subject to changes that take place in the body over which the mind has no direct control. Although the Cartesian soul is often affected by the body and its will has no direct control over the passions (AT XI, 359–360), there are steps the mind can take to minimise its passivity by minimising its opportunities for wonder. Wonder is most useful for preserving the union of mind and body but can impede the functions of reason and will. The primary function of wonder is to draw the attention of the mind to new experiences of corporeal things, performance of which enables us to adapt to changing circumstances.

One is able to say (of wonder, *l’admiration*) in part that it is useful in that it makes us learn and retain in our memory things we have hitherto ignored, for we wonder only at that which appears to us rare and extraordinary, and something is able to appear thus to us only because we have been ignorant of it or it is different from the things we have known. For it is this difference that makes it that which one calls extraordinary. (AT XI, 384)

It is in this way that wonder contributes to the preservation of the human being. But too much wonder or wonder directed at the wrong things – the seemingly inexplicable marvels of nature or novelties for their own sake – is likely to do more harm than good. Ultimately, the rational soul must strive to free itself from wonder and enable its will to take over the functions of attention. Too much wonder, *astonishment*, is a bad thing, for it renders the body immobile and impedes appropriate action and investigation (*Passions of the Soul*, articles 73, 78; AT XI, 383, 386), but a deficiency of wonder is, on the other hand, associated with stupidity (*Passions of the Soul*, article 77; AT XI, 385–386). Freeing ourselves from wonder is the same process by which we acquire knowledge of corporeal things, for it is only what we are ignorant of that we wonder at for very long. So at the same time as wonder motivates us to engage in scientific investigation, it also motivates us to seek

ways to make wonder cease. As Descartes' character, Eudoxus, explains to Polyander ("Everyman") in *The Search After Truth*, a proper understanding of mechanics is the key to unlocking the secrets of nature and dispelling an inappropriate wonder.²⁷ In this endeavour, the task is to begin by seeking explanations of those things that *most* capture attention, that most defy our ordinary empirical explanations:

I confess, also, that it would be impossible to discuss in detail all of those (rare and recondite things). For it would be necessary, in the first place, to have researched all the herbs and stones that come from the Indies, it would be necessary to have seen the Phoenix, and in short not to be ignorant of any of the more strange things in nature. But I shall believe that I have sufficiently fulfilled my promise if in explaining to you the truths which can be deduced from ordinary things and things known to each one, I make you capable of discovering for yourself all the others, when it will please you to take the trouble to look for them. (AT X, 503)

A similar point is made in the *Passions of the Soul* at article 76 (AT XI, 385). There is no remedy for excessive wonder other than "to acquire the knowledge of many things and to exercise yourself in the consideration of all those things which may seem to you most rare and most strange" (AT XI, 385). The marvellous and seemingly inexplicable things of nature are appropriate sources of wonder only to the point that they make us see what is wrong with existing scientific theories that fail to explain them. They are thus limiting cases for a theory and that they capture attention is a sign of our ignorance rather than a sign of any enduring value. By applying mechanical principles Descartes believes that he can explain most of the wondrous things, such as those listed earlier, which cannot be explained by the sciences of the ancients. Since explaining ordinary phenomena can only be easier, this will stand as evidence for the universality of mechanics as a science of nature.

In his account of the epistemological functions of wonder, Descartes is echoing both Aristotelian and Augustinian themes. In accordance with Aristotle's remarks at *Metaphysics* (I. 2 982b11–28), that wonder is the beginning of philosophy, Descartes sees in wonder the beginnings of science. But Descartes is opposed to wonder for its own sake and here his concerns are reminiscent of Augustine's worry that curiosity is a vice of the learned who seek to know what doesn't concern them, or which it is useless to know, simply for the sake of knowing (*conf.* 10.35). Virtuous wonder or awe is, by

²⁷ For a very interesting discussion of the subject of wonder and its role in Descartes' account of empirical knowledge, see Schmitter, Amy, "Descartes and the primacy of practice: The role of the passions in the search after truth", *Philosophical Studies* 108, 1–2 (2002), 99–108.

contrast, useful because it directs the mind's attention to the marvels of creation (*civ.* 21.6). But because attention is, for Augustine, an active power of the mind, it does not strive for its own extinction. There is something analogous to this notion of attention in Descartes' philosophy, namely the will, but wonder that is stimulated by corporeal things and affects the very structure of the brain remains for Descartes a means to an end. Descartes does not, however, conceive of the embodied knower at the end of science as a disinterested knower. The mind's wilful control over attention needs to be bolstered by rational love, an "internal emotion". In our embodied state and while we are still in pursuit of scientific knowledge, wilful attention and rational love are usually accompanied by sensuous love, a passion of the body that mimics the effects of attention in fixing the sense organs in a state of attention while some matter is being investigated (AT IV, 603–604).

Obtaining empirical knowledge is one means by which the rational soul can control the effects of wonder. But no amount of empirical knowledge will prepare the soul for all the contingencies of this life that it can neither predict nor avoid being affected by. But, Descartes argues, there are ways in which the soul can prepare itself so that while it may not avoid being surprised, it might nonetheless avoid being surprised that it is surprised. As Descartes advises Elisabeth, it is important to use the imagination "to have imagined in general things more vexing than those which have happened and be prepared to suffer them" (AT IV, 411). This role of the imagination is reminiscent of the premeditative exercises Epictetus was reported to have required of his students, supposedly to prepare the soul to bear up in the face of events over which it had no control.²⁸ Descartes' advice stems from his mechanical understanding of the brain processes underlying the passions. The point of using the imagination to consider scenarios outside one's experience and in which one's strength of soul would be tested is to prepare and toughen those parts of the brain that would be newly affected were those situations to obtain. The effect of these exercises is to limit the effects of wonder, allowing a more rational approach to the practical problems an agent encounters. In terms of the question of whether Descartes' account of attention represents an endogenous or exogenous approach, these passages indicate a compromise position: Descartes' Stoic exercises serve as conceptual and imagistic priming mechanisms, intended to minimise the impact of exogenous factors.

In the well-ordered soul, wonder at corporeal things strives then for its own extinction. This does not mean that wonder has no other function or will cease

²⁸ Knuuttila, Simo, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 78.

to play some role in structuring perceptual attention in the way necessary for survival, but Descartes' ambition is that in the Cartesian sage perceptual attention will be driven more by endogenous factors than it is in those more susceptible to dynamic stimuli. There will also always remain the secrets of Providence, which are due a kind of wonder closer to reverential awe, and the free will, which, when we wonder about in ourselves, produces *générosité*, the highest form of self-esteem (a species of wonder) and the unifying virtue (*Passions of the Soul*, articles 198, 153). Turning wonder in on the soul itself reveals an enduring source of truth and value. But how, we may well ask, can the soul turn its wonder inwards when attention is a function of a passion, and therefore depends upon the body? Clearly not by any direct act of will, but perhaps the very act of reflecting on the will, its immense power and direction towards the good, has an effect on the body, which, in turn, can generate a degree of self-esteem sufficient to swamp any esteem we might hitherto have had for things outside our control. It is thus that Descartes sees in generosity the propensity to control all our other passions, and the actions that follow upon them, and thus when generosity becomes habitual there is no difference between it and virtue. Descartes thus defines generosity as consisting

partly in that he knows there is nothing that truly appertains to him other than this free disposition of his volitions, nor ought he to be praised or blamed for anything except that he uses it well or badly, and partly in that he senses in himself a firm and constant resolution to use it well, that is to say, to never fail to use the will to undertake and execute all the things he judges to be the best. And this is to follow virtue perfectly. (AT XI, 446)

Generosity provides one means by which, even in Descartes' non-voluntarist approach to attention, it is possible to manipulate attention by separating sense from its usual associations in memory. When the free will becomes the focus of wonder, the usual sensory objects that evoke esteem will cease to be associated so strongly with representations of value and come to be associated with different ideas. In this way, the generous cease to react directly to incoming stimuli but consider the value of actions and ends in terms of the extent to which they depend on what is within their control.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Although Descartes and Augustine thus have different accounts of how attention is oriented, their views converge on a number of central points. Both recognise that there are grades of perceptual awareness, which have nothing to do with divisions within the soul. There can be brute effects of sensory stimuli on the behaviour of an agent, but without attention, these effects will never translate into perception in the proper sense of the word, implying as it does

the functions of memory, classification of stimuli by means of innate ideas, and the opportunities for reflection on the nature of both mind and matter. On the matter of whether it is exogenous or endogenous factors that orient attention, in emphasising the activity of the mind in perception, Augustine anticipated more accurately the findings of contemporary psychologists. But even in Descartes' non-voluntarist approach there is the recognition of the holistic effects other thoughts have in determining whether or not a given external stimulus captures attention. If nothing else, a comparison of their views shows how difficult it is to theorise about attention without recognising the influence of *both* endogenous and exogenous factors. Their theories also converge on the importance of the emotions for explaining why the mind focuses on some stimuli rather than others, insofar as some have more utility than others for the whole human being, or if they are novel stimuli, insofar as they might prove to be beneficial or harmful and so need to be investigated further. In their discussions of curiosity, both thinkers are cautious, moreover, of the moral effects of becoming too captivated by novelty. Finally, both see attention as a function of the soul, and although there may be mechanisms in animals that resemble the effects of attention, these mechanisms do not perform the same functions when disconnected from reason.

Although this has been a largely comparative exercise, and one that I hope has shown a high degree of continuity between the issues these two thinkers were concerned with and those that form the focus of contemporary psychological interest, the legacy of their writings is that attention is not only an integral concept in the theory of perception, but is a central concept in any naturalistic approach to empirical knowledge acquisition and moral psychology. The idea of a naturalistic theory of the exercise of cognition in embodied beings is not one that most philosophers would typically associate with the names of Augustine and Descartes, renowned more for their "Platonist" or "rationalist" tendencies, but it is one that deserves attention from the scholarly community. It should be clear that the heightened awareness afforded through attention is, for both thinkers, central to explaining how sensory information is identified, stored and made available for use not just by perceptual beings, but by rational, moral and epistemic agents. Perhaps at least in this regard they are right: attention is part of the very exercise of reason itself, by means of which we might in this life become masters of our selves if not of nature.²⁹

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CHAPTER EIGHT

ORDERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND FORMS OF REFLEXIVITY IN DESCARTES

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

Descartes affords several notions of consciousness as he explains the characteristics of the diverse features of human thought from infancy to adulthood and from dreaming to attentive wakefulness. I will argue that Descartes provides the resources for a rich and coherent view of conscious mentality from rudimentary consciousness through reflexive consciousness to consciousness achieved by deliberate, attentive reflection. I shall begin by making two general yet important remarks concerning the conceptual starting points of my investigation.

First, in interpreting early modern notions of consciousness, it is important to notice that conscious thought is often deemed as self-relational involving reflexivity understood as a more or less attentive relation to *self*.¹ I will deploy the terms ‘conscious’ and ‘consciousness’ in reference to a wider array of experiential phenomena than that of *self*-consciousness,

¹ The self-relative aspect of consciousness is often emphasized in passages which are closest to being definitions of consciousness or in which the significance or larger theoretical role of it is addressed. Consider the following. Ralph Cudworth (*True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678), 159) says that “*Consciousness* [. . .] makes a Being to be Present with it self, Attentive to its own Actions, or Animadversive of them, to perceive it self to Do or Suffer, and to have a *Fruition* or *Enjoyment* of it self”. John Locke (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690), II, 27, 9) maintains that “consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things”. The author of *An Essay on Consciousness (Two Dissertations Concerning Sense, and the Imagination with an Essay of Consciousness* (London, 1728), 144–145) gives a definition according to

since I believe it is mandated by Descartes. Sensory perceptions of external and internal senses, imagining, doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, willing are examples of conscious phenomena (See *Second Meditation* AT VII, 28; CSM II, 19; *Third Replies* AT VII, 176; CSM II, 124; *Sixth Meditation* AT VII, 76–77; CSM II, 53).² This list includes very simple sensations as well as highly rational operations of the mind – only through them can we establish a relation to the self. Common to all these various phenomena is that they are experiences or appearances in the first person-perspective. Descartes says that “these [phenomena] all fall under the common concept of thought or perception or consciousness, and we call the substance in which they inhere a ‘thinking thing’ or a ‘mind’” (*Third Replies* AT VII, 176; CSM II, 124). Considering himself as a thinking thing Descartes finds it certain “that there can be nothing within me of which I am not *in some way* aware” (*First Replies* AT VII, 107; CSM II, 77).³ As is well known, on the one hand, Descartes narrows the notion of soul or mind to what has traditionally been called rational soul and maintains that those functions of organisms which used to be referred to vegetative and sensitive souls can be explained solely on mechanical principles. On the other hand, he widens the scope of what belongs to (rational) soul’s realm to include also (passive) sensations in so far as they are regarded as appearances to mind, not merely as bodily events.

According to Descartes, animals do not have souls, and because thought and consciousness can inhere only in ensouled beings, animals are deprived of thought and consciousness. It has been argued, however, that Descartes does not maintain that animals do not have feelings and sensory perceptions

which “*Consciousness* [. . .] is that inward sense and Knowledge which the mind hath of its own being and Existence, and of whatever passes within itself, in the use and Exercise of any of its Faculties or Powers [and] knows that it is *it self* (*i.e.* its own actual Being) which *Thinks, Perceives, & c*”. However, it is clear from their texts that none of the mentioned authors subscribe exclusively to a concept of consciousness involving the *self* as an object.

² References to Descartes’ work are to *Œuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols., edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1964–1976) (cited as AT). Translations from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 vols. Vols. 1–2 edited and translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (cited as CSM I and CSM II), Vol. 3 with A. Kenny (cited as CSMK) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–1991).

³ My emphasis. Descartes’ formulation ‘in some way’ is noteworthy in allowing different ways of being conscious.

at all.⁴ There is textual evidence that supports this conception. For instance in his letter to Henry More, Descartes says that “I do not [. . .] deny sensation [to animals], in so far as it depends on a bodily organ” (AT V, 278; CSMK, 366),⁵ and even more explicitly in his letter to the Marquess of Newcastle: “Since the organs of their [i.e. animals]’ bodies are not very different from ours, it may be conjectured that there is attached to these organs some thought such as we experience in ourselves, but of a very much less perfect kind” (AT IV, 576; CSMK, 304), and to Fromondus: “Animals do not see as we do when we are aware that we see, but only as we do when our mind is elsewhere” (AT I, 413; CSMK, 61). In this chapter, I refrain from taking a pronounced position in the dispute whether Descartes – especially in light of his conception of matter and mechanism – could viably attribute feelings and sensations to animals in any non-metaphorical sense of subjective experiences.⁶

It is sufficient for the current topic that, in light of the earlier quotations, we can see that Descartes is at least not a straightforward eliminativist on animal sentience. It should be thus clear that through his agnosticism on animal experientiality, he recognises an attenuated sense of awareness that

⁴ Gaukroger, Stephen, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 288; Alanen, Lilli, *Descartes’s Concept of Mind* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 101. See also Morris, Katherine, “Bêtes-machines”, in S. Gaukroger et al. (eds.), *Descartes’ Natural Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 401–419. Morris holds that on Descartes’ view animals can feel but not think. However, she holds also that Descartes’ concept of sentience is very different from ours. See note 7.

⁵ The qualification “in so far as it depends on a bodily organ” seems to suggest a reading that animals do not, after all, have sensations as experiences in the first-personal mode. Namely, given Descartes’ dualism and his conception of matter and mechanism it is far from evident whether there could be anything it is like for animals to have sensations when sensations depend solely on bodily organs. However, see note 6.

⁶ I am sympathetic to Stephen Gaukroger’s view, according to which Descartes does attribute sensations to animals and that thus it is misleading to say that, on Descartes’ account, animals have no experiences whatsoever. According to Gaukroger, animal automata are unlike such mechanical constructions as clocks even though also animals’ functioning, including genuine perceptual cognition, “can be described wholly in mechanical terms; in particular, no separate mental substance need be invoked, and nothing other than completely inert matter need be invoked”. This is because, Gaukroger explains, on Descartes’ account “addition of degrees of complexity brings with it significant qualitative differences – emergent properties” (Gaukroger 1995, 288).

does not presuppose a direct conceptual link to the characteristics of the “traditional rational soul” nor to conscience which ties the idea of moral responsibility together with one’s awareness of one’s mental states.⁷ When pressed by his critics, I shall argue, Descartes attributes such an attenuated sense of consciousness to infant thought. As acknowledged, given the materiality of animals it is disputable whether Descartes can ultimately grant any kind of awareness to animals. But we do not have a similar question about infants since, as opposed to brutes, infants have souls. The essential ingredient is thus lacking for the dispute over the possibility of infant awareness to even rise. Moreover, everyday experience testifies that infants have the potentiality to later gain more refined ways of becoming conscious.

The second remark concerns a slight but noteworthy distinction between two ways of understanding *reflexivity*. According to a metaphor, consciousness is like a light which, in addition to illuminating its object, illuminates itself. The idea of “illuminating an object”, i.e. to be conscious *of* x, is

⁷ Cf. Baker, Gordon and Morris, Katherine, *Descartes’ Dualism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 99–100. Baker and Morris’ interpretation includes a claim that for instance the idea of pain merely as something that hurts is non-sensical since, according to them, for Descartes human beings are “‘geometrically excluded’ from having a ‘What’s it like?’. There is in [Descartes’] framework no such thing as (nothing *counts* as) an inexpressible form of *thinking*”. Morris (2000, 403) further holds that in general the “seventeenth-century concept of sentience” is such that in it “‘what’s it like?’ had no part whatsoever [. . .]. Rather the conception was linked to responsiveness to stimuli”. So according to Morris (2000, 404), Descartes’ quest was to dispel his contemporaries’ resistance by explaining animals’ subtle responsiveness to their environment by bringing out the details of anatomy and mechanics: “against neo-Aristotelians, Descartes argued that sentience (as they understood it, *not* as we understand it) could be fully explained mechanistically, with no need for a sensitive soul”.

Gaukroger says that even though humans have sensory experiences (such as sensations of pain, hunger and thirst) “the fact that we are capable of reflection and judgement completely transforms the nature of our experience, even when we are not reflecting and making judgements about it” (1995, 351). I agree with Gaukroger that capability to reflect and judge is distinctive of human thought and the nature of our experience is transformed in the sense that for Descartes the ‘I’ who has these experiences can only hardly avoid experiencing hunger *as* hunger or pain *as* pain. Feelings of hunger and pain would be quite different for a creature capable only of direct sensory experiences and powerless in coming to regard those feelings *as* something. This means, however, that there are two different types of experience which, I will show, are recognized by Descartes.

intelligible only in so far as x is illumined *for* somebody. In other words, consciousness is always given to itself, or reveals itself to itself, besides being about something else. In this experiential sense of reflexivity, consciousness can be regarded as essentially reflexive. I take reflexivity, so understood, to be a minimal condition of what it means to have conscious thoughts.⁸

From this use of ‘reflexivity’, I distinguish another. The same terminology can be used in what we may call a structural sense, i.e. in analysing the intentional structure of consciousness. Structural reflexivity does not refer to the phenomenal givenness of consciousness but to such relations pertaining to consciousness which are not, as such, revealed in the occurrent experience. In such case, a phenomenally unified experience is underlain by a relation. This means that a description given in terms of such a relation, i.e. a relation which is within or between mental operations and which is not readily revealed in the occurrent experience, is a theoretical description of how a thought comes to be conscious, or what goes on behind the scenes, as it were, when we are immediately conscious of something.

This contrast between how a conscious thought is experientially given to the subject and the intentional structure of a conscious thought is endorsed by Descartes himself. Descartes claims that a single thought, for instance a thought with a content “an astonishing machine” can involve in fact two perceptions: perception of the machine and perception of the initial perception. The latter, which he calls “intellectual perception”, is responsible for the feeling of amazement intertwined with the perceptual experience of the machine. Even though there is a relation between two distinct perceptions, the thought is experientially unified. Namely, according to Descartes, these perceptions “occur together and appear to be indistinguishable from each other” (*Letter to Arnauld, 29 July 1648 AT V, 221; CSMK, 357*). The thought “an astonishing machine” thus *appears* to the subject of experience as internally unified, and it fails to reveal to her the fact that it involves two distinct mental operations. Due to his conceptual distinction, Descartes is able to analyse such a unified appearance as in fact being constituted by two

⁸ As Gaukroger rightly notes (1995, 288) there are general difficulties in characterising experiential states which are different from ours. It will be shown later that Descartes regards the awareness associated with infants’ thoughts differently generated than that of adults’ thoughts. This difference, according to my interpretation, amounts to infants’ being incapable of coming to regard the objects of their perceptual states *as* perceptual states, or the object of such a state *as* the certain object (or the certain kind of object) it is. But this does not have to mean that infants’ perceptual states would not be given in the mode *for-somebody*.

separate operations of the mind. This means that philosophical scrutiny can provide us knowledge about the intentional structure of consciousness, even though the structure remains concealed from the subject at the time of undergoing the experience. We thus have two approaches to one phenomenon: the perspective of the thinking subject undergoing an experience and the perspective of a philosopher who is able to reveal the intentional structure of experience by examining the nature of thought. To be clear, I do not claim that the latter perspective is radically separated from the former. Rather, it seems that the latter is founded on the former. Descartes' point is simply that for us humans it is difficult to see what sort of mental operations (and their mutual relations) are involved in our everyday thinking.

As concerns the terminology of reflexivity, there is also the notion of reflexivity proper, in which the person is the active agent that does the reflecting deliberately. The result of such deliberate, attentive, personal-level reflection is the third type of Cartesian consciousness. The second type I call 'reflexive consciousness' in which reflexivity is automatic, as described earlier, and which is characteristic of adult thinking. The first, most elementary, type will be called 'rudimentary consciousness' which includes reflexivity understood as the givenness of the occurrent experience. It is the characteristic thinking mode of infants, the sick and the tired, and often pertains to dreaming during sleep. Through recognition of these types, I hope to contribute to a more resolute and comprehensive understanding of Descartes' conception of consciousness.

These distinctions are tenable on their own, I believe, but they are also partly motivated by the technical problem of infinite regress which threatens a theory that regards consciousness exclusively as a result of a relation between two separate mental operations. In his objections, Hobbes intimates that the threat rises with Descartes' account,⁹ for Descartes explicitly maintains that "we cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when it is in us" (*Fourth Replies* AT VII, 246; CSM II, 171). If consciousness is itself taken as one mode of thinking, i.e. as a separate act of thought, Descartes is committed to infinite regress because, as a thought, consciousness would have to be an object of yet a further consciousness, and so on infinitely.

In Section 8.2, I compare Richard Aquila's and Udo Thiel's illuminating readings of Descartes and show that they provide two seemingly incompatible views concerning Descartes' conception of consciousness. To prepare the resolution of these seemingly conflicting positions, I introduce Descartes'

⁹ See the second objection of the third set of objections AT VII, 173; CSM II, 122.

view of deliberate attentive reflection. I will show that consciousness as thinking of thinking is not his only notion of consciousness. In Section 8.3, I examine the central passages that provide the textual evidence for my explication of the three types of consciousness in Descartes and argue that my explication incorporates the central ideas of Aquila's and Thiel's. In Section 8.4, by making use of the conclusions from the Section 8.3, I present the problem of infinite regress and show how it resolves in light of the distinction into three different types of consciousness. In Section 8.5, I compare my interpretation with Daisy Radner and Michael Radner's view with the purpose of showing that my interpretation of Descartes' conception of consciousness is compatible with theirs, but supplements it in an important way. In Section 8.6, I discuss the relation of reflexive consciousness to attentive reflection.

8.2 CONSCIOUSNESS AS THINKING OF THINKING

Let us take a look at some views held by recent commentators and some passages from Descartes himself in order to see that his discussion of consciousness inspires a wide diversity of interpretations. Udo Thiel claims that Descartes draws no distinction between the meaning of 'consciousness' and 'individual reflection'.¹⁰ By 'individual reflection' Thiel means the process of observing or considering one's own mental states.¹¹ His reading emphasises that Descartes maintains a view of consciousness as achieved through thinking of thinking. As a result, his view winds up suggesting that for Descartes there are no other ways of acquiring experiential mental states, multifarious as they come. Even the simplest state of consciousness would then be achieved by *considering* one's previous or simultaneous thoughts.

Richard Aquila maintains a different view. He claims that Descartes' notion of consciousness comes down to an idea of a single operation which is at once directed at itself and at an external object.¹² Aquila argues that even if it would be correct that Descartes believes that we are conscious of external things by virtue of some second-order perception of the initial

¹⁰ Udo Thiel ("Hume's notions of consciousness and reflection in context", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 2, 2 (1994), 91) uses the term 'individual' in order to distinguish it from what he calls 'philosophical reflection' which is a yet higher-order notion. For instance, individual reflection can be a means to carry out a project of philosophical reflection.

¹¹ Thiel 1994, 85.

¹² Aquila, Richard E., "The Cartesian and a certain 'poetic' notion of consciousness", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, 4 (1988), 544.

perception of the external object, this second perception must, nonetheless, be “somehow one with the first”.¹³ He sees Descartes going as far as to propose an identification of “inner-directed consciousness and a [. . .] cognition or perception of which it is a consciousness”.¹⁴ Aquila does not pursue the question of how we should understand this kind of identity, namely how we should understand that these two seemingly different things somehow collapse together and constitute one conscious thought.

In other words, Thiel maintains that consciousness results from the subject’s explicit consideration of her thoughts, where the act of reflecting is clearly a distinct thought from the thought reflected on. But Aquila claims that although in some sense there were two mental operations that together constituted consciousness, these are not really distinguished from each other by Descartes but rather identified as one. Later I will reconcile between these two views for I intend to show that Descartes’ conception of consciousness is wide enough to envelop the insights of both of these views.

Robert McRae distinguishes between three interrelated notions: thought, consciousness, and reflecting or attending to one’s thoughts. He argues that in Descartes’ theory, thought is not identical or synonymous with consciousness, simply because “being conscious of whatever exists in us is not the same as thinking of what exists in us”.¹⁵ Thinking and consciousness must be distinguished from each other because Descartes explicitly maintains that consciousness is something that always accompanies all presently occurring thinking. Hence the thought by which one reflects and the thought which is reflected on, must already be conscious. Therefore, there must be at least one sense of consciousness which does not result from attending to one’s thoughts, and consciousness identified with the act of reflection proper must thus be distinguished at least from this sense of consciousness. On the face of it, a passage from Descartes’ conversation with Burman seems to question this interpretation:

It is correct that to be aware is both to think and to reflect on one’s thought. But it is false that this reflection cannot occur while the previous thought is still there. This is because [. . .] the soul is capable of thinking of more than one thing at the same time, and of continuing with the particular thought which it has. It has the power to reflect on its thoughts as often as it likes, and to be aware of its thought in this way. . . (AT V, 149; CSMK, 335)

¹³ Aquila 1988, 546.

¹⁴ Aquila 1988, 547.

¹⁵ McRae, Robert, “Descartes’ definition of thought”, in R.J. Butler (ed.), *Cartesian Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 57.

As McRae rightly notes, in this passage ‘to think’ is used differently from what Descartes takes thinking to be when he states that we cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when we have it. It seems that here thought is not treated as something of which we are always conscious, for what is stated suggests that being conscious presupposes not only thinking but reflecting on one’s thinking. This is not what Descartes maintains, however. It is important for us to see that Descartes replies here to Burman’s concern about the temporality of relating to one’s thoughts by other thoughts: Burman asks whether it follows from Descartes’ characterisation of thought that one cannot be aware that one *is* thinking but only that one *was* thinking. Burman’s question concerns *thinking of thinking* rather than nature of consciousness in all its manifestations (*ibid.*). Descartes’ reply is simply that one can have the original thought and simultaneously reflect on that thought and thus be aware that one is presently having the thought. It is crucial that he claims that this is because mind has the “*power to reflect [. . .] as often as it likes*”. He treats reflection here as a higher-level mental operation, as a separate act invoked by the subject and based on her power to do so which enables her to be conscious of her thought “in this way”. Interpreting the passage thus does not at first sight align with Descartes’ commitment to automatic accompaniment of consciousness to thought. But as mentioned already, the tension disappears when we understand the passage as not being about the more pervasive types of consciousness at all but about our reflective capabilities as persons, about deliberate attentive reflection in particular.

Descartes’ reply to another objection, one presented by Bourdin, helps further to see that consciousness acquired through deliberate attentive reflection is not his only notion of consciousness. Bourdin challenges Descartes by claiming that to establish the superiority of the incorporeal substance, it is not sufficient to contend that thinking makes it superior to matter. He claims that the superiority of the incorporeal is due to occurrence of explicit reflective acts, i.e. thinking of thinking. Descartes denies that this is the case:

The initial thought by means of which we become aware (advertimus) of something does not differ from the second thought by means of which we become aware that we were aware of it, any more than the second thought differs from the third thought by means of which we become aware that we were aware that we were aware. (AT VII, 559; CSM II, 382; my emphasis)

The importance of this explication for our present purposes is that we become aware of something already by the initial thought. Descartes stresses that all the successive thoughts are similar in kind. The fact that the object of my thought happens to be another thought, as opposed to an external object, does not make this second thought special as a thought since it has no relevant property that the first thought would lack. For conscious

thought, it is not necessary that one thought is rendered conscious by another thought. We are conscious already by having one thought.

In his question, Bourdin also voices the suspicion that perhaps Descartes himself really maintains the reflection-view which has been maintained by many through ages, namely “I think, I am conscious of thinking, therefore I am a mind” (AT VII, 534; CSM II, 364). But this is not Descartes’ view. The core of his answer lies in how ‘conscious of thinking’ is understood: he does not deny that consciousness is what distinguishes mind from matter, but by saying that the initial thought is enough to grant the superiority of mind over matter he sets consciousness as a property of a single thought. “If it is conceded that a corporeal thing [e.g. a brute animal] has the first kind of thought” (AT VII, 559; CSM II, 382), which is what Bourdin suggests (AT VII, 534; CSM II, 364), we will commit a dangerous error because “then there is not the slightest reason to deny that [matter or certain compositions of matter] can have the second [act of thought]” (AT VII, 559; CSM II, 382), since the first and second acts of thought are similar in kind. For this reason, reflection cannot be the differentiating feature between corporeal things and incorporeal ones.

Descartes sees it as simply fallacious to suppose that to become aware of something requires employing an explicit reflective act (*ibid.*). In another context, he expresses the same idea by saying that when we think of our thoughts there is an “internal awareness which always precedes reflective knowledge” (*Sixth Replies* AT VII, 422; CSM II, 285). This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that we can think about our thinking by means of other thoughts and be aware of them also in this way, but it must be distinguished from the internal awareness preceding reflection.¹⁶ The discussion in this section leads us to ask and inquire whether Descartes provides resources for a more detailed analysis of the internal awareness involved in all thinking. Let us next concentrate on types of consciousness which are more elementary than consciousness acquired through attentive reflection.

8.3 RUDIMENTARY AND REFLEXIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

We can find many passages which impel distinctions into different types. The first passage crucial to my argument for distinguishing between rudimentary and reflexive consciousness is in Descartes’ reply to Arnauld. Here he explains:

¹⁶ See also *Discourse on the Method* where Descartes states that “many people do not know what they believe, since believing something and knowing that one believes it are different acts of thinking, and the one often occurs without the other” (AT VI, 23; CSM I, 122). It is clear that this does not prevent these people from being conscious of something whenever they believe something.

[T]he first and simple thoughts of infants are *direct* and not reflexive [. . .]. But when an adult feels something, and simultaneously perceives that he has not felt it before, I call this second perception *reflection*, and attribute it to intellect alone, in spite of its being so linked to sensation that the two occur together and appear to be indistinguishable from each other. (*Letter to Arnauld*, 29 July 1648 AT V, 221; CSMK, 357)

This is an intriguing passage which merits a central role in my interpretation. This is because here Arnauld has pressed Descartes to explicitly consider the differences between the natures of infant and adult thought. We can see from Descartes' answer that infants lack the capability of "reflex thought" but they have "direct thoughts". Descartes affirms that "the mind begins to think as soon as it is implanted in the body of an infant, and [. . .] it is immediately aware of its thoughts, even though it does not remember this afterwards because the impressions of these thoughts do not remain in the memory" (*Fourth Replies* AT VII, 247; CSM II, 171–172). Thinking thus begins already in the mother's womb where humans feel "pain, pleasure, heat, cold, and other similar ideas" (*Letter to Hyperaspistes* AT V, 149; CSMK, 189–190). There is no doubt that Descartes regards also direct thought as conscious and that this rudimentary consciousness can be involved in perception without occurrence of the kind of reflexive relation that Descartes associates with adult thought.¹⁷

The reflexive relation pertaining to adult thought consists of the second perception taking the initial perception as its object, and this reflexivity results in presenting the initial perception under some particular feature. In the quoted example, the feeling is perceived *as new*.¹⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that Descartes does not claim that reflex thought is inevitably involved in grown-up thinking but rather maintains that adults, in distinction to

¹⁷ In *The Passions of the Soul* (see AT XI, 327ff.; CSM I, 328ff.) Descartes classifies different passions (i.e. perceptions) according to their cause. As regards our topic, there is no reason to assume that perceptions of different kinds of objects would involve relevant differences in how we come to be aware of the perceptions.

¹⁸ Anne A. Davenport analyses the role of the intellectual perception as follows: "Material things that are known in sensation do not include as a feature their novelty relative to the mind: there is nothing in the patch of red that impinges on my retina that says that I have or have not experienced it before. Consequently, the intellect itself must supply the index of 'novelty' to any sensation that I experience for the first time" ("What the soul remembers: Intellectual memory in Descartes", *The New Arcadia Review* 3 (2005), 4). "Novelty" is obviously not the only feature which things apprehended in sensation do not include in themselves. The same can be said of a number of features under which a perception itself or an object of perception appears to the mind.

infants, are capable of it.¹⁹ This contention finds support from Descartes' explanation in his letter to Gibieuf: "I believe that the soul is always thinking for the same reason that I believe that light is always shining, even though there are not always eyes looking at it [. . .]" (AT III, 478; CSMK, 203). He then points out that "every night we have a thousand thoughts, and even while awake we have a thousand thoughts in the course of an hour" (ibid.). Each and every one of our thoughts during dreaming and all the countless thoughts we have while awake hardly contain second-order perceptions which would present each and every perception under some feature.²⁰

By maintaining that the mind always thinks in one manner or another, Descartes subscribes to the view that there are a variety of degrees of consciousness between which we continually vacillate. In somewhat more technical terms this means that we can be conscious by having direct thoughts and by having reflex thoughts. Infants form an exception as they do not have the capability of such reflex thought as described earlier.²¹ Adults, on the other hand, are capable of both kinds of thinking.²² As Descartes denies non-

¹⁹ Alison Simmons ("Changing the Cartesian mind: Leibniz on sensation, representation, and consciousness", *The Philosophical Review* 110, 1 (2001), 31–75) is one to draw a distinction between these two types of consciousness. She calls them phenomenal and reflective consciousness. She describes the phenomenal (my rudimentary) consciousness, by saying that it "affords an experience in which things are phenomenally present to the thinking subject". By 'phenomenal presence' she means that experiences are something felt by the subject of consciousness, "there is something it is like to think this or that". Reflective (my reflexive) consciousness differs from rudimentary consciousness as regards experiential content. In reflective consciousness things are also considered *as* something: as new, remembered, etc. Reflexion adds something to experience (Simmons 2001, 36).

²⁰ As we will see later, volitions are nevertheless always accompanied by second-order, intellectual perceptions.

²¹ In *Letter to Arnauld, 4 June 1648*, Descartes writes that we cannot remember our early sensations: "For that we would have to observe that the sensations which come to us as adults are like those which we had in our mother's womb; and that in turn would require a certain reflective act of the intellect, or intellectual memory, which was not in use in the womb" (AT V, 192–193; CSMK, 354).

²² To my knowledge Descartes nowhere explicitly affirms or denies that adults sometimes think like infants. He, however, regards our perceiving being sometimes similar to that of brutes. He states that animals do not see as we do when we are aware that we see, but as we do when our mind is elsewhere (See *Letter to Plempius for Fromondus* AT I, 413; CSMK, 61). This supports the present claim in so far as Descartes intends the seeing of animals as an experience in the first-personal mode, regardless of how slight or confused an experience he might think of it.

conscious modes of thought, this means furthermore that rudimentary consciousness minimally belongs to every presently occurring thought.

This much is relatively clear about Descartes' replies to Arnauld, but the response merits further attention. Remember that in this account he characterises the adult's awareness as being by virtue of a second perception which is so closely linked to its object "that the two occur together and appear to be indistinguishable from each other". It is important that even though Descartes treats the second perception here as numerically distinct from the first, he immediately points out that they are closely joined elements constitutive of a single experience. It is furthermore noteworthy that also the second perception, which Descartes attributes "to intellect alone", is a passion (of the soul) and thus as automatic or inevitable as the first perception. The novelty associated with the first perception in Descartes' example would not have been revealed to the subject of experience had not the second perception occurred.

This description of reflexivity differs drastically from the notion of reflexivity in the Burman quote. It is common to both of these notions of reflexivity that the second act or perception does not necessarily accompany every initial perception. But, as we noticed, in the conversation with Burman Descartes emphasises the mind's power to reflect as it likes, while according to the notion of reflexivity that we have been examining in this section the occurrence of a second perception does not depend on any deliberate act. What we have here is an intellectual perception of a logically prior but temporally simultaneous perception which occurs as a byproduct of the initial perception. Together they afford a phenomenally unified experience to which reflexivity pertains in an inconspicuous way. This type of experience is something quite typical for us, albeit not the only type.

Reflex thought, as it has been characterised in this section, is not literally a matter of practising acts of mind, since perceiving is passive, and not active. Therefore it is worthwhile to examine whether Descartes has any different account of how consciousness comes about in mind's actions proper, i.e. volitions. Descartes provides two noteworthy insights about willing and consciousness associated with it. Firstly, he maintains that we cannot will anything without having understanding of *what* we will. We are thus inevitably aware of what our willing is about. In a letter to Regius, he explains the difference between activity and passivity of the mind by saying that:

Understanding is the passivity of the mind and willing is its activity; but because we cannot will anything without understanding what we will, [. . .] we do not easily distinguish in this matter passivity from activity. (*Letter to Regius* AT III, 372; CSMK, 182)

An act of will has an object. According to Descartes, we are aware of that object, since, as he says, we have some understanding of it. This passage does

not convey whether Descartes presumes that understanding of what we will is by virtue of a numerically distinct perception. On the one hand, it could well be pointed out that regarding something as a passion or an action is only a matter of terminology for Descartes and that therefore in this passage willing and understanding are not really two distinct things but only two aspects of a single thing. On the other hand, understanding can take place in the absence of willing which implies that they should be treated as being separate. Furthermore, in considering the characteristics of adult thought in contrast to infant thought Descartes is explicit in stating that there are two operations where the first-order operation is perceived by the second. Therefore, I opt for a reading that follows the model made explicit in the case of adult perception, i.e. involving two connected but numerically distinct mental operations. Following the case of adult perception, we have here an act of will which occurs together with an intellectual perception. As Descartes states in this passage, our understanding concerns especially the object of the act of will. As will be shown later, the act of will reveals itself as an act of will, but understanding of the object of will is not achieved by the single act alone.

Descartes stresses here again that it is not easy to distinguish the perception concerning what our willing is about from the act of will. He concedes, again, that they make up a unified appearance. The case of being aware of what we will and the case of adult perception in the reply to Arnauld are similar in the respect that both cases involve an intellectual perception. They differ in two respects however. First, here one of the mental operations is an act of will whereas in the reply to Arnauld both are perceptions. Second, an intellectual perception does not accompany every first-order perception, but it is impossible to ever execute an act of will without having understanding of what we will.

So far it seems that reflexive consciousness has fairly clear-cut characteristics in terms of its intentional structure. Matters get a bit more complicated when we take a look into Descartes' view that we cannot will without knowing *that* we will. This is not the same as being aware of what we will, i.e. of the actual object of will, since here willing is considered as something by which we are aware of the mental operation itself.²³ It is noteworthy that Descartes accounts for our awareness of the act itself even though he is clear

²³ The expression 'to be aware that one wills' amounts to saying that, when one wills, the willing is experienced *as* willing. The experience is thus readily categorized as a certain kind of thought. It is also important to see that this cannot happen without the subject of willing, as it were, owning the act. This does not mean a full-blown self-consciousness but it is to acknowledge that any thought (in so far as it is conscious) must be *for* a subject.

that our willing is always intentional in the sense that we cannot will without thereby being aware also of what we will. The following is the next crucial passage for my argument. Descartes says:

I claim that we have ideas not only of all that is in our intellect, but also of all that is in the will. For we cannot will anything without knowing that we will it, nor could we know this except by means of an idea; but I do not claim that the idea is different from the act itself. (*Letter to Merenne*, 28 January 1641 AT III, 295; CSMK, 172)

We know that we will whenever we will, i.e. we are aware of our willing through the act of will itself. I do not wish to dwell on the debates of what is the proper understanding of the Cartesian notion of *idea*. It is safe, and enough for the present purposes, to say that Descartes holds the following views. (i) We can, and always do know our acts of will only by means of an idea. (ii) This idea is not different from the act of willing. He thus employs both a distinction and identification between act and idea. In yet other words, Descartes is saying that we should not regard our being aware that we will as a result of an operation of mind distinct from the act itself because everything happens within the single act.²⁴ Unlike in the two cases of reflexive consciousness considered earlier, here we have a case of only one act which thus has an internally complex structure. There are two things going on at once: the actual willing (of something) and awareness of the act of willing itself.

In this way, we can see how one act can be about something and also grasped by itself as the particular kind of act it is. We must be careful in distinguishing this from how Descartes explains passive adult thought. He is after all very clear in his reply to Arnauld in distinguishing between the initial and second perceptions. Indeed, this distinction is the very basis of the difference between the natures of infant and adult thought, as we saw earlier. Similarly, we must be careful in distinguishing “being conscious that we will” from “being conscious of what we will”, since the latter involves two distinct operations. An act of will alone *would not* be a similar means of having understanding of the object. This must be expressed in the conditional

²⁴ Descartes says that the word ‘idea’ is ambiguous. It can be taken materially as an act of the intellect, or objectively as the thing represented by that act (AT VII, 8; CSM II, 7). We can notice that the present interpretation concerning the fact that an act of will reveals itself does not depend on in which sense Descartes applies ‘idea’ here. If it is in the latter sense, the thing represented by the act is the act itself. If it is in the former sense he just identifies ‘act’ with ‘idea’. In that case they become interchangeable and we are entitled to say that act is known by means of the act itself.

because, as Descartes maintains, an intellectual perception always accompanies the act of will. Therefore, the account given of being aware that we will is about something that never in actuality occurs alone because willing always involves understanding. The descriptions Descartes gives of our awareness *that* and *what* we will are thus complementary elements in explaining both *how* we get to be conscious of our thoughts, and *what* kind of experiential content these acts have.

