



# MONASH University

## **Self as a Temporal Individual**

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## Abstract

I propose and defend a notion of the self that lies between a traditional, substantive self and a phenomenal self as a first-person, subjective feature of experience. I believe that the real, living self is somewhere between a purely immaterial substance and a purely phenomenal property.

The notion of the self I advocate for is not that of a concrete particular but rather an experiential one. I defend the idea of the individuality of the self – the idea that self is a concrete individual, a basic block of reality, that bears certain properties and relations but is not itself an instance of another individual. If ‘I’ exists, ‘I’ is not some kind of abstraction such as a set, a property, or a function but a concrete particular – a ‘thing’ in the world of space-time. I assume that even the most minimalist notion of the self is to be an individual in this sense. Furthermore, I suggest that the self is analogous to a sound with its mode of existence: the self, just like a sound, is an event-like particular that is extended through time but not directly extended through space in the way ordinary material objects are.

The proposed notion of the self is a fundamentally experiential notion. From a subjective first-person perspective, my own individual existence is given through the diachronic unity of consciousness, the experiential fact that consciousness is unified over time. Certainly, self is not a theme of observation or introspection. However, this does not stop the self from being an individual since its individuality is achieved over time through the experiential continuity of consciousness, an awareness of duration, succession, and change.

In other words, by virtue of being a diachronic unity of consciousness, the self can be said to exist as a temporally extended particular. Insofar as there is no breach in the continuity of consciousness, there is the self. I argue that my continuing existence on most occasions is not likely to be interrupted, even during periods when consciousness appears to discontinue. I argue this on the grounds that consciousness may still be continuous in the form of the most basic temporal awareness, an awareness of duration.

The self, as an event particular, can be acknowledged only when we realize that physical reality is not exhausted by our intuition of space. If we allow time and our experience of it to be a genuine ontological grounds for certain kinds of particulars, then the self may exist among them. If we are realists about sounds, smells, and winds, I believe we can also be realists about the self. The self, as essentially a product of time, cannot be locked in a three-dimensional space in any form of representational means since it is a living, dynamic individual that is always moving and is revealed only across time.

## **Declaration**

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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# Introduction

The most naïve, non-philosophical intuition about one's own self is that 'I' is an individual entity that exists independently of a body and consciousness and that survives through various changes. Even when my thoughts and experiences change, my personal traits alter, and my body gets older and deceases, 'I' remains something identical across all these changes. A Cartesian self is a typical example of a philosophical notion of the self that covers much of this intuition. Descartes, as a substance dualist, takes 'I' (a thing that thinks) to be classified under the category of substances. In particular, he regards 'I' as a substance of an immaterial kind and distinguishes it from a body, which is a substance of a material kind. So, the self, unlike its counterpart (the body), is thought to be without spatial extension or threat of decay or death.

The Cartesian self, however, has been challenged, and its existence has been rejected on the grounds that our introspection and observations indicate that there is no substantive self that remains transcendental in the flux of thoughts and things. More importantly, there is no reason to commit to the dualist ontology that allows for the realms of material substances and immaterial substances. Instead, it is suggested that self is best understood as a formal, theoretical postulation: although the existence of the self is presupposed habitually, logically, and semantically, there is, in fact, no substantial entity serving as a cognizer of thoughts.

So, the self is sometimes said to be a bundle of mental states (Hume 1739/2009, Parfit 1984), a fictional object or theoretical abstraction (Dennett 1986), a formal construct like a point of view (Searle 2004) or a mere representational model generated by the functional activities of the brain (Metzinger 2003). There is also the No-Self doctrine in traditions of classical Indian Buddhist philosophy (Albahri 2006, Siderits 2010, 2011), according to which there is only a *sense* of the self but nothing in reality that we can properly call the 'self.'



The existence of the self is also doubted from a linguistic point of view. The fact that we speak or think of the self by using the first-person pronoun 'I' (in English) in everyday life does not secure the existence of the self since there is a word that has no counterpart referent. For instance, 'it' in the phrase 'it rains' is used as a subject, but it does not stand for anything. The same holds for 'I' in 'I think.' The first-person pronoun 'I' is semantically empty in the sense that it does not refer to anything particular but is synthetically necessary to complete the sentence by filling the subject position. So, it is a mistake to infer 'I exist' from 'I think.' Even though 'I' in 'I think' is used as a subject, it does not follow that 'I exist' is logically deducible from 'I think.' Just like 'it' in 'it rains,' 'I' is an empty subject that has no referent. So, it would be better to say 'it thinks' instead of 'I think.' This is a point shared among philosophers like Lichtenberg, Wittgenstein (1930-1933), Russell (1921), and Anscombe (1975).

Note, however, that the self that is denied above is only a particular kind of the self, namely the Cartesian substantive self. Although the term 'self,' as Shoemaker (1963, p.41) acknowledges, has been used interchangeably with the term 'substance' in the traditional philosophical literature, it is important to realize that a rejection of one notion of the self should not be generalized into a rejection of the existence of the self. Self may not exist in the form of an immaterial substance but may take another mode of existence. Therefore, it would be a mistake to conclude that the self does not exist just because there is no reason to assume the existence of the substantive self. The skeptic's doubt about the self should be localized so that it does not deny the possibility that the self may exist in some mode other than the substantive mode.

I believe the first step in finding whether any viable notion of the self is possible is to fully appreciate the idea of individuality of the self, the most basic intuition about what we are. In other words, the idea that 'I' exists as an individual that bears certain properties and relations and is itself non-repeatable and non-instantiable. I consider the individuality of the self a starting point of discussions. The primary goal of this thesis is to specify what it means for a self to be an individual from ontological, metaphysical, and phenomenological perspectives.

The philosophical literature on the self contains a wide variety of opinions about what the self is if it exists. Apart from the substantive self, there are several other notions of the self such as the social self, cultural self, gender self, phenomenal self, embodied self, bodily self, narrative self, interpersonal self, and ecological self. It is clear from the diversity of these notions that the philosophical community has not yet come to any consensus on the unified notion of the self.

However, in my view, we can still speak of what can qualify as a self in the most minimal sense. I assume, following Galen Strawson (1999, p.99), that the self is minimally conceived of as “a subject of experience.”<sup>1</sup> If anything is to be a self, it has to be a subject to thoughts and experiences. Being a subject of experience may not be sufficient for being a self in the sense that there might be a subject of experience without being a self. However, I consider that being a subject is a necessary condition for being a self: there is no self when there is no subject of experience. From here, I think we can proceed to see whether it is possible to have the most basic notion of the self that can serve as grounds for all other varied notions of the self.

Merely to say that self is a subject, however, does not tell us much about what the self is since the concept of a subject or subjectivity is as varied as the concept of the self. According to De Sousa (1999), for instance, there are up to twelve varieties of subjectivity. What is required, therefore, is to specify what it is to be a subject of experience.

There may be two ways to do so depending on how a subject is construed to be related to consciousness. A traditional way to think of a subject is to see if it is externally related to experience in the sense that it survives across changes in individual experiences. The subject is thought to ‘have’ or ‘own’ experience. Thus, experience is said to be *of* the subject. The Cartesian self is typically the subject in this sense.

<sup>1</sup> There seems to be a close link between the concept of the self and that of an agent. However, I leave out this issue here. To ask whether being a self is also being an agent is to ask whether being a subject of experience is also being a subject of behaviours and actions. Though this is important, it is a separate topic to be discussed. For now, I distinguish between the self and an agent on the grounds that being a subject of experience does not always involve being an agent (and vice versa).

Alternatively, it was recently suggested that the presence of a subject can be guaranteed with little ontological commitment. The subject is thought to be integrated into consciousness. That is, for the subject to exist, we do not refer to a further ontological fact other than subjective features of experience itself. In this sense, the self, as the subject, is sometimes called the experience-based self; its proponents include Zahavi (2005, 2014), Galen Strawson (1997, 2009), and Dainton (2008).

The notion of the self I defend in this thesis is a version of the experience-based self, the subject of experience that cannot exist independently of consciousness. The subject in question can be sufficiently explained based on the fact that experience is subjective; in turn, the subjectivity of experience is directly related to phenomenal consciousness. As Nagel (1974, p.347) explains, experience is phenomenally conscious in that there is something it is like for a subject to undergo the experience. Meanwhile, phenomenal consciousness is said to be subjective in that it is always experienced from a unique, single, first-person point of view. For instance, the experience of pain is said to be phenomenal (there is something it is like for a subject to have pain). It is also said to be subjective (it is always immediately and directly experienced from the point of view of the subject, and it is experienced in ways unique to a subject by virtue of which one knows one's own experience in a way that no one does).

Therefore, it seems that the existence of a subject can be deduced from the existence of experience since, as Galen Strawson proposed, the presence of experience is "already sufficient" for the presence of a subject in the sense that "there is subjectivity, but there isn't a subject' can't possibly be true" (2011, p.258).<sup>2</sup>

To me, there seems to be nothing essentially problematic with inferring the existence of the self from experience that has a subjective feature. If something can go wrong, I think it is likely to be in the ways in which the subject in question is specified. For Descartes, the best way to understand

<sup>2</sup> No doubt, this line of reasoning will not appeal to those who advocate bundle theory. The bundle theorist will claim that, just as the color blue occurs without there being anything that is blue, consciousness can occur without there being anything that is consciousness; likewise, subjectivity can occur without there being anything (or anyone) that is subjective. So, I will have to make it clear that my position is not compatible with bundle theory.

what it means to be a subject of experience is to take it as an immaterial substance – however, being a substance is only one way to be a subject.

I take the experiential, subjective, first-person feature of experience as a sole basis for arguing that the self is a subject of experience. The existence of the self can be inferred from the existence of experience in the sense that whenever there is experience, there is a self as its subject. The self is present irrespective of the question of whether ‘I’ in ‘I think’ is logically equivalent to ‘it’ in ‘it rains’ in the sense that they both are a logical subject. However, to say that ‘I’ is a subject of experience is more than to say that ‘I’ is a mere logical subject. Whether ‘I think’ or ‘it thinks’ is said, the self as a subject is present insofar as there is ‘thinking.’

At the same time, I also maintain an ontologically minimalist stance. I assume that there is no need to appeal to material substance (a body or a brain), immaterial substance (the Cartesian self), or any kind of entity other than consciousness itself. The self is not something that is external to the stream of consciousness but something that exists through it.

In this respect, the notion of the self I defend in this thesis is akin to the notions of the experience-based self proposed and defended by Dainton (a potential or capacity for consciousness), Zahavi (the experiential core self), and Strawson (SESMET: Subjects of Experience that are Single Mental Things). These are all extensively discussed notions that are available as alternatives to the substantive self; however, in my view, they fail to capture the way we usually think about what we are. Intuitively, we think of ourselves as continuing individuals that survive across changes in a body, that bear certain relationships with various other things in the world, and that evolve continuously over time. What we hear, nonetheless, is that if we are not a Cartesian substance or soul, we exist as a *capacity* for consciousness (Dainton), a *property* of for-me-ness that is shared by all conscious experiences (Zahavi), or multiple individual *selves* – each with a very short lifespan – that are related to a single biological body (Strawson).

I wonder, then, if a capacity, property, or collection of short-lived selves can be properly called a ‘self’ concerning how we think about who we are. In this thesis, I offer a notion of the self that does

not violate the idea of the individuality of the self but is still based on consciousness. I hope that the self I advocate for here will be thought of as an improved variant of the experiential self rather than a mere surplus to the already abundant supply of well-established notions.

Generally speaking, the question of ontology – the question of what there is – is thought of as a kind of a metaphysical question about what kinds of things there are. So, the ontological question of whether a self exists is closely related to the metaphysical question of what kind of thing it is. For the claim for the existence of a self to be justified, the account of its metaphysical nature should follow.<sup>3</sup>

Given that the most basic ontological categories are traditionally thought to be particulars and universals, the question of whether the self is particular or universal should first be determined. In my view, the most intuitive, pre-philosophical idea about what we are is that we are particular rather than universal. It seems that we take ourselves as ‘things’ more akin to trees, houses, or tigers than to properties, relationships, or states of affairs. That is, if the self exists, it exists as an individual particular more than anything else. This intuition is shared by philosophers like Boethius, Descartes, and Leibniz. The principal aim of this thesis is to support and enhance this basic intuition about ourselves within the general framework of the experience-based notion of the self (i.e., the self as a subject that is integrated into consciousness itself).

It follows that we should then determine what sort of an individual particular the self would be. Traditionally, particulars can be sub-categorized into abstract and concrete particulars. One may feel quite comfortable to hold that self is an abstract particular like a soul.

However, I argue that the self – if it is said to exist in the most genuine sense – is a *concrete* particular that is a part of the furniture of the physical world. The most obvious way to think of the self as a concrete particular is to think of it as equivalent to a particular body or brain. However, a body (or brain) fails to be a self since a mere body (i.e., a deceased body) is often not a subject of

<sup>3</sup> Descartes thus tries to find what ontological category ‘I’ belongs to when he wishes to claim that ‘I’ exists. He thinks that the concepts of a self and a stone both seem to “agree with respect to the classification ‘substance’” despite some important differences in the sense that a stone is extended but does not think while a self thinks but is not extended (1641-2/1995, p.30).

experience intuitively, as observed by many theorists from Descartes to Locke. This raises the immediate question: if the self is not a body (or a brain), then on what grounds can we say that the self is a concrete individual rather than an abstract individual?

We may be able to find a supporting argument supporting that the self is a concrete individual without reference to a body (or a brain) if we consider the self to essentially be a temporal particular that is extended through time but does not have a direct spatial extension. Concrete individuals in the ordinary sense refer to ordinary material objects that are extended through a three-dimensional space by virtue of having spatial properties such as width, depth, and height. However, the world is also full of other beings such as sounds, smells, winds, and all sorts of various movements like dancing and jumping. There are temporal individuals that reveal themselves only across time but do not have a definite physical extension in the spatial field. So, I argue that the self exists in ways characteristic of temporal individuals such as sounds. Although the self is itself not measurable by any ordinary three-dimensional parameters, I believe it is still a concrete particular by virtue of being extended through time. More specifically, I propose that the self, just like a sound, may exist as an event-like concrete particular.

If the self can be thought of as a concrete particular in this sense, the self need not be construed as an abstract particular or a universal because it is not extended through space like a tree or a house. Nevertheless, it could be that the self is a concrete individual by virtue of being extended through time. I think we fail to see the possibility of the self as such a temporally extended individual most likely because, as Bergson (1889/1913) points out, we are obsessed with space to the extent that we are apt to (unintentionally) reduce the idea of time to that of space. According to Bergson, there are two concepts of time: time understood in terms of the idea of space and time in its original form as pure duration. We often conceive of time by projecting the idea of space onto the idea of time. According to this understanding, time is segmented in a unified manner into the past, the present, and the future (or into hours, minutes, and seconds) and juxtaposed just like space, which is thought of as a homogeneous field in which individual objects are arranged

simultaneously. However, Bergson argues that time, in its original form, is experienced as an organic whole that cannot be counted, numbered, or represented by symbols of any kind. Space (and the spatialized time) is, in his view, is “a principle of differentiation” that leads us to a reality of quantity and an external world that is measurable in a homogeneous way – thus, space is “a reality with no quality” (1889/1913, p.95). Time as pure duration, however, is considered differently: it is “a wholly qualitative multiplicity, an absolute heterogeneity of elements which pass over into one another” (1889/1913, p.229). It is a succession without differentiation and mutual penetration of conscious experiences. So, according to Bergson, to think of time as a mere fourth dimension of space is to misunderstand what distinguishes time from space. Thus, he writes,

[I]f we interrupt the rhythm by dwelling longer than is right on one note of the tune, it is not its exaggerated length, as length, which will warn us of our mistake, but the qualitative change thereby caused in the whole of the musical phrase. We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought (1913, pp.100-1)

Bergson does not deny that time can be understood in ways similar to space. What he wants to emphasize, if I understand him correctly, is that beneath the sense of time that is understood as clock-time, there is a more fundamental sense of time experienced as pure continuity with homogeneous multiplicity. In other words, time as continuity in its purest form refers to our experience of the continuity of consciousness – the dynamic, ever-changing flow of experiences and thoughts.

Accordingly, as opposed to the self represented in space and spatialized time, Bergson thinks that there is a fundamental sense of self grounded in this pure experiential continuity, assuming that the self in its original form cannot be accommodated in the idea of space. The idea of the experience-based self I advocate for in this thesis is inspired by Bergson’s intuition about self and time.

I propose that if the self is a concrete individual, then its individuality is achieved through the continuity of consciousness (i.e., the experience of time in its purest form). This proposal can be thought of as defending the Lockean idea that the self is understood in terms of the continuity of consciousness. By ‘continuity,’ however, I do not mean the psychological continuity that holds causally between psychological states but rather the phenomenology of the diachronic unity – the fact that consciousness is phenomenally unified across time. I propose that the diachronic unity of consciousness in the experiential sense can be sufficient grounds for arguing that the self is a temporally extended particular. I believe that this is a promising way to rightly say that the self is a concrete individual without appealing to a further ontological entity like a body, brain, or substance. Furthermore, I advocate that the self is a living, dynamic ‘thing’ that is never static but always moving. More specifically, I suggest that the self is an event-like particular that is not only extended through time but also travels through it.

### *Summary of chapters*

Chapter One is an introductory chapter that discusses three concepts that are relevant to understanding the self: continuity, identity, and individuality. There is a general tendency to conflate the problem of individuality (the problem of what it means for one to be an individual) and the problem of identity over time (the problem of what it means for one to be numerically one and the same across time). It seems that the problem of individuality is rarely considered without also considering the problem of identity.

It is also commonly assumed that the concepts of identity and continuity are complementary in the sense that identity is explained in terms of continuity and vice versa. Contrary to this, I argue that it is important to isolate the problem of individuality from that of identity in order to provide a more viable account of the self. The problem of identity is not to be confused with that of individuality. One reason for this is that identity is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for



individuality. Moreover, the problem of identity can arise only after the problem of individuality has been resolved. To confirm this, I refer to Parfit's (1984) points on personal identity stating that we are in a position to choose identity or continuity since the two concepts are not reconcilable; also, we choose continuity over identity because continuity is what matters for survival. Although I eventually distinguish between 'self' and 'person,' and between experiential continuity and psychological continuity,<sup>4</sup> I attempt to provide phenomenal support for these two claims since I think that they are directly relevant to our understanding of the individuality of the self.

It is important to acknowledge that the concepts of identity and continuity are conflicting rather than complementary. I argue that the conceptual distinction of identity and continuity is grounded in a further metaphysical fact that there is a difference between the ways space and time are understood. I show using phenomenal considerations that identity is a concept that operates fundamentally within the idea of space in the sense that it is an essentially transitive relation, and, in turn, transitivity is an essentially spatial concept. Continuity, however, is a temporal concept, meaning that it cannot be explained in terms of identity unless time is considered to be a mere species of space. I suggest that we must settle for continuity rather than identity when it comes to understanding the self as a temporally extended individual, given that continuity is more prior to and fundamental than identity in achieving the concept of individuality.

Chapter Two is devoted to discussing Husserl's (1991) inner time-consciousness and Zahavi's (2003, 2005, 2007a, 2011, 2012, 2014) interpretation and development of it in support of his phenomenologist notion of the self – the so-called *the experiential (core) self*. Since Husserl and Zahavi closely linked the self and the way the continuity of consciousness is experienced, I think that it is worth closely examining the notion of the experiential self to see whether it can fully realize the idea that the self is a temporally extended individual by virtue of being diachronically unified consciousness.

<sup>4</sup> I maintain that 'self' is a fundamental concept applicable to any being who is capable of entertaining phenomenally conscious life, while 'person' is a social and cultural concept directly related to humans. I also categorize the continuity of consciousness into experiential continuity – our basic temporal awareness, an awareness of duration, succession, and change, and psychological continuity – and the continuity that is established from causal relations between psychological states as employed in Parfit's context. I consider the former to provide a direct phenomenal grounds for the individuality of the self.

Like James (1890/ 1901, p.609) who, referring to E. R. Clay, regards *now* (the present) as a temporally extended horizon – the so-called “specious present” – Husserl also holds that the present is not a purely abstract momentary point but a duration-block that is open to a double direction (i.e., towards the past and the future). While James holds that the specious present is a basic unit that constitutes time-consciousness, Husserl has a further interest in developing the theory of the specious present. Husserl explains that our experience of a temporally extended object (e.g., a melody) is temporally unified by virtue of a three-folded intentional structure: *primal impression* (which is narrowly directed to the now-phase of the sensed object), *retention* (which is directed to the just-elapsed phase of the sensed object), and *protention* (which is directed to the sensed object as just-about-to-happen). According to Zahavi, Husserl equates this structure of time-consciousness with the experiential self (in Zahavi’s terms), which is the self in its most fundamental form. The idea is that the structure of time-consciousness is an invariable fact shared by all conscious experiences – if the self is something invariable among changes of experiences, then it must be equated with this shared dimension.

The aim of this chapter is not to defend Husserl’s analysis of time-consciousness among other competing theories, nor is it to assess whether Zahavi’s interpretation is appropriate. My interest lies in the specific link between time-consciousness and the self. So, my question is, *if* Husserl’s theory of time-consciousness and Zahavi’s understanding of it are all right, *then* can we accept the notion of the experiential self as a viable candidate for the self as a temporal individual?

I argue that the nature of the experiential self, although it is often hidden, is best understood as something abstract, which is likely to contradict Zahavi’s original intention. The three-fold structure of time-consciousness is a functional fact by virtue of which an awareness of time is possible; yet, it is itself considered to be atemporal or non-temporal within the context of Husserl’s analysis. The experiential self, therefore, in its equation with the structure of time-consciousness, has to be something purely functional – something as abstract as a property, a relation, or a state of affairs. I

conclude that Zahavi's notion of the experiential self has no relevance to the idea that the self is a concrete individual particular that is extended through time.

Chapter Three explores a way by which the self (purely grounded in consciousness) is a concrete individual particular. Is it possible for the self to be a concrete particular when it is neither a physical body nor a Cartesian substance? I argue that it is not hard to consider the self as a concrete particular among other particulars in the world once we revise our current ontology that is heavily committed to three-dimensional spatial objects and invites a temporal dimension as a distinct ontological basis for accommodating certain temporal particulars.

To explain this more clearly, I offer an argument from analogy: the self is analogous to a sound particular with respect to its mode of being. The self, just like a sound, exists as an event-like particular. This claim is made based on two further assumptions that sounds are more event-like than object-like particulars and that events are more concrete than abstract particulars. If there is such thing as the self, the way it exists is analogous to the way a sound particular exists. Just as a sound particular never exists at a time but reveals itself only across time, the self is not there at any momentary point; instead, its individuality is achieved only over time.

If this is the case, it is not surprising that we are unable to locate ourselves in any framework in the tradition of Euclidean geometry unless we believe we are identified by our bodies. This, however, does not mean that self does not exist or is illusory or purely theoretical. If we accept that the world we live in is full of not only ordinary spatial objects but also event particulars such as sounds, smells, and winds, we may also accept that the self is a basic particular that composes the concrete reality of this world.

Chapter Four addresses the question of how the consciousness-based notion of the self can survive through apparent discontinuities of consciousness. Consciousness is often said to be continuous in the sense that our experience of duration, change, and succession is seamless in ways characteristic of the flow of a river. However, consciousness is also said to contain gaps, and there are periods during which consciousness seems absent entirely. The gappiness of consciousness

certainly undermines the notion of the self that appeals to the stream of consciousness (i.e., the continuing flow of thoughts and experiences) since it brings about the problem of how the self, which is grounded in consciousness, can survive during the unconscious intervals.

Moreover, if consciousness is discontinuous, this begs the question of whether the stream of consciousness before a gap and the stream of consciousness after that gap are part of the same stream. Accordingly, a question will also arise as to whether the self before a gap and the self after the gap are the same self. What we are facing here is the problem of diachronic identity, or the problem of identity over time. In order to determine the sameness of the self when the continuity of consciousness is broken, a criterion for determining identity will have to be introduced. The occurrence of apparent gaps turns the problem of individuality into the problem of identity.

In this chapter, I ask whether the consciousness-based self can maintain its individuality across gaps without generating the problem of identity over time. I examine what options are available for the self to bridge gaps and preserve its individuality through consciousness. When the continuity of consciousness is disrupted, is there any way for the self to be a continuing individual without appealing to physical continuity (brain or body) or continuity of some further ontological items such as a soul or substance? My answer is that there is no such way. For the self as an individual that can be accounted for considering that consciousness is experienced as a temporally extended unity, the continuity of consciousness should be granted. Insofar as gaps are assumed to be entirely unconscious intervals, we will have to accept that the self purely grounded in consciousness is prone to the problem of discontinuous consciousness.

Chapter Five is an extension of Chapter Four. It adds some positive aspects to the negative conclusion that was drawn previously. In this chapter, I claim that the discontinuous feature of consciousness is not as threatening as it looks and that the consciousness-based self can be preserved across gaps.

I argue this based on two premises. First, the stream of consciousness, if considered as a whole, is rarely interrupted by gaps that are localized to individual thought and experience. No doubt, a gap

is an instance of temporal discontinuity between thoughts or during the course of a single thought. Nonetheless, it is too early to say that the stream of consciousness is entirely absent during a gap – while the course of one thought is paused, another thought may continue. Given that the stream of consciousness is a complex network of multiple thoughts and experiences that are either focal or marginal, it is highly likely that the continuity of consciousness is maintained regardless of whether gaps occur occasionally. I also want to point out that gaps are an essential part of consciousness since they make consciousness a living, dynamic, and rhythmic flow.

Second, there are experiences that are solely dedicated to gaps. Gaps are primarily experiential in the sense that there is something it is like to go through them. The experience in question is a kind of phenomenal consciousness even though it is not always accessible by retrospective cognition. The gappiness of consciousness should be regarded as a phenomenon that broadly characterizes our inner world.

The phenomenology of a gap is ubiquitous to our inner conscious life, both during waking and non-waking periods. Not only is there something it is like to be mind-wandering, daydreaming, sleep-walking, under anesthetics, or asleep without dreaming, but also is there something it is like to have ruptured, interrupted, or discontinuous trains of thought and experiences. The best way to describe the phenomenology of a gap, I suggest, is to take it as experience related to temporal intervals. More specifically, the phenomenology of a gap is an experience of pure duration or continuity without any experience of explicit change. Given that both an awareness of change and succession and an awareness of duration comprise experiential continuity, the phenomenology of a gap should be regarded as a kind of temporal awareness.

The gappiness of consciousness is problematic only when gaps are presumed to be entirely unconscious periods. However, if it is acknowledged that gaps are indeed experiential, even in this most restricted sense, the gappiness of consciousness will no longer pose a problem for my continuing existence since gaps are integrated into the whole flow of consciousness. As consciousness in its totality continues, so does my individual existence.

# Chapter One

## Individuality of the self and continuity of consciousness

### Introduction

The most minimal, deflated understanding of the self involves thinking of it as a subject of experience. If there is ‘thinking,’ the most deflated assumption is that there is a ‘thinker’ who thinks. Without presupposing the existence of a thinker, it is hard to imagine that any ‘thinking’ can occur. The most straightforward way to think of the self as a subject is to think of it as an individual being that bears a certain relation to consciousness. If the self exists – if it is something rather than nothing – then it exists as an individual subject of experience. The individuality of the self is often regarded as something primitively given so that it does not require further arguments or explanations. It is our pre-philosophical, deep-seated intuition about how we think about what we are. It is also explicitly utilized by philosophers like Boethius, Descartes, and Leibniz and implicitly granted in various philosophical views such as the traditional soul view, the substance view, the simple view,<sup>5</sup> and animalism.

