
Selfhood, Identity and Personality Styles

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Contents

Introduction	1
Part One	5
1 Subjectivity and Ipseity	7
1.1 From Kant to cybernetics	9
1.2 The sense of self and the variety of experience	11
1.3 Nonlinear systems and the construction of the self	12
Nonlinear systems	12
Construction of the self	14
1.4 The organization of living systems and constructivism of the self	16
The organization of living systems	17
Constructivism of the self	18
1.5 Robert's self from a systemic perspective	21
1.6 The continuity of the sense of self	22
1.7 The return of the world and the question 'Who?'	23
Returning to the world	24
The question 'Who?' (<i>Die Werfrage</i>)	25
1.8 Finding itself in things and with others	27
1.9 Reflection	28
1.10 Meaning	29
1.11 Inclination	31
2 Ipseity and Language	37
2.1 Traces of the other	37
2.2 Shared meaning	39
2.3 <i>Finding</i> oneself in the world: suggestions from phenomenology	41
2.4 Body-to-body	43

2.5	The significativity of expressions and objects	46
2.6	Referential communication	47
2.7	Oneself in the mirror and in the refraction of language	50
2.8	Recognition of self in the mirror and in language	52
2.9	Affective engagements	55
2.10	Acting and speaking	57
3	Personal Identity	65
3.1	Speaking of the past	67
3.2	Stories of the future	68
3.3	The sense of self in the age of reason	70
3.4	The modes of identity	71
3.5	Inclinations	75
3.6	Situatedness	78
3.7	The body, pain and others	79
4	Emotioning	87
4.1	Embodied emotions and judgements of the body	87
4.2	E-moting	90
4.3	E-moting with others	93
4.4	Emotional inclinations	95
4.5	Constructionist situatedness	97
4.6	The impact of technology	99
4.7	Technological tuning	101
4.8	Mediated affective engagement	102
Part Two		107
5	The Eating Disorder-prone Style of Personality	111
5.1	Co-perceiving the self and other	114
5.2	Disorders	119
	Anorexia nervosa	119
	Bulimia nervosa	121
	Binge-eating disorder	124
	Disorders connected to male body shape	126
	Behavioural addictions (compulsive buying, pathological gambling, kleptomania, internet addiction, impulsive-compulsive sexual behaviour, pyromania)	128
6	The Obsessive-Compulsive-prone Style of Personality	133
6.1	<i>Michael Kohlhaas</i>	134
6.2	<i>Mr Prokharchin</i>	137
6.3	Disorders	141
	Thematic personality disorders	144
	Obsessive-compulsive disorders	150

6.4 Case vignettes	151
Uncertainty about one's own thoughts	151
Uncertainty about one's actions and their consequences	153
Uncertainty about one's sense of self	154
7 Personalities Prone to Hypochondria-Hysteria	157
7.1 The Loser	159
7.2 Disorders	163
Hysteria	165
Hypochondria	171
8 The Phobia-prone Style of Personality	179
8.1 Interoceptive awareness and emotional experience	180
8.2 'The stuffed bird'	182
8.3 Zuccarello the distinguished melodist	183
8.4 Case vignette	186
8.5 Disorders	188
The distortion of personal stability	188
The fear of fear	189
What is the origin of distorted beliefs?	191
Agoraphobia	194
8.6 Case vignettes	195
Specific phobia?	195
Spontaneous panic?	196
9 The Depression-prone Style of Personality	199
9.1 The margins of the problem	199
9.2 Enduring dispositions	203
9.3 The depression-prone style of personality	204
9.4 Disorders	212
9.5 Case vignette	214
9.6 Is depression an adaptation?	215
Message in a Bottle	221
References	223
Index	263

Introduction

The title of a book, like a proper name, defines its identity. There are three interweaving themes informing this text. The first is selfhood, which, in line with the continental hermeneutic–phenomenological tradition, we have termed ipseity – thus emphasizing the need to account for the way in which each person, in dealing with others and the different circumstances of everyday life, is present to himself and pre-reflexively conscious of himself. This perspective of selfhood emerges from the ontological need to grasp individuals from their ways of being rather than by conceptualizing them according to the same categories that are applied to objects.

It is this very need that underlines the second theme of the book, identity, which in relation to action and feeling raises the question of ‘who’ to a new level: that of temporality. Stating who a person is implies that all individual passions and actions be understood within the framework of a historical dimension characterized by the permanence of the person, designated by its proper name, as being the same over time. In line with the work of Ricoeur, we have come to envisage narrative as the act by means of which personal identity takes shape while events interweave to form a plot. It is through the various forms of narrative that the person acquires his historical identity, which we term ‘narrative identity’.

If narrative is what enables the individual to recognize his own experiences as personal experiences, and hence to identify himself, narrative variances can be seen to reflect different ways of experiencing one’s own life. It is on the basis of these reflections on the relation between the pre-reflexive dimension and its narrative configuration that we have approached the third theme of the book: the psychological typifying of personality according to different emotional tendencies which crystallize in the course of a person’s life and are reflected in the construction of his personal story. This is where we turn to the neurosciences and develop a psychopathology that can take account of continuity with

normal personality. From this perspective, our appeal to literary (as well as clinical) examples should be regarded as an engagement with an experimental field within which we can observe the variations and boundaries of the narrative and of its characters: a sort of laboratory allowing us to analyse the heterogeneous ‘experiments’ performed on identity, thus drawing literature and psychology closer together.

It was our wish for the cover of the book to be embellished by the reproduction of a painting: Francis Bacon’s ‘Study of George Dyer’. This original choice was due to the ontological perspective that informs our work – and which Bacon grasps in his painting: a perspective that sees the living body as a way of being in the world, and its happening as a wholly original phenomenon. We too, like Bacon, see the perceiving flesh and the perceived body as one. Unfortunately, although we did our best to elucidate the reasons why we wished to make use of this reproduction, the Bacon Estate did not grant us permission.

The text comprises two parts. Part One, in four chapters, explores the first two themes of the book. In the five following chapters, Part Two discusses the various styles of personality and the pathologies these may engender.

Chapter 1 focuses on the difference between the typically modern conceptualization of the Self and a view of ipseity that by placing one’s way of feeling in the world at the centre of its analysis reverses both the perspective on the meaning of experience and that on reflection and personal identity. Chapter 2 engages with the relation between ipseity and language, starting from the problem of individual understanding of the other, which has been addressed in developmental psychology and the neurosciences. The importance and limits of the Mirror Neuron System (MNS) as a means to explain the relation between experience and language represents the driving motive behind our argument. Chapter 3 introduces the question of how to account, by means of language, for the permanence of Self over time. Personal identity dynamically takes shape through the narrative act: through language, it reflects different emotional inclinations which, when configured into a story, allow the person to perceive himself as stably situated over time. These dispositions may be defined on a continuum that extends from the Inward to the Outward polarity, depending on whether the frame of reference adopted by the individual in his search for personal stability is predominantly based on the body or on an externally anchored system of coordinates.

Chapter 4, which ends the first section, turns to the psychology of emotions to explore the distinction traced in the previous chapter between Inward and Outward, showing how the different possible combinations along the continuum demarcated by these polarities correspond to different ways of feeling emotion. This emotional basis will be the foundation on which to present the different styles of personality that characterize the five chapters making up the second section of the book. Each style may thus manifest those characteristics that mark one of the two polarities in a more or less prevalent way, thereby finding a place within the continuum.

In the context of the Outward polarity, Chapter 5 explores issues surrounding the type of personality prone to eating disorders, while Chapter 6 examines the style prone to obsessive-compulsive disorders.

Unlike the previous styles of personality, the style prone to hysteria and hypochondria – the object of Chapter 7 – may be considered a sort of combination of the two polarities, as both are here used in the search for personal stability.

In the context of the Inward polarity, the styles of personality prone to phobias and depression are analyzed in Chapters 8 and 9, respectively.

Arguments fixed in the written form cannot but show the influence of the conversations, debates and exchanges of ideas that have accompanied us during the writing of this text: in particular, our meetings and walks with Vittorio Gallese, in whose company we spent many late nights discussing the meaning of experience and its neural substrate – an experience often enriched by our discussions on phenomenology and the philosophy of science with Corrado Sinigaglia. To these we should add our weekly reflections on research methodology, genetics, psychiatry and neurosciences with Alessandro Bertolino; our daily dialogues on developmental psychology, the neurosciences and psychotherapy with Viridiana Mazzola; our pondering on the themes of ancient philosophy with Michele Alessandrelli and on hermeneutics with Elizbieta O'Bara.

On the day on which this introduction was written, one of our pupils, Martina Grilli, lost her life in a car accident. She too took part in the conversations that contributed to shape this book. We express our most profound and sincere gratitude to Martina and all our students for their curiosity and eagerness to learn, and for the confidence they placed in us by choosing us as their teachers.

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1 Subjectivity and Ipseity

Dasein works in the how of its being-now.¹

Robert is thirty years old. Over the last ten years he has done odd jobs, including holiday village entertainer, ski instructor and skipper. He has travelled a great deal, he has had many love affairs and he has passionately sought to realize one of the dreams of his youth. Robert wanted to be a pilot. In order to achieve this goal he studied hard, he acquired pilot licenses, he went to live in different countries, he spent a lot of money. Nevertheless, today, despite having completed his training, and despite having received promises, commitments and assurances from various companies, he still does not have a job. This, in his opinion, is what has led him to seek help. Indeed, he feels his life is meaningless, that he has no stimuli and that he is incapable of taking any initiative whatsoever, even the simplest. He remains closeted at home all day long.

In actual fact, on reconstructing the origin of Robert's current problem, the onset of this malaise appears to be related to the coming to an end of Robert's relationship with a woman: Sarah, the girl he was living with, disappeared suddenly from Robert's life. Robert had met Sarah two years earlier in a discotheque. Before that he was feeling just as he is feeling now – tired and bored by his existence, bitterly disappointed by the fact that he could not find any work, suffering through a life which was scattered with periods of emptiness, in which his only problem was how he could get through the day.

Sarah is twenty-three years old and works in a bar. When Robert first sees her he is stunned by her physical beauty: her green eyes, her slender figure, her blonde hair – a set of features which seizes his imagination. He has only just seen her and he is already in love with her.