What about rudimentary consciousness, typical of infant thought, which seems to be by virtue of a single perception involving no reflexivity? We seem to lack an account of how it comes about. One way to resolve this is to consider the account given of the intentional structure of our awareness “that we will” as applying also to rudimentary consciousness. Namely, in the quoted passage Descartes generalises upon what he says about our being aware of our acts of will to everything that is in our intellect. Even though perceptions depend on the mind–body compound, they are affairs of the mind as sensations proper. Descartes is quite clear about this. For example in *Optics*, he explains that bodily events “which, acting directly upon our soul in so far as it is united to our body, are ordained by nature to make it have [. . .] sensations” (AT VI, 130; CSM I, 167), and a little later he elaborates that “it is the soul which sees, not the eye” (AT VI, 141; CSM I, 172). Sensations are, as it were, the end products of chains of bodily events and in this sense they pertain to the mind alone.

Therefore we may regard the same inherent reflexivity that pertains to acts of will, as such, to pertain to perceptions also. Thus, when we perceive something we are aware of our perception similarly through an idea as we are aware of our act of will. This model would then apply to thinking of infants also, i.e. of how rudimentary consciousness comes about. What would still be lacking is the experiential addendum that would be brought about by an accompanying intellectual perception – which always accompanies volitions and typically perceptions (of adults). I wish to point out this line of reasoning without arguing for it however. This is because, admittedly, Descartes’ considerations on the nature of infant thought are a somewhat special case, and it may be that he would not be inclined to analyse infant perception analogically to acts of will. If that is the case, then one has to remain content with noticing that rudimentarily conscious thought is primitively so, allowing no account of how this consciousness comes about. Fortunately, as regards unravelling the three types of consciousness in general, this is not a detrimental shortcoming.

Finally, I believe that the differences between how consciousness is associated with perceiving and willing by Descartes can be explained by the fact that willing, since it is an activity, presupposes more maturity and liberty of

mind than that of being a passive percipient. We should consider Descartes' observation in his letter to Hyperaspistes:

[W]e know by experience that our minds are so closely joined to our bodies as to be almost always acted upon by them; and although when thriving in an adult and healthy body the mind enjoys some liberty to think of other things than those presented by the senses, we know there is not the same liberty in those who are sick or asleep or very young; and the younger they are the less liberty they have. [I]t seems most reasonable to think that a mind newly united to an infant's body is *wholly* occupied in perceiving in a confused way or feeling the ideas of pain, pleasure, heat, cold and other similar ideas which arise from its union and, as it were, intermingling with the body. (AT III, 424; CSMK, 189–190; my emphasis)

In a similar manner, Descartes explains that “in the mind of an infant there have *never* been any pure acts of understanding, but *only* confused sensations” (*Letter to Arnauld, 4 June 1648* AT V, 192; CSMK, 354; my emphasis). Lack of liberty in infants and in the sick limits the ways in which they can come to be conscious. As a consequence, there are obviously limitations in what types of conscious states they can have: liberty or capability to be concerned with something other than what is presented by the senses means that one can execute acts of will and think about one's thoughts and consequently be conscious of thoughts also through volition and reflection. As I have argued, Descartes regards the conscious states achieved through volition and attentive reflection as clearly different types from rudimentary consciousness, and from each other, since he gives different explanations of how these conscious states are generated in the mind.

In the light of what I have argued in this section, we can finally reconcile between Thiel and Aquila. The considerations on intentional structure of consciousness, the discrepancy between it and the phenomenal givenness of consciousness, and finally the consequent exposition of different types of consciousness provide grounds for preserving the central tenets of both Thiel's and Aquila's views. We do not have to choose between the central convictions of their positions but we can, and in my view we indeed should, incorporate the spirit of Aquila's claim with that of Thiel's. Namely, we can assimilate Aquila's claim that Descartes considers the second mental operation which takes the first mental operation as its object as somehow one with the first with Thiel's insistence that “Descartes distinguishes between the act of reflection itself and the thought which is the object of reflection”.²⁵ They are both right in their claims. The cases considered in this section show that two operations can make up a phenomenally unified experience. In this sense, there is

²⁵ Thiel 1994, 92.

identification. However, from another perspective, as a single thought can involve a relation underlying the unified appearance, there is clearly a distinction involved. Moreover, although Descartes holds that we can acquire consciousness through attentive reflection it is not the only way of being conscious. My reading thus incorporates Thiel's and Aquila's views to the extent that it accommodates two central elements of Descartes' conception of consciousness which they tend to see as exclusive of one another.

8.4 THE THREE TYPES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND INFINITE REGRESS

According to what Descartes says in the passages considered so far, we are impelled to grant that he has a relatively complicated account of consciousness. Firstly, we can recognise three different types of consciousness which roughly go together with different kinds of thinking: consciousness involved in infants' perceptions, consciousness that comes about through intellectual perception of an initial perception or an act of will, and consciousness acquired through deliberate attentive reflection.²⁶ The first type is rudimentary consciousness which is minimally involved in all thinking. The second type is reflexive consciousness. Reflexive consciousness comes about in acts of will because they always involve understanding. An intellectual perception does not always accompany an initial perception, however. This is the case in infants' perceptions and often in sickness and tiredness as well as in dreaming. But when an intellectual perception occurs together with the initial perception (itself sufficient for rudimentary consciousness) having the initial perception as its object, this also constitutes a case of reflexive consciousness. The third type of consciousness is a result of attentive reflection, whereby a person explicitly and deliberately thinks about her thoughts, attends to them, or considers them.²⁷

²⁶ Overall, existence of different senses or orders of consciousness should not strike us as peculiar. See, for instance, the introduction of this book for John Maxwell's 1727 exposition of several senses of consciousness: "reflex act", "direct act", "the power or capacity of thinking", "simple sensation", and "the power of self-motion, or of beginning motion by the will".

²⁷ Further support for the distinction between rudimentary and reflexive consciousness can be found from Descartes' discussion about the three grades of sensory response in the *Sixth Replies* (AT VII, 436–438; CSM II, 294–295). The first grade involves only stimulation of bodily organs, i.e. mechanical movements. The distinction between second and third grade is drawn so that the second grade includes the immediate effects in the mind which arise from the intimate union of mind and body and which do not properly involve the intellect (such effects being pain, pleasure, hunger, sound, taste, heat, etc.). The third grade concerns things outside us and, in particular, our judgements about those things. Descartes says that when we make

These distinctions of the intentional structure of consciousness are naturally related to the issue of how the different types of consciousness should be understood as appearances to mind, as lived through experiences. As is clear, for Descartes the mind always thinks and its thinking is always conscious. Then minimally, thoughts are experientially present for the mind. Sometimes perceptions are accompanied by secondary perceptions which have the initial perceptions as their object. This reflexivity adds something to the experience: things are experienced under some feature, but the fact that it is due to an accompanying perception is not revealed in the experience as lived through by the subject. And always, in willing, acts of will reveal themselves as acts of will and are accompanied by intellectual perception which enriches the experiential content by contributing knowledge about the object of willing. The third sense of being conscious established by Descartes is through attentive reflection when a person deliberately attends to her own already conscious thoughts. This is thinking of thinking in the most typical sense and it can afford rich and articulate content, and also result in self-knowledge and self-determination. One more noteworthy distinction is that in Descartes' categorisation willing and attentive reflection belong to a different category than passive perceptions, since for him they are mental activities essentially independent of the body. Nonetheless, it is worth stressing that persons ultimately have the capacity for self-determination which presupposes the capability to attend to and consider one's thoughts in a thorough manner.

Let us now briefly look into the problem of infinite regress to see how it, for its part, motivates the distinctions into the three types of consciousness. To avoid regress Descartes would have to deny the assumption that for thinking

some certain judgement for the first time we are more inclined to attribute the judgement to the intellect, and thus treat the sense-perception and the judgement as two distinct operations. Supposedly this means that we either come to notice that a judgement is involved in addition to the sense-perception or we more or less purposely make the judgement about the thing represented in the sense-perception. But, mistakenly in Descartes' view, we tend to refer judgements to our senses when there is nothing new in the sensation. In such cases, we make the judgement so quickly that we do not distinguish the judgement from simple sense-perception. This distinction between second and third grades of sensory response resembles Descartes' statements about the difference between the natures of infant and adult thought: the former lacks the participation of the intellect, whereas a judgement (or, intellectual perception) is often involved in the latter but in such a way that the fact that there are two operations involved remains concealed from the subject of thought. However, we can come to notice our automatic judgements, as well as we can deliberately reflect on our thoughts.

to be conscious, every thought would require a distinct thought directed at it. On the other hand, he would obviously not want to commit himself to the view that no thought can be taken as an object of another thought. At first sight he seems to be liable to infinite regress: First, according to him there is no presently occurring thought which is not conscious. Second, in his conversation with Burman he says that to be aware is both to think and to reflect on one's thought. A way out is to deny that in his reply to Burman he explicates the only possible manner of being conscious. Then it will not follow from his definition of thinking that in order for a thought to be conscious it requires yet a further thought directed at it, and *ad infinitum*.²⁸

It is undeniably Descartes' view that consciousness can be associated with attentive reflection and be brought about by explicitly thinking about one's previous or simultaneous, but yet separate thoughts. But as we have seen, it is not the only view Descartes maintains about consciousness. For him consciousness does not necessarily require reflexivity in the sense of involving a relation of distinct acts of thought. Such concept of non-reflexive consciousness is most directly presented in his comments on the nature of infant thought where he states that infants are capable of direct but not reflex thought. What infants lack compared to adults, in Descartes' understanding, is not rudimentary consciousness but a specific kind of consciousness which categorises the present thought as a certain kind of thought. Moreover, infants also lack the capability to consider or attend to their (already conscious) thoughts. Even more importantly, as regards the vicious regress, Descartes maintains that also an act of will primitively involves awareness of itself through built-in self-referentiality even though it is always accompanied by an intellectual perception.

On top of all this, thinking which involves reflexive consciousness, be that willing or (adult) perceiving, can be analysed from two perspectives. On one account, reflexive consciousness requires occurrence of two distinct mental operations. As I have argued, there is also another viable account presented by Descartes, according to which this is an analysis of the intentional structure of consciousness underlying the unified appearance. Descartes nowhere indicates that the accompanying intellectual perception should itself be rendered conscious by yet a further perception. This is because he regards appearance that results from the compound of two operations as a single conscious thought.

²⁸ Hobbes points out this problem by claiming that even though "someone may think that he *was* thinking (for this thought is simply an act of remembering), it is quite impossible for him to think that he *is* thinking, or to know that he is knowing. For then an infinite chain of questions would arise" (AT VII, 173; CSM II, 122).

8.5 REFLEXIVITY AS INTENTIONAL STRUCTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND AS PHENOMENAL GIVENNESS

My reading that there are three types of awareness in Descartes challenges certain accounts presented in recent Descartes scholarship. Daisie Radner and Michael Radner have dealt with the issue of reflexivity associated with Descartes' conception of consciousness. I agree with them in emphasising that Descartes is clear that also infant thought is accompanied with consciousness, and that infant thought is on a par, for instance, with passing dreams of adults.²⁹ But I argue that their interpretation does not provide a complete enough account of Descartes' conception. I believe it neglects the fact that Descartes has a say on the relations between and within mental operations which are not manifest in how our thoughts appear to us, and that Descartes also treats actions and passions differently. Therefore, Radner and Radner's interpretation must be related to the passage where Descartes actually draws the distinction between infant and adult thought³⁰ and in which he characterises the latter in terms of intellectual perception accompanying a first-order perception. It is also important to remember the considerations in the passages where Descartes argues that we cannot will without knowing *that* and *what* we will. These passages provide the grounds for my interpretation that Descartes holds a view concerning what I have called the intentional structure of consciousness.

Radner and Radner strive to present a comprehensive characterisation of Descartes' understanding of consciousness. They claim that humans, including infants as well as sleeping adults, are conscious in the sense that "there is only one act, the act of thinking of x, which has x as its primary object and itself as secondary object. Object x is primary in the sense that it is, properly speaking, what I am thinking about or what my thought is directed toward. The act reveals itself along with this object as a kind of by-product, albeit an essential one".³¹

They consider this characterisation of consciousness as excluding only the type of consciousness that is achieved through attentive reflection. Radner and Radner's formulation of Descartes' view does not discriminate between

²⁹ Radner, Daisie, and Radner, Michael, *Animal Consciousness* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 35.

³⁰ As noted earlier, sometimes adult thought is similar to infant thought, as sometimes in dreaming. By 'adult thought', I will in this section refer to what is characteristic of it in distinction to infant thought, i.e. that it can be reflexively conscious.

³¹ Radner and Radner 1989, 29. See also Radner, Daisie, "Thought and consciousness in Descartes", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26, 3 (1988), 446.

rudimentary and reflexive types of consciousness. Their account does not (and does not purport to) take notice of the underlying intentional structure which is the basis for the distinction between them.

The purpose of my distinction between rudimentary and reflexive consciousness is not to claim that rudimentary consciousness as an occurrent experience would not be *for* someone alongside with what the experience is primarily about (experiences do not just float around!), but primarily to point out that Descartes gives different accounts of the underlying structure of these different types of consciousness. So even though we may regard also rudimentary consciousness involving reflexivity in the sense that it is for a subject, this kind of reflexivity must be distinguished from reflexivity pertaining to intentional structure of consciousness.

If we fail to do this and operate only with the notion of reflexivity in reference to appearance or phenomenal givenness of consciousness, Descartes' account of adult thought as involving intellectual perception accompanying an initial perception, and his view of acts of will which involve understanding of what we will, do not fit into the framework. As we have seen, Descartes is explicit that the *two* operations occur together and appear to be indistinguishable from each other. These two mental operations together thus constitute a unified appearance. In the light of this fact, we can see that adult thought cannot be analysed through the notion of reflexivity embraced by Radner and Radner, because Descartes is explicit that the relation is between two distinct mental operations, whereas Radner and Radner argue that there is only one operation. Descartes articulates that in adult thought there are two, albeit intertwined operations precisely in the purpose to show how adult thought differs from infant thought.³² Second, adult thought cannot be regarded as an instance of attentive reflection either, since it is clear that the kind of reflexivity it involves is not subordinated to voluntary control. Therefore, Descartes' conception of consciousness cannot be exhausted by the notions of reflexivity as phenomenal givenness and attentive reflection.

As mentioned, this disagreement is not fundamental. Radner and Radner's description of Descartes' view is correct in so far as it is taken to state that thinking reveals itself along with its primary object to the subject of experience. This can be safely said of both rudimentary and reflexive consciousness. But in its neglect of what Descartes says about relations which do not reveal themselves to the subject undergoing the experience, their description fails to recognise the differences between rudimentary and

³² See also note 27 for Descartes' considerations about different grades of sensory response and how the third grade involves two distinct operations.

reflexive consciousness. As mentioned, even though phenomenal givenness is a minimal condition for all consciousness, reflexive consciousness carries richer experiential content than rudimentary consciousness. It categorises thoughts as certain kinds, presents them under some feature, or involves understanding of the object.

8.6 RELATION OF REFLEXIVE CONSCIOUSNESS TO ATTENTIVE REFLECTION

There are also other recent views that focus on the notion of consciousness understood particularly as self-relative, but I believe they also understand ‘reflexivity’ in reference to the fact that for Descartes all thinking as it were reveals itself to itself. According to Lilli Alanen, Descartes’ notion of consciousness includes inherent reflexivity, which does not require a “distinct and secondary awareness having the primary awareness as its object”.³³ Alanen sees such reflexive consciousness as a form of self-consciousness, although not in the sense of being consciousness of a self, but rather consciousness’s awareness of itself. She holds that consciousness understood in this way is “the kind of awareness accompanying thought in Descartes’ wide sense [of thought]”. In other words, reflexive consciousness is “what Descartes regards distinctive of human thought” in general.³⁴ This is on a par with what has earlier been said about reflexive consciousness.

This sense of consciousness is very important in understanding the nature of attentive reflection. Namely, reflexive consciousness is presupposed in a person’s capability to reflect and to control one’s thoughts.³⁵ Similarly to Alanen, Robert McRae insists that, according to Descartes, by virtue of consciousness, thoughts are present to the mind in such a way that attention can capture them. He expresses this by saying that, for Descartes, attentive reflection is not a steerable “light beam” which illuminates its object, but

³³ Alanen 2003, 100. She points out that if it did that would lead to an infinite progress of instances of consciousness. It is worthwhile to notice that it would also make the notion of deliberate attentive reflection altogether futile, given Descartes’ own definition of thinking, where consciousness necessarily accompanies thought. Thus secondary consciousness would have to be, besides properly distinct from the primary, also necessarily generated. Except for Descartes’ own definition of thought as always conscious there seems to be no other reason to think that the problem of infinite regress would arise in so far as the secondary act is subordinated to mind’s power to invoke it, as is asserted in the Burman quote.

³⁴ Alanen 2003, 100.

³⁵ See Alanen 2003, 101.

“possible only if the object is already in the light”.³⁶ Also in a similar vein, Stephen Gaukroger maintains that it is characteristic of human sense perception that it “involves an awareness of one’s perceptual states as perceptual states, whereas animal sense-perception does not”.³⁷

I agree with these scholars with the qualification that infants form an exception (together with animals, perhaps), for as we saw, there is a period of time when one’s mind is wholly occupied in perceiving in a confused manner or feeling pain, hunger, cold, etc. And in his letter to Hyperaspistes, Descartes takes the same to hold for those who are asleep or sick.³⁸ Even though the confused perceptions and feelings certainly qualify as conscious experiences, it is not indicated by Descartes that these states include awareness of them as some kind of states. To be able to attend to the content of one’s thought the content (or, the object) of thought must be readily apprehended as something. Similarly, reflection on our mental operations themselves presupposes them as already apprehended as the certain kind of thoughts they are: as doubting, seeing, feeling, etc. As by virtue of rudimentary consciousness the thought is (merely) phenomenally present to the mind, it is difficult to see how reflective attention could be directed at the thought without it being reflexively conscious, i.e. already categorised as something. Remember Descartes’ assessment about infants: in the mind of an infant there are only confused sensations and no reflexive acts,³⁹ and those creatures who can be only rudimentarily conscious also lack the capability to attentively reflect on their thoughts.⁴⁰ Liberty and maturity of the mind bring with them the conceptual categorisation of the acts and contents of perception and volition.

I will not get involved with the question of animal awareness here, but we should notice that Descartes considers the difference, or rather the semblance, between animals and infants: “I should not judge that infants were endowed with minds unless I saw that they were of the same nature as adults; but animals never develop to a point where any certain sign of thought can be detected in them” (*Letter to More*, 15 April 1649 AT V, 345; CSMK, 374). Infants acquire the ability of real speech, to name one certain sign, but there is a period of time when their lives do not notably differ from that of animals. While it is a matter of dispute whether Descartes grants

³⁶ McRae 1972, 70. McRae uses the expression ‘reflective attention’.

³⁷ Gaukroger 1995, 349.

³⁸ See AT III, 424; CSMK, 189–190.

³⁹ *Letter to Arnauld*, 4 June 1648 AT V, 192; CSMK, 354.

⁴⁰ See *Letter to Hyperaspistes*, August 1641 AT III, 424; CSMK, 189–190.

animals awareness of some kind or degree, he is clear that infants, ensouled beings that they are, are conscious. As I have argued, in its lack of reflexive relations which would inconspicuously categorise thought as something, the rudimentary consciousness pertaining to infant thought is best understood as phenomenally given to the mind. Rudimentary consciousness is the foundation for reflexive consciousness which, for its part, is prerequisite for our capability to deliberately reflect on our thoughts.

CHAPTER NINE

THE STATUS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN SPINOZA'S CONCEPT OF MIND

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Let me start with my conclusions: like most other philosophers of his era, Spinoza did not have well-developed views on consciousness and its place in the mind. Somewhat paradoxically, however, a basic tenet of his metaphysics generated a problem which might have been solved if he had thought more about those issues. So in the end, then, Spinoza did not have much to say about consciousness even though the coherency or at least the plausibility of his system demanded it.

With such being my assessment of Spinoza's views on consciousness, it will come as no surprise that I regard the prospects for a robust and coherent Spinozistic theory of consciousness as dim. As explained later, I differ in this respect from some prominent Spinoza scholars. At the same time, even if we won't find much guidance from Spinoza for thinking about consciousness, I believe that he has much to teach us about *the mind*. In my view, Spinoza's philosophy of mind is instructive precisely because it attempts to understand the mind without reference to consciousness. This can and should be a healthy corrective to contemporary philosophy of mind, which is prone to inflate the place of consciousness in the mind.

To make and defend all of these points, I divide my chapter into four sections. In the first, I offer a sketch of consciousness in seventeenth-century philosophy generally and Spinoza's work specifically, a sketch which is intended to show that consciousness did not feature prominently in their accounts of the mind. Then, I note how a major problem plagues Spinoza's account of the relationship between the physical and the mental, and I show how two attempted solutions of this problem both fail. By way of conclusion, I suggest why Spinoza might be interesting to philosophers of mind today, his silence on consciousness notwithstanding.

9.1 CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

As the chapters in this book attest, there are many ways in which consciousness can figure into accounts of the mind. While we tend to think of it as central or essential, people haven't always done so. In fact, there have been times when consciousness was not only not considered to be the essence of the mind but it wasn't even one of several essential properties ascribed to the mental. This seems to have been the case for most of the seventeenth century, as an array of literary and philosophical evidence suggests.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, provides eight basic definitions of the English word 'consciousness'. Fully half of these arose in the seventeenth century, with the others entering the language significantly later. The emergence of the first four in the seventeenth century is interesting, because it indicates that a new concept was being formulated at the time: struggling to articulate an idea that couldn't be voiced with the extant vocabulary, people did what people often do in such situations – they simply created a new word. The earliest *exemplum* given in those four definitions is dated 1632; *exempla* for the other three all appear toward the end of the century. Indeed, the definition identified by the *OED* as the most philosophical of the lot – “The state or faculty of being conscious, as a condition and concomitant of all thought, feeling, and volition” – doesn't appear in print until 1678, when a version of it can be found in the works of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth. Even then, it evolved significantly, at the hands of Locke and Clarke among others, before reaching its canonical form in Reid (1785).¹ According to lexicographers, then, the generic English word 'consciousness' seems to have been produced by currents of thought which initially combined in the late seventeenth century but took many more decades before churning the specifically philosophical meaning to the surface.

Turning from English to Latin, two important words for consciousness in that language are *conscientia*, a noun, and *consciuis*, an adjective derived from the perfect passive participle of the verb *conscio*.² A pair of

¹ We can silently bypass Cudworth, Locke and Clarke but Reid's formulation deserves quotation since it is canonical: “Consciousness is a word used by Philosophers, to signify that immediate knowledge which we have of our present thoughts and purposes, and, in general, of all the present operations of our minds” (*Intellectual Powers of Man* 1785, I.i).

² There are of course other words, such as the noun *animus*, which were occasionally used to refer to consciousness. I shall ignore them because they didn't become semi-technical terms in the way that *conscientia* and *consciuis* did.

seventeenth-century dictionaries of philosophy³ do not have entries for *consciūsus*; however, both do have entries for *conscientia* and both define the word similarly. So Goclenius' dictionary spells out four predominant meanings of the word over a half-page. While two of them are logical and so unrelated to the themes of this chapter, the other two do involve a "power of the mind".⁴ Not just any power, however, but a *normative* power. As Goclenius writes, *conscientia* is "the mind's knowledge which allows it to judge accurately when healthy or inaccurately when ill". Here we find consciousness closely related to what we now call 'conscience': it is a normative faculty of the mind which directs the agent to follow standards. While *conscientia* is one of the mind's powers, it is by no means conceived to be the essence of the mind. Indeed, *conscientia* in this sense can be defined without any mention of the mind's essential properties, a fact which emphasizes the distance which lies between consciousness as it is understood by Goclenius and the fundamental conditions for thought, feeling and mentality generally.

If we shift our focus to philosophy and particularly to the most important philosophical influence on Spinoza, Descartes, we find indications of both continuity and change with the broader trends of the day. Taking continuity first, Descartes only made infrequent use of words for consciousness. So *conscientia* never appears in the *Meditations* and *consciūsus*, only once. Though the latter can be found in the *Objections and Replies*, and both terms are present elsewhere in his corpus, they are not common parlance for Descartes. Reflecting their relative unimportance, Étienne Gilson does not even bother to include them in his *Index Scolastico-Cartésien*. The same is true of common French words for consciousness, such as 'connaissance' and 'conscience': they are used; Descartes knows them; but they aren't important to him.⁵

When we look at the applications of the terms on the occasions when Descartes does use them, further continuity is discernible. For example, Descartes will employ 'conscientia' where English speakers nowadays would

³ Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum quo tanquam clave Philosophiae fores aperiuntur* (orig. published 1613; reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964). Micraelius, *Lexicon philosophicum terminorum philosophis ussitorum*, 2nd ed. (orig. published 1662; reprinted Düsseldorf: Stern-Verlag Janssen, 1966).

⁴ Both Goclenius translations are my own.

⁵ When researching these issues, I have relied on both Gilson and the invaluable searchable database, *Œuvres Complètes de René Descartes*, produced by André Gombay et al. and published by InteLex. For a broader look at the transformation of *conscience* in the seventeenth century, see Davies, Catherine Glynn, *Conscience as Consciousness* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1990), Chapter 1.

use ‘conscience.’ Thus he speaks in the *Search after Truth* of “conscience or internal testimony [*conscientia vel interno testimonio*]”.⁶ Here we see roughly the same sense of ‘conscientia’ as found in Goclenius. A different one appears in the *Third Replies*, where Descartes says that all “‘acts of thought,’ such as understanding, willing, imagining, having sensory perceptions, and so on” belong under “the common concept of thought or perception or consciousness [*sub ratione communi cogitationis, sive perceptionis, sive conscientiae*], and we call the substance in which they inhere a ‘thinking thing’ or a ‘mind’”.⁷ No special weight is assigned to consciousness here; it is one of several terms provided by Descartes to illuminate the locus of all individual thoughts, which is the mind. The mind itself is given the familiar Cartesian essence: it is a thinking thing. Since there are many more properties to thought than just consciousness, it follows for Descartes that the essence of the mind is not or not just consciousness.⁸ Here, then, we find another respect in which Descartes is a man of his times.

Yet, Descartes was prolific and elsewhere in his corpus we can find innovations. Two examples may suffice to illustrate the changes. First, he said in the *Conversation with Burman*, “to be conscious is both to think and to reflect on one’s thought”.⁹ Second, he explained in the *Principia* that “thought” is “everything of which we are conscious [*quae nobis consciis*] as happening in us, in so far as we have consciousness of it [*quatenus eorum in nobis conscientia est*]”.¹⁰ These and other texts, which could be cited,¹¹ contain concepts which bear little or no resemblance to what could be found in Goclenius and other contemporaries of Descartes. One novel element is introspectability: conscious states are ones which we can and do observe,

⁶ *Œuvres de Descartes*, 12 volumes, edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (1897–1913) (hereafter AT), AT X, 524; my translation.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all Descartes translations are from the respective volume of *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. I–II, ed. and trans. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch; vol. III, ed. and trans. by Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch and A. Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–1991). Abbreviation: CSM/CSMK plus the volume and page numbers. The passage from the *Third Replies* comes from CSM II, 124.

⁸ As John Cottingham puts it, “The defining characteristic of the mind, for Descartes, is not consciousness but thought, *cogitatio*” (*Philosophy and the Good Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 120).

⁹ CSM I, 335.

¹⁰ *Principia*, Part One, Article 9 (CSM I, 195; translation modified).

¹¹ Many of them have been gathered together in Alanen, Lilli, *Descartes’s Concept of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), Chapter 3.

even if they are internal to ourselves. A second new idea is interchangeability: thought and consciousness are identifiable with one another. Descartes may not be conceiving of consciousness as the essence of the mind but he is (at least in this and other similar passages) conceiving of consciousness in terms which are familiar to twenty-first-century readers.¹²

The works I have cited as well as other chapters in this book have more to say about Descartes, so let us come to Spinoza's use of words for consciousness.¹³ Like Descartes, he does use both 'conscientia' and 'consciuis', though not frequently: the *Lexicon Spinozanum* records some six instances of 'conscientia' in his corpus and about 15 of 'consciuis'.¹⁴ Curley's valuable glossary-index reinforces the impression given by the *Lexicon*. He combines 'conscientia' and 'consciuis' into a single entry and identifies approximately 18 appearances of one word or the other.¹⁵ The point made earlier about linguistic frequency bears repeating here: Spinoza's sparing use of words for

¹² There is an interesting disagreement between specialists versus non-specialists in early modern philosophy on the status of consciousness in Descartes' philosophy of mind. Most historians would endorse Lilli Alanen's assertion that "consciousness was not prominent in Descartes's own discussions of the mental" (Alanen 2003, 78). By contrast, most non-specialists would agree with David M. Rosenthal's statement that Descartes "identified" consciousness and the mind ("Consciousness and the mind", *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 51 (2002), 229). Descartes' views are certainly more complex than Rosenthal suggests, though for reasons I have just given in, it is also not unwarranted to see him as beginning an expansion in the mental space occupied by consciousness. For additional discussion of these much talked-about issues, see also the famous passage in Ryle, Gilbert, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1949), 19–24, together with Edwin Curley's reply in *Descartes Against the Sceptics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 170–193.

¹³ I realize that my discussion of Descartes is highly schematic, raising many more questions than it answers. It should only be used as it is intended: namely, to set the stage for Spinoza. In addition to the works that I have already cited, I strongly recommend Genevieve Lewis's *Le probleme de l'inconscient et le cartesianisme* (Paris: PUF, 1950). She assembles a large quantity of material which is invaluable for understanding Descartes' views on consciousness.

¹⁴ See Giancotti Boscherini, Emilia, *Lexicon Spinozanum*, vols. 1–2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 216–217.

¹⁵ See *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by E. Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 669–670. For a study of the *Ethics* alone, see *Spinoza: Ethica – Concordances, Index, Listes de fréquences, Tables comparatives* by Michel Gueret, André Robinet and Paul Tombeur (Louvain: Publications du CETEDOC, 1977), 76.

consciousness is an important clue about the status of the corresponding concepts to his thought, suggesting that they are not very central at all.

A review of the use Spinoza put to these words reveals that they were not conceived technically. He never provides formal definitions or demonstrations of them, in the way that he does for substance, attribute, intuitive knowledge, the good and other important concepts. Instead, they are routine terms deployed in the course of argument without any attempt to stipulate special meanings for, or assign special status to, them. For example, at the end of Part One of the *Ethics* he declares, “all men are born ignorant of the causes of things, and . . . they all want to seek their own advantage, and are conscious of this appetite [*conscii sui appetitus*]”.¹⁶ Later in the *Ethics* we read, “the Mind (by IIP23) is necessarily conscious of itself [*sui conscia*] through ideas of the Body’s affections [. . .]” (IIP9Dem). Because ‘conscientia’ and ‘conscius’ are both routine terms without explicitly stated boundaries, it would be a mistake to distinguish too sharply between them.

Assuming that ‘conscientia’ and ‘conscius’ overlap, the following general observations can be made. They have two predominant meanings: conscience, and self-awareness or self-recognition. As an example of the former, there’s the definition given in the third part of *Ethics* (IIIDefAffXVII), where the emotion of disappointment is called “conscientiae morsus”, the “pain accompanied by the idea of a past thing whose outcome was contrary to our hope”. ‘Conscientia’/‘Conscius’ as conscience is both more easily understood and less interesting for the purposes of this chapter. It is the use of those terms to indicate self-awareness or recognition that deserves amplification.

We can distinguish between two different senses here. First, there is the sense of self-awareness implicit in such statements as “Men are deceived in thinking themselves free, a belief that consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions [*suarum actionum conscii*] and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined” (IIP35Sch). The contrast between *consciousness* of actions and *ignorance* of causes suggests that this kind of conscious awareness is purely epistemic: it consists entirely in knowledge of a certain set of propositions or states of affairs. What sets this kind of knowledge apart from other kinds of knowledge is that the set of propositions or states

¹⁶ IApp (Curley 440). Unless otherwise noted, all Spinoza translations are by Curley. Also, standard citations will be used when referring to the *Ethics*: Roman numerals for Part, “D” plus an Arabic numeral for definition, “A” plus an Arabic numeral for axiom, “P” plus an Arabic numeral for proposition, “Dem” plus an Arabic numeral where required for demonstration, “Sch” plus an Arabic numeral where required for Scholium, etc. So “IIP9Sch” means “the scholium to proposition nine of part three”.

of affairs are restricted to the agent. One is always conscious, in this sense, that such-and-such is the case for oneself; that is to say, consciousness consists entirely in self-knowledge.

The second sense of consciousness *qua* self-awareness or recognition is also epistemic but with some twists. Spinoza writes at the end of the *Ethics*,

[W]e strive especially that the infant's Body may change [. . .] into another, capable of a great many things and related to a Mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things. We strive, that is, that whatever is related to its memory or imagination is of hardly any moment in relation to the intellect [. . .]. (VP39Sch)

There are two differences between this sense of consciousness and the one adumbrated in the last paragraph. First, while consciousness is still supposed to consist in self-knowledge, the scope of the self has been radically extended here. Where the self being spoken of in the previous paragraph is closer to the common pre-philosophical sense of self which takes as its referent the cognitive states of a single individual, here the self includes not just one's own mental states but much else besides. As Spinoza says, he wants the self to be conscious not just "of itself" but also "of God, and of things". Since the mind must now know about God and other things before it can claim to be truly conscious or self-aware, both the challenge of coming to be self-aware and outcome of that effort will be very different from what is true in early parts of the *Ethics*, where the discussion centres on a much narrower conception of the self.

Second and even more important for the purposes of understanding his conception of the mind, consciousness is equated with the intellect. This is implied by the second sentence in the passage quoted, where propositions or states of affairs known by memory or imagination are minimized in importance, while those known by consciousness or intellect are emphasized. Assuming that the intellect is the better part of ourselves,¹⁷ the equation of consciousness with intellect implies that it is also the better part of ourselves. This claim mirrors those few passages we found in Descartes which accord consciousness a prominent place in his account of the mental. Yet, as in Descartes, the ultimate significance of this claim is uncertain, because it is only made twice in Spinoza's writings, both within a few pages at the very end of the *Ethics*.¹⁸ Spinoza may have had some inkling that mentality can be equated with consciousness but it was far from being fully developed.

¹⁷ That is Spinoza's wording in the *Theological–Political Treatise*, Chapter Four (Gebhardt Vol. III, p.59). For discussion of whether he really took the intellect to be the better part of us, see Miller, Jon, "Spinoza's axiology", *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 2 (2005), 158–159.

¹⁸ The other text is VP42Sch.

Let's suppose that Spinoza shared neither our concept of consciousness nor the belief – common enough nowadays – that consciousness is essential to the mind. If that's the case, the obvious question is – why not? Space will not allow me to answer that question fully but I can quickly state two crucial reasons. First, when it came to consciousness, Spinoza was a man of his times and men of his times did not closely connect the mind and consciousness. For interesting and complicated reasons, the situation had started to change by the end of the seventeenth century, when philosophers such as Locke could say, “it being the same consciousness that makes a Man be himself to himself”.¹⁹ But that lay ahead: Spinoza belonged to an earlier era. For him as for his contemporaries, the mental was largely construed without reference to consciousness. The second reason is perhaps more philosophically satisfying. For Spinoza as for Descartes, *thought* was the mark of the mental. And for Spinoza as for Descartes, thought was comprised of many more activities and states than consciousness.²⁰ Since thought was the essence of the mind, and thought was distinguished from consciousness, it follows that consciousness was at best part of the mind's nature or essence, not constitutive of it.

With that point having been made, these opening remarks may be concluded. I only wish to make one final point, which connects to the opening paragraph of this section. Though we have grown accustomed to looking for signs of consciousness in accounts of the mind, there is no reason why consciousness must be central to what any philosopher says about the mind. Indeed, the points I have made over the past few pages imply that consciousness was *not* central to accounts of the mind for most (though not all) of the seventeenth century. We can examine Spinoza to learn what he said about consciousness and to investigate possibilities which were introduced into the philosophy of mind by his system. But we commit dangerous anachronisms when we open our investigations by *assuming* that Spinoza's philosophy of mind has helpful or important contributions to make regarding consciousness. Much of what is interesting about Spinoza's discussion of consciousness is precisely that it is so deeply problematic. Regarding consciousness, the Spinozistic (and, I might add, Cartesian) legacy is valuable not because it bequeathed useful solutions to its heirs but rather because it burdened them with weighty problems that philosophers are still struggling to carry.

¹⁹ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), II.XXVII.10.

²⁰ This point is famously made by Descartes: “But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions” (*Second Meditation*, CSM II, 19).

9.2 THE PROBLEM

The previous section adduced various considerations, largely external to Spinoza's philosophy, in support of my contention that Spinoza did not have much to say on consciousness. In this section, my focus shifts to an internal issue, as I shall discuss a major problem with his metaphysics which might have been ameliorated if he had considered consciousness more fully.

The problem may be stated as follows. According to Spinoza, there is only one substance (IP14). This single substance, however, is made up of many attributes, through which it is understood or conceived (IP11).²¹ Two attributes of substance are thought (IIP1) and extension (IIP2). So substance can be conceived in terms of either thought or extension. Now, the conceptualization of substance in either of these terms is exhaustive and exclusive of any other form of conceptualization (IP10Sch). So, when we think of substance in terms of thought, we can give a complete account of it in those terms without ever needing to employ the terms of, say, extension. The opposite holds as well: we need not and indeed cannot draw on the terms of thought when we are conceiving of substance in the terms of extension. Even though we can only use the terms of one attribute when conceptualizing substance, it doesn't follow that one conceptualization is totally disconnected from another. Quite the opposite, as Spinoza emphasizes: "the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under that" (IIP7Sch). For any given part or aspect of substance's essence, we can give a characterization of it in one of its attributes. Corresponding to that precise characterization is a characterization of substance in the terms of the other attribute.²² This doctrine, which holds that the thinking realm or realm of ideas exactly mirrors the extended realm or realm of physical states, is often called "psycho-physical parallelism" or just "parallelism".

²¹ There is scholarly dispute about how many ways substance can be conceived, with the two most interesting alternatives being (i) two ways and (ii) an infinite number of ways. Since the issue does not affect the central concerns of this chapter, it will not be discussed further. For more, see especially Bennett, Jonathan, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1984), 75–79.

²² As Bennett has put it, parallelism "seems to be the doctrine that there is a one–one relation correlating mental items with physical ones, mapping similarities onto similarities and causal chains onto causal chains. If x is a physical item, then the correlated mental item is what Spinoza calls 'the idea of x'" (Bennett 1984, 127).

Now, since substance is the ultimate constituent of all that is or exists, it follows that all that is or exists must be conceived in one of the terms of substance. To use Spinoza's words, apart from substance itself, everything else is a "modification" or "mode" of substance (ID5). Right after the part of IIP7Sch just quoted, Spinoza goes on to say that the psycho-physical parallelism which obtains for substance also holds for all of the modes of substance: "So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways". An example elucidates the point: "a circle existing in nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in [substance], are one and the same thing, which is explained through different attributes". We can repeat this exercise of conceptualizing things in terms of thought or extension across all entities we might find or hypothesize. It is important to stress the unqualified nature of this conceptualization: every single thing may be conceived as thinking or extended. This means that not only God is conceivable as thinking or extended but also humans, animals, plants, stars, rocks and any other entity one might contemplate. Here is where the problem arises: while most of us will unhesitatingly agree that humans think as well as at least some other existing things (such as animals and God, if he exists), an equal number of us will unhesitatingly reject the notion that rocks and many other existing things think. Since there is no doubt that Spinoza argued for this claim – indeed, it is a hallmark of his metaphysics – it seems to follow that Spinoza argued for a claim which most of us will reject out of hand as obviously false. In what follows, it will be convenient to have a label for this problem. Call it the problem of pan-psychism.²³

9.3 TWO SOLUTIONS

The crux of the problem is this: when Spinoza says in IIP7 that everything is "conceivable under the attribute of thought", what exactly does he mean? In recent decades, scholars have advanced two radically different answers to that question. In this section, I will go through both and show how they fail.

1. *The non-psychological solution.* The first of the two has been defended most artfully by Edwin Curley. Basing his solution on a re-interpretation of

²³ The label is offered with some qualms. My principal reservation stems from the obscurity of the notion of pan-psychism itself, which I take to be very far from self-evident. However, so long as it is understood that when I speak of "pan-psychism", I mean only the doctrine that all things think (however that doctrine is to be interpreted), we should avoid any difficulties.

Spinoza's theory of ideas, Curley holds that there are three distinctive features of that theory: first, all ideas are supposed to involve an element of affirmation or negation; second, one idea is said to follow from another; finally, ideas are made into bearers of truth – they are the sorts of things that can be true or false, depending on whether or not they agree with their objects.²⁴ Given that Spinoza grants all of these properties to ideas, Curley holds that “it would be appropriate in most contexts in Spinoza to substitute the term ‘proposition’ or ‘assertion’ for the term ‘idea’”.²⁵

With this point in hand, Curley turns to Spinoza's view that all things may be conceived as thinking. On the supposition that “idea” equals “proposition”, the claim that the “order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (IIP7) becomes “the order and connection of propositions is the same as the order and connection of things”. Plainly, the meaning of proposition 7 (IIP7) has been considerably altered by the substitution of “propositions” for “ideas”. No longer is there any suggestion that all things can think; instead, the suggestion is that all things can be understood in propositional terms. As Curley puts it, “the relation between thought and extension” has been transformed into a relationship between “true proposition and fact”.²⁶ The epigraph opening the chapter in which he puts forward this interpretation says that “One is tempted [. . .] to think that the idea meant for [Spinoza] what we should call the truth about each particular event”.²⁷ There are differences between this view and Curley's but they plainly cast Spinoza in roughly the same light.

As a solution to the problem of pan-psychism, it is ingenious, for it completely deflates the worry that Spinoza has endowed too many entities with the capacity for thought. Indeed, some scholars have wondered whether it isn't too successful in solving that problem: not only does it deny the capacity for thought to rocks and planets but also it must deny the capacity for thought to higher-order animals and humans.²⁸ Curley writes, “The true proposition is the idea in thought of the mode of extension, it is its form or, if you like, its mind [. . .] When [Spinoza] says that the human mind is the idea of the human body (IIP13), he is not crediting the human body with

²⁴ See Curley, Edwin, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 121–124.

²⁵ Curley 1969, 122.

²⁶ Curley 1969, 123.

²⁷ See Curley 1969, 118; he only identifies the source as “Fuller, *History of Philosophy*”.

²⁸ See, e.g., Bennett 1984, 129.

anything that any other mode of extension does not have”.²⁹ According to Curley, we can and should apply the word ‘mind’ to any set of propositions which truly describe a corresponding set of facts. So we can speak of ‘Spinoza’s mind’ just as we can ‘Mt. Everest’s mind.’ Given that the mind is just a certain set of true propositions, we aren’t endowing Mt. Everest with the capacity for thought. Then again, neither are we to Spinoza.