If the self is an individual, then what kind of an individual is it? We may simply say that self is an individual by virtue of being a body (or a brain), which is an ordinary three-dimensional thing in space. If the self is identified with the body, then it is certainly a concrete individual particular, the existence of which in the physical world is undoubtable.

However, I do not find this approach satisfactory since, as Descartes points out, a mere physical body often fails to be a subject of experience – a thinker that thinks – as there may be no conscious thinking or experiencing even though the body exists. To say that self is a physical body makes it

<sup>5</sup> The simple view denies that there is any criterion of personal identity and holds that personal identity is a fact that is not analyzable in terms of any observable or experienceable evidence. It is worth noting that those who defend the simple view tend to defend substance or soul view eventually (see Chisholm (1976), Swinburne (1973-1974, 2012), Madell (1981, 2015)). This is probably because, as Shoemaker (2012:123) points out, the simple view is often framed in the form of mind-body dualism.

no different from the way in which ordinary material things like a table or a chair exist. When it comes to my own individual existence, we usually expect to be more than mere bodily objects.

We may also say that the self is an individual by virtue of being an immaterial entity such as a soul or a Cartesian substance. The self, in this sense, is thought of as an ontologically independent being that is causally related to a body and consciousness and that survives through all the changes in them. Following this approach, we may regard the self as an individual but at the cost of heavy ontological commitment: we are required to endorse the Platonic, dualistic two-world view that allows both the world of material beings that are subject to changes and the world of immaterial beings that survives through the changes.

Perhaps a more satisfactory way to specify what it is for a self to be an individual lies in the middle ground between the above two approaches: the self may exist somewhere between being a physical body and being an immaterial entity. In this chapter, I argue that the most promising way to approach the idea of the individuality of the self is to appeal to the unity of consciousness – in particular, the diachronic unity of consciousness or the continuity of consciousness. That is, in my view, the self can be best thought of as a concrete, temporal individual by virtue of being the diachronic unity of consciousness, by the fact that consciousness continues over time.

This approach can be thought of as a version of the Lockean theory, but there is an important difference. The continuity of consciousness I am concerned with is experiential continuity instead of psychological continuity, which is based on causal relations between psychological states: it is a phenomenology of continuity that the phases of experiences appear to flow continuously and seamlessly by being temporally arranged as one following (or being followed by) another.

In section 1.1, I will show that the idea of the individuality of the self can be best understood in terms of the unity of consciousness, in particular, in terms of the diachronic unity of consciousness. Section 1.2 concerns the relation between individuality and identity. I suggest that it is important to distinguish the problem of the individuality of the self from that of its identity over time and to take the former as a more fundamental fact than the latter. Section 1.3. offers some phenomenal grounds

for Parfit's (1984) claim that identity and (psychological) continuity are irreconcilable. In section 1.4, I argue for the primacy of continuity over identity in achieving the concept of individuality. Unlike the traditional Lockean approach, which regards the continuity of consciousness as a criterion of identity of the self over time, I explain that the relevant continuity should be treated not only independently of but also more primarily than the concept of identity. I conclude that the self, in its most basic experiential form, can be best understood as a temporally extended individual that reveals its existence only through the continuity of consciousness.

### **1.1. Individuality as a unity**

It is commonly acknowledged that individuals differ from universals in that the former are bearers of properties and relations but are not themselves exemplifications of another individual. According to Gracia (1988), even though individuality (or being an individual) is often thought of as indivisibility, of the distinctions that separate each individual from all other individuals, impredicability,<sup>6</sup> and identity, only noninstantiability is a necessary and sufficient condition of individuality. Thus, he writes,

What is meant by saying that individuals are incommunicable is something else: the impossibility that they be instantiated. Socrates, for example, cannot become instantiated in the way "human being" can. It is, then, noninstantiability that provides us with a precise understanding of individuality, since it is both a necessary and sufficient condition of it. Individuals cannot be instantiated, as universals can. They are instances of instantiables and noninstantiable themselves. Individuals, properly speaking, are instances, while universals are instantiables (1988, p.45).

There may be various ways to characterize the concept of individuality, but I assume, following Gracia, that noninstantiability should be thought of as the most fundamental basis on which something can be said to be an individual rather than a universal. As long as something is not

<sup>6</sup> When impredicability is considered to be equivalent to individuality, an individual is perceived as being a logical subject.



instantiable by other things in ways that are characteristic of universals, that thing can be properly called an individual. Thus, I take the idea of the individuality of the self as a special case of this general understanding of individuality.

To say that the self is an individual in the most minimal sense is to say that it is not itself instantiable or exemplifiable. This chapter concerns the question of whether there is any way to understand the individuality of the self without appealing to a body or immaterial substance. I suggest that the self can be said to be an individual with a sole basis of consciousness if we understand the individuality of the self in terms of the unity of consciousness.

The idea of the self in terms of the unity of consciousness is inspired by Lockean accounts. However, by ‘unity,’ I mean a particular experiential feature of phenomenal consciousness rather than the sameness of psychological states (and their contents) or personal traits. The unity of consciousness I am concerned with is a kind of unique phenomenology in the sense that there is *something it is like* for thoughts and experiences to be unified both at a point in time and over time. It is commonly acknowledged that experiences are said to be unified at a time (or synchronically). When we drink a cup of tea, for instance, there is something it is like for us to see, feel, smell, and taste it. We do not experience the taste in isolation from other experiential features; instead, we experience them together at the same time. Experiences are also said to be unified over time (or diachronically); your experience of drinking the tea is temporally arranged in ways the temporal passages of the experience are followed by another continuously for some duration of time.

The unity of consciousness in this experiential sense does not presuppose any ontologically independent entity that unifies consciousness. Rather, consciousness is considered to be self-unified, both synchronically and diachronically.

There are various ways in which the unity of consciousness has been explained. For instance, Dainton (2000) explains this self-unifying feature of consciousness in terms of a co-consciousness relationship – a relationship of experiencing together. This is to say that the unity of consciousness can be accounted for without presuming the existence of an agent external to consciousness.

Experiences are not unified by being owned by the same subject but by being related co-consciously. The unity construed in this way does not require any further ontological fact beyond consciousness.

Provided that individuality, as Gracia (1988, p.55) allows, can be regarded as individual ‘unity,’ the fact that consciousness is self-unified, in my view, can provide sufficient support for the idea that the self exists as an individual more than anything else. That is, the self can be said to be an individual by virtue of the fact that consciousness manifests individuality. Moreover, the condition of being a subject of experience can be met in this most deflated sense since unity itself is a kind of phenomenal consciousness – there is something it is like to have experiences unified both at a point in time and over time. When there is a phenomenally conscious experience, there is a subject as an experiencer. Here, there is no need to presuppose any ontologically separate entity that bears a certain external relation to consciousness. The only fact required is that consciousness is self-unified.

In particular, when we want to defend the self – not as a mere instantaneous, non-temporal, abstract individual but a living, temporal, concrete individual – I think diachronic unity should be our primary concern since it is a way of being a concrete individual particular that is extended through time. Experiences unified across time manifest a streaming feature. Things are experienced as a succession from one temporal phase to another by virtue of whatever consciousness is unified over time, and there is a phenomenology of continuity: there is something it is like for consciousness to continue.<sup>7</sup>

I think the idea that the self exists as an individual can be best understood as this experiential continuity of consciousness. Insofar as consciousness continues – that is, insofar as there is the phenomenology of continuity – there is a self as its experiencer, a subject of the experience of continuity. According to this understanding, the self meets the condition of noninstantiability: the self that exists in the continuous stream of consciousness is a living, temporal individual and is

<sup>7</sup> Thus, Dainton says, “To gain a full understanding of the unity within experience we must take the plunge, into the turbulent dynamics of the stream of consciousness proper” (2000, p.113).

essentially a product of time. It is a non-repeatable and non-instantiable particular; once it has gone, it cannot recur.

## **1.2. Dropping out identity**

When we claim that the self is an individual extended through time, the first obstacle we are confronted with is the problem of diachronic identity – in other words, the problem of what it is for the self to be numerically one and the same individual over time. This mirrors the primary concern presented in discussions about personal identity. Traditionally, the problem of personal identity is considered a variant of the problem of identity over time. It is basically the problem of the persistence of one and the same object at different times. So, the problem of diachronic identity is typically a matter of re-identification: a person can be considered as the same continuing individual by being re-identifiable at different times under particular identity conditions.

However, in my view, there is a general tendency to conflate the problem of individuality with that of identity. The concepts of identity and individuality have overlapped in the philosophical literature for a long time; therefore, whenever the problem of individuality arises, the problem of identity often follows. The conflation of identity and individuality is not helpful when we are concerned about the understanding of the self as an individual. This is because there is no clear-cut criterion by virtue of which self can be identified over time.

Debates about personal identity suggest that no bodily, brainly, or psychological criterion can make the self remain numerically identical at different times. So, our obsession with the problem of identity is likely to delay any productive conversation about the individuality of the self. If we want to avoid this unwelcome consequence, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of individuality does not depend on identity and that the problems concerning the former should be distinguished from the problems concerning the latter.

Therefore, I suggest that we drop identity in favor of continuity. Instead of identity, I consider the continuity of consciousness to be intimately related to the way the self is understood as an

individual. To illustrate why continuity should be chosen over identity, I refer to Parfit's (1971, 1984) discussions about personal identity. Although Parfit discusses the identity of a 'person' and uses the term 'continuity' to refer to the psychological continuity (the causal relation between psychological states), I find some important relevance in his core claims that identity and continuity are not reconcilable and that we should choose to think of one's survival through continuity rather than through identity. Parfit's famous expression was that psychological continuity, not identity, is what matters for survival. Thus, it can be said that experiential continuity, not identity, is what matters when thinking of the self as an individual.

One reason I think we should not allow the problem of identity to concern us too much is that it is irrelevant to the problem of individuality. Identity, as Gracia (1988) points out, is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for individuality. Something may be said to be one and the same thing at different times, but it still may not be an individual at all. For instance, a man's humanity would still be the same across changes in a spatio-temporal location, but humanity itself is not an individual. There could also be cases of instantaneous individuals and, probably, non-temporal beings (such as God) that are not subject to changes in time. Therefore, the issue of identity over time does not arise for such individuals.

Based on this line of reasoning, Gracia argues that the problem of individuality should be isolated from the problem of identity. The problem concerning individuality deals with whether a thing is individuated in terms of time and space. For instance, Socrates is said to be an individual by virtue of the fact that he occupies a certain place at a certain time and that nobody else (in the same species) can be in the same place as him at the same time. However, the problem concerning identity is not the problem of individuating a thing by virtue of its unique spatio-temporal relations. What makes Socrates the same person over time cannot be secured in his spatio-temporal location. The fact that Socrates is in a certain space at a certain time is a part of the changes he undergoes, but his identity tolerates changes in his spatio-temporal location. Socrates can be in this place today

and that place tomorrow, but this does not prevent him from being the same person today and tomorrow (Gracia 1988, pp.38-41).

One may wonder whether Gracia correctly distinguishes the problem of individuality from that of identity. It seems that ‘identity,’ in the context he presents, means only diachronic identity, or identity over time. However, when it comes to the problem of synchronic identity, individuality may not be sharply distinguished from identity since for one thing to be distinguished from another, it may be pointed out that a certain condition of identity must have been given.

However, I am not so sure that synchronic identity can be sharply distinguished from diachronic identity to begin with. Can we register the identity of something without assuming that that thing is numerically one and the same thing over time? To think of the synchronic identity of a thing without thinking of its diachronic identity is, in my view, to think of that thing as existing in a space void of time.

Even when synchronic identity can be discussed independently of diachronic identity, I still think that the problem of individuality remains different from that of numerical identity. Provided that to determine a numerical identity is to point to a numerical difference between two individuals of the same species, according to Castañeda (1975), the problem of individuality<sup>8</sup> is not to be blended with the problem of numerical identity. Imagine that there are two individual objects with the same qualities – a genuine problem of individuality has nothing to do with the contrast and differentiation between the two individuals since even if the other object disappeared and so there was just one individual object left in the whole universe, Castañeda proposes that there would still be “a problem of accounting for the individuality of that lone individual” (1975, p.133). Thus, we would still wonder what makes that object the individual that it is.

The lesson that can be drawn from Castañeda’s point is that the idea that the problem of individuality is already there, even before the problem of numerical identity arises. Numerical identity is a concept that operates primarily on the assumption that there is more than one individual of the same species. In this respect, I do not think that diachronic identity is much different from

<sup>8</sup> Castañeda often uses the term ‘individuation’ interchangeably with the term ‘individuality.’

synchronic identity. The case of diachronic unity is problematic because it assumes that there is an object  $o_1$  at time<sub>1</sub> and an object  $o_2$  at time<sub>2</sub> and tries to make an identity claim that  $o_1$  and  $o_2$  are one and the same object. However, it should be noted that, even before there is diversity, there was already a problem of oneness, unity, or the whole. So, when it comes to the problem of the self, the problem of individuality should be thought to not only be thought of as independent of the problem of identity but also more fundamental than it.

One may still wonder if saying that the self is a temporally extended individual is equivalent to saying that it is a continuant that retains its numerical identity all the way through, meaning that the case of diachronic identity cannot be sharply separated from the case of the individuality of the self.

However, I argue that even in the case that individuality appears to entail identity, there are reasons to think that identity is not what matters eventually because continuity, not identity, is the most relevant aspect of the individuality of the self. To illustrate this point, I will look at the issue within the problem of personal identity. Even though I believe that ‘self’ and ‘person’ should be distinguished in the sense that ‘self’ is a more basic, minimal, experiential sense of ‘I’ than ‘person,’ which is a socially-embedded sense of ‘I,’ I think we can share the most basic feature of personal identity.

I feel that most philosophical debates about personal identity are roughly characterized by two aspects: the aspect that deals with what a ‘person’ is and the aspect that is shared with a general problem of identity (over time) – a tension between identity and continuity. These two aspects are interrelated in the sense that without reference to what a ‘person’ is, it cannot be determined whether that person is the same at different times.

My focus, however, is on the structural aspect since I believe the real difficulty with personal identity arises when we try to combine concepts of identity and continuity into a single package. The question about personal identity is the question of whether a ‘person’ remains the same ‘person’ over time; in turn, it is the question related to finding a criterion of identity over time.

However, any single identity condition, whether bodily, brainly or psychological, is not sufficient for securing the diachronic sameness of a 'person.' Although a certain criterion appears to secure X's identity, once it is applied over time, it soon becomes problematic because it is often incapable of tolerating changes that occur as time passes.

One may think that this issue will be resolved when we find a perfect criterion of identity. However, I think it is more likely that no matter what identity criterion of a 'person' is given, the problem of personal identity will not be resolved since it is fundamentally a problem that arises in the particular way it is structured: it is a problem of reconciling the concepts of identity and continuity that are conflicting rather than complementary.

Parfit's (1979, 1984) argument about personal identity directly deals with the tension between identity and continuity. It is commonly believed that the problem of one's survival depends on the problem of one's continuing existence as a person (numerically) identifiable as one now. This matter concerns the question of whether 'I' in the future is one and the same person as 'I' in the present, who is wondering if 'I' will survive, for instance, bodily death.

In contrast, Parfit says that what matters for survival is (psychological) continuity. In saying so, he provides a way to think of one's survival without appealing to one's identity criterion. The traditional link between survival and identity is to be discarded while the link between survival and (psychological) continuity is preserved. His claim on this point can be unpacked into two parts: first, we are in a position to make a choice of one over another since identity and continuity are not reconcilable, and second, we should choose continuity because identity is not what matters (for survival) and because what really matters is psychological connectedness and continuity.<sup>9</sup>

Parfit's preference for continuity over identity is based on his distinction between the reductionist and non-reductionist views with regard to the ontology of the self. According to Parfit, identity matters only for the non-reductionist who thinks that the self exists as a further ontological

<sup>9</sup> Parfit writes, "*What matters is Relation R: psychological connectedness and/or continuity with the right kind of cause,*" where the right kind of cause could be any cause (1984, p.215).

fact independent of a body, brain, and psychological features. The language of identity, from this perspective, is employed to secure the reference of the self.

However, the reductionist does not think that there is any determinate identity condition since s/he assumes that the self is nothing more than a body, a brain, and psychological features.<sup>10</sup> If we are reductionists and believe that there is nothing further that remains identical through changes in the body, the brain, and psychological features, then we have no reason to think that identity matters.

As Parfit (1984, p.229) illustrates in his spectrum cases, there may be all possible degrees of psychological and physical connectedness and continuity but no clear-cut boundary for identity.<sup>11</sup> Unless we are non-reductionists, then, according to Parfit, we should believe that no true criterion can serve as a definitive boundary; when there is no such boundary, the hypothesis that the identity criterion for the self yields a definite answer should be given up. Again, when there is no further ontological fact, there is no determinate identity, and when identity is only indeterminate, it does not really matter to one's continuing existence.

This idea is discussed further in a case of fission in which one original person becomes two resulting people, each with half of the original person's brain after surgery. Assuming that psychological states are supervenient on brain states, the two resulting people are imagined to preserve the same psychological features of the original person. However, numerical identity obviously breaks down because one person before the surgery cannot be numerically identical with two resulting people: put simply, one is not two.

Since it is obvious that the sameness of psychological features does not guarantee the numerical sameness of a person, the case of fission is regarded as a typical counter-example to the Lockean view that defends a psychological identity criterion of a person. Instead of insisting on the psychological criterion, Parfit, as a reductionist, chooses to be free from the language of identity

<sup>10</sup> In the reductionist's view, one's life can be re-described in an impersonal way. Parfit writes, "Because we ascribe thoughts to thinkers, we can truly claim that thinkers exist. Still, we cannot deduce, from the content of our experiences, that a thinker is a separately existing entity. And, as Lichtenberg suggests, because we are not separately existing entities, we could fully describe our thoughts without claiming that they have thinkers. We could fully describe our experiences, and the connections between them, without claiming that they are had by a subject of experiences. We could give what I call an *impersonal* description" (1984, p.225).

<sup>11</sup> Note also that changes in brain states, in Parfit's view, are responsible for changes in psychological states.



altogether. At the same time, he wants to preserve the connectedness and continuity of psychological features as the features that provide the real basis for one's survival. Once we drop out identity, we are left with psychological continuity. According to Parfit, one is said to survive psychologically insofar as they maintain their connectedness and continuity.

I think the essence of Parfit's argument can provide a helpful insight into the way we think of our own individual existence. In what follows, I will discuss why identity and continuity are not reconcilable and why continuity should be chosen over identity. However, unlike Parfit, I perceive the continuity in question as experiential continuity, which I think is a phenomenal basis for psychological continuity.

I also assume that there must be a link between his defense of the reductionist position and his discussion of survival. For survival to be meaningful, there must have been an individual that survived through changes. Without assuming that I am an individual of a certain kind, it is impossible to predict what my own survival is like. I do not need to be this particular body (or brain) or a certain kind of immaterial entity, but I must be some sort of individual that may be said to survive or not. In what follows, I argue that the individuality of the self can be expressed through the experience of a diachronic unity, the experiential continuity of consciousness.

### **1.3. Identity and continuity**

For Parfit, one main reason to think that identity and continuity are not reconcilable is that identity is a one-one relation while continuity is a one-many relation. It can be said that, after fission, the two resulting people are (psychologically) continuous with the original people but are certainly not numerically one and the same as the original people.

In this section, I aim to show that there is an additional reason for the irreconcilability of the two concepts (identity and continuity): when considered from a phenomenal perspective, they are fundamentally conflicting rather than complementary in the sense that what characterizes identity

makes sense only at the cost of sacrificing what characterizes continuity. So, any attempt to reconcile the two concepts will eventually collapse.

I believe that identity and continuity are conflicting rather than complementary is that there is a difference between how time and space are experienced. I think that identity is a primarily spatial concept, while continuity is a temporal concept. Therefore, identity and continuity are different inasmuch as the ways we experience and characterize space and time are different. Also, I believe that there are good reasons to think that time is experienced and understood in a way that is not reducible to space. The apparent problem of personal identity arises from an attempt to explicate one's continuing existence in terms of identification (and re-identification). However, this problem cannot be resolved without first reducing the problem of continuity to that of identity and, further, without reducing the concept of time to that of space.

One way to make a close link between space and identity can be found in P. F. Strawson's (1959) chapter, "Sounds." Here, Strawson defends the Kantian idea that our intuition of space is a necessary condition for our experience of objective particulars that exist independently of ourselves and our consciousness (1959, p.61).<sup>12</sup> Strawson explores whether this idea is still useful when one's conceptual scheme is not of our ordinary, unified system (i.e., the system that consists of three spatial dimensions combined with one temporal dimension and that contains ordinary material bodies as basic particulars). He asks us to imagine a No-Space world, the pure auditory universe that has only one temporal dimension. Sound particulars are given as the only objects of perceptual experience in this world.

Then, the question is, could a subject whose experience is purely auditory also have a conceptual scheme that provides the idea of objective particulars given that the subject is in a situation devoid of the three spatial dimensions? For one to distinguish a thing from oneself and one's consciousness, identification and re-identification are required so that one is able to assume that the

<sup>12</sup> For Kant, our intuition is nothing but representation of appearances. Space and time, as given *a priori*, are necessary conditions for appearances. More specifically, he distinguishes time as a necessary condition for all appearances and space as a necessary condition for *outer* appearances. For Kant, space makes it possible for things to appear to us as objective particulars (Kant 1998, p.161 A29, p.163 A34).

thing persists through the time spent apart from one's existence. That is, the idea of a re-identifiable particular is related to the idea of the continuing existence of a particular while it is not being perceived by a subject. Then, the question above can be rephrased: how can a subject in the purely auditory universe identify a particular sound once heard with a sound heard again as numerically the same sound after an unheard interval? Could there *be* sound-particulars at all in the No-Space world?

Strawson's answer is that even when the spatial three dimensions are absent, the *concept* of space is still necessary for a subject to be aware of sound particulars as continuing to exist independently of the subject's own existence. When we ordinarily regard a particular sound as the identical particular that survives through unheard intervals, we appeal to a *place* at which the sound is audible. With reference to place, we can make sense of the idea that the sound is still audible (and, thus, continues to exist), but it is not heard by me because I am not at that place.

Likewise, for the subject whose experience is purely auditory to have the idea of objective sound particulars, Strawson argues that an analog of space must be introduced even in a purely auditory form. Thus, he devises a specific sound – the so-called “the master sound” – as the auditory analog of space (1959, p.76). The master sound is characterized by varying pitches but with a constant timber and loudness, and it is imagined to be continuously heard in the background of other sound particulars. Its job is to yield a possibility to re-identify particulars in the No-Space world by providing the subject with the concept of place at which a particular sound exists while it is unperceived by the subject. The sound particular is identified and then re-identified by being heard with (or, analogously, by being located at) the same pitch level of the master sound.

The subject in the purely auditory world is able to determine the auditory analog of position and, thus, conceive of the objective sound particular that is “unheard at any moment, but audible at other positions than the once occupied at that moment” (Strawson 1959, p.77).

There are two assumptions behind this view: first, the possibility of the idea of objective particulars is grounded in the possibility of identification and re-identification. Second, the

possibility of identification and re-identification is grounded in the idea of space. Thus, it follows that the idea of space is a necessary condition for the idea of the *outer* world and *outer* individual particulars. In my view, the first point is more controversial than the second since, as I will show, there may be other ways in which individuality can be achieved. In particular, when it comes to the problem of the self existing as an individual particular, the concept of identity does seem much less relevant unless one takes a purely third-person approach when one thinks of one's own existence.

Nonetheless, I take it that Strawson's illustration in his chapter shows how difficult it would be to think of identity without the idea of space. It seems very hard to do so to the extent that the subject in the imaginary world whose experience is purely auditory will have to be ultimately equipped with the idea of space in the form of a metaphor in order to make a distinction between one's own consciousness and one's idea of the external world.

Given that the relevant concept of identity is not a qualitative but a numerical one, it seems that there is also a close link between the concepts of identity and number (or quantification). Numerical identity implies a number one, and it enables us to count things as one just in case they are numerically identical. Also, there is also reason to think that the concept of numbers is basically grounded in the concept of space. If it is right to say that (numerical) identity is related to the concept of numbers that works in the concept of space. It can also be said that identity is closely related to space.

Bergson (1889/1913) argues that our intuition about space is necessary to inform our idea of number. He defines a number as "a collection of units" or "the synthesis of the one and the many" in the sense that every number is one as well as a sum that is the synthesis of the units that it composes (1889/1913, p.75). Each unit of the collection must be assumed to be both identical qualitatively and distinct numerically from each other so that each of them can be counted or quantified.

For instance, when counting the fifty sheep in a flock, we take each sheep as an identical unit (in the qualitative sense) but, at the same time, distinguish them by the position that they occupy in

space (if there is no such distinction, they would merge into a single unit, not a multiplicity of the flock). In other words, when we count them, we consider a point of space as representing the position of each sheep in the flock and achieve the idea of the sum based on the assumption that those points are located side by side in space. We can do so by regarding space as a homogeneous medium that can be simultaneously arranged into identical units. Even when we think we count them in duration, Bergson argues, we actually do so by means of the accompanying intuition of space. Suppose we retain only the idea of the fifty sheep, not the actual sheep, and count them by repeating the image of a single sheep fifty times in succession. Then, we only have to picture a single sheep in the flock in succession, and for the number to increase in proportion, Bergson says, “we must retain the successive images and set them alongside each of the new units which we picture to ourselves: now, it is in space that such a juxtaposition takes place and not in pure duration” (1889/1913, p.77). That is, in this case, we have counted moments of duration that represent points in space.

A number, in this way, is thought to be a multiplicity of units or parts *simultaneously* perceived. Bergson argues that the addition is possible in duration when we place homogeneously divided units or parts side by side in the idea of space. A juxtaposition of homogeneous units must take place for the addition to hold, and it is possible only in the idea of space that is *simultaneous*. The idea of space, in his view, accompanies every idea of numbers, even of the most abstract numbers. Space, for Bergson, is “the material with which the mind builds up number, the medium in which the mind places it” (1889/1913, p.84).

Of course, this view about numbers lies in a peculiar understanding of the relationship between numbers and space. It appears particularly problematic when it is noted that Bergson’s theory of number appeals to a great variety of visualized images. This will make it hard to determine whether space is necessary for conceptualizing a *number* or if it is actually necessary for the *visualization* of the number.

Bergson says that “every clear idea of number implies a visual image in space” (1989/1913, p.334), but one may doubt that such visualization is really necessary for the concept of numbers. This point is addressed by Russell (1912). He says that since the concept of numbers is primarily abstract such that it cannot be really pictured as a juxtaposition of representational units of space in the way Bergson describes.

If Russell is right, our idea of numbers does not require our intuition of space. For instance, the twelve apostles, the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve months of the year are all collections of units, but none of them is the number twelve. In order to understand the number twelve, we must know what all these collections have in common, which is certainly something abstract, not something that can be depicted with mere visual images. Again, when we count numbers in succession, for instance, upon hearing the strokes of a bell, there is “no logical necessity” either to picture the bell swinging backwards and forwards or to range the successive strokes in the idea of space.

Therefore, Russell argues that Bergson’s theory of number confuses “a particular collection with the number of its terms, and this again with number in general” (1912, pp.334-5). For Russell, the main source of this confusion lies in Bergson’s predominant use of vision (and visualization).<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, there is some truth in Russell’s point that the idea of a particular number (or number in general) should not be confused with a particular collection of units to which the particular number is applicable. However, the question of whether Russell’s objection is fair depends on what one thinks numbers are and where they originated from.