From that night on his only thought is how he can manage to meet her again. He tries to meet people who know her, he approaches her friends, he talks with the owner of the discotheque to try to obtain information about her, he returns to the discotheque in order to meet her – until he manages to organize a dinner to which he invites her in the company of mutual friends. As in the film which Robert has constructed in his imagination, from that evening on their encounters become more frequent and intense. However, something happens which shatters Robert's expectations. As the two become more deeply acquainted, Robert experiences an increasing sense of anxiety and malaise; he

finds he is unable to talk about his life, and he feels she is not close to him. Perhaps it's their difference in age, perhaps because they have reached different stages of maturity, or probably because they have different types of sensibilities. This distance, which is a sign that intimacy between the two is impossible, dashes his hopes. The body which drew him like a magnet does not possess the qualities he desires in a woman. Despite this fact, he suggests they live together.

After all, despite the distance between them, she is beautiful, attentive to his needs, quick at reading his thoughts and anticipating his desires. And what is more, he no longer has the strength to live alone, to fall, shut up in his room, into that painful condition of total loss of meaning which he experiences every day.

Since he met Sarah, those days destroyed by emptiness have disappeared. Sarah manages to keep him away from the precipices of solitude by constantly seeking him out. This is the most important effect which the girl has produced on his life, and this is the reason why he has asked her to live with him.

When Sarah enters Robert's world, he has already been a 'remote control man' for several years, a man who spends his days moving from the settee to the television, to the PlayStation, to the computer. Thus, for Sarah, choosing to live with Robert means joining this seesaw, moving from one screen to another, tuning in to his expectations, but at the same time camouflaging herself in Robert's daily life. The only interval between changing screens is a raid on the shopping centres to lose themselves among the crowds, to buy some unimportant object or other . . . and so on, day in day out.

After a few months she gives up her job in the discotheque, even though it is only part-time. Every second of the day her life is absorbed into Robert's and becomes indistinguishable from his; while he navigates through his technological spaces she concentrates her attention on him, eliminating any possibility of emptiness that might occur.

Gradually, even those escapes to the shopping centres become rarer and rarer, as does sexual intercourse; she becomes ashen, he observes her dying away.

This is one year after their relationship began.

Suddenly she starts being a little less attentive, 'less devoted', in his words. In other words, Sarah begins to be no longer exclusively attuned to Robert's life. One of her old friends makes an appearance, then she timidly goes out for the first time, almost as if guilty of committing some heinous crime, then she goes out for a pizza, then to the cinema, then to the discotheque, then . . . her absences become more frequent . . . she is less considerate, and when she goes out, in an incredible crescendo, he seeks her out, he is worried, he fears he will lose her, he is terrified in case she leaves him. Emptiness reappears on the horizon.

Robert attempts to stem the haemorrhage of meaning caused by Sarah's abandoning him in every way possible. He attempts bribery: he buys her increasingly costly gifts; then come the threats, the arguments, the violent fights. He feels Sarah is on the point of leaving him. Her periods of absence become longer and longer until, one day, she disappears without leaving any word.

He falls into the abyss. 'I seemed to exist no longer, I couldn't feel myself anymore'. His sense of identity dissolves into thin air. For the first time in his life, he realizes just how important Sarah is to him: 'She was my mirror so while she was there, I was there too, then she went away and suddenly I didn't exist any longer.' He disappears, drawn into nothingness.

1.1 From Kant to cybernetics

What is the origin of this painful displacement, of this disappearing into nothingness, of this being absorbed by the void? What structures underlie the ordinary and the extraordinary experiencing of Self? What is the origin of the so-called sense of Self?

Most people could probably provide an intuitive answer to this question. At bottom, the sense of Self corresponds to that experience of ownership and impenetrability of one's thoughts, of one's internal dialogues, of one's affective states, that many – but not all – of us have from infancy. This 'mental solitude' is held as constituting the basis of our sense of personal uniqueness, of identification and of demarcation from others. It is perhaps that very same solitude that Descartes had in mind when he redefined the concepts of subject and subjectivity.

Ultimately, being oneself means that the faculty of knowing lies within the subject, in his head, and the subject has such a status by dint of being enclosed within himself, separate and distinct from the world and from others.

Doesn't common sense tell us the same thing? Isn't it true that we say 'What's got into you?' to express surprise at, and disapproval of, unexpected and bizarre behaviour? And again, doesn't common sense tell us that strange behaviour is signalled by tapping one's forehead with one's forefinger?

'Why the Mind is in the Head' is the title of one of the lectures delivered at the 1951 Hixon Symposium, a landmark in the history of cybernetics (McCulloch, 1965); half a century later modern neuroscience has definitely not rejected the idea of locating the mind in the head (Amodio and Frith, 2006).

But Robert's case presents us with a strange dilemma. Robert loses his sense of Self, he disappears as a person, when Sarah leaves him. He thus possesses a discontinuous sense of Self, which comes into being only through the presence of the other and which disappears when the other disappears. Being alone 'in one's own head', dialogue with oneself without the other, corresponds to the loss of meaning, to the dissolution of the sense of Self. Naturally, when dealing with experiences of this nature, a chorus of voices is raised by those who question the very existence of the Self understood as a self-contained individual, which modernity had recognized as a subject.

One of the most authoritative voices in this chorus is Ken Gergen's (1999: 122), who asks the question: 'can we compellingly reinscribe what it is to be a person in a way that moves us away from the individualist premise and toward the relational?' In this way a new topic comes on stage in contemporary psychology: Self as Relationship. One of the foundation stones of the modern mode of conceptualizing the Self, being enclosed within the confines of one's own mental sphere, is shattered. In one fell swoop the gulf of sense between the subject and reality is overcome. The Self as solitary lord and master of *cogitationes* becomes the public co-creator of meaning; its constitutive dimension is social, like the discourses through which it emerges: socially distributed selves animated by socially-constructed emotions. This is the stance taken by social constructivists.

The Relational Self has had a significant impact on contemporary psychology and psychotherapy. This new hot topic, which made its appearance a few decades ago on a psychological stage that was lifeless and lacking in ideas,² has managed to group together various trends, which go from constructionism to constructivism, from family therapy to narrativism, from cognitivism right up to Buddhist psychology.

Robert's experience, however, touches upon another, even more pressing, central conceptual issue that occupies philosophers, neuroscientists, sociologists and scholars of literature: the problem of the sense of unity of the human experience. That is, the relationship between the multiplicity of the individual's actions and passions and the unity of the Self, or as James believed, the relationship between the Self as known (Me) and the Self as knower (I).

When Robert passes from the chat line to the PlayStation, from films to shopping centres, from the discotheque to compulsive shopping, when, in the intervals between different contexts, he is lost in a meaningless emptiness, when he perceives himself only when he is tuned in to an external source of reference, the way Robert perceives himself does not appear to be ascribable to a sense of unity which knows itself (is conscious of itself) as the basis of its own actions. It is difficult to understand an experience of Self of this nature in the light of that type of subjectivity which modern thought conceives of as what remains identical despite wide variations in conduct.

The inability to account for a mode of experiencing life such as Robert's is connected to the very characteristics which define the Self as it is conceived of by modernity: the Self's privacy even to itself, the unity of the multiplicity of experiences and the continuity of the sense of Self.

These aspects, which are constitutive of the modern Self, also correspond to the account common sense offers of first-person experience. For, when one thinks of oneself, who would not say that he is certain that his thoughts are private (privacy), that he feels he is always himself in the different situations he encounters in daily life (unity) and that he feels that his experiences are linked together by an uninterrupted sense of being himself (continuity)?

Robert, on the contrary, does not experience his own Self as being stable over time. He might say he does not have a sense of unity, a stable image of the Self, but that in fact he has many, all of which are different. He would say he is not sure whether he is thinking or acting in a certain way to please the other person or whether he really does believe what he is saying and doing; he would be uncertain both of the authorship of his states and of their privacy. He would admit that he can feel and can think things which are the complete opposite with regard to the current situation, without these different experiences of Self being coherently connected to each other.

Our questions start here, from clinical practice with people. Although these questions obviously spill over into contiguous scientific domains in the search for comparisons, contaminations, dialogic exchanges, they are nevertheless posed from the standpoint of the psychiatrist and the therapist: that is, the point of departure is the investigation of people's stories and the ultimate objective is to provide therapy.

The search for a solution to the problems set by the case of Robert constitutes the itinerary for this first chapter.

The first step will be to analyse the origins of the three characteristics of the modern Self and to show why these origins continue to constitute the basis of the way we conceive of the Self today. To produce an overall picture of this first step, we will draw a brief outline of the Kantian concept of Self, showing that this framework is present in systems theory, in the neurosciences, in most branches of contemporary psychology and psychiatry. In particular, I will analyse the perspective taken by nonlinear systems, which underpins Cloninger's approach to the study of personality, and then pass on to the view of closed systems adopted by the constructivists, concentrating principally on

the psychology of the Self. The element which these different perspectives have in common, from Kant to nonlinear systems, up to closed systems, is the same mode of conceptualizing the Self: the Self is understood as a thing: in Kant as a substance – yet again Descartes' *res cogitans*; in the cyberneticians as a computational object.

We shall see that it is only the domain of hermeneutic phenomenology that proposes a new method of investigating the Self, or rather, of being oneself. And it is this perspective that will enable us to discover that the classic mode of conceptualizing the Self has always implicitly conceived it as a thing, an object, with object-like characteristics and with the capacity to serve as an object in relation to other objects. This change in viewpoint will enable us to grasp the fact that the continuity between Kant and cybernetics is buttressed by the understanding – and the study – of the Self, through the deployment of those categories which are applied to objects that are produced, to things. In modern thought, the Self has the ontological status of a thing that is produced.

But the Self cannot be explained as if it were an object with properties such as, for instance, the weight of a bag. Instead, it appears through possible ways of being. One feels like this or like that in one situation or in another. Adopting this vision, which places the experience of being oneself centre stage, with all it entails, thus means asking a novel question: what happens if, instead, we consider the Self not as a thing, but as a 'who'.

The second part of the chapter attempts to answer this question. A serious enquiry into this issue implies that the starting point is the awareness that the sole phenomenon in real flesh and blood to which we have access when we study the Self is the experience each of us has of always living in the present. What distinguishes one's experience of being oneself is how one feels now, every single time. If this fact, this phenomenon, constitutes our starting point, how can we make sense of those fundamental features that characterize both the modern Self and the common-sense Self: continuity, unity and privacy? The development of these topics involves a scrutiny of Heidegger's phenomenology, above all the phenomenology of his early years, from 1919 to 1929. Our goal is to discover whether the nature of ipseity that we can derive from Heidegger's philosophy will enable us to grasp the dilemma set by Robert.

1.2 The sense of self and the variety of experience

The relationship between the diversity, the multiplicity, of one's experience – of one's actions and feelings – and the concurrent sense that every experience is perceived as belonging to oneself implies two polarities. On the one hand, something (the Self as subject) that remains one and invariable in the course of time: the sense, that is, that the different events in one's life belong to the subject experiencing them: the Self as a knower (I) of James. On the other hand, the Self as object, which corresponds to the diversity of one's experiences, and which, on the contrary, changes continuously in relation to its interactions with the external world and with others; in other words, in relation to the 'affections': the Self as known (Me) of James.

