

Is the Self a Social Construct?

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ABSTRACT *There is a long tradition in philosophy for claiming that selfhood is socially constructed and self-experience intersubjectively mediated. On many accounts, we consequently have to distinguish between being conscious or sentient and being a self. The requirements that must be met in order to qualify for the latter are higher. My aim in the following is to challenge this form of social constructivism by arguing that an account of self which disregards the fundamental structures and features of our experiential life is a non-starter, and that a correct description and account of the experiential dimension must do justice to the first-person perspective and to the primitive form of self-referentiality, mineness or for-me-ness that it entails. I then consider and discuss various objections to this account, in particular the view that an endorsement of such a minimal notion of self commits one to an outdated form of Cartesianism. In the final part of the paper, I argue that the self is so multifaceted a phenomenon that various complementary accounts must be integrated if we are to do justice to its complexity.*

There is a long tradition in philosophy for claiming that selfhood is socially constructed and self-experience intersubjectively mediated. It is a view that has had many different voices. According to a widespread reading, Hegel argued that subjectivity is something that can only be achieved within a social context, within a community of minds, and that it has its ground in an intersubjective process of recognition rather than in some immediate form of self-familiarity. In the late 19th and early 20th Century related views were defended in the US by Royce and Mead. According to Royce, “Self-conscious functions are all of them, in their finite, human and primary aspect, social functions, due to habits of social intercourse” (Royce, 1898, p. 196). Mead argued that the self is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, rather it is better characterized as an eddy in the social current (Mead, 1962, p. 182),

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and he explicitly defined self-consciousness as being a question of becoming “an object to one’s self in virtue of one’s social relations to other individuals” (Mead, 1962, p. 172). Partly playing on the etymological roots of the term “subject”—one is always subject to or of something—Foucault has more recently claimed that individuals acquire their sense of autonomy inside contexts of domination and subordination. Forming subjects and subjecting them to authority were in his view two sides of the same coin. As he wrote at one point, “the subject that is constituted as a subject—that is ‘subjected’—is one who obeys” (Foucault, 1976, p. 112). On this reading, subjectivity and individuality are not rooted in some free and spontaneous interiority. Rather, we are dealing with categories produced in a system of social organization. By forcing us to think about ourselves in terms that might support moral categories such as guilt and responsibility, the system will be better able to control and manage us. An example found in Althusser illustrates this idea well. When a policeman calls out to someone in the street, “the hailed individual will turn round”. And as Althusser then continues, “By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*” (Althusser, 1971, p. 174).

Without denying that there are significant differences between these various proposals, I think it is fair to say that they are all united in their rejection of the idea that subjectivity and selfhood—and for reasons that will become apparent in the following, I will be using both notions interchangeably—are something innate, automatic and spontaneous. On many accounts, we consequently have to distinguish between being conscious or sentient, and being a self. The requirements that must be met in order to qualify for the latter are higher. More precisely, being a self is an achievement rather than a given, and therefore also something that one can fail at. Selves are not born, but arise in a process of social experience and interchange. Indeed many would consider the self a construction, something more a matter of politics and culture, than of science and nature.

My aim in the following is not to dispute that there are important insights to be found in such claims. However, insofar as they are presented as accounts of the self tout court, rather than as accounts of certain dimensions or aspects of self, I find all of them unpersuasive. I think there is a basic yet crucial aspect of self that they all fail to consider let alone explain. To put it differently, I am opposed to the claim that the self is nothing but a social construct and in the following I will argue against this kind of social reductionism by outlining a more basic experiential notion of self that I consider a necessary precondition for any socially constructed self. This more basic notion is one with a venerable ancestry. It has been defended by various figures in the phenomenological tradition.

I. Subjectivity of experience and the minimal self

In his very first lecture course from 1919, Heidegger addresses the question as to whether every experience contains a reference to an I. As he remarks, if

we interpret an intentional experience, say, the experience of writing on a blackboard, as an experience where “I relate myself towards the blackboard”, we introduce something into the experience that wasn’t there from the very start, namely an I (Heidegger, 1999, p. 66). If we really want to describe accurately what is there, we will not find any *detached* I, but simply an intentional life (Heidegger, 1999, p. 68). But as Heidegger then goes on to say, although my experiences do not contain any explicit reference to an I, the experiences are nevertheless rightly called *my* experiences, and are indeed part of *my* life (Heidegger, 1999, p. 69). The experiences do not simply pass me by, as if they were foreign entities; rather they are precisely *mine* (Heidegger, 1999, p. 75). Thus, whenever I experience something, my self (and Heidegger prefers to speak of a self rather than of an I) is present, it is so to speak implicated. In fact, on Heidegger’s account every experience involves a primitive sense of self; every experience is characterized by the fact that “I am always somehow acquainted with myself” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 251). In his lectures from this period, Heidegger makes it clear that the self should not be understood as a pure and detached ego-pole (Heidegger, 1993, p. 247). Rather, when we look at concrete experience, we always come across a co-givenness of self and world. Experiential life is as such, as Heidegger says, world-related (Heidegger, 1993, p. 34), and my self is present when I am world-engaged (Heidegger, 1993, p. 250). Indeed, on his account, the co-disclosure of the self belongs to intentionality as such (Heidegger, 1989, p. 225).¹

In the beginning of the *Bernauer Manuskripte über das Zeitbewusstsein*, Husserl remarks that consciousness exists, it exists as a stream, and it appears to itself as a stream. But how the stream of consciousness is capable of being conscious of itself; how it is possible and comprehensible that the very being of the stream is a form of self-consciousness, is, as he says, the enduring question (Husserl, 2001, pp. 44, 46). Husserl’s detailed investigation of time-consciousness was to a large extent motivated by his interest in the question of how consciousness is given to itself, how it manifests itself, and throughout his writings Husserl argues that self-consciousness, rather than being something that only occurs during exceptional circumstances, namely whenever we pay attention to our conscious life, is a feature characterizing the experiential dimension as such, no matter what worldly entities we might otherwise be intentionally directed at (Husserl, 1959, pp. 189, 412; 1973b, p. 316). Husserl emphasizes the ubiquitous presence of self-consciousness in experiential life, and on repeated occasions equates 1) the first-personal mode of givenness, 2) a primitive form of self-awareness, and 3) a certain basic sense of selfhood. As he writes in a research manuscript dating from 1922, “The consciousness in which I am conscious of myself [*meiner*] is my consciousness, and my consciousness of myself and I myself are concretely considered identical. To be a subject is to be in the mode of being aware of oneself” (Husserl, 1973b, p. 151).