It seems to me that Bergson’s original intention was to show that the very abstractness of number has experiential grounds – in particular, visual perception or visual imagination. Given that vision and its experience typically lead us to the idea of space, it can be said that the idea of numbers has space as its medium. His assumption is that a particular collection of units is thought to be a basis for the idea of a particular number.

<sup>13</sup> Russell describes Bergson as “a strong visualizer, whose thought is always conducted by means of visual images” (1912, p.330).

For anyone who suspects that numbers are given to us prior to any experience, Bergson's idea that a number must imply a multiplicity of units in the intuition of space may sound plausible enough. Even if the idea of numbers is given to us *a priori*, it can always be said that our intuition of space as a homogeneous medium is, to say the least, a trigger for our access to the concept of numbers. I do not intend to pose any suggestion about the metaphysical nature of numbers. However, in my view, we can say, at the very least, that there may still be equally good reasons to think that the idea of numbers requires the idea of space.

Even if we do not endorse Bergson's strong claim that the concept of space is necessary for the concept of numbers, we can still draw some relevant insight into thinking that numerical identity is a concept primarily derived from the concept of space. With regard to the relation of numerical identity, Bergson would probably say that in order to count *x* and *y* as one (i.e., as numerically identical), we must place them in the idea of space along with one another. It follows that numerical identity is secured by the fact that both *x* and *y* are thought to occupy the same point in space.

The same holds for diachronic identity. Even though we think that we identify *x* – now and *y* – later as numerically the same *over time*, we make the same kind of juxtaposition by the idea of space. We place the temporal moments 'now' and 'later' side by side as if they are multiple identical units that represent fixed points in space and as if they are available simultaneously.

I think this is one way to support the idea that identity is a concept primarily derived from the idea of space. Here, the idea of identity over time is thought of as the relation between temporal points that are localized in the idea of space (or time, as understood as just another dimension of space). In other words, temporal points are assumed to be nothing but homogeneous spatial points, and the problem of identity over time is assumed to be that of identity at a point in time.

The idea that identity, not continuity, is a spatial concept can gain further support. I begin with one of the logical properties of numerical identity: transitivity. I regard the relation of transitivity as an important parameter that distinguishes the concepts of identity and continuity, and further, the ideas of space as simultaneous and time as successive.

From a logical point of view, numerical identity is said to be a reflexive, symmetrical, and transitive relation. A relation R can be said to be transitive just in case it is true that x and z must be R-related if x is R-related to y while y is R-related to z. Not all transitive relations are relations of identity, but all identity relations are transitive. So, identity is said to be transitive in case x is numerically identical with z if x is numerically identical with y and y, in turn, is numerically identical with z.

Continuity in its most basic form, however, is not transitive. Indeed, when the transitive relation holds, continuity has to be given up. Continuity, as Parfit considers it, is the psychological continuity understood to be derived from psychological connectedness, the direct *causal* connectedness between neighboring mental states (1984, p.215). If a mental state A is causally connected to a mental state B, and B is connected to C (but where A is not causally connected to C), it still can be said that the states A and C are psychologically continuous. That is, continuity is considered to be established through the direct connectedness between A and B and between B and C. From this perspective, the direct connectedness of nearby psychological states is intransitive, while the continuity of psychological states is transitive.

This kind of transitivity of psychological continuity is understood to be derived from the intransitivity of psychological connectedness. This understanding of continuity was initially proposed in support of a memory criterion of personal identity against objection from intransitivity of memory over time. It seems to me that this view of transitive continuity was intended to avoid a structural conflict between the memory and psychological connectedness that are intransitive and the concept of identity that is essentially transitive.

So, I will have to clarify that continuity, as it is used in this chapter, is more akin to psychological connectedness than psychological continuity. More specifically, continuity, as I consider it, is not the relation derived from the psychological connectedness but is primarily based on our experience. The continuity in question is experiential continuity – the direct experience of



duration, succession, and change – which I consider as a more basic sense of continuity of consciousness that offers a phenomenal basis for psychological continuity/connectedness.

As Dainton (2008) explains, there is experiential continuity – our experience of the streaming of consciousness – as a more fundamental sense of continuity. The experiential continuity is distinguished from the psychological continuity that is maintained through a causal dependency of later psychological states on earlier states – the former is a condition of the possibility for the latter. Also, as will be shown, there are good reasons to think that continuity, in this experiential sense, cannot be characterized as the transitive relation in the way identity can.

If transitivity is found to be a relation that primarily operates in the idea of space, and if it is not applicable to the idea of time, then identity, as the relation of transitivity, can be rightly said to be a spatial relation. Time is distinguished from space in the sense that, as Kant (1998, p.162, B47) describes, it is only one dimension: different times are not simultaneous but successive, while different spaces are not successive but simultaneous. The synchronic unity and diachronic unity of consciousness are also distinguished in accordance with the same principle, given that synchronic unity has to do with space, whereas diachronic unity has to do with time. It seems that the transitive relation fits comfortably in the simultaneity of space, while it cannot be applied to continuity.

The diachronic unity of consciousness differs phenomenally from the synchronic unity in that for diachronic unity to hold, transitivity has to go. Dainton (2000) illustrates this point in the context of his theory of co-consciousness. Since the theory of co-consciousness offers a relation-based understanding of the unity of consciousness, I believe it may help us to see the contrast between synchronic unity and diachronic unity with respect to the relation of transitivity.

According to Dainton, the unity of consciousness (both synchronic and diachronic) can be accounted for in terms of a relation of co-consciousness – the relations that experiences have when they are experienced together. For instance, a pain in the back is experienced together or co-consciously with the smell of coffee. He takes this relation of co-consciousness as “a primitive feature of experience” and “a basic experiential relationship” (2000, p.84). By virtue of the co-

consciousness that binds diverse experiences, phenomenal contents are experienced as occurring together. By this account, synchronic unity is accounted for in terms of synchronic co-consciousness, and diachronic unity is accounted for in terms of diachronic co-consciousness. However, there is an important difference between the two modes of co-consciousness. The synchronic co-consciousness is a transitive relation in the sense that every phase of a stream of consciousness would be fully co-conscious with every other phase of it, while the diachronic co-consciousness is an intransitive relation in the sense that “without breakdowns of transitivity, every phase of a stream of consciousness would be fully co-conscious with every other phase.” (2000, p.177).

Synchronic co-consciousness, according to Dainton, cannot fail to be transitive. For any experience, A, B, C, if A is synchronically co-conscious with B and B is synchronically co-conscious with C, then A is synchronically co-conscious with C. If, for instance, when I am having a headache while watching a TV show and there is a smell of coffee, then feeling a headache is synchronically co-conscious with watching a TV show, and watching a TV show is synchronically co-conscious with smelling coffee. As a result, the feeling of having a headache is synchronically co-conscious with smelling coffee. These experiences are co-conscious parts of a whole, total, single experience.

In contrast, Dainton characterizes the diachronic co-consciousness as intransitive since intransitivity is what makes the experience of succession or temporal passages possible. For instance, upon listening to a melody of a middle C-E-G, we experience C giving way to E and E giving away to G. This phenomenal flow or passage between notes is “directly experienced, and it is experienced as occurring in a particular direction” (Dainton 2000, p.173). Here, no co-consciousness relation holds between C and E in the way it is supposed to be in a synchronic case. If the tones of a middle C, E, and G are heard co-consciously at one time, it will be heard as a C-major harmony, not as a melody. In other words, for the experience of the melody to hold in this relation-based understanding of the unity of consciousness, intransitivity is required for our

experience of temporality (of the phenomenal flow and passage between notes). So, as Dainton says, it is “incomprehensible” to think of transitive diachronic co-consciousness as much as it is “inevitable” to think of non-transitive synchronic co-consciousness (2000, pp.181-2).

However, note also that Dainton says that it is “tempting” to suppose that there is an essential link between temporality and non-transitivity (2000, p.182), for there is a case in which diachronic co-consciousness is still apparently transitive. That is, he holds that it is not true that all cases of diachronic co-consciousness are intransitive. Importantly, he points to the case that diachronic co-consciousness is experienced as intransitive only when it is beyond the duration of the so-called *specious present*, or “the practically cognized present” (James 1890/1901, p.609), the temporally extended horizon of the present through which our awareness appears to extend both in the rearward and forward directions in time. In other words, Dainton thinks that transitivity is maintained in diachronic co-consciousness within the period of the specious present, which he assumes consumes only less than a half-second of clock-time. Otherwise, he admits the failure of transitivity of co-consciousness between experiences separated by an interval longer than the specious present.

However, I do not think that this restricted sense of the transitive diachronic co-consciousness undermines the idea that our experience of continuity cannot hold when the relation of transitivity holds. Although the specious present is a basic unit of time-consciousness and, as James proposes, we are “immediately and incessantly sensible” of it (1890, p.631), it does not seem to be responsible for the phenomenal, temporal flow in Dainton’s relation-based account because it is simply too short to generate the experience of succession.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> It is also worth noting that Dainton aims to “establish that the unity of consciousness over time is no different, in its essentials, from the unity of consciousness at a time” (2000, p.81). That is, he explains both synchronic unity and diachronic unity in terms of the relation of co-consciousness. However, there may be no good reason to think of the diachronic unity in terms of the co-consciousness relation between temporal phases of experience at all. When the diachronic unity is explained from non-relational approach, the question of whether it is transitive may not even arise since transitivity is itself a kind of relation.

#### **1.4. Individuality through continuity**

I agree with Parfit's idea that if we are in a position to choose one over another, our choice has to be continuity over identity when it comes to one's own continuing existence. I think so not only because identity is not what matters but also, more importantly, because continuity is prior to and more fundamental than identity when it comes to the idea that I exist as an individual more than anything else. I think that there are reasons to believe that the concept of individuality is more primarily linked to continuity than identity. Even when identity over time cannot be determined and only continuity holds, individuality may still be achieved. In particular, I believe that if we speak of the individuality of something that is concrete and temporal, our primary interest should be continuity. Furthermore, I defend the primacy of continuity. Continuity as a temporal notion cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of identity that basically operates in the idea of space.

One way that continuity is considered to be prior to the concept of identity is in that the relation of identity is introduced to complete individuality when continuity breaks down. Evans (1985), in his comments on P. F. Strawson's chapter "Sounds," addresses this point. For Strawson, as discussed earlier, identification and re-identification are required for a subject to conceive of a temporally extended particular such as a sound.

Evans, however, suspects that identification and re-identification are not necessary for us to conceive individual particulars in the external, objective world. For instance, the idea that it is raining continuously between the time one falls asleep and the time one awakens appears to be "prior to, and independent of, the idea of a single rainstorm," quantified as one and the same re-identifiable particular (1985, p.257). Here, Evans seems to raise a point that the concept of continuity is not only independent of but also prior to the concept of identity with respect to conceiving of concrete individual particulars. The concept of continuity can be registered without identity (and vice versa). Further, continuity alone can lead to the idea of the existence of individuals over time. If so, it follows that individuality can be achieved through continuity even before the concept of identity is introduced.

In my view, Evans's remarks on this point can be thought of as implying that there is no necessary connection between individuality and identity and, further, that the relationship between individuality and continuity is closer than that between individuality and identity.

The close connection between individuality and continuity can also be supported by our understanding of time as pure continuity that is irreducible to the idea of space. Bergson (1889/1913) distinguishes between two concepts of time: time as a homogeneous medium and time as a pure duration. When we divide time into units and consider them to be available simultaneously, we often conceive of time in the way we think of space – that is, we attribute homogeneity and simultaneity (which is characteristic of space) to the idea of time. For instance, according to Bergson, when we divide the temporal dimension distinctly into the past and the present as if the present were co-existing with the past – or when astronomers consider time to be measurable on a clock in terms of equally divided portions – time is understood as just another dimension of space. Time is thought of as a homogeneous medium in which conscious states are arranged side by side to form a discrete multiplicity.

Although this is how we often think of and deal with time, Bergson thinks that this understanding of time is far from the sense of time in its original form because “to put duration in space is really to contradict oneself and place succession within simultaneity” (1889/1913, p.227). Thus, time, when interpreted as the idea of space, is “nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness” (1889/1913, p.99). Under this surface of the spatialized time, Bergson claims that there is an idea of time in the most fundamental sense: time as a pure duration. Given that he considers duration (succession and motion) as “mental syntheses” (1889/1913, p.120), not as an external object, it seems that time as a pure duration (more properly speaking) refers to our consciousness of time (or time-consciousness) rather than time itself.

However, Bergson seems to think that time belongs to the inner, conscious mind, not to the outer, external world. This does not affect the main line of his argument relevant to the current context. This is because the problem of time itself should be distinguished from the problem of the

awareness of time, and our concern is with the latter, not the former. Whether time itself exists in the objective and absolute sense is a separate matter to be discussed on another occasion. Then, time in its original form is our deep-seated intuition about the continuity of consciousness in which conscious states are qualitative and heterogeneous in the sense that they penetrate one another.

For Bergson, succession is “a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole” (1889/1913, p.101). Being successive contradicts being simultaneous, and time is successive but not simultaneous, just as space is simultaneous but not successive. So, we should not think that time in its original form can be realized in the idea of space. In this sense, Bergson thinks that the idea of time as a pure duration is prior to and more fundamental than the idea of time considered as just another dimension of space.

He also suggests that there are two kinds of selves that correspond to the two concepts of time: the fundamental self and the refracted self. The fundamental self is considered as a pure duration, and the refracted self is considered as a spatial and social representation of the fundamental self. Below the numerical, quantitative, and discrete multiplicity of consciousness, there is qualitative multiplicity; below the concept of homogeneous, quantifiable time, there is the concept of heterogeneous, pure duration; and below self with well-defined states, there is “a self in which *succeeding each other* means *melting into one another* and forming an organic whole” (1889/1913, p.128). The idea that the self is a concrete, temporal, living individual, in my view, may be realized in this sense of pure continuity of consciousness.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have defended the idea that the self is an individual more than anything else. More specifically, the self is a concrete individual particular as opposed to a property, a set, a proposition, or a state of affairs. I have suggested that the self is an individual, not because it is identified with a physical body (or brain) or any immaterial, mythical entity such as a soul or Cartesian immaterial substance but because it can be understood in terms of the unity of

consciousness – the fact that consciousness is unified both at a time and over time – both synchronically and diachronically. The unity of consciousness is phenomenal in the sense that there is something it is like to have experienced being unified. Insofar as there is a phenomenally conscious experience of the unity of consciousness, there is an individual subject as an experiencer in the most deflated sense. In particular, much of my concern in this chapter was with diachronic unity – the phenomenology of continuity of consciousness assuming that if the self is an individual, it is an essentially living, concrete particular that is extended through time, though not through space.

In order to make sense of the idea of individuality of the self, I discussed two relevant concepts: identity and continuity. Although individuality is often understood in terms of identity, I tried to show that it is important not to fuse identity with individuality because they are two distinct concepts. Instead, I suggested that continuity, not identity, is more closely related to the concept of individuality. My discussion on this point is inspired by Parfit's claims that identity and continuity are not reconcilable and that, therefore, we should choose continuity over identity since continuity is what matters for one's survival.

The apparent contrast between concepts of identity and continuity, in my view, is reflected in a phenomenal difference in the ways space and time are experienced. While identity is a concept that is deeply connected to the idea of space, continuity is essentially a temporal concept. Endorsing Bergson's peculiar understanding of time in the most fundamental and original sense, I suggested that the phenomenology of continuity is related to the idea of time as a pure duration that cannot be wholly explicable in a way that is subject to the idea of space.

I argued that the most intimate link is between the continuity of consciousness and the individuality of the self. The individuality of the self is secured in the continuity of consciousness, and the problem of its identity over time should not be our primary concern. The self is not identified and re-identified in the same ways as ordinary material objects. This, however, does not prevent the self from being a concrete, temporal individual. Insofar as consciousness continues over

time (i.e., insofar as there is something it is like to have a continuing flow of thoughts and experiences), the self exists as a temporally extended individual particular. One can still speak and think of one's own individual existence without worrying about identifying oneself with something or someone at different times. I consider that the self, in this sense, is immune to error relative to misidentification and is already flowing through prior to all our attempts of identification and re-identification.

I conclude this chapter with some remarks about Lewis's (1976) challenge to Parfit's claim that identity and continuity are irreconcilable. Considering identity as a primitive fact,<sup>15</sup> Lewis argues that identity and continuity are not irreconcilable and, thus, that we need not give up identity in favor of continuity. Indeed, he emphasizes that identity is all we care about when we think of our own survival.

Identity, according to Lewis, is not a problem of an individual existing as a whole from one time to another but a problem of one's temporal parts being related from one time to another. So, an individual is said to be identical if and only if any temporal part that is a part of one is a part of the other. This view is typically based on a metaphysical stance called four-dimensionalism, according to which time is just another dimension of space and a concrete individual is an aggregate of its temporally extended parts, just as it is a sum of its physical parts that are themselves spatially extended.

Lewis developed the four-dimensionalist theory of personal identity (what he calls perdurantism as opposed to endurantism). The perdurantist typically assumes that an individual is extended through time by having its temporal parts, slices, or stages in ways it is extended through space by having its physical parts. For the self to persist over time, then, is for it to be an aggregate made of different temporal parts. Just as my arms and legs extended through space make up the whole of my body, my temporal parts – the parts of 'I' yesterday, today, and tomorrow – make up 'I' as a whole.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis denies that there are any genuine problems about identity: "Identity is utterly simple and unproblematic. Everything is identical to itself; nothing is ever identical to anything else except itself. There is never any problem about what makes something identical to itself; nothing can ever fail to be" (1986, pp.192-3).



'I' never exists as a whole at one time or another in the way the endurantist typically conjectures. Instead, only temporal parts or stages of 'I' exist at different times.

Accordingly, Lewis offers a unique interpretation of fission: since temporal parts, unlike spatial parts, can overlap in the same place at the same time, more than two persons can be said to have a single temporal part in common at a certain time. Thus, it is a mistake to think that fission is a case of beginning with one person and ending with two people. Before the fission, there were already two people who had a temporal part in common, and it is just that their overlapping temporal part diverged post-operatively. Since a one-one relation is maintained through the operation (there were two people all along), there is no violation of identity. Meanwhile, (psychological) continuity is also maintained, given that the temporal parts before and after the operation are causally related. This fission, strictly speaking, is not a case of 'my division' as Parfit describes but a case of overlapping temporal parts.

In my view, Lewis defends what seems to be apparent for him about our identity over time in ways far from being apparent to us. We are required to think of fission as a case in which two people existed all along, even before the operation. I wonder whether identity and continuity can be reconciled in the way Lewis advocates. One important assumption behind his view is the idea that time, just like space, can have uniformly divided or segmented parts. It is assumed that a concrete individual spreads across a dimension of time just like it does across the three dimensions of space. Different temporal parts of an individual are thought to be located between different temporal points that are uniformly discrete. I do not think this is compatible with our basic experience of time. It is not that we cannot, or should not, think of time in this space-like manner but that 'I' as an individual (or any of my parts) is not likely to lie between those fixed temporal points that represent geographical, spatial points.

This is not to deny that time (physically speaking) is another dimension of space or that the physical world is indexed with spatio-temporal points. The purpose is to point out that there is a further fact about our experience of time. Our phenomenology of continuity is analogous rather than

digital; it is simply that a stream of consciousness does not phenomenally appear to manifest such discrete temporal units.

As Zahavi (2005) explains, the diachronic unity of consciousness is not a mere connection between already synchronically unified slices of consciousness. Moreover, as Bergson (1889/1913) points out, it is doubtful that time, in its most basic form, is characterized by homogeneously divided units. Thus, I think that Lewis's perdurantist account cannot be a viable option for us to specify the idea of the individuality of the self. I maintain that continuity and identity are conflicting rather than complementary. I also believe that the individuality of the self – the idea of the self as a non-instantiable, non-repeatable particular – is best understood as the diachronic unity of consciousness.

It follows that experiential continuity (i.e., the experience of duration, successions, and changes) is the topic most relevant to the self in this view. In other words, our temporal awareness (or time-consciousness) is the only piece of phenomenal evidence we have for our own existence as a concrete individual particular that is extended through time. So, it is natural to wonder how the self can be understood in relation to time-consciousness. A specific influential way to consider the intimate link between self and time-consciousness will be discussed in the following chapter.

# Chapter Two

## The experiential self and time-consciousness

### Introduction

If the idea that the self exists as a concrete individual particular can be best realized in the experiential continuity of consciousness – the experience of the ever-streaming flow of consciousness – it is important to specify a relationship between the way we experience continuity and the way we think of our own individual existence. Given that experiential continuity refers to the experience of duration, succession, and change, our consciousness of time can be said to be the most basic awareness of the continuity of consciousness. Then, we can ask how the self is related to this basic temporal awareness.

One influential approach to the understanding of the self as closely related to temporal awareness is proposed from a phenomenologist's tradition. Zahavi (2003, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2014) offers a notion of the self that is regarded as the subjectivity of experience, which he calls "the experiential self" (2014, p.18). He proposes the experiential self as an alternative to the substantive self and the No-Self on the assumption that there is no substantive self that exists separately from consciousness. Yet, it does not follow that there is no self.

The experiential self, according to Zahavi, is an integral part of consciousness itself. It is a subjective, first-personal feature of experience – what he also calls for-me-ness. For-me-ness is explained as a pre-reflective mode of consciousness as opposed to a reflective mode of consciousness in the sense that it is a conscious experience without being considered an intentional theme by a further inner awareness. Zahavi equates pre-reflective consciousness with the structure of inner-time consciousness, as analyzed by Husserl (1991). It follows that the experiential self is ultimately equated with inner-time consciousness.

The close tie between self and time-consciousness in Husserl and Zahavi's accounts motivated this chapter. In my view, the notion of the experiential self deserves special treatment because it is

the self that is understood in a close association with time and our experience of it. When we think of the self as an individual that is primarily understood in terms of time and continuity instead of space and identity, I think we should ask whether the notion of the experiential self is a viable candidate for the self construed as an essentially temporal individual.

A closer examination of the experiential self in relation to Husserl's analysis of inner time consciousness, however, shows that the experiential self is confronted with a serious difficulty in its equation with inner time-consciousness. As will be shown, the experiential self is highly likely to be a pure abstraction rather than a concrete individual particular. I argue that, initially, the temporality of the experiential self, as Zahavi intends to advocate, is not compatible with the nature of inner time-consciousness in Husserl's analysis.

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 2.1 introduces the notion of the experiential self and explains how it is equated with inner time-consciousness (or absolute flow) in the context of Husserl's account of time-consciousness. Section 2.2 deals with the problem of the nature of the experiential self. I will show that the experiential self as the structure of inner time-consciousness is best understood as an abstraction such as a property rather than a concrete individual particular. In section 2.3, I will argue that the experiential self, contrary to Zahavi's original intention, is likely to remain atemporal or super-temporal, something over and above time. I conclude this chapter with a sketch of my own proposal about what it is to be a self if it is understood as being closely related to the phenomenology of time.

## **2.1. The experiential self**

Zahavi describes his notion of the self as a "basic and indispensable experiential feature" (2014, p.63), a "ubiquitous dimension of first-personal character" (or first-personal self-givenness) in a multitude of changing experiences (2011, p.325), or "the subjectivity of experience" (2011, p.326) – the feature of what-it-is-like-*for-me*. He calls this sense of the self the experiential (core) self.

Experience is said to be subjective in the sense that it has a feature of a first-person perspective. In my experience, things are given *for me* in certain ways. For instance, my visual experience of the blue sky is said to be subjective just in case there is, in Nagel's (1974) phrase, something it is like *for me* to see the blue sky. Zahavi calls this a for-me feature of experience, or for-me-ness<sup>16</sup>, and conceives of it as a constitutive feature of consciousness. Since for-me-ness is a shared dimension of all conscious experiences, what-it-is-likeness of experience, in this view, is really what-it-is-like-*for-me*.

Phenomenal consciousness, according to Zahavi, is constituted not only by the phenomenology of intentional contents (or intentional objects and their properties) but also by the phenomenology of intentional acts (or propositional attitudes). Zahavi calls the former a *worldly property* and the latter an *experiential property*: The worldly properties are within the phenomenal domain of "what the object is like for the subject," while the experiential properties are that of "what the experience of the object is like for the subject" (2005, p.124).

From this perspective, a mental state is said to be conscious rather than unconscious by virtue of its experiential properties rather than its worldly properties. This is because the mere fact that one is causally related to worldly objects and their properties is not what makes an experience phenomenally conscious. The worldly objects and their properties are always (re)presented to a subject in a particular mode: They are perceived, imagined, remembered, and so on. The qualities of an experience itself are phenomenally distinguished from those of (re)presented objects (i.e., what it is like for me to *see* the blueness of the sky differs from what it is like for me to visually *imagine* it). The worldly properties, without our experiencing them in a certain mode, would remain mere properties that have nothing to do with our conscious experience.<sup>17</sup> This particular attention to the

<sup>16</sup> There are many other names for this first-person, subjective feature of experience. It is also called *mineness*, *ipseity of experience*, and *pre-reflective self-consciousness*.

<sup>17</sup> Here, Zahavi argues for a phenomenal character that is dedicated to attitudes independently of qualities of (re)presented objects. While this view shares some similarities with the thesis of cognitive phenomenology that there is phenomenology solely dedicated to propositional attitudes (see Bayne and Montague (2011) for further details with regard to the thesis of cognitive phenomenology). This clearly contrasts with a first-order representationalism (or the externalist representationalism), which is mainly defended by Dretske (1995) and Tye (1995) and which asserts that phenomenal consciousness is exhausted by the represented properties of the represented objects.

experiential properties marks the phenomenologist's analysis as distinct from other theories of consciousness.

Zahavi takes for-me-ness as a first-personal givenness of experience. Experiences are given in a particular mode of consciousness – that is, they are given as first-personal and self-referential. Zahavi says that all conscious states are necessarily self-conscious states: “Every givenness, be it the givenness of mental states or the givenness of physical objects, involves a first-person perspective” (2005, p.123). There are important differences in the phenomenal characteristics of the first-person givenness of experiencing in the sense that the first-person givenness of *perceiving*, for instance, is phenomenally different from the first-person givenness of *imagining*. Nevertheless, all experiences are given to me in the first-person, subjective mode. In this sense, the for-me feature or for-me-ness is “a universal and essential characteristic of phenomenal consciousness” (Zahavi and Kriegel 2015, p.37).

Acquaintance with for-me-ness is pre-reflective or non-reflective – it is a special sort of non-introspective, unthematic, implicit, and intransitive awareness. Provided that all consciousness is self-consciousness (in the sense that all experiences are given to a subject from the first-person perspective), phenomenologists categorize (self-)consciousness into pre-reflective and reflective (self-)consciousness. Reflective self-consciousness is an objectifying self-consciousness that has a dual structure of the reflector and that which is reflected on (or between a subject and an object). It is an introspectively accessible, thematic, explicit, and transitive self-awareness. On the other hand, pre-reflective self-consciousness is a non-objectifying self-consciousness that is given prior to the dichotomy between a subject and an object. It is a condition of the possibility for reflective consciousness.

Given that the experiential self is a ubiquitous dimension of the first-personal character of experience – and that such a dimension is the feature of for-me-ness (or mineness) and, in turn, for-me-ness is also a special mode of consciousness (the so-called pre-reflective self-consciousness), it

follows that the experiential self is equated with for-me-ness (mineness), or pre-reflective self-consciousness. Following this line of reasoning, Zahavi writes,

It is also possible to identify this pre-reflective sense of mineness with a minimal, or core, sense of self. ... [T]he idea is to link an experiential sense of self to a particular first-personal givenness that characterizes our experiential life; it is this first-personal givenness that constitutes the mineness or ipseity of experience (2005, p.125).