Kant (1977, 1980) welds these two polarities into a unity. He conceives of the former, the Self as subject, as invariable and as the unifying ground of the latter, the Self as object, which is changeful. The relationship between these two polarities of the Self may be compared, from a logico-grammatical standpoint, to the relationship between subject and predicate. The subject, that is, may be viewed as the base which unifies

all its predicates. For example, we may state that Robert is intelligent, a sportsman, a scholar and so forth. We may state, using different words, that the one and invariable Self consists in the combining of the manifold changing experiences into a unity. Kant terms this unity the ‘I-think’.

What this means is that even during the simplest possible experience, for instance my perception of the page I am writing on the computer screen, I not only grasp the content I am perceiving as I write (the Self as object), but ‘I think’, I apprehend myself along with what is perceived (the Self as subject). Subjectivity, understood as self-consciousness, lies in this property: namely, in the combining which unifies all the single experiences. That is, the subject is conscious of his own experience in the thousands of actions he carries out in the course of his daily existence. The subject is thus conscious of himself inasmuch as he perceives himself as constituting the foundation, the unifying ground by which his manifold acts are combined – following the determinations of the categories.

With regard to the relationship between the I of consciousness (the Self as subject) and the experiencing I (the Self as object), Kant has this to say:

‘The I think expresses the act of determining my existence. The existence is thereby already given but the manner in which I am to determine it, the way I am to posit in myself the manifold pertaining to it, is not yet thereby given’ (Kant, 1967).

That is, the meaning of my experience is related to how I connect the multiplicity of my experiences. The I think is this very order.³

This being an I, which is identical for every living subject, is thus what remains when the I (the Self as subject) is divested of all its determinations (the Self as object). If we take away from Robert his intelligence, his being a sportsman and a scholar, what remains is Robert as a thinking thing, a *res cogitans*. That is to say, when we remove all the predicates from the subject, when we purify the unity of its multiplicity, what remains is the pure I. But while the multiplicity of one’s experiences may be determined by the I think, the latter can in no way be determined: it remains unknowable. Such an asymmetry at the heart of identity is the aporia which this view of the Self leads to, a view which goes from cybernetics, without ever constituting a topic in that domain, to psychiatry, to cognitive psychology and to constructivism.

1.3 Nonlinear systems and the construction of the self

Nonlinear systems

It is both extremely interesting and, as we shall see, extremely surprising to discover that some of the aspects of Kant’s conception of subjectivity are to be found as cornerstones of the cognitive sciences right from one of the two articles that lay the foundations of first-order cybernetics.⁴ I am referring to ‘A Logical Calculus of the Ideas Immanent in Nervous Activity’ by Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts (in McCulloch, 1965). Let us get straight to the heart of the matter by quoting the authors themselves:

The all-or-none law of nervous activity is sufficient to insure that the activity of any neuron may be represented as a proposition. Physiological relations existing among nervous activities correspond, of course, to relations among the propositions (p. 21).

Hence, starting (a) from the state of activity or inactivity of every single neuron which correspond respectively to the logical values true or false (0 or 1), (b) from their connections—so that if two neurons tend to be active together, connecting up is facilitated, whereas the opposite state inhibits any connection (the rule governing the change is a [Boolean] function of two arguments [such as ‘and’ ‘or’]—Varela et al., 1991), we obtain (c) the brain is comparable to a machine operating by deduction.

The spirit is embodied in the mechanism. Starting from basic operational rules, a machine would be capable of ordering concrete experience, that is, it would be capable of ‘thinking’.

See also Figure 1, from McCulloch (1965).

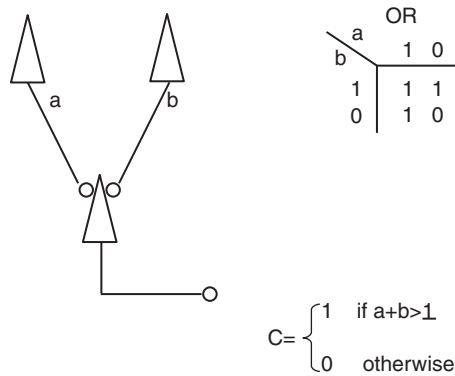


Figure 1 McCulloch, Warren S. Introduction by Seymour A. Papert., *Embodiments of the Mind*, figure, © 1965 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, by permission of the MIT Press.

McCulloch’s philosophical stance is a bold one. He offers a vision of the brain as an embodied logico-mathematical machine, thereby furnishing the neuroanatomical and neurophysiological bases to an a priori synthetic judgement (Dupuy, 1985), that is, to that knowledge which, in Kant’s view, we possess a priori and in conformity to which every determination, every definition of experience, must come about. As is well known, in philosophy the so-called Copernican revolution is founded on the a priori synthetic judgement.⁵

Starting from the second half of the 1970s,⁶ along the pathway inaugurated by McCulloch there developed a new perspective with regard to the issue of cognition: the standpoint of self-organized systems. From the behaviour of the single neuron, attention moved on to the analysis of the coherence of the system as a whole, that is, to the investigation of those global structures which emerge as a result of the cooperation taking place among all the units that constitute the system. It is the connectedness of the system that matters! This accounts for the origin of the name (neo)connectionism which characterized this branch of research, especially in its early stages.

In this view, the organism is conceived of as a self-organized system which, starting from an initial state, moves along a certain transformative trajectory as a result of the cooperation in a given context among the elements of which it is composed (Thelen, 2002; Thelen and Smith, 1994). In the course of its development, and in relation to each specific situation, every system will ‘settle into’ states of dynamic stability, termed

‘attractors’, which resist perturbations and to which the system tends to return when perturbed. That is, each organism ‘prefers’ a certain landscape of attractors, a coherent space state around which it fluctuates and which characterizes the system.

This new approach to the study of the system introduces both a synchronic and a diachronic dimension. If, from the perspective of real time, the behaviour of the system appears to be the result of the global dynamics of the system within the context in which it acts, from the standpoint of duration, the emergence of new structures is consolidated by the tendency of the components of the system to activate themselves in a coherent fashion. The connectedness of the system is thus indivisible from the history of its transformations. The position that was occupied in Kant by the ‘I think’, understood as the link which unifies the wide variety of behaviours exhibited by the system (according to the categories), is taken by the ordering mechanism.

Construction of the self

We must leave aside the extraordinary history of cybernetics, which comes right up to the present and which has brought about tremendous changes in all our lives,⁷ in order to focus our attention on the application of the theory of nonlinear systems to the conceptualization of the Self in psychiatry.

One example of dynamic systems – or complex systems, or nonlinear systems – which has met with great success in psychiatry is the approach of Cloninger and his colleagues to the study of personality (Cloninger, 1993, 1999). Cloninger’s theory of personality posits that the Self is actually a mechanism. Let us see how.

Cloninger and his colleagues believe personality is a complex system that evolves over time and which is a combination of two constitutive elements: temperament and character. These two constitutive dimensions give rise to the respective differentiations into four temperament traits and three character traits, all of which can be specified objectively and can combine dynamically. This approach furnishes a ‘table of elements’ enabling the construction of a typology of personality and its psychopathology.

The four temperament traits (‘Harm Avoidance’, ‘Novelty Seeking’, ‘Reward Dependence’ and ‘Persistence’), are correlated with four neural systems that influence stimulus-response patterns and are associated with four different psychobiological profiles. Each trait is made up of specific components, called ‘facets’, which refer to an individual’s emotional predispositions, that is, to the inheritable differences underlying one’s automatic response to danger, novelty and types of reward. Each trait may be inherited independently of the other traits, but not in such a way as to be mutually exclusive. Hence, all combinations are possible.

The three character traits (‘Self-directness’, ‘Cooperativeness’ and ‘Self-transcendence’), which concern the higher individual cognitive functions, are inherited to a lesser degree and are moderately influenced by social learning, culture and random personal life events.⁸

How does the system work? The mechanism is constituted by two classes, temperament and character, whose dimensions – the traits – acting in synergy, structure and strengthen their connections. When they operate independently, however, they decrease and weaken the connections. Given these premises, personality development may be seen as a dynamic system which, starting from the initial temperament configuration,

proceeds through the maturational stages as a consequence of a peculiar form of cooperation among the elements of which it is constituted.⁹ The state of the system may be envisaged moment by moment as a tendency to gravitate around conditions of dynamic stability – the attractors. The latter correspond to particular structures of relationships between the temperament traits and the character traits in a given maturational context.

What this means is that each organism ‘prefers’ a certain mosaic of attractors, a coherent space state around which it fluctuates and which characterizes it. This applies not only to normality but also to pathological conditions. For instance, the chronicity and difficulty of treating a personality disorder may be accounted for by the fact that, once personality has stabilized a certain dynamic configuration, it tends to maintain that stability, even if it does not correspond to the best possible form of adaptation for that individual.

In the view of Cloninger and his colleagues, who see personality development as a walk in an adaptive landscape made up of areas of high (hills) and low (valleys) adaptive value, attractor states correspond to the hills, while the valleys correspond to states of great instability, so much so that even the slightest perturbation may drive the system away from this point of low fitness. When the system is perturbed, it will respond spontaneously to internal or external constraints by seeking adaptive changes of personality, motivated by the optimization of fitness.

When a state of high stability is achieved, that state remains virtually invariable unless the system is subjected to external or maturational pressures. For the stability of the system to change, fitness must decrease by a slippage toward a valley. Only at that point will the organism spontaneously seek a new configuration capable of meeting both external and internal constraints. On the other hand, as we mentioned earlier, stability itself may become a trap, as is the case when a given disturbance becomes chronic: ‘Such local maxima correspond to arrests in character development and may lead to practical termination of search’ (Cloninger and Svrakic, 1999).

How can we understand the relationship between the unity and the multiplicity of the Self as seen by Cloninger?

Perhaps the clearest answer lies in their definition of personality.

Cloninger and Svrakic (1999) employ the terms of Gordon Allport (1937) to define personality as the ‘dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his or her unique adjustment to the environment’. And in the paragraph which follows, they specify that by dynamic organization they mean ‘an organized system (“*unitas multiplex*”) that is constantly evolving and changing’, while the expression they borrow from Allport, ‘within the individual’, means that ‘personality is what lies behind a specific individual’s acts’.

This definition is reflected in Marc D. Lewis’ application of the principles of self-organization to the development of dynamic cognitive-emotional systems. Lewis (Lewis, 2005: 173) writes: ‘cognitive systems construed as dynamic systems do not process information transduced from the outside world; they reconfigure themselves in response to an ongoing stream of sensory events’.