Finally, to mention just one further example, Sartre famously argues that the *mode of being* of intentional consciousness is to be *for-itself* (*pour-soi*), that is, self-conscious. An experience does not simply exist, it exists for itself, i.e., it is given for itself, and this (pre-reflective) self-giveness is not simply a quality added to the experience, a mere varnish, rather it constitutes the very mode of being of the experience. As he writes, “This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness, but as *the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something*” (Sartre, 1976, p. 20). And as Sartre then adds a bit further in the text, “consciousness is self-consciousness. It is this same notion of *self* which must be studied, for it defines the very being of consciousness” (Sartre, 1976, p. 114).

I have elsewhere presented an extensive defence of this general approach (Zahavi, 1999; 2005), so let me here restrict myself to the more modest task of clarifying and elaborating the dimension of selfhood that these different thinkers are referring to.² The crucial idea propounded by them all is that an understanding of what it means to be a self calls for an examination of experience, and vice versa. Galen Strawson has recently argued that if we wish to understand what it means to be a self, we should look at self-experience, since self-experience is what gives rise to the question in the first place by giving us a vivid sense that there is something like a self (Strawson, 2000, p. 40). The phenomenologists would concur and even go one step further by claiming that the most basic form of self is constituted in and through self-experience.

One way to appraise this proposal is by seeing it as constituting a middle position between two opposing views. According to the first view, the self is some kind of unchanging soul substance that is distinct from and ontologically independent of the mental experiences and worldly objects it is the subject of. According to the second view, there is no self, since there is nothing to consciousness apart from a manifold of interrelated changing experiences. Although the two latter positions seem to differ radically, one should observe the dialectical relation that frequently obtains between them. Several participants in the current debate concerning the relation between self and consciousness start out by embracing a very traditional reified definition of self, and after denying that there is anything answering to this definition, and by implication after denying the reality of the self, they then opt for the second position, which might be described as a no-self doctrine. An alternative to this line of thought is, however, available the moment one recognizes that there are other, more plausible, notions of selfhood on hand. This includes the phenomenological proposal which defines selfhood in terms of subjectivity and argues that subjectivity amounts to selfhood.

In contemporary discussions in analytical philosophy of mind a standard move has been to articulate the subjectivity of experience in terms of Nagel's famous notion of what-it-is-like (cf. Nagel, 1974). On closer examination it should be obvious, however, that there is more to the subjectivity of experience

than the fact that what it is like to perceive a green square is subjectively distinct from what it is like to perceive a blue circle. The dimension of phenomenality is not exhausted by the qualities belonging to the objects of experience. We also need to distinguish as Husserl did between the intentional object in “the how of its determinations” (*im Wie seiner Bestimmtheiten*) and in “the how of its givenness” (*im Wie seiner Gegebenheitsweisen*) (Husserl, 1976, pp. 303–04). What it is like to *perceive* a green square is different from what it is like to *remember* or *imagine* a green square. Moreover, we shouldn’t forget that in perceiving or imagining an object consciously, the object appears in a determinate manner *to ourselves*. Whereas the object might be termed the accusative of the perceiving, the subject is the dative. But let us leave the colours and geometrical figures aside, and instead consider the following slightly more complex example:

I have climbed the spire of Our Saviour’s Church together with my oldest son. Holding onto the railing, I see Copenhagen spread out before me. I can hear the distant noise from the traffic beneath me and feel the wind blow against my face. Far away, I can see an airship. My attention is drawn to something that is written on its side, but despite repeated attempts to decipher the text, I cannot read it. My concentration is suddenly interrupted by a pull in my hand. My son asks me when we are supposed to meet his mother and brother for cake and hot chocolate. I look at my watch and shamefully realize that we are already too late for our appointment. I decide to start the descent immediately, but when rushing down the stairways, I stumble over an iron rod and feel pain blossom up my shin.

A careful analysis of this episode will reveal many differences. If we compare perceptual experiences, voluntary movements, passivity experiences, social emotions, the experience of pain, effortful concentration or decision making etc., we will not only encounter an experiential complexity, but also a diversity of qualitatively different experiences of self. There is for instance a vivid difference between the kind of self-experience we find in shame and the kind of self-experience we have when our body is moved by external causes. Despite these differences, however, there is also something that the manifold of experiences has in common. Whatever their character, whatever their object, all of the experiences are subjective in the sense that they feel like something *for somebody*. They are subjective in the sense that there is a distinctive way they present themselves to the subject or self whose episodes they are.

To better pin down the specificity and phenomenological character of this proposal, let me distinguish it from another account. According to this alternative proposal, which has a long heritage, each and every experience presupposes by conceptual necessity a subject of experience, one the

existence of which we can infer, but which is not itself in any way experientially given. A version of this view has recently been defended by Searle. According to Searle, the self is not a separate and distinct entity but rather a formal feature of the conscious field. He claims that we mis-describe the conscious field if we think of it as a field constituted only by its contents and their arrangements. The contents require a principle of unity, but that principle, namely the self, is not a separate thing or entity.³ Searle then goes on to say that the postulation of a self is like the postulation of a point of view in visual perception. Just like we cannot make sense of our perceptions unless we suppose that they occur from a point of view, even though the point of view is not itself perceived, we cannot, according to Searle, make sense of our conscious experiences unless we suppose that they occur to a self, even though the self is not consciously experienced. The self is not the object of consciousness, nor is it part of the content of consciousness, indeed we have on Searle's account no experience of the self at all, but since all (non-pathological) consciousness has to be possessed by a self, we can infer that it must exist (Searle, 2005, pp. 16–18). The problem with this account is that Searle fails to realize that the experiential reality of the self is linked to the first-personal givenness or for-me-ness of experience. To be conscious of oneself is, consequently, not to capture a pure self that exists in separation from the stream of consciousness; rather, it entails being conscious of an experience in its first-personal mode of givenness; it is a question of enjoying first-personal access to one's own experiential life.