[T]here is a minimal sense of self present whenever there is self-awareness. Self-awareness is there not only when I realize that I am perceiving a candle, but whenever I am acquainted with an experience in its first-personal modes of givenness, that is, whenever there is something it is like for me to have the experience. In other words, pre-reflective self-awareness and a minimal sense of self are integral parts of our experiential life (2005, p.146).

Zahavi perceives the experiential self as constituting the unity of consciousness. Consciousness is said to be unified by the self, which is defined not as an ontologically separate entity like the Cartesian substantive self but as an essential character of consciousness itself – the subjective, first-person features of experience. Consciousness is unified in the sense that both synchronically and diachronically dispersed experiences partake in the first-personal dimension (i.e., for-me-ness). Thus, Zahavi proposes that the unity of consciousness is sufficient for the identity of the experiential self (2014, p.74).

Furthermore, he equates the experiential self with the structure of inner time-consciousness analyzed by Husserl. According to Zahavi, Husserl's most profound investigation of self-consciousness is presented in Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness. He describes Husserl's analysis of the structure of inner time-consciousness as "an investigation of the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our experiences" (2011, p.21) as "an analysis of the (micro-)structure of first-personal givenness" (2014, p.65).

Based on the traditional understanding, Husserl's analysis of inner time-consciousness presupposes three different levels of temporality: objective time, subjective time, and inner time-consciousness. Objective time is the temporality of all transcendental or external objects. A temporal object, like a melody or tone, has a duration, succession, and change in objective time. This is a level of time that can be measured by objective means. Subjective (or phenomenal) time is the temporality of appearing or immanent objects and of our intentional directedness to an experience itself that is thought of as an inner object. At this level of temporality, objective time is phenomenologically constituted and stands before a subject in appearance as an objectivity. Lastly is inner time-consciousness, which is also called *absolute consciousness*. It is due to this further level of temporality that subjective time becomes possible, as we are aware of intentional acts subscribed to subjective time (Sokolowski 2000, pp.130-3).

This hierarchical structure of temporality is characteristic of Husserl's view of temporal awareness. It is commonly acknowledged that Husserl uses the third, deepest level of temporality as his concept of inner time-consciousness or absolute consciousness. Inner time-consciousness is necessary for subjective time in which all transcendental objects appear (including experiences that are perceived as immanent objects). That is, the temporal unity of subjective time is phenomenally conscious by virtue of being perceived as an intentional theme by this increased inner awareness.

It is not hard to see that this account soon generates an infinite regress. Husserl holds that a succession of experience is not the same as the experience of succession because the mere arrangement of temporal phases of an experience do not give rise to an experience of a temporally unified stream. Instead, it is the inner-time consciousness that makes us aware of subjective time, the sense of temporal unity. Then, the question is how inner time-consciousness can itself be experienced as a temporal unity. For it to be experienced as a successive, continuing stream in time, its temporal phases must be made aware by a further level of inner-awareness; for that level of inner-awareness to appear as a temporal unity, its temporal phases must be given in awareness by a still further level of inner-awareness, and *ad infinitum*.



This problem of the infinite regress, as Kortooms (2010, pp.266-8) explains, requires Husserl's analysis to undergo many changes and developments. As a result, the latest version of the theory is equipped with a more horizontal structure such that it no longer suffers from the problem of vicious regress. Husserl's resolution is to propose double intentionality directed towards both immanent objects and itself to support a specific structure of inner time-consciousness, according to which inner time-consciousness makes itself appear as a temporal unity by being self-conscious, self-constituting, and self-unifying.

Like James (1890/1901, p.609), who wants to cash out our experience of succession to support the notion of *the specious present*, Husserl also takes the present, or, the moment of *now*, as an extended temporal block that is open to both directions, the past, and the future. Time-consciousness is impossible if we consider the present moment as a purely abstract mathematical point. In order for time to be experiential, the present should also be experiential; further, for the present to be experiential, it has to be temporally extended to some degree.

Husserl analyzes the notion of the specious present as follows. The specious present is characterized with a threefold intentional structure – *retention*, *primal impression*, and *protention*. We experience a temporally extended object (i.e., a melody) by virtue of the interplay of the three interwoven intentional processes: primal impression (which is narrowly directed to the now-phase of the sensed object), retention (which is directed to the just-elapsed phase of the sensed the object),<sup>18</sup> and protention (which is directed to the sensed object as just-about-to-happen). The present that constitutes inner time-consciousness is not a thin slice of perception of the now-phase of an object but a thick temporal horizon in which the primary impression is always coupled with retention and protention.

This three-fold structure of inner time-consciousness, Husserl explains, is itself not confined to subjective time but enables us to be aware of time in retention and its modification processes in particular. Retention is a directedness towards the just-past phase of a sensed object. Husserl

<sup>18</sup> Husserl also calls retention *primary* memory, which continuously attaches itself to primary impression (1991, p.32), while he calls recollection *secondary* memory.

emphasizes that retention is also a directed *awareness* of the just-past phase of the object.<sup>19</sup> That is, retention contains not only the just-past phase of the sensed object but also *awareness* of the just-past phase of the object. So, retention is not an ordinary sense of memory such as recollection (note that recollection is a mental act that is also itself temporal), nor is it a mere reverberation like an echo but is instead a special kind of memory that belongs to the now moment – the basic temporal unit of time-consciousness.

Retention is “consciousness of *what has just been* and not merely consciousness of the now-point of the object that appears as enduring” (Husserl 1991, p.34). Retention also retains the primary impression of a sensed object, as well as the object that has been retained just before and the retention of a further retention of the object, and so on. This is how Husserl considers retention to be directed both to the now and the past tone.

Husserl holds that primary impression (the awareness of the now-phase of a sensed object) is subject to the principle of modification in that it continuously changes into ever new retention: the now phase of the tone changes into a tone having just past (retention), and into a retention of a retention, and so on. “[E]ach later retention is not only continual modification that has arisen from primal impression; each is also continual modification of all earlier conscious modifications of that same initial point” (Husserl 1991, p.31).

For example, when listening to a melody of a succession of a tone C, D, and E, if we hear C, the primal impression is directed to C. However, when the tone is succeeded by D, the primal impression is directed to D, and C is retained in retention. If D is subsequently succeeded by E, the primal impression is again directed to E, and D is retained in retention, which is also a retention of C. Whenever a new tone is directed by primal impression, the whole sequence of the retentive processes is modified in this way. What is important in this process of modification is that a successive series of C, D, and E is perceived as successive from the chains of retentions of retentions. In this sense, Husserl characterizes retention as “a comet’s tail that attaches itself to the

<sup>19</sup> Husserl distinguishes between the content of retention (primary memory) – what is retained – and the content of memory (secondary memory) or echo. The content of retention – a tone retained, for instance – is not a presently sensed tone but a tone “primarily remembered in the now” (Husserl 1991, p.33).

perception of the moment” (1991, p.35). Due to the principle of retentional modifications, our perception of duration and succession is argued to be possible.

These retentional processes and modifications, according to Husserl, are characterized by two kinds of intentionality: transverse intentionality and longitudinal (or horizontal) intentionality. Transverse intentionality, as an ordinary sense of intentionality, is perceived as a primary memory of the just-passed tone, while longitudinal intentionality is “constitutive of the unity of this primary memory of the flow; namely, retention” (1991, p.85).

In virtue of the transverse intentionality, retention points to a temporally extended object presented in the flow, and in virtue of the longitudinal intentionality, it also points to the just-elapsed phase of the flow itself. The longitudinal intentionality, as Zahavi (2003, 2005) explains, is not an ordinary kind of intentionality but a kind of subject-awareness that does not objectify itself by considering itself as its own intentional theme. Longitudinal intentionality, if appropriately understood, refers to the self-manifestation of retention or its flow. In short, it can be said that longitudinal intentionality refers to just retention.

In this sense, Husserl’s concept of double intentionality is distinguished from Brentano’s distinction of two kinds of awareness, which are primary awareness and secondary awareness. For instance, according to Brentano, when we hear a melody, our hearing has two intentional objects: the melody as the primary object and hearing as the secondary object (1874, pp.179-80 [1973, pp.127-8]). While transverse intentionality corresponds to Brentano’s primary awareness, Husserl clarifies that his notion of longitudinal intentionality is not the same as Brentano’s secondary awareness.

Husserl denies that the awareness of hearing is given to itself as an intentional object. For Husserl, the problem of infinite regress is inevitable when consciousness is objectified, even in the way Brentano’s secondary awareness takes experience itself as the secondary intentional object. By virtue of the longitudinal intentionality directed to retention or a continuous modified sequence of retentions, retentional processes enable us to experience not only the enduring temporal object but

also the continuous flow itself. Here, is no need for a further level of inner-consciousness, and, thus, the infinite regress stops.

Considering the notion of longitudinal intentionality, Zahavi (2003, 2007, 2011) denies that Husserl's inner time-consciousness is to be understood as a separate inner-awareness that has immanent objects (both transcendental objects and intentional acts) as its intentional content. He points out that such an understanding, even though it is a widely held interpretation, is a result of a narrow reading that hardly takes into consideration the later part of Husserl's analysis found in posthumously published and unpublished materials.

If, however, we consider how much changes Husserl's analysis underwent over time, we gain a different interpretation. Specifically, we see that Husserl's analysis overcomes the hierarchical structure of objective time, subjective time, and inner time-awareness (or an absolute flow).<sup>20</sup> In particular, as Zahavi says, we should stop thinking of inner time-consciousness as a further, separately existing inner awareness and instead should think of it as pre-reflective self-awareness.

Inner time-consciousness and intentional acts are not to be understood as different dimensions of subjectivity as if acts were brought to givenness by a further level of subjectivity. Rather, inner time-consciousness is a pre-reflective mode of self-awareness of intentional acts. When Husserl says that an act is constituted in inner time-consciousness, what he really means is that it is brought to itself by its own means. Inner time-consciousness, as Zahavi explains, "belongs intrinsically to the innermost structure of the act itself," such that its three-folded structure is "an analysis of the structure of the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our acts and experience" (2003, p.168).

If Husserl's later analysis of time-consciousness is understood in this horizontal structure, Zahavi thinks that we can handle some difficulties via the traditional interpretation. If experiences

<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Kortooms (2010, p.233) also explains that Husserl's later works indicate that Husserl eventually abandons the vertical structure of consciousness in favor of a horizontal structure. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a difference between Kortooms's and Zahavi's views. Like Zahavi, Kortooms (2010, pp.89-91) thinks that Husserl does not regard his concept of inner time-consciousness as the deepest underlying level of temporality on which other levels of temporality are based. However, challenging Zahavi's interpretation that inner time-consciousness is a non-objectifying pre-reflective self-consciousness, Kortooms suggests that although it is not an awareness of ordinary sense of object – say, an objectivated, or grasped object – it is still an awareness of objects in a different manner. It takes "the immanent, non-grasped, non-objectivated object of intentional constitution" (2010, p.237). Inner time-consciousness is an awareness of background objects, "the marginal consciousness of an object toward which attention is not directed" (2010, p.90). Zahavi, according to Kortooms, leaves out this part of Husserl's considerations.

run in subjective time and the inner time-awareness is an awareness of those temporal experiences, the question of whether there are two kinds of streams or a single, unified stream of consciousness will arise since it is assumed that there is a stream of experiences and a stream of inner time-consciousness. However, if inner time-consciousness refers to a pre-reflective self-manifestation of experience itself, there will be a single, unified consciousness. That is, there are not two different unities but two distinctive manifestations of one and the same flow of consciousness (i.e., the reflective manifestation of objects and the pre-reflective manifestation of acts). Inner time-consciousness is an abiding feature that pervades all conscious experiences but cannot exist independently from experiences, just as experiences cannot exist independently of their intended objects. It is pre-reflective self-consciousness – the first-personal dimension of experience – and, thus, the experiential self.

## 2.2. Ontology

The idea that there can be a way of thinking about the self without it being a Cartesian substance or a merely formal, theoretical postulation is central to Zahavi's proposal of what the experiential self is. The experiential self is argued to be the notion of the self in the most basic, minimalist sense. It is something rather than nothing. It is said to be existing as a genuine part of our phenomenal reality.

In this exploration of whether the experiential self can be said to exist, the first question to be asked is an ontological one: What ontological category does the experiential self belong to? My best conjecture is that it is a class of a property – in particular, a phenomenal property that makes mental states phenomenally conscious.

As discussed in the previous section, Zahavi (2005, p.124) speaks of for-me-ness as a sort of phenomenal property. Following Husserl, he assumes that there are two kinds of phenomenal property: a *worldly* property (of what is given) that pertains to objects that experience the (re-)present, and an *experiential* property (of givenness itself) that pertains to the intentional act or

experience itself. Also, he sub-categorizes the latter into the property of givenness (of individual experiences) and the property of for-me-ness (which is responsible for the ubiquitous, indispensable dimension of the first-personal givenness of experience) for the phenomenology of what-it-is-like-*for-me*.

While a worldly property and a property of givenness may vary and change among different individual acts (or attitudes) and contents (intentional objects), the property of for-me-ness (i.e., the property of the subjectivity of experience) does not change. It is argued that for-me-ness is a common feature shared by all various modes of givenness (e.g., perceiving, imagining, remembering) and (re)presented objects. When an experience realizes the property of for-me-ness, the experience is self-conscious in the sense that it is *for* me; when this happens, the nature of this mode of consciousness is pre-reflective (or non-reflective), unthematic, intransitive, and non-objective. In other words, it is not conscious *of* (an intentional object) but conscious *how*.<sup>21</sup>

The above discussion indicates that the experiential self is a kind of property – an experiential property that forms a mental state conscious (rather than unconscious) when it is exemplified. Then, it is natural to wonder if the self, even in the most minimalist sense, belongs to the category of a property if not to the category of a substance. If I exist, do I exist as a universal like a property that can be multiply instantiated? If so, then the notion of the experiential self does not reflect the idea of the individuality of the self, the idea that the self exists as a concrete individual that is a bearer of certain properties and relations, and that is not instantiable by other concrete individuals. However, it may be too hasty to classify the experiential self as a property. Perhaps the notion of the experiential self, in its identification with inner time-consciousness in Husserl's analysis, may

<sup>21</sup> In this respect, this view appears similar to Baker (2013)'s account. The property of for-me-ness seems to correspond to a property of the first-person perspective in the rudimentary sense in Baker's context. She holds that there are first-person properties that are irreducible and ineliminable in the third-person scientific method; meanwhile, the first-person perspective is an instance of exemplification of the first-person property. Similarly, Zahavi also thinks that the first-person perspective is an exemplification of the property of for-me-ness. The difference is that Zahavi speaks of for-me-ness as an experiential property in virtue of which the first-person perspective is a mode of phenomenal consciousness. However, it is not obvious that for-me-ness is ontologically irreducible in Zahavi's context.

present to us a more plausible picture of what we really are. The question of what the nature of the experiential self is, then, ultimately depends on the nature of inner time-consciousness.

The challenge is that it is far from clear what kind of a thing Husserl had in mind when he spoke of inner time-consciousness. In my view, however, it seems clear enough that inner time-consciousness is not a concrete individual being that exists through time. What is important for Husserl is to provide an intelligent account of time-consciousness that is free from the problem of infinite regress. Husserl's solution to the problem of generating a further and still further inner-consciousness and *ad infinitum* is to propose longitudinal intentionality, by virtue of which inner time-consciousness is self-constituting and self-unifying such that it becomes a temporal unity itself without being objectified or an intentional theme of a further inner-awareness. This led Husserl to regard inner time-consciousness as something atemporal, super-temporal, or quasi-temporal. If it is to stop the regress, inner time-consciousness should not itself be temporally extended in the way ordinary temporal objects (and immanent objects, including one's own intentional acts) are.

To say that inner time-consciousness is itself atemporal is to say that it does not occur in time or move through time. It does not come and go, nor does it persist over time. Rather, it is, as Zahavi describes, "a form of temporality," "time itself," or "the time-constituting phenomena" (2007, p.466).

It follows that the experiential self is a structure of temporality but is itself not a product of time. It is prior to our experience of temporal objects and of any succession, change, or duration. In my view, it is now more obvious that the experiential self, as a consequence of being equated with inner time-consciousness, cannot be regarded as a temporal individual as indicated in Husserl's quote in his later work:

[N]ot everything subjective is a temporal, is individual in the sense that it is individualized through a unique temporal position. What we do not have in the stream of experience is, above all, the ego itself, the identical center, the pole to which the whole content of the stream of experience is related.... [The ego] is not itself temporal...as the identical pole for

all experiences, the ego...is the pole for all the temporal series [of such experiences] and, as such, is necessarily 'super'-temporal" (*The Bernau Manuscripts*, p.277, quoted in Mensch 2010, p.142).

Here, Husserl says that the self – the ego – is not a product of time but is something over and above time. This idea is consistent with the description in *The C Manuscripts* as Mensch (2010, p.143) interprets it. In my view, if we consider that Husserl identifies this super-temporal self with the structure of inner time-consciousness (or what Husserl calls the streaming present or living present), there is good reason to think of Zahavi's notion of the experiential self as non-temporal and non-concrete.

If the self is something beyond or prior to the phenomenology of time, then what sort of a thing is it? If it does not have a temporal location or extension, if it does not have any of the characteristics we commonly ascribe to temporally extended objects, what kind of an ontological being would the self be? Perhaps the most plausible candidate for such a being is one that belongs to a category of universals rather than of individuals. That is, in my view, the self likely belongs to a category of property. We are asked to think of the self as a peculiar sort of property – a property of for-me-ness, which is complicated with the structure of primal impression-retention-protention with double intentionality. Alternatively, if the self is an individual in this context, it is likely to be an *abstract* particular, atemporal, or non-temporal individual, such as God or a soul. Whatever the case, I think we can say at least one thing: the experiential self, even though it is explained as being closely linked to time-consciousness, is not a concrete individual particular.

The fact that the experiential self is inner time-consciousness indicates something non-temporal. Thus, I believe we can infer that it shares a certain feature with the traditional notion of the substantive self. The experiential self is not any sort of individual entity that stands against the stream of consciousness but is a certain structural feature of consciousness itself that remains constant amid continuous changes of intentional contents and acts. In this way, the experiential self



preserves a traditional intuition about the transcendental self – the self as something stable and unchanging among a plurality of ever-changing experiences.

A typical example that represents the transcendental self is a Cartesian ego – the self as an immaterial kind of substance that exists independently of both a body and consciousness. It seems that Husserl's idea of the self and inner time-consciousness, as well as Zahavi's interpretation and development of it, are not free from the idea of the transcendental self even though the experiential self is accommodated in the very feature of consciousness itself, not outside of it. If there is something unchanging, unmovable, and invariant *within* consciousness, that thing is more likely than anything else to be the self.

So, for Husserl and Zahavi, to reject the Cartesian substantive self does not mean to reject the notion of the transcendental self altogether because, as Zahavi says, “the notion of a transcendental ego is not bound up with an idea of an autonomous sovereign free-standing ego” (2011, p.323 Footnote 2). To reject the substantive self, however, does not mean to settle in the No-Self doctrine because the self could be integrated into a stream of consciousness.

Even when the self is not an ontologically separate agent that organizes and unifies the stream of consciousness, it can still be the transcendental self. If there is something transcendental about consciousness – if there is something that survives despite changes in the stream of consciousness, it can satisfy a necessary condition for being a self, as Husserl emphasizes in his earlier work:

Every cogito, at least in principle, can change, can come and go.... But, as opposed to this, the pure ego seems to be something necessary in principle. As something absolutely identical in all actual and possible changes of experiences, it cannot in any sense be taken as a real component or moment of the experiences.” (*Idea I*, p.123). (Quoted in Mensch 2010, p.140).

While individual experiences and thoughts come and go (or change and evolve over time), the self as a ‘pure ego’ remains unaltered. This idea of the pure ego seems to be maintained throughout different stages of Husserl's theory of time-consciousness.

The question for Husserl and Zahavi, then, is how to realize the transcendental self without appealing to an ontologically separate entity-like substance. Obviously, neither the objects (or contents) of experience nor individual experiences remain invariable in the flux of changes of experiences.

Therefore, Husserl draws attention to a feature of consciousness itself. In particular, he attends to the present, or the now moment, which he considers a source of the unified stream of consciousness. Individual experiences seem to be temporally extended – they come, persist, and fade away. However, they all stream through the now moment, a temporal horizon with a certain structure rather than a purely abstract momentary point. All our conscious experiences, according to Husserl, appear to have a temporal extension at this very present moment, which has the structure of primal impression-retention-protention.

This field of the now – what Husserl calls the living or streaming present – is a basic unit of inner time-consciousness. While individual experiences vary, the structure of the living present is unchanging and necessarily there regardless of continuous changes to the experiences. In this sense, Husserl sometimes calls inner time-consciousness an unchangeable form of presence.

In my view, the experiential self is puzzling because it preserves the idea of the transcendental self – the idea that the self, as a fixed form of consciousness, is unchangeable, stationary, and identical, while everything else is part of a changing and variant reality. Husserl's inner time-consciousness, the structure of primal impression-retention-protention, is not 'temporal' in the sense that it is itself extended over time. It is not constituted in time but is itself a time-constituting phenomenon.

If there is anything that is beyond our ordinary sense of time, if there is anything that is not subject to change and movement through time and that is always and necessarily there, do we, in general, say that that that thing is a (living) being rather than a non-being? Does it make sense to take such an entity as a self only because it is an unchangeable and invariant structure of experience even when it is not temporally bounded?

I do not think that there is any other way to understand the super-temporal, transcendental entity other than in the way we normally understand something like a property, a relation, or a state of affairs. Just as being 'red' is an invariant feature that is shared by a fire engine, post-box, and ripe tomato, inner time-consciousness (also known as for-me-ness and pre-reflective self-consciousness) is an unchangeable and invariant feature that is a common dimension of all conscious experiences that are diachronically and synchronically dispersed. Just as a fire engine, post-box, and ripe tomato are unified by being 'red,' all our conscious experiences are unified by having the feature of inner time-consciousness – that is, the experiential self. In this sense, in Zahavi's view, the experiential self is conceived as the unity of consciousness. That is, all phenomenally conscious experiences are unified by virtue of for-me-ness and, thus, by virtue of the experiential self.

If the experiential self is a property, then it has to be exemplified in the spatially and temporally bounded world by bearing a relation to something concrete for it to be made aware (or self-aware). This, I think, leads to the phenomenologist's attention to a body and the notion of the embodied (or bodily) self. Without involving a physical body, the experiential self is likely to remain purely abstract. I am not certain that Husserl and Zahavi ultimately intended to claim that the self is a pure abstraction, yet it seems that without introducing the concept of embodiment, the notion of the experiential self is likely to end up somewhere beyond the physical domain, somewhere in Plato's heaven with all other abstract entities.

If so, can this view be considered as a more viable view than the Cartesian view with respect to the mode of the existence of a self? Both Descartes and Zahavi (and Husserl as interpreted by Zahavi) share the core idea that the transcendental self remains invariant throughout a plurality of changes of experiences. Although one tries to find the self somewhere outside the stream of consciousness and the other tries to find it within the stream of consciousness, both parties have the same goal: to find something that transcends all individual changes in experience.

Descartes considers the self as a substance of an immaterial sort that is somehow causally related to a body (i.e., a concrete physical substance). His view is criticized because it is hard to make sense

of the existence of such an immaterial substance that stands against the stream consciousness and that also resides in the realm beyond the physical world. The substance indicates a thick sense of a subject of experience, as we are required to presuppose that we exist as the immaterial substance.

So, it is proposed that we look for other notions of the self, perhaps, something thinner such that those skeptical of the Cartesian self would find it acceptable. Both Descartes and Zahavi, in my view, started from the same point, which is our conscious thought, and ended at the same idea of the self: the transcendental self. As a result, both headed towards the same destination of the world beyond space and time, the world of immaterial entities and abstractions.

While it is easy to tell where the Cartesian self originates from, it is often difficult to tell where the experiential self comes from. This could be because the experiential self is thought to be a thin sense of a subject, the subject that is integrated into consciousness itself. The experiential self is getting thinner and thinner, approaching the point where it slowly disappears from our sight and from this world we live in. It might be that we are left with some kind of an empty field because everything has been stripped away and abstracted. If anyone finds the experiential self (for-me-ness, pre-reflective self-consciousness, or inner time-consciousness) too elusive to grasp, it is probably because it has been abstracted away into a pure abstraction, such as a property, structure, form, and function. Thus, it is not likely that the experiential self can make sense of the idea of the self as a living, individual particular. Just as it is hard to believe that I am a Cartesian substance, it is hard to believe that I am a property like redness or roundness.

### **2.3. Temporality**

Zahavi would not want to accept the consequence that the experiential self is a pure abstraction. He might have wanted to defend his notion of the self as a dynamic and living self since it has a certain degree of temporality established by processes of retentional modifications. Given that he regards the experiential self not as a formal postulation but as a phenomenal reality, it does not appear that he intended to offer the notion of the experiential self as something purely conceptual

and metaphysical. Regardless, in my view, the experiential self, in its identification with inner time-consciousness, is likely to face serious difficulties. In what follows, I will show that Zahavi's claim for the temporality of the experiential self creates a puzzle that cannot be resolved easily.

Either the notion of the experiential self is incompatible with Husserl's inner time-consciousness (even on Zahavi's own interpretation), or it hides the contradiction that it is both temporal and non-temporal. Either way, I argue that if we allow the experiential self to be 'temporally extended,' the identity relationship between the experiential self and inner time-consciousness in Husserl's analysis does not hold.

Zahavi claims that the experiential self possesses some degree of diachronic unity in the sense that it is temporally extended to some degree. So, he perceives Husserl's analysis of inner time-consciousness as an analysis of the temporality of the first-person perspective (2014, p.66). It could be that to talk about the experiential self in terms of inner time-consciousness provides further phenomenal support for the existence of a temporally extended, diachronically unified self.

I find it puzzling that inner time-consciousness – the interplay between retention, primal impression, and protention – which is said to be atemporal (or super-temporal), is also claimed to be temporal. On the one hand, inner time-consciousness is not temporally extended in the same ways in which ordinary temporal objects are extended. Considering inner time-consciousness (the living present) as the self in the most basic sense, Husserl says, "The ego in its most original originality is not in time" (CMS, p.197) and that such a "super-temporal ego" is "the identical pole for all experiences" (quoted in Mensch 2010, p.169). On the other hand, Zahavi argues for the temporally extended self considering that consciousness is temporally extended through retentional modifications:

In short, each actual phase of consciousness retains not only the just past-tones, but also the previous phase of consciousness. The retentional process consequently not only enables us to experience an enduring temporal object; it does not merely enable the constitution of the

identity of an object in a manifold of temporal phases; it also provides us with a non-observational, pre-reflective, temporally extended self-consciousness (2014, pp.64-5)

Provided that the experiential self is inner time-consciousness and that inner time-consciousness is not temporally extended, the claim that the experiential self is temporally extended seems incompatible with Husserl's idea that inner time-consciousness is itself atemporal or super-temporal. Since Zahavi holds that the experiential self is diachronically unified, his claim that the (diachronic) unity of consciousness is constituted by the (experiential) self is the same as the claim that the (diachronic) unity of consciousness is constituted by the (experiential) self, which is also diachronically unified. In other words, consciousness is *temporally extended* by the self, which is also *temporally extended*. This clearly conflicts with Husserl's intention to avoid the recurrent problem of infinite regress by considering that inner time-consciousness is not to be temporally extended.