Hence, the unifying principle, which gathers and determines the multiplicity of experiences, may be located in organizational dynamics, in real activity, which is structured at the level of connections. The system’s connectedness is the *unitas*, which is continuously reorganized in relation to the multiplex of experience. This is why

Cloninger can claim that at the base of every act there lies the entire unit. Every act is determined by the unity of the system, which, by conserving the traces of the structures that have emerged in the course of its history, integrates the dimension of duration with the ongoing event through the continuous recomposition of connectivity. The system adjusts itself moment by moment in relation to the external and internal constraints. That is to say, every current act, every current experience, is defined by the principle of order which – like the Kantian I think – determines the present state of the system, the difference being that in Kant, this unifying connection is not a subject but a mechanism. On this count, we might state what Ricoeur stated about structuralism: ‘a transcendentalism without a subject’ (1969); a Kantism without the I think.

1.4 The organization of living systems and constructivism of the self

But why should it be surprising that aspects of the Kantian conception of subjectivity constitute the basis of these views? What has Kant got to do with dynamic self-organizing systems?

Heidegger once said that cybernetics is the metaphysics of the atomic age. What does this mean? Can Heidegger’s words indicate a direction, or are they simply the condemnation of technical knowledge by a philosopher whose border town was Freiburg?

Perhaps the most significant clue to fully understanding what Dupuy called the Heideggerian anathema in his noteworthy study of the first stage of cybernetics has been provided by Lettvin, one of McCulloch’s collaborators. Speaking of McCulloch’s intellectual development, he writes: ‘He devoted himself to discovering how the brain works in the same way that an inventor knows exactly every single cog in the machine he has created. The key to such knowledge lies, not in observation, but in the construction of models which are then compared to the data available . . . And McCulloch preferred to run the risk of failure in his attempts to create a brain, rather than succeed in furnishing an improved description of existing brains’ (Dupuy, 1985: 78).

The cybernetician as Plato’s Demiurge! Like the craftsman who, the *Timaeus* argues, imposes a pre-existing form on as-yet formless material.

Is there a thread linking ancient philosophy, Kant and contemporary science?

In a work which is so closely linked to the research developed in *Sein und Zeit* that it appears to be the continuation of the latter,¹⁰ Heidegger provides an extraordinarily clear reply. The trait which connects ancient philosophy with modernity is the fact that the being of consciousness is considered in exactly the same way as the being of an object: an *ens creatum*. That is, like a thing whose specific way of life, its autonomous existence, belongs to it on the basis of having been produced; like the vase which, once it has been moulded by the Demiurge from a pre-existing form, stands for itself.

Thus, there is no difference between the ways of existing of a vase, of a mouse and of a man. Clearly, existence refers back to an act of creation, hence to an *ens increatum*. And this is the fundamental theme which constitutes the meeting ground of ancient ontology with Christian theology in the Middle Ages and which then enters the modern age via Descartes. Descartes is the thinker who directs philosophical enquiry toward the subject, interpreting subjectivity through the employment of the ontological categories of ancient and medieval philosophy. In other words, existence is conceived of as the

specific way of being of a thing which belongs to that thing exclusively by dint of the fact that it has been produced.

This perspective also offers us a better grasp of the Kantian view of subjectivity. The one and invariable Self is that created thing (like the vase), a *res cogitans* to be precise, which lies at the base, which connects, which is the subject of all possible determinations. With Kant, for the first time the thinking thing becomes quite simply that 'I' which, being in possession of the multiplicity of its determinations, is the knowledge of its own identity. In thinking or in perceiving, in acting or in suffering, in judging or in loving – that is, in the multiplicity of its determinations – the thinking thing, the 'I think', grasps itself; it is conscious of its own Self, it is self-conscious, hence it stands for itself. In actual fact, however, starting out from the theme of the subject did not constitute a fundamental step forward inasmuch as the ontological difference between the way of being of the subject, which understands itself through living, and the mode of presence at hand of the object was never clarified (Heidegger, 1988: 123).

Does this indistinctiveness still permeate contemporary science? Does that very same ontology which never permitted the subject's way of being to be investigated still lie at the heart of scientific thought?

The organization of living systems

A second approach that may be identified within the domain of the study of self-organization constitutes the foundation of radical constructivism. The basic postulate of this perspective is 'The nervous system is organizationally closed' (Riegler, 2003).

What does 'organization' mean and what does 'closure' mean? Organization is the heuristic description of the behaviour of the system: it enables the identification of the invariant features ('eigenbehaviour'), according to which the processes constituting an autonomous natural system (i.e. metabolic processes, developmental processes, processes of the nervous system), are so closely interconnected as to form a whole.

Operational closure refers, instead, to that mechanism which, as a result of its functioning, allows the generation of a variety of internal transformations. The nervous system thus appears as a closed network of interacting neurons where any change in the state of relative activity of a collection of neurons leads to a change in the state of relative activity of another, or the same, collection of neurons (Riegler, 2003).

A system thus organized has its own internal coherence whose features are distinct and relatively independent of the environment. The internal coherence of the system defines an autonomous system inasmuch as it constitutes a whole, while the complexity of the system is manifested in the configuration of the landscape of its possible behaviours.

Evidently, since in this view the system is considered impermeable to environmental input (which explains why it is a closed system), the relationship with the external world is maintained by structural changes in the system coupled with perturbations in the medium in which it lives. This means that, in order to come to terms with a change in the environment, a system changes continuously its internal structure but conserves its organization.

This is why Varela says 'Internal transformations are the main thread which allow us to comprehend the dynamics of the system; the coupling (of the two independent series of events – those taking place in the system and those occurring in the environment) only intervenes if certain unforeseen events or circumstances help us to better understand

a given transformational pathway' (Varela, 1983: 149). The ultimate regulation of adaptation is assigned to structural changes that are subordinated to the invariance of the living organism.

Extending the biological interpretation to include relationships with the environment brings psychology on to centre stage; and, more generally, cognition. A cognitive act is then defined as the actual action undertaken by a living organism in its environment and it can only be explained by having recourse to the organizational dynamics of the system. Being a Self implies the maintenance of the organization of the system through continual structural changes coupled with the perturbations originating in the environment in which it lives. In this way everything that takes place is brought forth by the living organism in its praxis of living.

This interpretation of cognition gives rise to the epistemological aphorism which has characterized the Santiago school and second-order cybernetics: 'Everything said is said by an observer to another observer that could be him or herself' (Maturana, 1988).

In actual fact, this aphorism can only be fully understood if one bears in mind the other manoeuvre which accompanies the emphasis on the biological ontology of the observer, a manoeuvre whose flavour and terminology are explicitly phenomenological: placing objectivity within brackets. It consists in suspending every postulate regarding the experience of things and of the world (inasmuch as they refer to the internal dynamics of the system), leaving one's consciousness pure (the organization of operations), which is very similar to what remains when one suspends real experience. This so to speak residual consciousness is thus the absolute foundation of all positing of being, of objects, of swans, of plants and of people. In it, the world is defined by means of the invariances pertaining to the organism's internal operations. It is the place of the biology of knowledge.

Constructivism of the self

The most striking aspect of this mode of conceiving self-organizing systems is undoubtedly that of organizational closure. This mechanism establishes an absolute distinction between the sphere of lived experience, of the dynamics of change, which is necessarily coupled with the conservation of organization – which Guidano (1991) identifies with that of personal meaning – and the external world.

The domain of personal meaning is a coherent unity closed to any information that might come from the external world. Hence, the question that must be asked is: How is the sphere of personal meaning constituted?

The starting point to investigate this aspect is the immediate experience of daily life: for example, my immediate experience of the table I am writing on. This experience is embodied in a stream of experience which constitutes the flowing of individual experience. From the standpoint of the internal dynamics of the system, this corresponds to the succession of internal configurations of coherence within the system itself: that is, it consists of structural changes.

In a well-known adage, Maturana says that at the level of immediate experience there can be no difference between perception, illusion and hallucination (Maturana, 1988). It is only when we examine immediate experience by means of reflection, therefore through another act of the same nature as the act preceding it (from the viewpoint of closed systems, this corresponds to the coordination of the coordination of actions), that

we can distinguish between the various modes of gaining immediate experience of something; it is the relationship between the praxis of living and its explanation.

This interdependent polarity is the backbone of the model of the Self produced by Guidano, who has been one of the most subtle representatives of constructivism (Guidano, 1987, 1991). In his work, Guidano posits that this polarity corresponds to a circular process of mutual regulation between the immediate experiencing of oneself (the acting and experiencing I) and the more abstract and explicit sense of Self that emerges as a result of self-referring the ongoing experience (the observing and evaluating Me). Guidano thus combines the perspectives of Maturana and James.

It is interesting to note that the object of reflection (immediate experience) and the act of reflecting (explaining) belong to the same flow, to the same domain (coherence of the operations of the system).

The embodied consciousness, which continuously constructs and reconstructs itself as the organization of the acts and of the reflection on those acts, is totally separated from the real world and from any contamination on the part of that world. This is the deep significance behind operational closure: in terms of the mechanisms organizing the process, it founds the closed unit of experience. The entire world is banished from this unit and it can only constitute a transcendental domain.

At the level of CNS, what the observer may see is changes in relations of activities between neurons as they interact, determining changes in the properties of the components of the neuronal network, which in their turn bring about changing relations of activities. Translating this into an example: from the standpoint of sensorimotor activity, an environmental perturbation X (for instance, the hand approaching a source of heat) stimulates structural changes in the sensory surface. Since the sensors are part of the neural network, structural changes in the sensory surface trigger structural changes of the effectors, changing relations of activities between the components of the system. (To the observer, such changes in the internal dynamics of the network appear to take the form of postural changes, such as the removal of the hand.) In their turn, changes in effectors trigger changes in relations of activities between the elements of the system, thereby determining structural changes in the sensory surface and, consequently, in the range of perturbations that are significant for the system.

When anything that is outside the system comes into contact with the system, the only reaction it can cause is that of a perturbation to the dynamics of the system. Consequently, within this dimension defined through recursive circularity, a real object can only arise as a perturbation of the dynamics of the system. As such, and unlike input, a perturbation cannot specify the way in which a given transformation of the system itself can come about – the transformation can only be determined by the global organization of the system.

Returning to the previous problem (to my immediate perception of the table I am writing on), the table I am writing on might present itself to me as perception, hallucination, illusion by means of memory, or of an imaginary scenario, or in other ways, but no matter what form this experience takes, the experience in itself does not contain the table. The table and the entire material world belong to a domain that is totally different from that of consciousness – and of the objects of consciousness – which, instead, constitutes a unitary context in itself.