As should be clear from what I have written so far, the account I favor denies that the self under consideration—and let us just call it the experiential self—is a separately existing entity, but it would also deny that the self is simply reducible to any specific experience or (sub-)set of experiences. If we shift the focus from a narrow investigation of a single experience and instead considers a diachronic sequence of experiences, it should be obvious that each successive experience doesn't have its own unique for-me-ness or mine-ness—as if the difference between one experience and the next experience was as absolute as the difference between my current experience and the current experience of somebody else. If I compare two successive experiences, say a perception of a blackbird and a recollection of a summer holiday I can focus on the difference between the two, namely their respective object and mode of presentation, but I can also attend to that which remains the same, namely the first-personal givenness of both experiences. To put it differently, we can distinguish the plurality of changing experiences from the abiding *dative of manifestation*. An informative way of characterizing the self might consequently be as a *ubiquitous* dimension of first-personal givenness in the multitude of changing experiences.⁴ This is not meant to imply that genuine self-experience requires the experience of something invariant or identical, as if one had necessarily to be conscious of one's overarching identity as the subject of different experiences in order to be self-conscious. We certainly

need to distinguish the case where I reflect on myself as the one who in turn deliberates, resolves, acts and suffers and the case where I simply consciously perceive a table, but even the latter experience is characterized by first-personal givenness and is to that extent an instance of self-experience.⁵

Let me now consider a few objections:

The first objection argues that it is patently implausible to claim that each and every experience is accompanied by a distinct feeling of mineness. It simply isn't true to phenomenology to claim that all my experiences possess the same quale, a common stamp or label that clearly identifies them as mine. Rather than being a primitive, the mineness of experience must be considered either a post-hoc fabrication, i.e., something imputed to experience by a subsequent reflection, or a late developmental achievement, say, something that only emerges the moment the child realizes that its point of view differs from those of others. The problem with this objection, however, is that it basically misses the point. It interprets the mineness or for-me-ness in question as a quality or datum of experience on a par with, say, the scent of crushed mint leaves. But this is precisely the mistake. When consciously seeing the moon, imagining Santa Claus, desiring a hot shower, anticipating a forthcoming film festival, or remembering a recent holiday in Sicily, all of these experiences present me with different intentional objects. These objects are there *for me* in different experiential modes of givenness (as seen, imagined, desired, anticipated, recollected, etc).⁶ This for-me-ness or mineness, which seems inescapably required by the experiential presence of intentional objects and which is the feature that really makes it appropriate to speak of the subjectivity of experience, is *not* a quality like green, sweet or hard. It doesn't refer to a specific experiential content, to a specific *what*, nor does it refer to the diachronic or synchronic sum of such content, or to some other relation that might obtain between the contents in question. Rather, it refers to the distinct givenness or *how* of experience. It refers to the first-personal presence of experience. It refers to what has recently been called *perspectival ownership* (Albahari, 2006). It refers to the fact that the experiences I am living through are given differently (but not necessarily better) to me than to anybody else. It could consequently be claimed that anybody who denies the for-me-ness or mineness of experiences simply fails to recognize an essential constitutive aspect of experience. Such a denial would be tantamount to a denial of the first-person perspective. It would entail the view that my own mind is either not given to me at all—I would be mind- or self-blind—or present to me in exactly the same way as the minds of others.⁷

To repeat, to emphasize that experience is characterized by for-me-ness and first-personal givenness is simply to insist that there is a distinctive way experiential episodes present themselves to the subject whose episodes they are. Were one to claim that it is reflection that creates the distinctive first-personal givenness of experience, were one to claim that the experience (or better, the mental state) prior to becoming the object of a first-person

thought lacked this dimension,⁸ one would be attributing quite exceptional powers to reflection. It is, of course, true that some advocates of higher-order representation theories have been willing to bite the bullet on this and argued that only those mental states that you are able to reflect upon and conceptualize are phenomenally conscious—a prominent example would be Carruthers, who famously argues that only creatures that are in possession of a *theory of mind* (and on Carruthers' account this rules out non-human animals, children under the age of three, as well as autistic subjects) are capable of enjoying conscious experiences or of having mental states with phenomenal feels (Carruthers, 1996, p. 158; 1998, p. 216; 2000, p. 203)—but since space constraints prevent me from discussing higher-order representation theories in any detail here (I have done so elsewhere), let me simply state that I find the entailed conclusion so implausible that I consider it a desperate last resort.

Let me next consider two versions of a different objection, which rather than denying the proposal basically seeks to trivialize it.

One possibility is to question the explanatory value and relevance of the account just offered. If for-me-ness is an intrinsic and integral aspect of experience, we will be faced with a non-informative account of selfhood that fails to explain anything—or so the objection goes. There is both something right and something wrong about this objection. It is true that the account doesn't offer anything resembling a reductive explanation of self, but that hardly makes it irrelevant if one is in the explanatory business. Quite to the contrary in fact, since the account by providing a correct description of the *explanandum* should be invaluable to anybody seriously interested in reductive forms of explanation. Furthermore, the account has a number of empirical implications. Let me pick out three areas where the relevance should be particularly visible.

- (1) First, consider the case of pathology. Relevant test-cases would include thought-insertion and other self-disorders in schizophrenia, disturbed forms of self-understanding in autism and diminished self-experience in dementia and Alzheimer's disease. As Seeley and Miller have recently put it: "Though once relegated to philosophers and mystics, the structure of the self may soon become mandatory reading for neurology, psychiatry, and neuroscience trainees. For the dementia specialist the need for this evolution is transparent, as shattered selves—of one form or another—remain a daily part of clinical practice" (Seeley & Miller, 2005, p. 160).⁹ If we consider the case of Alzheimer's disease, a currently quite popular attempt to underscore the socially constructed character of selfhood is the so-called narrative account of self. In *Making Stories*, Jerome Bruner has argued that there is nothing like selfhood if we lack narrative capacities, and that the dynarrativia which we encounter in Alzheimer's disease is deadly for selfhood

(Bruner 2002, 86, 119, see also Young and Saver 2001, 78). The current account would question this claim and would predict that even someone deprived of autobiographical memory and narrative identity would retain perspectival ownership and still feel, say, the pain and discomfort as his or her own.