One way to solve this puzzle is to allow for a difference between two ways of being *temporal* (or *temporally extended*): the way inner time-consciousness (or consciousness) is *temporal* and the way the objects of consciousness are *temporal*. As Zahavi says, "Just as my experience of a red circle is neither circular nor red, there is a difference between the temporal givenness of the intentional object and the temporal givenness of the experience itself" (2007, p.465). So, it is important not to confuse "the temporality that is intrinsic to consciousness itself" with "the kind of temporality that pertains to the objects of consciousness" (2007, p.465).

However, even when the two kinds of temporality can be distinguished in our phenomenology, I wonder whether this distinction can help us solve the given puzzle. Zahavi, following Husserl, insists that inner time-consciousness, as the most fundamental level of time-consciousness, is not a temporally extended process. So, the structure of primal impressions, retentions, and protentions cannot be said to be enduring, successive, or changing since it is not itself in time.

It is a mistake to think that the relationships between primal impression, retention, and protention are among the items located within the temporal flow. They are not relations of the

present, the past, and the future. Rather, according to Zahavi, the three-fold intentional relations should be understood as a form of temporality that constitutes the temporal flow (2007, p.466).

So, it is natural to wonder in what sense Zahavi thinks that the experiential self as inner time-consciousness is temporally extended. When he says that inner time-consciousness is temporally extended by claiming that the experiential self is itself temporally extended, does he intend to involve a different kind of temporality? All we are given here is a largely negative explanation of how inner time-consciousness is not temporal in the way (re)presented objects are.

Thus, is there any way to ascribe 'temporal' to this non-temporally extended process? I suspect that there is no distinction between two uses of 'temporal' for inner time-consciousness (consciousness itself) and for objects of consciousness. When we say that an immanent object is temporal and the experiential self is temporal, we simply mean that both are experienced as having a certain temporal order or pattern. This sense of temporality seems to be all Zahavi has in mind regarding the temporality of the experiential self.

The temporally extended experiential self is explained by appeal to retentional processes and their modifications which, as seen earlier, Husserl considers to be fundamentally responsible for the experience of duration. Zahavi (2003, 2005) argues that by virtue of retention and its modification, pre-reflective self-awareness is both logically and temporally prior to reflective self-awareness. It is logically prior to reflective self-awareness in the sense that it is a condition of possibility for reflective self-consciousness. Without something available for reflection, how can the act of reflecting ever be possible? Something must have been given pre-reflectively to be grasped upon reflectively.

In this sense, pre-reflective self-awareness, from the phenomenologist's perspective, is thought to be more primary and fundamental than reflective self-consciousness. By virtue of pre-reflective self-awareness, reflective self-awareness becomes possible. Zahavi also claims that Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness – in particular, his characterization of retention as a comet's tail

attached to the consciousness of the present moment – temporally prioritizes pre-reflective self-consciousness over reflective self-consciousness.

More specifically, we can ask how retention could be responsible for the temporal priority of pre-reflective self-awareness over reflective self-awareness. The retention constitutes a temporal field of the present and retains some awareness of what has just passed. Retention, according to Zahavi, is the pre-reflective self-givenness of the flow.

Husserl thinks that intentional acts are tacit, non-thematic, intransitive self-awareness – when I experience, I am *explicitly* directed at intentional objects, but my experience itself is only *implicitly* self-aware. He also allows intentional acts to be brought to our attention by means of an act of reflection. They can be reflected upon by being considered an intentional object. Reflection is to grasp something that was already given prior to grasping. It is not an “act *sui generis*” but presupposes a motivation, as reflection requires a prior self-affection to be motivated (Zahavi 2003, p.163).

So, for reflection to occur, there must be something to be reflected upon as having already been in time, as having been in a temporal horizon. The just-past phase of the act reflected upon is retained in the flow, and the very act of reflecting itself remains pre-reflectively self-aware. Thus, according to Zahavi, “It is due to retention that consciousness can be made into an object. Or, to rephrase, reflection can only take place if a *temporal horizon* has been established” (2003, p.164).

To say that pre-reflective self-consciousness is temporally prior to reflective self-consciousness is to say that pre-reflective self-consciousness and reflective self-consciousness are in a given temporal order, that one is prior to another. It follows that the experiential self, which is pre-reflective self-consciousness, is a part of temporal order and, thus, is temporally extended. If the experiential self is ‘temporal,’ it is in this sense of being ‘temporal’ that it is experienced in a certain temporal order or pattern.

Is there any other way we can call something ‘temporal’ without appealing to such an ordering of one following another? If this is a sense in which the experiential self (and inner time-



consciousness also) is ‘temporal,’ we still face a puzzling question: Can we say that something is ‘temporal’ while also arguing that that thing is not in time but a condition for constituting time? I do not know how we can ascribe a predicate of ‘being temporal’ to such a thing. Until we hear how something that is allegedly super-temporal or atemporal can be located in certain temporal order – until we are given a certain mechanism that accounts for it – the confusion will remain.

Instead of distinguishing two senses of ‘temporal,’ we should probably accept that one is non-temporal and the other is temporal and proceed to see how these two notions might be interrelated. The question, then, is how something that is not originated in time becomes temporal (or comes into time), or how an originally atemporal self becomes a temporal self. Perhaps this is another approach to the claim that the unity of consciousness is constituted by the diachronically unified self or that consciousness is *temporally extended* by a self that is also *temporally extended* to some degree. Although Zahavi does not address this issue further (perhaps he takes it for granted that the experiential self as pre-reflective self-consciousness is temporally extended since all conscious experiences are temporally extended), we may find some helpful ideas in Mensch’s (2010) chapter, “The Relation of Consciousness to the Ego.”

The question of how the originally timeless self can be a temporal self could be answered based on Husserl’s understanding of the living present. Husserl is not only interested in what seems to be stationary and standing in the present, but he also views the present itself as streaming. For Husserl, the present, according to Mensch’s interpretation, is both stationary and constantly streaming. In this sense, Husserl calls the present the stationary-streaming, the standing-streaming, or the *living* present. Given that he takes the living present as a basic unit of inner time-consciousness, it follows that the self, equated with inner time-consciousness, is both standing and streaming.

However, this seems impossible. How can one and the same thing be both standing and streaming? Mensch says that there can also be a living, dynamic, temporal self because it lives through the stream of experiences: “Like a standing wave in a tidal bore, it depends on the material that passes through it” (2010, p.146). He writes,

(The ego of the cogito... as an empty form that is individualized through the stream...) This view of the ego as an “empty form” resolves many of the paradoxes raised by the *Bernau Manuscripts*. An ego can “be” and not be “a being” insofar as it is a form or eidetic structure of being. Such a structure, insofar as it does not change with the changing content it structures, can also be considered timeless. We can also see how it “lives” through the stream of experiences and yet is distinct from it. Like a standing wave in a tidal bore, it depends on the material that passes through it. In this sense, its identity is that of something enduring continuously through such changing material. Yet insofar as the structure remains, even as the content passing through it is continually other, it is distinct from the stream. Because it is, we can describe it as “stationary and streaming.” It is stationary since from its own perspective, the central ego (the center of the centering) does not change. It is constantly now. Yet from the perspective of the material that streams through it, it does stream. It streams away from the departing material (2010, p.146).

If the standing, invariant feature of the present – the structure of inner time-consciousness – is established only through the constant flow of experiences, the identity of the self might be established through the constantly changing flow. That is, the identity of the self arises from both its standing and streaming. Then, we might be able to make sense of how the temporally extended self can be compatible with inner time-consciousness.

This understanding of the self makes sense when we distinguish a timeless self from a self that exists in time. In this sense, Mensch finds a clue to the question of how the self can be timeless and yet enter into time in “Husserl’s linking of the different levels of our being to different levels of temporalization”: “the individual ego” of which temporalization is into “something primarily existing” – into an ego that is distinct from its others on the one hand, and pre-individual ego – a “surpassing being” as the pre-egological, pre-individual origin of time on the other hand. As Husserl proposes, the latter, according to Mensch, is nothing more than “a continuous, primordially-streaming constituting” being (2010, p.169).

Based on this interpretation, the most fundamental sense of the self, for Husserl, is the pre-individual ego identified with the *living* present, inner time-consciousness. As Mensch's stated,

Now, the key to seeing how this ego pole enters into time is Husserl's identification of it with the anonymous central ego and, hence, with the living present in its pre-objective, pre-individual streaming. The timelessness of this present does not prevent it from entering into time since, in its streaming, it is constantly temporalizing everything, including itself (2010, p.170).

Then, we can ask if we should think of the experiential self as a realization of the 'timeless self' entering into time by the process of self-temporalization. Doesn't it make the experiential self an individual being that exists in time? Zahavi perceives the experiential self as temporally extended, which I think is one way to understand the sense of the temporality of the experiential self.

Nonetheless, this understanding of the temporally extended self is not free from the problem of infinite regress because the explanation of the temporally extended consciousness is also given in terms of the temporally extended inner-consciousness. Husserl considers temporality to be a sufficient characteristic of an individual being in the sense that every individual being persists over time. This understanding of an individual, Mensch points out, is present consistently throughout Husserl's various works.

Since Husserl holds that inner time-consciousness (primal impression-retention-protention) or the *living* present does not persist over time, it cannot be thought of as an individual (Mensch 2010, p.160-161). Provided that the notion of the pre-individual ego is equated with the *living* present, it seems to correspond to the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Thus, it follows that the experiential self could be the pre-individual ego rather than the individual ego. In this case, Zahavi's equation of the experiential self with inner time-consciousness (retention-primal impression-protention) again gives rise to a puzzle: inner time-consciousness remains pre-individual and pre-objective, but the experiential self in its temporal extension seems to already exist in time

and, thus, is already individualized. The notion of the experiential self remains unsettled between being atemporal and temporal, between being a pre-individual and being an individual.

It could be that the notion of the experiential self does not work in the current framework since Mensch's interpretation of Husserl's inner time-consciousness is based on the traditional model that takes inner time-consciousness as a separate level of inner awareness. As a time-constituting process, inner time-consciousness is involved in the transformation of the subjective into the objective. "The distinction between 'the subjective' from 'the objective' occurs through its processes of retention and protention. In his doctrine of the ego, what Husserl is describing is the polarization (or centralization) of 'the subjective' into an ego through these processes" (Mensch 2010, p.156).

However, the whole point of Zahavi's interpretation of Husserl's inner time-consciousness is to reject such a traditional view and propose that inner time-consciousness is not a kind of a meta-awareness of the stream of experiences and that it is instead the very self-constituting and self-unifying stream itself due to its longitudinal intentionality. For Zahavi, Husserl's inner time-consciousness is itself a pre-reflective self-manifestation of an experience. Subject-consciousness is not an intentional theme by a further inner-awareness, not even by itself. Inner time-consciousness is self-awareness in the pre-reflective mode.

It seems right that Mensch's interpretation reflects the traditional understanding of Husserl's analysis of inner time-consciousness, which is better thought of as a kind of object-consciousness that takes itself as an individual object and transforms itself from the subjective to the objective, from the pre-individual to the individual, or from the timeless self to the temporal self. However, this tells us only that the notion of the experiential self, if it is identified with inner time-consciousness, is still puzzling when applied to a model that differs from Zahavi's.

The experiential self, as something temporally extended, still does not seem to fit neatly into Husserl's analysis of inner time-consciousness. If an individual being is necessarily extended through time and the experiential self is extended through time, then the experiential self should be

thought of as an individual, as a product of temporality rather than as temporality itself. If inner time-consciousness is fundamentally atemporal because, as a time-constituting phenomenon, it is not extended through time, the claim for the temporality of the experiential self should be refuted.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that Descartes, Husserl, and Zahavi's understanding of the self focus on that which remains unchangeable and invariant amidst the flux of a changing reality. They draw attention not to the fact that consciousness is a constantly streaming flow but to the fact that, despite such a constant movement, there is something fixed, formal, and structural that is responsible for the movement. They propose that we may rightly call this thing 'self.'

However, unlike for Descartes, for Husserl and Zahavi, what remains invariant (and, thus, deserves the name 'self') is the very feature of consciousness itself. This entity is called the first-person perspective, pre-reflective self-consciousness, for-me-ness, inner time-consciousness, or the living present.

However, I feel that this static picture of the self cannot be a viable alternative to the traditional substantive self. The consequence of Zahavi's notion of the experiential self is that the self is likely to reside in the world of abstract entities because it is best understood as a timeless, abstract self with a certain function of temporalization. Perhaps Zahavi might have intended to get rid of the abstract nature of the traditional understanding of the Husserlian pure ego and make it a part of a phenomenal reality by describing the experiential self as being closely connected to time-consciousness and characterizing it as temporally extended. However, the notion of the experiential self faces a dilemma: Either it remains as the atemporal or super-temporal self, or it cannot be equated with inner time-consciousness.

I conclude this chapter by examining whether there is any way to enhance the notion of the experiential self as a living, dynamic, temporal individual subject of experience. To do this, I propose a notion of the self as not only extended through time but also constantly moving across

time. Clearly, individuality can be ascribed to this notion of the self because it exists in time. I think that even the most minimalist notion of the self should start from the level of an individual – a concrete particular that is part of the physical world. The self is not a pure abstraction like a property or a function, nor is the self any specific metaphysical postulation involved in constituting the flow of consciousness.

In my opinion, the self is an individual, a concrete particular, that bears various attributes and relations and constantly moves over time. If we give up the static picture of the self as a standing, identical pole and think of it as a movement or change itself (i.e., as the flow of consciousness rather than its properties, structure, or function), the self might be understood as a part of a temporal reality of the world with a sole reference to consciousness. Then, instead of saying that experiences come and go, we could say that ‘I’ has been, is passing by, and is heading forward. Just like it is hypothesized that the Earth is moving around the sun, not the other way around, it could also be that ‘I’ is moving across individual thoughts and experiences in time.

Since the given proposal asks us to consider the self as a moving, temporally extended reality, it might operate within the traditional interpretation of Husserl’s analysis of inner time-consciousness, according to which inner time-consciousness is thought of as a separate flow of an inner-awareness of its own. It may be said that the self, as the separate inner flow, exists in its own temporal extension and has a special relationship with other mental events.

It appears that this sense of a temporal self, if it is understood as inner time-consciousness that is also a temporally extended flow, gives rise to the problem of infinite regress. However, the temporal phases of the inner flow do not need to be acknowledged by a further inner flow to be a conscious flow once we take the flow, as a whole, as a moving, dynamic reality instead of as a static, invariant structure. The idea is that temporality or phenomenal time does not need to be constituted by a peculiar structure of inner time-consciousness, but it may be generated from relationships between inner time-consciousness that is constantly moving and individual experiences and thoughts that might also have their own temporal extension and be undergoing

constant changes and movements. That is, our experience of time may be thought of as a result of the movements of two temporal individuals. There is no need to introduce the metaphysical complexity of primal impression, retention, and protention when the simple fact that 'I' is a mover, a self with velocity, is sufficient.

This proposal may also settle the recurrent complaint that the experiential self is too elusive. I fully agree that the real, fundamental self cannot be grasped by any introspective means. No matter how much we try to look for it, there is no 'self' standing there except as an array of experiences and thoughts. However, this is not because we are sourced from something over and above time but because (it may be thought) we are beings that always travel through time. If one finds it hard to capture one's own self, I propose that it is not because the self is something that is over and above time but because it always moves forward away from what one can reflectively catch.

I propose that our traditional belief about the self as an invariant, standing, fixed identical pole should be transformed into a new framework equipped with much more fluidity. In saying so, I do not claim that this is the only option; I suggest only that it might be at least as good as the proposal that the self is the structure of inner time-consciousness as analyzed by Husserl. If there is a way to account for the same phenomenon without employing metaphysical complications, the one which offers a simpler explanation should be preferred. In my view, we may find such a possibility by just putting the traditional framework in the other way around.

Nonetheless, I want to stress that this is not to deny that the self is a time-constituting phenomenon: the self is still a part of time-constituting phenomena but in conjunction with experiences and thoughts. 'I' plays a role, but 'I' is not the sole player. Furthermore, if the proposed view is properly specified and further developed, we may be able to have a notion of the self that exists in this world together with other concrete particulars.

# Chapter Three

## The self as an event-like particular

### Introduction

Dennett (1986) argues that the self, just like a center of gravity in Newtonian physics, is a theoretical invention that is postulated for the purpose of making sense of human intentions and behaviors. He thinks that the self is an illusion we should eventually get rid of, along with other illusions such as consciousness and free will. This idea of the self, in my view, is grounded in our persistent (albeit implicit and involuntary) tendency to prioritize a spatial reality over a temporal reality.

In this chapter, I offer an argument from analogy to explore the possibility that the self exists as a part of the physical world as a temporal individual. I argue that the self is analogous to a sound particular with respect to the mode of existence on the basis of two assumptions: 1) that sounds are event-like particulars rather than object-like particulars and 2) that events are concrete particulars rather than abstract particulars. The way the self exists is analogous to the way sound exists: just like a sound, the self exists as an event-like particular. If a sound, as a product of time, is our physical reality, so is the self. So, I believe, if one is a realist about sounds, one is more likely to be a realist about the self.

When it comes to the question of whether the self exists, we are also faced with a metaphysical question: the question of what kind of a thing the self is. These two questions are interrelated such that we cannot just claim that the self exists without specifying the ontological category to which the self belongs. To ask what kind of a thing a self would be is to ask about its nature. So, for the claim that self exists to be justified, it should be followed by an account of how its nature is to be specified. Otherwise, the claim for the existence of the self will remain mere speculation.



Therefore, my principal concern in this chapter is the ontology and metaphysics of the self. Section 3.1. discusses Dennett's proposal that the self is not a physical reality but a theoretical invention like the center of gravity. Section 3.2. is concerned with space- (and vision-) dominated ontology. I argue that the self – even though it is not extended through space in ways characteristic of ordinary material objects – can be understood as an individual particular by virtue of being extended through time. Section 3.3. offers the event account of the self in which I argue that the self, analogous to a sound, is an event-like concrete particular. Section 3.4. deals with potential objections to the event view. Finally, I conclude that the self is a physical reality by virtue of being a particular in time as opposed to space.

### **3.1. The self as an abstraction**

According to Dennett (1986), the self is analogous to a center of gravity in Newtonian physics or a fictional character in literature. Just as the center of gravity is a mathematically calculated spatio-temporal location with no physical attributes but a working concept in the context of Newtonian physics, the self is an abstract construct but a useful theoretical postulation in the science of persons such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, and anthropology. If a physicist finds it useful to postulate the center of gravity in order to interpret phenomena of physical objects, a hermeneutician finds it useful to postulate self in order to explain human intentions and behaviors. Both the center of gravity and the self are pure abstractions but well-behaved concepts in the sense that they have a legitimate place (or a functional role) in the relevant theory. However, it is important to note that just as the center of gravity cannot be seen or touched, the self is not perceivable or observable – it simply does not exist in the physical world.

Dennett also asks us to think of a fictional character in literature as analogous to the self. Whatever properties are ascribed to Sherlock Holmes, a fictional character created by Conan Doyle, it is a mistake to ask whether Holmes really possesses such properties in the real world since he is a fictional character that only lives in the fictional world created by Doyle. Likewise, whatever

characteristics and properties the self has, they are only meaningful within a certain linguistic context. It is a categorical mistake to search for the self outside the relevant content.

However, Dennett stresses that there is an important disanalogy: Holmes is created by Doyle, who is himself a real person, while the self is not. Imagine a novel-writing machine stating, 'Call me Gilbert.' From this very moment, Gilbert was created, and a story about Gilbert begins. However, all this is done not by a mere machine that does not even know that it is creating the character called Gilbert. What it says is interpreted not only by us but by itself as providing an interpretation about its own activities in the world. That is, the self in this sense is a narrative self that is created and constituted by a non-self which, nonetheless, interprets behaviors of the self as postulated by the narrative. Likewise, we are all writing a story in which the center of narration is the self. The self in the story is written and re-written, anticipated, and evolving over time.

This understanding of the self, in my view, has both positive and negative aspects. It tells us that the self exists as a pure abstraction – as a functioning concept that provides theoretical support for a better interpretation of a person's intentions and behaviors. It also tells us that the self is a mere fictional object and, thus, is nothing but an illusion. The self as a function is admitted, but the self as a physical entity is denied. The self in this view is said to be generated, existing, and evolving in a fictional story written by a narrator who calls itself 'self.' The self is allowed to *be* in a certain linguistic context, but its actual existence beyond the relevant context is denied. Dennett denies a traditional Cartesian ego – the immaterial substance that is a thinker of 'thinking' and is somehow causally related to a body (the material substance). However, instead of the world of immaterial things, he appeals to the world of fiction as a new home for the self as a pure abstraction.

The traditional notion of the self – the substantive Cartesian self – has been targeted by well-known skeptics like Hume. However, note also that the substantive self is rejected not only by the skeptics but also by most contemporary realists due to its heavy ontological commitment. Those who reject the Cartesian self but still defend the existence of the self would emphasize that the self is a subject of experience that does not need to be a substantive subject existing independently of

experience. The existence of a subject is still inferred from the existence of experience, but it does not follow that the subject exists in the way the Cartesian self exists.

Strawson (2009, 2011) defends the non-substantive notion of a subject. According to him, “The sense in which it’s necessarily true that there’s a *feeling*, and hence a *feeler*, of pain, if there is pain at all, is the sense in which it’s necessarily true that there’s a subject of experience if there is experience, and hence subjectivity, at all” (2011, p.258). Strawson calls this sense of self a *thin* subject (as opposed to the traditional substantive subject) and defines it as “something that exists only if experience exists of which it is the subject” (2009, p.323).

There is no need to postulate a further ontological entity apart from an experience since the existence itself is a sufficient basis for the existence of the thin subject. So, those who endorse the notion of the self as a thin subject of experience would agree with Dennett that there is no substantive self. They would suggest that Dennett’s skeptical position should be understood as a denial of only a particular notion of the self, not as a denial of the self – *tout court*.

This is probably the most common way in which contemporary realists undermine traditional skeptical arguments. Nonetheless, it must be asked on what grounds the thin subject should be understood as the self. The self as a thin subject may be explained in terms of the subjectivity of experience though Strawson is concerned with more than the subjectivity of experience. Commonly speaking, the subjectivity of experience refers to a self-referential, reflexive, first-personal feature of experience; things are experienced for a subject in a certain way.

Nagel famously states that phenomenal consciousness – what it is like to undergo a certain mental event – is subjective and that the phenomenon of subjectivity is essentially connected with a first-person point of view – a unique, single, and particular point of view (1974, pp.436-7, 1986, p.7).<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Shoemaker describes the first-person point of view as “a distinctive way mental

<sup>22</sup> Nagel proceeds to claim that conscious experiences are not to be reduced to physical science. The phenomenal fact about experiences cannot be adequately understood from a purely objective, third-person point of view; thus, it also cannot be completely reducible to the third-person science.

states present themselves to the subjects whose states they are” and considers that philosophers must provide an account for the perspective a subject has on their own mental states (1996, p.157).

So, one may propose that the self is a thin subject of experience since the first-person feature of an experience is thought to be subjectivity, and this subjectivity can be a sufficient basis for the presence of a thin subject. For instance, Zahavi proposes a notion of the self that is thought of as the subjectivity of experience: “the ubiquitous dimension of first-personal character that must be distinguished from but can be shared by a multitude of changing experiences” (2014, p.72).<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, I wonder if the proposal of the self as a thin subject will appeal to those who think that the first-person, subjective point of view can be reducible to the third-person, objective point of view. For instance, Dennett declares that his starting point of the study of consciousness is “the objective, materialistic, third-person world of the physical sciences” (1987, p.5). So, for him, our belief about the irreducibility of the first-person point of view is an illusion that seems to be with us for a while but eventually becomes extinct (in the same way our geocentric intuition that the sun revolves around the earth has been given up in favor of the heliocentric hypothesis). According to Dennett, consciousness is an illusion since there is nothing intrinsic about the first-person point of view (the subjectivity of experience). It follows that if consciousness is an illusion, as is the self, even it is minimally construed as a thin subject of experience. Using the first-person point of view as a starting point for a concept of the self is not likely to work. As Dennett acknowledges, this would beg the question against each other position (1987, p.6).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> What characterizes this notion of the self is that it proposes that the first-person point of view is a primitive fact that is not reducible to any further facts. For Zahavi, even science is not a pure objectivity but “a perspective that involves a first-person perspective, or to be more precise it is a perspective that involves several first-person perspectives” since the third-person, scientific knowledge is generated by observations and experiences from the point of view of each individual (2007b, p.39)

<sup>24</sup> On this point, Dennett states, “Nagel is the most eloquent contemporary defender of the mysteries, and anyone who suspects I have underestimated the problems I pose for my theory will be braced by Nagel’s contrary assertions. Assertions, not arguments. Since Nagel and I start from different perspectives, his arguments beg the question against a position like mine: what counts for him as flat obvious, and in need of no further support, often fails to impress me. ... The feeling then is mutual; we beg the question against each other” (1987, p.6).

### 3.2. The self as a temporal being

Is there be any way to undermine the skeptic's position without begging the question? I believe there might be. Instead of a direct appeal to the first-person features of consciousness, I suggest that we consider the third-person point of view as the starting point and move forward from there to seek an ontological category that contains a self as its member. If we are equipped with a new perspective and an enlarged and more generous ontology, it may be possible to accommodate the self in a world with other physical things. Moreover, in my view, such a possibility might become available when we draw our attention to the temporal features essential for establishing the presence of the self.

When we think of a concrete particular, we are apt to consider space as its primary ontological ground. If something does not have spatial features such as mass and shape, we presume that thing is non-physical or that it does not exist at all. We will have to appeal to the ontological category of non-physical beings. One of supporting premises for Descartes's mind-body dualism is that a body is an extended thing, but a thing that thinks is non-extended: "... the idea I have of the human mind in so far as it is a thinking thing, which is not extended in length, breadth, or height and has no other bodily characteristics, is much more distinct than the idea of any corporeal thing" (1641-2 /1996, p.37).

From this (per the Leibniz Law), Descartes infers that 'I,' a thinking thing, exists as a non-material being that is sharply distinguished from a material body. More specifically, he classifies the thinking thing as a substance (specifically, under the sub-category of immaterial substance), as opposed to a material substance. When Descartes says, 'extended,' he means 'extended through space.' The underlying assumption is that three-dimensional spatial parameters such as height, depth, and width are essential for a thing to be a physical thing. However, 'I,' a thing that thinks, is not extended through space since such parameters cannot be assigned to 'I.' Thus, Descartes assumes that 'I' is not a thing of a physical sort but an immaterial substance. Those who doubt the existence of the Cartesian substantive self (typically, those of the tradition of British Empiricism)

hold that Descartes's ontology is surplus to our requirements. They would say that if anything is non-physical, then there is no reason to think that thing exists in the strict sense.

In my view, both Descartes and the skeptics seem to share the same underlying idea: for anything to be a physical thing, it must be extended through space. It seems to me that those who are skeptical about the Cartesian substantive self are also skeptical about the possibility that there can be non-spatial things in the physical domain. Skeptics like Hume (1739/2000, p.165) and Dennett typically seem to assume that if the self exists, it has to be an object of our observation, perception, or introspection. They often try to look for the self here or there, but the self is not observed, perceived, or introspectively available anywhere. So, they conclude that the self is some imaginary, mythical entity that cannot be tolerable in the world governed by the laws of physics.