The close connection with Husserl's phenomenology is crystal clear. In one extract from *Ideas I* (Husserl, 1962), he makes an extremely lucid distinction between reality

and the abyss which divides it from the domain of consciousness, over which the term 'disturbance' builds a bridge: 'We are aware of things not only in perception, but also consciously in recollections, in representations similar to recollections, and also in the free play of fancy; and this in "clear intuition" it may be, or without noticeable perceptibility after the manner of "dim" presentations, they float past us in different "characterizations" as real, possible, fancied, and so forth'; and shortly afterwards we find the extract: 'We shall not think of confusing the *objects of which we are aware* under these forms of consciousness with the conscious experiences themselves which are a consciousness *of them*' (Section 35, page 106, original emphasis). In terms of the mechanisms operating, it is the consciousness of this or that . . . that the system grasps.

This approach is especially evident in a psychology of the Self, such as that championed by Guidano, which is not outdated in the domain of constructivism and which assigns to these concepts the role of founding presuppositions for clinical practice. On the basis of these concepts Guidano has identified four invariant types of organization of the Self understood as the internal coherence of the system. He has dubbed these types Organizations of Personal Meaning. He has also traced their origins in the development of an equal number of forms of attachment. These correspond to four basic configurations of operations ordering experience, to four unitary categories for the organization of acts and of reflections on acts, which are structured, in Guidano's view, by different developmental pathways.

He writes (Guidano, 1991: 33): 'an Organization of personal meaning is to be interpreted as a unitary ordering process in which continuity and internal coherence are sought in the specificity of the formal, structural properties of its knowledge processing (flexibility, generativeness, and abstracting level) . . . This leads to the adoption of a systems process-oriented methodology that can identify the deep syntactic rules ("I") capable of generating a coherent range of surface, semantic representations ("Me") according to an ever-changing interaction with the world.'

The therapist employs this model to seek principles which the patient uses to order his experience. Such principles – which remain constant throughout the patient's life – enable the patient to consistently recognize and appraise his experience as unitary and continuous in time. This analysis, which is guided by the four organizational principles and by the ways they combine, takes shape through the therapist's trying to 'cleanse' the patient's experiences of all those elements which are extraneous to the structural invariants hypothesized by the therapist as constituting the patient's organizational structure, in order to confirm the therapist's hypothesis.

One of the techniques which Guidano developed, the so-called 'moviola' technique, consisted in interrupting the flow of consciousness, bringing the experience into focus, amplifying it and running over it again in order to grasp the meaning attributed by the patient to what he had seen and done, and going slowly back and forth in order to extrapolate the principles ordering experience.¹¹

The most striking aspect of this approach, and one which becomes even more obvious in the course of clinical practice, is that by placing experience within brackets, hence by opening out on to the perspective of the internal dynamics of the system and of the coherence of the system, real experience is taken as corresponding to the configuration of the organism's internal processes. As in Kant, the one and invariable Self consists in the connection of manifold changing experiences in a unity.

This brings about the concurrent cancellation of two extremely important aspects. First of all, by placing it within brackets, the reality (*realis*) of consciousness, or factual consciousness, is set aside: precisely that state of being involved in things and in the material world which concerns man in facts, from a concrete viewpoint. Consciousness thus appears the presupposition, the a priori condition, on the basis of which objects – to use a Kantian metaphor – come to be regulated and reality can manifest itself and thus become significant.

On the other hand, the ‘mineness’ of acts, the occurring singularization of experience, is eliminated. This being mine of acts and experiences is elided or simplified in order to grasp the organization, the configuration of internal coherence. Such deletion suppresses the history of the person, and with it, the person’s identity. Identity thus becomes a portrait. It constitutes the organization of personal meaning (Guidano, 1987, 1991).

What does the expression ‘identity thus becomes a portrait’ mean? Let us deal with this question by analysing the story that we are using as a testing ground for our investigation of the Self.

1.5 Robert’s self from a systemic perspective

As we have stressed before, the model produced by Cloninger and his colleagues would have identified such unity in multiplicity by relating Robert’s real experience to the combination of the features (temperament and character) which defined, at the given moment *x*, the dynamics of the system in its landscape of states. When Robert asked for our help, we could have analysed him by taking into account a combination of features; we could have evaluated the high or low dispositions for each temperament trait in combination with a high or low score of character dimensions in relationship to his lifestyle. In that case, we would have examined Robert’s world with a neutral attitude, trying to identify those regularities in the phenomena of Robert’s life experiences in the light of the model. That would have enabled us to cleanse the experiences analysed of the personal residual experiences, those foreign to the structural organization of the personality, and, consequently, to formulate a diagnosis. This is the perspective on which the natural sciences are founded.

Things are more complicated from the point of view of closed systems.

From this perspective, unity arises through the flowing of experience: unity itself is the self-organization of the multiplicity of experiences. Unity is the process itself. This corresponds to the continual structural change taking place in order to maintain the organization of the living organism stable. By combining various nuclei that are constitutive of sense (patterns of attachment, modes of organizing the emotional domain, the relationship between immediate experience and the image of the Self, levels of integration of the different forms of experience and so on), it is possible to identify different forms of organization of the Self, which correspond to different global configurations of the flow of experience (four forms of self-organization and the combinations that occur).

The therapist who adopts this perspective in order to understand how Robert organizes meaning must put Robert’s habitual attitude within brackets and shift the focus from the what of experience to the how of experience. This change in viewpoint, which Guidano calls internally-bound attitude, is the result of reflecting on the patient’s real

experience and leads to the identification of the invariant principles that explain the experience being analysed. The therapist and the patient agree on a frame of sense (so to speak), which is derived from having reflected analytically on the concrete experience of the patient. That is, therapist and patient identify the regularities, starting from the way in which the patient attributes meaning to his experience.

In this approach, although the experiential data of another person's experience are taken as being valid, they are taken as being accounted for by the organizational principles which guide the patient's cognitive system. In other words, subjective experience (the first-person I) is viewed through the second person (you) and the methodology consists of the suspension of real experience in order to grasp the organizational invariants. In this way, the patient is transformed into a stable and lasting portrait of himself, 'cleansed' of all 'business' with the external world. In Robert's case, the invariants can be hypothesized as being: a vague and oscillating sense of Self, a definition of the Self based on external sources, a tendency to perfectionism, attribution of cause to external entities, a defective perception of others and so forth.

But has this portrait brought the solution to Robert's case closer, or has it simply built a certain connection between invariants, a sort of psychic DNA, without actually making us take a single step forward in finding a solution? And if the latter is the case, what direction should we take at this point? Might the singularity of the experience, that business with external reality, not constitute the key to the problem?

1.6 The continuity of the sense of self

Before tackling these issues seriously, we must first analyse briefly a problem which is closely connected to multiplicity and unity: continuity – the fact, that is, that the multiplicity of experiences and the variety of our experiences take shape over time.

From this standpoint, being a Self seems to imply a continuity in sense, a permanence of the Self across past, present and future experience. The setups both of nonlinear systems and of closed systems offer two solutions to the problem. These two solutions are both based on the same explicative principle: self-organization.

In the case of nonlinear systems, connectivity is governed by both local and global rules. That is to say, it is the way in which connectivity is built up over time that constitutes the invariant which underlies changes in the system.

In the case of closed systems, what remains invariant in relation to current changes is the organization of the system understood as the configuration of static or dynamic relations between its component parts.

In both cases, continuity corresponds to the dynamic nature of the system.

From the experiential standpoint, this would mean that any form of discontinuity that is perceived by the person can simply be attributed to a sense of continuity in the Self. In nonlinear systems this would be attributed to connectivity, while in closed systems it would be attributed to organization itself as an invariant. From this viewpoint, continuity is always located in the Self, in the Self as a coherent flow.

But does reducing experience to the flow not lead to the loss of the characteristics of experience? Does it not mean that we are still viewing consciousness as a thing which exists by itself, as a self-sufficient object, while concurrently considering the world as something separated from it by a fracture?

Let us think for a moment of how Robert perceives himself. Periods of commitment in which he feels his life is meaningful alternate with periods during which he falls into a void in which his sense of Self disappears completely. States of void mean for Robert the lack of an anchor point, of a wavelength which allows him to tune in to himself. He deals with these states of emptiness through technical means which produce experiential spheres capable of absorbing his attention. Sarah's presence, especially at the initial stages, is a human source which can serve as the point through which he can define himself. Then Sarah becomes part of his relationship with the technical means he deploys to handle emptiness. When, at the end of the relationship, Sarah finally disappears, Robert no longer has points of reference, he no longer perceives himself as a Self.

Naturally, it can be said that although Robert experiences void as the disappearance of the Self, this is nevertheless part of Robert's personality system. We can combine, for instance, high novelty seeking with low self-directness with the event of Robert's separation from Sarah. Alternatively, we can thematize the unitary structure of his personality, the way it is organized, and consequently focus on the features denoting the vagueness of his sense of Self, the way he defines himself through the other, his touchiness to comparison and so on. In other words, we can reduce experience to the status of the object of reflection in order to highlight the organizational invariants. By operating in this way, however, we fail to capture experience *qua* experience, life as experienced directly by the subject himself. What we grasp, instead, is the objectivity of subjectivity – the flesh and blood subject slips through our hands. We not only omit a point which is relevant to the patient – that is, that the world in which Robert experiences the Self is discontinuous – but we also fail to engage with the fundamental question of ipseity . . . and starting from that question, the issue of personal identity.

1.7 The return of the world and the question 'Who?'

In a target article of great interest entitled 'The Self', Galen Strawson (1999)¹² deals with the theme of the continuity of the Self over time in relation to character. In so doing, he introduces a difference, as indicated by his words: 'Some people live deeply in narrative mode . . . Some merely go from one thing to another. They live life in a picaresque or episodic fashion' (Strawson, 1999: 15). Two different ways of living, of experiencing, of imagining and of talking about oneself. If we examine these two modes in the light of continuity, however, then the second mode is defective.

If continuity were tacitly or theoretically assumed as the definitional criterion of the normal sense of Self, just think of how many therapists would have the formula of a cure in the palm of their hands! They would only have to help their clients tell their life stories in a different way, or convince them of how unreasonable their picaresque way of life was; or it might be necessary to construct a more adequate frame of meanings, a more appropriate portrait by which to judge the fragmented nature of their lives. In other words, it would suffice to furnish a stable point, perhaps a new story, or perhaps a more precise image of the Self, in order to bring the dispersion of experience back to the sense of personal continuity. For those therapists, normality corresponds to the narrative mode of living. But is being non-narrative really an anomaly? As Strawson

(Strawson, 2007: 86) says: ‘one may simply lack any narrative tendency, or one may have a positively anti-narrative tendency’.