- (2) If correct, the account will have obvious implications for the ascription of self not only to infants, but to all animals possessing phenomenal consciousness. It would in short allow for some measure of developmental (ontogenetic and phylogenetic) continuity. For the same reason, it would challenge those developmental psychologists who link the emergence of self to the acquisition of higher-order representational skills. As an example, consider Kagan, who in his article “Is there a self in infancy?” criticizes the assumption that infants under the age of 18 months have a concept of self. In the process of disputing this assumption, Kagan also denies that infants have a self, that they have a sense of self, that they possess self-awareness, and that they are consciously aware of their own feelings or actions (Kagan, 1998, pp. 138, 143, 144). The current account would dispute the legitimacy of running together all these different issues. It would concede that there is a developmental story to be told, that different aspects of self emerge ontogenetically and that infants may lack various dimensions of self that adults possess, but would at the same time insist that there is a dimension of self present already from the moment infants have phenomenal experiences.
- (3) If the account is right, any search for the putative neural correlate of phenomenal consciousness would have to be a search for the neural correlate of self and self-consciousness as well. In other words, it would be a mistake to think that one could start with phenomenal consciousness and postpone the supposedly more complex and enigmatic problem of self for later. It is worth mentioning that a similar view seems to be advocated by some neuroscientists. In his book *The Feeling of What Happens*, for instance, Damasio writes: “If ‘self-consciousness’ is taken to mean ‘consciousness with a sense of self’, then all human consciousness is necessarily covered by the term—there is just no other kind of consciousness” (Damasio, 1999, p. 19).

Another line of attack is to concede that there is something like subjectivity of experience, but to then argue that too much focus on this trivial truth will belittle a significant difference, namely the one existing between experiences that so to speak are mere happenings in the history of my mental life and experiences that are my own in a much more profound sense. To put it differently, it could be argued that although it is undeniably true that an experience, i.e., a conscious thought, desire, passion etc., cannot occur without an experiencer, since every experience is necessarily an experience for

someone, this truism will mask crucial distinctions. Consider, for instance, thoughts that willy-nilly run through our heads, thoughts that strikes us out of the blue, consider passions and desires that are felt, from the first-person perspective, as intrusive—as when somebody would say that when he was possessed by anger, he was not in possession of himself—or take experiences that are induced in us through hypnosis or drugs, and then compare these cases with experiences, thoughts and desires that we welcome or accept at the time of their occurrence. As Frankfurt argues, although the former class might indeed be conscious events that occur in us, although they are events in the history of a person's mind, they are not that person's desire, experience or thought (Frankfurt, 1988, pp. 59–61). We cannot simply identify a person with whatever goes on in his mind. On the contrary, conscious states or episodes that we disapprove of when they occur are not ours in the full sense of the word (Frankfurt, 1988, p. 63). To disapprove of or reject passions or desires means to withdraw or distance oneself from them. To accept passions or desires, to see them as having a natural place in one's experience, means to identify with them (Frankfurt, 1988, p. 68). Frankfurt concedes that it is difficult to articulate the notion of identification at stake in a satisfactory manner, but ultimately he suggests that when a person decides something without reservations, the decision determines what the person really wants by making the desire on which he decides fully his own (Frankfurt, 1988, p. 170).

How might one respond to this criticism? There are several moves available. One possibility would be to say that subjectivity of experience although being insufficient for selfhood is nevertheless a necessary condition for selfhood, there is no self without it, and it is consequently something that any plausible theory of self must consider and account for. To put it differently, any account of self which disregards the fundamental structures and features of our experiential life is a non-starter, and a correct description and account of the experiential dimension must necessarily do justice to the first-person perspective and to the primitive form of self-reference that it entails.

Another possibility would be to maintain that the subjectivity of experience amounts to more than merely an indispensable and necessary pre-requisite for any true notion of self, but that it rather in and of itself is a minimal form of self (it constitutes the minimal requirements for selfhood). Ultimately, however, the distinction between these two options (considering subjectivity of experience as a necessary but insufficient vs. necessary and sufficient condition for selfhood) might be less relevant than one should initially assume, since we—with the possible exception of certain severe pathologies, say, the final stages of Alzheimer's disease—will never encounter the experiential core self in its purity. It will always already be embedded in an environmental and temporal horizon. It will be intertwined with, shaped and contextualized by memories, expressive behaviour and social interaction, by passively acquired habits, inclinations, associations, etc. In that sense, a narrow focus on the experiential self might indeed be said to involve an abstraction. Nevertheless,

although one must concede that such a minimal notion is unable to accommodate or capture all ordinary senses of the term “self”, and although it certainly doesn’t provide an exhaustive understanding of what it means to be a self, the very fact that we employ notions like *first-person* perspective, *formeness* and *mineness* in order to describe our experiential life, the fact that it is characterized by a basic and pervasive reflexivity and pre-reflective self-consciousness, is—pace those who wish to insist on the difference between subjectivity and selfhood (cf. Frankfurt, 1988; Albahari, 2006)—ultimately sufficient to warrant the use of the term “self”.

To claim that the subjectivity of experience is trivial and banal in the sense that it doesn’t call for further examination and clarification would in any case be to commit a serious mistake. Not only would it disregard many of the recent insights concerning the function of first-person indexicals (the fact that “I”, “me”, “my”, “mine” cannot without loss be replaced by definite descriptions) and ascriptionless self-reference (the fact that one can be self-conscious without identifying oneself via specific properties), but it would also discount the laborious attempt to spell out the microstructure of lived subjective presence that we find in Husserl’s writings on time. As Husserl would argue, given the temporal character of the stream of consciousness, even something as apparently synchronic as the subjective givenness of a present experience is not comprehensible without taking the innermost structures of time-consciousness into account. Indeed, Husserl’s analysis of the interplay between protention, primal impression and retention is precisely to be understood as a contribution to a better understanding of the relationship between selfhood, self-experience, and temporality.

It is intriguing that Frankfurt while defending the importance of identification and commitment for the constitution of self at the same time accepts that consciousness does entail a basic form of self-consciousness. As he writes

what would it be like to be conscious of something without being aware of this consciousness? It would mean having an experience with no awareness whatever of its occurrence. This would be, precisely, a case of unconscious experience. It appears, then, that being conscious is identical with being self-conscious. Consciousness *is* self-consciousness (Frankfurt, 1988, pp. 161–62).

As Frankfurt makes clear this claim is not meant to suggest that he endorses some version of a higher-order theory of consciousness. The idea is not that consciousness is invariably dual in the sense that every instance of it involves both a primary awareness and another instance of consciousness which is somehow distinct and separable from the first and which has the first as its object. Rather, and this constitutes a clear affinity with a perspective found in phenomenology,

the self-consciousness in question is a sort of *immanent reflexivity* by virtue of which every instance of being conscious grasps not only that of which it is an awareness but also the awareness of it. It is like a source of light which, in addition to illuminating whatever other things fall within its scope, renders itself visible as well (Frankfurt 1988, 162).