I, however, suspect that the skeptics fail to find the self because there is something they fail to consider in their search: the possibility of being a concrete individual particular by virtue of being extended through time. The self may not be an ordinary material thing in space, but it may still be a 'thing' in time. It is hard to see that there can be 'things' essentially grounded in the temporal dimension when we are obsessed with ordinary spatial things. Although it is certain that there is a tight connection between space and material objects, I find it unfortunate that space is overemphasized to the extent that it cancels out the physicality of temporal individual particulars.

To think of the self as an immaterial substance or an illusory object, in my view, is related to our tendency to prioritize space over time when individuating concrete particulars in the world. Ordinary physical objects like a desk or a chair do have clear spatial boundaries since they have mass and shape – that is, they occupy a certain geographical portion and, thus, are clearly observable.

The prioritization of space over time is closely related to vision and visual experiences. Much of the literature on perception and consciousness has narrowly focused on vision and visual qualities like colors, shape, size, and location. For humans, vision dominates other, non-visual sense modalities (i.e., audition, olfaction, gustation, and touch) and is undeniably a major source of our

sense of space. Accordingly, our search for a self is based on our focus on space and vision. We are forced to 'look' for the self as represented in introspection, through the mind's 'eye.' When we query whether there is a self, several questions come to mind. Where is it? If the first-person pronoun 'I' is a referring term, 'where' can I find the reference of 'I?' Is the self somewhere outside this world, or is it in our mind? Is the self outside or inside of the stream of consciousness? Does it have properties that are suitable to be located in the three-dimensional spatial field? Such questions indicate that we are anxious to locate a self in space with other spatial objects.

The emphasis on spatiality in our search for self seems to direct our attention further away from our experience of becoming over time. We imagine ourselves located at a certain point at a certain spatial field. Implicitly, what we keep finding and attending to is most likely to be a static self that is supposed to be present somewhere out there or over here. However, as soon as we try to approach it, it keeps slipping away from our grasp. The self is like a conceptual mirage: it is too elusive to get a grip on.

As a consequence, there are two options: either that we accept the self as some mythical immaterial entity or we reject its existence altogether. It seems that one cannot be both a realist and physicalist about the self. If we want to be physicalists who (unwittingly) prioritize space over time, something like the center of gravity is probably the best analog of the self since there is no spatial portion that is found to be assigned to the self. So, we think that the self is a functionally active but physically empty notion.

Nonetheless, I believe that there is still a possibility of simultaneously being a physicalist and realist about the self if we give up the assumption that all material things are extended through space. Even when something is not extended through space in ways ordinary objects are, it does not follow that that thing does not exist in the physical domain. There is always a possibility that that thing is extended through time while not directly extended through space. If there are such temporal things, and if those things can be classified under the pre-existing ontological category, there is a

possibility that the self exists among them. Then, it is a mistake to rule out such a possibility in the search for the self.

### **3.3. A new analogy: a sound**

My overall aim in this section is to propose a way to conceptualize a self primarily in time as opposed to space. To do so, I need a new analogy that is quite different from Dennett's analogy of the center of gravity. The new analogy points to something that is essentially temporal but still a physical phenomenon: that is, it shows the possibility of concrete particulars that are extended through time but that may not be extended through space. Furthermore, it is not about anything that can be presented visually. It is related to vision, visual experiences, and their contents so that it does not stimulate our tendency to be dominated by spatial features in our conceptualizing of concrete particulars. So, I propose *sound* as a good example of an analog of the self.

Sounds are said to be essentially temporal things in the sense that they do not have typical spatial attributes like mass, shape, or color. Sounds, unlike ordinary physical objects, do not exist at any given moment but reveal their existence only across time with a certain duration and temporal order. Sounds are themselves temporally extended objects of our auditory experience.

Can we say that sounds do exist in space? We may say both yes and no. When sounds are said to be spatial, this is not meant in the same way that ordinary physical objects are spatial. Sounds are not located in the sense that they are heard from the right or the left, from above or below, and from close by or far away. It seems that under normal circumstances, a hearer has no problem locating where sounds come from. Indeed, sounds seem to inherit their location properties from sounding sources that are usually ordinary physical objects.

Nonetheless, sounds are not themselves in space with the features of width, height, and depth. Sounds are heard (only over time) but are neither visible nor touchable. They are not something made of any further physical particles or elements; rather, they arise from waves or movements of air (or other media like helium or water). Thus, it can be said that sounds do not occupy space in



ways ordinary physical objects do (for instance, multiple sounds can overlap in the same space at the same time while only one ordinary object can occupy one same space at any given time).<sup>25</sup>

Since sounds represent something that is certainly extended through time (even though they are not directly extended through space in ways characteristic to ordinary physical objects), we may regard sounds as essentially temporal beings. Then, it is natural to wonder what kind of a thing a sound is. Given that, generally speaking, universals and individuals are two fundamental ontological categories, the first question to be answered is whether sounds are universals or individuals.

Sounds are traditionally understood as the properties of a sounding object. Locke (1689/2011), for instance, regards sounds as what he calls *secondary* properties – the dispositions of ordinary material objects – along with other sensible qualities like colors, smells, and tastes. There are also contemporary philosophers who take sounds as properties of vibrating objects (Pasnau 1999, 2000) or stable dispositional properties of objects (Kulvicki 2008, 2015).

This property view is argued for on the basis of the analogy between sounds and colors. It is assumed that sounds, like colors, are properties of an ordinary material object. However, this view has been objected since it ignores the temporal aspects of sounds: unlike colors, sounds are products of time that occur, persist, change, and evolve (and possibly end) over time.

Indeed, it seems to me that sounds have been implicitly thought of and treated as if they were individuals rather than properties. For instance, both P. F. Strawson (1959) in his chapter, “Sounds,” and Evans (1985) in his comments on Strawson’s chapter seem to presuppose that sounds are individual temporal particulars. More recently, O’Callaghan (2007, 2009) also defended the idea that sounds are not properties but particulars.<sup>26</sup> He argues that sounds are particulars that can be identified and individuated, that a sound is a bearer of properties such as pitch, timbre, and loudness

<sup>25</sup> Owing to this feature of sounds, sounds are traditionally assumed to be properties of a thing.

<sup>26</sup> O’Callaghan writes, “Sounds, I claim, are particular individuals that possess the audible qualities of pitch, timber, and loudness, possibly along with other inaudible properties. They enjoy lifetimes and bear similarity and difference relations to each other based on the complexes of audible qualities that instantiate” (2007, p.17).

and it is itself not instantiated by other particulars. We can identify sounds based on patterns of audible properties. We can also individuate sounds – that is, we can count and quantify them based on their sounding source and spatio-temporal discontinuity. “As long as the causal source remains the same and the sound is spatially and temporally continuous, it remains a single sound” (O’Callaghan 2007, p.63).

It seems to me that sounds are best categorized as particular individuals rather than as properties. Without presupposing this, in my view, it would be hard to account for many of the important features of sounds (i.e., that sounds are countable and exemplify audible properties but are not themselves exemplified by other particulars, and, most importantly, that they have a course of lifetime of their own).

Nonetheless, it is also true that sounds are different from ordinary individual particulars, like a tree or bicycle, or abstract particulars like numbers. If sounds are individuals, what sort of individuals are they? Apart from the two commonly acknowledged ontological categories, individuals and universals, there can be still further categories like substances, relations, propositions, facts, and tropes. Can sounds fall under any of these further categories?

Recently, Casati and Dokic (1994) and O’Callaghan (2007, 2009) defended the event view of sounds, arguing that sounds are better described as event-like concrete particulars than as object-like particulars. This is because sounds are spatio-temporally individuated in ways characteristic of events. So, the event view, according to the proponents, amounts to “a powerful framework for a satisfactory account of both the metaphysics of sound and the contents of auditory experience” (O’Callaghan 2007, p.58).

Then, it is natural to ask on what grounds we should think of sounds as being akin to typical examples of events like births, deaths, lightning, explosion, thunder, storms, concerts, and dancing. The proponents of this view regard a sound as a temporal object of our experience. Unlike color, sounds such as explosions are happenings that take place and last for some time. That is, our experience represents a sound as a temporal object that occurs at  $t_1$ , (possibly) ends at  $t_2$ , and

persists for the interval between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ . It is argued that those temporal features, by virtue of which sounds are clearly distinguished from color, cannot be accommodated in the property account. Sounds, like many other concrete individuals in the world, are not repeatable; they come into existence and go out of existence after some time.

The mode of existence of sounds is different from that of ordinary physical objects. Sounds are experienced as essentially temporal. They enjoy their *own* lifetimes, which does not correspond to the lifetime of the ordinary sounding object that emits the sound. Furthermore, sounds survive and evolve through changes to audible qualities. One paradigmatic example is a sound of an emergency siren that survives through various ranges of pitches from high to low over its duration.

All these characteristics attributed to sounds, in this view, are specific to an event particular. More specifically, O'Callaghan characterizes sounds as *located* events. Consider the case of striking a tuning fork. The sound is an event that is causally intermediate between an ordinary event, which is the striking of the tuning fork, and traveling sound waves that reach a hearer's eardrums. In short, the sound of the tuning fork is the *event* of the tuning fork's disturbance of the air. That is, a sound is "not motion in the medium, but the activity of one thing's moving or disturbing another" (O'Callaghan 2007, p.61). In this sense, O'Callaghan regards Aristotle's idea of sounds as motions of the air as "the beginnings of the event theory of sound" (2007, p.61).

If we accept that a self, just like a sound particular, is essentially a product of time, we may draw some important similarities between a self and a sound. A particular self has a lifetime, as it has a beginning point, continuing period, and (most likely) an endpoint. The self is also dynamic – it survives and evolves amid changes in its attributes over time. The self does not exist at a momentary point, but its presence is revealed only over time. Moreover, it bears auditory qualities but is not itself exemplified by other particulars.

The conclusion that can be drawn from all this is that the self, like a sound, is an event-like concrete particular rather than an object-like particular (or any other kind of universal). Our experience of sounds tells us that there is a further dimension for a physical reality other than space.

Specifically, there is the temporal dimension in which temporal particulars like sounds are acknowledged and individuated. If a sound is a particular that is extended through time but not through space, the self may also be such a particular.

There are, I believe, some benefits of the proposal that the self is analogous to sound with respect to the mode of being. For example, it makes it possible for us to have an account of the self that is in accordance with the principle of ontological parsimony and simplicity without the need to be a reductionist or an eliminativist. Moreover, no surplus ontology is required to introduce a further category of being. No substratum or substance needs to be postulated in order to defend the presence of the self. Events are sufficient to do the job.

However, at the same time, we do not need to think of the self as a pure abstraction or illusion because it is always possible to construe an event as a concrete particular that constitutes a part of the physical world as long as temporality is considered an ontological basis for a certain kind of particular. I believe that the event view promises us ontologically the most economical way to be a realist about self. If we are realists about a sound, we can also be realists about self as well.

This view is also compatible with any notion of the self based on experiential, subjective, first-person perspectives of experience. The first-person perspective is sometimes thought of as a property. Zahavi (2005, 2014), for instance, explains it as a feature of what-it-is-like-*for-me* (or the for-me-ness of experience). He describes for-me-ness as a phenomenal property of experience itself, not of (re)presented objects.

Similarly, Baker (2013) argues for the existence of a first-person perspective as a dispositional property that is irreducible and ineliminable.<sup>27</sup> She opines that the first-person perspective is an exemplification of the first-person property. Given that an event is a concrete particular that bears certain properties, it can be said that the self is an event-like particular that bears a property of for-me-ness or a first-person perspective.

<sup>27</sup> Baker (2013) distinguishes the first-person perspective into two stages: a rudimentary first-person perspective and a robust first-person perspective, which corresponds to consciousness and self-consciousness, respectively.

In this case, the notion of the event-like self may support the non-substantive notion of the self that is grounded in the first-person, subjective feature of experience. Furthermore, the proposed account is compatible with a particularist ontology, according to which concrete particulars are regarded as fundamental items that are not reducible or analyzable into further items like substratum or properties. Even particularists who are dubious about the existence of the property of first-person or for-me-ness as a fundamental reality might agree to the existence of the self insofar as it is an event and insofar that events are concrete particulars.

### 3.4. Challenges

The claim that the self is an event-like particular is supported by the argument based on the analogy between a self and a sound. One might ask whether this analogy is the right one. It may be said that there is a disanalogy between a self and a sound that is negatively relevant to its conclusion that a self, like a sound, is an event particular. Sounds are objects of auditory experience. We do not see them, but we do *hear* them. Also, our experience of sounds has a physical basis: dedicated cerebral areas are specialized in audition.

However, it is hard to insist that a self is an object of our perception in the same way sounds are unless we link a self to a body or a brain. We neither see nor hear the self. Therefore, it might be suggested that our awareness of the self is a particular kind of awareness other than our ordinary sensory awareness of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. However, it is far from clear that there is a reason to think that such an extraordinary, non-sensory awareness is phenomenally available. What kind of neuro-physiological basis should be considered as being specialized in this particular sort of awareness? It seems that the difference between a self and a sound remains important enough to outweigh the alleged similarities.

One way to respond to this point is to clarify what I want to draw from the analogy of a self and a sound. A self is analogous to a sound with respect to its mode of existence, but it does not follow that the analogy between a self and a sound also holds with respect to the mode of awareness. It

might be that the way we are aware of ourselves is distinguishable from the way we are aware of ordinary sensory objects. Why should we think that I should see, hear, touch, smell, or taste myself (unless I equate my body with myself)? There is also little reason to think that the self, if it exists, should be an object of our introspection perceptible by the mind's eye. As Hume (2000, pp.164-165) points out, no matter how carefully we *look* inside our mind, we find no self. However, we need not be skeptical about our own existence since the self, even though it is not explicitly observable or introspectable, may be available to our awareness implicitly, non-introspectively, and non-thematically.

There have been several attempts to explain that our phenomenology is richer than indicated by introspection. It is argued in Continental Phenomenology traditions that there is a mode of consciousness that is not accessible via introspection: pre-reflective awareness (as opposed to reflective awareness) is thought to be prior to all our acts of introspecting or reflecting. Then, it can be said that the awareness of the self (or self-awareness) is possible in this pre-reflective mode (see Zahavi 2005, 2014).

Similarly, those who defend self-representationalist theories distinguish consciousness into peripheral (inner) awareness and focal (outer) awareness. The former, unlike the latter, is considered an introspectively non-accessible, implicit, and unthematic mode of awareness. Then, the self may be said to be phenomenally available in the mode of peripheral (inner) awareness (see Kriegel 2004, 2009). Another example of non-introspective awareness can be found in traditions of Buddhist philosophy. It is argued that there is a kind of an implicit and pre-attentive awareness called *ālaya-vijñāna* in *Yogācāra* tradition. It is a “repository or basic consciousness,” a continuing subtle background awareness that functions as a condition for contents of experience (Chadha 2015, p.746). This mode of consciousness is considered as a phenomenal basis for both the unity of consciousness and the sense of self (see Dreyfus 2011, Chadha 2015). Perhaps, the way we are aware of ourselves may be based on such a basic, non-perceptual, non-introspective mode that is a largely hidden and elusive part of our phenomenology.

I also think that the way the self is available to awareness may be akin to the way we are aware of time. It seems that the way we perceive time is different from the way we perceive ordinary sensory objects. We do not see, hear, touch, smell, or taste time, but it seems that we are somehow aware of time nonetheless. There are no sensory organs like eyes or ears that are specialized for detecting time, but it is hard to deny that time is somehow one of the themes of our awareness. How is this possible? Probably, the perception of time is derived from the perception of movements, changes, and successions of an ordinary sensory object, such as listening to a melody or seeing a bird flying. If this is the case, our temporal awareness is a kind of secondary perception that is supervenient on ordinary perceptual experiences. It might be that the awareness of the self, just like our temporal awareness, is the derived sense of awareness.

One may point to another disanalogy that undermines the effectiveness of the proposed analogy of the self and a sound particular. It could be argued that the self is essentially a temporal individual that is extended through time but not through space. However, it is far from clear that sound particulars are only temporal individuals. There is reason to think that sounds are also spatial in the important sense. Most contemporary acoustic scientists identify sounds with longitudinal pressure waves in a medium such as air, water, or helium in which vibrating objects are present. Sounds, from this perspective, are not said to be themselves vibrating objects but pressure waves that are generated by the vibrating objects in the medium. It follows that we hear neither vibrating objects nor their properties; instead, we hear waves – the properties of the medium that travel from the vibrating objects to the eardrums of a perceiver.

The origin of this idea, as Pasnau (1999, 2000) points out, is the ancient and medieval philosophical tradition. For instance, in *De anima* (II 8, 420b II), Aristotle says that sound is a certain motion of air and the object of hearing (like color is of sight and taste is of flavor) (II 6, 418a 13). It is undeniable that waves are physical phenomena that occur in space. They are a result of the motions of particles in the medium. When an object moves or vibrates, it pushes particles that are located the closest to it, and those moved particles bump into the closest neighboring particles, and

so on. The motions of these particles travel through the relevant medium as a wave. Audition holds when our ears detect the waves. If sounds are such a movement of particles in a medium where a vibrating object is present, then sounds clearly have spatial indications – they are related to particles, as well as their motion and energy, in the three-dimensional spatial field. However, it is hard to think that the self, which is not equivalent to a body, has anything to do with particles or energy in the spatial field.

As a quick response, it can be pointed out that even if a sound is equated with a wave, the core idea of the event account of the self can be maintained since the analogy of a self and a sound can always be replaced with the analogy of a self and a wave. A wave is a motion in a medium, and the motion itself can be an event particular. If the self is analogous to a pressure wave in the medium, it can be said that the self is an event particular in the same way a pressure wave is. It can also be said that just as the particles and their movements in the medium are physical bases for the pressure wave, changes in neuro-physical states in the physical body (or the brain) are physical bases for the self.

Another response is that there is no reason to endorse the wave theory of sounds when it does not neatly fit in our ordinary auditory experience. If the wave account were right, there would be a phenomenon of what O’Callaghan (2007, p.35) calls an “auditory missile,” the phenomenon that sounds are artificially engineered to be heard to move swiftly from a particular location towards a subject’s eardrums. This, however, clearly does not capture our auditory perception of sounds. Although the pressure waves in the medium travel in the medium in such a swift way, we experience sounds from a distance as being located at a sounding source.

Even if the analogy between a self and a sound is granted, there remains another difficulty. The proposed analogy is roughly built on two assumptions: that sounds are event particulars and that events are concrete particulars. The former was already discussed to some degree. Sounds, as I have shown earlier, are better explained as event-like particulars rather than properties or ordinary



material objects. However, the latter assumption that has been taken for granted thus far can also be controversial since events can be thought of as something other than concrete particulars.

Why should we regard events as particulars rather than some other ontological categories such as properties, facts, states of affairs, and propositions? Given that particulars (or individuals) are commonly acknowledged as a category of fundamental entities along with universals, to say that events are particulars is to say that they are an irreducible, *sui generis* category of being. On what grounds, then, should we think that events and other ordinary senses of objects have an equal ontological status as basic particulars? Moreover, the claim that events are *concrete* particulars requires further qualifications since events are more commonly argued as being *abstract* particulars, as in the early work of Davidson (1967, 1969, 1970), Bennett (1988), Kim (1976), and Lombard (1979).

My intention in claiming that a sound is an event-like particular is to provide metaphysical support for the idea that the self, which is analogous to sound, is an individual of a certain kind. If the self is an individual, then I want to argue that its mode of existence is something like the way events exist. So, the fate of the argument, as it proceeds to a further level, will depend on the claim that events are concrete particulars. If it is right to consider events as concrete particulars, then the idea that the self is an event-like particular can be valid even when sounds are not event-like particulars; thus, the proposed analogy between a self and a sound fails.

If, however, events are not concrete particulars, then the idea that the self exists in the way an event exists will lead to a denial of the existence of the self. If events are facts, propositions, or sets, for instance, we will have to either give up the idea of the individuality of the self (i.e., that self exists as a concrete individual particular) or find a different metaphysical basis for the idea of the individuality of the self. If events are something non-concrete and non-individual, to say that the self is an event-like particular will do more harm than good.

To ask about the nature of an event is to ask what kind of a thing it is. In general, events are said to be happenings or occurrences such as wars, weddings, collisions, and lightning. Events are

different from ordinary material objects: objects are said to exist, but events are said to occur, happen, or take place. Objects are thought of as entities that exist on their own, while events are thought of as changes the objects undergo, such as Socrates's death and Sebastian's strolling. While objects are extended through three-dimensional space, and their temporal boundaries may be vague (as Casati and Varzi (2020) describe), events are extended through time, and their spatial boundaries may be unclear.<sup>28</sup>

On the basis of this general understanding, there are various views on the metaphysical nature of events. The questions as to whether events are concrete particulars or something more akin to universals – whether they are fundamental ontological items in their own right or reduced to a further ontological item – remain largely unresolved.

Chisholm (1970) thinks that events are more like universals than particulars. He says that an event can recur and that it is reducible to a state of affairs: “an *event* is any contingent state of affairs which is not a proposition and which implies change (i.e., which implies that there is some state of affairs *p* such that *p* occurs and not-*p* occurs)” (1970, p.20). Horgan (1978) also offers a reductive account of events according to which events are best understood as propositions. He argues that since there is no theoretical need to postulate events, we should, for ontological parsimony, drop out the notion of an event in favor of the notion of a proposition.

Alternatively, Kim (1976) offers the property-exemplification account that asserts that an event has a unique metaphysical structure characterized by three constituents: a substance, the property it exemplifies, and time. According to this account, an event is the exemplification of a property by an object (or objects) at a time. As a variant of this view, Lombard (1979) regards events as the changes physical objects undergo, and Bennett (1988) explains them as property instances, tropes.

By appealing to the notion of a trope that is conceived of as an abstract particular, Bennett thinks that to explain an event in terms of a trope might be the best answer to the question of why an event is both abstract and a particular. It seems that the view of events as abstract particulars is the most

<sup>28</sup> Of course, this sharp contrast between events and objects does not apply for four-dimensionalists, as they believe that ordinary material objects do not exist as a whole at a time but as aggregates composed of temporal parts or slices.

widely held view about the nature of events. Events are particulars rather than universals in the sense that they are unrepeatable and spatially located but also abstract rather than concrete in the sense that more than one event can occur in the same place at the same time.

Davidson (1967, 1969, 1970) also initially conceived of events as abstract particulars. His theory of events was motivated by the question of how adverbs can be fit into predicate logic. Given that adverbs (or adverbial clauses) are verb modifiers, the relevant problem is this: a sentence composed of one singular term and a one-place predicate, 'Sebastian walked' can be rephrased as 'Sebastian walked at 2:00 a.m.' Then, we can ask if the two-place predicate 'walked at 2:00 a.m.' is to be considered as a new predicate. If the sentence is rephrased again as 'Sebastian briskly walked at 2:00 a.m.,' we must ask again whether there is a new predicate 'briskly walked at 2:00 a.m.' If it is said that 'Sebastian briskly walked at 2:00 a.m. in Bologna,' then, would a predicate here be 'briskly walked at 2:00 a.m. in Bologna'? The question concerning a predicate can be asked endlessly in this way. It seems that adverbs like *at 2:00 a.m.*, *briskly*, and *in Bologna* are hard to be disconnected from the verb, *walk*.

To resolve the problem of adverbial modification, Davidson proposes that we should postulate an event as a particular that can be quantified over, identified, and individuated. We should posit something that can be said to be a walk, to be at 2:00 a.m., to be brisk, and to be in Bologna. If analyzed formally, it can be said that there exists an  $x$  such that Sebastian strolled  $x$ , and  $x$  is at 2:00 a.m., and  $x$  is brisk, and  $x$  is in Bologna. Here, the verb *walk* is analyzed as the existence of an event (the stroll of Sebastian), and the adverbs turn into predicates.

This concern about the semantic and logical structure of an event motivated Davidson to develop the causal account of events according to which events are identified and individuated in terms of causal relations. He argued that just as an ordinary physical object is identified by virtue of occupying a unique position in spatial relations, an event is identified by virtue of having a unique position in causal relations: "events are identical if and only if they have exactly the same causes

and effects” 1969, p.280).<sup>29</sup> However, Davidson (1985) later abandoned the causal criterion of identity in favor of Quine’s (1985) view that events are concrete particulars extended through both time and space.

Since events, just like physical objects, are material contents of any portion of space-time, Quine claims that the identity condition of an event should be the same as that of a physical object. That is, they both are identified if they occupy the same space at the same time. For instance, if Sebastian is chewing gum while walking, the event of his chewing and the event of his walking are identical because they are spatio-temporally coextensive. That is, Quine argues that there is just one event that entails both chewing and walking (1985, p.167).

However, he also stresses that this does not mean that we must identify events with objects. The walking of Sebastian cannot be identified with Sebastian, nor can a wave crossing the ocean (in Davidson’s example) be identified with the ocean. Adopting Quine’s view, Davidson argues that events are non-repeatable, non-reductive *concrete* particulars – a fundamental *sui generis* ontological category. He writes,

Occupying the same portion of space-time, event and object differ. One is an object which remains the same object through changes, the other a change in an object or objects. Spatiotemporal areas do not distinguish them, but our predicates, our basic grammar, our ways of sorting do (1985, p.311)

It seems to me that Davidson’s later view is the most promising and powerful account of events: an event can be best explained as a particular that is concrete, non-repeatable, and irreducible category of being. However, to determine which theory is the best theory from a logical, semantic point of view involves complicated and extensive arguments on metaphysics and semantics. Thus, it is beyond both my capacity and the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, I can make one small remark

<sup>29</sup> In this view, causes and effects are thought of as features that individuate events. As Davidson says, “If we claim, for example, that someone’s having a pain on a specific occasion is identical with a certain complex physiological event, the best evidence for the identity is apt to be whatever evidence we have that the pain had the same causes and the same effects as the physiological changes. Sameness of cause and effect seems, in cases like this one, a far more useful criterion than sameness of place and time” (1969, p.231).

on this from a non-logical point of view: I believe that without assuming events as concrete particulars, we will miss much of what our experiences convey to us about the world.

Most philosophical literature on this topic heavily relies on the question of how the structure of predicate logic can tolerate the way our natural language has verbs modified by adverbs with or without quantifying over events. So, the philosophical interest in events has developed largely around verbs. It is thought that action verbs (or actions) are related to the ontology of events from the fact that verbs can be converted into nouns or predicates into singular terms. For instance, 'Socrates dies' is supposed to be synonymous with 'the death of Socrates,' 'Sebastian walks' with 'the walk of Sebastian,' and 'Mary jumps' with 'the jump of Mary.' Davidson's account is also motivated by the idea of action as a species of an event.

However, the focus on verbs (or actions) and semantic concerns seems to make us disregard the fact that there are many other event-like phenomena in the world that are not directly related to the semantic link between verbs and adverbs. There are movements, changes, and successions that are essentially temporal items of which existence is revealed only for some duration of time. It is hard to think that these phenomena can be captured in logic. Then, there may be non-logical reasons to regard the existence of events as concrete particulars.

I take sounds as a typical example of phenomena that defy logic and language. Sounds are not something that can be smoothly converted into a verb form in ways characteristic of a death or a jump. Sounds bear rich auditory qualities, and their own course of lifetime comes into existence and then evolves over time while entering complex networks of other sounds, events, and ordinary material objects. The best explanation of sounds requires a reference to the notion of events conceived of as concrete particulars. We cannot imagine all kinds of various sounds surrounding us as reducible to states of affairs, propositions, sets, or tropes. In my view, it is best to call these temporal items event particulars. The whole auditory world and our rich experience of it will be inexplicable if we regard events as reducible to universals or any abstract particulars.