This means that caution must be taken when seeking continuity of the Self in a narrative mode, or in an impersonal portrait, as if the narration of a story or the stability of an image were a guarantee of the continuity of the Self. As if bestowing meaning through any story whatsoever were enough to create stability.

Another reason why caution must be exercised is that narration concerning the construction of personal identity is based on, and brings to language, one’s own experience of being in the world. The way people narrate themselves differs; not all stories exhibit continuity and go through the stages of beginning, development and end. Some stories consist of variations on a single theme, others consist of a variety of themes, while others still consist simply of variations without a theme (Arciero, 2006). Why?

Although many believe that it is sufficient to tell a story, or to tell oneself a story, to bestow sense on the Self or on others, one must stress the view expressed by MacIntyre (1981) that stories are lived before they are told. Recounting one’s life must thus bring to light ‘the documents and monuments’, the actions carried out and feelings experienced during that life, otherwise the act of recounting is pure fiction. Hence, the problem cannot be solved simply at the level of the story of the Self. Instead, it concerns, first and foremost, being oneself.

Considerations of this nature encourage us to take Zahavi (2003: 62) seriously when he proposes making a terminological distinction to avoid unnecessary confusion: ‘When we are dealing with the experiential self, we should stick to the term “self”, since we are exactly dealing with a primitive form of self-giveness. But when we are dealing with the narrative model, it would be better to speak not of the self, but of the *person* as a narrative construction.’ Zahavi identifies two domains of phenomena that we have not yet encountered, of which one, the experiential Self, is more primitive than the other – the person as narrated.

Thus, before we can start looking for a cure for Robert’s discontinuity, the problem Robert’s story sets us is to make ipseity manifest: to show that experiential Self which each of us is before any narration. Rendering this phenomenon evident means accounting for the different modes of experiencing continuity-discontinuity, not at the level of narration, but already at the pre-reflexive level; it is in its acting and feeling that this phenomenon must be unveiled.

In order to cast light on ipseity, then, we take a fundamental methodological step – that of taking concrete experience and giving it back the part that is missing, the world, integrating being . . . in-the-world. In other words, we lead consciousness back into direct contact with the world, with daily life, namely with what absorbs us for most of our waking lives without ever requiring reflection.

Instead, taking factual experience not as the object of reflection but as a way of being oneself – that is, as a way of feeling that I exist – has two obvious consequences. The first concerns the Self returning to the world and the second the question of ‘who?’. We shall deal with these two issues separately.

Returning to the world

Setting the concrete relationship between subject and world as the main focus of research clearly demolishes the separation between consciousness and the world. In other words,

the fundamental presuppositions of modern subjectivity, hence of the theory of nonlinear systems, of closed systems and of cognitive psychology, are left behind: the closure of consciousness,¹³ understood as the I think which accompanies all the representations, or as an I that radiates a series of acts (perceptions, actions, images, etc.), to which this same I would return through reflection.

Indeed, if we consider the actual experience of living, such as, for example, feeling hot on this summer afternoon as I sit at this table writing this book, this experience is my very own, but it is not the outcome of an I who first reflects on this experience and then says he is hot. That is, this experience has a meaning even before an I, the centre of all meanings, says 'I am hot' through having reflected on the immediate experience. This experience does not, however, constitute the exception. If we think for a moment of the various events that have occurred during the day – waking up, having breakfast, getting ready to go out, the journey to the office and so forth – the vast majority of these experiences have taken shape without any need for one's cognitive apparatus to come into play.

Rather than going back to reflect on its own acts, the consciousness of Self emerges in its business with the world. We meet ourselves, the Self is present to itself, not in the closed space of an interior room illuminated by introspection, but in doing what we do, in feeling happy at what makes us happy, in thinking what we think of, in loving whom we love, in perceiving what we perceive. Consciousness seems to be rooted in existence, embodied in my body, attuned to a certain emotion.

In recent years, several investigations – above all from new interdisciplinary studies combining philosophy, developmental psychology, primatology and the neurosciences – have all converged in considering self-consciousness as a more primitive, embodied, nonconceptual phenomenon.

Several studies have shown that starting right from early infancy, perceiving movements or objects corresponds to acquiring nonconceptual, pre-linguistic information about oneself (Bermudez, 1998). This type of consciousness is the basis for the earliest processes of imitation which children are already capable of a few hours after birth (Meltzoff and Moore, 1977, 1984). Gallagher and Meltzoff (1996) would thus appear to be correct when they say that the human infant comes already equipped with a minimal Self that is embodied, enactive and ecologically attuned.

The question 'Who?' (Die Werfrage)

The second interesting consequence is the passage to a new ontological perspective in which the difference between what and who is given serious consideration, in which the question that resonates is 'Who is the Self?' rather than 'What is the Self?'

This standpoint, according to which 'subject' means *what* remains identical throughout the multiplicity of behaviours, or the I which irradiates intentional acts, interprets the being of the subject as a fact, as evidence, as a datum, just like the telephone next to my computer. That is, by means of the very same categories we use to identify things.

Such a perspective does not thematize the different ways of being of the subject which, nevertheless, constitute our uniqueness. It leaves these modes indeterminate and undifferentiated since, We would claim, this perspective does not need to characterize them from an ontological standpoint. In actual fact, it understands the Self as if it were a thing. It understands Robert – to return to our example – as if he were

a system in which character traits combine with temperament traits at a certain point in his life; or else as the self-organization of meaning which can be identified by means of a number of invariant characteristics and of certain constitutive elements. This approach guarantees the objectivity of subjectivity, the impersonal portrait of the subject. It might be stated that these categories release us from the need to know *who* we are talking about when, in using them, we refer to a specific individual. These categories refer to a subject who is nobody.

If, however, the being of the subject is not attributed properties the way a product is, but is instead assigned manners of being according to which on each separate occasion the person experiencing the world perceives himself in either this or that other way, then there is an ontological difference between being a star, being a rose, being a monkey and being a man. Man's existence is thus characterized by possible ways of being, by modes of feeling oneself alive: experience is mine, it is always my being that is at stake in my possibilities of being, in my plans, in my expectations, in my encounters, in my choices!

The question 'who?', the *Werfrage*, sets the question of the uniqueness and of the generality of being oneself. Indeed, it asks the question, 'Who am I?', 'Who are you?'. By posing this question, ontology sets out to find, not the real being 'I' or the real being 'you', but being me in the sense in which I, you and everyone else means, each and every time, 'I myself', that is, ipseity.¹⁴ A very peculiar conceptualization, since it attempts to grasp in one fell swoop the generality and the uniqueness of man.

Asking this question, however, also means extending the investigation to a Self that is not already given but which is always under construction. It is no longer a question of grasping the Self by means of an act of reflection, but of understanding how being oneself is there for itself, how it is conscious of Self in its routine activities, in its factual experience.

The question then becomes where does this presence to oneself emerge from, what is the origin of this consciousness of Self if reflection has been banished, and with it the interiority of consciousness?

The answer is in existence itself.¹⁵

I am present to myself while, in my laziness, I turn in bed before getting up, while, still half asleep, I wash my teeth and tie my shoelaces, or while I walk briskly into the office. And if to exist is being in the world for the sake of its own possibilities, a dwelling with the things of our daily concern, and if consciousness is nothing other than man's openness toward the world, then consciousness is not closed (within the head) but is in the world!

Consciousness of Self implies, therefore, a deeper relationship, a primal and more original relationship that is constitutive and that makes consciousness of Self possible: the relationship with the world, the relationship with the other.¹⁶ That means that existing is already being always open to . . . , being in relation to . . . , being with But such existence is also concurrently being open itself. . . , being open to itself, on each and every occasion.

Consciousness embodied in a body, my body. The body proper is thus 'the place' in which, every time, the appearing of the world and my feeling alive are actualized. This is the extraordinary feature of the body: it masters its own being, it takes hold of it in one grasp while it reflects itself from the things present in the surrounding world. It is the current way of my being in the world. From this perspective, every sensation, every act of

perception, every emotion is concurrently an emergence and a disappearance: it has already dissolved the moment it occurs. As the poet Rilke (Rilke, 1939: II, 18 ff.) says:

For we, when we feel, evaporate; oh, we
breathe ourselves out and away; from ember to ember
yielding a fainter scent.

Thus, if ipseity reveals itself and takes shape in daily life in the encounter with what it is not – the world and others – if it encounters and is present to itself in acting and feeling, in doing and undergoing, if it is commensurate to a world which unfolds as it lives its daily life, this is because it recognizes itself to the extent that it recognizes itself every time from things and from others existing in the world.

If being oneself takes shape in the itineraries which each one of us follows in the world each day, in the actions and passions of which those itineraries are made up, this is because the presence to itself opens up, it reveals itself by mirroring itself at each event from the world and from others.

1.8 Finding itself in things and with others

What does it mean when we say ipseity is reflected by things? What does reflection mean here? Through referring to reflection, have we not walked again into the trap of falling back on a person's own interiority, of relating the subject to his acts, which was the foundation of the consciousness of the Self posited by the modern age?

In Heidegger's words, 'The self is there for the *Dasein* itself without reflection and without inner perception, before all reflection. Reflection, in the sense of a turning back (*Rückwendung*) is only a mode of self-*apprehension*, but not the mode of primary self-disclosure. The way in which the self is unveiled to itself in the factual *Dasein* can nevertheless be fittingly called reflection (*Reflexion*), except that we must not take this expression to mean what is commonly meant by it – the ego bent around backward and staring at itself – but an interconnection (*Zusammenhang*) such as is manifested in the optical meaning of the term "reflection". To reflect means, in the optical context, to break at something, to radiate back from there, to show itself in a reflection from something' (Heidegger, 1988: 226).

The mode in which oneself is there for itself, the fundamental mode in which it is open, is through refraction, through reflecting oneself from things, just as a beam of light is refracted on the surface it encounters. Ipseity reflects itself from things as if they were a mirror, and in so doing, each time it returns to itself, it is its own. Through what we busy ourselves with and through what worries us, through what we do and through whom we meet, through everyday life, ipseity discovers and understands itself. In this sense, consciousness of Self is founded on factual existence, on concrete life, inasmuch as it is emotionally situated through my business with the world and with others on each and every occasion.

This means that existing does not correspond exclusively to being at all times toward . . . but that existing is, on every occasion, also determination of oneself.¹⁷ I may be enthralled, furious, indifferent, impassioned, lost in those events and things surrounding me, in the facts that strike my imagination. Feeling that I am alive constitutes the way in which my existence is consigned to the sentiment of the situation in which I *find myself*.