For Frankfurt, however, self-consciousness doesn't amount to consciousness of a self. Rather, the reflexivity in question is merely consciousness's awareness of itself (Frankfurt, 1988, p. 162). On the face of it, it is quite true that self-consciousness doesn't have to be understood as a consciousness of a separate and distinct *self*; it might simply refer to the awareness which a specific experience has of *itself* (cf. Gurwitsch, 1941). It is a mistake, however, to suggest that we in the latter case would be dealing with a non-egological type of self-consciousness, one lacking any sense of self. The very distinction between egological and non-egological types of (self-)consciousness is ultimately too crude and fueled by a too narrow definition of what a self amounts to. There is subjectivity of experience and experiential selfhood, not only when I realize that *I* am perceiving a candle, but whenever there is perspectival ownership, whenever there is first-personal presence or manifestation of experience. It is this pre-reflective sense of self which provides the experiential grounding for any subsequent self-ascription, reflective appropriation and thematic self-identification. To put it differently, even if the situations where we explicitly designate our own experiences as our own are the rare exceptions, we still need to understand how they are possible, and as the argument goes, it would be impossible to account for these more explicit forms of self-ascription, where we recognize an experience as being our own, if it wasn't for the fact that our experiential life is fundamentally characterized by a first-person perspective and by the primitive and minimal form of self-reference it entails. To put it differently, a minimal or thin form of self-experience is a condition of possibility for the more articulated forms of conceptual self-consciousness that we incontestably enjoy from time to time. Had our experiences been completely anonymous when originally lived through, any subsequent appropriation would be inexplicable.

II. The minimal self and the suspicion of Cartesianism

At this stage, there are different options available. One might for instance discuss some of the issues just raised in more depth. Is the minimal dimension of selfhood truly ubiquitous or is it on the contrary possible to unearth dissociations between phenomenal consciousness and sense of self, be it in various pathologies, in meditative states or perhaps in infancy. Another option would be to ask whether we in the case of self are entitled to move from the sense of self to the reality of self. Is the presence of a sense of self sufficient to prove the existence and reality of the self or is the presence of

such a sense compatible with the self ultimately being illusory? I will, however, leave these questions unaddressed in this paper (but see Zahavi, 2005), and instead pursue a rather different line of thought. Basically, the question I wish to discuss is whether an endorsement of the just outlined notion of self either directly or in a more oblique manner commits one to a traditional Cartesian-style like understanding of self, where the self is viewed as some kind of self-sufficient and self-governing world-detached residuum (for a recent criticism along these lines, see Maclaren 2008). As I see it, it is precisely the suspicion that this is the case, which has led many people to reject the notion of an experiential self outright and made them opt for a more robust and socially mediated notion.

If we recall the definition given above, however, it shouldn't be too hard to deflate this worry. The minimal self was tentatively defined as the ubiquitous dimension of first-personal givenness *in the multitude of changing experiences*. On this reading, there is no pure experience-independent self. The minimal self is the very subjectivity of experience and not something that exists independently of the experiential flow. Moreover, the experiences in question are world-directed experiences. They present the world in a certain way, but at the same time they also involve self-presence and hence a subjective point of view. In short, they are of something other than the subject and they are like something for the subject. Thus, the phenomenology of conscious experience is one that emphasizes the unity of world-awareness and self-experience. This is why Merleau-Ponty could write that, at the root of all our experiences and all our reflections, we find a being who immediately knows itself, not by observation, not by inference, but through direct contact with its own existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 426), and claim that consciousness is always affected by itself and that the word "consciousness" has no meaning independent of this self-affection (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 488), while at the same stating that, "there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. v). If we want to study the self, we should not look inside consciousness in the hope of finding some elusive I, rather we should look at our intentional experiences. Just as the self is what it is in its worldly relations, self-acquaintance is not something that takes place or occurs in separation from our living in a world. To put it differently, our experiential life is world-related, and there is a presence of self when we are engaged with the world, i.e., self-experience is the self-experience of a world-immersed self. Moreover, although we might be dealing with a minimal concept of self, I have at no point suggested that it is a disembodied one. And the moment we think through the implications of this, it should also be clear why it would be quite wrong to conceive of even minimal self-experience as the experience of an isolated self. Embodiment entails birth and death. To be born is not to be one's own foundation, but to be situated in both *nature* and *culture*. Indeed, rather than being simply a biologically given, embodiment is also a category of sociocultural analysis.

To be embodied is to find oneself in a historical and cultural context that one did not establish. To phrase it differently, the notion of embodiment obviously and necessarily contextualizes the very concept of subjectivity. Finally, we obviously shouldn't make the mistake of confusing the distinctive first-personal access we have to our mental states with epistemic claims concerning infallibility or incorrigibility. In cases of careless self-description, for instance, first-person beliefs can certainly be corrected by others or be overridden by external evidence. We should not confuse questionable claims regarding self-transparency or infallible self-knowledge with the quite legitimate point that, to quote Shoemaker, "it is essential for a philosophical understanding of the mental that we appreciate that there *is* a first person perspective on it, a distinctive way mental states present themselves to the subjects whose states they are, and that an essential part of the philosophical task is to give an account of mind which makes intelligible the perspective mental subjects have on their own mental lives" (Shoemaker, 1996, p. 157). In fact, we can recognize this point, and at the same time agree with Scheler when a propos traditional accounts of the problem of other minds he argues that they frequently underestimate the difficulties involved in self-experience and overestimate the difficulties involved in the experience of others (Scheler, 1973, pp. 244–46). On Scheler's account we should not ignore what can be directly perceived about others, nor should we fail to acknowledge the embodied and embedded character of self-experience. Scheler consequently denies that our initial self-acquaintance is of a purely mental nature, as if it antedated our experience of our own expressive movements and actions, and as if it took place in isolation from others. He considers such an initial purely internal self-observation a mere fiction.

That it would be wrong to interpret the phenomenological account of minimal selfhood as amounting to a resurrection of a Cartesian-style view of self, which defines it as some kind of self-enclosed and self-sufficient interiority, can also be shown in a somewhat different manner, however, namely by briefly returning to Husserl and Heidegger. My claim is not that both thinkers defend the very same view—there are important differences—but as should be clear from the following, although both favour an account that links self and experience closely together, they certainly also recognize the socially situated character of selfhood.