Aware that the generic sense of ‘mind’ which he finds in Spinoza is idiosyncratic, Curley thinks it may be made more palatable by a distinction between two species of minds: non-conscious versus conscious. Mt. Everest may have a mind, in the attenuated sense of that word just described, but it doesn’t necessarily follow that it is conscious and thinks. According to Curley, only a very small subset of all minds are also conscious and capable of thought. Distinguishing conscious minds from non-conscious ones is what Spinoza calls (in IIP20Sch and elsewhere) “the idea of the idea”. We needn’t worry about what exactly this means; take it to be roughly equivalent to second-order thought or the ability to reflect on the more basic contents of one’s mind. More importantly, whatever “the idea of the idea” is, as Curley reads the texts where Spinoza discusses that notion, it only applies to human minds. He writes, “while every individual thing has a ‘mind’ containing ideas of the affections of its body (IIP13Sch), the existence of ideas of ideas is proven only for human minds (IIP20)”.³⁰ Given that the necessary and sufficient condition for consciousness is the ability to perceive one’s own ideas or have ideas about one’s ideas, then since humans alone have this ability, they alone are conscious. In Curley’s words, “although Spinoza is willing to assert that everything is animate (in a very odd sense of the term), he is not prepared to say that anything except a human being is conscious”.³¹

However, it is not quite true that Spinoza “says” humans alone are conscious. Those are Curley’s words, put into Spinoza’s mouth as an interpolation of certain texts. And as some critics of Curley have pointed out, it is far from clear that the texts support Curley’s attribution. For example, Margaret Dauler Wilson notes that while Curley wants IIP20 to apply only to the human mind, the implications of the demonstration which supports the proposition won’t allow this. The proposition is this: “There is also in God an idea, or knowledge [*cognitio*], of the human Mind, which follows in God in the same way and is related to God in the same way as the idea, or knowledge, of the human body” (IIP20). The demonstration to the

²⁹ Curley 1969, 126.

³⁰ Curley 1969, 128.

³¹ Ibid.

proposition (IIP20Dem) hinges on the claim that, because there are and have to be ideas in God of all of the modifications of his attributes, there must also be ideas in him of the human mind. While it is true that Spinoza focuses on the human mind, Wilson contends, there is no reason why his point should hold for only the human mind. Indeed, in the demonstration (IIP20Dem), Spinoza refers to proposition 11. That proposition states, "The first thing that constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists" (IIP11). Wilson concedes that Spinoza continues to speak of human minds in particular but she insists that such talk is misleading. When we look at both the demonstration to IIP11 and its applications throughout the *Ethics*, Wilson says, we will find that it "is one of those [propositions] that Spinoza explicitly holds to apply generally, and not just to the human mind".³² Wilson does not deny that Spinoza may have wanted to use the doctrine of the idea of an idea to distinguish conscious from non-conscious minds, but she is adamant that we distinguish between the intended versus actual implications of Spinoza's argument. The actual implications are not what Spinoza may have wanted, for the actual implications endow all minds with ideas of their ideas.

2. *The psychological solution.* For these and other reasons, many commentators have been led to abandon a non-psychological interpretation in favour of readings which impart some degree of psychological force to ideas.³³ We can find such a view, for example, in a new paper by Don Garrett.

Whereas Curley begins with an analysis of Spinoza's concept of idea, Garrett's starting point is Spinoza's concept of naturalism. As he interprets it, there are two components to Spinozistic naturalism: first, naturalism *per se*; second, what Garrett calls "incrementalism". An invaluable text for understanding the former is the Preface to Part III of the *Ethics*: "nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any defect in it, for nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same [. . .]. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, of whatever kind, must also be the same [. . .]". In this text, Garrett sees Spinoza committing himself to "the project of fully integrating the study and understanding of human beings, including the human mind, into the study

³² Wilson, Margaret Dauber, "Objects, ideas, and 'minds': Comments on Spinoza's theory of mind", reprinted in her *Ideas and Mechanism: Essays on Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 126–140, 135.

³³ It should be noted that Curley himself backs away from it in his later work. See especially *Behind the Geometrical Method* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), xv–xvi, 71–73, and endnote 12 to the "Preface".

and understanding of nature [. . .].”³⁴ Regarding Spinoza’s incrementalism, Garrett doesn’t draw attention to specific texts, perhaps on the grounds that it is so engrained into his thought that he doesn’t ever feel the need to discuss it explicitly.³⁵ What he means by incrementalism is “the methodology of treating important explanatory properties and relations not as simply present-or-absent but rather as properties and relations that are pervasively present to greater or lesser degrees”.³⁶ We can draw inferences about properties from highly sophisticated beings to very simple ones; conversely, we can use what we already know of very simple beings to acquire knowledge of complex ones. Combining naturalism as he understands it with incrementalism in this sense, Garrett contends that for Spinoza, human traits and behaviours are the product of properties which are found throughout nature, only in less complex forms. Since humans are conscious, then “all finite individuals are conscious to at least some degree”.³⁷

While Garrett denies that this conclusion is or should be “embarrassing” to Spinoza, he does direct attention to some mitigating texts for those who have their doubts. Take, for instance, the scholium to proposition 39 of part five: “he who, like an infant or child, has a Body capable of very few things, and very heavily dependent on external causes, has a Mind which considered solely in itself is conscious of almost nothing of itself [. . .]” (VP39Sch).³⁸ It may be the case that all beings are conscious, but the consciousness of some beings is extremely minimal. Moreover, even to the extent that simple beings are conscious, their consciousness is not efficacious but diffuse and ineffectual. According to Garrett’s psychological interpretation of Spinoza’s concept of idea, all ideas carry with them some degree of consciousness. Some ideas are, however, much more expressive of activity than others. Because this activity is required for the preservation and increase in the individual’s existence, it is only in beings with higher forms of consciousness that their consciousness will be apparent in their actions and redound to their benefit.

³⁴ Garrett, Don, “Representation and consciousness in Spinoza’s naturalistic theory of the imagination”, in his *Necessity and Nature in Spinoza’s Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming) (page numbers were not available at the time this chapter was written).

³⁵ Instead of texts, Garrett draws attention to the “prevalence” of such words as “insofar as” [*quatenus*]” in his writings (see Garrett forthcoming, n. 19).

³⁶ Garrett forthcoming.

³⁷ Garrett forthcoming.

³⁸ Also relevant, Garrett says, is IIP13Sch.

Garrett's reading has many virtues, not the least of which is that it seems much less strained than Curley's: he doesn't go through many contortions to make Spinoza deny pan-psychism. As a matter of fact, Garrett doesn't go through any contortions to distance Spinoza from pan-psychism, for as he sees him, Spinoza is a pan-psychist. Since Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism affirms that every extended entity is attended by an intentional correlate – all bodies have their ideas – then given that Garrett takes ideas as being intrinsically psychological, it follows that all beings must have psyches. For this reason, as a solution to the original problem identified earlier – the problem of pan-psychism – Garrett's reading will strike some as of little use. It may seek to convince us that pan-psychism is not a problem, but if we remain convinced that it is problematic, then Garrett will not take us far.

Indeed, as Margaret Wilson points out, it is not plain that Spinoza himself did not take pan-psychism to be problematic. There are at least two texts in the *Ethics* – the proposition 9 of Part Three and the scholium to proposition 39 of Part Five – in which, Wilson writes, “Spinoza does recognize some significant distinction between conscious and non-conscious ‘minds’ or states of ‘minds’”.³⁹ It may be true that Spinoza does not ultimately succeed in articulating criteria capable of explaining the distinction between conscious and non-conscious minds, criteria which are consistent with his basic metaphysical suppositions. In fact, as we shall see, Wilson argues that he does fail, in just this respect. As a preliminary point, however, it should be noticed that he wanted to make such a distinction. For this reason, Wilson doubts that those, such as Garrett, who take Spinoza to be comfortable with pan-psychism are correct. At some moments, at least, Spinoza recognized pan-psychism as a problem; these moments are enough to dispel claims that he did or would have unreservedly embraced pan-psychism.

To say that someone wanted to defuse a problem, however, is not to say that he actually succeeded in doing so, and Wilson is highly sceptical about whether Spinoza dealt with the problem of pan-psychism in a matter that is at all satisfactory. She examines two ways in which he might be thought to have resolved the problem, one centring on his notion of an “idea of an idea” and the other connected with what Garrett calls his “incrementalism”. We have already looked at her analysis of the “idea of an idea”, so let's consider now what she has to say about incrementalism.

There are (at least) two problems with the claim that Spinoza can link the properties of minds to the complexity of their bodies. One has to do with the internal consistency of his texts. Perhaps we can read latter passages of the

³⁹ Wilson 1999, 134.

Ethics, such as the scholium (VP39Sch), as making consciousness a function of the physical states of the body. There are, however, important earlier passages which appear to contradict that view. For example, IIP9 says, “Both insofar as the Mind has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, it strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of this striving it has”. Both here and in the attending demonstration, Spinoza seems to say that all minds, and all the ideas of every mind, are conscious. If it’s the case that all minds are conscious, then consciousness does not appear to be tied to physical development but rather things seem to be conscious simply in virtue of their physicality. This claim seems incompatible with the claim vetted in VP39Sch that physicality per se does not provide consciousness, since consciousness is a by-product of complexity.

Quite apart from the problem of consistency, Wilson inspires a purely philosophical objection to incrementalism. Why should we think that “the adult body’s fitness for many things should be tied to consciousness in the adult mind”?⁴⁰ Can we not imagine beings of enormous complexity who lack consciousness altogether? Even if we are inclined to think that increasing complexity will entail consciousness, we need to have reasons. But as Wilson says, “Spinoza offers us no way at all of understanding” why such a view should be true.⁴¹ In sum, then, incrementalism as a solution to the problem of consciousness is both far from obviously true while simultaneously lacking justification from Spinoza.

3. *The outcome*. There is much more to be said about this issue, as well as the other issues we have discussed, but all that will have to be left for another day. To end this section, I want to reflect on the various responses we have seen to the problem of pan-psychism. In one respect, the non-psychological and the psychological interpretations are radically dissimilar. The solutions each poses to the problem of pan-psychism are unmistakably distinct: where the non-psychological solves it by tightly restricting the scope of things which have conscious minds, the psychological draws on other aspects of Spinoza’s thought to argue that he needn’t be troubled by pan-psychism. While they disagree in this respect, however, both readings agree on another, perhaps more important point: both think that Spinoza had the resources to solve the problem itself. Wilson takes a dimmer view of the situation. “Spinoza’s system”, she writes, “does not provide a plausible or coherent position about (real) minds and their relations to bodies”.⁴² Without discounting the importance of this or any other of the disagreements, I do

⁴⁰ Wilson 1999, 137.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Wilson 1999, 138.

want to draw attention to another point on which all of the parties agree: no matter how they solve the problem or whether they think it's soluble, all of them agree that pan-psychism is an issue on which Spinoza owes us an account and that the account must somehow involve the notion of consciousness. The universal recognition of pan-psychism as deeply problematic for Spinoza, together with the widespread opinion that consciousness figures somehow into the solution to the problem, points to the conclusion stated in my introduction. For if consciousness had occupied a more prominent place in Spinoza's conceptual schema, it is hard to believe that he would have left such a glaring hole in his metaphysical system unfilled.

9.4 PHILOSOPHY OF MIND *SANS* CONSCIOUSNESS

To the extent that my chapter has been trying to argue that Spinoza lacked robust views on the nature of consciousness and its relationship to the mind, it may be seen as purely negative in thrust. There is value in knowing that a philosopher didn't address a particular issue, especially when that issue is of such concern to us nowadays. For this reason, I hope that my arguments will be welcomed as expanding our understanding of Spinoza and philosophy in his time. Still, I want to end on a more positive note, one which also serves to connect the issues I have discussed with more topical concerns. Why is it, I want to ask, that Spinoza might still be of interest to contemporary philosophers of mind, his views – or lack of views – on consciousness notwithstanding?

For brevity's sake, I shall consider only one answer. Nowadays, consciousness is accorded a central place – indeed, the central place – in accounts of the mind. For example, Daniel Dennett declares, “Human consciousness is just about the last surviving mystery [. . .]. There have been other great mysteries [. . .]. [Those] mysteries haven't vanished, but they have been tamed [. . .]. With consciousness, however, we are still in a great muddle”.⁴³ Agreeing with Dennett, Thomas Nagel explains why consciousness is so important: “Consciousness is what makes the mind–body problem really intractable [. . .]. Without consciousness the mind–body problem would be much less interesting. With consciousness it seems hopeless”.⁴⁴

John Searle thinks the key to understanding the mind lies in understanding how consciousness is possible: “The most important scientific discovery

⁴³ Dennett, Daniel C., *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 21–22.

⁴⁴ Nagel, Thomas, “What is it like to be a bat?” [1974], reprinted in *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 165–166.

of the present era will come when someone – or some group – discovers the answer to the following question: How exactly do neurobiological processes in the brain cause consciousness?”⁴⁵ Now, it would be daft to deny that consciousness is vital to our minds; for reasons given by Dennett, Nagel, Searle and so many others, we must grapple with consciousness if we want to understand the nature of our minds. Even so, there is more to the mind than just consciousness. Since Spinoza’s inquiry into the mind was largely pursued without giving any consideration to consciousness, he presents a fascinating resource or opportunity to learn just how much progress can be made into understanding the mind without relying on consciousness.

The point I’m making should not be taken as Freudian, for I am not suggesting that we ought to expand our investigations into the mind by taking into account the unconscious. This is both unnecessary and otiose: unnecessary, because plenty of theorists nowadays fold the concept of unconsciousness into their explanations of the mind; otiose, because it is beside the point I am arguing. As I read Spinoza, he used neither consciousness nor unconsciousness in developing his theory of the mental. And this is what makes him interesting. By not employing consciousness in his theory of the mind, he conceived the mind in terms that are alien to today’s theories of the mind. It is the alienness itself of his approach that philosophers ought to find attractive, for it holds the promise of presenting avenues of inquiry, currently unexplored, that may lead to exciting new discoveries.^{46, 47}

⁴⁵ Searle, John R., “The problem of consciousness”, reprinted in A. Revonsuo and M. Kamppinen (eds.), *Consciousness in Philosophy and Cognitive Neuroscience* (Hove, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 93.

⁴⁶ For additional discussion of this issue, see Rosenthal 2002, 227–230. I may object to his characterization of Descartes (see note 12) but I am very sympathetic to his claim that “We must . . . reformulate the intuitive connection often claimed to hold between mind and consciousness” (229). My suggestion is that, contrary to the general consensus, both Descartes and especially Spinoza can be of use in achieving this reformulation.

⁴⁷ Many thanks to the editors of this book, and especially Pauliina Remes, for their patience and helpful guidance. Thanks are also due to Don Garrett for showing me his paper, and to Edwin Curley for valuable comments on the antepenultimate version of my chapter.

PART III

FROM KANT TO CONTEMPORARY
DISCUSSIONS

CHAPTER TEN

HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS TRANSCENDENTAL CONDITIONS: KANT'S ANTI-CARTESIAN REVOLT

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

Kant's philosophy is deeply systematic. Understanding his account of human consciousness requires considering some of his broader systematic analyses, to the extent required here to understand his account of consciousness, which is of great philosophical and historical interest. "Anti-Cartesianism" and "externalism" are key issues in recent philosophy of mind. "Cartesianism" is a group of principles, stemming from Descartes – whether by assent or by assimilation – including these which are presently germane:

1. The Priority of Inner Experience: The fact that we experience, or at least appear to experience, various objects and events is fundamental. A key issue is whether anything we experience is as it appears to us to be.
2. Internalism (or "Individualism") about Mental Content: The apparent or manifest content of our experience or awareness can be defined or specified without reference to anything "outside" our minds, in particular, anything in the "external" world, or nature.¹
3. Infallibilism about Mental Content: Each and any "mental" content, or content of experience, is exactly what it seems to us to be, and nothing else. Thus we cannot be mistaken about our mental contents.²

¹ The unfortunate designation "individualism" for this view is used by Tyler Burge, "Philosophy of language and mind: 1950–1990", *The Philosophical Review* 101, 1 (1992), 46–47.

² William Alston stresses the distinctions among infallibility, incorrigibility, and indubitability (*Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 257–264). These three concepts are often conflated in Modern and contemporary epistemology. When using technical terms, I have tried to define them sufficiently

4. Internalism about Justification: One is, or can upon simple reflection become aware of whatever may bear on the justificatory status of one's beliefs or (putative) knowledge.
5. Infallibilism about Justification: Genuine epistemic justification entails the truth of what is believed or claimed.

Whilst they continue to have able defenders, much contemporary philosophy of mind and epistemology aims to criticise and reject these Cartesian views. Largely unrecognised, however, is that the radical critique of Cartesianism began with Kant. More important yet is his critique of empiricism. This, too, is of great contemporary importance, for most contemporary critics of Cartesianism are heirs to the empiricist tradition, beginning with Locke and Hume, into which Russell embedded analytic philosophy almost at its outset.³

Kant was the first great anti-Cartesian in epistemology and philosophy of mind. He criticised the five Cartesian tenets listed here, and developed sophisticated alternatives to them. His transcendental analysis of the necessary a priori conditions for the very possibility of self-conscious human experience invokes externalism about justification, and proves externalism about mental content. Semantic concern with the unity of the proposition – required for propositionally structured awareness and self-awareness – is central to Kant's account of the unity of any cognitive judgment. The perceptual “binding problem” is central to Kant's account of the unity of the object in perception. To understand the aims and character of Kant's innovations requires setting his views in the context of the Modern “new way of ideas”.

for present purposes. For further information on terms or philosophers mentioned here please refer to Sosa, Ernest and Dancy, Jonathan (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), Guttenplan, Samuel (ed.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online* (<http://www.rep.routledge.com>), or *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>).

³ In 1922 Russell proclaimed: “I should take ‘back to the 18th century’ as a battle-cry, if I could entertain any hope that others would rally to it” (*The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, gen. ed. J. Passmore, (London: Routledge, 1994), 9:39); Quine concurred: “On the doctrinal side, I do not see that we are farther along today than where Hume left us. The Humean predicament is the human predicament” (W.V.O. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 72, cf. 74, 76).

10.2 THE MODERN "NEW WAY OF IDEAS"

Characteristic of most Modern epistemologies and philosophies of mind is a distinctive kind of representationalism, according to which the direct objects of our awareness are mental representations, which are caused (typically) by objects in our surroundings and which (in cases of veridical perception) represent actual characteristics of those objects. Similar views had been developed by Stoics, and were recognised already by Sextus Empiricus to generate a sceptical "veil of perception": If the only direct object of our awareness are mental "ideas", on what basis can we know whether any of our ideas represent, whether accurately or inaccurately, anything in our surroundings that supposedly causes them? On what basis can we know or even reasonably presume that we have any physical surroundings?⁴ In view of this obvious problem with representational theories of perception, why did such theories become the received wisdom among the vast majority of Modern philosophers?

The mind–body problem is unknown to the Greeks and Mediaevals.⁵ One source of its development is the newly quantified science of nature, physics. Central to scientific investigation of natural phenomena, whether terrestrial or celestial, are the size, shape, location, motion, number and material constitution of objects. These "primary" qualities were regarded as the only fundamental or "real" qualities of bodies. All the others that make life so colourful, tasty and delightful are thus "secondary", qualities derivative from the effects of the primary qualities of bodies on our senses. With the mechanisation of nature inevitably came the mechanisation of the human body. Descartes' innovation was not the mind, it was the body as *machina*; it too is exhaustively describable in purely quantitative terms. Thus even our sensory organs cannot themselves be qualified by the "secondary" qualities – colours, odours, tastes, or auditory tones – we experience so abundantly. This is the key shift away from Aristotelian and Mediaeval notions of the human body. Since we *do* experience such qualities, they must "be somewhere" or inhere in "something"; since we *experience* them, they must inhere in the mind. This line of reasoning gave strong impetus for regarding

⁴ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (in *Works*, trans. R.G. Bury, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934, 4 vols., vol. 1), Bk. II §74.

⁵ Matson, Wallace, "Why isn't the mind-body problem ancient?", in P. Feyerabend and G. Maxwell (eds.), *Mind, Matter, and Method* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 92–102; King, Peter, "Why isn't the mind-body problem Mediaeval?", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Forming the Mind: Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medical Enlightenment* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 187–205.

sensed qualities as “modes” of the mind, caused by physical objects in our surroundings, and transmitted to us mechanically via our bodies.

Distinguishing between our awareness and its apparent objects and separating them in this way also had a theological impetus.⁶ Whilst natural necessity was taken for granted by the Ancient Greeks and other pre-Christian naturalists, the Christian doctrine of divine omnipotence requires that God can produce any event, regardless of whether its typical natural causes occur. The universal scope of this thesis includes those events we call ‘perceivings’, and entails that they, too, can be made by God to occur regardless of whether the typical causes of our perceivings occur. Thus perceivings can occur even in the absence of whatever we ordinarily take ourselves to perceive, in each putative case of perception. If direct realism were true, if we directly perceive physical objects, this would be impossible. Hence we must *not* perceive them directly; we must perceive them via our mental representations of them. Descartes’ dilemma at the end of his first Meditation already looms: What if an omnipotent being who can cause one’s (apparent) perceptual experiences isn’t omni-benevolent, and might instead be a deceiver?⁷

These two developments occurred in a post-Reformation intellectual climate already suffused with sceptical issues through the writings especially of Montaigne, and re-emphasised by Bayle, which challenged thinkers either to refute Pyrrhonism or to learn to live with it.⁸ Living with it might be consistent with some forms of fideist religious faith, but would abandon the new natural science. Given the well-known vagaries of perceptual experience, empirical evidence – if indeed it is evidence – seemed perhaps suited to the task of living with Pyrrhonism, though not to refuting it. “Fallibilist” accounts of epistemic justification were thus ruled out as capitulations to scepticism, rather than responses or alternatives to it. This demotion of empirical evidence was facilitated by continued adherence to ancient distinction, presumably exhaustive, between two kinds of knowledge: *historia* and *scientia*. “Historical” knowledge is based squarely and solely on perception or empirical evidence; it is inevitably partial and unsystematic, or at least cannot be known to be otherwise.

⁶ Boulter, Stephen, “Hume on induction: A genuine problem or theology’s Trojan horse?”, *Philosophy* 77 (2002), 77–80, 82–86.

⁷ Descartes, René, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, also A. Kenny eds. & trans., *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 1991; cited as ‘CSM’), vol 2. (CSM provides the pagination of C. Adam and P. Tannery, eds., *Œuvres de Descartes*, rev. ed., Paris: Vrin, C.N.R.S., 1964–1976.) *First Meditation* CSM II, 14.

⁸ Popkin, Richard, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (New York: Humanities, 1964; reprinted New York: Harper & Row, 1968), Chapters 1–5.

“*Scientia*” is the only rigorous form of knowledge, for it justifies conclusions solely by deducing them from original “first” principles.⁹

In this context, then, it appeared that refuting scepticism requires devising a way of harnessing sensory experience for the service of *scientia*. This is precisely what Descartes did by defining sensing “properly speaking”: “[. . .] I certainly do seem to see, hear, and feel warmth. This cannot be false. Properly speaking, this is what in me is called ‘sensing’. But this is, precisely speaking, nothing other than thinking” (*Second Meditation* CSM II, 19). In one facile re-definition, Descartes suddenly disclosed an inexhaustible realm of empirical evidence that must be cognitively reliable because this kind of evidence is exactly what it appears to be! Not even an omnipotent evil genius can make this kind of sensory evidence false or unreliable. Descartes defended our knowledge of the world by proving God exists and cannot be a deceiver, because any being with one perfection, such as omnipotence, must have all perfections, including omni-benevolence (*Third Meditation* CSM II, 34). Whilst this strategy was controversial from the start and was rejected by empiricists, Locke, Berkeley and Hume all adopted Descartes’ view that sensory representations or “ideas” are exactly what they seem to be,¹⁰ and they all adopted foundationalist approaches (modelled on *scientia*) to epistemic justification. In the absence of a Cartesian divine guarantee, Locke distinguished our perceptual knowledge

⁹ Descartes uses this distinction in passing in the Third of his *Rules for Directing the Mind*. . . (CSM I, 13). This distinction gives the point to Locke’s claim to use the “historical, plain method” (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690], ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975; cited as ‘*ECHU*’, followed by book:chapter:§ numbers, 1.1.2) and to Hume’s contrast between “inference and reasoning” versus “memory and senses” as sources of knowledge (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in P. H. Nidditch (ed.), *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975; designated ‘*En1*’), §8, ¶64.2). Kant uses it in the same sense as Descartes in a parallel context in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A835–A837/B863–B865); cited is: Kant, Immanuel, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Königlich preussische (now Deutsche) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, deGruyter, 1902–; 29 vols.; cited as ‘Ak’, followed by volume:page.line numbers); Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (ibid., vols. 3, 4) is cited as ‘A’ and ‘B’ for the first and second editions. All recent translations contain page references to this edition. All translations used here are my own.

¹⁰ Locke (*ECHU* 4.3.8); Berkeley, George, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. J. Dancy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; cited by part:§ numbers), 1:3; Hume, *En1* §7.1 ¶52 (p. 66); *idem.*, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds. D.F. Norton and M.J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; designated ‘*THN*’, cited by book.chapter:§.¶ numbers), 1.4.2.5, 1.4.2.7.

of our surroundings from “intuitive” and “demonstrative” knowledge, calling it ‘sensitive’. He claimed that “sensitive” knowledge is “beyond doubt” and has its distinctive kind and degree of evidence and certainty, whilst recognising it did not match the utter certainty of the other two kinds of knowledge (*ECHU* 4.2.14). Hume relentlessly drew out the implications of his premises, concluding in profound empirical scepticism; indeed, on Hume’s account, our very concept of a physical object is a “fiction” (*THN* 1.4.2.36, 42–43).

Thus were both representationalist theories of perception and their associated “problem of the external world” bequeathed to subsequent centuries, where they lodged again in a wide variety of sense data theories and, in modified form, in reductionist programmes in analytic epistemology at least through the 1950s. Obscured in this familiar history, however, are two crucial issues noticed only by a few Modern philosophers. These issues lead from epistemology into some core issues in philosophy of mind that are key points of departure for Kant’s accounts of consciousness. One problem is that representationalist accounts of sensory ideas tended to assume that, if a sensory idea was caused by an object, that idea also represented (some feature of) that object. Whence comes such “representational” capacity? In what consists the representation relation between any idea and “its” (alleged) object? The second problem concerns sensory atomism, a view held expressly by Locke (*ECHU* 2.2.1) and Hume (*THN* 1.1.7.3, 1.2.1.3, 1.2.3.10), along with many others. The problem of how to account for the representational capacity of our sensations or sensory ideas was recognised by Abbé de Condillac, who initiated a new, minority tradition in philosophical theory of perception called ‘sensationism’.¹¹ The key insight of this theory is that the mere fact that objects cause our sensations or sensory ideas does not explain how our sensations or sensory ideas can or do represent their alleged objects. Explaining their representational capacity was the key undertaking of sensationist theories, which were also espoused, *inter alia*, by Thomas Reid and in Germany by Johann N. Tetens, from whom Kant adopted it.¹²

¹¹ *A Treatise on Sensations*, trans. F. Philip, *Philosophical Writings of Etienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac* (Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982–1987, 2 vols.), vol. 1.

¹² Tetens, Johann N., *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung* (Leipzig: M. G. Weidmanns Erben & Reich, 1777; reprinted, ed. W. Uebele, Berlin: Reuther & Reichard 1913). Also see George, Rolf, “Kant’s sensationism”, *Synthese* 47, 2 (1981), 229–255, and Harper, William, “Kant’s empirical realism and the distinction between subjective and objective succession”, in R. Meerbote and W. Harper (eds.), *Kant on Causality, Freedom, and Objectivity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 108–137.

Sensationist theories of perception generally adopted the sensory atomism common in Modern theories of perception. A second problem generated by sensory atomism is to explain what unites any group of sensations into what may be called a percept of any one object? This issue arises within each sensory modality, and also across our sensory modalities. This issue arises synchronically within any momentary perception of an object, and it arises diachronically as a problem of integrating successive percepts of the same object. These two sets of issues also arise at two levels. One is purely sensory, and concerns the generation of sensory appearances to each of us. A second level is intellectual, and concerns how we recognise the various bits of sensory information we receive through sensory experience to be bits of information about one and the same object. These problems about sensations lurk in the core of the Modern “new way of ideas”, though they were recognised by only three Modern philosophers: Hume, Kant and Hegel. They were neglected by representational theorists of perception and by sensationists alike, often because they were occluded by uncritical appeal to what we “notice”.¹³ These problems with sensations recur today in neurophysiology of perception as versions of a set of problems now called the “binding problem”, which has only very recently garnered attention from epistemologists.¹⁴

10.3 KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL GROUNDS FOR REJECTING CARTESIANISM

1. *Kant's lead question.* All three problems – how or even whether sensations or sensory ideas *represent* physical objects, what binds sensations or sensory ideas together so that they can represent physical objects, and what enables us to identify a variety of sensory information as information about any one object – are identified by Kant in the lead question of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft* 1781). Kant undertook to write the *Critique* when he discovered this decisive question:

On what ground rests the relation of that in us which is called representation to the object? (Ak 10:130.6–8; cf. A197/B242)

¹³ I discuss this circumstance in *Hegel, Hume und die Identität wahrnehmbarer Dinge: Historisch-kritische Analyse zum Kapitel »Wahrnehmung« in der Phänomenologie von 1807* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1998), part 1.

¹⁴ Roskies, Adina, (ed.), “The Binding Problem”, *Neuron* 24 (1999), 7–125. For philosophical discussion, see Cleeremans, Axel, (ed.), *The Unity of Consciousness: Binding, Integration and Dissociation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Cognitive reference, semantics and its role both in thought and in knowledge, is *the* central issue of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant recognised that neither causal theories nor descriptions theories of reference could solve these problems.¹⁵ The shortcomings of causal theories Kant learnt through study of Hume and Hume's German followers, and their sensationist critics; causal relations between our surroundings and our sensory ideas don't suffice to explain how those ideas refer to and so represent objects in our surroundings. The shortcomings of descriptions theories he learned through his critical reflections on Leibniz, summarised in the *Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection* (A260–92/B316–49). In brief, no description, no matter how detailed, can indicate whether it is empty, ambiguous or definite; hence descriptions alone cannot provide singular cognitive reference. This is the key failing of traditional rationalism: Rationalists freely used a priori concepts in metaphysics without asking: How can a priori concepts be referred to any particulars about which we purport to make metaphysical claims?

Kant's objections to empiricism illuminate his innovative "transcendental" approach to analysing human consciousness. One central empiricist principle concerns the content of concepts or the meanings of terms. Concept empiricism holds that every term in a language is either a logical term, a term defined by ostending a sensory object, or can be defined by means of these two kinds of terms. Because concept empiricism requires purely ostensive definition of terms that name sensory objects or their features, it requires aconceptual knowledge of particulars, an epistemological view now familiar under Russell's designation, "knowledge by acquaintance". Against empiricism of this kind, Kant argues that identifying any particular object (or event) we point to (or ostend) requires both locating it (at least approximately) in space and time and correctly (if approximately) identifying some of its manifest characteristics. Thus our basic awareness of particulars requires predication. This thesis, which follows as a corollary from Kant's *Transcendental Aesthetic* (on space and time) and *Analytic of Concepts*, is precisely that defended by Gareth Evans.¹⁶

¹⁵ Melnick, Arthur, *Space, Time and Thought in Kant* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989), 1–4. Melnick identifies three distinct theories of thought in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, though both its editions contain versions of the third, most adequate theory.

¹⁶ Evans, Gareth, "Identity and predication", *Journal of Philosophy* 72, 13 (1975), 343–363. For discussion of Kant's and Evans' convergence about this point, see Westphal, Kenneth R., "Contemporary epistemology: Kant, Hegel, McDowell", *The European Journal of Philosophy* 14, 2 (2006), 274–302.

2. *A priori concepts.* Kant's rejection of empiricism must be a premise for his analysis, and not merely a conclusion of it, if he is to avoid begging the question against his philosophical opponents. In this regard, Kant argues directly that concept empiricism cannot account for our concepts of space, time and cause. That concept empiricism cannot account for our concept of physical object had already been demonstrated by Hume; only for that reason does he condemn our "idea of body" as a "fiction" (*THN* 1.4.2.36, .42–43).¹⁷ Very briefly, Kant argues that in order to identify any region of space or time occupied by any particular, or to recognise its spatial or temporal features, presupposes that we already have and can use concepts of space and time. Thus with regard to identifying any particulars whatever, and identifying any of their spatial or temporal features, our concepts of space and time are *a priori* (A24/B38–9).

The status of the concept of cause merits closer consideration.¹⁸ The empiricist view is that we develop a concept of causality from observing particular causal relations. Two principles are involved in this process. Identifying particular causal relations involves using the "particular" causal principle, that the same kind of event has the same kind of cause. The "general" concept of cause involves the "general" causal principle, that each event has some cause or other. According to standard empiricist doctrine, we obtain this general concept and general principle of causality on the basis of many experiences exhibiting the particular causal principle. Kant agrees with Hume and other empiricists that knowledge of particular kinds of causal relations, that is, knowledge of instances of the particular causal principle, can only be based on repeated experiences with events and their causes. Kant denies, however, that such experiences can generate the general concept or principle of causality. Indeed, he argues that we cannot have experiences of particular kinds of causal relations without presupposing the general concept and principle of causality! Consider briefly why.

Hume examined this issue far more carefully than any other empiricist. He begins with the alleged obvious facts of experience, that we experience sensory "impressions", fleeting appearances that are exactly what they appear to be and nothing else. Yet our experience and memory tell us nothing about unobserved objects, and we frequently experience only events which we regard as effects of causes we have not witnessed, such as the knocking on the

¹⁷ For discussion, see Westphal 1998, §4.

¹⁸ Here I follow Lewis White Beck, "A Prussian Hume and a Scottish Kant", in his *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 111–129.

door being caused by someone on the other side of the door whom we do not perceive at the time we hear the knock. As a purely statistical matter we much more often experience either a cause or an effect in isolation, but not both in relation (*THN* 1.4.2.15–48). If we acquire concepts solely by psychological association, then every time we witness only an (alleged) effect without its cause, or an (alleged) cause without its effect, this should *weaken* our belief in their alleged particular causal relation. If Hume's associationist principles were true, then for statistical reasons we should thus have only very few, very weak beliefs in any particular causal relations. Such a basis is entirely insufficient for generating any general concept of cause expressed in the general causal principle. Consequently, on Hume's empiricist account of concept acquisition by psychological association, we never should develop the concept of cause at all, not even the bare Humean concept of cause as 1:1 correlation. Indeed, the only way we can sort our data so as to identify particular causal relations is by presupposing the general causal principle, which alone can justify, indeed it alone provides a basis for formulating, any methodological principle to the effect that we are entitled to ignore certain cases in which we witness only an (alleged) effect or only an (alleged) cause, though not, for situation-specific reasons, its purported partner event. (Kant's justification for our use of the concept of cause is discussed later.)

For such reasons, Kant is confident that we have a set of a priori concepts, which he called 'categories' (A78–83/B102–9). He did not think the categories are innate. Innate in the human mind, according to Kant, are twelve logical functions of judgment.¹⁹ These functions of judgment guide the generation of the categories when these are used to organise the spatio-temporal manifolds supplied by our forms of sensibility.²⁰ Kant recognised, further, that our a priori categories can only be used in legitimate cognitive judgments if and when they are used to identify particular objects or events

¹⁹ Kant's completeness proof for his Table of Judgments is brilliantly explicated and defended by Michael Wolff, *Die Vollständigkeit der kantischen Urteilstafel* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), "Erwiderung auf die Einwände von Ansgar Beckermann und Ulrich Nortmann", *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 52, 3 (1998), 435–459, and "Nachtrag zu meiner Kontrovers mit Ulrich Nortmann", *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 54, 1 (2002), 86–94. Kant's contention that general logic is complete, distinct from, and more fundamental than mathematical logic is defended by Wolff in *Abhandlung über die Prinzipien der Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004). Wolff's brilliant work deserves wide study.

²⁰ See Longuenesse, Béatrice, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

in space and time. Spatio-temporal designation is essential to the singular presentation of particulars we experience, and to our singular cognitive reference to them. This, very briefly, is Kant's answer to the semantic question of reference neglected by his rationalist predecessors.²¹

3. *The binding problem.* Another problem with the "new way of ideas" requires discussion before turning to Kant's constructive philosophical psychology. Among the binding problems noted earlier is a sensory issue of how various sensations become combined into the percept of any one object, and an intellectual issue of how we recognise that the sensory information provided in perception is information about any one object. These issues arise, as noted, in both synchronic and diachronic versions. Kant realised that these problems are especially pressing for radical empiricism, such as Hume's or Condillac's, though they also require answers by rationalists and certainly by any adherent of the new way of ideas. If an idea is exactly what it seems to be, then our awareness of that idea seems to be unproblematic: If that idea occurs to us at all, we must be aware of it, for its *esse* just is its *percipi*; our awareness of it is built right into its being an idea at all. This self-disclosing nature of ideas, however, obscures a crucial issue, because it only accounts for the distributive awareness of each and any one such "idea". Nothing in such ideas, self-disclosing though each may be, accounts for any of us being aware *that* each of us is aware of any *plurality* of such ideas. The "consciousness" involved in the self-manifestation of any Cartesian sensory "idea" or Humean "impression" is distributed individually across each such idea (B133). How, exactly, can any of us have *one* (collective) consciousness of a *plurality* of sensory ideas? How is the self-ascription of sensory ideas, or more generally, of sensory experiences possible? No plurality of sensory ideas, and analogously, no plurality of sensory experiences, as such, can account for our obvious capacity to ascribe a variety of ideas or experiences to ourselves, nor can any privileged idea or experience account for it. Only intellectual factors can make self-ascription possible (B131–5). Any representational state providing one collective awareness of a plurality of sensory ideas or experiences involves *judgment*, a judgment that one and the same judge or subject of experience has and is aware of each member of the relevant plurality of ideas or experiences. Perceptual experience thus requires

²¹ Kant's semantics of cognitive reference is examined in Westphal, Kenneth R., *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Hanna, Robert, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2001). Hanna replies brilliantly on Kant's behalf to Quine.

perceptual *synthesis* of sensory intake. Sensations or sensory intake alone cannot account for such synthesis; the relevant synthesis is an intellectual achievement involving judgment, and the awareness of the plurality of synthesised sensory information is a further intellectual, judgmental achievement. That naive realism *seems* to be true provides no evidence to the contrary. Kant's transcendental method rejects the alleged "transparency of consciousness", another stock Cartesian tenet (see later).

By recognising the distinctive contributions of sensation and judgment in perceptual experience (even in putative or merely apparent experience), Kant is able to reconceive sensations, no longer as Cartesian objects of awareness, but as *components* of *acts* of awareness. In cases of veridical perception, we are aware of spatio-temporal particulars *via* our integrated sensory and judgmental acts of perceiving them. Rejecting the Modern reification of sensations as objects of awareness enables Kant to develop a "direct" theory of perception, according to which the objects we perceive are spatio-temporal particulars themselves, though Kant is no naive realist about our perception of objects in our surroundings. Instead, our "direct" perception of objects in our surroundings is a complex achievement requiring the integration of both intellectual and sensory factors.

Kant's recognition of the crucial importance of perceptual synthesis for solving "binding" problems and resolving unanswered, indeed unasked questions at the centre of the new way of ideas, together with his recognition of the role of a priori concepts in the definition and acquisition of even the simplest empirical concepts, provide two of his key reasons for holding that both sensibility (our capacity to sense) and understanding (our capacity to use concepts in judgments) have distinct though integrated roles in the very possibility of our enjoying sensory experience at all (A15, B29). What are these roles and how can they be identified? To what extent are these philosophical questions amenable to philosophical inquiry? Kant acknowledged that there are various physiological and psychological factors in human experience, though he held that these disciplines (nascent though they were in his day) cannot answer the normative questions of epistemology or moral theory about the character and scope of the justification of our most basic cognitive and practical principles (A261–3/B317–9). These issues pertain centrally to who we are (A804–5/B832–3; *Logic*, Ak 9:25), what we are conscious of, and how we are conscious of it. Kant vindicated his theory of perception by showing that we can know that we do have at least some veridical perception of the world around us. Demonstrating this involves refuting global perceptual scepticism of the kind represented by Sextus Empiricus or Hume.

4. *Kant's anti-sceptical strategy.* Kant's anti-sceptical aim requires eschewing empirical data about the external world; appealing to such data begs the

question against global perceptual sceptics. Hence Kant sought to show that at least some synthetic principles can be known a priori. He recognised that such a proof cannot be solely analytic (B263–5). He also recognised that such a proof cannot follow the Cartesian model of starting with the obvious facts of our self-consciousness and of our apparent sensory experience, and trying to prove on the basis of those “evidential data” what conclusions follow regarding empirical knowledge. Kant recognised that a wholly “changed way of thinking” (Bxviii) was required in order to address these questions. Kant’s refutation of global perceptual scepticism does take the fact of our self-consciousness as a premise, though it refines it significantly. His lead question became, What a priori conditions must be satisfied *if* we are to be self-conscious at all? If these conditions are to be a priori, empirical data cannot suffice to identify or establish them. If these conditions are required in order for us to be self-conscious at all, and only thus to be able to be aware of spatio-temporal particulars, then a new method of philosophical inquiry is required, for as Kant remarked, “whatever I must presuppose in order to know an object at all, I cannot itself know as an object (*Object*) [. . .]” (A402). Introspection of the contents of the mind, the work-horse of Modern philosophy, had thus to be rejected as philosophically inadequate, indeed irrelevant, to Kant’s philosophical analysis of human consciousness.

Kant’s epistemological analysis seeks what he called ‘transcendental knowledge’:

I call all knowledge *transcendental* that is concerned, not so much with objects, but rather with our way of knowing objects, so far as this [way of knowing objects] is to be possible a priori. (B25)

The a priori conditions of knowledge, according to Kant, largely consist in capacities and functions. Kant thus replaced the inquires of his predecessors into our mental being, into what our minds consist in, with an inquiry into our mental *functions*, which can be investigated independently of questions about mental or physical substance.²² The functions of interest to Kant are

²² Kant’s functionalism and his transcendental account of the a priori conditions required for self-conscious experience have enormous significance, both constructive and critical, for cognitive science and artificial intelligence. See Meerbote, Ralf, “Kant’s functionalism”, in J.-C. Smith (ed.), *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), 161–187; Kitcher, Patricia, “Kant’s dedicated cognitivist system” (1990a), in J.-C. Smith (ed.), *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990), 189–206; Kitcher, Patricia, *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990b); and especially Brook, Andrew, *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

those required a priori for us to know or be aware of objects at all. Such functions can only be discovered indirectly, by reflection. The relevant kind of reflection is “transcendental” (A260–1/B316–7). Transcendental reflection is important because it concerns not the logical form but the cognitive significance of our representations (whether concepts or intuitions), to determine whether or under what conditions they can ground genuine cognitive judgments. In so doing, transcendental reflection determines whether or how the representations in question, which are components of potential cognitive judgments, related as they happen to occur in our thoughts, *ought* to be related in our cognitive judgment (A261–3/B317–9). This counts as reflection because it considers representations in connection with our cognitive capacities; this reflection is transcendental because it concerns our a priori capacities to form legitimate cognitive judgments. Kant insists that “transcendental reflection is a duty from which no one can escape if he would judge anything about things a priori” (A263/B319). Thus Kant’s methods must be understood and closely followed if we are to understand Kant’s analyses and proofs.²³

One reason for Kant’s profoundly changed way of thinking is his recognition that Cartesian infallibilism about justification (tenet 3) requires in effect that our cognitive capacities be proven to be competent in any possible environment before trusting them in our actual environment. Kant did not seek to determine the transcendental conditions of self-conscious experience *per se*. Even if there were some, it’s hardly obvious how we could determine what they might be. Kant sought an account of *human* experience, and accordingly sought the a priori transcendental conditions for the possibility of *human* experience (or more precisely, for any beings with 12 discursive forms of judgment and two forms of intuition, spatial and temporal). Kant’s key anti-sceptical premise is “I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time” (B275). By “determined in time” Kant here means that each of us is aware of ourselves as being aware of some events appearing to us before, during and after others, where “appearing to us” is taken subjectively, as “seeming to us to occur” before, during or after others. Though richer than Descartes’ premise, Kant’s appears too innocuous to launch an anti-sceptical *tour de force*.²⁴

²³ The nature and role of transcendental reflection in Kant’s epistemology is discussed in Westphal 2004, starting in Chapter 1.