This accounts for Heidegger's (2001: Section 29, page 176) affirmation that 'A mood assails us. It comes neither from "outside" nor from "inside", but arises out of Being-in-the-World, as a way of such Being'. An emotional state is not closed in an interiority; it is, on the contrary, the mode of being together, of being in the world; at the same time it is the mode in which being here, existence, is mine.

These different ways of being toward things point to an equal number of modalities of the presence of oneself, of the understanding of Self.

Seen in this light, intentionality is not a structure of experience which irradiates from the I, but appears as ipseity itself opening on to the world; it therefore acquires ontological value. It is the essential structure which underlies living experience – as the possibility to gain access to the world and as the fundamental determination of the existence of oneself.

1.9 Reflection

The problem of reflection brings up another issue: how can one reflect oneself from something if one is not already there for itself prior to that act of reflection (Raffoul, 2004)?

Being itself comes about by way of a possibility of being, from anticipations, projects and so on, from a constitutive opening corresponding to a totality of possibilities of being in the world. Hence, the anticipation of Self on itself constitutes a structural component of ipseity. We always live in hope, in expectation, in fear, in desire, being wary of something, relating to something, having something before oneself, for the sake of something.¹⁸

Consciousness, as embodied consciousness, as Merleau-Ponty states, taking up Husserl's unpublished manuscripts, is not an 'I think that' but an 'I can' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Looking for the switch with one's eyes, grasping the lamp and its wire visually and placing it in the foreground with respect to the other objects which 'animate' this office already means looking at these objects as being 'able to be used'. That is, the body proper appears as a correlate of a world which the body is always one step ahead of by means of its different modes of accessing the world, a world on which it acts and which acts on it. 'In reality the body is nothing but the manner in which we gain access to the world and, at the same time, or correlatively, a certain mode of appearance of the world itself ... The body is the ensemble of concrete conditions under which an existential project actualizes itself and becomes, by actualizing itself, properly mine' (De Waelhens, 1951: 109). A number of studies in the neurosciences reveal how this anticipatory capacity is structured in the sensorimotor system (Rizzolatti *et al.*, 1996; Gallese *et al.*, 1996; Noe, 2004; Berthoz, 2000; Jeannerod, 2006).

It can be said that being itself exceeds itself, it is 'overabundant'; in one way or another, it is always ahead of itself, 'in advance' of anything we have to do, for it already exists in a world, 'it has already been born'. In his 1922 winter semester lectures, Heidegger (2001: 72) says 'I encounter myself in the world, in that which I live and in that which engages me, in my successes and failures, in my environment, in my surrounding world, in my shared world. I encounter myself from my own self, but in which the Self "is" not there *qua* Self, and where the "from my own Self" is neither reflectively given nor explicitly placed on state within this reflection'. As often happens in Heidegger, it is evident that the ways in which he employs language and the singularity of experience that these ways evoke do not provide easy access to meaning.

What does the philosopher mean by these enigmatic words? We always find ourselves amongst things and with others in a sort of concerned absorption in the world.

In the world, ipseity is always related to things and to others, and these relationships determine the way it acts or behaves in certain ways, according to certain emotional tones. It is precisely through the different ways in which it encounters the world and the other that ipseity reveals what is significant and concurrently discovers its own modality of being. In this sense, the Self 'is not reflectively present', it is not present to itself through a reflection generated by an interior space. Reflection springs 'outside itself', from things themselves.

And this being 'outside itself' immersed in a background of men and things which reflection presupposes as the very condition for a return to the Self (but not as an I, which is already given and which comes out of the Self in order to meet the world and the other to then return to the Self). It may be said that relating oneself (*Verhalthen*) is situated against the background that is 'already revealed', hence familiar for us, by way of encountering the things we have to deal with in our daily lives. That is, before caring or worrying about this or that, I already presuppose a world that I first take for granted, that I do not take into consideration, because it is obvious.¹⁹ As Zaner (1971: 184) states, 'to belong-to-the-world is to inhabit it as a being who is already familiar with it, its typical course and style, because he is embodied in a body which is "at home" therein'.

Ipeity, understood as my mode of being intentionally directed toward this or that on each and every occasion, co-belongs to the world. It is the continuity of relating to the world that gives every single one of us the sense of the continuity of Self.²⁰ Heidegger leaves no doubts on this point: "'Who" I am now can be said only throughout this sojourn, and always at the same time in the sojourn lies that with which and with whom I sojourn, and how I comport myself toward [them]' (Heidegger, 2001a: 260). The continuity of relating cannot be anything but discontinuous inasmuch as my relating with this or that is different every time.

Hence, it is precisely because oneself is already always 'outside itself', open to the world and, therefore, emotionally situated, that it can reflect itself from things and thence return to itself. And it is precisely because the things from which oneself reflects itself refer back to that background, to the world, that they can mirror oneself. In his final semester at Marburg, Heidegger returned to the subject, affirming that 'The world is the free counter-hold of Dasein's for-the-sake-of' (Heidegger, 2001: 192). When worried, when in a hurry, when calm, when detached, when in the for-the-sake-of its own being, the world provides or withholds support to a possible play of opportunities

1.10 Meaning

Through what means does ipseity grasp itself in reflecting? 'From the things we have to deal with', those things that are urgent, feasible, indispensable, appropriate, those things that breathe down our neck, that we hope for, that we deem necessary. Success or failure, feasibility or impossibility on the one hand, but at the same time the viability, the impracticality of the world on the other hand; and then those things which are unexpected, ambiguous, new, mysterious, obscure, indefinable, vague. These are the things that enable or prevent oneself from returning to itself.

Not a single thing in itself, but that intertwining of things with the praxis of living, whose meaning is replete with, and complicated by, a series of specific references. Not a significativity connected to raw data, connected to the identity of the object, but an object whose luminosity is acquired through the context it refers to; a visibility that emanates from the totality which supports it. It is that contexture of specific references which constitutes the background of comprehension that enables us, at any and every moment, to attribute meaning to an object.

Take the lamp on the desk in my office as an example. The lamp acquires meaning as it enables me to light up the office, which in its turn is part of the department where I work, which in its turn links up to the need for an environment where man can work, and can work there at night too. The final context mentioned does not make connections with a set of specific references but to being-in-the-world itself.²¹

The object acquires meaning because it is referred back to a context, a wider connective sphere: to its possible uses, which in turn refer back to an even wider context, and so forth until the whole range of references finds anchoring in man's being. The whole range of interconnected contexts – which merge into one another, to the point that the widest contexts are visible even in the most limited ones – is immediately before us each time we are about to use the lamp.

According to Heidegger, it is by way of things that we are returned to a set of possible actions, to a contexture of references from which they retrieve sense and by way of which they offer themselves to comprehension, and of which the ultimate referential final point is man.²² It is the set of possible uses that may be made of it that give meaning to the lamp that I have on my desk. Those uses constitute the last anchor point for man's mode of comprehension, which, as we have seen, is always based on keeping ahead, always . . . for the sake of itself.

'Consequently,' as Raffoul (2004: 180) underlines, 'when the Self moves, changes places or commits itself to certain relations, it is actually its own being that it assigns itself the task of unveiling and understanding . . . Familiarity with the world is familiarity with oneself.'

For instance, when darkness falls, the possibility that I can continue writing 'points' to the need for light that will enable me to see. For the sake of the exigency to continue working even at night, I search for the switch in order to turn on the lamp. I encounter the lamp without thinking about it. In this encounter, my need for light is allowed, is reflected, in the use of the lamp as a source of light. It is precisely the existence of a possible contexture of specific references, in which the thing takes on significance, that makes it possible for ipseity to be reflected as in a mirror. Reflection may take shape inasmuch as the discovery of the specific functionality of things (significance) presupposes a mode of being of discerning preoccupation, a searching after viability, an allowing the world to come to oneself for the sake of . . . The experience comes to be meaningful for the very reason that the object illuminated (by the possible contexts of reference) meets up with the position of the person looking, listening, touching.

We may understand Merleau-Ponty's concept of body schema from the same stance: 'constituted by means of the concrete task-at-hand and carried out in bodily movements' (Zaner, 1971: 169). The body schema is the result on every single occasion of the organization and coordination of real and possible bodily activities with certain objects, intended as poles of action in the extant situation. A style of behaviour that is reflected in

my vital environment which I deem important: my home, my music, my books, my personal effects and so on . . . the traces of our existence!

Those are the things that speak of me. In this sense, ipseity, which deals with things and which worries about things, is reflected in the contexture of references of intraworldly entities.

But this reflection is mute if it is not emotionally situated! My expectations may meet with disappointment, or I might be surprised by the results of the concrete task-at-hand, I may be spurred on, or I may be swept away by the situations which I encounter, and which encounter me. 'Indeed *from the ontological point of view*,' says Heidegger, 'we must as a general principle leave the primary discovery of the world to 'bare mood' (Heidegger, 1988: Section 29, page 177). In this sense, ipseity expects its own possibilities, relying on what 'things give or what they refuse' (Heidegger, 1988: 289),²³ since ipseity comprehends itself by way of those possibilities that the world of praxis and of things are able to reflect. Through understanding the world, through understanding the other, the Self understands itself.

Finally, in this sense, for an ipseity which encounters the world as a contexture of specific references (significance) through the circumspective engagement with the surrounding environment, meaning corresponds to what has been comprehended, grasped, in a single act.

Hence, it is ipseity that is open to the world in terms of a discerning preoccupation, (that is, concerned with this and that), while it encounters something significant, understands itself; while it expressly relates to something and lives off something, at the same time it brings its own world to experience.²⁴ We might say, in line with a variation on the same theme, that one's body-proper, emotionally situated, cooriginates with things. It is on this side, on my side, and at the same time it is on the other side, on the side of the world, or, as Merleau-Ponty put it, the touched touching.

In this way both the alterity of the world and that of the other, both individuation and openness, can be thought of together, contemporaneously. Meaning seen from this perspective indicates something, or someone, on each occasion and at the same time itself which comes to experience. In this sense, experience is mine.²⁵ The always being mine of experience indicates existence belonging to itself. It corresponds to my being in this or that emotional tone in the specific situation I am living through each time.

A private world understood as the sphere of internal experience is thus not given. It is, instead, the being mine of a behaviour. 'I can speak,' says Dreyfus (1991: 145), 'of your comportment and my comportment, and the understanding of being in your activities and in my activities, but that should not lead me to think that your comportment is in your world and my comportment is in my world or that you have your understanding of being and I have mine.'