A. Husserl

Let me start with two quotes from Husserl's late work *Krisis*. Husserl writes that it holds a priori that "self-consciousness and consciousness of others are inseparable" (Husserl, 1954, p. 256; and as he then amplifies a bit later: "Experiencing—in general, living as an ego (thinking, valuing, acting)—I am necessarily an 'I' that has its 'thou', its 'we', its 'you'—the 'I' of the personal pronouns" (Husserl, 1954, p. 270). Thus, for Husserl, the personal I has a

relative mode of being (Husserl, 1952, p. 319). If there were no Thou, there would also be no I in contrast to it (Husserl, 1973a, p. 6). Hence the I is only constituted in contrast to the Thou (Husserl, 1973a, p. 247; cf. Husserl, 1973c, p. 603). As Husserl eventually put it in a famous quote, that Merleau-Ponty was later to discuss in detail: “subjectivity is what it is—an ego functioning constitutively—only within intersubjectivity” (Husserl, 1954, p. 175).

At first glance, it seems hard to reconcile these claims with the statements presented earlier, but the reason why Husserl isn't outright contradicting himself is because he operates with and distinguishes several complementary notions of self. In his view, one might conduct a formal analysis of the relation between selfhood, experiential self-givenness, and the structures of the stream of consciousness without introducing others into the analysis. In fact, as Husserl writes, when it comes to the peculiar mineness (*Meinheit*) characterizing experiential life, this aspect can be understood without any contrasting others (Husserl, 1973c, p. 351). But as Husserl then points out, even though our experiential life is inherently individuated, we must realize that it is a formal kind of individuation; one that necessarily characterizes every possible subject (Husserl, 1973b, p. 23). This kind must be distinguished from a proper individuality which has its origin in social life. To put it differently, a more concrete kind of individuality is constituted by my identification with and participation in various groups, by my personal history, in my moral and intellectual convictions and decisions. These convictions and endorsed values are all social, which is why Husserl then goes on to distinguish the *subject* taken in its bare formality from the *personalized subject* and claims that the origin of personality must be located in the social dimension. I am not simply a pure and formal subject of experience, but also a person with abilities, dispositions, habits, interests, character traits, and convictions, and to focus exclusively on the first is to engage in an abstraction (Husserl, 1962, p. 210). Given the right conditions and circumstances, the self acquires a personalizing self-apprehension, i.e., it develops both into a person and as a person. This development depends heavily upon social interaction. Persons do not exist in a social vacuum. To exist as a person is to exist socialized into a communal horizon, where one's bearing to oneself is appropriated from the others. As Husserl writes in *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität II*,

The origin of personality lies in empathy and in the *social acts* which are rooted in the latter. To acquire a personality it is not enough that the subject becomes aware of itself as the center of its acts: personality is rather constituted only when the subject establishes social relations with others (Husserl, 1973b, p. 175).¹⁰

More specifically, Husserl is calling attention to a special and highly significant form of self-consciousness that comes about by adopting the perspective of the other on oneself. It is only when I apprehend the other as apprehending

me and take myself as other to the other that I apprehend myself in the same way that I apprehend them and become aware of the same entity that they are aware of, namely, myself as a person (Husserl, 1954, p. 256; 1973b, p. 78). It is no wonder that Husserl often asserts that this type of self-apprehension, where I am reflected through others, is characterized by a complex and indirect intentional structure. But as he also makes clear, it is only then that I am, for the first time and in the proper sense, an I over against an other and thereby in a position to say “we” (Husserl, 1952, pp. 242, 250). To put it differently, on Husserl’s account the self is fully developed only when personalized intersubjectively, and I only become a person through my life with others in a shared world (Husserl, 1952, p. 265; 1973b, pp. 170-71).

B. Heidegger

Heidegger mainly raises the issue of others in connection with his analysis of our practical engagement in the surrounding world, for, as he points out, the world we are engaged in is not a private world, but a public and communal one (Heidegger, 1979, p. 255). As he writes, “the world is always already the one that I share with the others” (Heidegger, 1986, p. 118). In fact, in utilizing tools or equipment *Dasein*—to use Heidegger’s terminus technicus for subject or self—is *being-with* (*Mitsein*) others, regardless of whether or not other persons are factually present (Heidegger, 1989, p. 414). That is, just as *Dasein* does not exist first of all as a worldless subject, an “inwardness,” to which a “world” is then subsequently added, *Dasein* likewise does not at all first become being-with when an other in fact turns up. In fact, on Heidegger’s account, being-with must be regarded as a constituent of *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1979, pp. 328–29; 1986, p. 125), or to put it differently, qua its engaged being-in-the-world, *Dasein* is essentially social from the very start.

For this very reason, it might also be objected that there is a crucial aspect of Heidegger’s view that my earlier summary failed to consider. In several places, Heidegger makes it clear that even if we accept that the structure of *mineness* is constitutive of *Dasein*, this does not as such answer the question of who *Dasein* is in its everydayness. As Heidegger writes in *Sein und Zeit*, “the who of everyday *Dasein* is precisely *not* I myself”, rather it is the *they* (Heidegger, 1986, pp. 114–15). In fact, as he points out a little bit later in the text, in everydayness

Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The *they*, which supplies the answer to the *who* of everyday *Dasein*, is the *nobody* to whom every *Dasein* has always already surrendered itself, in its being-among-one-another (Heidegger, 1986, p. 128).

How should we understand this claim? Heidegger makes it clear that it would be a mistake to ascribe an objectual form of being to *Dasein*. Being a self is quite different from being slim, 41-years old or black-haired. In fact, there is

no such thing as who (in contrast to what) I am independently of how I understand and interpret myself. No account of who one is can afford to ignore the issue of one's self-interpretation, since the former is (at least partially) constituted by the latter. However, it so happens that Dasein frequently lets its self-interpretation be determined, controlled and articulated by others (Heidegger, 1986, p. 127). These others are not first of all "everybody else but me", as a whole from which I would stand out; rather, the others are those among whom one is, but from whom "one mostly does *not* distinguish oneself" (Heidegger, 1986, p. 118). As Oscar Wilde famously wrote in *De profundis*, "Most people are other people. Their thoughts are some one else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation" (Wilde, 1969, p. 97). We are in the world together with others, and our being-with-one-another is mostly characterized by substitutability (Heidegger, 1979, p. 428). Insofar as Dasein allows itself to be determined in its being by others, insofar as the self of everyday Dasein is a they-self, Dasein exists *inauthentically* (Heidegger, 1989, pp. 242–43). But as Heidegger then adds, Dasein also has the possibility of appropriating itself in an authentic manner (Heidegger, 1986, p. 129).