²⁴ Descartes’ premise is, “*I am, I exist* is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind” (*Second Meditation* CSM II, 17).

5. *Kant's refutation of global perceptual scepticism.* Kant's refutation of global perceptual scepticism is subtle and intricate. Only some key points may be indicated here; those that illuminate Kant's account of human consciousness. In a revealing example (*THN* 1.4.2.20–21), Hume hears only a knocking, a squeak, a treading sound, and then sees a letter held out to him by a hand extended by an arm. Remarkably, Hume has no trouble recognising that this meagre sensory experience sufficiently indicates, unequivocally, what has happened: A porter entered the front door of his building, climbed the stairs, knocked on Hume's door, opened it when admitted (causing the door hinge to squeak), walked across the carpeted floor, and delivered to him a letter while he sat in his chair (in all likelihood, a wing chair) facing away from the door towards the fire. Thus Hume's experience, no matter how meagre it officially is, indicated that a large number of objects have continued to exist in the interim, and have retained their typical characteristics, including causal characteristics, whilst having been in the interim unperceived by Hume and thus, on Hume's official account, literally and altogether out of his mind (his bundle of perceptions). The general point implied by such examples, Kant recognised, is that in no case does the mere order in which appearances happen to occur to us indicate, by itself, the order in which events occurred, even when those two orders coincide. Any change in appearances may result from a local motion of an object (relative to us), so that it reveals a previously occluded aspect; it may result from a translational motion of an object (to a different place), so that a different object is perceived by us in the place or angle of view it previously occupied; it may result from a spatially stable object changing some of its perceptible characteristics; it may result from one substance replacing another within the same space; or it may result from a combination of such events as these. None of these differences can be analysed on the basis of Humean impressions or mere sense data; because they are exactly what they seem to be, impressions are "Heraclitean": any apparent change in impressions or sense data is a numerical change between different impressions or sense data. Nor for this same reason can impressions or sense data have dispositional properties, because such properties manifest themselves one way in some circumstances and in another way in other circumstances (triggering conditions). Consequently, impressions or sense data theories cannot distinguish among the various accounts of a change of appearances just noted.

Kant makes four key points about this circumstance. The first is negative: if there were no causal relations among whatever we perceive, then the only "change" we would "experience" would be entirely within the subjective flow of ever fresh sensations. Nothing within those sensations would indicate that any one sensation had any greater or lesser relations to or significance

regarding any other. In this case we could not ever determine which sensations were of (relatively stable) objects and which were of transformations. We could make none of the discriminations Hume recognised very well he and the rest of us make all the time as a matter of course. If all we “experienced” were impressions or sense data, none of our sensations could be related, even apparently, to objects (A194–5/B239–40, cf. A112). Nevertheless, second, we are aware of some events appearing to occur before, during or after others (B275). Even this innocuous premise would not be true in a world consisting in nothing but Humean impressions or sense data. Conversely, third, this innocuous premise can only be true if we live in and perceive a world in which at least some objects and events determine their own order in time and space. For objects or events to determine their own order in time and space requires that the antecedent of an event contains a condition such that, when it occurs, that event occurs. Such conditions for such sequences are causal conditions for generating caused effects. Thus only if at least some of the objects and events we perceive are causally interacting perceptible substances can Kant’s innocuous first premise be true. However, fourth, for us to be aware of ourselves as being aware of some events preceding, occurring along with, or following others requires that we can and do identify at least some such events and the objects that participate in them. To do this requires that we identify at least some of their causal relations, which requires identifying at least some of their causal characteristics, and that we succeed in ascribing our experiences of those objects and events to ourselves. Thus for any human being to recognise that Kant’s innocuous premise is true of him- or herself requires that he or she has at least some knowledge of spatio-temporal, causally interactive perceptible substances in his or her surroundings. This is the nerve of Kant’s “Transcendental Deduction of the Categories”, “Analogies of Experience”, and “Refutation of Empirical Idealism”. Thus (in brief) does Kant justify a priori the legitimacy of our use of our a priori concept of cause in making genuine cognitive judgments about at least some of our physical surroundings.

6. *Causal judgments are discriminatory.* Consider one central feature of Kant’s analysis of causal judgment. In the “Analogies of Experience” Kant defends three principles of causal judgment. Each principle concerns a distinct aspect of causal phenomena. Causality is strictly related to substance (B183, A182–84/B225–27, A204/B249). Substances persist through change; hence only substances can have dispositional properties, properties that manifest one characteristic in one kind of circumstance, though a different characteristic in others (triggering conditions). The First Analogy treats the persistence of substance through changes of state (transformations). The Second Analogy only treats rule-governed causal processes within any *one*

substance. Only the Third Analogy treats causal interaction *between any two* (or more) substances (B111; cf. *Critique of Judgment, Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790, Ak 5:181). The core points of Kant's three principles in the Analogies are these:

1. Substance persists through changes of state (B224).
2. Changes of state in any substance are regular or law governed (B232).
3. Causal relations between substances are causal *interactions* (B256).

These three principles form a tightly integrated set of mutually supporting principles; each of them can be used only conjointly with the other two.²⁵

These principles can only be used conjointly because determining that we witness either co-existence or succession requires discriminating the one case from the other, and both determinations require that we identify objects that persist through both the real and the apparent changes involved in the sequence of appearances we witness. We directly perceive or ascertain neither time (A172–3, 188/B214, 231) nor space (A171–2, 214, 487/B214, 261, 515), and the mere order in which we apprehend appearances does not determine any objective order of objects or events (A182, 194/B225, 219, 226, 243, 257). Consequently, given our cognitive capacities, we can determine (even approximately) which states of affairs precede, and which coexist with, which others only under the condition that we identify enduring substances that interact and thus produce changes of state in one another. Identifying enduring substances is necessary for us to determine the variety of spatial locations objects or events occupy, to determine changes of place, and to determine non-spatial changes (transformations) objects undergo. To make any one such identification requires discriminating the present case from its possible alternatives, and this requires joint use of all three principles defended in the “Analogies of Experience”. Failing to employ these principles successfully would leave us with “nothing but a blind play of representations, i.e., less than a dream” (A112). Without the capacity to make causal judgments we could never “derive” (as Kant says) the subjective order of apprehension from the objective order of the world (A193/B238), nor could we distinguish between our subjective order of apprehension and any objective order of things and the events in which they participate (A193–5/B238–9) – including those events called ‘perceiving’ them. We could not identify sensed objects at all, not even putatively; we

²⁵ Guyer, Paul, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 168, 212–214, 224–225, 228, 239, 246, 274–275; Westphal 2004, §36.3.

could not identify the door on the basis of its squeak. In practice Hume clearly distinguished the subjective order in which his experiences occurred from the objective causal order of objects and events that he experienced, though his epistemology cannot account for this ability. Kant's transcendental proofs concern, not merely the possession of certain concepts, but their use in legitimate cognitive judgments of these sorts.

Thus Kant refutes global perceptual scepticism by showing that we must have at least some knowledge of the objects (perceptible, spatio-temporal causally interacting substances) in our surroundings; otherwise Kant's innocuous premise (B275) could not be true. And if it were not true, none of us could even pose sceptical issues. This blocks the sceptic's generalisation from occasional perceptual error to the possibility of universal perceptual delusion. The universal possibility of perceptual error does not entail the possibility of universal perceptual error. Thus Kant can acknowledge that our perceptual judgments are fallible (cf. A766/B794), whilst conceding nothing to scepticism. Wisely, Kant's proof shows *that* we have some empirical knowledge, without embroiling us in that perennial source of sceptical befuddlement, "*How* do you know you're now perceiving that (*e.g.*) chair?" Kant's transcendental analysis of the a priori conditions under which alone self-conscious human experience is possible only outlines some key point that answer this 'how' question, because the central philosophical question (in epistemology) is whether we have any empirical knowledge of our surroundings (B116–7, *Axvii*).

When developed in full detail,²⁶ this is a genuinely transcendental proof of mental content externalism, which puts paid to the Cartesian ego-centric predicament of Modern, and much of recent and contemporary, philosophy: If we are conscious enough to pose problems of global perceptual scepticism, then if we understand Kant's proof, we can also know that we are not subject to global perceptual scepticism, because we can only be conscious, even to the minimal extent characterised in Kant's innocuous premise, if in fact we are conscious of some of our physical surroundings!

7. *Rational freedom.* The fact that Kant's three principles of causal judgments form an integrated set has a very important implication for his account of the freedom of rational judgment, both in cognition and in action.²⁷ Against Modern rationalist (a priori) psychology, Kant argues in detail in the *Paralogisms of Pure Reason* (A341–61, B399–413) that neither the concept of substance nor the concept of simple substance can be used in

²⁶ Westphal 2004.

²⁷ Westphal 2004, §61.

any legitimate judgments about ourselves. This holds true, Kant contends, both for a priori philosophical (i.e., “rational”) and for a posteriori (empirical) psychological judgments. Kant contends, that is, that the constantly changing “data” of inner sense changes in time, though none of this introspectable data is itself in space, and we cannot identify *any* substances of *any* kind solely within time. Hence we cannot identify ourselves as substances of any kind. The direct corollary of this finding, together with the integrity of the three principles of causal judgment, is that we cannot make any legitimate causal judgments within (introspective) psychology. For this reason, causal determinism cannot be known to be true within (introspective) psychology. In principle, Kant argues, psychological determinism is unknowable. This provides the critical grounds Kant needs to appeal to practical (moral) considerations to determine whether we are free (see later).²⁸

Kant recognises that we constantly use causal locutions when speaking of the mind. They can hardly be avoided, for such locutions derive from our basic conceptual categories. Yet Kant's account raises a crucial semantic point which is widely disregarded today by philosophers and psychologists alike: To what extent can we give a legitimate constitutive (rather than merely heuristic) interpretation to our causal locutions when considering or investigating the human mind? To the extent that we can do so, on what grounds can we do so? Generally, the justification for interpreting causal locutions concerning the mind constitutively appeals to the causal aims of scientific explanation. Kant of course agrees, indeed argues, that seeking causal explanation is a key regulative principle of scientific inquiry. Yet Kant rightly points out that the regulative use of the general causal principle in empirical inquiry does not of itself justify the constitutive interpretation of causal locutions in any domain. Constitutive interpretation of causal locutions can only be justified by providing a genuine causal explanation of the phenomenon in question. This, of course, is a scientific achievement, not a philosophical one. The programmatic and systematic considerations of philosophers of mind and cognitive psychologists do not suffice to justify any constitutive interpretation of causal locutions within psychology. Contemporary materialist or reductionist philosophers of mind should take heed of Kant's important point.

Positively, Kant argues that rational judgment is free or “spontaneous” because it is guided by the normative considerations of appropriate assessment and use of both evidence and principles of reasoning. If judgment, as a physiological or psychological process is in some way causal, nevertheless it counts as *judgment* only insofar as it responds to such normative considerations,

²⁸ *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:54–56, 134–135.

rather than merely to its causal antecedents as such. Judgment is a response to, not merely an effect of, its proper evidentiary and inferential antecedents. If justificatory processes turn out to be causal, they are justificatory not because they are causal, but because they satisfy sufficient normative constraints – defining or at least including *proper* functioning, *proper* inference, and *proper* assessment – to provide rational justification. Kant contends that freedom is a rational idea that is constitutive – indeed definitive – of our conceiving of ourselves as agents.²⁹ Only rational spontaneity enables us to appeal to principles of inference and to make rational judgments, both of which are normative because each rational subject considers for him- or herself whether available procedures, evidence, and principles of inference warrant a judgment or conclusion. In the theoretical domain of knowledge, *having* adequate evidence, proof or (in sum) justification, requires *taking* that evidence, proof or justification to be adequate; in the practical domain of deliberation and action, *having* adequate grounds for action requires *taking* those grounds to be adequate.³⁰ We *act* only insofar as we take ourselves to have reasons, even in cases of acting on desires, where we must (ex hypothesi) take those desires as appropriate and adequate reasons to act.³¹ Otherwise we abdicate rational considerations and absent ourselves from what Wilfrid Sellars calls “the space of reasons” and merely behave.³² In that case, as John McDowell says, we provide ourselves only excuses and exculpations, but not reasons or justifications, for acting or believing as we do.³³ Kant’s conception

²⁹ Allison, Henry, “We can act only under the idea of freedom”, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 71, 2 (1997), 39–50.

³⁰ Note that I do not claim that taking evidence to be adequate suffices for that evidence to be adequate! Some epistemologists bridle at the notion that having adequate evidence or grounds for belief requires taking that evidence or those grounds to be adequate. Yet there are many examples of people having memories or perceptions that in fact bear evidentially on a certain belief they hold, though they fail to recognise this evidential relation and so fail to base their belief on that evidence. Basing (or, *mutatis mutandis*, rejecting) beliefs on evidence requires taking that evidence to be both relevant and adequate.

³¹ Thus Kant’s “Incorporation thesis” (so named by Henry Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5–6, 39–40), that no inclination is a motive unless and until it is incorporated into an agent’s maxim by being judged to be at least permissible (*Religion*, Ak 6:24), is an instance of the more general principle of autonomous judgment identified here.

³² Sellars, Wilfrid, *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 169.

³³ McDowell, John, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 13.

of rational spontaneity opposes empiricist accounts of beliefs and desires as merely causal products of environmental stimuli, and it opposes empiricist accounts of action, according to which we act on whatever desires are (literally) “strongest”. We think and act rationally only insofar as we judge the merits of whatever case is before us.

10.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined Kant's development and justification of his rationalist account of our active intellect and its roles in perceptual consciousness and in rational judgment, including our consciousness of our rational freedom, all through a radically innovative transcendental inquiry into the necessary a priori conditions for us to be conscious at all.³⁴ Kant's anti-Cartesianism is a major philosophical breakthrough that far surpasses contemporary anti-Cartesian efforts. It behoves us to give Kant his due and avail ourselves of his profound insights into the nature of human mindedness.

³⁴ Recommended for further reading are Ameriks, Karl, *Kant's Theory of Mind*, rev. ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000); Ameriks, Karl, “Kant and the self: A retrospective”, in D.E. Klemm and G. Zöller (eds.), *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 55–72; Powell, C. Thomas, *Kant's Theory of Self-Consciousness* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990); Aquila, Richard, “The subject as appearance and as thing in itself in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: Reflections in light of the role of imagination in apprehension”, in P.D. Cummins and G. Zöller (eds.), *Minds, Ideas, and Objects: Essays on the Theory of Representation in Modern Philosophy* (Atascadero, Cal.: Ridgeview, 1992), 317–327; and Aquila, Richard, “Self as matter and form: Some reflections on Kant's view of the soul”, in Klemm & Zöller 1997, 31–54.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE LIVING CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE GERMAN IDEALISTS

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An air of scandal has always surrounded German idealism.

A defender of common sense might already be scandalised by the extraordinary complexity of many German idealists' writings. If their language is difficult, it is partly because the era of idealism belongs to the era of the discovery of the philosophical resources of the German language: the philosopher finding ideas also had to be a writer finding the words to express them. What is more, the idealists seem to abandon "common sense" because they skip the problems of the traditional school logic and seek, instead, a logic of subjectivity and of being. These logics cannot be reduced to the operations of the "understanding" and constitute what the idealists named "reason". Testing reason's ultimate conditions also requires facing the possibility of a loss of understanding and risking the insanity and fantasy that delimit reason's very essence and expression. However, idealist philosophy never leaves the domain of reason, whereas some members of the contemporaneous romantic literary movement ended up taking the risk and drowning in it. Nevertheless, the idealists and the romantics share a willingness to go beyond the reasonable in the name of superior reason, and to misuse clarity in the name of superior precision.

The scandal surrounding the means of thought directly reflects the scandal surrounding its contents. German idealism abandons natural consciousness as the starting point of reflection, even though it starts from consciousness: its centre is an I that has little to do with my empirical self and a lot to do with the absolute spirit. Thereby idealists seem to transgress the law of finitude decreed by Kant and to put themselves in the impossible position of the intellectual intuition or, in other words, to transcribe the words of God. It might be scandalous to surpass human experience – and I will question the validity of this accusation – but this scandal corresponds

to an inverse scandal that German idealism denounces: precisely that of limiting oneself to the finite knowledge of an empirical I.¹ The empirical I does not know what already thinks within it; the Kantian subject already thinks of the “thing in itself” that it seems to project outside of its reach. One should not fear to step into what already thinks in us, and that is why philosophy should start with what Hegel called the “courage to truth and a faith in the power of spirit” (W 18, 13): being a spirit, man must regard himself as being worthy of supreme knowledge. Directly following Kant’s Copernican revolution, this idea starts another revolution of thought. German idealism was born in a period of double revolution, one provoked by Kant and the other by the French Revolution; it inherited this revolutionary spirit and provoked other (philosophical and political) revolutions in turn. This is why I would like to resume: its scandal really is the bold and a painful consciousness of the need for revolution.

German idealism essentially seeks to revolutionise the notion of consciousness, first of all by crumbling its traditional acceptance. On the one hand, it examines different figures of the loss of consciousness and follows the dead-ends of non-knowledge, and on the other hand it tends to surpass the level of mere consciousness towards pure thought, which is in fact more than absolute consciousness. It is the absolute spirit, absolute need and power to think, that presents itself as the spirit’s life and history, and no longer as an immobile first cause. The following three points set out some of the consequences of this “deconstruction”.

1. The idealist consciousness is not primarily a human faculty. It is, above all, the spirit’s self-consciousness: not the subject’s consciousness of its object, nor its self-consciousness, but the life of reason as far as it conditions these two forms of consciousness. Unlike Descartes and even Kant, the German idealists did not start from “my” finite experience, not to mention empirical experience (W 5, 76–78).² Certainly absolute consciousness takes place in “me”, but it remains a transcendental operation that thinks in me while still remaining radically other to me. It might coincide with my experience, but the experience of the absolute is fundamentally something that rejects my finite self from its joints.

¹ Hegel ridicules the pretensions of the empirical I in two hilarious little texts, “Krug’s Entwurf eines neuen Organons der Philosophie” and “Wer denkt abstrakt?”, in *Werke 2*. I quote Hegel according to the most easily accessible edition: *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenauer and K.M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971).

² Hegel, G.W.F., *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969). Originally *Wissenschaft der Logik I* [1812] 1932.

2. Idealist consciousness is an activity and a process. It cannot be seized as a “dead”, i.e. immobile, object or subject of a relation of consciousness, for it is the activity of “living” that infinitely synthesises the relation in which the subject appropriates and creates its objects and becomes itself: it only is what it makes itself to be (GA I, 96³) (W 16, 79⁴). One has to underline the processual character of the idealist consciousness, for it has often been misunderstood: if the spirit is its own life, it is because it is the very process of living and not just a thing, that accessorially lives, too. In order to seize the spirit’s life, the idealists turned from the Cartesian tradition towards Aristotle’s dynamics, and even to Heraclitus, whose “*hen kai pan*” was the watchword of the young students Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin.

3. The absolute consciousness discussed earlier is really the spirit, whereas the consciousness in the proper sense of the word characterises the human condition. Even if the human being’s finite consciousness of the object and of the self is not the starting point of the German idealists, it is one of their aims, and they examine the problematic passage from the absolute to the finite. In fact, they underline the *practical* character of human consciousness: its most distinctive feature is the fact that it only exists in a community, such a community being constituted in a process of recognition rather than in any kind of a cognitive act. Seen from this angle, the consciousness exists as a state of a human community and not as the illumination of a solitary mind. The German idealists were essentially political thinkers, whose idealism embodies the very experience of the concrete reality of the world and a reflection of man’s task in his historical reality.

In what follows I will present the development of these principles in a brief historical survey. Although Kant can be included in German idealism, I take his position to be known and proceed directly to Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. History has remembered them in this order – but one should keep in mind the simplistic character of such a presentation, too. Each one of these

³ GA refers to Fichte, J.G., *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, eds. R. Lauth, H. Jacob and H. Gliwitzky (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1962). Here, as I do most of the time, I refer to Fichte, J.G., *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre (1794)* (SW I), whose edition in the Meiner Philosophische Bibliothek (Hamburg: Meiner, 1997) and whose English translation (Fichte, J.G., *Science of Knowledge, with the First and the Second Introductions*, trans. P. Heath and J. Lachs [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982]) also indicate the GA page numbers in the margins.

⁴ Hegel, G.W.F., *Vernunft in die Geschichte 1*, ed. Meiner Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1970), 55. In English *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

thinkers is an individual, and there is no direct progression from Kant through Fichtean preparation and Schellingian excess to Hegel's complete system (except in Hegel's presentations of their mutual relations). However, for the purposes of the present survey, there is no need to question the real historical interaction between them.

11.1 FICHTE

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 1762–1814, was a shooting star whose glory was assured by the publication of *The Science of Knowledge* (a rather inexact translation of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*) of 1794–1795⁵, but whose decline had already started in 1798 and who died forgotten by the public. At that time, he was overshadowed by Hegel, and it was not until recently that research has accorded him the place he merits as a strong, independent thinker. The *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794 contains the essence of his doctrine, which he modified in a number of new versions that were only published posthumously. He considered that the vocation of a philosopher spreads beyond his academic functions, and wrote and published several eloquent treatises on practical and political subjects, such as *The Vocation of Man* (1800) and *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808).

Wissenschaftslehre examines the foundations of consciousness.⁶ Ordinarily we take consciousness to be consciousness-of-something or self-consciousness. According to Fichte, however, neither of these can ground nor even explain itself. Consciousness-of-something is conditioned by its object, the phenomenon of which might be given but its essence and being cannot be known by the subject. Such a thing remains the transcendent ground of the subject, whose self-consciousness remains incomplete because it is conditioned by an unknowable ground. Fichte takes this to be the position of dogmatism, which postulates a thing in itself beyond its reach

⁵ Fichte and his scholars generally use the German expression *Wissenschaftslehre*, sometimes rendered by the abbreviation WL. Of the several versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, one can start with the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, whereas the later versions, in particular those of 1798, 1801 and 1804, give interesting material for further research.

⁶ For further readings, see Bourgeois, Bernard, *L'idéalisme de Fichte* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), Chapter III; Henrich, Dieter, *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), in English "Fichte's original insight", trans. D. Lachterman, in *Contemporary German Philosophy* 1 (1982), 15–52; Neuhaus, Frederick, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Philonenko, Alexis, *L'Œuvre de Fichte* (Paris: Vrin, 1984), Chapter 1.

(GA I, 119–120). Self-consciousness remains equally incapable of explaining itself insofar as it tries to know itself by making an object of itself. In this case, the subject can only postulate still another consciousness, capable of being conscious of itself as an object, and so forth ad infinitum. This is how self-consciousness falls into infinite regress in which it is impossible to stop at the level in which consciousness would really see itself.

Consciousness-of-something necessarily lies on an unknowable foundation, and self-consciousness necessarily falls into an infinite regress – because consciousness is taken to be our object. Fichte, instead of contemplating consciousness as an object, seeks to *found* it in reason. He seeks something of which we cannot be *conscious* but that we must *think* of as the condition of possibility of all consciousness (GA I, 91). The foundation of consciousness requires a rational presentation aiming at grasping something that permits, among others, to understand consciousness. This something is the pure activity of the I.

The I that founds all forms of consciousness is a pure activity. It is not the *res cogitans*, the thinking *thing* of Cartesianism, but the pure activity of thinking as such. In fact Fichte recognises that Descartes' *cogito* is a fundamental principle and not an object of representation, but thinks that Descartes simply states this fact instead of explaining it (GA I, 100). Fichte finds his way to the very functioning of the I by radicalising Kant's idea of the subject. The I stems from the transcendental apperception defined in *Critique of Pure Reason* (GA I, 476). Fichte's starting point in the § 1 of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, however, is not a sense experience but the simplest and the most indubitable law of thought, $A = A$. Then he shows how this proposition takes place in the I insofar as the I thinks of itself, also I is I, and the passage from the “=” to the “is” also means that the I is. Such a deduction only makes sense because the I is not simply the possibility to connect laws of thought, like the transcendental apperception, but the *activity* of thinking that produces the connection. The I is most essentially a radicalisation of the idea of freedom presented in *Critique of Practical Reason*: a *practical* idea of an action that gives itself its own law.⁷ The I is not its own predicate, but its task: it *has* to make itself and *is* only what it does.⁸ It only *is* insofar as it makes itself be, and it is nothing but this activity of generating itself. It is not its own product but the producing itself: a free and creative principle of producing itself and, in a certain sense, of creating its world. As a free

⁷ Cf. Fischbach, Franck, *L'Être et l'acte: Enquête sur les fondements de l'ontologie moderne de l'agir* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), Chapter 1.

⁸ It is the famous “fact/act” or “act-action” (*Tathandlung*): GA I, 91, 96–98.

creation, Fichte's I is, above all, a radicalisation of Kant's transcendental imagination (GA I, 215–218).

Being the subject's own pure activity, the I cannot be an object of consciousness; and even though in the order of presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* it is first given as the most apodictic principle, it cannot be a pure logical object either. The *Wissenschaftslehre* is not an analysis of the logical consequences of the principle $A = A$, but a synthetic production of its conditions in an ever richer presentation of the whole of science, until it exposes the foundations of the entirety of human knowledge, starting from the most abstract and descending back to the most concrete aspects of the human world. The truth criterion of the system is its systematic totality (GA I, 115), its capacity for constituting a whole, the first principle of which is only proved by the end (this is the famous circularity that we find again in Hegel). In other words, the truth of the system depends on the coherence of the operation of thought it exposes, a coherence that is formally ensured in the very first thought (the principle of identity) and gains a full content at the end of the operation.

If we cannot represent or deduce the I, how, then, are we to know it? We know it by virtue of what is generally called intellectual intuition (GA I, 463 *s.q.*). Fichte's intellectual intuition is not the same as the one Kant attributed only to God, insofar as God's intuition immediately creates its own object (whereas the human being only has a transcendental imagination). For Fichte, such an intuition remains transcendent and risks coinciding with the problematic thing in itself. Fichte's intellectual intuition is a purely immanent activity of the I insofar as it is conscious of itself as a transcendental activity at work in all of its operations.

Such an intellectual intuition of the I is only possible within the I. We can only observe it by using it, and there is no external position from which to seek it. This is how the very act of philosophising becomes the object of philosophy. Fichte was the first to think of philosophy as the self-consciousness of philosophy itself. Thought is a process, and philosophy entails becoming conscious of the process of thinking. Furthermore, the process cannot be stopped in an achieved form but it has to remain a process. Philosophising is a form of life, and one cannot become conscious of life except by living it. This is why philosophy cannot be an object of contemplation: as an essential manifestation of human freedom it is necessarily an experience and a task – a task of becoming freely conscious of itself as freedom. Consequently, philosophy is also a creation, a creation that does not exhaust itself in any of its creations but seeks to experience and even create the very moment of creation.

The I is also the pure will, the principle that became famous in its developments by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Does this imply that the Fichtean

I finally creates its world, or makes a simple representation of the world (according to the critique that has often been addressed to all German idealists)? For several reasons, the answer is no. The I is not the transcendent reason creating the world, it is the transcendental principle operating in every finite act of thought. It is an infinite operation that operates in finite acts of thought, which are essentially acts of consciousness and, as such, are constituted as a separation between the I and the non-I (GA I, 101–105). Before it determines the non-I, this finite I is determined by the “shock” caused by the non-I (GA I, 212–213), i.e. by God, a thing, another human being, or even by the philosopher himself. Fundamentally, the non-I is the *whole of what is*: certainly it cannot be created by the finite I but it *shows* itself to the I. It shows itself in *images* that could be characterised as the visibility of what is, and that are consequently the very contrary of (my) representations. These images correspond to the transcendental imagination, whose “waving” (*schweben*) permits the search for coherence to what cannot be reduced to the logical order of the universe.⁹ Finally, the hovering of the transcendental imagination also enables the very intellectual intuition, the I’s relation to itself.

For Fichte, the ultimate source and aim of philosophy is life itself. “One only learns to know life by life itself, and not by speculation, when the aim is not to reason by pleasure, but to live” (GA II, 332)¹⁰; “life is the aim [. . .] speculation is only a means to know life”. (GA V, 342)¹¹ This is why the theoretical deduction of the pure I, presented in the first part of *Wissenschaftslehre*, aims at the practical deduction of its reality, presented in the second part. The pure I is a transcendental structure that explains natural consciousness – which is not conscious of itself as a pure I – and philosophy only seeks to make it conscious in order to return back to natural consciousness and to show to it the extent of the human being’s freedom. Philosophy concerns life itself, primarily understood as human life. Fichte regards human life as a practical task, which he examines, on the one hand, as philosophising itself and, on the other hand, as political philosophy.

⁹ For a challenging interpretation of the role of transcendental imagination, cf. Goddard, Jean-Christophe, *Fichte (1801–1813): L’émancipation philosophique* (Paris: PUF, 2003), Chapter 3.

¹⁰ Fichte, J.G., *Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publikum über das eigentliche Wesen der neuesten Philosophie*, in English “A crystal clear report to the general public concerning the actual essence of the newest philosophy: An attempt to force the reader to understand”, trans. J. Botterman and W. Rasch, in E. Behler (ed.), *Philosophy of German Idealism* (New York: Continuum, 1987).

¹¹ Fichte, J.G., *Rückerinnerungen, Antworten, Fragen*, GA V, 342.

When it comes to philosophising, Fichte stresses the character of experience required by a philosophy of philosophy. Fichte says that “the kind of philosophy one makes depends on the kind of person one is” (GA I, p. 434): one is not obliged to philosophise, one can philosophise only in a dogmatic manner, or one can philosophise in an idealist manner, like Fichte himself. Only idealist philosophy seeks to understand the life of the I in oneself by living it: only such philosophising is absolute, and Fichte evidently considers that there is no other way to it than the one deduced in *Wissenschaftslehre*. How, then, can one seize thought as *life*, given that life is a pure passage, whereas any effort to grasp it changes it into a *being*, that Fichte takes to be a *dead* thing? For him, the experience of a life of thought is equally an experience of thought as a practical task that necessarily produces and creates its own reality. It is not a question of avoiding the production of finite reality, it is just a question of seeking, as if under each product of the reason, the very moment of production that made it possible.

The necessity to bring philosophy back to life itself equally implies the necessity to bring it to political reality, and consequently Fichte wrote extensively on law and morality. For him, the very consciousness of the human being is always already a recognition that happens in and as the human community.¹² Such recognition, given its aim of recognising the absolute freedom in each and every one of us, is primarily a practical and not a theoretical process. The realisation of universal freedom is the task of humanity, and the philosopher should contribute to it in his own way. Fichte, like all of his peers, felt the necessity of measuring his philosophical ideas against the political reality because of the French Revolution, the ideas of freedom and democracy of which had filled him with enthusiasm. Again like his peers, however, he experienced a bitter disappointment when the revolution turned into Napoleon’s empire. He found himself living in a conquered country with no political unity (“Germany does not exist”) or military power to counter the imperial power. If the French revolution had failed and if a German revolution seemed impossible, the thinker’s task was to investigate the conditions of possibility of a real reign of freedom.

No doubt, the task is worthy, but Fichte’s solutions remain ambiguous. To begin with, inspired by Kant and Rousseau, he claims that the very logic of the absolute I requires recognition of the freedom of each and every one in

¹² In particular, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre* (GA III), in English *The Science of Rights*, trans. A.E. Kroeger (London: Trübner & co, 1889, reprint London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

such a way that the other's freedom does not merely limit my freedom but on the contrary only makes it possible¹³; left on this level of abstraction, however, the reign of the absolute I hardly differs from the tyranny of absolute freedom, whose terrifying consequences Hegel analysed in *Naturrecht* and *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. In his later texts, Fichte considers the emancipation of the consciousnesses to be a practical task, primarily requiring a spiritual revolution. In the case of his own culture, the aim of such a revolution would be to find the "Germanity" that would justify the foundation of a German nation, "Germanity" being a linguistic and a cultural whole that could only be found through education.¹⁴ This is a nationalist project, and even if it is not to be confused with the later nationalist totalitarianism (the biologist notion of a German "race" was unthinkable for all of the German idealists), it contains the ambiguity that weighed already on Plato's *Republic* that is its model: the realisation of justice presupposes the education of the citizens, but it is, in effect, impossible to distinguish between education for freedom and training for obedience. Rather than offering a solution, Fichte leaves it to us as one of the fundamental contradictions of modern political society.

11.2 SCHELLING

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's (1775–1854) thought underwent several metamorphoses¹⁵. He established his original position by creating a philosophy of nature, then he exposed an identity philosophy, and passed through "On Human Freedom" and the "Ages of the World" to his final philosophies of mythology and revelation – as if passing from nature through man to god. Attending the famous Tübinger Stift together with Hegel and Hölderlin, he occupied the chair of philosophy in Jena after

¹³ In particular: *Beitrag zur Berechtigung der Urteile des Publikums über der französische Revolution*.

¹⁴ In particular, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, in *English Adresses to the German Nation*, trans. R.F. Jones and G.H. Turnbull (Chicago: Open Court, 1922, reprint Westprint CT: Greenwood Press Inc., 1979).

¹⁵ Before the completion of the *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe, im Auftrag der Schelling-kommission der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, the standard edition remains the *Sämtliche Werke* (SW) (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–1861). General introductions: Snow, Dale E., *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); Frank, Manfred, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbsterkenntnis* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991); Marx, Werner, *The Philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling: History, System, Freedom* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Fichte and in Berlin after Hegel; his direct influence on the romantics and his indirect influence on several generations of thinkers remain considerable. We are currently witnessing a strong renewal of interest in Schelling.

Schelling shared Fichte's starting point, in particular the stress put on freedom and the refusal to understand subjectivity as the Cartesian thinking substance.¹⁶ He opposed Fichte's absolute I on the question of what is absolutely irreducible to the I: being itself as an unconditional but unconscious ground. This is how Schelling passes from subjective to objective idealism.

The unconditional being first appeared to him as nature, the study of which Fichte had practically overlooked.¹⁷ Schelling sought to understand nature otherwise than as a simple object of consciousness, for such a view projects it only in terms of human representation. It should rather be conceived of as what "shocks" the consciousness, comes to it as the unconditional but unknowable ground of all being. This change of viewpoint was already prefigured by Kant. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he presented nature as a phenomenon the laws of which are explained through the necessary functioning of human consciousness. On the other hand, in *Critique of Judgement*, he sought nature's own legislation: using the creative power of art as an analogy, he presented nature as an autonomous system with its own life and creative potentiality. Schelling recapitulated the latter conception and conceived of nature as life and as an organism, indeed as a kind of subjectivity that, in contrast with human subjectivity, follows teleological reasons without being conscious of them, and is creative but not truly free.

¹⁶ In *Vom Ich*, Schelling establishes that the principle of philosophy is the I (SW I, 167), which cannot be an object of consciousness (SW I, 180) but can only appear as intellectual intuition (SW I, 181) and is a pure act. Schelling examines Fichtean motifs in particular in *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen*, *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*, as well as in *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, in English *Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy or on the Unconditional in Human Knowledge* and *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, both translated by F. Marti, in F.W.J. Schelling, *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794–1796)* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980); and *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. P. Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978).

¹⁷ The first formulation of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* appears in *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft* and in *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*. The *Ideen* was translated by E.E. Harris and P. Heath as *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature: As Introduction to the Study of this Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Faced with such a nature outside and inside of itself, the reason does not observe contingent border phenomena but its ownmost condition. Thus not only consciousness but also self-consciousness is characterised by an indelible shadow: the unconsciousness of its own being.

How could consciousness confront unconsciousness? Psychoanalysis is known to offer one answer to this question; but even if Schelling's thinking was to inspire Freud, his point of view was different in that he did not examine consciousness and nature in the individual, but rather in terms of the absolute, whose "consciousness" confronts nature like freedom confronts necessity.

So-called identity philosophy (1801–1809), which started to take shape in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), gives one answer to this question. Transcendental philosophy, then, is incapable of explaining nature that is *its* condition (nature remains its "unconsciousness"), and philosophy of nature is incapable of explaining the emergence of consciousness that is *its* consciousness (consciousness is its "unconsciousness"). Schelling maintains that in order to attain truth, the possibility of which cannot be denied, the two must coincide, and consciousness must be the consciousness of nature. This need is expressed in reason, which poses a superior principle above them. This is the absolute of the philosophy of identity, the subject–object that is neither the subject nor the object but the condition of their unity.¹⁸ Identity philosophy has to be purely systematic and rational. Thus it starts from the principle of identity, which is to be distinguished from what Schelling regards as the formal identity of Fichte's $A = A$, and understood as rational identity. Rejecting the tautological I is I as mere self-affirmation, he held that only an identity that is affirmed through difference is a concrete identity, the identity of identity and difference. Only an identity that encompasses the identity $A = A$ and the difference $A = B$ is a truly rational identity, an absolute point of indifference, which permits the development of various "potentials" of its terms. This logic prevails in the exposition of the whole system of philosophical sciences, no longer simply as their transcendental condition but as their absolute ground.

By definition, the system of identity is absolute and absolutely true. How, then, are we, finite philosophising beings, to get a hold of it?¹⁹ Schelling's answers to this fundamental question are somewhat varying. He shares Fichte's initial understanding of the act of philosophising as an act of

¹⁸ Cf. in particular Chapters 1 and 2 of *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*. Cf. also SW IV, 116, 121, 125, 235–239.

¹⁹ A careful study of the question is presented by Fischbach, Franck, *Du commencement en philosophie: Étude sur Hegel et Schelling* (Paris: Vrin, 1999), Chapter 1.

freedom aiming at intellectual intuition. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, he seeks this intuition beyond the Fichtean intuition of the productivity of the I (which cannot be shared, as its only proof is personal experience) and the intuition of nature (whose objectivity is shared but whose character of production cannot be proven) in an analogy with artistic production. Following Kant, Schelling takes art to be the coincidence of unconscious natural production and conscious artistic production such that neither of the two can cause the other but their balance is the very existence of art (SW III, 618, 627).²⁰ This is how art can manifest the absolute, of which, analogically, philosophy may have an intellectual intuition. In his *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1801), however, Schelling points out that the thought of absolute reason is given to everyone, but in order to attain it, one has to make an abstraction of the one who thinks (SW, IV, 114; SW VI, 140; SW V, 224). In other words, *I* do not think, but the absolute thinks in me; I think as far as I let the absolute spread itself out freely through me.

In his later philosophy, Schelling gives up the term ‘intellectual intuition’ in favour of ‘ecstasy’²¹, which denotes the movement in which the human being abandons himself to superior knowledge, be it religious revelation or the ecstasy of reason that brings him to the absolute. Even if ecstasy means a loss and the abandonment of oneself – indeed it verges on madness and on divine possession – it does not imply the cessation of thinking, but rather rises towards higher, more absolute thought. As long as the human being remains “in himself”, he cannot help falling back on preconceived representations. Hence he has to give them up, and accept finding in the absolute something his understanding cannot conceive of – for instance the very existence of the existent. Only such an abandonment, an exposition to the absolute, can bring him up to the absolute itself. The question remains, however, whether such ecstasy can be attained directly or only through a propaedeutic that opens the way towards the absolute by criticising the notions of finite reflexion. This option remains open even in the latest works of Schelling, which hover between positive and negative philosophies, that is to say between direct revelation and the critical appraisal of inherited notions and figures of thought and religion.

Schelling’s recourse to a term like ‘ecstasy’ is more understandable when connected to the transformation in his conception of the absolute. I will

²⁰ The early romantic thinkers Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis showed Schelling how art could be a way of understanding what escapes knowledge.

²¹ The sense of Schelling’s ‘ecstasy’ is well explained in the article by Courtine, Jean-François, “L’achèvement de la métaphysique”, in *Extase de la raison: Essai sur Schelling* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 192–195.

only mention *Of Human Freedom* (1809)²² and *Ages of the World* (1811–1815)²³ here, since his later philosophies of mythology and revelation are too complex for a brief presentation. Since *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling re-interpretes the principle of identity as a question of ground, and no longer simply as a proposition. Inquiring into the ground of beings, he does not understand the ground as a cause or a sufficient ground, because such a formulation of the problem always risks the dogmatic positioning of the ultimate being. Instead, he sees the ground as the profundity or the abyss that appears when the origin of beings is questioned (SW VII, 406–408).

Schelling's abysmal ground is the being of beings. It is not a superior being beneath finite beings but the existence of beings, not *what* exists but *that* it exists. This conception of being is very close to Heidegger's famous exposition of being as its own donation and retreat, and indeed the *ex-* of *ex-istence* is a donation that corresponds to the *ex-* of *ex-stasis* characterising the human being's relation to the being of beings. At the same time, Schelling's view of being is the very opposite of Heidegger's, since being is for him the act of existing of an absolute *subject*, whose being is characterised as *will* (SW VII, 350).

Being is the absolute's will of being. It is not the will to realise something the idea of which would have pre-existed in a divine mind (such a will is not unconditional but precisely conditioned by the idea). It is will as a pure potentiality the effectuation of which happens as if by surprise through an absolutely free act of creation or, better, of birth: one can represent the absolute as what gives birth to itself (SW VII, 359). Schelling presents this absolute act of being in the two forms of nature and God. In fact, they are the same, but as nature God is not conscious of himself (he remains "insane" and "suffering", and desires his own birth as a coming to the light). Following the vocabulary of *Ages of the World*, the infinite act of the absolute as God/nature is the "heart", whose systole and diastole give and withdraw the chaotic originary being, and expand and contract the light that is to illuminate it.

²² *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, in English *Of Human Freedom*, trans. J. Gutmann (Chicago: Open Court, 1936). Interest in this fascinating work was intensified by Heidegger's commentary, cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), (a lecture course given in 1936, published in 1971), in English *Schelling's Treatise on Human Freedom*, trans. J. Stambauch (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985).

²³ *Die Weltalter*, in English *The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World*, trans. J. Norman (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).