1.11 Inclination

The being mine of experience, the fact that experiencing belongs to me and corresponds each time to my acquiring a meaning, shows how permanence in time is declined as continually a finding of oneself and/or finding each other. And it is each time experience belonging to itself which finds individuation in its undissociability from a sharing of the world with others.

In the winter 1922 lectures, Heidegger spoke of inclinations to indicate a certain historicity of this being in relation to:

'In this inclination of the relationality, in proclivity as a mode of the actualization of caring, the world, in which life lives, has weight for life, specifically such that life, in its facticity, admixes constantly new sorts of weight. The realms of significance which are encountered in the course of the maturation of life, and which become different as its world changes, transport life. In its proclivity, life thereby arrives at the mode of being transported. Life abandons itself to a certain pressure exerted by its world' (Heidegger, 1988: 76).

We must be careful not to interpret this being inclined as a return to a sort of immanent sphere, to that substantial permanence which represented one of the most significant features of modern subjectivity. Inclination is to be understood by way of being each time, by way of discontinuity, by way of the sense of Self which comes to experience each time. It indicates, rather, that coming toward itself each time ipseity finds itself to be the same, inasmuch as it finds itself each time beside the same things with the same emotional tones. In the following chapters we will see the importance that this return to the Self acquires for the study of character and personality.

This tension – between the sedimentation of one's own experience of Self and the happening each time – which is internal to ipseity, which actualizes itself anew each moment of our existence, almost always remains invisible in daily experience. That is, how the history of our lives, which orients us, remains more or less indistinguishable from how we experience this or that thing. Although we do perceive a feeling of stability in ourselves every time we experience something, that feeling is never called upon explicitly in daily life; it is always silently present. As if there existed a sort of overlapping between the sense of continuity of Self, which remains while it unfolds, and the experience I am undergoing. The hidden dialectic between sameness and ipseity only discloses itself with vibrant clarity in the experience of novelty. It throws oneself out of itself; the encounter with the unexpected event produces the result that in the world we no longer find ourselves as being the same beside the same things with the same emotional tones. In experiencing novelty, it is as if ipseity did not have the support of its history: a history sedimented with actions and emotions with others in the world.

Let us now sum up our argument so far, in order to identify what problems remain to be solved, and to define the trajectory of the next chapter. Robert's case has posed a series of questions that have led us to re-examine the modern concept of Self, in both its foundations and implications. We have therefore traced the origins of this concept and outlined its developments as part of an ontology that, from Plato to Husserl, has always envisaged the Self as a thing. This concept, which has been adopted in psychology without any further thematization, has been seen to underlie the systems theory, the various classifications of personality and the different forms of therapeutic approach. By challenging these foundations, we have followed Heidegger in an attempt to define an ontology that grasps the Self as a 'who': not, that is, by means of ontological categories applied to things produced, but through ways of being – a Self marked by ways of 'feeling-in-the-world'. This exercise has inevitably led us to reconsider the three distinguishing elements that modern thought, as well as common sense, have regarded as the essential qualities of the Self: interiority, unity and continuity. Once again, Robert's case served as a test bed.

On the basis of this new perspective, it would seem that Robert's discontinuity, multiplicity, lack of narrative unity and lack of self-centeredness cannot be understood as inadequate terms with respect to the notions of continuity, unity and privacy. In other words, there may be an alternative way of understanding these three traits of Robert's Self. Our enquiry suggests that permanence does not possess a substantial character. The being-oneself is always something discontinuous: ipseity is constructed in each case in relation to the ongoing situation. While this form of discontinuity is always mine, in each case, depending on circumstances, it is simultaneously reflected in things or in others; as such, it is put off-centre. I meet myself in the way the world reflects my everyday business or life projects; I find myself through my relations with others and through others' relations with me. This multiplicity does not necessarily require any narrative unity. It is possible to describe oneself as a romantic hero or as a range of different characters: a kind of polyphony of the Self; a person may also lack any narrative tendency. From this perspective, Robert no longer appears deficient with respect to the normal functioning of the Self; rather, his case may be examined on the basis of different modes of being.

We do not find ourselves, however, in a situation similar to that which Klaus Conrad brought to Biswanger's attention when he polemically posed the question: does not the taking into account of as many unique and unrepeatable world projects as there are schizophrenic patients prevent us from grasping what is specifically schizophrenic? Paraphrasing Conrad, we may ask in turn: why should Robert suffer? After all, his discontinuity, multiplicity and being in each case attuned to others are all structural characteristics of the Self. In reaching ipseity, we have lost psychopathology!

The question 'who?' must still be answered; yet, it has certainly brought a previously concealed issue to the forefront: the meaning of experience, which is always torn between the happening and the sedimented story of the subject. The section on Inclination raises this question almost by surprise, pointing to the need of understanding ipseity in the context of its quasi-invisible dialectic with sameness.

A human being, unlike an animal, can only grasp the sense of Self – ipseity – in the context of the sedimentation of his own experiences. Without sameness we cannot understand the distribution – so to speak – of the multiplicity of Self in time: the context of meaning, that is, in which Robert's experiences in each case take shape. It is for this reason, on account of the decontextualization of experience, that the strenuous attempts of neuroscientists to locate the Self in the human brain are inevitably destined to fail. The network of relations between ipseity, sameness and narrative (or lack of narrative of Self) thus becomes the thematic object of our research. Following this path, in the next chapter we will mark those stages that lead from the pre-reflexive origin of meaning to its articulation through language.

This will enable us to study – in the footsteps of Paul Ricoeur – the relation between feeling and action, and the narrative reconfiguration of the two.

Endnotes

¹ Heidegger (1988: 11).

² 'Psychology itself is dead', said Gazzanica (1998) a few years ago.

³ See Carr (1999) for a discussion of the relationship between the transcendental I and the empirical I in Kant, which constitutes an alternative to the line of argument we are advancing.

- ⁴ A distinction is generally made between first-order cybernetics, which studies observed systems, and second-order cybernetics, which studies observing systems.
- ⁵ Kant calls the knowledge of something (which also includes intuition and thought) a priori if it comes before any empirical experience. A thought (judgement), therefore, may be regarded as a priori if it finds no immediate reference in experience. An a priori judgement is described as synthetic, for it extends the knowledge contained in its subject concept through the predicate. Albeit anterior to any experience, an a priori judgement is not a mere form: it also possesses content; as such, it assigns a determination to intuition in advance. One of the chief problems addressed in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is precisely the unity between pure thought and pure intuition.
- An a priori synthetic judgement measures the real experience we have of things.
- ⁶ For a history of the development of the cybernetic movement, see Heims (1991). For a history of self-organization, see Stengers (1985).
- ⁷ Those interested in delving further into the subject may consult Dupuy (2000) and Heims (1991).
- ⁸ Temperament and character traits are correlated with each other in a nonlinear manner: this means that the ways they are related are neither inevitable nor necessary. That is to say, one temperament trait may be related to different character configurations, and a given character configuration may be the outcome of different temperament structures.
- ⁹ Cloninger and his colleagues also introduce into the model the developmental perspective in the form of 15 steps corresponding to an ideal pathway which leads to full character development. This pathway is consistent with the qualitative descriptions of development provided by Piaget, Freud and Erikson. At each step, it is possible to measure the relationship between the current state of character development and the preceding stage, as well as with the temperament traits and with the pressures exerted by the environment.
- ¹⁰ Heidegger expressly states that 'the basic problems of Phenomenology' represent 'a new elaboration of the third section of the first part of *Sein und Zeit*'.
- ¹¹ This mode of conceiving of self-consciousness corresponds to what Zahavi (2003) calls 'intransitive consciousness'.
- ¹² Strawson's point of departure is that of a reflective description of the Self, which leads to conclusions that differ from ours.
- ¹³ Closure here means: anything I am conscious of is in my consciousness.
- ¹⁴ Contrariwise, I-ness does not mean the factual ego distinguished from the thou; egoicity means, rather, the I-ness also at the basis of the thou, which prevents an understanding of the thou factually as an alter ego. But why is thou not simply a second ego? Because being an ego, in contradistinction to being a thou, does not at all pertain to the essence of Dasein, that is, because a thou is what it is, only *qua* itself, and likewise for the I. Therefore I usually use the expression 'ipseity' [Selbstheit] for metaphysical I-ness, for egoicity. For the 'ipse' can be said equally of the I and the thou: 'I-myself', 'you-yourself', but not 'thou-I'. (Heidegger, 1984: 188).
- ¹⁵ As Raffoul (2004: 118) states, 'consciousness is a mode of being, a particular realization of the presence to oneself'.
- ¹⁶ But also, as we may glean from the title of one of the great works of Ricoeur (1990), the relationship of *Oneself as Another*.
- ¹⁷ Heidegger employs an unusual lexeme to define my being as always: *die Jemeinigkeit*. The term indicates a universal concept (what it is that renders possible the existence of all the Is and all the Yous), but at the same time it indicates that experience belongs to me, it is my property.
- ¹⁸ Even the impossibility of all possibilities, as in clinical depression, consists of living in expectation of . . .
- ¹⁹ Dreyfus (1991) speaks of familiarity with a background of shared practices. This familiarity corresponds to common sense (Arciero, 1989).
- ²⁰ Continuity is interrupted by death. The importance of being-for-death in the architecture of *Being and Time* is well known.

- ²¹ But this lamp was once on my father's desk, my father having received it as a gift from my grandmother on a certain occasion, together with a paperweight which had belonged to her grandfather. Now, for whoever is unfamiliar with these facts or for whoever does not reflect about the history of this lamp, this object is a mere lamp: access to the lamp is opened up by the use made of it.
- ²² In understanding itself by way of things, the *Dasein* understands itself as being-in-the-world by way of its world' (Heidegger, 1988: 171).
- ²³ Shortly afterwards, Heidegger (1988: 289) explicates the phenomenon of expecting, awaiting as a mode of re-coming toward itself: 'Only because the *Dasein* is expectant of its can-be in the sense described, as coming from the things it attends to and cares for – only because of this expecting can it anticipate, await something from the things or wait for the way they run off'.
- ²⁴ 'The "oneself" in *comporting oneself* and the "my" in "my *Dasein*" must never be understood as a relationship to a subject or to a substance. Rather, the "oneself" must be seen in a purely phenomenological sense, that is, in the way I comport myself now. In each case the *Who* exhausts itself precisely in the comportments in which I am [it is] involved just now' (Heidegger, 2001a: 159).
- ²⁵ This is why *Jemeiningkeit* cannot be considered an empty universal which is separable from the individual event of experience, but it must also not be confused with concrete individuality. As Raffoul (2004: 206) writes, 'Being always mine is the internal, constitutive and undissociable possibility of concrete individuality.'