We have sounds, smells, and various other dynamic, temporal phenomena in the world. Thus, in my view, Davidson's account is more likely to be true than other competing theories since his account can have a wider application for explaining the world. Just as our auditory world is furnished with various auditory items, our experience over time is full of temporal individuals that come, stay, and go. If it is acknowledged that the temporal dimension is as important as the three spatial dimensions for our conception of what there is – and if there are certain things that only live for some duration – then I believe such temporal beings can be rightly called events that are supposed to exist in time as opposed to space.

It is also important to recognize that our experience of temporal particulars typically extends beyond logic and language. Even though the relation between verbs and adverbs can be analyzed without assuming the existence of events as irreducible concrete particulars, it does not mean that all the things in the world can be analyzed without any reference to events. It may be right from the logical point of view that events can be reducible to states of affairs, propositions, facts, property exemplifications, or sets, but this may be irrelevant to what the events really are in the world. In particular, our temporal reality is much more than that can be analyzed in logical and linguistic structures. Without reference to event particulars, we miss a large part of the dynamic, lived world.

Although the self is an event and an event is a concrete particular, there is still a further difficulty: how can a relation between a self and its body be specified? It appears that the event account allows only a one-way direction of causality – from a body to a self, not the other way around. If the self as an event is related to the body in the way a sound is related to its sounding source or that a wave is related to the ocean, it is hard to imagine that the self has a causal influence on the body, just as it is hard to imagine that a sound has a causal effect on its sounding source. The implication of the event account will be that a self is a mere causal product of a body so that it is causally inert towards the body.

However, don't we intuitively think of a self as having some degree of causal influence on a body? Aren't one's feelings, desires, intentions, and beliefs responsible for one's behavior? It

appears that the event account disregards what centrally characterizes the self by failing to establish a right sort of causal relation. On what grounds, then, should we base such an epiphenomenal self that has no explanatory power over our own behaviors and actions as a self in the real sense? The fact that a sound does not bring about any causal changes on its sound sources hardly bothers us. Nevertheless, when it comes to the self, we certainly want to be causally more active than that.

It may be responded that the difficulty in specifying the self-body relation is not only a problem of the event account but also of all other accounts of the self (except the account that directly identifies the self with a body or a brain). However, I do not think that the self-body relation is the relation of identity since, as Quine and Davidson point out (as mentioned above), an event particular is not merely identified with an ordinary material object. Even when the existence of an event depends on the existence of an object, the event can come and go while the object remains identical. An event is a concrete particular – a *sui generis* fundamental category of being that is not reducible to its related physical object even though the event's existence may be conceptually dependent on the existence of an object as held by P.F. Strawson (1959).<sup>30</sup>

When a self is something other than a mere physical body, the problem of what relation it has with the body becomes a baffling question that has baffled people for a long time. This question is parallel to the problem of a mind-body relation – that is, the problem of how something mental can enter the causal network of something physical. Unless we assume that the mental is reduced to the physical or allow for some ontologically odd circumstances in which the pure mental self somehow sits nicely in certain physical space (for instance, in the cerebral region of the pineal gland as Descartes conjectured), it seems hard to explain that something non-physical can exert a causal power on something physical.

I think there might be another, more constructive way to specify the self-body relation. It could be that the problem of the self-body relation, on the event account of the self, is really a problem of a relation between two distinct concrete particulars that are irreducible to another. The idea that the

<sup>30</sup> Strawson (1959) argues for a *conceptual* dependence of events on objects, claiming that events can be rephrased without reference to events, whereas the references of objects cannot be eliminated in the same way.

self is not an abstraction but an individual particular (a part of the furniture of the physical world) is central to the event account. Since the self is assumed to exist as a form of an event-like particular, I believe the event account can provide a plausible way to specify the self-body relation.

To see how this can be, I refer to the sound analogy once more. It is commonly assumed that a sound is a direct causal product of its sounding object. For instance, the playing of a violin (= an ordinary physical event) and the sound of it (= a sound event) are causally related. The sound of the violin is heard as caused or produced by the playing of the violin. This characterization of a relationship between a sound and its source appears to be compatible with our phenomenological considerations, as well as our everyday linguistic practice. If the self analogous to a sound is related to a body in this way, the epiphenomenalist's consequence will be unavoidable.

However, there may be another way to specify the relation of a sound and a sounding source. It can be said that a sound is mereologically related to a sounding source. According to O'Callaghan (2011), there are two different perceivable events – a sound and a sound source – and the sound construed as a part is a constituent of the sound source construed as a whole. We perceive the whole (the sound source) by virtue of perceiving its parts (the sound). For instance, playing a violin is an ordinary physical event construed as a larger event of which the sound of it is a part; that is, we experience the sound event as being part of the event of playing a violin. This understanding of the relation of a sound and its source gives us an alternative way to specify the self-body relation.

It can be analogically said that the self, as an event, is related mereologically to neurophysiological events in the body (or in the brain). In other words, the self and the body form a part-whole relationship. Since a part is not supposed to be identified with the whole, the identity thesis of the self-body relation can be avoided when the ontological dependence of the self on the body is maintained in the sense that the body can exist without the self (but not vice versa).

The mereological approach, however, does not seem to help much in dealing with the objection that the self is causally inert. Even though it is right to assume that the self is a part of the body, concerns about the self's being epiphenomenal may still remain. However, I think that it will fade



away if we appeal to the very nature of events. If we agree to regard an event as an ontological category of its own, we can accept that events alter the qualities of ordinary things by bearing certain relations with those things. That is, things can change by taking part in some events. As concrete particulars, events do not occur all alone. They have causes and effects, and they form causal relations with ordinary objects and other events in space-time. So, it may be said that the self, as an event, can have a causal effect on the body by bearing a causal relation with neurophysiological events that take place in the brain. This aligns well with the commonly held view that a mind-body relation is a problem of the relations between mental events and physical events.

## **Conclusion**

In contrast to Dennett's analogy of a self as a center of gravity, I have offered an analogy of a self as a sound. I argued that the self exists in ways characteristic to sounds, assuming that a sound is an event and that an event is a concrete particular. I suggested that just like a sound, a self is essentially a temporal thing that reveals its existence only across time.

Minkowski's (1908) geometry famously depicts a case of an airliner circling an airport as a circle in a three-dimensional space but as a helix when a temporal dimension is added. I wonder if something similar to this may hold for a case of the self. The self, when considered carefully in temporality, may be a very different kind of being from the self when it is viewed predominantly in space. The self, just like a sound, is given life only across time and, thus, is not captured in any snapshot of a momentary temporal point. However, if temporality is conceived of as a basis for what there is, it may be possible to conceive a notion of a self that is part of a living, dynamic reality.

Nonetheless, I think there is some truth in Dennett's account that should not be disregarded. The notion of the functional self, when understood in terms of the roles it plays, represents an important aspect of human life. Some beings, such as humans, have a relatively large brain capacity that

makes it possible to manage and store a large amount of memory and attain highly sophisticated linguistic skills. Accordingly, we are able to create, maintain, and develop a linguistic world – the world furnished with complicated networks of highly complex concepts among which there is a concept of the self. In such a world, we represent ourselves using linguistic symbols and think of ourselves as partaking in some stories under various contexts.

For us to navigate the linguistic world, it is inevitable to create a self that has functional and representational features. Furthermore, such a self can be re-written, over-written, and manipulated at any time depending on how our representational system is re-constituted and re-arranged. So, it seems right to say that the self, in this sense, is a useful theoretical invention like a center of gravity and has various notions depending on the context in which it is situated. There are cultural, religious, legal, ethnic, and gender contexts, among many others. There are also various corresponding notions of the self – for example, the cultural self, religious self, legal self, ethnic self, and gender self.

It is hard to imagine that any single individual human could manage a life entirely isolated from such contexts as long as s/he remains a member of human society. So, Dennett's notion of the self explains an important and necessary feature of human life. Nonetheless, I believe there is a more fundamental sense of the self deep under the surface of the functional self.

To see this, just as Descartes suggests that we should first throw out all the apples in the basket to select apples that are not rotten, we may suggest that we take away all stories about ourselves to approach the self in its most original form. Such would be very hard but not impossible. Would there be anything left after all that? I think there would be. It may be related to 'thinking,' as expressed in Descartes's meditations, or to what is innate to humans in the primitive stage. It may also be Kierkegaard's naked self, Zahavi's pre-reflective self-consciousness, or Baker's rudimentary first-person perspective.<sup>31</sup> If the term 'self' is a highly complex idea that is composed of many

<sup>31</sup> Baker (2013) herself thinks that self-awareness is not established at the stage of rudimentary first-person perspective. Nevertheless, I think it is still enough to be called the self in this basic sense since self-awareness (in her context) seems to refer to the explicit self-awareness that is drawn from our linguistic practice of the pronoun 'I'.

simple ideas, the simplest and most fundamental idea of the 'self' may be the self as an event-like concrete particular.

# Chapter Four

## My individual existence and gappy consciousness

### **Introduction**

Consciousness is often said to be continuous in ways characteristic of the streams of a river in the sense that passages of thoughts and experiences appear to follow one another smoothly and seamlessly. However, consciousness is also said to be gappy in the sense that there are periods, such as a dreamless sleep, during which consciousness appears to be entirely absent. The gappiness of consciousness will certainly undermine the experience-based notion of the self upon which existence is solely grounded on the continuity of consciousness. It is hard to imagine that the consciousness-based self can tolerate apparent temporal gaps in consciousness. The gappiness of consciousness generates the problem of identity over time – the problem of the persistence of a single, individual self across gaps. If the continuity of consciousness breaks down, it would be questioned whether the self before a gap and the self after the gap are one and the same self. Similarly, it would be questioned whether the stream before a gap and the stream after a gap are one and the same stream of consciousness. That is, when the stream of consciousness is disrupted, the sameness of the self is to be determined by appeal to other than consciousness itself. Then, the problem of the individuality of the self – the problem of what it is for the self to exist as an individual – will turn into the problem of the identity of the self.

However, as I argued in Chapter One, it is important not to conflate the problems of individuality and identity. The notion of the self as an individual particular that is extended through time can be best understood in terms of a phenomenal fact that consciousness is diachronically unified – the fact that consciousness is a continuous flow. So, I have suggested that continuity, not identity, is what matters when discussing what the individuality of the self is.

The goal of this chapter is to explore whether there is a way to preserve the idea of the continuing existence of a single, individual self across temporal gaps without appealing to a body, brain, or any entity other than consciousness. My examination of several related ideas tells us that there is no such way. Section 4.1. concerns the gappy nature of consciousness. Section 4.2. examines Strawson's (1997) proposal that short-lived single selves are one way to deal with gappy consciousness. Section 4.3. discusses Dainton's (2008, 2016) claim that a self is a capacity or potentiality of consciousness. Section 4.4. examines Rashbrook's (2011) distinction between strict and extreme continuity. Section 4.5. considers Stokes's (2014) and Zahavi's (2014) alternate ways to think about the continuity of consciousness.

I conclude that none of these approaches are satisfactory for securing the continuing existence of the self. For the consciousness-based self to exist, the experience of continuity must be granted. It seems that the self cannot survive across gaps as a single individual particular insofar as these gaps are complete discontinuities of the stream of consciousness.

#### **4.1. A stream or a dolphin swimming?**

According to James (1890/1901), the most natural way to characterize consciousness is to think of it as river-like rather than train-like. Consciousness itself does not appear to be "chopped up in bits" but rather a jointless flow (1890/1901, p.239). He calls the flow of consciousness *the stream of consciousness*. When consciousness is said to be continuous, it usually implies that passages of thoughts and experiences are experienced as following one another in a stream-like, seamless way. Bergson (1920, p.70), as acknowledged by Dainton (2017, p.99), also emphasizes the *seamless continuity* of consciousness: our entire psychological existence continues since the first awakening of consciousness in the sense that it is "interspersed with commas, but never broken by full stops" (1920, p.70).

However, this view of consciousness has been challenged. It has been claimed that the stream-like continuity of consciousness is an illusion with no real phenomenal support (Neumann 1990,

Flanagan 1997, Strawson 1997, Blackmore 2002). There seems to be many cases in which consciousness is disrupted and alternated by temporal intervals of unconsciousness. The continuity of one's conscious life is said to be broken not only by certain clinical conditions – for example, comas, epilepsy, or the application of anesthetics – but also by non-clinical, recurrent, daily episodes such as states of dreamless sleep or mind-wandering.

Furthermore, as Strawson (1997, p.421) observes, seamless continuity is a rare phenomenon, even in one's ordinary, waking life. That is, our reflections on day-to-day experience reveal “gaps and fadings, disappearances and recommencements” of thoughts and experiences even when the contents of them remain the same. The continuity of consciousness is maintained only in the short term, for instance, during the so-called specious present or the temporally extended interval of the present. Otherwise, consciousness is inherently and persistently gappy to the extent that any single thought often does not complete its full course without interruption. So, Strawson writes,

“When I am alone and thinking I find that my fundamental experience of consciousness is one of *repeated returns into consciousness from a state of complete, if momentary, unconsciousness*... consciousness is continually *restarting*. There isn't a basic substrate (as it were) of continuous consciousness interrupted by various lapses and doglegs. Rather, conscious thought has the character of a (nearly continuous) series of radically disjunct eruptions into consciousness from a basic substrate of non-consciousness. It keeps banging out of nothingness; it is a series of comings to” (1997, p.422).

Perhaps the stream metaphor is wrong. Perhaps consciousness is never stream-like but more like a dolphin swimming. Just as dolphins cross the border between water and air, as adopted by Metzinger (2013), thought processes frequently cross the border between conscious and unconscious processes. The fact that consciousness is gappy in this way certainly threatens the notion of the self claiming that existence is solely based on the stream-like continuity of consciousness. My own existence will be interrupted as often as consciousness is interrupted; whenever consciousness discontinues, it has to be that ‘I’ go out of existence, disappearing

completely and, probably, restarting anew. Then, the idea that the self is a temporally extended individual is not sustainable. In what follows, I will discuss some ways in which this difficulty might be resolved and the consciousness-based self might be preserved.

#### **4.2. Short-lived selves**

One may suggest that our approach to the experience-based notion of the self should be re-considered in ways that are not undermined by the gappiness of consciousness. It may be that we need to give up not the idea of the self with a sole reference to consciousness but the idea of the enduring self across temporal gaps during which consciousness is absent. If we acknowledge that diachronicity is not an essential characteristic of the self in the long term, we may perceive a notion of the self with a short lifespan – a self that persists while consciousness is continuous and goes out of existence when consciousness is disrupted by a gap.

There is no single self that survives across gaps, but there is a self whose existence relies entirely on consciousness. When consciousness discontinues, its existence also discontinues just as when there is no ‘thinking,’ there is no ‘thinker.’ More specifically, it follows that we should allow for the existence of many individual *selves* that relate to a single biological body. If our cognitive processes frequently cross the border between conscious and unconscious processes as the dolphin model of cognition tells us, the idea that ‘I’ is a single individual over the course of a biological life has to be given up in favor of the idea that ‘I’ is a collection of many single selves, each of which continues for a short time.

So, Strawson (1997) argues that we are more likely to be short-lived multiple ‘selves’ rather than one self. Since the stream metaphor wrongly characterizes consciousness, which is, indeed, continually broken and restarting, he believes it is misleading to take diachronic singleness as a necessary feature of the self that is based in consciousness. There is simply no phenomenal support for the idea of a diachronically extended self that survives across all temporal gaps.

Instead, Strawson proposes the notion of a short-lived single mental self: “the mental self – *a* mental self – exists at any given moment of consciousness or during any uninterrupted or hiatus-

free period of consciousness” (1997, p.425). Since consciousness, in its most basic form, is characterized as “a gappy series of eruptions of consciousness from a substrate of apparent non-consciousness” (1997, p.426), each mental self is said to exist only for a short time (at least for the specious present). Since there is a single self for every continuing phase of an experience, it is argued that there are many individual selves throughout the course of the biological lifetime of a single human organism. Strawson calls this view *the Pearl view* (which contrasts the stream view) “because it suggests that many mental selves exist, one at a time and one after another, like pearls on a string, in the case of something like a human being” (1997, p.424).

In this view, the diachronicity of the self is denied in the long term, but the diachronicity of the self in the limited sense is still allowed. Strawson only denies the notion of the self as the long-term diachronic unity. However, a short-lived single mental self (or selves) is not an abstraction but an individual that exists in time. The idea of the momentary existence of selves is based on the idea that a moment is never a purely abstract point but, as James (1890/1901, p.609) posits, a temporally stretched (though limited) block – the lived present or the specious present.

So, even though Strawson says that selves exist only at a specific time, it should be understood that selves are still diachronically extended during the specious present. In this sense, each self is called “something that’s single – a unity – at least during the lived present experience” (Strawson 2009, pp.204-5). Short-lived selves can be thought of as parts of a diachronic unity during short periods even though their diachronicity does not sustain over longer periods of time, such as weeks, months, years, and lifetimes (Strawson 1997, p.416).

The greatest difficulty with this view, I think, is its counter-intuitive feature, the notion we are required to deny that the self is an enduring individual throughout our biological lifetime in favor of the idea of short-lived mental selves. To say that ‘I’ is a multiplicity of such individual selves seems to deny that ‘I’ exists as a genuine sense of the self. Strawson calls these single mental things ‘selves’ in the most basic, experiential sense, but it is far from clear that ‘selves’ or ‘self’ is the right name for it since it does not at all represent what we think we are.



The core idea of the experience-based self, as Strawson (2011, p.258) outlines, is to think of the self as a subject of experience “in a maximally ontologically non-committal way: in such a way that the presence of subjectivity is already sufficient for the presence of a subject, so that ‘there is subjectivity, but there isn’t a subject’ can’t possibly true.”

However, it seems unclear to me that the short-lived single mental selves can be rightly called subjects of experience, even in this basic sense. No single experience, in this view, seems to continue without being gappy. So, it is likely that any short-lived self is too short to be a subject of experience. Moreover, the living present is known to last for less than half a second, and this is a very short time for any single, phenomenally distinguishable experience (and, thus, for any single subject of experience) to hold.

Then, we can ask if the experience-based self can be preserved in this approach within the gappiness of consciousness. Certainly, the notion of short-lived selves fully appreciates the gappiness of consciousness, as each self lives only between gaps. It can also be said that each self is an individual whose individuality is given in terms of continuity of consciousness, even in the very restricted sense. However, it is far from clear whether this short-lived mental thing can be called a self in the way we refer to ourselves. Although something is an individual based on a very short-term phase of experience, there is no reason to call that thing a self if it cannot also be called a subject of experience.

### **4.3. Surviving gaps**

One may still want to insist on both ideas that the self is *an* individual (not individuals) surviving through periods during which consciousness is absent and that it is grounded in consciousness rather than anything else. To hold both ideas appears contradictory: if one’s intention is to claim that the most basic form of the self is based on experience, how can the self persist during gappy

periods when there is no experience? Is it possible for the self to exist uninterrupted during an interrupted stream of consciousness when the fundamental grounds for its existence is experience?

Dainton (2008, 2016) suggests that the self can survive across gaps even when it is purely understood in terms of a stream of consciousness. He asks under what conditions the self can be said to exist across temporal gaps in unconsciousness when the self is understood with no reference to a body, a brain, a substance, or any other entity that exists independently of consciousness. For Dainton, our own existence is grounded in the continuity of consciousness.

In this respect, he describes his view as a development of the Neo-Lockean account of the self. The difference between Dainton's view and the traditional Neo-Lockean view lies in the way the continuity of consciousness is understood. According to the Neo-Lockean view, continuity is thought of as a psychological continuity that consists of causal relations between psychological states and personal traits. If a person at a future time has memories, beliefs, and personal characteristics that are causally dependent on my current memories, beliefs, and personal characteristics, then I am that person. Dainton takes the psychological continuity to be grounded in a more fundamental sense of continuity – the experiential continuity of consciousness. Dainton's experiential continuity is more basic than psychological continuity in that it can remain intact even when the psychological continuity is broken down. Since our existence is more intimately related to experiential continuity than to psychological continuity, he argues that the Neo-Lockean persistence conditions of the self should be fundamentally accounted for in terms of experiential continuity.

According to Dainton, the self is a subject of experience because of its capacity to enjoy conscious experiences. The ability to be conscious is a necessary feature for the existence of the self. From this, he proceeds to say that the self is essentially a capacity to have conscious experiences (2016, p.116).<sup>32</sup> More specifically, the self is constituted from “clusters of experiential

<sup>32</sup> This move from a subject's having a capacity for consciousness to a subject's being identified with the capacity itself appears problematic. As Snowdon (2016, p.148) points out, since “there is no general rule that if individual *i* with the feature *F* (and only *F*) then one should or can identify *i* with the feature *F*” just as salt is not equated with a capacity to dissolve in water.”

powers” or “a system of experiential capacities” (2008, p.134, 2016, p.17).<sup>33</sup> In this view, the streams of consciousness are products of experiential powers. The self is not a being that only witnesses experiences but a being that actively generates experiences. Even though the capacity is sometimes exercised (while I am conscious) and sometimes dormant (while I am unconscious), I am essentially an enduring and uninterrupted capacity, a power or a potentiality for experience.

Obviously, in this view, the self is not undermined by the problem of the gappy consciousness since it can bridge gaps without its existence being interrupted. The self continues to exist while experiential continuity is disrupted since the self is thought to persist during unconscious intervals, as it is the potential or the capacity for consciousness. It can be said that during the temporal gaps in unconsciousness, my mode of existence is potential rather than actual. That is, the self is an uninterrupted capacity of the interrupted consciousness. Insofar as there remains potential for consciousness (if it is not a case of death, for instance), the discontinuity of a stream of consciousness does not extinguish the self. Even if it is true that consciousness is absent during dreamless sleep, for instance, the self persists insofar as there is a possibility of waking up.

However, I wonder whether the self, when construed as such, is still a variant of the experience-based self. A capacity is simply a capacity but not an experience. At the very least, a capacity (of consciousness) while remaining potential and inactive is not experiential at all and, thus, is no longer experience-grounded. It seems that to say that the self is a capacity for consciousness is to say that there is no experience-based self during periods of unconsciousness. When consciousness is regained, we can reason retrospectively that the self must have been in existence to generate consciousness once again. If consciousness is not regained, however, we will have to also say retrospectively that the self must have been extinguished. The idea of the continuing existence of the self is basically maintained only inferentially, not experientially.

<sup>33</sup> Dainton writes, “The experiences in a typical stream of consciousness manifestly are unified both at and over time in a deep and distinctive manner. Consequently, the claim that experiential capacities (over a given interval of time) belong to the same subject in virtue of the fact that they can produce experiences that are unified in these ways is a very natural and compelling one. Systems of experiential capacities that are related in this distinctive way I call C-system. In my view, subject of experience is C-system, and we are too if we are subjects of experience” (2016, p.117). Indeed, it seems that to think of the self as having a capacity for consciousness is a familiar view in neuro- and cognitive science.

When we refer to Dainton's account of how we experience ourselves subjectively and first-personally, his notion of the self becomes more puzzling. Dainton proposes that a kind of background phenomenology is responsible for our sense of self. The phenomenal background, as he calls it, amounts to overall non-focal, peripheral experiences. When I feel pain, I usually feel it against other experiences such as experiences related to the surrounding worlds through perceptions and experiences about the inner world through bodily awareness, thoughts, imaginings, memories, and emotions.

Dainton argues that the inner background experiences constitute the sense of self (what it feels like to be me) on the grounds that the familiar feeling of inner background experiences is pervasive while outer background experiences are variant due to changes in one's surroundings. He says that "when the inner background is present, so too am I, phenomenologically speaking," and consequently, any experience that is co-conscious (i.e., experienced together with the inner background experiences) will seem to be me (2008, p.243).

If the self is experienced as this specific kind of phenomenal background, there will be no experience-based self when there is no experience. If consciousness is absent during gaps, it will follow that there is no phenomenal background, and, in turn, there is no experience of the self. When the inner background is not present, neither am I, *phenomenally speaking*. Here, 'I' is no longer experienced as a subject of experience.

On what grounds, then, shall we regard the self as a capacity for experience as the notion of the experience-based self? It seems that Dainton, as Stokes (2014) points out, "sacrifices phenomenological purity for metaphysical respectability" (2014, pp.300-1). His theory starts from an attempt to offer a notion of the self grounded solely in consciousness but ends up with an appeal to non-experiential facts – the experiential powers or capacities – that underlie consciousness.

This view explains that the existence of the self is prior to the existence of consciousness. The self is not a product of consciousness but a generator or producer of it (when the capacity is active). The self is thought of as a condition for (streams of) consciousness. Thus, the continuity of the self

is considered ontologically prior to the continuity of consciousness, and the self survives through gappy consciousness.

I suggest that the ontological primacy of the self over consciousness is based on the idea that the self is externally related to consciousness in the sense that it ‘owns,’ ‘possesses,’ or ‘has’ experiences. Dainton characterizes the relationship of *owning* as that of being *consubjective*. Different streams of consciousness are said to be *consubjective* in the sense that they all belong to the same subject. Since it is assumed that the self is thought to be a subject that is related to consciousness in terms of ownership, it is natural to presume that the ontological status of the self is different from that of consciousness.

Certainly, Dainton’s notion of the self is not prone to the problem of a gappy consciousness. However, it generates another problem: namely, the problem of maintaining the continuity of the capacity for consciousness that survives through all the gaps between streams of consciousness. The self as a capacity for consciousness survives some changes but not all changes. As Dainton (2016, p.116) acknowledges, there are some changes that do not permanently extinguish the capacity of experience, while there are others that do. For instance, I can survive sleep, but I cannot survive death. I have the potential to be conscious under general anesthesia, but I no longer have the potential to be conscious when I die.

However, it must be asked how these two kinds of changes can be distinguished and why the capacity for experience survives only some gaps but not all. Here, the problem of continuity of consciousness is replaced by the problem of continuity of a capacity. Given that the capacity of experience is argued to be equated with the self, the problem is now related to the continuity of the capacity of experience. Under what conditions does the capacity of experience continue to exist? Thus, it seems that this is no longer a problem of phenomenology. The self, here, is no longer an experiential being; it has turned into a formal, metaphysical construct. Dainton’s proposal, like Strawson’s, loses its original intention to defend a notion of the self purely grounded in phenomenology in the face of the challenge of the gappiness of consciousness.

#### 4.4. Continuity: strict or extreme?

It might be that reconsidering and revising our approach to the notion of continuity of consciousness could resolve the problem of the apparent existence of gaps in consciousness. James's metaphor of a stream is not meant to suggest that consciousness does not manifest gaps in the literal sense; rather, consciousness only runs seamlessly such that our experiences of duration, succession, movement, and change are phenomenally conscious. When we see a bird flying, for instance, we see it directly and smoothly as a movement, not as a collection of a few snapshots. In this sense, consciousness may be said to be stream-like rather than chunk-like. If this is right, the claim that consciousness is gappy becomes irrelevant and, therefore, does not undermine the stream metaphor. Thus, it may be possible to have a notion of the self in terms of the continuity of consciousness. To see whether this reasoning is viable, I refer to Rashbrook's (2011, 2013) interpretation of continuity of consciousness.

Rashbrook has claimed that when a property of continuity is ascribed to consciousness, there are two senses of continuity: strict and extreme. Our ordinary way of thinking about the continuity of consciousness is to think of it as having no temporal gaps. Rashbrook calls this sense of continuity 'strict continuity.' Consciousness is said to be strictly continuous "if and only if it does not have any gaps" (Rashbrook 2011, p.617). The strict sense of continuity, according to Rashbrook, is a fundamentally mathematical concept that can be understood in relation to density. Rational numbers (i.e., numbers that can be expressed as fractions) are said to be dense when they are arranged in ascending or descending order in the sense that between two rational numbers in such an arrangement that we can always find another rational number.