From the perspective of nature, the absolute exists as the obscure depth out of which the spirit yearns to emerge. This happens through the “potentials” of gravity and light, where gravity stands for the mute and chaotic factuality of being, and light stands for the idea that gradually gives sense to being.²⁴ But nature only attains the potential of light in the human being, who is the balance of light and gravity, or of chaos and idea. Moreover, the human being’s essence is will (and not an intellectual capacity), and in him, will becomes freedom. The human will is essentially a practical notion, since it is an unconditional freedom for good or for evil, a pure vertiginous wavering between these two choices (SW VII, 364). By their inevitably tragic decisions human beings gradually produce their world, and finally the whole of world history. On the other hand, as practical as it might be, the sense of the human being’s freedom remains his ultimately theoretical capacity to mediate between gravity and light, between chaotic nature and the ideal clarity of God.

Being no thing but pure will, Schelling’s God is personal, and his personality has no predicates but the potentials of highness, goodness and love. God loves by creating the world and by manifesting himself as its reason. God is not only the being of each and every one of the singular beings, but also the “light” or the “idea” that comes out in each and every one of them. In this double manner, he manifests himself *as* the finite world, and as nothing beyond it. God is an imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) that produces the ideas of finite things and conceives of finite things as “images” (SW III, 18; SW V, 386). Such images are the very opposite of the human representations that vainly seek to prove their correspondence with things. Divine images manifest the very logic of things in themselves: they are the “light” that strives to set forth from the obscure “gravity” of finite beings. In this sense, the wavering of the imagination that produces the images of the world corresponds to the blind drive of the “potentials” that allow light to rise from the obscurity of primordial gravity: the two processes are the same, the first being presented from the perspective of the divine, the second from the perspective of the nature.

God’s manifestation is closely related to his temporality. The very aim of *Ages of the World* is to understand him as the *living* God.²⁵ A living god is neither eternal nor intratemporal: it is its own temporalisation in which it opens up its own past and future as its extases.²⁶ On the one hand, God’s

²⁴ Schelling’s dramatic terminology (‘light’, ‘obscurity’, ‘depth’ and so forth) reflects a strong theosophical influence, in particular Jacob Böhme’s thought.

²⁵ On the interpretation of the idealist era’s “living god” as Dionysius and Christ, cf. Frank, Manfred, *Der kommende Gott* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

²⁶ Cf. Wieland, Wolfgang, *Schellings Lehre von der Zeit* (Heidelberg: C. Universitätsverlag, 1956).

temporality spreads out the very life of God himself, that is to say, the tension between the absolute past of the creation and the absolute future of a “reign of spirits”. On the other hand, the actuality of the divine present is human history, which Schelling studies in particular as the suite of gods that the human being has invented in order to explain his world. On both levels, God presents himself as a living being, that is to say, as a subjective structure that returns back into itself – and into its own origin and end – through a temporalising movement.

Schelling pushes the notion of consciousness to the extreme. For him, consciousness is above all the absolute’s self-consciousness. No doubt it can only be realised through the human beings’ action, but as the human being’s highest action is the ecstasy in which he exposes himself to the self-revelation of the absolute, the true subject of this consciousness remains the absolute itself. Furthermore, absolute consciousness is certainly absolute knowledge, but the essence of this knowledge is not a theoretical principle. It is freedom, a freedom that only accomplishes itself in an action. Absolute action rejoins the contemplative ideal when it shows itself as the act of manifesting itself, not only as its own creation, but also as the very process of eternally creating itself. Such is the absolute subject–object: it is not a simple consciousness of *what* is, but a consciousness *that* is.

11.3 HEGEL

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) achieved the project of German idealism in the sense that he was the only one to complete the entire system of philosophical sciences. His systematic approach also produced the first true philosophy of history, which he presents as the teleological progression of reason. If his first philosophical work, *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy* (1801), took a position for Schelling against Fichte, his first major work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), was considered by Schelling as an attack against him. The *Science of Logic* (1812–1816) and the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* (1817) present his philosophical system, and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821) sums up his very influential political theory.

In *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*²⁷, Hegel criticises Fichte’s $A = A$ in favour of Schelling’s identity of identity

²⁷ *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, *Werke* 2, in English *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*, trans. H.S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).

and difference. However, the heart of Hegel's logic is not in pure formal propositions but in the speculative proposition, S is P, the form of which is annulled by its contents and not by simple formal considerations (W 3, 26).²⁸ In terms of contents, S is P, for instance "God is eternal", combines two names that are empty in themselves ("God" and "eternity"), and produces a proposition that is false in itself ("God" does not mean the *same thing* as "eternal", but each term overlaps the other). Notwithstanding the necessary falseness of the propositions, there is no other way to science than through them. We have to start from them and we cannot go beyond their domain: science is their internal mutual critique, a critical movement the totality of which aims at total transparency to itself.

Such a movement only becomes possible when we seek to understand what *happens* in and through the propositions, rather than only asking what is stated in them.²⁹ Hegel's famous word for the *event* of the speculative proposition is the *Aufhebung*, which denotes a double movement in which the proposition is annihilated by its inherent falseness, and the very comprehension of the falseness gives rise to a new truth (W 5, 113–115). At the same time, the critical and productive work of the *Aufhebung* is doubled by the secret work of *negativity*, which is another key Hegelian notion. In innumerable forms, for instance as contradiction or as death, negativity withdraws truth and destroys understanding: not because truth and understanding would be impossible, but on the contrary because they are infinitely more than any of their finite figures. Hegel is an idealist for whom truth is nothing less than absolute: but for whom the *presentation* of the absolute can only happen through the negativity and the reciprocal critique of its expressions.³⁰

In the end, the absolute must know itself as the absolute. Such transparency is attained when thought observes its own life in the double guise of its form and its contents. At this point, the form is no longer a mere proposition, it is the very movement of destroying and begetting propositions, and

²⁸ Hegel, G.W.F., *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in English *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

²⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy gives an enlightening account of this "plasticity" of the concept in *Speculative Remark: One of Hegel's bons mots*, trans. C. Surprenant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), and in *Hegel, The Restlessness of the Negative*, trans. J. Smith and S. Miller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

³⁰ Classical studies on the Hegelian motif of presentation: Marx, Werner, *Absolute Reflexion und die Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967) and Hyppolite, Jean, *Logique et existence* (Paris: PUF, 1953).

the content is no longer an isolated concept, it is but the systematic totality of all the concepts traversed by science. Science is the concrete life of the spirit, not an infinity emancipated from finitude, but the eternity of finitude as far as it is thought as a whole.

The absolute spirit is its own subject and substance. By definition, spirit is self-consciousness, the essence of which is presented in the dynamic terms life, freedom and thought. Even if this absolute self-consciousness is eternal, and even if it acts more or less secretly in every finite action and thought, it is not given to man immediately. On the contrary, human consciousness has to undergo a long and painful formation (*Bildung*) in order to be capable of consciously participating in the life of the absolute spirit, that is to say, of philosophising. Hegel stresses the importance of this propaedeutic – which is by no means the education of an individual for the profession of philosophy, but the gradual formation of the human consciousness throughout the entire history of its formations, that is to say, the history of the different types of consciousness that have been assumed by the humanity at different stages of world history.

Hegel presents this propaedeutic most strikingly in *Phenomenology of Spirit* – which is subtitled *The History of the Experience of the Consciousness*. This book describes the Odyssey of natural consciousness, that is to say human consciousness in its different particular figures, towards the absolute consciousness of the spirit.³¹ It starts from the plain consciousness of a given being and evolves into a self-consciousness in which the consciousness is its own object, first as the mere recognition of its quality of self-consciousness and finally as consciousness of its representations of itself. In other words, as Hegel says in the *Introduction*, it is a way of doubt and despair (W 3, 72), for it shows how each form of consciousness falls in ruins because of its finitude that dashes it against its limits. Nevertheless, each collapse is equally an experience out of which a new consciousness emerges, and this is how the way of the consciousness is also its way towards the pure sight (*Zusehen*) (W 3, 77) on its own infinite power – a sight to which consciousness only adds its capacity to undergo an experience³². This “sight” of the gradual disintegration and birth of concepts is Hegel’s answer to Fichte’s and Schelling’s conceptions of intellectual intuition: more concretely than ever, he seeks consciousness’ pure relation to itself through finite, historical experience.

³¹ For a general presentation of the book, see Stern, Robert, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³² The capacity of experience, or of returning, is “our addition”, “unsere Zutat”. W 3, 79.

Instead of reviewing the full history of the formation of the consciousness, I will just point out three distinctive features of Hegel's account of it, its negativity, its community, and its poietic character.

For Hegel, the very finiteness of real consciousness implies its negativity (and absolute consciousness is not a consciousness liberated from negativity but a consciousness that thinks it absolutely – “supports the sight of death” (W 3, 36)). The very starting points of the respective analyses of consciousness and of self-consciousness are two figures of negativity. The first figure of consciousness is sense-certainty, the apparent plenitude of which is shown to be a nullity. The object of my supposed certainty vanishes (“now it is night”); when I try to say what I meant to be certain I realise the certainty was not mine (the necessary words are common); the very effort of contemplating the thing in itself annihilates it entirely. Correspondingly, the first figure of self-consciousness is death which nullifies its very possibility. In the famous dialectic of the Lord and the Bondsman, the Lord is ready to sacrifice his being in order to attain recognition and thereby self-consciousness; but the miserable mischief of the Bondsman shows that self-consciousness without being is worth nothing. Self-consciousness needs an experience of death, but paradoxically it must traverse this experience without succumbing to it.³³ The nullity of sense-certainty and the emptiness of death already suffice to show that Hegelian consciousness springs not from an investigation of positive knowledge but from examining ways of facing the impossibility of knowing that only enrich it by shattering it.

Like Fichte and Schelling, Hegel takes the natural consciousness to be an intersubjective phenomenon. Neither consciousness nor self-consciousness are solitary figures. In particular, self-consciousness is by definition “an I that is We and a We that is I” (W 3, 145): as such, it is constituted not by a reflexive look at oneself but by the relation of reciprocal recognition in a human community. Recognition is primarily a practical event that aims at freedom, and not at knowledge of self-consciousnesses. Thus the process starts from the pure recognition of the existence of the other. This recognition is measured against the possibility of a violent death that Hegel analysed earlier in the dialectic of the Lord and the Bondsman, and further in his analysis of the Terror that followed the French Revolution (W 3, 431–441).

³³ The dialectic of the Lord and the Bondsman is at the centre of Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), in English *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. J.H. Nichols, jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969), which has inspired the major part of the twentieth-century French philosophy, from Sartre to Bataille, from Lacan to Derrida. It is also a fundamental scheme of the Marxist analysis of class domination, further developed in the Frankfurt school.

Recognition truly aims at the reciprocal recognition of the freedom of each and every human being. Instead of remaining an abstract right, such freedom must become concrete in acts. In its analyses of the Greek and the modern worlds, *Phenomenology of Spirit* shows how difficult, or actually impossible, it is to recognise not only the freedom but, what is more, the justness of the acts of another. This leads to a fundamentally tragic view of human reality, and in particular of politics, marked by division and evil. When Hegel in his philosophy of history presents world history as the gradual realisation of freedom, the tragic tonality remains. This already follows from the contradictory structure of the concept of freedom. Hegel saw it as an idea, an eminently practical idea that requires its realisation as different human communities. At the same time, each realisation of freedom (for instance a state) is already a limitation of the freedom that cannot but seek its emancipation from its given forms. This dialectic leads to the endless cycle of destruction and construction that characterises human history.³⁴

Natural consciousness is equally creative or poietic. It gives form to nature and to oneself, and thus creates a “second nature”, the consciousness of which can found a political community. Such a community can reflect its essence in its art, religion, and philosophy. The source of these creations is what Hegel calls the objective spirit, which is not an individual’s self-expression, but the self-expression of a whole “spirit of people” and “spirit of time”. Such expression can eventually arise through a “genius”, but its part in the absolute depends not on individuality, but on the relative universality of the objective spirit.

Hegel, too, considers philosophy to be fundamentally concerned with its very possibility. The constellation in which the philosopher, a finite subject, thinks of the absolute, an infinite subject, is not that of the contemplation of an object by a subject. It is an act in which a finite subject decides to meet the absolute subject; and this is only possible since the absolute is nothing but its own act of self-revelation. Like Schelling, Hegel takes the generosity of the absolute to be the true source and condition of the truth of philosophy. Unlike Schelling, he calls the attitude that permits to meet the absolute a decision³⁵, and not ecstasy. It is an active decision, the “courage to truth

³⁴ There has been great debate on the eventual “end of history” presumably proclaimed by Hegel. However, given the very idea of liberty, it is difficult to accept the idea that any real, concrete political formation could definitely incarnate freedom.

³⁵ On the motif of decision, cf. Bourgeois, Bernard, “La spéculation hégélienne”, in his *Études hégéliennes: Raison et décision* (Paris: PUF, 1992). On the relation between Hegel’s “decision” and Schelling’s “ecstasy”, cf. Fischbach, 1999.

and a faith in the power of spirit” (W 18, 13) that postulates the human mind to be powerful enough to comprehend the absolute. It is also a decision that implies slow and painful work among the propositions of understanding and the figures of consciousness, for the absolute cannot exist as a pure revelation: it requires exposition in the philosopher’s work. For Hegel, this is the philosopher’s work: work with death, work of death, so that the spirit might live.

11.4 CONCLUSION

Hegel was undoubtedly the most influential of the German idealists. One indication of the extent of his influence is in how he has inspired practically all political ideologies since the nineteenth century from Marxism and nationalism to liberalism. He has nourished Christian thinkers as well as the existentialist movement, and – if only by reaction – the Frankfurt school and so-called poststructuralist continental thought. Who would not have read Hegel, or, as Foucault once said: “Wherever I turn my head, Hegel is already there”.

In comparison, Fichte and Schelling have hardly aroused other than scholarly passions, and in fact it is not until recently that they have begun to appear as fascinating independent thinkers. One could characterise the latest renewal of interest in German idealism as a “phenomenological turn of the German idealism”: by way of caricature (but it really is no more than a caricature), one could say that Husserlians return to Fichte³⁶, Heideggerians to Schelling³⁷, which leaves Hegel in the hands of the deconstructors³⁸. A “phenomenological turn” would consist in a double movement. Firstly, the German idealists are studied as the forgotten, if not outrightly rejected, predecessors of the ideas that gave rise to phenomenology, notably the transcendental I and the concrete lifeworld. Secondly, the “phenomenological

³⁶ A complete list of secondary literature is given by Schnell, Alexander, “Husserl und Fichte: Überlegungen zur transzendental-spezifischen Argumentation im transzendentalen Idealismus”, in E. Escoubas and B. Waldenfels (eds.), *Phénoménologie française et phénoménologie allemande* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000).

³⁷ E.g. Courtine, Jean-François, *Extase de la raison: Essais sur Schelling* (Paris: Galilée, 1990); Nancy, Jean-Luc, *L’expérience de la liberté* (Paris: Galilée, 1988).

³⁸ Jacques Derrida’s texts, in particular the articles “Le puits et la pyramide: Introduction à la sémiologie de Hegel” and “Ousia et grammé: Note sur une Note de Sein und Zeit”, in *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), have inspired a number of studies.

turn” consists in reinterpreting the idealists themselves in terms of finitude, stressing the mobility of transcendental operation instead of the intemporality of the spirit. This leads to an investigation of the act of philosophising as an experience (of reduction, of extasis or of decision), and of being as a donation or an exposition. In this constellation, what used to be the “consciousness” is reinterpreted as a thinker’s relation to being; and it is inexact to say that the thinker is conscious of being when he can mostly abandon himself to the givenness of the whole. More than consciousness of something or of the self, it is the thought’s effort to seize its own life – a life of thought immersed in the concrete lifeworld. The idealists interpret this “life” as *reason*: this is not to say that our earthly life is “reasonable”, but it is to say that we have no other reason to examine than the unreasonable, contradictory, painful reason of this world. This might be a bewildering idea, but idealism precisely requires the courage to face it.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE HEIDELBERG SCHOOL AND THE LIMITS OF REFLECTION

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Analytical philosophy of mind is currently engaged in a renewed and intensified debate about such issues as subjectivity, phenomenal consciousness, and the nature of selfhood. While it is undeniable that its discussion of these topics has reached a high level of complexity and sophistication, it is however, a discussion that has also remained rather inward looking. Apart from some occasional references to historical figures such as Locke or Kant or James, it has largely been a discussion for and among analytical philosophers. There has been a lack of any real interest in the parallel discussions to be found on the Continent, even though there is a long and rich tradition for discussing and analyzing the very same problems in Austrian, German, and French philosophy.

In this chapter, I wish to present and discuss some of the contributions to a theory of self-awareness that can be found on the Continent. I will focus on the work of a group of German philosophers known as the *Heidelberg School*. However, my point of departure will be contemporary analytical philosophy. I will start out by briefly outlining an account of consciousness that has recently enjoyed great popularity – the so-called higher-order theory. I will then turn to the Heidelberg School, which not only has formulated an incisive criticism of the higher-order theory, but also has developed a position of its own that arguably stands as the most important contribution to a clarification of self-awareness in recent German philosophy. I will analyze this contribution in detail, and then end the chapter by drawing attention to some of its specific limitations.

12.1 THE HIGHER-ORDER THEORY

It is customary to distinguish between two uses of the term “conscious”, a transitive and an intransitive use. On the one hand, we can speak of our being conscious of something, be it x , y , or z . On the other, we can speak of

our being conscious *simpliciter* (rather than non-conscious). For the past two or three decades, a popular way to account for intransitive consciousness in cognitive science and analytical philosophy of mind has been by means of some kind of higher-order theory.¹ According to the higher-order theory, what makes a mental state (intransitively) conscious is the fact that it is taken as an object by a relevant higher-order state. It is the occurrence of the higher-order representation that makes us conscious of the first-order mental state. One way to illustrate the guiding idea is by comparing consciousness to a spotlight. Some mental states are illuminated; others do their work in the dark. Those that are illuminated are intransitively conscious, those that are not, are non-conscious. What makes a mental state conscious (illuminated) is the fact that it is taken as an object by a relevant higher-order state. In short, a conscious state is a state we are conscious of, or as David Rosenthal puts it, “the mental state’s being intransitively conscious simply consists in one’s being transitively conscious of it”.² Thus, intransitive consciousness is taken to be a non-intrinsic, relational property,³ that is, a property that a mental state only has insofar as it stands in the relevant relation to something else. Consciousness has consequently been taken to be a question of the mind directing its intentional aim upon its own states and operations. Self-directedness has been taken to be constitutive of (intransitive) consciousness, or to put it differently, the higher-order theory has typically explained (intransitive) consciousness in terms of self-awareness.⁴ As Robert Van Gulick puts it, it is “the addition of the relevant meta-intentional self-awareness that transforms a non-conscious mental state into a conscious one”.⁵

One of the clearest articulations of this link between self-awareness and a higher-order account of consciousness can be found in the writings of the

¹ See Armstrong, David M., *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968); Lycan, William G., *Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987); Carruthers, Peter, *Language, Thoughts and Consciousness: An Essay in Philosophical Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

² Rosenthal, David M., “A theory of consciousness”, in N. Block, O. Flanagan and G. Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 739.

³ Rosenthal 1997, 736–737.

⁴ In the following, I will not distinguish terminologically between “self-consciousness” and “self-awareness”.

⁵ Gulick, Robert van, “Inward and upward: Reflection, introspection, and self-awareness”, *Philosophical Topics* 28, 2 (2000), 276.

British philosopher Peter Carruthers. According to Carruthers, the aim of a theory of consciousness is to explain what it is for mental states to be conscious as opposed to non-conscious.⁶ This question is different from the question of what it is for an organism or creature to be conscious (i.e., awake) in opposition to non-conscious (i.e., asleep) and it is also a different question from the question of what it is for an organism to be conscious rather than non-conscious of events or objects in the world. Carruthers admits that it might be argued that what he is really after is a theory of self-consciousness rather than simply a theory of consciousness. For in his view, a conscious mental state is one of which the agent is aware, and to that extent it is something that involves self-consciousness. The only reason why he prefers to think of his own theory as a theory of consciousness rather than as a theory of self-consciousness is because the reference to self-consciousness seems to suggest that the subject of a mental state must possess a developed conception of self, a conception of the self as an enduring agent with a determinate past and an open-ended future, in order for the mental state to be conscious. However, because Carruthers finds it highly likely that there are organisms capable of having conscious mental states, but with only the most tenuous conception of themselves as continuing subjects of thought and experience, he regards it as being quite legitimate to maintain a view of creatures which have conscious mental states but which lack self-consciousness.⁷ It soon becomes obvious, however, that Carruthers fails to comply with his own admonition. He points out, that the subjective feel of experience presupposes a capacity for higher-order awareness, and he then continues, “such self-awareness is a conceptually necessary condition for an organism to be a subject of phenomenal feelings, or for there to be anything that its experiences are like”.⁸ To speak of what an experience is like, or of its phenomenal feel, is an attempt to characterize those aspects of experience that are subjective. But the subjective aspects of experience must be aspects that are available to the subject. According to Carruthers, this means that for mental states to be conscious the subject of those states must be capable of discriminating between them; they must be states of which the subject is aware, and this obviously involves a certain amount of self-awareness. In fact, it requires reflective self-awareness.⁹ To be more precise, for a creature to be capable of discriminating between its mental states is for

⁶ Carruthers 1996, 148.

⁷ Carruthers 1996, 149.

⁸ Carruthers 1996, 152.

⁹ Carruthers 1996, 155, 157.

a creature to be capable of reflecting upon, thinking about, and hence conceptualizing its own mental states. Since mental concepts get their significance from being embedded in a folk-psychological theory of the structure and functioning of the mind, this ultimately means that only creatures in possession of a theory of mind are capable of enjoying conscious experiences.¹⁰ Given this setup, Carruthers draws the obvious conclusion: Creatures who lack a theory of mind – such as most animals, young infants, and autistic patients – will also lack conscious experiences, phenomenal consciousness, and a dimension of subjectivity. In his view, they are blind to the existence of their own mental states; there is in fact nothing it is like for them to feel pain or pleasure.¹¹ Carruthers concedes that most of us believe that it must be like something to be a young infant or a cat, and that the experiences of these creatures have subjective feels to them, but he considers this common-sense belief to be groundless. In fact, he believes it to be something of a scandal that people’s intuitions are given any weight at all in this domain, let alone believed sufficient enough to challenge the higher-order theory of consciousness.¹²

12.2 THE HEIDELBERG SCHOOL

One might share Carruthers’ view concerning the close link between consciousness and self-consciousness and still disagree about the nature of the link. In contrast to the higher-order theory, the Heidelberg School explicitly denies that the self-consciousness that is present the moment I consciously experience something is to be understood in terms of some kind of reflection, or introspection, or higher-order monitoring. It does not involve an additional mental state, but is rather to be understood as an intrinsic feature of the primary experience. That is, in contrast to the higher-order account of consciousness that claims that consciousness is an extrinsic property of those mental states that have it, a property bestowed upon them from without by some further states, the Heidelberg School argues that the feature in virtue of which a mental state is conscious is located within the state itself; it is an intrinsic property of those mental states that have it.

According to the higher-order theory, self-awareness is an intentional act; it involves a subject–object relation between two different mental states.

¹⁰ Carruthers 1996, 158; Carruthers, Peter, *Phenomenal Consciousness: A Naturalistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194.

¹¹ Carruthers 2000, 202–203; Carruthers, Peter, “Natural theories of consciousness”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 6, 2 (1998), 216.

¹² Carruthers 2000, 199.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) Locke used the term reflection to designate our mind's ability to turn its view inward upon itself, making its own operations the object of its contemplation.¹³ It has since been customary to describe such a higher-order account of self-awareness as a reflection theory of self-awareness. But although it might at first sight seem obvious that self-awareness is precisely a question of the mind having itself, rather than anything else, as its object, this approach has also been subjected to severe criticism. In fact, one of the most persistent attacks can be found in the writings of the Heidelberg School.¹⁴ What is wrong with the reflection theory?

The reflection model of self-awareness operates with a duality of moments. In its classical form it is a question of a second-order mental state taking a first-order mental state as its object. Consequently, we have to distinguish the reflecting from the reflected. Of course, the aim of reflection is then to overcome or negate this division or difference and to posit both moments as identical – otherwise we would not have a case of *self-awareness*. However, this strategy is confronted with fundamental problems: How can the identity of the two relata be certified without presupposing that which it is meant to explain, namely, self-awareness; and why should the fact of being the intentional object of a non-conscious second-order mental state confer consciousness or subjectivity on an otherwise non-conscious first-order mental state?

The reflection theory claims that self-awareness is the result of a reflection, i.e., in order to manifest itself phenomenally (and not merely remain non-conscious) a feeling, perception, or thought must await its objectification by a subsequent reflection. However, it is not enough for the reflection theory to explain how a certain state becomes conscious. The theory also has to explain how the state comes to be given as my state, as a state that I am in. Why? Because when one is directly and non-inferentially conscious of an occurrent pain, perception, or thought, the experience in question is characterized by a first-personal givenness that immediately reveals it as being one's own. In this sense, the first-personal givenness of the experience can be said to entail a built-in self-reference, a primitive experiential self-referentiality, which is

¹³ Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 107, 127.

¹⁴ The first use of the term Heidelberg School is found in Tugendhat, Ernst, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstbestimmung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 10, 53. Cf. Frank, Manfred, *Die Unhintergebarkeit von Individualität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 35. The name reflects the crucial influence of Dieter Henrich's seminars in Heidelberg.

exactly what the reflection theory has to account for. But in order for the experience to appear as my experience, it is not sufficient that the experience in question (A) is grasped by a reflection (B). If A is to be given as mine, it is not enough that B is de facto about A. B must recognize itself in A. That is, the first-order state must be grasped as being identical with the second-order state (and since a numerical identity is excluded, the identity in question must be that of belonging to the same subject or being part of the same stream of consciousness). This poses a difficulty, however, for what should enable the act of reflection (which according to this model is itself non-conscious) to realize that the first-order state belongs to the same subjectivity as itself? In order to identify something as oneself one has to hold something true of it that one already knows to be true of oneself. Just as I cannot recognize something as mine unless I am already aware of myself, a non-conscious second-order mental state (that per definition lacks consciousness of itself) cannot recognize or identify a first-order mental state as belonging to the same mind as itself. If the second-order state is to encounter something as itself, if it is to recognize or identify something as itself, it needs a prior acquaintance with itself.¹⁵ As Konrad Cramer puts it,

How should the reflective subject be able to know that it has itself as an object? Obviously only so that the self knows that it is identical with its object. But it is impossible to ascribe this knowledge to *reflection* and to *ground* it in reflection. Because the act of reflection presupposes that the self *already knows* itself, in order to know that the one which it knows when it has itself as an object is identical with the one which accomplishes the act in the reflective thinking (back to itself). The *theory* that tries to make the *origin* of self-awareness understandable through reflection, ends necessarily in a circle which needs to presuppose the knowledge that it wants to explain.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cramer, Konrad, “‘Erlebnis’: Thesen zu Hegels Theorie des Selbstbewußtseins mit Rücksicht auf die Aporien eines Grundbegriffs nachhegelscher Philosophie”, in H. G. Gadamer (ed.), *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage 1970*, Beiheft 11, Bonn: Hegel-Studien (1974), 563.

¹⁶ “Wie aber soll das Subjekt in der Reflexion wissen können, daß es sich selbst als Objekt hat? Offenbar einzig dadurch, daß das Ich sich mit dem, was es als Objekt hat, identisch weiß. Nun ist es aber unmöglich, dies Wissen der *Reflexion* zuzuschreiben und aus ihr zu *begründen*. Denn für den Akt der Reflexion ist vorausgesetzt, daß das Ich sich *schon kennt*, um zu wissen, daß dasjenige, was es kennt, wenn es sich selbst zum Objekt hat, mit dem identisch ist, was den Akt reflektiver Rückwendung auf sich vollzieht. Die *Theorie*, die den *Ursprung* von Selbstbewußtsein aus der Reflexion verständlich machen will, endet daher notwendig in dem Zirkel, diejenige Kenntnis schon voraussetzen zu müssen, die sie erklären will.” (Cramer 1974, 563.)

Any convincing theory of consciousness has to account for the first-personal or egocentric givenness of our conscious states, and has to respect the difference between our consciousness of a foreign object, and our consciousness of our own subjectivity. However, this is exactly what the reflection theory fails to do. Thus, it is highly questionable whether one can account for the first-personal givenness of phenomenal consciousness by sticking to a traditional model of object-consciousness and simply replacing the external object with an internal one. Self-awareness does not come about as the result of a procedure of introspective object-identification. I do not first scrutinize a specific pain and subsequently identify it as being mine, since that kind of criterial identification implies the possibility of misidentification, and self-awareness is not prone to that kind of error. In fact, when one is aware of one's occurrent thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires, one does not seem to be confronted with objects of any sort, and this is exactly what the reflection theory overlooks.

When something is given as an object, it is given as something that transcends the merely subjective. For something to be given as an object of experience is for it to differ from the subjective experience itself. But if this is so, if object-awareness always involves a kind of epistemic divide, object-awareness cannot help us understand self-awareness. After all, self-awareness is supposed to consist in some kind of acquaintance with experiential subjectivity; it is not supposed merely to acquaint us with yet another object of experience. It could, perhaps, be objected that there surely are cases where I am confronted with a certain object, and then recognize that the object in question is in fact myself. This is true of course, but this kind of objectified self-recognition can never constitute the most fundamental form of self-awareness. In order for me to recognize a certain object as myself, I need to hold something true of it that I already know to be true of myself, and the only way to avoid an infinite regress is by accepting the existence of a non-objectifying self-acquaintance. In analytical philosophy of mind, a similar line of thought can be found in Sidney Shoemaker:

The reason one is not presented to oneself "as an object" in self-awareness is that self-awareness is not perceptual awareness, i.e., is not a sort of awareness in which objects are presented. It is awareness of facts unmediated by awareness of objects. But it is worth noting that if one were aware of oneself as an object in such cases (as one is in fact aware of oneself as an object when one sees oneself in a mirror), this would not help to explain one's self-knowledge. For awareness that the presented object was ϕ , would not tell one that one was oneself ϕ , unless one had identified the object as oneself; and one could not do this unless one already had some self-knowledge, namely the knowledge that one is the unique possessor of whatever set of properties of the presented object one took to show it to be oneself.

Perceptual self-knowledge presupposes non-perceptual self-knowledge, so not all self-knowledge can be perceptual.¹⁷

This reasoning holds true even for self-knowledge obtained through introspection. That is, it will not do to claim that introspection is distinguished by the fact that its object has a property, which immediately identifies it as being me, since no other self could possibly have it, namely the property of being the private and exclusive object of exactly my introspection. This explanation will not do, since I will be unable to identify an introspected self as myself by the fact that it is introspectively observed by me, unless I know it is the object of *my* introspection, i.e., unless I know that it is in fact *me* that undertakes this introspection. This knowledge cannot itself be based on identification if one is to avoid an infinite regress.¹⁸

So the basic claim being made is that self-awareness cannot come about as the result of the encounter between two non-conscious experiences. Consequently, the reflection must either await a further reflection in order to become self-aware, in which case we are confronted with a vicious infinite regress, *or* it must be admitted that the reflection is itself already in a state of self-awareness, and that would of course involve us in a circular explanation, presupposing that which was meant to be explained, and implicitly rejecting the thesis of the reflection model of self-awareness, namely, that *all* self-awareness is brought about by reflection.¹⁹

So far, the Heidelberg School's contribution to a clarification of self-awareness has mainly consisted in its criticism of the reflection theory. If it could offer nothing more than these negative observations, however, it would hardly qualify as an alternative theory of self-awareness. Dieter Henrich readily acknowledges that it is essential to transcend a mere disclosure of what he believes to be the aporetic implications of the reflection theory and offer a more substantial account. However, as he points out one has to realize that the difficulty in interpreting the familiar phenomenon

¹⁷ Shoemaker, Sidney and Swinburne, Richard, *Personal Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 105.

¹⁸ Shoemaker, Sidney, "Self-reference and self-awareness", *The Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968), 561–563.

¹⁹ See Henrich, Dieter, "Selbstbewußtsein, kritische Einleitung in eine Theorie", in R. Bubner, K. Cramer, and R. Wiehl (eds.), *Hermeneutik und Dialektik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970), 268; Henrich, Dieter, *Selbstverhältnisse* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982b), 64; Frank, Manfred, "Fragmente einer Geschichte der Selbstbewußtseins-Theorie von Kant bis Sartre" (1991b), in M. Frank (ed.), *Selbstbewußtseinstheorien von Fichte bis Sartre* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 498, 529.

“consciousness” by direct description is so extreme that it is practically impossible to overcome.²⁰ The difficulty Henrich has in mind has to do with the difference between being self-aware and explaining self-awareness. Whereas the self-givenness of lived consciousness is characterized by immediacy, this is certainly not the case with our philosophical understanding of it. In order to examine (reflect upon) the structure of self-awareness we have to direct our attention to it, and since this inevitably implies its objectification, the original subjective dimension will evade our theoretical gaze and remain inaccessible for direct description and investigation.²¹ This does not imply that its existence is merely postulated, since we are after all not only acquainted directly (and non-theoretically) with the original state of being conscious, e.g., we all know the difference between wakefulness and sleep, but we are also in a position to ascertain that we are self-aware through reflection. By analyzing reflection we can regressively infer that it has a more primitive form of self-acquaintance as its condition of possibility. Nevertheless, a direct examination of this dimension seems impossible, and the following four features that constitute the core of Dieter Henrich’s own theory of self-awareness have consequently been disclosed indirectly, *ex negativo*, through a criticism of the reflection theory:²²

1. Consciousness is a dimension that contains knowledge of itself, for there is no consciousness of anything that is not implicitly acquainted with itself. “Implicitly” is here not used in the sense of being a mere potential acquaintance, but in the sense of existing even prior to reflection and explicit thematization.
2. Original self-awareness is not a performance, but an irrelational occurrence (*Ereignis*). That is, self-awareness is not only irrelational, it is also something that is given rather than voluntarily brought about.
3. Self-aware consciousness is an *egoless* dimension within which intentional experiences and mental states take place.
4. It is a private or exclusive dimension, in the sense that each consciousness has special access to itself.

Let me add a few clarifying comments. Henrich denies that *original* self-awareness should be understood either as a relation between two mental states or as a relation between the mental state and itself. The general point seems to be that one should avoid theories describing self-awareness as a kind of *relation*, since every relation – especially the subject–object relation – entails

²⁰ Henrich 1970, 274.

²¹ Henrich, Dieter, *Fluchtlinien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982a), 152.

²² Henrich 1970, 275, 277, 280, 284.

a *distinction* between two (or more) relata, and this is exactly what generates all the problems. Thus, Henrich argues that self-awareness cannot come about as the result of a criterial self-identification, nor is it a kind of reflection, introspection, object-intentionality, or conceptually mediated propositional attitude – all of which entail the distinction between two or more relata. The basic self-awareness of an experience is not mediated by foreign elements such as concepts or classificatory criteria, nor by any internal difference or distance, but must be treated as an intrinsic quality of experience that is completely *irrelational*.²³

The criticism directed at the reflection theory has generally not been meant to imply, however, that reflective self-awareness and objectifying self-thematization is impossible, but merely that it always presupposes a prior unthematic and pre-reflective self-awareness as its condition of possibility. Thus, it is necessary to differentiate *pre-reflective* self-awareness, which is an immediate, implicit, irrelational, non-objectifying, non-conceptual, and non-propositional self-acquaintance from *reflective* self-awareness, which is an explicit, relational, mediated, conceptual, and objectifying thematization of consciousness.

Reflections can mediately connect to immediate awareness and elevate it to the status of knowledge. The original givenness is however the awareness itself which obviously appears as a single unit and not as an object pole of a conscious subject which directs itself toward it.²⁴

Henrich's third feature also calls for a clarification. The question whether it makes sense to speak of a subjectless or egoless self-awareness, i.e., of self-awareness without anybody being self-aware, ultimately depends upon whether one opts for an *egological* or a *non-egological* theory of consciousness. An egological theory would claim that whenever I taste a single malt whiskey then I am not only intentionally directed at the *whiskey*, nor merely aware of the whiskey being *tasted*, but also aware that it is being tasted by *me*, i.e., that *I am tasting a whiskey*. Thus, the egological theory would claim

²³ Henrich 1970, 266, 273; Henrich 1982a, 142. Cf. Pothast, Ulrich, *Über einige Fragen der Selbstbeziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1971), 76–78; Frank 1986, 34, 61; Frank, Manfred, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbsterkenntnis* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991a), 71, 405; Frank 1991b, 597.

²⁴ “Reflexionen können mittelbar an unmittelbares Bewußtsein anschließen und es in den Status eines Wissens erheben. Die ursprüngliche Gegebenheit ist aber das Bewußtsein selbst, welches offensichtlich einseitig auftritt und nicht als Objektpol eines sich darauf richtenden Bewußtseinssubjektes.” (Frank 1991b, 438. Cf. Frank 1991a, 7, 161.)

that it is a conceptual and experiential truth that any episode of experiencing necessarily includes a subject of experience.²⁵ This account, which identifies self-awareness with *I-consciousness*, is however regarded by the Heidelberg School as having fallen victim to the language of reflection – *the use of “I” seems exactly to articulate a self-reflection* – and is rejected for the following reasons: whereas reflection is described as the accomplishment of an active principle, as something that is initiated by a subject, pre-reflective self-awareness must precede all performances, and can consequently not be attributed to the ego, but must be characterized as a subjectless or egoless awareness.²⁶ Moreover, an egological theory claiming that self-awareness is properly speaking an original awareness of *myself*, as a self, subject, or ego seems in an eminent way to take self-awareness as a kind of object-awareness, and thus to be prone to all the problems confronting this approach.²⁷ Finally, if one conceives of the ego qua subject of experience as that 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 be classified as a case of *self*-awareness.²⁸

This criticism does not imply, however, that the ego is a superfluous and dispensable notion. Henrich argues that it is impossible to understand phenomena such as making a decision, solving a problem, expecting an event, or initiating a reflection, without assuming the existence of an active principle of organization in the field of consciousness, i.e., without accepting the existence of an ego or a self. But this egological structure is not a fundamental feature of consciousness; rather, it is merely a mode of its organization. Originally, consciousness is egoless and anonymous.²⁹

Is the position of the Heidelberg School convincing? Somewhat surprisingly, both Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank have later expressed reservations about the adequacy of their central claim, namely, that original self-awareness is strictly *irrelational*. Both explicitly acknowledge that the phenomenon of self-awareness has an internal structural *complexity* that manifests itself in a plurality of ways. More specifically, they have started speaking of *three* moments that together make up the unity of self-awareness: the anonymous dimension of subjectivity, the epistemic self-acquaintance, and the (founded) egological organization. All of these features have to

²⁵ Cf. Shoemaker 1968, 563–564.

²⁶ Henrich 1970, 276.

²⁷ Cramer 1974, 573; Frank 1991a, 252.

²⁸ Pothast 1971, 64.

²⁹ Henrich 1970, 276, 279.

co-exist in a structural unity, and this seems to contradict the claim that pre-reflective self-awareness per se lacks internal differentiation and structural complexity.³⁰

In short, it seems as if it is too hasty to ban every kind of internal differentiation and structure from pre-reflective self-awareness. This is not to say that the arguments presented against the reflection theory and against the attempt to understand self-awareness as a kind of relation have suddenly lost their validity – one must still display utmost caution not to become vulnerable once more to that criticism. But as Frank suggests, it is possible to escape the previously outlined difficulties if one conceives of the moments as conceptually differentiable, but factually inseparable.³¹

Thus, when all is said and done, self-awareness is primitive in the sense of being irreducible, but it is neither simple nor unstructured. We are ultimately dealing with a unitary phenomenon composed of connected elements that can neither be subsumed under nor deduced from a higher principle. Frank speaks of a unity of identity and difference, in the sense that each of the elements is irreducible, but nevertheless unable to exist in separation from the others.³²

At this point, however, the clarification and analysis terminate. According to Henrich, we do not possess an *adequate* understanding of the connection between the different elements of self-awareness. Why the elements are inseparable, and how they manage to constitute the unity of self-awareness, are questions that cannot be answered:

So it is necessary to accept both that self-awareness in itself is complex and that we cannot unravel this complex or understand it in its inner constitution.³³

In the end, it is consequently claimed that the unitary phenomenon of self-awareness resists comprehension.³⁴ This conclusion is hardly satisfying. Although Frank admits that it conceals rather than solves the problem – if the different moments are not only to be different, but in fact moments of

³⁰ Henrich 1970, 280; Henrich 1982a, 145–146. Cf. Frank, Manfred, *Zeitbewußtsein* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1990), 113; Frank 1991a, 16–17. These reflections are developed by Henrich in an unpublished manuscript, which Frank summarizes in Frank 1991b, 590–599.

³¹ Frank 1991a, 10, 83; Frank 1991b, 589, 591.

³² Frank 1991b, 595.

³³ “So ist also beides anzunehmen notwendig: Daß Selbstbewußtsein in sich komplex ist und daß der Komplex von uns nicht aufgelöst oder in seiner inneren Konstitution verstanden werden kann.” (Henrich 1982a, 150. Cf. Henrich 1982a, 152, 157; Henrich 1982b, 102.)

³⁴ Henrich 1982a, 169. Cf. Henrich 1982a, 155, 162–163.

one phenomenon, it is essential to explain and clarify their connection and interaction – he is ultimately unable to contribute with a more satisfying solution himself, and he as well must in the end admit that the way in which the elements of self-awareness are united remains obscure.³⁵

12.3 TUGENDHAT'S CRITICISM

The Heidelberg School's contribution to a clarification of self-awareness has not been met with approval by everybody. One prominent critic is Ernst Tugendhat, who has argued that the Heidelberg School represents the culmination and termination of the traditional discussion of self-awareness. After having pointed to the aporias of previous theories of self-awareness, it fails to provide a less aporetic account itself. Thus, Tugendhat claims that Henrich, in particular, has unwittingly led the traditional concept of self-awareness *ad absurdum*, and that it is consequently necessary to undertake a fundamental revision of the notion of consciousness which the entire classical tradition has uncritically made use of.

Tugendhat's own alternative is based upon more general language-philosophical reflections. According to Tugendhat, one cannot know or be conscious of an object, one can only be intentionally related to states of affairs. I do not know a table; I know that a table has such and such properties. Self-awareness should be interpreted in a similar way:

I suggested that we should first make the general structure of consciousness of something clear; on this basis we were to acquire a concept of what consciousness of oneself means by replacing the variable 'something' accordingly.³⁶

Thus, self-awareness is taken to be a kind of knowledge. It is not knowledge about an (internal) object, about a self or an experience; rather it is propositional knowledge expressed in the form "I know, that I φ ", where φ stands for a mental or psychic state.³⁷ In contrast to Henrich and Frank, Tugendhat consequently takes immediate self-awareness to be an epistemic relation between an empirical person and a proposition. Self-awareness is a *propositional attitude*.³⁸

It is against this background, that Tugendhat claims that the problem discussed by the Heidelberg School is a pseudo-problem. In the phrase

³⁵ Frank 1990, 125, 135; Frank 1991b, 599; Cramer 1974, 591.

³⁶ Tugendhat 1979, 21, in English Tugendhat, Ernst, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 12–13.

³⁷ Tugendhat 1979, 22.

³⁸ Tugendhat 1979, 10–11, 45, 50–51, 54, 57, 66–67.