There are plenty of ambiguities in these claims. To this day, the precise relationship between Heidegger's concepts of *inauthenticity* and *authenticity* is debated in the literature. But what is crucial in this context is simply that Heidegger already early on in his argumentation makes it quite clear that both of these existential modes presuppose that Dasein is determined as such by mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) (Heidegger, 1986, p. 43). A way to interpret Heidegger is to see him as pointing to two complementary dimensions of selfhood, one pertaining to the issue of formal individuation, the other to a much richer normatively guided notion.

III. A multi-dimensional account

It should by now be clear that several thinkers have defended the socially situated nature of the self while at the same time respecting and defending an experientially grounded notion of self. Why is there no incompatibility or straightforward contradiction involved in defending both views? Indeed, why might it even be possible to accept some of the claims made by the social constructivists while at the same time defending the experiential nature of self? Obviously, because we need to distinguish different aspects or levels of selfhood, and not only is the minimal notion of self fully compatible with a more complex and socially situated notion of self, but the former is arguably also a condition of possibility for the latter (cf. Zahavi, 2005; 2007). To put it differently, we cannot and should not make do with one account alone, rather we need to realize that the self is so multifaceted a phenomenon that various complementary accounts must be integrated if we are to do justice to its complexity. We need to aim for a multi-dimensional account.

If we do that, it will be possible to reconcile various positions that at first sight might seem incompatible. Take for instance the case of Mead. In the beginning of the article, I listed him as a defender of a social constructivist approach to the self. We are on his view selves not by individual right, but in virtue of our relation to one another. However, in *Mind, Self and Society*, Mead concedes that one could talk of a single self if one identified the self with a certain feeling-consciousness, and that previous thinkers such as James had sought to find the basis of self in reflexive affective experiences, that is, in experiences involving self-feeling. Mead even writes that there is a certain element of truth in this, but then denies that it is the whole story (Mead, 1962, pp. 164, 169, 173). For Mead, the problem of selfhood is fundamentally the problem of how an individual can get experientially outside himself in such a way as to become an object to himself. Thus, for Mead, to be a self is ultimately more a question of becoming an object than of being a subject. In his view, one can only become an object to oneself in an indirect manner, namely by adopting the attitudes of others on oneself, and this is something that can only happen within a social environment (Mead, 1962, p. 138). In short, it “is the social process of influencing others in a social act and then taking the attitude of the others aroused by the stimulus, and then reacting in turn to this response, which constitutes a self” (Mead, 1962, p. 171).

What at first sight looked like a substantial disagreement might in the end be more of a verbal dispute regarding the appropriate use of the term “self”; a dispute that can be resolved the moment we discard the ambition of operating with only one notion of self. Having said this, it would obviously be naive to imagine that every disagreement will automatically dissolve the moment one recognizes the need for a distinction between different levels or aspects of selfhood. In order to show why, let us move forward in time. Given my introductory remarks, one might have gotten the impression that the attempt to argue for the socially constructed character of selfhood was primarily a thing of the 19th and 20th century. But this is of course incorrect, since one can also find various forms of social constructivism in contemporary cognitive science.

In an article from 2003, Wolfgang Prinz argues that “the social construction of subjectivity and selfhood relies on, and is maintained in, various discourses on subjectivity” (Prinz, 2003, p. 515). Indeed on his account selves are sociocultural constructs rather than naturally givens. They are constituted within culturally standardized frameworks that control the socialization of individuals. What is remarkable about Prinz’ proposal is that he explicitly defines the notion of self in terms of “me-ness”, that is, the notion of self that he considers to be a social construct is precisely the kind of subjective presence that I have been trying to articulate in the preceding. As a consequence the position defended by Prinz is quite radical. The radicalism is not primarily to be found in his claim that the unity and consistency of the self rather than being a natural necessity is a cultural norm, but in his endorsement of

the view that human beings who were denied all socially mediated attributions of self—like, say, the famous case of Kasper Hauser—would lack a self, and consequently remain unconscious zombies (Prinz, 2003, p. 526).

In a 2007 paper, György Gergely explicitly defends the social origins of the subjective sense of self (Gergely, 2007, p. 71). In his view, infants have no subjective awareness of their basic emotions at the beginning of life (Gergely, 2007, p. 58). Indeed according to Gergely, emotional states do not initially present themselves as subjectively experienced states, but are on the contrary non-conscious. In order for the initial non-conscious emotional states to become subjectively experienced, the following conditions must be met. The non-conscious affective states must be associated with second-order representations, and for this to happen the attentional orientation of the infant must be changed from being outward directed to being inward directed. Thus, being subjectively aware of an emotional state is a question of being introspectively aware of it (Gergely, 2007, p. 58). Gergely's proposal is that such a change of attentional orientation is orchestrated and motivated by social interaction (Gergely, 2007, p. 59). Without going into all the specificities of his account, the basic idea is that "it is the experience of one's current internal states being externally 'mirrored' or 'reflected' back through the infant-attuned contingent social reactions of the attachment environment that makes it possible to develop a subjective sense and awareness of one's primary affective self states" (Gergely, 2007, p. 60). To put it in a slightly less technical jargon, when the caregiver engages in affect-mirroring behavior, the infant will search for the intended referent of this display and will direct its attention towards itself. In this way, a sensitive caregiver can teach the infant about the existence of her own primary, non-conscious automatic emotion states by establishing cognitively accessible second-order representations for them (Gergely, 2007, pp. 68, 81). In a sense, it is the fact that the caregiver behaves as if the infant is already in possession of subjective experiences which serves as the mechanism by which the infant comes to acquire subjective experiences. This is why, Gergely can conclude that the construction of the introspectively visible subjective self happens through the attachment environment (Gergely, 2007, p. 59).