“I know, that I ϕ ” the word “I” appears twice, and one could then wonder how we know that both uses refer to the same subject. How do we account for the identity between the one who knows and the one who is in the mental state? It is true that I cannot be aware of, for example, that I am in pain or that I am seeing a canary, and be mistaken about who the subject of that experience is. The fact that first-person experience ascriptions are not subject to the error of misidentification is not in need of any further explanation and is in particular not due to some mysterious self-transparency or self-acquaintance, since no infallible identification or informative reference has taken place. The identity in question is of the purely tautological sort. Thus, that my awareness of an experience does not leave it open whose experience it is, is just as unproblematically true as that $A = A$ or $I = I$.³⁹

Tugendhat attempts to transform the problem of self-awareness into a semantic problem. But rather than clarifying and solving the problem, this transformation merely covers it up. Despite his criticism of the traditional subject–object model, Tugendhat remains convinced that self-awareness is to be understood as a relation between two different entities, a person and a proposition. But he never explains why such a relation should establish *self*-awareness. Nor does he seem to realize that the principal task facing a clarification of immediate epistemic self-awareness is to account for the unique first-personal givenness of our experiences rather than to explain the identity between the knower and the known. Moreover, given that Tugendhat claims that self-awareness is a propositional attitude, he is confronted with an obvious question. Does self-awareness presuppose language-use? Is a person only in possession of self-awareness when it has acquired a sufficient mastery of language to be able to refer to itself with “I”? If it does, are we then to deny self-awareness to children and animals? Tugendhat’s reply is remarkably vague. He says that it remains unclear whether we can refer to propositions non-linguistically, but suggests that self-awareness only becomes conscious when it is linguistically articulated.⁴⁰ However, not only is it rather unclear what a non-conscious self-awareness should amount to, furthermore many developmental psychologists currently argue that infants are in possession of various forms of pre-linguistic self-experience already from birth.⁴¹

³⁹ Tugendhat 1979, 55–61, 68–70, 83.

⁴⁰ Tugendhat 1979, 21, 26.

⁴¹ Cf. Zahavi, Dan, “The embodied self-awareness of the infant: A challenge to the theory-theory of mind?”, in D. Zahavi, T. Grünbaum and J. Parnas (eds.), *The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 35–63.

12.4 CONCLUSION

In my view, Tugendhat's criticism of the Heidelberg School is misplaced. But that does not mean that the account offered by the Heidelberg School escapes criticism. I find its account significant and illuminating because of its focus upon the aporetic character of the reflection theory of self-awareness, and because of its systematic and instructive analysis of how not to conceive of self-awareness. Despite its insights, however, it basically remains a critical introduction.⁴² Although both Henrich and Frank acknowledge that pre-reflective, irrelational self-awareness is characterized by a certain internal differentiation and complexity; they never offer a more detailed analysis of this complex structure. That is, when it comes to a positive description of the structure of original pre-reflective self-awareness they are remarkably silent, either claiming in turn that it is unanalyzable, or that the unity of its complex structure is incomprehensible. This is hardly satisfactory, and in addition, the account offered by the Heidelberg School is also overly negative and formalistic. Moreover, the problem of self-awareness has numerous essential facets which the Heidelberg account either remains silent about, or only analyzes inadequately. Let me conclude by specifying some problems that I believe a convincing theory of self-awareness would have to tackle, but which the Heidelberg School has failed to take into sufficient consideration.⁴³

1. The methodological problem

To what extent is it at all possible to investigate subjectivity? If subjectivity rather than being an object that we can encounter in the world is the very perspective that permits any such encounters, to what extent can it then be made accessible for direct examination? Will any examination necessarily take the subject of experience as an object of experience, and thereby transform and distort it? In other words, can subjectivity actually be grasped and described, or is it only approachable *ex negativo*?

2. The problem of reflection

Although the Heidelberg School has offered a criticism of the reflection theory, it has in fact said rather little about reflection itself. Moreover, even if one concedes that reflective self-awareness rather than being the most basic type of self-awareness, is in fact a more complex form, this still leaves it open how exactly pre-reflective self-awareness is supposed to give rise to reflective self-awareness. This is in particular a problem if one, as it is customary in some of the discussions on the Continent, takes reflection to entail some kind of internal

⁴² Cf. Henrich 1970.

⁴³ The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

self-division or self-detachment. For how is pre-reflective self-awareness, which is supposedly simple and irrelational, to give rise to such a fracture? Thus, it will not do to conceive of pre-reflective self-awareness in such a manner that the transition to reflective self-awareness becomes incomprehensible.

3. The problem of temporality

Any convincing theory of self-awareness should not only be able to account for the pre-reflective self-awareness of a single experience, but also explain how I can have self-awareness across temporal distance, that is, it should be able to explain why I can remember a past experience as mine. Thus, the temporality of consciousness has to be accounted for, and in more detail than the Heidelberg School has done. Given the temporal character of the stream of consciousness, even something as apparently synchronic as the conscious givenness of a present experience might not be comprehensible without taking temporality (or as Edmund Husserl would call it: inner time-consciousness) into consideration.

4. The problem of the self

The question concerning the egological or non-egological character of self-awareness also has to be clarified. Does self-awareness necessarily have an egocentric structure, or is self-awareness rather the anonymous acquaintance of consciousness with itself? Since an answer to this question can only be given after it has been established what exactly a self is, this must also be done, and ultimately it will prove necessary to determine the relation between a single experience, the stream of consciousness, and the self. However, the analysis of the self or ego offered by the Heidelberg School is clearly inadequate. The validity of their rejection of an egological theory of consciousness is tied to their very narrow definition of the ego. It is understood either as a principle of activity or as something that must necessarily be conceived as standing opposed to consciousness “having” it.⁴⁴ But there are certainly other ways to conceive of the self.

5. The problem of the body

The difference between a first-person and a third-person perspective does not coincide with the traditional difference between mind and body. As an analysis of proprioception reveals, the body itself can appear from a first-person perspective, and an investigation of the different types of bodily self-experience must be integrated into a general analysis of self-awareness. Moreover, this investigation of the body is indispensable if one is eventually to understand how one can appear to oneself as a worldly object, that is, if one is to understand the relation between one’s awareness of oneself as

⁴⁴ Henrich 1970, 279; Pothast 1971, 66.

an elusive subjective dimension, and one's awareness of oneself as an intersubjectively accessible entity in the world. Thus, a convincing theory of self-awareness cannot allow itself to ignore the body.

6. The problem of intersubjectivity

Not only can I be aware of my own subjectivity, I can also be aware of other subjects, and an analysis of self-awareness must also deal with the problem of intersubjectivity. It must do so not because every type of self-awareness is intersubjectively mediated, nor because the analysis must necessarily account for those types of self-awareness that are in fact intersubjectively constituted, but because a theory of self-awareness must avoid conceiving of self-awareness in such a fashion that intersubjectivity becomes impossible. That is, it will not do to conceive of self-awareness in such private and exclusive terms that it becomes incomprehensible how I should ever be able to recognize another embodied subjectivity. To quote Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "If the sole experience of the subject is the one which I gain by coinciding with it, if the mind, by definition, eludes 'the outside spectator' and can be recognized only from within, my cogito is necessarily unique, and cannot be 'shared in' by another. Perhaps we can say that it is 'transferable' to others. But then how could such a transfer ever be brought about? What spectacle can ever validly induce me to posit outside myself that mode of existence the whole significance of which demands that it be grasped from within? Unless I learn within myself to recognize the junction of the for itself and the in itself, none of those mechanisms called other bodies will ever be able to come to life; unless I have an exterior others have no interior. The plurality of consciousness is impossible if I have an absolute consciousness of myself".⁴⁵

7. The problem of intentionality

Pre-reflective self-awareness might not be a type of object-consciousness, but this does not entail that an analysis of self-awareness can dispense with the problem of intentionality. As Erwin Straus once put it: "In sensory experience I always experience myself and the world at the same time, not myself directly and the Other by inference, not myself before the Other, not myself without the Other, nor the Other without myself".⁴⁶ Henrich has himself acknowledged that consciousness is simultaneously

⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 373.

⁴⁶ Straus, Erwin, "Aesthesiology and hallucinations", in R. May et al. (eds.), *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 148.

and co-originally aware of itself and related to the world.⁴⁷ But this connection has to be explored in greater detail than done by Henrich.

8. The problem of language

Even if one can reject the claim that self-awareness is a linguistic phenomenon, it is hardly possible to deny that language can transform our self-acquaintance and make possible new and far more complex forms of self-consciousness. A better understanding of how this is possible is a clear desideratum.

9. The problem of the unconscious

A theory of self-awareness will eventually have to confront the problem of the unconscious. The basic question is whether all of our experiences are characterized by a primitive self-awareness and whether the notion of an unconscious consciousness is therefore a contradiction in terms, or whether it is actually possible to reconcile a thesis concerning a primitive but pervasive self-awareness with a recognition of the unconscious?

It is important not to misunderstand this criticism. I am not claiming that a theory of self-awareness, in order to be convincing, must necessarily account for intentionality, intersubjectivity, temporality, etc., as well. Although a full and comprehensive theory of consciousness would have to tackle all of these issues, it is certainly possible and legitimate to focus on and isolate certain specific topics, including the nature of self-awareness. The point I wish to make is simply that the account offered by the Heidelberg School is problematic because it focuses on self-awareness in abstracto rather than accounting for the self-awareness of the temporal, intentional, reflexive, corporeal, and intersubjective experiences.

The nine problems outlined concern aspects of self-awareness in need of further elaboration and clarification. Part of this clarification can be found in another philosophical tradition from the Continent, that I haven't mentioned so far, namely phenomenology. This is a tradition that the Heidelberg School has regarded with considerable reservation.⁴⁸ But as any in-depth

⁴⁷ Henrich 1982a, 149.

⁴⁸ Although Frank occasionally speaks favourably of Sartre, he and Henrich ultimately argue that Sartre's account is vulnerable to their own arguments against the reflection theory (cf. Henrich 1970, 261; Frank 1990, 83). They criticize Husserl and Heidegger along similar lines (Henrich, Dieter, "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht", in D. Henrich and H. Wagner (eds.), *Subjektivität und Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1966), 231; Frank 1986, 43–45; Frank 1990, 53–57; Frank 1991b, 530–531, 536; Cramer 1974, 583–584, 592–593). For a critical appraisal of this criticism, cf. Zahavi, Dan, *Self-Awareness and Alterity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999); Zahavi, Dan, "How to investigate subjectivity: Heidegger and Natorp on reflection" (2003b), *Continental Philosophy Review* 36, 2 (2003), 155–176.

study of the writings of Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, etc. will disclose, their analyses of pre-reflective self-awareness are integrated into and can be found in the context of an examination of a number of related issues, such as the nature of intentionality, spatiality, embodiment, selfhood, temporality, attention, sociality, etc. This is one of the reasons why the phenomenological analyses of self-awareness can easily complement the incisive but rather formal analyses offered by the Heidelberg School. A more extensive presentation of the phenomenological take on self-awareness, however, would exceed the limits of this chapter.^{49,50}

⁴⁹ See, however, Zahavi, Dan, “The fracture in self-awareness” (1998a), in D. Zahavi (ed.), *Self-Awareness, Temporality, and Alterity* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 21–40; Zahavi, Dan, “Self-awareness and affection” (1998b), in N. Depraz and D. Zahavi (eds.), *Alterity and Facticity* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 205–228; Zahavi 1999; Zahavi, Dan, “First-person thoughts and embodied self-awareness”, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1, 1 (2002), 7–26; Zahavi, Dan, “Internal time-consciousness and pre-reflective self-awareness” (2003a), in D. Welton (ed.), *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 157–180; Zahavi, Dan, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ This study has been funded by the Danish National Research Foundation.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CONTEMPORARY NATURALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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Consciousness occupies a central place in contemporary Anglophone philosophy of mind. One reason why this is so – and we shall expand upon this later – is that consciousness poses a *problem* for naturalist theories of mind. Most Anglophone philosophers of mind are committed to the view that social, linguistic and psychological facts supervene upon and are determined by facts about the objective, non-mental, causal world, a world studied and explained by physics, chemistry, biology and other “natural” sciences. Whilst most philosophers agree that consciousness poses a problem for this naturalistic conception of the world, there is considerable disagreement about what consciousness is. This is, perhaps, not surprising. It has long been recognised that ‘consciousness’ is an ambiguous, polysemic notion.¹ The polysemy of consciousness is not just a consequence of diverse theoretical characterisations of a univocal phenomenon that everyone agrees about. The polysemy is more basic. Elsewhere, I have explored the historical and semantic reasons why there should be a number of different core notions of consciousness that have

¹ Hamilton, William, *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood [1836] 1859); Bain, Alexander, *Mental and Moral Science*, vol. 1, 3rd edition (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1879); Lewis, C.S., *Studies in Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1960] 1967); Natsoulas, Thomas, “Consciousness”, *American Psychologist* 33 (1978), 906–914; Wilkes, Kathleen, V., “–, yishi, duh, um, and consciousness”, in A. Marcel and E. Bisiach (eds.), *Consciousness in Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 16–41; Allport, Alan, “What concept of consciousness”, in A. Marcel and E. Bisiach (eds.), *Consciousness in Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 159–182.; Block, Ned, “On a confusion about a function of consciousness”, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 18 (1995), 227–287; Nelkin, Norton, “The dissociation of phenomenal states from apperception”, in T. Metzinger (ed.), *Conscious Experience* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 1996), 373–383.

been drawn upon, or are currently drawn upon.² Rather than explaining why ‘consciousness’ is ambiguous, the aim here is to focus on the way that the dominant metaphysical assumptions of contemporary analytic philosophy influence the way that consciousness is conceived of. This will lead us on, by way of a more speculative conclusion, to reflect upon some of the implicit costs of the naturalistic focus of contemporary philosophy of mind.

13.1 EPISTEMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

‘Consciousness’, historically and in everyday (English) speech, is primarily an epistemic notion: a broad synonym for knowledge, or awareness.³ Consciousness is something that is predicated of people and other creatures: we are conscious of objects; conscious that things happen; conscious that certain things are the case. On this everyday view, consciousness is a property of people, or other creatures. In contemporary philosophy of mind, however, many thinkers take epistemic consciousness to be a property of mental states. Consciousness, or “state consciousness”, is the property that a mental state has when a subject knows of that state (in a direct, first-personal way). At first sight this might seem to be a bit odd. Why should we suppose that consciousness is a property of mental states at all, if consciousness is something that we predicate of people?

The first point to note is that epistemic consciousness is relational. To say that someone is conscious of something specifies an epistemic relation between a subject and an epistemic object (what it is that they are conscious *of*). We can be conscious of fish, rocks, of someone’s jealousy. We can be conscious *that* it is getting late, and that it is time for bed, and so on. We can also be conscious of our own mental states.

The relational nature of epistemic consciousness does not, by itself, suggest that we should shift from predicating consciousness of epistemic subjects to predicating it of the *objects* of consciousness. We can be conscious of fish but we don’t talk of conscious fish (fish that someone is aware of). We can be aware of rocks but we don’t talk of conscious rocks (rocks that someone knows of), and, more strongly, we do not *predicate* consciousness of the *objects* of our everyday epistemic consciousness. For example, in the early 1950s the molecular structure of DNA *became known*. We might say that people became aware of the structure of DNA. But we don’t talk of the molecular structure becoming conscious. When we talk about mental states,

² Manson, Neil C., “Why is consciousness a mongrel concept?” *London Review of Philosophy* 1 (2003), 24–30.

³ Manson, Neil C., “Epistemic consciousness”, *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 33 (2002), 425–441.

however, it does not seem so odd to talk of, say, a repressed desire becoming conscious, or a memory failing to be conscious. So why does it make sense to predicate consciousness of the mental states that are the objects of knowledge if we do not, in general, predicate consciousness of the objects of knowledge?

There are two contingent historical events that provide the basis for viewing consciousness as something that is predicated of mental states. First, ‘consciousness’ came to be used in a restricted way by philosophers. Because ‘consciousness’ is an epistemic notion, it was suitable to be co-opted as a technical term for the special kind of first-person knowledge we have of our own minds. Locke held that “Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a Man’s own mind”.⁴ For Reid *consciousness* signified “that immediate knowledge which we have of our present thoughts and purposes, and, in general, of all the present operations of our minds”.⁵ This notion of ‘consciousness’ in Locke and Reid is still something predicated of creatures (not mental states). The main difference between the Lockean notion of consciousness and the everyday one is the restriction of the epistemic concept to *mental* objects, and to mental objects alone. A subject has consciousness only of her mental states, she does not have consciousness (i.e. immediate first-person knowledge) of rocks, fish or the structure of DNA.

The restriction in the extension of consciousness does not itself support a shift to using ‘consciousness’ predicatively of mental states. The second contingent historical factor that provides the basis of the shift to ‘mental state consciousness’ can be found in the explanatory commitments of psychology. By the late nineteenth century, psychologists found that it was useful, for explanatory reasons, to ascribe mental states that failed to be known by their subjects in this direct first-personal way.⁶ The epistemic notion of consciousness was now used to mark a partition within the class of mental states.⁷ Some mental states (the conscious ones) are known by their subject in a direct first-personal way, whilst others (the *unconscious* ones) are not. From this attributive use of ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ it is a short step to using ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ predicatively: theorists can talk of a mental state’s *being* conscious, or *becoming* conscious, or *failing to be* conscious, and, in doing so, they are using conscious as an epistemic term. So, rather than talking of people being conscious of this or that, we shift to talk of mental

⁴ Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690], collated by A.C. Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), II, 1, 9.

⁵ Reid, Thomas, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Printed for John Bell, and G.J.J. & J. Robinson, London, 1785), I, i.

⁶ Manson, Neil C., “State consciousness and creature consciousness: A real distinction”, *Philosophical Psychology* 13 (2000), 405–410.

⁷ Manson 2002.

states' being objects of epistemic consciousness. Being an object of (Lockean) consciousness is what many contemporary theorists – higher-order representation theorists – mean by consciousness.⁸ Such theorists focus upon the question of “what it is for a mental state to be conscious”,⁹ and consciousness is taken to be a property of mental states. This is sometimes called ‘state consciousness’ or ‘mental state consciousness’.¹⁰

‘State consciousness’ and ‘mental state consciousness’ are, I think, unfortunate labels. After all, a person who is conscious of a fish, or a rock, is in a state of consciousness. The cognitive mental state via which they are aware of the rock is a conscious state.¹¹ For our purposes, it will be clearer if we use the labels ‘everyday epistemic consciousness’ for the epistemic relation that we predicate of people, and the label ‘objectual epistemic consciousness’ for the epistemic relation that we predicate of the (mental) objects of self-knowledge. One virtue of this labelling is that we keep explicit the epistemic nature of consciousness. Another virtue is that we remind ourselves of the relational nature of epistemic consciousness. Finally, we avoid the risk of conflating the term ‘state of consciousness’ with ‘state consciousness’: two terms that are lexically similar, but semantically very different.

A short clarification is in order at this point. On the objectual view of epistemic consciousness, consciousness is a property that a mental state has in virtue of the subject being conscious of it. But when we are conscious of something we are conscious of those things via an epistemic state: a perceptual state, or some other cognitive state. This suggests that objectual epistemic consciousness essentially involves two kinds of mental state. A subject’s conscious mental states are those that she is conscious of, so there must be higher-order mental states via which she is conscious of her first-order states. Some theorists who accept the view that conscious mental states are ones that we are conscious of argue against the view that conscious mentality entails two, logically distinct, layers of mentality. They are

⁸ Rosenthal, David M., “A theory of consciousness”, in N. Block, O. Flanagan and G. Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 729–753; Lycan, William G., *Consciousness and Experience* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996); Carruthers, Peter, *Language, Thought and Consciousness: An Essay in Philosophical Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁹ Rosenthal 1997, 729.

¹⁰ Rosenthal, David M., “Thinking that one thinks”, in M. Davies and G. Humphreys (eds.), *Consciousness* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993b), 197; Rosenthal 1997, 729.

¹¹ Dretske, Fred, “Conscious experience”, *Mind* 102 (1993), 263–283.

committed to a reflexive concept of epistemic consciousness.¹² The reflexive view holds that (all and only) conscious mental states take themselves as an object of epistemic consciousness. A conscious perceptual state will have some part or constituent about the state itself. For the purposes of our discussion, we will leave aside the distinction between the reflexive and non-reflexive variants of objectual epistemic consciousness.

13.2 SUBJECTIVE QUALITATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

We have been considering *consciousness* as an epistemic notion. But there is another way of conceiving of consciousness. Rather than using ‘consciousness’ as a label for an epistemic relation, it is used to denote the non-epistemic properties that are the basis of the epistemic relation, or the basis of some element of the epistemic relation.

Each of us is conscious of the world from an individual point of view. When you and I look at a table each of us perceives different aspects of the table (e.g. you might see one side of it, whilst I see the other). Not only do we encounter the world from an individual point of view, but there is a qualitative character to our experience of the world. It is *like* something to see, to hear, to see red, to smell paint and so on. We can describe our experience, our sensations, twinges and feelings. Consider the contrast between simply *believing* that there is a bright red apple on the table and *seeing* the bright red apple. In the latter case, there seems to be some additional phenomenon, something qualitative that one encounters in experience. The fact that our subjective point of view has a qualitative character makes it tempting to conceive of consciousness as involving, or constituted by, some kind of special qualitative entities: “ideas”; sense data; qualia, phenomenal properties, “phenomenology”; presentations.

This line of ontological reflection seems to receive further support when we reflect upon the nature of hallucinations and dreams. In hallucinations and dreams, we seem to encounter *things* (perhaps indistinguishable from the things that we encounter in our waking life). But these things do not exist in the objective world. So, we may reason, there must be a subjective medium, some kind of subjective “stuff” that these hallucinatory and illusory things are constituted by. In sum, given the lines of reflection outlined earlier, it

¹² Brentano, Franz, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, L.L. McAlister (ed.), trans. A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and L.L. McAlister (London: Routledge [1874] 1995); Kriegel, Uriah, “Consciousness and self-consciousness”, *The Monist* 87 (2004), 185–209; Hossack, Keith, “Self-knowledge and consciousness”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 102 (2002), 163–181.

seems tempting to conceive of our experiential mental states in terms of there being some kind of subjective qualitative medium of mentality, and ‘consciousness’ does duty, not as an epistemic term, but as a label for the “stuff” or the properties that constitute this (putative) subjective ontology.

As with epistemic consciousness, subjective qualitative consciousness can be viewed in different ways. It may be conceived of as the special ontological medium that allows one to be conscious of the world. In line with the root notion of a subject’s *being conscious of* the world, subjective qualitative consciousness can be viewed as the subjective medium that is directed “outwards”.¹³ Or, subjective qualitative consciousness may be viewed as the special ontological feature of mental states that we are conscious *of*. That is, it is the special ontological feature that explains objectual epistemic consciousness. Finally, and this seems to be Brentano’s view, consciousness may be viewed, ontologically, as a special *reflexive* subjective medium, that not only affords consciousness of the world, but essentially involves reflexive self-consciousness.

13.3 NATURALISM

How does the assumption of a naturalistic ontology shape or influence the way we think of consciousness? At this point, we might ask what naturalism is. ‘Naturalism’ only has significance and value as a term in contexts where there is some kind of non-naturalism (or super-naturalism). Naturalism is typically *opposed* to some (real or imagined) opposing non-naturalist, or *super-naturalist*, position.¹⁴ There is not, so far as I can tell, a dispute between naturalists and non-naturalists in geology. In biology, by way of contrast, there used to be a dispute between naturalists and non-naturalists. How could living things be nothing more than inert matter? When we view the biological world, *life* is property that is passed on from one living thing to another (sexually or asexually). How on earth could the arrangement of inert matter give rise to a living, breathing, animal that is capable of giving birth to new living breathing animals? One “solution” was to assume that there must be some *extra* non-natural property, some *élan vital* or life-force that, in some unknown way, “informs” or “animates” certain kinds of matter. The developments in biology (especially in molecular biology and evolutionary theory) of the past 150 years offer the prospect of an entirely naturalistic theory of life.

¹³ Sartre, Jean-Paul, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* [1937], trans. F. Williams and R. Kirkpatrick, New York: Noonday Press, 1957.

¹⁴ Stroud, Barry, “The charm of naturalism”, in M. De Caro and D. Macarthur (eds.), *Naturalism in Question* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 22.

Although naturalism is clearly opposed to non-naturalism or supernaturalism, it is much less clear as to what, exactly, ‘naturalism’ amounts to.¹⁵ Naturalism in ethics may differ from naturalism in the sciences, both of which may differ from, say, epistemological naturalism. Naturalism has ontological, methodological, semantic and conceptual variants amongst others. Our aim here is not to settle a dispute about what naturalism means. The naturalism that matters for our purposes is the widely accepted *ontological* view that “the entities posited by acceptable scientific explanations are the *only* genuine entities that there are”.¹⁶ Now, this definition raises questions about what a *scientific* explanation is. For our purposes, we can be liberal: let’s assume that the ontological naturalist is committed to the existence of the entities cited in physics, chemistry and biology (so we need not assume that naturalism is the same as *physicalism*), and she holds that there are, strictly speaking, no other kinds of entities and all other apparent entities can be viewed as composed of, constituted by, or, at the very least, supervenient upon, physical, chemical and biological features of the world. The naturalist of this kind *rejects* the idea that there are souls, or spirits, or minds that occupy some *other* (subjective) realm, over and above, and distinct from, the objective causal world studied by the natural sciences.

Even with this broad and loosely drawn naturalist ontology *mentality* poses a problem. We have thoughts, perceptions, emotions, memories. Such states are *about* things. They exhibit intentionality. We can think about things in the distant past or future. We can think about or seem to see things that do not exist. How on earth can a mass of electrochemically agitated matter, even if it is an evolved, self-replicating organism, have states that are about other bits of the world? How can a piece of material stuff, albeit a very complex one, have thoughts about things that don’t exist, or things that have long since ceased to be? The relation we have to the intentional objects of our thoughts cannot be a simple causal one, because non-existent things cannot cause anything.

Intentionality poses a problem for naturalism. But this is not the only problem. There are other aspects of human mental life that we might add. Human beings are linguistic creatures, capable of producing and understanding any of an indefinitely large set of novel sentences (provided they are syntactically well formed within the speaker, or hearer’s, language). Normal human subjects exhibit a wide range of properties that seem to resist characterisation solely in objective naturalistic terms. When we characterise human beings, and interact

¹⁵ See, for example, the essays in M. De Caro and D. Macarthur (eds.), *Naturalism in Question* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ De Caro and MacArthur 2004, 7.

with other human beings, we draw upon a wide range of concepts that have no proper (non-metaphorical) application in the non-human world. We draw upon notions of responsibility and blame, for example, and many of our emotional reactions to other humans are entirely inappropriate if applied to non-human entities (e.g. can one be *ashamed* of what one's cat has done, or *embarrassed* that a cow was 'witness' to one's foolish attempts to erect a tent in high winds?). Underlying the use of many of these concepts is an assumption that human beings, unlike other living things, are capable of free will. Free will, in turn, rests upon notions of rationality. Human beings are capable of reasoning, of making truth-preserving inferences, and we are capable of acting on the basis of our rational deliberations.

There is also the problem of subjectivity.¹⁷ The entities that we encounter in the natural world are objective. But our mental life, as we noted earlier when we considered the ontology of our waking experience, seems to acquaint us with subjective phenomena. Suppose you are in pain: a sharp throbbing pain just above your eye. From your point of view, the pain is as real as rock. It is no solace at all to know that the pain is "all in the mind" for, when we consider things like pains, there is, it seems, nowhere else that they could be. We could weigh you, cut you up into pieces, look at slices of your brain, lay out all the chemical constituents of your body in a long line, but *we would never find the pain*. It is arguably hard to even conceive of how something subjective can emerge out of a combination or arrangement of objective bits of stuff. When you look at this page before you, how can it be that your experience is made up of nothing more than activity in the brain? Such a view seems to be nonsense. We can readily understand how different kinds of objective thing – water, gold, chocolate – might all be made out of, ultimately, varying arrangements of the same simple objective components, but when we turn to our mental life we seem to require a shift from the objectivity of the constituent parts to the subjectivity of the whole.

Reflection on the nature of our mental life gives rise to two kinds of non-naturalist claims about the mind. First, there are claims to the effect that there must be non-natural mental *subjects*. For example, in order for agents to be properly *free*, we might hold that the entities that are the source of such agency cannot be part of, and subject to the causal laws of, the natural world studied by science. Or, to take another example, we might reflect upon the nature of our empirical investigations into the natural world. The thinking

¹⁷ Nagel, Thomas, "What is it like to be a bat?", *The Philosophical Review* 83 (1974), 435–450; reprinted in N. Block, O. Flanagan and G. Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997), 519–527; Levine, Joseph, *Purple Haze: The Puzzle of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

subject that is at the centre of the point of view from which empirical inquiry takes place cannot be an object of empirical study. The conscious subject must occupy a (non-spatial) point “outside” of the empirical realm.

Second, there are claims to the effect that there must be non-natural mental properties. If pains are essentially subjective, then, even if pains are felt by, or are properties of, natural objects (animals, people), the pains themselves are not natural properties. If we hold that all mentality is a modification of (subjective ontological) consciousness, then we may be tempted to be non-naturalists about the mind more generally. If natural properties are *objective*, and the mind is essentially *subjective*, we have a categorical schism between mentality and the natural world.

These two kinds of non-naturalism – about mental subjects and mental properties – sit well together. If mental properties are subjective then surely they need a special kind of *bearer*, and how could a mass of matter be the bearer of subjective properties? But one can be a non-naturalist about mental properties whilst, for example, denying the existence of non-natural mental subjects.¹⁸

Bearing in mind that naturalism of the kind sketched here is not an obligatory commitment – throughout history, and in contemporary philosophy, there are lots of thinkers who reject naturalism for a wide variety of reasons – let us consider how naturalists seek to accommodate the mind *within* an objective naturalism. The naturalist assumes that the world is fundamentally constituted by objective non-mental phenomena. The naturalist rejects idealism (the view that the world is constituted by subjective, mental phenomena). Why can't naturalists just be *dualists*? Why do naturalists have to insist that *all* properties are, or are supervenient upon, natural objective properties. One key problem is the *problem of interaction*. We have good reason to believe that the natural world is causally closed. Anything that occurs in the natural world has antecedent, and sufficient, *natural* causes. But the subjective mental domain and the objective natural domain seem to be in causal contact. The contents of experience are causally dependent upon what happens in the objective world. Our decisions, judgements and emotions have effects upon the natural world. If there is a distinct non-natural subjective domain, it is unclear how this kind of interaction is possible.

One type of naturalist response is *eliminativism*, where one denies that there are any subjective, intentional, properties. Given that any *statement* of an eliminativist thesis can be readily re-cast as, and rationally evaluated as, an expression of belief, I propose that we do not waste time discussing radical, global eliminativism here. A second naturalist approach to the mind is an abstract metaphysical one. If mental states (i.e. properties) are *identical* to

¹⁸ E.g. Sartre [1937] 1957.

physical properties then, of course, mental states will be natural properties (physical properties being the paradigmatic natural properties). In the middle of the twentieth century, a number of theorists proposed just this kind argument.¹⁹ But there is a deep problem with this theory. You and I, and a Martian, may all believe that snow is white. But we each may differ in subtle, or, in the case of the Martian, not-so-subtle ways with regard to the features of our brain that underpin that belief. If mental states are identical to brain states how can this be so? Sameness of belief would imply sameness of brain state, but sameness of belief does not seem to require sameness of brain state.

A third naturalist approach is *behaviourism*. There are different kinds of behaviourism. Scientific behaviourism, the kind favoured by John B. Watson, is a *methodological* doctrine. Scientific behaviourism was an overt reaction against the introspectionist paradigm in psychology that it sought to replace. Watson stressed that “introspection forms no essential part of [behaviourism’s] methods”.²⁰ This simply evades the worries about how to accommodate subjectivity within the naturalist framework.

Logical behaviourism, by way of contrast, is a doctrine that does have some metaphysical import. Gilbert Ryle (at least the Ryle of *The Concept of Mind*) is taken to be a central proponent of logical behaviourism. Ryle is keen to stress that he is not providing a methodology for a scientific psychology, rather he is “examining the logical behaviour of a set of concepts all of which are regularly employed by everyone”.²¹ Logical behaviourism is the idea that our mental concepts are of a certain kind. First, and most importantly, they are *not* concepts of inner, private episodes in a non-material mind or soul. Second, our mental concepts are concepts of behavioural dispositions. For example, our concept of belief on a philosophical behaviourist analysis is such that what it is for a subject to *believe* that *p*, is for that subject either to be behaving in a particular way, or to be causally disposed to behave in a range of ways in certain circumstances. One deep problem with logical behaviourism is that it seems ill-placed to capture the intuitive idea that mental events can be the *causes* of behaviour. Another worry is that it entirely leaves out the subjective aspect of mind.

The fourth naturalist approach to the mind is the one that has gained prominence in the past 40 years or so: *functionalism*. Contemporary functionalism

¹⁹ Smart, J.J.C., “Sensations and brain processes”, *Philosophical Review* 68 (1959), 141–156; Place, U.T., “Is consciousness a brain process”, *British Journal of Psychology* 47 (1956), 44–50.

²⁰ Watson, John B., “Psychology as the behaviorist views it”, *Psychological Review* 20 (1913), 158.

²¹ Ryle, Gilbert, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin [1949] 1978), 319.

can be viewed as the offspring of philosophical behaviourism.²² Functionalism is the view that what makes a mental state the mental state that it is, is its *causal* role. Functionalist theories of mind specify mental states in terms of ‘input’ clauses (which say what kinds of mental states give rise to others), ‘output’ clauses (specifying how mental states relate to behaviour), and ‘interaction’ or ‘intermediary’ clauses (which specify how mental states interact in a variety of psychological processes). Functionalism differs from philosophical behaviourism in a couple of key ways. (i) Functionalism views mental states as *causes* of behaviour; (ii) functionalism stresses the need to relate mental states to other mental states and thus aims to provide the conceptual resources to show how mental states are causally related to one another.

So far we have only noted the functionalist line of thought on mental *states*. But what about the *contents* of such states? It is incumbent upon any theory of mentality to make room for, and to account for, the “aboutness” of mental states and events. Of course, representation or aboutness might be taken to be unanalysed, or unanalysable, primitives. But most contemporary philosophical theories of mentality and representation accept three *desiderata* (i) that the account of representation be consistent with (some particular) functionalist conception of mentality; (ii) that the account of representation be non-circular; and (iii) that the account of representation show how representation is possible as a natural phenomenon. Jerry Fodor makes explicit these latter two *desiderata* when he states that a theory of meaning or representation should aim to articulate “in nonsemantic and nonintentional terms, sufficient conditions for one bit of the world to *be about* (to express, represent, or be true of) another bit”.²³

13.4 CONTEMPORARY NATURALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A functionalist conception of mental states, coupled with a (nascent) naturalistic representational theory of mind, provides the metaphysical backdrop to a great deal of contemporary Anglophone philosophy of mind. But what implications does this kind of naturalism about the mind have for our thinking about consciousness? Let us begin by considering the subjective ontological notion of consciousness.

²² Block, Ned, “What is functionalism?”, in Block, N. (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 175–176; Braddon-Mitchell, David and Jackson, Frank, *The Philosophy of Mind and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 29–58.

²³ Fodor, Jerry, *Psychosemantics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 98.

1. *'Consciousness' cannot denote the subjective medium of mind.* Even though nobody has yet provided a fully worked out naturalistic representational theory of mind it is widely assumed that, in principle, *some* such account will be forthcoming. The representational theory of mind thus involves a commitment to a particular ontology of mind. Mentality is something that is constituted by certain kinds of complex systems standing in certain kinds of complex causal relations. Mentality is ultimately a *causal* phenomenon and causality is taken to be, at root, an *objective, non-mental, inanimate* phenomenon. This conception of mind is plainly inconsistent with the idea that mentality inheres in some kind of subjective ontological medium. Given the objective ontological commitments of naturalism, 'consciousness' cannot be used to denote the subjective ontological medium of mind.

The fact that 'consciousness' no longer denotes a subjective ontological medium does not mean that 'consciousness' is redundant. 'Consciousness' has remained in use (unlike *élan vital*) even though the idea that mentality inheres in a subjective ontological medium has been dropped. When people use 'consciousness' to mean the subjective medium of mind, we can distinguish two things. First there is the *extension* of the term: what things are picked out by 'consciousness'. Second, there is the *intension* of the term: what kind of thing is consciousness? What inferences are permitted, what inferences are disallowed, when we use the concept? An analogy may help. Consider a non-naturalist conception of *life*. The non-naturalist and the naturalist may agree about *which things* are the living ones, what they disagree about is *what life consists in*. The extension of the term 'life' (meaning, roughly, "those things that are alive"), retains its use across a shift in our conception of what life consists in. A similar thing has happened with *consciousness*. The extension of 'consciousness' remains pretty much the same (picking out the same kinds of mental states that would have been picked out by William James, or Sartre), but the intension has undergone an important change. Let us see just what this change amounts to.

2. *Consciousness as a property of mental states.* Consider, once again, the lines of reflection that lead us to think of consciousness as the subjective medium of mind. When we reflect upon our waking experience, we seem to encounter *subjective phenomena*. Many of these phenomena have a qualitative character: it is *like something* to see a red apple, to taste lime, to hear a cello and so on. In our waking experience we can, it seems, distinguish a qualitative element from the "aboutness" or "intentionality" of the experience. Earlier, we drew a contrast between *believing* that there is a red apple on the table and *seeing* the red apple on the table. Both of these are cognitive

states with the same, or very similar, intentional contents. But perception seems to involve something over and above the intentional content. There is an intrinsic *qualitative* aspect to perceptual experience that is absent in the case of belief. The contrast between belief and perception is one that holds even if we are naturalists, but our characterisation of what the contrast consists in will be different. On the subjective medium view, intentionality is constituted by modifications of a subjective qualitative medium. The intentional properties of a perceptual state inhere within, or are constituted by, determinations of the subjective qualitative ontological “field”. But if we accept the contemporary naturalist view of mind then we must also accept that the intentionality of our waking mental life is constituted by our instantiating a complex system of causal relations. Intentionality is something that is independent of subjective, qualitative experience.

With the naturalistic commitment to the causal theory of mind in place, a new line of reflection comes into play. It does not take much work to imagine creatures, who satisfy the *objective* conditions for being mental subjects but who entirely lack the subjective and qualitative elements distinctive of consciousness. An early version of this line of thought can be found in Ned Block and Jerry Fodor’s “absent qualia” thought experiment,²⁴ and, in recent years, the line of thought has developed into a sub-industry of *zombie* thought experiments.²⁵ With this line of reflection, it may seem that *consciousness* (subjective, qualitative character) is a contingent property of mental states. Mental states have intentional properties and then *some* of them have an additional set of subjective experiential properties: qualia, or phenomenal properties. *Consciousness* is now used, by a lot of contemporary naturalists, as a label for the qualitative subjective properties that some mental states (i.e. the conscious ones) have. Indeed, some naturalistic theorists who recognise that ‘consciousness’ is ambiguous argue that the qualitative, non-epistemic, notion of consciousness is *the* most important, or fundamental one. Eric Lormand claims that “phenomenal consciousness is the most *basic* kind of consciousness”.²⁶

²⁴ Block, Ned and Fodor, Jerry, “What psychological states are not”, *Philosophical Review* 81 (1975) 156–181. Reprinted in N. Block (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 244; Block, Ned, “Troubles with functionalism” [1978], in N. Block (ed.), 1980, 287–291.

²⁵ Chalmers, David, *The Conscious Mind: In Search for a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Levine 2001.

²⁶ Lormand, Eric, “Nonphenomenal consciousness”, *Noûs* 30 (1996), 255.

Tyler Burge suggests that “phenomenal consciousness is the core notion” of consciousness.²⁷

3. ‘*Consciousness*’ as a label for a problem. Consciousness, as we saw earlier, also has various epistemic senses. ‘Consciousness’ is an epistemic relation that we predicate of people. So why would naturalistic theorists select the subjective qualitative notion as *the* most important one? There is a reason why this is so. Philosophy is a social and practical affair. It is useful to have labels for those elements or phenomena that are the focus of philosophical concern. The background assumption to contemporary naturalism is that intentionality is something that can be, in principle, explained in naturalistic, causal terms. But then we have arguments like the “absent qualia” and “zombie” arguments noted earlier. If these arguments are sound, then there are properties that resist explanation in terms of the best naturalistic model of mind (the functionalist, representational theory). The subjective qualitative aspects of experience pose a *problem* for naturalistic theories. ‘Consciousness’ is used as a label for a problem.

Some theorists reject the idea that there are intrinsic, subjective qualitative properties of experience.²⁸ They reject the absent qualia and inverted spectrum arguments. They argue that if we reflect a little more carefully upon the nature of the subjective qualitative aspects of experience we will recognise that the subjective qualitative aspects of experience are, in fact, just species of *intentional* content. For example, rather than viewing pains as intrinsic, qualitative, subjective entities, we view them as the *contents* of certain kinds of representational state: for example, a representation of bodily damage.²⁹ We cannot discuss the details of this debate – between “intentionalists” and “intrinsicists” about subjective qualitative consciousness.³⁰ What matters for our purposes is that *one* notion of consciousness – the

²⁷ Burge, Tyler, “Two kinds of consciousness”, in N. Block, O. Flanagan and G. Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997), 429.

²⁸ Harman, Gilbert, “The intrinsic quality of experience”, in J. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 4 (Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1990), 31–52; Tye, Michael, “A representational theory of pains and their phenomenal character”, *Philosophical Perspectives* 9 (1995), 223–239; Carruthers, Peter, *Phenomenal Consciousness: A Naturalistic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁹ Bain, David, “Intentionalism and pain”, *Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003), 502–523.

³⁰ See Byrne, Alex, “Intentionalism defended”, *Philosophical Review* 110 (2002), 199–240; Levine 2001.

subjective qualitative one – has been singled out by many naturalistic philosophers precisely *because* it is deemed to be problematic for naturalistic theories of mind. But, because naturalistic theories of mind view intentionality as something more fundamental than consciousness, and because they reject the view that subjective qualitative entities are the basis of, or medium of, mind, consciousness is viewed as a property of mental states.

Whilst the subjective qualitative experiential notion of consciousness has been to the fore of contemporary naturalistic theories, the *epistemic* notions of consciousness have not gone away. In the final two sections of our discussion of contemporary naturalism and the concept of consciousness, I want to focus on two ways in which the epistemic notions of consciousness are kept in play in theorising about mind.

4. *Objectual epistemic consciousness as a solution to “the problem” of consciousness.* Contemporary naturalist theories of mentality hold that intentionality is something objective, causal, naturalistic. This view of the ontology of mind allows one to conceive of mental states as being the mental states that they are in independence of notions like subjectivity, self-knowledge, awareness or the qualitative character of experience. We have also seen that contemporary naturalism has involved a subtle shift to viewing consciousness as a property of mental states. This background context paves the way for a particular kind of philosophical use of the epistemic notion of consciousness.