Whereas some of the previously mentioned theorists were referring to other aspects of self when discussing its socially mediated character, this is hardly the case with Prinz and Gergely. They seem to focus pretty much on the same aspect of self that I have been discussing in the previous, and this is of course also why their account remains incompatible with my own. Indeed I would consider my own account and the kind of accounts favored by them to constitute decisive alternatives. Although I would obviously concede that the world we live in is public, and that we *de facto* are together with others from the very start, I would deny that the *for-me-ness* of experience is constitutively dependent upon others. Space constraints prevent me from engaging in any in-depth discussion of their positions, so a few remarks will have to

do. As far as I can see, both authors endorse some version of a higher-order theory of consciousness, and assume that first-personal access to one's own mental life is made possible through second-order representations. The point they then make is that the relevant second-order representations are socially mediated. But although one can understand this line of reasoning if one accepts a higher-order account, it becomes quite implausible if one rejects such an account, as I think one should. To put it differently, one obvious problem is that neither author provide any arguments for the higher-order theory. They just assume that it is true, and that the distinction between conscious and non-conscious mental states rests upon the presence or absence of a relevant meta-mental state. But this is precisely a view that in recent years has been met with growing criticism (cf. Zahavi, 2004).

IV. Conclusion

In this paper I have wanted to argue that an account of self which disregards the fundamental structures and features of our experiential life is a non-starter, and that a correct description and account of the experiential dimension shouldn't forget to do justice to the first-person perspective and to the primitive form of self-referentiality, mineness or for-me-ness that it entails. There is certainly more that can be said in defence of this view, but I hope to have made it clear that it would be a mistake to dismiss the minimal notion of self in question with the argument that it commits one to an outdated form of Cartesianism. By endorsing this minimal notion of an experiential self, there is nothing that either directly or in a more oblique manner commits one to taking the self as some kind of self-enclosed and self-sufficient interiority.¹¹

Notes

1. In a recent article, Okrent has argued that Heidegger is committed to the view that one cannot intend anything as ready-to-hand unless one also intends oneself as "that for the sake of which" one engages in the kind of activity in which one engages. He then claims that this self-directed form of intentionality plays the same structural role in Heidegger's thought as the "I think" does in Kant (Okrent, 2007, p. 162).
2. I am not denying that there are also relevant differences to be found, but in the following my focus will be on what I take to be an important commonality. And the selection of Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre is to some degree arbitrary. The view I will expound and articulate has also been defended by for instance Merleau-Ponty (1945, pp. 487–88), Schütz (1991, p. 94) and of course Henry (1963, pp. 581–85). For a more extensive discussion see Zahavi, 1999 and 2005.
3. It is an interesting, though separate question, whether the self must necessarily be viewed as a principle of unification and whether by implication the self would lose its *raison d'être* if it didn't condition the synchronic and diachronic unity of consciousness.
4. It might be possible to interpret Husserl's notion of pure ego in a way that tallies well with the point just made. Husserl observes that the ego cannot simply be identified with our experiences, since the former preserves its identity, whereas the latter arise and

perish in the stream of consciousness, replacing each other in a permanent flux (Husserl, 1952, p. 98; 1974, p. 363). But as Husserl then goes on to emphasize, although the ego must be distinguished from the experiences in which it lives and functions, it cannot in any way exist independently of them. It is a transcendence, but in Husserl's famous phrase: *a transcendence in the immanence* (Husserl, 1976, pp. 123–24). For comparison consider the relation between an object and its profiles. The object is not merely the sum of its profiles—had that been the case, we would never see the object as long as we merely saw one of its profiles, but only part of the object, but that doesn't seem right—but rather an identity in and across the manifold of profiles. But this doesn't mean that the object stands in opposition to or is independent of its profiles.

5. One might add though that experiences never occur in isolation, and that there will always be a tacit experience of synchronic and diachronic unity. But even if we grant that, the tacitly experienced unity will differ from the identity we disclose when we explicitly compare different experiences in order to thematize that which remains the same.
6. Pace various representationalist approaches to phenomenality it makes little sense to claim that this aspect of experience is simply a property of the represented object.
7. I wouldn't consider the latter option a successful way of addressing the problem of other minds. It wouldn't solve the problem; it would dissolve it by failing to recognize the difference between our experience of self and our experience of others.
8. Given what has been said so far, it should be clear why I prefer to speak of first-personal givenness (or for-me-ness) as a *dimension* of experience, rather than either as one experiential *quality* among others or as a *structure* of experience—if by structure one means a feature we must presuppose, but which is not itself experientially given. It goes without saying that the reference to a dimension is not meant to suggest that we are dealing with some kind of empty or pure mental space that can exist in separation from the concrete experiences and upon which they subsequently make their entry.
9. This statement can of course be interpreted in (at least) two rather different ways. Either it can be read as amounting to the claim that empirical scientists should acquaint themselves with philosophical debates about the self since the latter are of pertinence for their own research, or it could be read as implying that it is now up to empirical scientists to tackle and solve the age-old problems of philosophy by themselves, since philosophers have failed so miserably in producing any lasting results during the last two thousand years (cf. Crick, 1995, p. 258). For why it might be advisable to opt for the former rather than the latter strategy, consider a recent article by Simon Baron-Cohen. In the beginning of his contribution, Baron-Cohen writes as follows: “The idea that as a result of neurological factors one might lose aspects of the self is scientifically important, in that it offers the promise of teaching us more about what the self is. In this chapter I do not tackle the thorny question of how to define the self [. . .]. Rather, I accept that this word refers to something we recognize and instead raise the question: are people with autism trapped—for neurological reasons—to be totally self-focused?” (Baron-Cohen, 2005, p. 166). But does it really make sense to discuss whether autism involves a disturbed focus on self, if one doesn't spend any time discussing and defining the concept of self at play? To put it differently, a whole range of scientific disciplines (neuropsychology, social neuroscience, cognitive neuroscience etc.) are currently becoming interested in the notion of self. When reading the literature, it is however obvious that most of the effort is spent on the experimental setup and on the discussion and interpretation of the experimental results. Far less time is spent on discussing the more overarching theoretical and conceptual issues that a proper clarification of self is also faced with. But one cannot dispense with this more philosophical task. A lack of clarity in the concepts being used will have wide-ranging implications. It will lead to a lack of clarity in the questions being asked and therefore also a lack of clarity in the design of the experiments that are supposed to resolve the questions.

10. When Husserl speaks of personality (*Personalität*) in this context, he is not referring to personality traits such as temperament, etc., but to personhood.
11. Thanks to Dorothée Legrand, Galen Strawson and an anonymous referee for various comments to an earlier version of the paper.

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