In recent years a number of thinkers have argued that what it is for a mental state to be a conscious one is for that mental state to be the *object* of certain kinds of intentional, cognitive, state. Leaving aside the *reflexive* epistemic theories mentioned earlier, there are two broad families of higher-order epistemic theories of consciousness: (i) inner perception, or monitoring, theories³¹; (ii) higher-order thought theories.³² D.H. Mellor also propounds a version of higher-order representation theory, but argues that the account is only appropriate for conscious belief.³³ Whilst each account differs from the others in detail, they all involve a commitment to the idea

³¹ For example, Lycan 1996; Armstrong, David M., *The Nature of Mind* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), 55–67; Churchland, Paul M., *Matter and Consciousness*, revised edition (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 73–79.

³² For example, Rosenthal, David M., “Two concepts of consciousness”, in D.M. Rosenthal (ed.), *The Nature of Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 462–477; Rosenthal, David M., “A theory of consciousness”, in N. Block, O. Flanagan and G. Güzelde (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997), 729–753; Carruthers 1996.

³³ Mellor, D.H., “Conscious belief”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 77 (1977), 88–101.

that some kind of higher-order epistemic state is necessary for, and, coupled with other specifiable conditions, sufficient for, the consciousness of a mental state. Thus David Rosenthal claims: “When a mental state is conscious, we are transitively conscious that we are in that state”.³⁴ William Lycan informs us that: “I cannot myself hear a natural sense of the phrase ‘conscious state’ other than as meaning ‘state one is conscious of being in’”.³⁵ Similarly, Peter Carruthers holds that “a conscious mental state is one of which the agent is aware”.³⁶ David Armstrong, echoing the remarks by Locke and Reid mentioned earlier, suggests that “consciousness is no more than awareness (perception) of inner mental states by the person whose states they are”.³⁷

The existence of the objectual variant of epistemic consciousness provides an alternative root conception of what conscious mentality consists in: an epistemic conception of consciousness, rather than a subjective qualitative ontological one. The important thing about the epistemic notion of consciousness is that epistemic states are intentional, cognitive, states. If the naturalistic theory of mind can, in principle, secure an objective account of what it is to be an intentional state, and if consciousness just consists in an intentional state’s being the object of another intentional state, then consciousness is, in principle, something that can be accommodated in the naturalistic causal theory of mind.

It is important to bear in mind what is being suggested by theorists like Rosenthal, Lycan and Carruthers. What they are claiming is that consciousness *consists in* states being accompanied by the appropriate kind of higher-order thought. That is, they are committed to a *constitutive* claim about consciousness. We might hold that conscious experiences are, *in fact* available to self-knowledge, and that self-knowledge involves higher-order thought without holding that this is what consciousness consists in. For example, suppose we hold that consciousness is the subjective qualitative ontological medium of mind. What makes a mental state conscious is its being a modification of this subjective medium. We can attend to, think about, or have privileged first-person thoughts about, the events that occur in this subjective medium, but that is just an additional, contingent, feature about conscious mentality:

³⁴ Rosenthal, David M., “State consciousness and transitive consciousness”, *Consciousness and Cognition* 2, 4 (1993a), 361.

³⁵ Lycan 1996, 25.

³⁶ Carruthers 1996, 149.

³⁷ Armstrong, David M., *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 94.

because consciousness is subjective, it is available for us to think about in a direct first-person way (a way that is denied to other parties).

Constitutive higher-order epistemic theories are *only* possible if one rejects the idea that consciousness (whatever it is) is essential to mind. Why? Consciousness, on the higher-order view, is conferred upon a mental state by a higher-order state. Now consider the lower-order state, the one that is conscious. The constitutive higher-order representation view involves a commitment to the claim that the lower-order state is a conscious state only if it is subject to, or available to, higher-order representation. But this means that its mental status must be independent of its conscious status. If all mental states have to be *conscious* states, then either (i) the lower-order state *qua* mental is conscious or (ii) the lower-order state *qua* unconscious is not mental.

But if the lower-order state is not mental, it is unclear how its being an object of consciousness makes it into a mental state (any more than being conscious of a fox makes the fox into a mental state). There is no problem here for higher-order theorists precisely because contemporary naturalist theories of mind allow us to conceive of mentality as something that is independent of consciousness.

Because naturalistic theories of mind *allow* one to conceive of mentality in independence of subjectivity and self-knowledge, constitutive higher-order theories become feasible in a way that they are not if one holds that mentality just is a modification of consciousness. *If* we view consciousness in this way then consciousness becomes something that can be accommodated within the naturalistic theory of mind. The key problem, of course, can be readily illustrated with our earlier example of the distinction between beliefs about and perceptions of a red apple. Our waking mental life is *like* something for us. What the higher-order theorist seems to offer is an account of the “for-us” aspect of conscious mentality, but they do not explain why one intentional state’s being about another should be like anything at all.³⁸

We do not have space to go into a detailed discussion of the pros and cons of higher-order theories of consciousness. For our purposes, what matters is that although subjective qualitative consciousness is taken by many to be the core concept of consciousness, other thinkers draw upon the objectual epistemic notion as the core concept, and in each case, the background assumptions of contemporary naturalism influence the way that the thinkers conceive of consciousness (especially in that *all* parties agree that mentality is something independent of consciousness, in both its epistemic and subjective qualitative senses).

³⁸ See Levine 2001; Manson, Neil C., “The limitations and costs of Lycan’s ‘simple’ argument”, *Analysis* 61 (2001), 319–323.

5. *Contrastive analysis and its problems with consciousness.* So far, we have primarily been concerned with *philosophical* naturalism: with abstract ontological theses about the nature of mind and intentionality. But contemporary naturalism about the mind has an application in empirical theorising. Cognitive science is an empirical science grounded in the naturalistic functionalist conception of mentality.

Cognitive scientific explanations are a species of functional explanation.³⁹ Functional explanations explain the abilities and dispositions of complex creatures or systems by “decomposing” them into simpler types of functional components and by identifying various functional properties (e.g. that this or that kind of information processing state plays a certain kind of functional role in a system). In recent years, a number of theorists have offered empirically grounded cognitive scientific, naturalistic, theories of consciousness.⁴⁰ These theorists draw upon a particular methodology, that of *contrastive* analysis, where the aim is to show that *conscious* intentional states play a certain kind of functional role whilst closely similar *unconscious* mental states play a different kind of functional role.⁴¹ The empirical challenge is to establish what functional role consciousness plays. Theorists perform controlled experiments where, for example, a contrast can be drawn between (i) perceptual identification of an object via normal perceptual states (states which are like something for the subject to be in) and (ii) informational sensitivity to objects or situations in the perceptible environment where the subject denies that it is like anything for her to exhibit such a sensitivity. A good example of the empirical work which provides the data for contrastive analysis can be found in studies of “blindsight”.⁴² Subjects with this kind of damage suffer from a region of “blindness” in part of their visual field (often one half of their field of vision is missing). Such subjects claim not to be able to see anything in their “blind” field, but they do exhibit some kind of ability to detect or discriminate events in their “blind” field – visually detectable events, rather than events which are detected via some other, undamaged, sense modality. Subjects can, when forced, reliably “guess” the orientation of objects in their

³⁹ Cummins, Robert, *The Nature of Psychological Explanation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).

⁴⁰ Baars, Bernard J., *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Schacter, Daniel L., “Neuropsychological evidence for a consciousness system”, in A. Goldman (ed.), *Readings in Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 415–444.

⁴¹ Baars 1988.

⁴² Weiskrantz, Lawrence, *Blindsight: A Case Study and Implications* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Schacter 1993; Baars 1988.

“blind” field even though they deny that they see the object, and deny that they have any knowledge of its orientation. The blindsight subject seems to have a deficit in her subjective experiential point of view. The cognitive states and processes which underpin her reliable guesses do not make any contribution to the subjective character of experience (or, at the very least, if they do so, they fail to make the kind of contribution which places the stimulus object within the subject’s normal visual perceptual field). The blindsight state does not make the kind of contribution to subjective experience which normal visual perceptual states do. The presence or absence of subjective experiential properties (at least in this particular context) seems to make a difference to what the person can do. This provides us with a candidate functional role for phenomenal states and thus a candidate functional role property for subjective experiential properties. Since consciousness is absent in blindsight, cognitive theorists infer that “consciousness must have a function of somehow enabling information represented in the brain to be used in reasoning, reporting, and rationally guiding action”.⁴³

There are three points worth noting, in the current context, about contrastive methodology and the concept of consciousness.

6. *Contrastive analysis assumes the possibility of unconscious mentality.* The first point is that the contrastive methodology only makes sense if one holds that mentality is, in principle, something that can be instantiated in independence of consciousness.⁴⁴ If unconscious mental states are impossible, then the contrast, in the contrastive analysis, will be between conscious mental states and unconscious *non-mental* states. But this does not identify a function for consciousness, it identifies a function for mentality. Contemporary naturalists assume that mentality is something that is independent of consciousness, so the contrastive methodology can be focused, seemingly, on consciousness alone.

7. *The co-instantiation problem.* A second deep problem for the contrastive methodology is that it fails to take into account the fact that ‘consciousness’ picks out a number of distinct properties, and these properties may be co-instantiated in certain types of mental states.⁴⁵ Returning to our example of looking at a red apple, when you see a red apple you have an intentional mental state that represents the apple as being a certain colour

⁴³ Block, Ned, “On a confusion about a function of consciousness” (revised version) in N. Block, O. Flanagan and G. Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 376.

⁴⁴ Baars 1988, 13.

⁴⁵ Nelkin 1996.

and shape (and as being located at a particular point in space relative to your body). You have everyday epistemic consciousness *of* the apple. It is also *like* something to see the apple. Your state of being conscious of the apple is a subjective qualitative state. The state is also *objectually* epistemically conscious, insofar as you are, or can readily become, aware of your state of seeing the apple.

In the blindsight case, by way of contrast, we have a multiple deficit. First, there is the absence of subjective experiential properties. Second, there is a deficit in intentionality. The blindsight state is “about” the presented stimulus in a limited information-processing sense of “aboutness”. Because the subject is not aware of the stimulus the contents of her blindsight state are not available for assertion, nor are they available as premisses in cognitive or practical reasoning. Third, the blindsight intentional state is not *known* by the subject in a direct first-personal way. There thus seem to be *three* conscious/unconscious contrasts at play in the blindsight studies.

	Everyday epistemic consciousness	Objectual epistemic consciousness	Subjective qualitative consciousness
Normal perception	✓	✓	✓
Blindsight	×	×	×

Cognitive theories of consciousness use contrastive analysis to identify functional roles played by mental states. But there are *three* contrastive pairs involved in the blindsight study and all of the contrastive pairs are correctly identifiable as species of the conscious/unconscious contrast.

8. *Contrastive analysis privileges the epistemic notions of consciousness.* A final worry about the cognitive scientific methodology is that it is primarily tailored to epistemic consciousness. Contrastive analysis requires the theorist to be able to *objectively* identify different kinds of mental state: “Contrastive analysis allows us to observe the difference between the presence and absence of conscious experiences ‘from the outside’”.⁴⁶ One central way of doing this is to rely upon subject’s *reports*. This may involve a *direct* report of what is seen, heard, felt. Or, the reports may be indirect: the subject may be forced to “guess” the orientation of a perceptual stimuli, she *claims* she does not perceive anything, or she *claims* that she has no reason

⁴⁶ Baars 1988, 19.

to guess one way rather than another. But claims and reports express knowledge: either the subject's first-order awareness of objects and states of affairs, or her higher-order knowledge of her own mental states. What is being measured in contrastive analysis is, in effect, the cognitive processes that are bound up with phenomena like reportability, or accessibility to reasoning and speech. We can, if we draw upon the naturalistic causal theory of mind, imagine beings who are capable of all these objective activities, but who *lack* subjective qualitative aspects to their mental lives. Because contrastive analysis is objective it, at best, picks up on cognitive and epistemic phenomena that *we assume to be* based upon, or at least correlated with, subjective experiential phenomenon. The mistake, as Ned Block has argued at length, is to assume that one has identified and explained the subjective qualitative consciousness *just* by identifying certain contrasts in reasoning and reportability.⁴⁷

There is thus an underlying tension for empirically grounded philosophical theorising about consciousness if it is meant to provide a naturalistic account of the nature of subjective qualitative properties: the empirical evidence that such theorising might be based upon may well side-step the very properties that are under study, privileging, in their place, the co-instantiated epistemic and cognitive properties involved in perception, reasoning and self-report.

13.5 CONCLUSION

Contemporary naturalists, by and large, assume that mentality and intentionality are fundamentally objective and causal phenomena. Because they assume this, they reject the idea that mentality inheres in some kind of subjective ontological medium. 'Consciousness' cannot simply be a label for the medium of mind. Instead, consciousness is viewed as a property of mental states. But 'consciousness', as we have seen, is a polysemic term. Contemporary naturalists pick up on different species of the concept of consciousness. Some use 'consciousness' as a label for the subjective qualitative properties of mental states that pose a *problem* for contemporary naturalism. Others draw upon an objectual epistemic notion of consciousness and, in doing so, they argue that there isn't really a problem of consciousness at all: there are only problems of knowledge, mentality, intentionality and so on; and, *in principle* these problems are philosophically tractable. The idea that mentality and intentionality are explicable in causal terms is, of course, just that: an idea.

⁴⁷ Block 1995.

There is no convincing, generally accepted causal theory of mind or intentionality. Contemporary naturalists are not at all troubled by this and we have seen a flourishing of naturalistic theorising about consciousness all based upon the future promise of an adequate naturalistic theory of mind and intentionality.

Contemporary naturalistic theorising about mind typically involves an empirical element. Theorists, even those working in philosophy, want their thinking about consciousness to be true of *us*, given our contingent cognitive abilities and limitations. Contrastive analysis is central to cognitive scientific theorising about consciousness. The assumption that mentality is, at root, an objective causal affair, paves the way for a secure conception of unconscious mentality. Contemporary naturalism about the mind helps legitimate the methodology of contrastive analysis. But the polysemic nature of ‘consciousness’ poses a problem for contrastive analyses, especially given the fact that different species of consciousness are co-instantiated in many perceptual states. Finally, contrastive analysis introduces a distortion in our thinking about consciousness by picking up on *epistemic* species of consciousness.

Overall, then, a great deal of contemporary thinking about consciousness has been determined and shaped by the assumption of an objective causal theory of mind. Contemporary philosophy of mind, as a set of epistemic practices (i.e. the books and articles written, the conferences held, the appointments made) is one that is firmly grounded in the naturalistic conception of mind. By itself there is nothing odd or especially problematic about this, but it is worth noting just how these assumptions shape the way that philosophy is done, how they shape our conception of what a “serious” or “important” philosophical issue is. There is, for example, a set of issues that broadly fall under the heading of ‘consciousness’ that receive very little discussion in contemporary philosophy: philosophical, personal, social and ethical issues that surround the conscious/unconscious contrast. Why does it matter that we know our own minds? What implications are there for our social interactions with one another when we reject the idea that a person has first-person authority about her attitudes and desires? What happens to our conception of responsibility and agency if we are committed to the ascription of unconscious motives, or unconscious determinants of motives? These are all philosophical questions about consciousness, about what it is to be a conscious subject, and about what it is to occupy a world with conscious subjects other than oneself. Even if we are agnostic about whether or not naturalism, in its ontological or epistemological guises, is defensible, it should be clear that the ascendancy of naturalistic theorising about mind shapes more than just our conception of consciousness, it

shapes and determines what we take philosophy to be, and thus shapes what we take to be the philosophical issues that pertain to consciousness, and to the conscious/unconscious contrast. There is, I believe, much more of philosophical, and human, interest in consciousness, and in the conscious/unconscious contrast, than just a set of issues about whether or not subjective properties can be viewed as part of an objective causal order.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SELFHOOD, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND EMBODIMENT: A HUSSERLIAN APPROACH

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Several misconceptions about phenomenology stem from the notion that Husserl's transcendental self is a solitary creator of all meaning of objectivity – the meaning of the world and all beings included in the world: natural entities, physical things, living beings, human artifacts, works and tools, linguistic signs and mathematical objects, as well as all conscious subjects or other selves, as we may call them.

Two misinterpretations come together here. First Husserl is believed to argue that the constitutive basis of all meaning is in one universal transcendental subjectivity, shared equally and in some mysterious way by all rational conscious beings. Second, it is supposed that the constitutive subject that Husserl discloses is a-temporal and non-changing. These misconceptions make Husserl's transcendental self look very much like Kant's – and it seems to me that many commentaries and critiques still suffer from the habit of reading Husserl through Kantian eyes.¹

I will argue in this chapter that Husserl's transcendental self is not universal but individual, not stable but in constant change, not beyond time but temporal through and through. With this understanding of the ego, it becomes easier to see why Husserl and his followers insist and argue again and again that the constitutive basis of all meaning of objectivity is not in *one* transcendental self but is in the community of such selves, in transcendental intersubjectivity. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (*Phénoménologie de la perception* 1945): “Transcendental subjectivity is

¹ For an illuminative comparison between Kant's and Husserl's concepts of transcendental subjectivity, see Carr, David, *The Paradox of Subjectivity: The Self in the Transcendental Tradition* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

revealed subjectivity, manifested to itself and to others, and is for that reason transcendental intersubjectivity”.²

By focusing on Husserl’s discussion in two central works, the second volume of *Ideas* (*Ideen* 1952, written in 1912–1928) and *Cartesian Meditations* (*Méditations cartésiennes* 1931, *Cartesianische Meditationen* 1950), I demonstrate that his mature conception of selfhood is much more refined and plausible than standard presentations and superficial critiques suggest. Already in the 1910s, Husserl argued that phenomenological investigations disclose the transcendental ego not merely as a performer of transient acts or as an empty act-pole but as a temporal sediment of actions and affections. Husserl called ‘person’ this internal temporal formation, and argued that as such the person is not an outcome of activity but founded on primary passivity.

Husserl outlined this view in the 1910s and 1920s in his manuscripts; he systematized the account at the end of the 1920s in *Cartesian Meditations*. As early as in 1925, he sent the manuscript *Ideas* to his assistant and colleague Martin Heidegger who at that time was working to finish his habilitation treatise, *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit* 1927). Heidegger read Husserl’s manuscript and included in his own work a short but highly interesting critical commentary.³ He saw Husserlian phenomenology as hopelessly

² Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, [1945] 1995), 451; *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995), 361 (translation modified); cf. Husserl, Edmund, Hua1, 67–70/29–31, 156–158/128–130; Hua6, 175–176/172. In the following I will refer to *Husserliana* (abbr. Hua), the standard annotated edition of Husserl’s works. I will also give the page references to the English translations of Husserl’s works, after the references to the originals, separated by a slash. The bibliographical references to the English translations of Husserl’s works are given in the Bibliography. For a recent account of Husserl’s theory of intersubjectivity, see Zahavi, Dan, *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity: A Response to the Linguistic-Pragmatic Critique*, trans. E.A. Behnke (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001); original *Husserl und die transzendente Intersubjektivität: Eine Antwort auf die sprachpragmatische Kritik*, (1996).

³ Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, Gesamtausgabe II: Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923–1944, Band 20*, ed. P. Jaeger (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970), 167–168; *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. T. Kisiel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 121. For the philosophical relation between Husserl and Heidegger, see Sheehan, Thomas “Introduction: Husserl and Heidegger: The making and unmaking of a relationship”, in Edmund Husserl: *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, *Husserliana, Collected Works, Vol. 6*, ed. T. Sheehan and R.E. Palmer (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997); cf. Crowell, Steven Galt, “Does the Husserl/Heidegger fond rest

tied to the basic concepts of Cartesian epistemology. The task of the true phenomenologist became the “destruction” of this heritage, not in order to overcome it but in order to disclose the stratified and mediatory character of the concepts that the tradition hands down to us.⁴ I end my chapter by investigating the controversy between Husserl and Heidegger about the concepts of personhood and by questioning the tenability of the critical remarks Heidegger launched against Husserl’s “Cartesianism”.

14.1 THE TRANSCENDENTAL EGO: ACT-POLE, PERSON, AND MONAD

Husserl clarifies his concept of the self or the ego, the I, by distinguishing between three different senses of selfhood: first, the ego as an act-pole, or ego-pole, as he also calls it [*Ich Pol, Ego Pol*]; second, the personal ego [*personales Ich, Person*]; and finally the ego in its full concreteness as a monad. All these distinctions are already in operation in the second volume of *Ideas*, but Husserl does not explicate them fully or clearly until *Cartesian Meditations*.⁵

It must be emphasized, that this tripartite conceptual framework of selfhood is transcendental for Husserl. The terms ‘act-pole,’ ‘person,’ and ‘monad’ refer to different structures of transcendental consciousness as it is given after the phenomenological-transcendental reduction; and thus the descriptions and explications are supposed to be purified from all existential theses. So what is at issue are not worldly beings or parts, levels, or

on a mistake? An essay on psychological and transcendental phenomenology”, *Husserl Studies* 18, 2 (1997), 123–140; Luft, Sebastian, “Husserl’s concept of the transcendental person: A response to Heidegger”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13, 2 (2005), 141–173.

⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, [1927] 1993), 20–22; *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 42–43.

⁵ Husserl’s phenomenology is explicitly Cartesian in aiming at giving an apodictic (doubtless) foundation to all sciences, from logic to ethics, and from the natural sciences to the human sciences. Husserl argues, however, that Descartes was misled by two unfounded assumptions: first, by the assumption that the ego cogito is a thinking “thing”, and second, more fatally, by the assumption that all eidetic sciences are similar to the mathematical sciences. Hua1, 63–64/23–25; Hua3, 163–174/184–193; cf. Hua6, 80–85/78–84. For an explication of Husserl’s critique of Descartes, see Heinämaa, Sara, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003b), 11–17.

properties of such beings, but the nature of the consciousness in its constitutive work on being.⁶

In Husserl's explication, the ego as an *act-pole* or *ego-pole* is the subject of intentional acts, that is, the ego studied merely as the performer of acts. Husserl argues that every act discernible from the stream of experience radiates or emanates from one identical center; every act is given to us as such a ray. So to begin with, the ego is the synthetically constituted pole of all the acts (factual and possible) that stand out from the streaming continuum of consciousness. It is as if the acts were centered round the ego – in a similar way as they are centered round the object-poles.⁷

However, having made this basic point, Husserl argues that the transcendental ego is not *merely* an act-pole or a synthetic unity of transient acts. It is also a temporal formation, and as such, it refers back to its own past.⁸ Husserl's formulations are quite explicit on this second point in his manuscripts from the 1910s. Compare the following paragraphs from *Ideas II*, the “*Encyclopaedia Britannica* article” (1929) and *Cartesian Meditations*:

The pure Ego of any given cogitatio already has absolute individuation, and the cogitatio itself is something absolutely individual in itself. The Ego, however, is not an empty pole but is the bearer of its habituality, and that implies that it has its individual history.⁹

⁶ By arguing that Husserl's concept of personhood has a transcendental dimension, I challenge the current reading of Hiroshi Goto, *Der Begriff der Person in the Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls: Ein Interpretationsversuch der Husserlschen Phänomenologie als Ethik im Hinblick auf den Begriff der Habitualität* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004). I have no problem with Goto's ethical implications but I argue that his reading neglects the sections in which Husserl explains the transcendental dimensions of personhood. My interpretation moves in the same direction as the readings of Anthony Steinbock and Sebastian Luft: Steinbock, Anthony, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 33–37; Luft 2005.

⁷ Hua3, 137–138/155–157; Hua4, 97–100; Hua1, 100/66.

⁸ Cf. Lévinas, Emmanuel, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. A. Orianne (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, [1930] 1995), 50–51.

⁹ Hua4, 299–300/313; cf. Hua4, 310–311/324; Hua33, text no. 14. In *Ideas*, Husserl uses the term ‘pure Ego’ for the Ego-pole (e.g. Hua4, 325/337, cf. Hua14, 42–43, 47), but in an appendix to the second volume he writes: “This old reflection of habituality is still extremely immature; although everything essential is glimpsed, the description is not carried through to the end with precision. In the first place the doctrine of the pure Ego – before all else as a pole – has to be [revised]?” (Hua4 310/324 (English translation modified)).

There is also, inseparable from this [intentional] life-process, the experiencing *I-subject* as the identical *I-pole* giving a center for all specific intentionalities, and as the carrier of all habitualities growing out of this life-process.¹⁰

[. . .] this centering Ego is not an empty pole of identity (any more than any object is such). Rather, according to a law of “transcendental genesis”, with every act emanating from him and having a new objective sense, he acquires a *new abiding characteristic*.¹¹

Husserl uses the terminology of ‘habits’ [*Habitus, Habitualität*] to describe the temporal constitution of the ego as distinct from the ego in its function of performing acts. He warns that we should not take this terminology in its everyday sense of routines and social customs.¹² The reference is to certain processes in internal time in which acts are established and new acts are sedimented on earlier ones thus forming a kind of act-form or act-gestalt.¹³ This gestalt is unique to the individual, and we can thus say that the ego has a specific mode or style of acting.¹⁴ The unique styles of individuals can be classified as belonging to general types but they cannot be classified as belonging to any naturally determined class. Husserl explains:

Every man¹⁵ [*Mensch*] has his character, we can say, his style of life in affection and action, with regard to the way he has of being motivated by such and such circumstances. And it is not that he merely had this up to now: the style is rather something permanent, at least relatively so in the various stages of life, and then, when it changes, it does so again [. . .] in a characteristic way, such that, consequent upon these changes, a unitary style manifests itself once more.¹⁶

¹⁰ Husserl, Edmund, “Phenomenology” (Edmund Husserl’s article for the 14th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1929), trans. R.E. Palmer, quoted in *Edmund Husserl’s Phenomenology*, ed. J.J. Kockelmans (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1994), 114/115. The English translation of Husserl’s article has also been published in *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, *Collected Works, Vol. 6*, trans. and ed. T. Sheehan and R.E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997).

¹¹ Hua1, 100/66.

¹² Hua4, 111/118.

¹³ Hua1, 67/28–29, 100/66–67.

¹⁴ Hua4, 270ff./282ff., 277–278/289–291; Hua1, 148–149/119–120; Husserl, “Phenomenology,” Edmund Husserl’s article”, 182/183; Merleau-Ponty *Phénoménologie*, 100–101, 377, 519; *Phenomenology*, 85, 327, 455.

¹⁵ I have argued elsewhere that Husserl’s analysis holds for both sexes; see Heinämaa 2003b; Heinämaa, Sara, “Feminism”, in H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathal (eds.), *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism* (Malden USA, Oxford UK, Victoria Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

¹⁶ Hua4, 270/283, cf. Hua34, 200.

Husserl calls ‘transcendental person’ or ‘personality’ of the transcendental ego [*Person, Persönlichkeit*] the gestalt that is formed in the establishment and habituation of acts in internal time.¹⁷ For him, the ego is not a momentary actor, that wills, enjoys, and posits being, but the ego has already willed, has enjoyed and has posited being. The ego is not merely the totality of simultaneous acts but formed in time. In other words, the ego has a *genesis*¹⁸, an internal past, and an origin.¹⁹ And more: the ego is (also) its own past.²⁰

Husserl illuminates this process of habituation of acts, both in *Ideas II* and in *Cartesian Meditations*, by studying the case of judgment formation.²¹ He explains that always when we make a judgment, the judgment becomes our own in a specific way: it becomes part of our transcendental habitus. The judgment remains our own in this way, until we refute it by another act, and after this, it still remains ours as a judgment once held and acted on, and then refuted. This does not mean that we repeat the judgment in every moment until we refute it, but that we are, from the very moment of making the judgement, the ones who thus judge and believe.

For example, when the patter on the roof makes me believe that it is raining outside, I am bound to the reality of rain and the presence of raindrops. My judgment is transient and passing: after a moment I am back again in my work, absorbed in the texts that I am reading. The patter of raindrops no longer occupies the center of my attention but has moved into the background of my experience. But in this process, I have not ceased to be the one who believes that it is raining; I am still bound to the reality of the rain, even though I no longer actively posit the being of the raindrops.

The permanence of belief manifests itself in my responses: if I were asked about the patter, even when absorbed in my work, I would answer – without hesitation – that it is due to rain. The conviction also shows in other, non-verbal, ways in my behavior. When I go out, for example, I take an umbrella and put on rubber boots. It is (perhaps) only when I open the door, and see the clear blue sky and the neighbor’s children with the watering hose, that

¹⁷ Hua34, 200, cf. 158, 246; cf. Hua1, 101/67; Hua4, 212–213/223–224, 317–318/329–333. Husserl distinguishes the transcendental person sharply from the empirical or worldly person. The latter is the human being as part of the world; the former is free of all worldly being.

¹⁸ Husserl also uses the term ‘teleiosis’ in this context, Hua4, 349/360.

¹⁹ Hua4, 251/263; Hua1, 103–105/69–70; Hua13, 43–44; cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, xiii–xv, 147; *Phenomenology*, xviii–xix, 126.

²⁰ Cf. Steinbock 1995, 33–36; Kortooms, Toine, *Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology* (West Lafayette, India: Purdue University Press, 2002), 176, 210.

²¹ Hua4, 112–116/119–123, 311/324; Hua1, 100–101/66–67; Hua17, 319–321/319–320.

I come to abandon my belief. However, I do not thus return to the earlier moment or to my life as it was before I paid attention to the patter and judged that it is raining. Instead, now, after the abandonment of the belief, I am the person that *was convinced* of the reality of rain, but *is not* any more.

In a similar way, when my love dies, I do not in any miraculous way get rid of or liberate myself from this emotion, but continue carrying it in myself, now in the mode of the past. It is not that I think that I was mistaken about my feelings, that I had confused love with friendship, desire, or hatred, for example. I am aware that I really have loved, but at the same time I am aware that I have lived through and have passed this love, and that the feeling belongs to my past. I do not live anymore as loving – now I live as having loved.²²

Husserl emphasizes that we should not confuse the permanence of decision, belief, and emotion, with the experience of remembering or imagining such states.²³ It is of course possible for me to remember my experience of a recent shower of rain – really and genuinely recall it as past – *but only after* I have abandoned my conviction of the presence of raindrops. As long as I hold the belief, as long as I have not refuted it, I can always return to it and I find it unchanged and as my own, as part of me. According to Husserl, the permanence of the conviction holds even through sleep. He claims:

Likewise [cf. judgment] in the case of all kinds of decisions, value-decisions and volitional decisions. I decide: the act-process vanishes but the decision persists; whether I become passive and sink into heavy sleep or live through other acts, the decision is continuously in validity and, correlatively, I am so decided from then on, as long as I do not give the decision up.²⁴

So as a summary, we can say that with the concept of person, Husserl starts a new discussion about the temporality of the transcendental ego: the ego-pole or the act-pole is an identical center of acts, but the concrete ego is a person constituted as the whole of experiences streaming in time, transient as acts but permanent as accomplishments and also sedimented one upon another. The act-pole and the person are not two separate parts, levels, or phases of the ego but essentially bound together, and only distinguishable by analysis.

²² Cf. Hua4, 114/121; Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, 433–434; *Phenomenology*, 378–379.

²³ From the point of view of Husserl's phenomenological analysis, the account that Locke offers of personhood in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is weakened by the confusion between memory and sedimentation (see especially paragraphs 9–10 in Chapter XXVII of Locke's work).

²⁴ Hua1, 101/67 (translation modified); cf. Hua4, 107–108/114–115.

As the transcendental person is essentially a temporal formation, investigations of its nature belong to *genetic phenomenology*. This is explained already in *Ideas II* but the methodological implications are emphasized and clarified in full only in *Cartesian Meditations*. In *Ideas II*, Husserl writes for example:

In reflection I therefore always find myself as a personal Ego. But originally this Ego is constituted in the genesis pervading the flux of lived experiences.²⁵

Compare this statement to the following paragraph from *Cartesian Meditations*:

With the doctrine of the Ego as pole of his acts and substrate of habitualities, we have already touched on the problem of phenomenological genesis and done so at a significant point. Thus we have touched the level of *genetic phenomenology*.²⁶

Genetic phenomenology explicates the temporal order of meaning constitution. It does not confine itself to the investigation of individual histories but, by a method of eidetic variation, aims at illuminating the essential steps and phases in all temporal institution or establishment of meaning and sense. The mature Husserl argues that static analyses are a necessary part of phenomenology but are not sufficient in themselves, because phenomenology aims at accounting for the structures of meaning as well as for their genesis and origins. Thus Husserl's concept of the transcendental person enriches and concretizes his account of subjectivity by enclosing the essence of the temporal unfolding of the self.

To complete the Husserlian analysis of subjectivity, however, we need to introduce still another concept: that of the monad. Husserl argues that the transcendental ego, in its full concreteness, is not confined to its activity and acts, but is also necessarily bound to its intentional objects. The ego is a whole which includes the acts and the temporal formation of acts as well as the intentional objects of the acts.²⁷ Husserl uses the Leibnizian term 'monad' to describe this whole. He does not choose this terminology in order to argue that the ego is alone or autonomous in its constitutive activity. On the contrary, *Ideas II* and *Cartesian Meditations* explicitly reject such notions as misunderstandings and argue that phenomenologists must proceed to investigate transcendental intersubjectivity. The term 'monad' is

²⁵ Hua4, 251/263.

²⁶ Hua1, 103/69; cf. Hua27 278–279/316–318; Husserl, "'Phenomenology,' Edmund Husserl's article", 146–148.

²⁷ Hua1, 102–103/67–68, 134–135/103–105; Hua4, 111–120/118–127; Hua14, 46; cf. Hua6, 187/183.

telling for another reason: with it, Leibniz referred to a “windowless spirit” that is not causally influenced or acted upon by outside factors.²⁸

What is crucial for Husserl in Leibniz’ account is that the relation between the monad and what is outside of it and other from it, is not a causal relation but a relation of expression. It is as if the monad, instead of being influenced by its outside, would resonate with it. The relation is comprehensive so that every single monad expresses the whole complexity and multiplicity of the world.²⁹ In an analogous way, Husserl argues that in its full concreteness the ego covers or encompasses all the intentional objects of its acts – encompasses them precisely as intentional objects and not as causes or effects.

Thus understood, the transcendental ego is determined by two kinds of relations, firstly as a person by its own past, and secondly as a monad by its intentional objects. By its intentional relations, the transcendental ego is bound to other egos and, due to them, connected to a world and not just to a subjectively specified environment. The ego is not solitary, Husserl argues; the *solus ipse* is an abstraction.³⁰ This is explained in detail already in *Ideas II*, but Husserl returns to the topic again in the fifth Cartesian Meditation.³¹ At the end of *Ideas II*, he explains in a footnote:

According to our presentation, the concepts I-we are relative; the I requires the thou, the we, the “other”. And, furthermore, the I (the I as person)

²⁸ In his manuscripts on intersubjectivity, Husserl writes: “[. . .] the monad has no windows, monads are not in interaction, but they have a universal accord. There is no sense in wanting to influence consciousness through the physical” (Hua13, 7; cf. Hua4, 229–231/240–242, 297–301/311–315; Hua1, 102/68). In other sections he explains that the monad is bound to other monads by the special kind of intentional relation which he calls ‘empathy’ [*Einfühlung*] (Hua13, 474; Hua14, 260; 295; cf. Hua1, 141–145/112–116). Cf. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Monadology*, in *Philosophical Texts*, trans. R. Francks and R.S. Woolhouse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1714] 1998), 268, 269, 274–275. For a comparison between Husserl’s and Leibniz’ monadologies, see Mertens, Karl, “Husserls Phänomenologie der Monade: Bemerkungen zu Husserls Auseinandersetzung mit Leibniz”, *Husserl Studies*, 17 (2001), 1–20; Smith, Michael, “Towards a phenomenological monadology: On Husserl and Mahnke”, in D. Carr and C. Lotz (eds.), *Subjektivität – Verantwortung – Wahrheit: Neue Aspekte der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern etc.: Peter Lang, 2002), 243–259.

²⁹ Leibniz, *Monadology*, 269–270, 276.

³⁰ Hua4, 78/83, 81/86; cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, [1960] 1998), 218–221; *Signs*, trans. R.C. McCleary (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 173–175.

³¹ See also his manuscripts on intersubjectivity from 1905–1929, i.e. Hua13–15. Cf. Zahavi 2001.

requires the relation to a world of things. Therefore I, we, and the world belong together: the world as a common surrounding world which bears the stamp of subjectivity.³²

To sum up, the self has three “dimensions” in Husserl’s mature account: it is an act-pole, it is a person constituted in inner time, and it is a monad related to intentional objects. These dimensions are not given separately but can only be distinguished by analysis. If we keep this in mind, then we can clear up several misconceptions about “Husserl’s subjectivism” and the “self-centeredness” of phenomenology.

First, we see that the self as a pole is merely an abstraction from the concrete whole of the ego, constituted as a process of change and development in inner time. Accordingly, the ego-pole is not a-temporal but trans-temporal or supra-temporal.³³ Second, the self should not be understood as a universal principle in which all humans or all rational beings take part. Rather it is an individual with individual characteristics and with an individual style of changing and developing. To be sure, this individual exhibits certain essential structures, such as the structures of inner temporality and those of intentionality, but these structures do not have any separate being or existence as distinguished from the stream of lived experience. On the contrary, the essential structures of experience show or disclose themselves only within such a stream.³⁴ Third, the self is not a sole basis of meaning or a solitary creator of objects, but related to other similar selves in its process of constitution and self-constitution. It relates to other selves by its body – the body understood, not as one of the experienced objectivities, but as a specific mode of experiencing, characteristic of perception, affection and sensation.

³² Hua4, 288/301–302 (translation modified), cf. 198–199/208–209, 249–250/261. Merleau-Ponty argues that the genetic basis of the I–you constitution is in an anonymous subjectivity. This should not be understood as a fusion of the self and the other self but means the unparalleled, nameless subject of perception and motility. For a detailed account of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of anonymity, see Heinämaa, Sara, “Personal and anonymous: Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the subject”, (2005b), a paper presented at *Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception 60 Years Later*, September 30–October 1, Center For Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen. Husserl uses the concept of anonymity to describe the absolute basis of all constitution in inner time-consciousness, e.g. Hua9, 478; Hua10, 75; Hua14, 29; Hua33, 277–278.

³³ Cf. Kortooms 2002, 212.

³⁴ Hua3, 171–174/191–193; cf. Hua6, 181–182/178.

14.2 PERSONHOOD AND EMBODIMENT

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger presents two critical claims against Husserl's account of persons. First, Heidegger argues that Husserl's notion of personhood is inadequate: Husserl defines the person as a performer of acts but leaves unexplained what it means to *perform* acts. In paragraph 10 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger formulates the problem as follows:

Essentially the person exists only in the performance of intentional acts, and is therefore essentially *not* an object. [. . .] A person is in any case given as a performer of intentional acts which are bound together by the unity of meaning. [. . .] Acts get performed; the person is the performer of acts. What, however, is the ontological meaning of "performance"? How is the kind of Being which belongs to a person to be determined ontologically in a positive way?³⁵

Heidegger then argues that the critical questioning cannot stop here. There are several fundamental problems involved in the classical phenomenological account of personhood. The second problem is that Husserl's notion of the person as a *spiritual-bodily* whole is naïve. In Heidegger's understanding, this is due to Husserl's failure to explain the unity of the three different kinds of being: body, soul, and spirit. Heidegger argues: "When [. . .] we come to the question of man's Being, this is not something we can simply compute by adding together those kinds of Being which body, soul, and spirit respectively possess – kinds of Being whose nature has not as yet been determined".³⁶

Heidegger claims that these shortcomings have roots in phenomenology's indebtedness to Cartesian epistemology, to its concepts of substance, transcendence, and knowledge. He argues that philosophy must break away from this tradition and inquiry back to its forgotten basis. Thus classical Husserlian phenomenology must be substituted by the ontological analytic of *Dasein*.³⁷

³⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 48; *Being and Time*, 73 and 488–489 (translation modified); cf. *Prolegomena*, 171–173; *History*, 123–125.

³⁶ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 48, cf. 117; *Being and Time*, 74, cf. 153; cf. *Prolegomena* 172–173; *History*, 125.

³⁷ In his marginal remarks to Heidegger's study of Kant, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* 1929), Husserl points out that Heidegger, in a similar way to Kant, is arrested in his philosophizing by the image of God as the subject of *infinite creative intuition* distinct from finite and receptive human intuition. For Husserl, such comparisons and contrasts are both unnecessary and confusing. Husserl, Edmund, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, ed. T. Sheehan and R.E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 24–31.

In the second part of my chapter, I argue that Heidegger's presentation of Husserl's account of personhood is misleading. This holds for the remarks presented in *Being and Time* as well as for the earlier, more extended discussion in the lecture course from 1925 on the *History of the Concept of Time* (*Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs: Prolegomena zu einer Phänomenologie von Geschichte und Natur*). I will answer Heidegger's two remarks separately. I start from the claim that the person, as Husserl frames it, is nothing but a performer of acts, and I proceed to study how Husserl's account of the spirit–body union relates to, and differs from, the accounts that we find in the tradition of Cartesianism.

We have seen earlier that Husserl defines the person, not merely as a performer of acts, but also as a maintainer of earlier activity. This still leaves Husserl's concept of person tied to the concepts of act and activity, and to this extent Heidegger's presentation seems right: the person is defined and determined by activity, insofar as it carries or habituates earlier acts. However, the self is not merely an originator of acts, or the objects constituted in them, but is also a passive receiver or heir of earlier activity.³⁸ Merleau-Ponty even claims that Husserl's genetic phenomenology implies the idea that the self receives its acts, not just from its own past, but also from other, previous forms of consciousness. This, according to him, is possible due to the mediating function of nature as experienced in motion and sensation.³⁹

Moreover, Husserl himself argues in *Ideas II* that all the activity constitutive of a personal self has a passive basis in the stream of lived experiences. He writes:

I am originally not a unity composed of associative and active experiences (if experience means the same as it does in the case of thing). I am the subject of my life, and the subject develops by living [. . .] The Ego does not originally arise out of experience [. . .] but out of life.⁴⁰

Spirit is not an abstract Ego of the position-taking acts but is the full personality, I-human, the “I take a position”, the I think, I value, I act, I complete works etc. Then there also belongs to me a *basis of lived experiences* and a *basis of nature* (“my nature”) which manifest in the movement of lived experiences.⁴¹

Thus understood, the personal self is formed, to a certain “extent”, from acts, but it is not merely an intentional agent nor actively accomplished.

³⁸ Hua4, 135/143, 332–336/344–347.

³⁹ For example Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, 249; *Phenomenology*, 215. For a detailed account of Merleau-Ponty's concept of anonymity, see Heinämaa 2005b.

⁴⁰ Hua4, 252/264.

⁴¹ Hua4, 280/293; cf. Hua4, 99–100/105–106.

I can reflect on myself and objectify myself by will, but, as Husserl emphasizes, the possibilities of self-reflection and self-objectification are based on the (transcendental) fact that the ego is already given before reflection and objectification, passively constituted in the stream of lived experiences and internal time-consciousness.⁴²

Heidegger's second critical remark concerns Husserl's discussion of the soul–body composite. Heidegger claims that Husserl's account of this relation suffers from a fundamental naivety about the different senses of being that characterize the relata: the soul, the body, and the spirit. Without taking a stand on the issue, if such an explication is really missing from Husserl's mature works, let us see what Husserl in fact says about the relations between the body, the soul, and the spirit.

The first thing to notice is that, instead of one notion, Husserl offers several perspectives. *Ideas II* provides at least two different accounts: one that aims at capturing the unity of soul and body as it is conceived within the *naturalistic attitude*, and a different one for the experience of the spirit–body unity within the *personalistic attitude*. The work starts with an analysis of the soul–body relation as it is conceived – and must be conceived – within the natural sciences, but Husserl proceeds to argue that this way of conceiving the relation is not our only option and, more crucially, is not epistemologically or ontologically fundamental.

The crucial difference between the naturalistic and personalistic attitude is not topical: both attitudes include bodies and souls, and both make possible certain accounts of their connection. The difference is rather in the order in which being is posited. In the naturalistic attitude, we posit material nature, physical being, as the foundation of all being. Husserl expresses this by saying that the naturalistic thinker fails to see or conceive any other mode of being; everything that is for him, is physical or founded on the physical.⁴³ Fundamental differences between modes of being are neglected, because they are understood as belonging to the realm of “mere seeming”. It is taken to be obvious that all beings are principally of the same kind. Thus, also every mental or spiritual state or process is taken to be part of physical being, a stratum of the physical, an epiphenomenon, or an emergent property of highly organized matter.

⁴² Hua4, 251–257/263–265, 277–279/289–291; cf. Hua13, 17–18, Hua15, 148–149; Zahavi, Dan, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: A Bradford Book, 2005), 67–72.

⁴³ Hua4, 183–184/193.

In the personalistic attitude, we do not posit physical being as the foundation of all being. The spiritual is primary, and everything else is conceived in relation to it.⁴⁴ The living body, for example, is conceived as belonging to a person which is spiritually individuated. Works of art and science, paintings and books, are conceived and seen as sensible expressions of spirit. We do not deny the materiality of things, but we conceive it, we see it, as dependent on and subjected to spiritual individuals.⁴⁵

The first part of Husserl's *Ideas II* studies the living body within the naturalistic attitude as part of physical nature. In this case, the body, with all its biological and psychological processes, life processes and operations of sensation and thought, is given as a mechanical-functional system, as a spatial-temporal reality. Its soul is "nothing per se", but only a special part or layer of material nature.⁴⁶

The second and third part of the book focus on the constitution of the spiritual world. Husserl argues that within the personalistic attitude, the body belongs to a person, or as he puts it with the German verb 'haben': the person has his body. The body in this case is not a mere physical thing but is an expression of the person. The spiritual "states" and "processes" of the person, his experiences and acts, lend the sensible matter their forms and structures. Thus the sensible body is articulated in a special way as an expressive unity in which all parts are internally bound together and cannot be removed, transplanted, replaced or substituted.⁴⁷

Thus understood, or perceived, the body of the person is not a separate reality but belongs to an expressive unity. Husserl explains this several times in *Ideas II*, for example:

The human being in the personal world (the world of spirit, we also say, as the domain of the human sciences) is the unity of the living body [*Leib*] as expression of spirit and of spirit as expressed in the living body, given in the personalistic attitude.⁴⁸

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes exactly these sections of *Ideas II*, and argues that they reformulate the understanding already expressed by Descartes:

The experience of one's own body runs counter to the reflective movement which detaches subject from object and object from subject, and which gives

⁴⁴ Hua4, 236–247/248–259.

⁴⁵ Hua4, 297–301/311–315.

⁴⁶ Hua4, 175/184–185.

⁴⁷ Hua4, 237–239/249–251; cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, 184, 194; *Phenomenology*, 157, 166.

⁴⁸ Hua4, 325/337.

us only the thought about the body, or the body as an idea, and not the experience of the body or the body in reality. Descartes was well aware of this, since a famous letter of his to Elisabeth draws the distinction between the body as it is conceived through use in living and the body as it is conceived by the understanding.⁴⁹

The point, however, is not that Husserl just repeats in new concepts what Descartes already had presented. On the contrary, Merleau-Ponty argues that Husserl proceeds to analyze the unity of body and spirit in a new way: by comparing it to linguistic unities. Thus Husserl's main contribution is not in revivifying the Cartesian account of the soul-body union but in introducing the concepts of *expression* to the analysis of the internal relation between spirit and body.

Husserl argues that sensible material requires spirituality, spiritual units, in order to be articulated as living bodies of human beings, in a similar way as mere sounds and visual shapes require spiritual units – meanings – in order to be articulated as words. The person and his or her body are one, not by first appearing as two separate things and being then tied together, afterwards, but by appearing as each other's necessary constituents, the articulating structure and the articulated sensible matter.⁵⁰ Husserl uses the analogy to language – to words, sentences, and texts – throughout the third part of *Ideas II*. In the supplements, he explains again:

It is just like reading a newspaper: the sensory-intuitive paper with markings is unified with the sense expressed and understood in the word-signs. Likewise in the case of any other literary offering, whether it be spoken, written, etc. Its has as it were a sensuous living body for a spiritual meaning that is grasped in understanding. In their appearance “living body” and “spirit” are unified in a particular way.⁵¹

Husserl argues that, before being given as bio-mechanical systems, living bodies appear as sensuous-spiritual wholes, articulated by spiritual units or spiritual individuals. The objects of physiology, anatomy, and scientific psychology, are achieved from expressive bodies by processes of abstraction. The attempt to reunite such abstract entities is a hopeless and absurd

⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, 231; *Phenomenology*, 198–199 (translation modified). On Merleau-Ponty's comparison between Descartes and Husserl, see Heinämaa, Sara, “Merleau-Ponty's dialogue with Descartes: The living body and its position in metaphysics”, in D. Zahavi, S. Heinämaa and H. Ruin (eds.), *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation: Phenomenology in the Nordic Countries* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003a), 23–48.

⁵⁰ Hua4, 239/251.

⁵¹ Hua4, 320/333 (translation modified).

project.⁵² In order to understand the spirit–body unity, one needs to return to the personalistic level of experience:

But if I am in the attitude of the human sciences, in which the other spirit is thematically posited as spirit and not as founded in the physical living body [*im physischen Leib*] [. . .], then this corporeal body [*Leibkörper*], like everything which is not spirit, belongs to the surrounding world of things; it is a thing, that has spiritual meaning, that serves as *expression*, organ, etc, for a spiritual being, for a person and his spiritual activity.⁵³

We fail to realize this as long as we study the body within the naturalistic attitude. The movements and postures of living beings, animals and humans, do not express anything to us but function as reactions to external and internal stimuli. We do not grasp them as gestures but understand them as effects in causal chains.

We are all certainly capable of taking such a stand; and many vital, life-supporting⁵⁴ tasks (e.g. the work of the surgeon) require that one is able to stay in this attitude and act accordingly. None of us, however, can remain wholly in the naturalistic attitude and for ever avoid leaning on the personalistic attitude and its objects. Not even the natural scientist, the biologist, or the physiologist can avoid taking the personalistic stand, for he too has to communicate his results to *other persons* in order to ascertain their validity and thus needs to relate to his own body and to the bodies of others as expressive and intentional wholes. And even if he gave up his scientific aspirations, he would have to take his own body as an expression of his will when “moving it”.

Husserl’s discussion of the expressive body is based on a conceptual distinction that he made already in *Logical Investigations* (1900–1901). In the first investigation, Husserl distinguished between two senses in which we can talk about signs and signification: expressions [*Ausdruck*] and indications [*Anzeige*]. These are not two subcategories of some general concept of sign but essentially different ways of *standing for* something.⁵⁵ By distinguishing between expressions and indications, Husserl argued that our common-sense notion of sign is actually equivocal. The essential difference between these

⁵² Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie*, 493; *Phenomenology*, 431–432.

⁵³ Hua4, 204/214; cf. Hua4, 235/246, 241/253.

⁵⁴ Life-supporting in the biological sense of ‘life’.

⁵⁵ For a detailed argument, see Heinämaa, Sara, “Embodiment and expressivity in Husserl’s phenomenology: From *Logical Investigations* to *Cartesian Meditations*”, (2005a), paper presented at the conference *The Other and I*, September 8–9, Department of Philosophy, Uppsala University.

two ways of “standing for” is that the relation of expression is internal and the relation of indication is external. The expressive means and the expressed object are necessarily bound together; indications for their part relate to the things indicated only occasionally. To put it more precisely, the expressive means and the expressed content have their identities only as parts of the expressive relation; and the indicative means and the indicated thing are what they are within the relation of indication as well as outside of it.⁵⁶

In *Logical Investigations*, Husserl stated that facial expressions, gestures, and bodily postures are not meaningful expressions, but only indicate the internal states of the gesturing person.⁵⁷ In *Ideas II*, he argues, on the contrary:

The thoroughly intuitive unity presenting itself when we grasp a person *as such* (e.g. when we, as persons, speak to them as persons, or when we listen to their speech, or work together with them, or watch their actions) is the unity of the “*expression*” and the “*expressed*” that belongs to the essence of all comprehensible unities. The unity of living body and spirit is not the only one of this kind.⁵⁸

This means that Husserl’s account of our experience of sensible bodies is refined and specified when he proceeds to transcendental phenomenology. The contrast is no longer between phenomenological-philosophical investigations and the empirical approach. Now we can distinguish between two different natural – non-phenomenological – attitudes: the naturalistic one and the personalistic one. One studies reality by presupposing the foundation of nature; the other takes persons as givens and proceeds to study their expressions and creations. Accordingly, we see that we can understand and investigate the living body in two different ways: as a mere material thing and as an expressive gesture. Both these forms of experience are founded on the sensible synthesis and on the intentional activities of consciousness. The task of the phenomenologist – the philosopher – is to account for these different modes of experience and to disclose their common foundations.

Thus it is misleading to claim that Husserl’s solution to the “mind–body problem” repeats the Cartesian idea of a composite substance, or that it

⁵⁶ Hua19-1, 24–31/183–188.

⁵⁷ Hua19-1, 31/187.

⁵⁸ Hua4, 236/248. For a detailed exposition of Husserl’s conception of the mind–body or soul–body union, see Heinämaa 2003b, 21–37; Alweiss, Lilian, *The World Unclaimed: A Challenge to Heidegger’s Critique of Husserl* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 141ff.

aims at reducing the material substance to a spiritual one. On the contrary, Husserl avoids these concepts and the problems involved in them by introducing the concept of expression to account for the relation between the person and the person's body. His solution certainly has its own problems, but to state that Husserl's falls back on Cartesianism does not capture these problems but, on the contrary, hinders any understanding of them.

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NAME INDEX

- Aquila, Richard 182–184, 193–194
Alanen, Lilli 199, 207
Alexander of Aphrodisias 81, 98, 101
Aquinas, Thomas 123, 153n1
Aristotle 3–5, 10–12, 14, 17, 21–22, 25, 29–30, 33, 38, 49–65, 71, 73, 80–82, 91, 95–101, 112, 117–118, 172, 247
Armstrong, David 302
Arnauld, Antoine 142, 186–189
Averroës (Ibn Rushd) 113, 118
Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) 22, 97, 101–119
Augustine 3, 23, 70, 78, 125, 141–143, 146, 149, 151, 153–155, 158–168, 171–175
Aulus Gellius 89
Aurelius, Marcus 83
Aureoli, Peter 129–136, 140
- Baker, Gordon 180n7
Bayle, Pierre 226
Berkeley, George 78, 227
Block, Ned 299
Bourdin 185–186
Böhme, Jacob 258n24
Brentano, Franz 13, 123
Burge, Tyler 300
Burman 184–185, 189, 196, 199, 206
Burnyeat, Myles 70, 72n15, 76
- Callicles 80
Carr, David 311n1
Carruthers, Peter 269–271, 302
Caston, Victor 11n32, 53–56, 60–62
Chabris, Christopher 155
Chalmers, David 24
Chatton, Walter 142, 147–152
- Cicero 85
Clarke, Samuel 8, 205
Collins, Anthony 8
Condillac, Abbé de 228, 233
Cramer, Konrad 272
Cudworth, Ralph 6–10, 177, 205
Curley, Edwin 207, 212–214, 217
- Davenport, Anne A. 187n18
Davies, Catherine Glyn 9
Dennett, Daniel 13, 15n37, 219–220
Derrida, Jacques 13, 262n33
Descartes, René 1, 3, 9, 16, 22–23, 70, 78, 118–119, 141–142, 153–155, 168–175, 177–201, 205–210, 220n46, 223–227, 236, 246–247, 249, 313n5, 324–325
Diogenes Laertius 86
Duns Scotus, John 64, 127–128, 131, 133
- Elisabeth (Princess) 173, 325
Epictetus 82, 89–90, 173
Epicurus 72, 79, 87
Evans, Gareth 230
Everson, Stephen 70–74, 83
- Fichte, J.G. 19, 247–255, 259, 261–262, 264
Ficino, Marsilio 9–10
Fine, Gail 75–76
Fodor, Jerry 13, 299
Foucault, Michel 4n4, 264
Frank, Manfred 277, 279, 281, 284n48
Frankfurt, Harry 79, 88
Frede, Dorothea 42n21
Freud, Sigmund 255
Fromondus 179

- Garrett, Don 215–217
 Gaukroger, Stephen 179n5, 180n7, 200
 Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid al- 115–116
 Gilson, Étienne 205
 Goclenius 205–206
 Gregory of Rimini 136–137
 Gulick, Robert van 268
- Hamlyn, D.W. 51
 Hegel, G.W.F. 19, 47n29, 229, 246–248,
 253–254, 259–265
 Heidegger, Martin 257, 264,
 284n48, 285, 312–313, 321–323,
 321n37
 Henrich, Dieter 274–275, 277, 279, 281, 283,
 284n48
 Henry, Michel 13
 Henry of Ghent 123, 127
 Heraclitus 247
 Heywood, Charles 156
 Hobbes, Thomas 118, 182, 196
 Hölderlin, Friedrich 247, 253
 Hume, David 18n42, 224, 227–234,
 237–238, 240
 Husserl, Edmund 13n35, 16, 19, 264, 284n48,
 285, 312–328
 Hyperaspistes 193, 200
- Ibn Bājja 95–96, 112
 Ibn Rushd, see Averroës
 Ibn Sīnā, see Avicenna
- James, William 155, 298
 Johansen, Thomas 42n22
- Kaczmarek, Ludger 137
 Kahn, Charles H. 56, 60–62, 97
 Kant, Immanuel 16, 19, 223–224, 229–243,
 245–246, 248–249, 250, 252, 256, 267,
 311, 321n37
 Kentridge, Robert 156
 Kirkegaard, Sören 19
 Knuuttila, Simo 2n2, 58
 Kojève, Alexandre 262n33
- Lacan, Jacques 262n33
 Leibniz, G.W. 230, 319
 Lewis, C.I. 14n37
 Locke, John 1, 18n42, 56, 60, 78, 177, 205,
 224, 227–228, 267, 270, 289,
 302, 315n23
 Lormand, Eric 299
 Lycan, William 302
- Macintosh, Jack 159
 Marcus Aurelius, see Aurelius
 Maxwell, John 8, 194
 McCabe, M.M. 87
 McDowell, John 39, 69, 75, 83, 242
 McKeon, Richard 2n2
 McRae, Robert 184–185, 199
 Mellor, D.H. 301
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 283, 285, 311–312,
 320n32, 322, 324–325
 Modrak, Deborah 4–5
 Montaigne, Michel de 226
 More, Henry 179
 Moore, G.E. 14n37
 Morris, Katherine 180n7
 Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr, al-Dīn Shīrāzī,
 Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm) 118
- Nagel, Thomas 14, 75, 219–220
 Nancy, Jean-Luc 260n29
 Natalis, Hervaeus 125–126, 130
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 20, 250
 Novalis 256n22
- O'Brien, Denis 42n20
 O'Daly, Gerard 160, 166–167
 Ockham, William 22, 64, 123–130, 136–137,
 142–147, 149–152
 Olivi, Peter John 123
- Pashler, Harold 155–156
 Perler, Dominik 130
 Peter of Ailly 136–140
 Plato 3, 11–12, 14, 21–22, 29–48, 59,
 67–69, 73–75, 79–82, 85, 88, 91,
 158–159, 253
 Plotinus 9–10, 73–74, 78, 81–82, 86,
 89–93, 100
 Plutarch 73
 Posidonius 74
 Posner, Michael 156
 Protagoras 35–39, 67–68, 72, 84
- Quine, W.V.O. 224n3
- Radner, Daisie 183, 197–198
 Radner, Michael 183, 197–198
 Rāzī's Fakhr al-Dīn al- 113–115
 Regius 189
 Reid, Thomas 205, 228, 289, 302
 Rosenthal, David M. 207, 220n46,
 268, 302
 Rousseau, J.-J. 252

- Russell, Bertrand 14n37, 224, 230
Ryle, Gilbert 296
- Sartre, Jean-Paul 17n41, 262n33, 284n48,
285, 298
Schelling, F.W.J. 19, 247–248, 253–259,
261–265
Scheler, Max 285
Schlegel, Friedrich 256n20
Schopenhauer, Arthur 250
Searle, John 13, 219–220
Sellars, Wilfrid 242
Seneca 81, 91n47, 93
Sextus Empiricus 70–71, 82, 84–85,
225, 234
Shoemaker, Sidney 273
Simons, Daniel 155
- [Ps.-]Simplicius 74, 99–100
Socrates 29–30, 34–45, 67, 80–81, 87
Sousa, Ronald de 25n50
Spinoza, Baruch 25
Suhrawardī Shihāb al-Dīn al- 116–118
- Tetens, Johann N. 228
Theatetus 67
Themistius 101
Thiel, Udo 9, 182–184, 193–194
Tugendhat, Ernst 279–281
- Watson, John B. 296
Weiskrantz, Lawrence 156
Wilson, Margaret Dauler 214–215, 217
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 15–16, 20

SUBJECT INDEX

- a priori concepts 230–234
 - and synthetic 235
- aboutness 1, 5, 10–14, 297–299, 306, see also intentionality; representations
- act
 - awareness of 141–152
 - in Descartes 191–193, 196–197, 206, 210
 - in Kant 234
 - in Peter Aureoli 131
 - pure 249–250, 254n16
 - of reflection 250–251, 272
 - of the soul in Ancient philosophy 37–38, 52–57, 82, 91–92
 - of will/volition 6, 8, 125–126, 161–162, 189–193, 197–198, 200, 205, 317
- act-pole 17, 313–317, 320, 322–323
- actions and passions 18–22
 - in Ancient philosophy 90–91, 93, 153
 - in Descartes 169–174, 177, 189–190, 195, 197, 210
- action 18, 20, 89, 105, 208–209, 242–243, 249, 294, 308, see also agency
- actual-potential in Aristotle 64–65, 91
- affection 43, 60, 68, 208, 214 see also emotion
- agency 6, 18, 20, 105, 205, 208–209, 242–243, 269, 294–295, 308
- animal spirits 169
- animals 4, 14, 23, 31–32, 51, 57, 63, 98–99, 102–106, 111, 114, 154, 168, 175, 177–180, 200–201, 211–213, 270, 280, 295
 - as automata 179n5, 211
- appearance (*phantasia*) 58, 62, 67–68, 71–74, 76–77, 82, 86
- artificial intelligence 235n22
- attention 1, 5–6, 10, 23, 32, 86, 99–100, 150–151, 153–175, 177, 184–185, 193–196, 199–200, 285
 - in Augustine, 160–168
 - modern and present theories, 155–158
 - stimulus-driven vs. intentional, 154, 156–158, 161, 166, 169, 173–175
- attributes, see substance
- Aufhebung* 260
- behaviorism 296
- being 7, 12–13, 15, 19, 124–125, 129–130, 135, 245, 252, 254, 257, 321
- belief
 - and desire 243
 - authority of 87–88
 - in emotion 58, 60
 - systematicity of 85–86
- blindsight 304–305
- body 1, 9, 18–19, 21, 59, 115, 161, 208–209, 282–283, 320
 - as machine 178–179, 211, 225, 325–326
 - control of 162–165
 - expressive 225–237
 - human 169–171, 192–193, 213–214, 225–226
 - infantile 187, 192–193, 209, 216
 - one's own 324–327
- brain 169–170, 173, 220, 294, 305
- Cartesian/Cartesianism 19, 49, 63, 210, 223–224, 235–236, 240, 243, 247, 254, 313, 321

- categories/categorization 19–20, 169–170, 196, 200
 Kantian 232, 238
 causal closure of the natural world 295–296
 causal explanations, see explanations, causal
 causality, see concepts of cause; intentionality
 causes vs. reasons 242–243
 cognitive science 3, 235n22, 241, 268, 304–308
 common sense (*sensus communis*) 21, 53, 55, 55n6, 97, 102, 166–167, 167n26
 concepts
 acquisition of 232
 a priori, see a priori concepts
 of cause 231–232, 238
 of space and time 231
 of substance, see substance
 psychological 16
 conceptualization 23, 169–170, 200, 211–212, 270
 consciousness (types and levels of) 177, 188, 193–195, 197, 245–246, 261, see also unconsciousness
 absolute 246–247, 261, 283
 animal 14, 31–32, 270, 280
 anonymous 277
 egoless, see ego
 epistemic 288–291, 300–303, 306–308
 infant 180, 182, 192–198, 216, 270, 280
 natural 245, 251, 261–263
 non-linguistic 280, 284
 object- 246–250, 254n16, 265, 268–269, 273–279, 288–291, 300–303, 306–308
 perceptual, see perception
 phenomenal 3–5, 10, 14–16, 188n19, 267–273, 291, 291–292, 294–295, 298–306, 309
 poetical 262–263
 pre-conceptual 170, see also consciousness, animal
 processual 247–261
 reflexive 1, 5, 8–9, 19, 20–23, 177, 182–183, 186–201, 275–278, 284, 290–292
 relational vs. non-relational 275–277, 288–291
 rudimentary 177, 182, 186–201
 self-, see self-consciousness
 transcendental 19, 249–251, 313–320
 consciousness (characterizations and metaphors)
 and the light metaphor 180–181, 199–200, 258, 268, 314
 and the mirror metaphor 73–74, 135, 144
 as an emergent property of matter 24, 323
 as epiphenomenon 24, 323
 as mystery 219
 as thought 214
 common sense conceptions of 245, 289
 loss of 245–246,
 scientific conception of 219–220
 stream of 271–272, 314, 320
 subject vs. mental state 288–290
 ‘consciousness’, see terminology
 curiosity 172, 175
 Cyrenaics 68–69, 70–73, 75–76, 80, 84–85

Dasein 257, 321
 description theories of reference 230
 despair 261
 destruction of ontology 3, 313
 doubt 228, 261, 313n5
 dreaming 55, 177, 182, 188, 194, 197, 291–292
 see also sleep

 ecstasy 256–257, 259, 265
 ego 277
 as act-pole 312–317, 320, 322–323
 as monad 313, 318–319
 ego-centric 240, 320
 egoless experiences 275–276
 egological and non-egological theories
 276–277, 280–285
 personal 313, 314–326
 transcendental 313–320, 322–323
 eliminativism 16, 24, 179, 295–296
 emotions 74, 91, see also curiosity; despair;
 esteem; generosity; passions; wonder
 in Aristotle 57–60
 in Descartes 170–174
 in Plato 41–43
 in Spinoza 208
 empiricism 224–227, 230–233, 243, 304–307
 endogenous and exogenous, see attention,
 stimulus driven vs. intentional
 epistemology and philosophy of mind 1–2, 223n2, 224–225, 228, 234, 240, 313
 esteem 171–174
 evidence 241–242
 and appearance 227
 empirical 226–227, 307
 explanations/theories of the mental
 by properties 211–212, 216
 causal 10, 13, 15, 24–25, 69, 71, 74, 220, 226–229, 241–243, 287–288, 293–308, 326
 Freudian 220

- functional 304–306, 326, see also
 functionalism
 mechanical 172–173, 177, 180n7, 225–226
 neurophysiological 220, 229
 psychological 289–290
 externalism 223–224, 240, see also internalism
- faculty psychology, see psychology, and
 faculties
- feeling quality, see phenomenal quality
- feelings 6, 178–179, 187, 200, 205
- finitude 245–247, 250–251, 255–256, 261–265,
 321n37
- first-person perspective 5, 17, 21, 109,
 178–179, 181–182, 288–289, 303, see
 also subjectivity
- first-personal givenness 107n28, 138–140,
 181–182, 193, 197–199, 270–271, 280,
 302–303, 306, 308
- foundationalism 226–228, 248–252, 254–255
- foundations of consciousness 248–250, 257–258
- Frankfurt School 262n33, 264
- freedom 294–295
 in German idealism 249–258, 262–263
 in Kant 240–243, 249
- functionalism
 contemporary 296–297, 300, 304–306
 in Kant 235n22
 in Spinoza 218
- generosity 174, 263
- habituation 315–316
- Heidelberg school 22, 267–284
- higher-order theories 20–22, 56–57, 146,
 183–186, 190, 196, 267–274, 290–291,
 301–303, see also second-order
 accounts
- historical vs. rational reconstruction 1–6
- historicity of consciousness 246, 259, 261–263
- human 31–32, 62, 113, 154, 167–168, 223–224,
 236, 245–246, 254, 261–262, 288–289,
 293–295
- I 20, 117, 277, 280
 absolute 245, 252–254
 and non-I 251
 life of 250–252
 non-objectifiable 254n16, 271–277, see also
 objectification of the subject
 pure 249–252, 254n16
 transcendental 249–252, 254, see also ego,
 transcendental
- idealism
 German 19, 245–265
 Kant's refutation of empirical idealism 238
 subjective vs. objective 254
- ideas
 as mental objects 191–192, 225–229, 291
 ideas of 214–215, 217
 in God 214–215
 innate 175
 in Spinoza 208, 213–217
 “new way of ideas” 224–229, 233
 psychological conception of 217
- identity 7, 18n42, 44, 116, 272, 280
 principle of 249–250, 255–257, 259–260
- identity theory 295–296
- illuminationists 112, 116–119
- imagination 11n32, 55, 74–75, 132, 170, 173,
 206, 209, 210n20, 250–251, 258, 317,
 see also appearance
- impressions, Humean 231, 233, 237–238
- incorrigibility of experiences 223n2, see also
 privileged access
- incrementalism 215–216
- indexicals 20
- infallibilism 223, 236
- infant 177, 179, 181n8, 187–190, 194–200, 209,
 270, 280
- infinite regress, see regress
- inner sense 7, 56, 60, 241
- intellect 33, 40, 96, 127–128, see also thinking
 in Descartes 181, 189–192, 194n27
 in Kant 233–234
 in Medieval philosophy 125–126, 133–134,
 136–139, 146
 in Plato 39–40, see also mind (*nous*)
 in Plotinus (*nous*) 92–93
 in Spinoza 209
- intelligibility of the world 10–11, 64, 77
- intentional object 270, 293, 318–319, see also
 intentionality
- intentionality 5, 8, 10–14, 17, 32n2, 123–140,
 181, 190–192, 195–198, 217, 270, 275,
 279, 283–284, 293–294, 297–302,
 306–308, 322, 327
 and causality 297–300, 307–308
 in Medieval philosophy 12–13
 object- 275–276, 279
 vs. causality 293–294, 318–319
 symmetry of the intentional relation
 12–13, 126
- internal senses, see also psychology, and
 faculties
 in Arabic philosophy 96–102, 118

- internalism 223–224
 interpretation 2–3
 intersubjectivity 16–17, 283–284, 308
 in German idealism 247–248, 252–253, 262–263
 in phenomenology 283, 311–312, 319–320
 introspection 23, 75–76, 155, 205–206, 270, 274, 276
 Kant's rejection of 235, 241
 intuition
 intellectual 245, 250–251, 255–256, 261, see also perception, intellectual;
 knowledge, intuitive
 judgments
 comparative 31, 39–41, 55n7
 formation of 316–317
 freedom of 240–243
 in Augustine 166–167
 in Descartes 194n27
 in Kant 224, 232, 234, 241–243
 in Ockham 136
 in Plato 31, 39–41, 45–46
 logical functions of 232–233
 normative constraints for 241–242
 knowledge 83–84, 86, 117, 129, 154, 168, 170, 205, see also self-knowledge
 abstractive 127, 131–132, 136–140
 a priori conditions of 235
 empirical 154, 165–168, 172–175
 higher 246
 historical vs. scientific 226–227
 intuitive 117, 127–128, 131–133, 136–138, 140, 144–147, 152, 208, 228
 of one's existence 22, 62, 107–108
 of particulars 230–231
 Protagorean view of 35, 67–68, 84
 terminative vs. denominative 135
 transcendental 235–236
 linguistic activity/experience 13n35, 15, 280, 284, 293
 life 15, 38
 biological 292, 298, 326
 spiritual 17, 19–20, 246–247, 249–252, 322, 324–326
 Marxism 262n33, 264
 materialism 24, 83
 contemporary 241–243, 323–326
 mechanical explanations, see explanations, mechanical
 memory 55, 162–166, 169–170, 187, 209, 231, 317
 mental
 concepts 296
 content 21, 22, 69–70, 78, 83, 93, 109–110, 148, 188n19, 195, 223, 297–301
 functions vs. substances 235–236
 representation, see representation
 states 4, 12, 14, 16–17, 22, 24–25, 70, 209–210, 217, 288–290, 297–302
 mental–material/mental–physical 72, 75, 211–219, see also mind–body
 metaphysics 1–2, 64–65, 230
 and contemporary analytic philosophy 288–292, 297–298
 in Spinoza 203, 217–219
 mind (*nous*) 33, 44–45
 as principle of synthetic activity 39–41
 determining the meaning of experiences 46
 mind 1–7, 177, 293
 and matter 186, 203, 211
 God's 149, 214–215, 250, 258
 human and non-human 214–215, 224
 in Descartes 206
 in Spinoza 203–220
 non-conscious 215
 power of 7–8, 162, 205
 seventeenth-century philosophy of 6–10, 203–210, 224–229
 without consciousness 203–220, 303
 mind–body, see also soul–body
 dualism 24–25, 49, 168, 180n7
 parallelism 211–219
 problem 24–25, 219–220, 225–226, 327
 union 169–171, 187, 192–193, 324–327
 monad 313, 318–320
 morality and moral philosophy 1–2, 80–81, 234, 252, 294, 308
 motivation 20, 171–173
 natural sciences 24–25, 287, 293, 323
 naturalism 13, 15–16, 175
 contemporary 23–25, 287–288, 292–308, 323–326
 in Ancient philosophy 225–226
 in Spinoza 215–216
 naturalization 5, 15, 23–25, 175, 215–216, 287–288, 292–308, 323–327
 nature 24–25
 as correlate of consciousness 254
 as life and creation 254, 257–258
 in German idealism 253–255

- in Kant 254
- in Merleau-Ponty 322
- in Spinoza 215–216
- mechanization of 225–226
- Neoplatonists 96, 99, 115, 118, see also Plotinus
- neurophysiology, see explanations, neurophysiological
- non-conscious mentality 215, 268–269, 288–290
- normative conscience 204–205
- objectification of the subject 17–20, 23, 109, 248–249, 271–279, 323
- objective world 36–37, 64, 69–74, 239, 287, 293–295
- ontology 1, 15n38, 16, 24, 82–83, 291–293, 297–298
- other subjects, see intersubjectivity
- ownness 5, 8, 10, 14, 69, 78–93, see also subjectivity; phenomenal quality
 - as identification 17, 79, 88, 90
- pain 14, 41–43, 59, 171, 180n7, 187, 193, 208, 270–271, 273, 294–295
- pan-psychism 212–219
- passions 169–175, see also actions and passions; emotions
 - in Descartes 187n17
 - rational control of 171–174
- perception
 - active vs. receptive 10–12, 50, 60, 73–75, 98, 153–154, 159, 161
 - and *as*-structure 45–46
 - and reason 45–46, 98, 154, 165
 - cross-modal unity of 21n46, 30–31, 95–97, 102, 104, 116, 229–236
 - cross-temporal unity of 31, 116, 163
 - in Arabic philosophy 95–119
 - in Aristotle 10–12, 50–57, 62, 64, 153
 - in Augustine 158–160
 - in Medieval philosophy 129, 132, 141, 143–144, 147, 151, 159
 - in Platonism 11–12, 33, 35–38, 42, 45–46, 159
 - intellectual 181, 189–197, see also intuition, intellectual
 - object of 7, 224, 229–230, 233–240
 - of ideas 214
 - perception of 21–22, 30, 51–57, 112, see also reflexivity; higher-order theories
 - sense perception 273, 283–284
 - in Descartes 169–174, 177–179, 187–195
 - in Kant 233–243
 - in Spinoza 206, 210n20, 226
- perceptual realism, see realism, perceptual
- person 14, 18, 40, 79, 185, 195, 252, 279–280, 289–290, 302, 320–322
 - empirical 316n17
 - transcendental 312–318, 320–322
 - unity of 4, 7
- phantasia*, see appearance
- phenomenal consciousness, see consciousness (types and levels of), phenomenal
- phenomenal quality 3, 10, 14, 16, 24, 63, 148, 188n19, 195–199, 267, 270–273, 291, 294, 298–300, 305
- phenomenology 13, 126, 264–265, 284–285, 312–318, 320–321, 327
 - genetic 318, 322
- philosophy
 - analytic 2–3, 13, 224, 228, 267–268, 288, 297, 308
 - and wonder 172–173
 - contemporary philosophy of mind 1–2, 13, 15, 203, 219–220, 224, 241–243, 287, 267, 287, 297, 307–308
 - continental 2–3, 13, 267, 284
 - history of 1–23
 - practical 251–252
 - systematic 223–224, 259–261
- pleasure 41–43, 57, 59, 171, 187, 192, 270
- pre-conceptual consciousness, see consciousness (types and levels of), pre-conceptual
- presence 12–13, 123–140, see also intentionality
- primary passivity 312, 322, 322–323
- primary qualities 225–226
- privileged access 14–15, 68–72, 75–77, 88–89, 93, 97, 275
- problem
 - binding 224, 229, 233–236
 - of consciousness 300
 - of pan-psychism, see pan-psychism
 - of subjectivity 282–284, 294–295
 - infinite regress, see regress
 - mind–body 219–220, 295
- propositional attitudes 279–280
- propositions 208–209, 213–214, 260
- psychology
 - and faculties 12, 55–56, 95–100, 118
 - contemporary 3, 175, 304–308
 - folk 270

- psychology (*Continued*)
 nineteenth-century history of 155
 scientific 296
 psycho-physical parallelism 211–219
- qualia, see phenomenal quality
- rationalism 175, 230, 233, 240
 realism 234
 perceptual 68, 70, 78
- reason, see also intellect; mind (*nous*)
 in Arabic Philosophy 113
 in Descartes 171–175
 in German idealism 245–246
 in Kant 241–243
 in Neoplatonism 92–93
 in Plato and Platonism 44–45, 88, 98, 167
 in Stoicism 89
- reasons vs. causes 242–243, 293–294, 307
 recognition 247, 262–263
 reduction, transcendental–phenomenological
 265, 313–314
 reductionism 24–25, 228, 241
 reflection 5, 8–10, 20–23, 32, 53, 87, 99,
 109–111, 144, 174–175, 182–185,
 193–195, 198, 206, 214, 256, 269–279
 limits of 267–279
 philosophical 182–183, 250–252
 transcendental 236, 238–240, 245–252
- reflection theories, see higher-order theories
 reflexivity 5, 8–10, 19–23, 182–183, 186–201,
 275–280, 290–292, see also self-
 awareness; consciousness (types and
 levels of), reflexive
 in Arabic philosophy 97–100, 109
 in Aristotle 50–62
 in Descartes 180–201
 in Medieval philosophy 21–22, 145–151
 in Stoicism 81
 of emotion 60
 of perception 50–57, 60–62, 144–147
 vs. recognition in Hegel 262–263
- regress/infinite regress 21–22, 51–52, 146–147,
 149, 182–183, 195–199, 248–249, 274,
 see also reflexivity
- representation 11–12, 23, 75–76, 128, 136,
 138–140, 225–228, 229, 236, 249–251,
 254, 256, 268
 as aboutness 297
- representationalism 69, 225–226, 228–230,
 238–240, 297–301
- responsibility 180, 294, 308
 romanticism 245, 254, 256n20
- science of consciousness 25–26, 219–220
 second-order accounts 21–22, 97–100, 112,
 146, 183–186, 190–193, 196–199, 214,
 see also higher-order theories
- secondary qualities 225–226
 sedimentation 312, 317n23
- self 1–3, 5–6, 10, 18–19, 91, 177, 199–200, 246,
 249–251, 268–277, 282–283
 abandonment of 256
 and other 283, 311–312, 319–320, see also
 intersubjectivity
 finite 246, 251
 in Arabic philosophy 100, 107–108, 113–115
 in Aristotle 62–63
 in Spinoza 209
 transcendental 249–252, 254, 311–320,
 322–323
 self-appropriation (*oikeiōsis*) 80–81
- self-awareness 1, 5, 9, 208–209, 224, 235–236,
 241, 267–285, 301, see also self-
 consciousness
 and language 280, 284, 293
 animal vs. human 98–118
 bodily 9, 105, 282–284
 in Aristotle 62–63
 in Avicenna 101–111
 intellectual 99–100, 112, 115
 pre-reflective 106, 275–278,
 281–282, 285
 primitive 99, 109–110, 103–106
 reflective 99, 109
- self-consciousness 32, 50, 62–63, 118, 141,
 145–147, 177, 199–200, 246–250,
 254–259, 261–262, 267–285, 292, 301,
 see also self-awareness
- self-control 171–174
 self-determination 171–175, 195
 self-intellection, see thinking of thinking
 self-knowledge 22, 108, 115, 117, 142–144,
 195, 208–209, 274,
 301, 307
- self-perception (*sunaisthēsis*) 9–10, 81,
 99–100
- self-recognition 80, 208–209, 261–262
 self-reference 88, 147, 280, see also reflexivity
 sensation, see also perception
 in Ancient and Medieval philosophy
 153–154
 in Descartes 169–171, 177–179, 187–188,
 192–193, 198n32, 227
 in Kant 229–234, 237–238
 of heat and cold 35n8, 187, 193
- sensationalism 228

- sense data 3, 14, 291, see also impressions;
consciousness (types and levels of),
phenomenal
- sense organs 39, 52, 84–85, 95, 115–116, 162,
169, 179, 194–195n27, 225–226
- sensory atomism 228
- sensus communis*, see common sense
- sickness 182, 193–194, 200, 205
- scepticism 68–69, 71–72, 75–76, 226–228,
234–240
- sleep 4, 50, 193, 275, 317, see also dreaming
- soul 1, 3–5, 10–12, 14, 17, 33, 37, 42, 47–48,
82–83, 95–96, 101, 153, 177–179,
293, 321
- animal 111, 116
 - division of the 153, 174
 - human 22, 37–48, 110–111, 114–115
 - unity of the 42–45, 116
- soul–body 49–50, 321–327, see also
mind–body
- solipsism 71, 126, 247, 319–320
- space and time, see concepts, of space
and time
- spirit 246–263, 293, 319
and body 320–327
- spontaneity 241–243
- state consciousness, see consciousness
(characterizations and metaphors),
subject vs. mental state
- stimulus 156–158, 163, 165, 169–171, 174–175,
180n7, 194n27, 305–306, 326
- Stoicism 9, 73–74, 80–82, 85–86, 89, 173
- structures of mind 13–14, 20–23, 46, 84–85,
143–152, 224, 251, 270, 275, 281,
313–320, see also intentionality;
reflexivity
- subject 12–13, 17–18, 82, 105, 143, 148, see
also first-person perspective;
intersubjectivity
- absolute 257, 261–263
 - as non-objectifiable 19–20, see also
objectification of the subject
in German idealism 248–265
 - Kantian 246, 249
 - of action, see agency
 - of consciousness/experience 33, 198,
288–290, 294–295
 - of language 280, 284, 293
 - of perception 35, 189
 - of thought 134, 190n23, 195, 294–295
 - other 283
 - subject–object 13, 35, 143–148, 255, 259,
268–275, 280, 288–289
 - transcendental 246, 249, 249–252, 254,
294–295, 311–320
- subjectivity 1–5, 10, 14–20, 269–270, 281,
291–292, 294–309, see also objectivity;
first-person perspective;
intersubjectivity
- and substance 17
 - in Ancient philosophy 68–77
 - in Aristotle 63
 - in German philosophy 245–254
 - in Kant 236–239
 - in Medieval philosophy 125–126, 129,
148–149, 151
 - in Plato 33–34, 36–37, 46
- substance
- in Arabic philosophy 110–111,
113–114
 - in Descartes 206, 327–328
 - in Kant 238–239, 240–241
 - in Spinoza 208, 211–212
 - modes and modifications of 212
 - thinking and extended 9, 211
- synthesizing sensory information 228,
233–234, 327, see also perception,
cross-modal unity of
- temporality 17–18, 229, 233, 282–284, 293,
311–312, 314–320
- terminology/terms
- aisthēsis* 53
 - animus* 204n2
 - ‘connaissance’ 205
 - ‘conscience’ 205
 - conscientia, conscius, conscio* 6–7, 204–208
 - ‘consciousness’ 4–10, 29, 49, 204–208,
288–290, 299
 - ‘idea’ 191n24
 - intention* 124–125
 - ‘intentionality’ 12–13
 - ‘mind’ 214
 - ‘naturalism’ 292–293
 - opsis* 53
 - ‘ownness’ 79–82
 - presentialitas* 123–124, 132
 - ‘sunaisthēsis’ 6–9, 99–100
 - ‘reflexivity’ 20, 181–182
 - ‘subjectivity’ 14–15, 17
 - ‘willing’ 190n23
- “thing in itself” 246, 248, 250, 262
- thinking/thought 129, 271–273, see also
intellect; reason
- as process 250–252, 255–256, 260–261
 - in Ancient philosophy 77, 90, 92

- thinking/thought (*Continued*)
 in Aristotle 60–62
 in Chatton 147–148
 in Descartes 184–186, 194–199,
 206, 210
 in German idealism 250–252
 in seventeenth-century philosophy 205
 in Spinoza 211–214
 non-reflexive 196
 thinking of thinking 60–62, 142–143, 149,
 183–185, 188, 195
 thinking thing 206, 210n20, 213,
 249, 313n5
- thought-experiment
 flying man 107–111, 115, 117
 inverted spectrum 300
 zombie 299–300
- time-consciousness, inner 282, 315, 320, 323
- transcendental 5, 16
 analysis of the conditions of experience 7,
 19, 224–240
 conditions vs. absolute ground 255–257
 person 312–313, 316–318, 320
 self 313–320
- transcendentalism 19
 in German idealism 245–252, 255
 in Husserl 19, 313–320
 in Kant 19, 224, 230–240
- unconsciousness 3, 5, 10, 149, 151–152, 164, 220,
 254–255, 284, 289–290, 304–305, 309
- understanding 133–134
 in Descartes 189–193, 206, 210n20
 in German idealism 245
 in Kant 234
 terminative vs. denominative –distinction of
 134–135
- veil of ideas 225
- voluntarism
 in Descartes 170–175
- “what’s it like”, see phenomenal quality
- will, willing 8, 20, 151, 169–174,
 189–194, 197, 206, 250,
 257–258, see also act, of will/volition
- wonder 169–175, 181
 as the beginning of philosophy 172–173