Nonetheless, no matter how dense rational numbers are, it is always possible to have gaps in any pair of ordered rational numbers. So, the mathematical system introduces irrational numbers (i.e., numbers that cannot be expressed as fractions) to fill those gaps. Once all the gaps are filled out, the mathematical concept of continuity is established. In this sense, it can be said that density is a

necessary – but not sufficient – condition for continuity. This is because being dense means an ongoing process of generating gaps between two rational numbers, while being continuous means a lack of gaps.

Rashbrook says that the concept of continuity, when applied to consciousness in the strict sense, represents this mathematical understanding. First, the idea of density by which we can divide time into instants that are analogous to numbers is essential to the strict sense of continuity. Next, strict continuity does not allow any gaps to exist between any two distinct instants (or temporal points) during which a subject is not experiencing. Consciousness, when it is viewed from the third-person, objective point of view, does not appear to be continuous in this sense. So, it can be said that consciousness is neither dense nor strictly continuous.

However, Rashbrook (2011, p.625) also points out that our phenomenology of temporal experience is not characterized by the mathematical, strict sense of continuity since our experience *at a time* does not operate on mathematical instants but on a temporal block that is itself a temporally extended interval. So, the objectively apparent gaps between mathematical points do not manifest in the phenomenology of a subject.

In contrast to strict continuity, Rashbrook says that there is continuity in the extreme sense. Consciousness is said to be extremely continuous “if and only if the temporal boundaries of experience fail to be manifest in consciousness” (2011, p.617). The continuity of consciousness, as viewed from a subjective, first-person perspective, is argued to be more appropriately characterized in terms of extreme continuity. It is important to acknowledge that a breach of continuity in the strict sense is not a breach of continuity in the extreme sense that even when consciousness is not continuous in the strict sense, consciousness can be said to be still continuous in the extreme sense.

What, then, does it mean to say that temporal boundaries are not manifest experientially? The assumption behind the notion of extreme continuity is that our temporal awareness consists of a series of so-called *Time-Windows*. Rashbrook regards a Time-Window as a temporal block of experience *at a time* that is itself temporally *extended* but also temporally *limited* in that it is always

shorter than the time during which a subject has been experiencing. The stream of consciousness is thought to be structured with temporal boundaries of Time-Windows, and the seamless, stream-like feature of consciousness is said to hold when those temporal boundaries are not manifest in our phenomenology.

For instance, consider Rashbrook's example of hearing the A-minor scale (2011, p.631-2). Let's assume that a Time-Window has a determinate length that allows only three tones to be experienced together. So, in the first Time-Window, the tones A, B, and C are experienced together, and in the second, the tones D, E, and F are experienced together. If the boundaries of the two Time-Windows were manifest phenomenally, we would hear the scale in two temporal chunks. We would group A, B, C as one chunk and D, E, F as another since the tone D will not be experienced together with any of the notes in the first Time-Window. If the boundaries of the Time-Windows were manifest in our auditory experience, thus making us aware of where the boundaries are, we would never experience the A minor scale as a diachronically unified whole such that all of the tones in the scale are experienced as following the tone that was heard before it.

Certainly, this is not what it is like for us to hear an A-minor scale. From the fact that we do not experience the temporal objects in temporal chunks, it can be inferred that the temporal boundaries of Time-Windows do not enter our phenomenology. If boundaries of Time-Windows were phenomenally manifest, consciousness would lose its feature of diachronicity; it would be chunk-like rather than stream-like. However, they are not, so consciousness can be said to be consciousness in this extreme sense.

It seems that the notion of extreme continuity is based on a particular approach to time-consciousness – the discrete block theory or pulse theory, as Dainton (2008, 2017a) calls it. In this approach, a stream of consciousness is thought to consist of a succession of distinct temporal blocks of experience (Time-Windows, in Rashbrook's term) that are arranged side by side with no overlapping parts. The border of one temporal block neighbors the borders of other temporal blocks.



The most significant difficulty here is the lack of the capacity to explicate a long-term temporal experience that lasts longer than each temporal block. If the boundaries of the temporal blocks are considered non-phenomenal, then the experience of a longer-term succession will become accountable without appeal to memory, which retains a portion of the experience of a neighboring temporal block. In this sense, Rashbrook's view seems to be an advanced variety of this model of time-consciousness.

However, the question of whether the seamless, stream-like feature of consciousness is a result of unawareness or of a further awareness of the structure of the stream itself remains controversial. The notion of extreme continuity assumes that the structure of temporal awareness is phenomenally negative. However, it can also be said that we experience such a sense of continuity in terms of phenomenally active structural features of temporal awareness. For instance, the phenomenal awareness of the structural feature is essential in Husserl's (1991) retention model. One may also wonder why we have to think that the temporally extended Time-Windows lie right next to the borders of neighboring Time-Windows. For instance, in the overlap model defended by Dainton (2000),<sup>34</sup> the continuity of consciousness holds by virtue of temporal blocks that partially overlap.

Even when we are willing to endorse Rashbrook's Time-Windows model as a viable theory of time-consciousness, I do not see how extreme continuity can be understood differently from strict continuity. In my view, strict continuity (i.e., continuity without temporal gaps) seems to be presupposed in establishing extreme continuity in the form of a stream of Time-Windows without gaps. In order to experience temporal chunks (in the above example, A, B, C as successive, and D, E, F as successive) as two separate temporal chunks, a temporal gap between two chunks must have

<sup>34</sup> Consider, for instance, the succession of three musical notes (C, D, and E), each of which is of equal duration. If we assume that the length of the specious present is two notes long, then our hearing of the succession of C, D, E is constituted by two sub experiences ( $E_1 = [C, D]$  and  $E_2 = [D, E]$ ). However, if  $E_1$  and  $E_2$  were momentary, point-like acts, then, D would be heard twice by presenting itself as a content of both  $E_1$  and  $E_2$ . That is, we would face the problem of a repeated content. Of course, this consequence is not compatible with our experience – we simply do not hear D twice. However, if we allow  $E_1$  and  $E_2$  to be temporally extended along with their contents ( $[C, D]$  and  $[D, E]$ ) and to overlap by sharing a common part (D), then we can make sense of our experience of the succession of C, D, E without facing the problem of the repeated content.

been assumed. Without the temporal gap, there is no temporal grouping between ascending or descending tones on the scale.<sup>35</sup>

It follows that there will be no experience of boundaries of Time-Windows without assuming the temporal gap between the two Time-Windows. The temporal gap is implied by the idea that the two Time-Windows are located border-to-border without any overlaps. Extreme continuity, then, is a consequence of bridging the gap between the two Time-Windows. That is, the concept of strict continuity that is assumed to inappropriately characterize the stream-like feature of consciousness is presupposed for the concept of extreme continuity that Rashbrook intends to advocate as the right characterization of a phenomenology of continuity.

It seems to me that extreme continuity is better thought of as a miniature of strict continuity. If strict continuity implies there are no gaps between streams of consciousness, then extreme continuity implies there are no gaps between Time-Windows. If this is the case, I wonder why extreme continuity is considered as an alternative to strict continuity when the idea of continuity with no gaps between mathematical instants is simply converted into the idea of continuity with no gaps between Time-Windows.

This difficulty, in my view, arises from the assumption that temporal awareness comprises relations between Time-Windows that represent temporally extended objects and are themselves temporally extended. Time-Windows that merely represent temporal orders of objects of experience are treated as temporal items that are both temporally extended and limited to some extent, and they themselves are arranged temporally one after another, reflecting temporal orders of represented objects. Instead of thinking of Time-Windows as having overlapping parts, Rashbrook's account makes it phenomenally inapt. Whether this account is more successful than the overlap account is disputable. However, it is primarily a relational approach. The problem of temporal awareness becomes the problem of a relation between other temporal items called Time-Windows.

<sup>35</sup> No doubt, temporal grouping can happen between groups of sounds that have radically different pitches, loudnesses, or timbers. If a middle C is heard three times and a middle B is heard three times, we experience them as two temporal chunks with no temporal gaps between the two groups. However, this does not hold for listening to ascending or descending notes on a scale.

The current proposal claims that we can preserve the thesis of continuity of consciousness regardless of the existence of apparent gaps viewed from the third-person point of view. This can be done by altering the way we understand continuity regarding how it is reflected in our phenomenology. Nonetheless, if it is right to think of extreme continuity as a version of strict continuity rather than as an alternative to strict continuity, we will again be left with the ordinary sense of continuity as a stream of consciousness without gaps. Then, any attempt to accommodate the idea of the self as a temporal individual in extreme continuity will not work because there is, strictly speaking, no such alternative.

#### **4.5. Phenomenal continuity across temporal gaps**

We may be able to maintain the notion of the experience-based self despite the threat of the gappiness of consciousness if we acknowledge that there is a difference between temporal continuity and phenomenal continuity. Temporal continuity is viewed from an objective, third-person point of view and, thus, is broken by temporal gaps. In contrast, phenomenal continuity – the sense of continuity experienced from a subjective, first-person point of view – is irrelevant to the existence of temporal gaps since what appears to be a temporal gap is not reflected in one’s experience of continuity.

This point, as Flanagan (1997, p.89) indicates, is acknowledged by James (1890/1901). James concedes that consciousness is stream-like when viewed subjectively and is less stream-like when viewed objectively. For instance, it seems that there is discontinuity of consciousness when one is put under anesthetics for an operation. However, at the same time, from an inward, first-person point of view, there seems no breach in consciousness since the pre-operative and post-operative experiences “join each other smoothly over the gap.” Only the wound obtained during the operation shows that one has persisted through the time during which consciousness was not present (1890/1901, p.200). During the period in which one had the operation, there was no experience; thus, there was nothing it is like for a subject. What is experientially available upon awakening from

the anesthetics is a stream-like, continuous flow of experiences prior to the operation and experiences of now in that one is followed by the other. That is, consciousness can be said to be continuous in this purely experiential way, as the experientially unavailable temporal gaps are completely excluded from our experience of continuity. Continuity, in the phenomenal sense, may represent a kind of continuity that is relevant to what it is for a self to be a temporal individual through the continuity of consciousness.

To show how the self can be understood in terms of phenomenal continuity, I will examine the work of Stokes (2014). He suggests that the stream of consciousness can be viewed from two different perspectives: a temporally neutral (or atemporal) perspective and a temporally indexed (or temporally bounded) perspective. To illustrate this, he asks us to imagine driving along a winding mountain road. While driving, you can only see some parts of the road – the road winding the mountain range behind and ahead of you – but you can never see the whole road since some parts of it are always hidden from your view. However, if you were to look down on the mountain from a hot air balloon, you would see the whole road winding through the mountain since all the parts would be visible to you at once (2014, p.307).

If the winding road is analogous to the stream of consciousness, the perspective from the balloon represents the atemporal or temporally neutral perspective of the stream while the perspective from the car represents temporally indexed perspective, which is indexed to *now*. Stokes thinks that the perspective implicitly adopted by Dainton and Strawson is like the perspective from the balloon: “it takes in everything at once, including the sections that were invisible from mid-stream (the experientially unavailable moments of dreamless sleep), but in doing so, it implicitly abandons the temporal flow for a vantage point above it” (2014, p.306). If one takes the overall, temporally neutral point of view, one can see how continuity of consciousness is interrupted by periods of unconsciousness.

In this case, it is natural to consider the interruptions as a serious threat to the idea of the continuing existence of a single, individual self over time. When one bounds oneself to a perspective of *now*, however, one's perspective on the stream of consciousness is temporally indexed. Thus, what is so obviously gappy from the temporally neutral perspective might not be experientially gappy from the temporally indexed perspective.

Stokes argues that when we think of the self in terms of the stream of consciousness, it is important to adopt the perspective based on the continuity of consciousness from the temporally indexed vantage point of a subject. When it comes to one's own experience of continuity at a certain time, what matters is the temporally bounded phenomenology of *now*, of what it is like for a subject to remember the past and anticipate the future *at the present moment*.

Correspondingly, Stokes distinguishes two kinds of identity: a theoretically figured identity and a phenomenally figured identity. The theoretical identity is inferential and theory-based; it is typically a concept of personal identity that involves re-identification across time. For instance, I may not now immediately recognize as myself a four-year-old child who broke a window 15 years ago because I do not retain any direct memory of that event; yet, I may be able to re-identify the child as myself inferentially, by being told by my mom, for instance.

Continuity of consciousness that involves inference and re-identification represents the atemporal perspective of the stream of consciousness: for this overall sense of continuity to be achieved, gaps that are experientially unavailable should be filled out by non-experiential means (i.e., the testimony of my mom). In doing so, there will be a need for re-identification, for a diachronic identity of the self. In contrast, the phenomenally figured identity can be said to be a purely experience-based sense of identity by which experiences of the remembered past and of the imagined future appear to me non-inferentially, phenomenally as my own experience the moment I am remembering and imagining.

The phenomenally figured identity is, according to Stokes, temporally bound in the sense that it is a “here-and-now perspective – the perspective of one individual act of intention or pulse of consciousness – specifically, this pulse now” (2014, p.311). The question of whether we are unconscious during dreamless sleep is irrelevant to our own continuing existence from this perspective. Thus, the question of whether there are several short-lived mental selves related to a single body does not arise.

In the phenomenally figured identity, therefore, there is no question of re-identification (of identity across time). Thus, there is no problem of maintaining the persistent existence of the self across temporal gaps. This is because, assuming that this phenomenal sense of identity exists, the continuity of consciousness is not viewed in terms of the relationships between discrete experiences over time. As Stokes says, the problem of bridging gaps in consciousness is not a problem for the phenomenally figured identity but is a problem only for the theoretically figured identity “because unconscious agents can never ask it” (2014, p.311).

The difficulty, according to Stokes, arises from our strong tendency to conflate two kinds of perspectives – namely, the temporally neutral and temporally indexed – and, correspondingly, two kinds of identity – the theoretically figured and phenomenally figured. Both Dainton and Strawson are not immune to the problem of confusing the two kinds of identity, even though their starting point is the phenomenally figured identity of the self. This can be seen in their move from “temporally indexical ways of speaking about selves or subjects to non-indexical ways of speaking” (Stokes 2014, p.305). The assumption behind this move is that the identity of the self, when figured phenomenally, must be coextensive with the identity of the self when figured theoretically.

In order to fill the temporal gaps between streams of consciousness, we must first admit that there must have been gaps during which consciousness is absent. Since there is no consciousness during these gaps, the only way we can know that there even are gaps is by inference. Thus, continuity, when established as such, is not an experience-based but rather a theory-based approach

to the stream of consciousness. This, as Stokes points out, is necessary to meet the traditional metaphysical requirement for the identity condition of the self. That is, in order to fill out the interruptions of continuity to achieve the whole unity of consciousness from an overall, temporally neutral perspective, we should accept that there are gaps in consciousness as a problem that threatens the self that is based on continuity of consciousness.

In order to see the gaps, we should leave a temporal point from which we have experiences *now* and move to a viewpoint from which we can see from a distance at the stream of consciousness as a whole. If we take this perspective while still insisting on the notion of the self with reference to consciousness, we will have to think of ‘I’ as many short-lived selves that are related to a single human organism (like in Strawson’s account). Alternatively, we would need to attempt to preserve the existence of a single individual that survives through gaps with reference to some components other than the actual stream of consciousness (like in Dainton’s account). However, Stokes claims that Dainton implicitly discards the stream of consciousness as an unreliable source to support the metaphysical identity of the self over time and leaves his original position based on phenomenal continuity in order to satisfy the traditional metaphysical commitment to the identity condition.

Zahavi (2014) agrees with Stokes’s point on Dainton’s and Strawson’s views, arguing that there is more to the stream of consciousness than mere relationships between discrete moments of experiences interrupted by intervals of unconsciousness. When it comes to the problem of one’s own persistence, he says, the stream of consciousness is not like “a cord,” nor is the gappiness of the stream like “a cutting of the cord” (2014, p.73). This only reflects our tendency to understand the continuity of consciousness from the third-personal point of view.<sup>36</sup>

This relation-based understanding of continuity brings about a problem of how discrete units of experiences are linked across time. For consciousness to achieve this sense of continuity is for it to

<sup>36</sup> Note that Zahavi’s distinction is based on the contrast between the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective, while Stokes’s distinction between the temporally neutral and temporally indexed perspectives involves more than the distinction between the first-person and third-person perspectives. For instance, Stokes interprets that Dainton’s view maintains the first-person (but temporally neutral) perspective.

survive across temporal gaps, both inferentially and theoretically. However, Zahavi argues that what it means to say that consciousness is continuous from the first-person point of view should not be understood in the way it is understood from the third-person point of view.

Zahavi equates the self in its minimal form with the subjectivity of experience – what it is like for me, or for-me-ness – and calls it *the experiential (core) self* (2011, p.325).<sup>37</sup> The self is not an ontologically independent agent that unifies consciousness but is the unity itself. Phenomenal continuity, in this view, is understood as the diachronic unity of consciousness. Temporally dispersed experiences are unified by virtue of engaging in the dimension of for-me-ness – the first-personal self-givenness. For instance, according to Zahavi, experiences I had last night, prior to a dreamless sleep episode, and experiences I have now upon awakening are diachronically unified in the sense they all partake in the same dimension (i.e., the dimension of for-me-ness).

For the phenomenal continuity from the first-person point of view to be established, the past experience should be first-personally accessible to the present recollection. Moreover, the past experience and the present recollection of it both are said to be part of the same stream of consciousness by sharing the first-personal dimension. Since there is no feature of for-me-ness when experiences are absent (during the dreamless sleep), there is no consciousness. Since gaps between streams of consciousness are not first-personally accessible – that is, there is no feature of what it is like for me when there is no consciousness – the gaps do not enter our experience of diachronically unified consciousness. Accordingly, given that the experiential self is the for-me-ness of experience, there is no such self when there is no experience.

<sup>37</sup> Experience has a subjective feature in the sense that there is something it is like *for me* to have an experience. In Zahavi's view, both what is represented in the contents of an experience and the experience itself are given to me first-personally and pre-reflectively (or non-reflectively). He calls this feature of first-personal givenness of experience for-me-ness (or mineness). Experience is characterized by phenomenal reflexivity: experience is self-aware in virtue of its feature of first-personal givenness. There is a phenomenal difference between seeing a *red* object and seeing a *blue* object, but there is also a phenomenal difference between *seeing* a red object and *imagining* it. However, all of this are given to me first-personally in a different way from how they are given to others. The dimension of the first-personal givenness is ubiquitous in the sense that it is shared by a multitude of changing experiences. In other words, experiences are unified by virtue of this basic and indispensable feature (i.e., the very subjectivity of experience). For more details on the definition of for-me-ness, refer to Chapter Two.



Nonetheless, Zahavi argues that the gappiness of consciousness does not threaten the existence of the experiential self. The diachronic identity of the experiential self does not depend on uninterrupted temporal continuity but upon the question of whether the same experiential self is present in temporally distinct experiences – that is, the question of whether any temporally distinct experiences partake in the same dimension of for-me-ness. The existence of gaps in consciousness, thus, should be considered to be independent of the diachronic unity of consciousness and of the self: “there is no breach of the unity of consciousness, and no breach of the unity of the experiential self” (Zahavi 2014, p.72).

In both Stokes’s and Zahavi’s views, the problem of the gappiness of consciousness is denied, rather than resolved, on the assumption that the problem is itself ill-posed. It is argued that the apparent existence of temporal gaps is not relevant to how one thinks of oneself from one’s own point of view since, regardless of the presence of gaps, there is what it is like for one to have one’s continuing existence. In other words, it is said that the temporal gaps in the stream of consciousness do not interrupt the phenomenal continuity of consciousness from a temporally indexed, subjective point of view. When there is no breach of the phenomenal continuity, there is no breach of one’s own continuing existence, and in turn, one’s identity is maintained over time with no need for re-identification.

This is a first-personal, subjective approach to the question of what it is to be a self. The notion of the self, from this approach, tries to cash out the self from the viewpoint of a subject (what it is like for me to have my own continuing existence from a purely experiential perspective of mine). The continuity in question for both Stokes and Zahavi is not a linear, mathematically organized unity over time but the present ‘now’ when one’s recollection of the past and imagining of the future takes place. What matters when consciousness is said to be *phenomenally* continuous is how one, at this very moment of now, represents one’s own experiences as what has happened or what will be happening. Since continuity, from this temporally bounded, subjective point of view is maintained, so is the self in the experiential sense.

Nonetheless, there is a perplexing aspect in this approach. I am not certain what kind of identity is supposed to be defended here. It seems to me that both Stokes and Zahavi offer qualitative identity as an answer when the question is about numerical identity – the question of whether ‘I’ before a gap and ‘I’ after the gap are numerically one and the same self (or whether a stream of consciousness before and a stream after the gap are numerically one and the same stream).

In my view, their attempt to rule out temporal gaps in establishing continuity in the phenomenal sense creates confusion between qualitative identity and numerical identity. Suppose we hear a sound with certain audible qualities (i.e., a certain pitch, loudness, and timber), followed by an interval of silence, and then another sound with the same audible qualities. When we say that we hear the same sound (in the sense that we hear a sound that has exactly the same auditory qualities as the sound we heard earlier), there is nothing wrong in our statement that we have heard the *same* sound. However, if the statement intends the sameness of the sound heard earlier and heard later as a numerically one and the same individual sound particular, we are confronted with the problem of how the sound particular could survive the unheard period.

The issue in determining the identity of the self over time is numerical identity, not qualitative identity. What we wonder is whether ‘I’ at some future time is one and the same individual temporally extended with the ‘I’ of now. It seems to me in both Stokes’s and Zahavi’s accounts that the problem of numerical identity turns into the problem of qualitative identity. No matter how often gaps of silence appear in streams of sounds (or how long these gaps last), we can say that we hear the same sound again in a qualitative sense. Likewise, we can say that the *same* self appears again whenever consciousness resumes after unconscious periods.

Of course, the fact that consciousness is gappy is irrelevant to the sameness in this qualitative sense. It seems, then, that the problem here is not a problem of the identity of an individual extended through time but a problem of something else. This becomes more obvious in Zahavi’s account. Zahavi regards the self as the diachronic unity of consciousness. However, when he speaks

of ‘the diachronic unity,’ he refers to the fact that the feature of for-me-ness is manifest in temporally dispersed experiences. Experiences of yesterday, a year ago, and now are said to be unified in terms of for-me-ness – the feature of what-it-is-like-for-me. This is to think of the self in terms of something stable and unchangeable in a flux of changing experiences. The dimension of the first-personal self-givenness or for-me-ness remains to be the same through different experiences synchronically and diachronically dispersed. It is this dimension that Zahavi labels as the self in the most minimal, experiential sense.

The most perplexing part of this account is revealed at this point: the self in this sense seems to be a property that is multiply exemplifiable across various thoughts and experiences. This is certainly not what we usually think of when we think about who we are, even in the most basic sense (I have argued this point in Chapter Two). Thus, I do not think that Zahavi’s notion of the self in terms of phenomenal continuity can secure the idea of the self as a concrete, temporal individual.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined several ways by which the experience-based notion of the self can be preserved despite the challenge of gappy consciousness. However, none of the accounts examined in this chapter succeed in securing a continuing existence of the self. We must admit either that the self cannot bridge temporal gaps in consciousness and thus has a very short life span or that for the self to continue to exist, it has to be based on something other than consciousness itself.

We may also consider an alternative understanding of continuity in which the gappiness of consciousness is not even considered as a threat to the stream of consciousness. All of the views above, in my view, fail to secure the idea of the self as a concrete, temporal individual through continuity of consciousness.

I conclude that if a conscious stream is constantly alternated by a *fully* unconscious episode, it is impossible to maintain the idea of a self as a persisting temporal individual across unconscious

periods with a sole reference to consciousness. It seems a simple and obvious fact that for a self to be a phenomenally grounded temporal particular, it is only temporally extended insofar as consciousness is temporally extended. The self cannot survive when a stream of consciousness discontinues. I do not think there is any plausible way to preserve my own existence as an individual being without involving the problem of diachronic identity insofar the gappiness of consciousness is characterized by a full sense of unconsciousness.

If consciousness is inherently and persistently gappy, it necessarily follows that the experience-based self also constantly goes out of existence. This is a natural consequence of thinking of gaps as periods of complete unconsciousness in the sense that there is nothing it is like to get through the gap. Perhaps the only way to establish my continuing individual existence over time is to deny that consciousness is entirely absent during gaps and suppose that gaps are still phenomenally conscious, even in the most restricted sense.

# Chapter Five

## Living through gaps

### Introduction

The notion of the self I defend in this thesis is a concrete, temporally extended individual that is primarily grounded in the continuity of consciousness. However, unlike the Lockean approach that considers the continuity of consciousness as the relation between thoughts and experiences, I think of it as the phenomenology of the continuity of consciousness (i.e., what it is like to experience duration, succession, change, and movement).

This notion of the self is certainly undermined if the stream of consciousness is interrupted by periods during which consciousness is not present. How could a self that is based solely on consciousness survive when consciousness constantly pauses, stops, or goes out of existence just before a gap and continues, restarts, or comes into existence after the gap? Whether one and the same stream of consciousness is thought to be interrupted (or whether distinct individual streams of consciousness are thought to come and go upon encountering a gap), it is hard to defend the idea of my continuing existence as an individual without referring to something other than the stream itself or without generating the problem of re-identification. The consequence of this is that we either give up the persistence of one single individual self across gaps or fill out the gaps by appealing to non-consciousness-based identity conditions.

However, what if the gaps that appear to be episodes of complete unconsciousness are indeed conscious intervals in a certain restricted sense? In this chapter, I propose that although there seem to be gaps in consciousness, it is wrong to assume that consciousness is entirely absent during gappy periods. Our introspection tells us that the stream of consciousness is full of gaps, that our mental activities cross the border between consciousness and unconsciousness just as dolphin swims under and over the sea's surface. However, I wonder if the state we ordinarily describe as 'unconscious' could, in fact, be a kind of phenomenally conscious state.

In this chapter, I argue that gaps (on most occasions, at any rate)<sup>38</sup> are primarily experiential in the sense that there is something it is like for a subject to get through gaps, even though it is not always accessible via our retrospective cognition. I also argue that the phenomenology of a gap is ubiquitous in our inner conscious life during waking and non-waking periods alike. Not only is there something it is like to have mind-wandering, day-dreaming, sleep-walking, or sleep without dreaming, but there is also something it is like to have ruptured, interrupted, or discontinued trains of thoughts and experiences. In this respect, I believe that the gappiness of consciousness is a phenomenon that broadly characterizes our rich, inner, conscious life.

In section 5.1. I will show that our awareness of gaps may not be a pure inference but an inferential awareness grounded on our direct phenomenal awareness of the gaps. In section 5.2. I will examine a case of dreamless sleep and argue that there is a reason to doubt that consciousness is entirely absent in the episodes of dreamless sleep. In section 5.3, I will argue for the phenomenology of a gap, that there is something it is like to get through a gap. Section 5.4 concerns potential objections and challenges. I conclude that the gappiness of consciousness no longer poses a problem for the idea of the experience-based self as a single, persisting individual since the view that takes it as a problem is based on the wrong assumption that gaps are fully unconscious intervals. If the gaps are phenomenal such that they are integrated into the whole flow of consciousness, my continuing individual existence can be guaranteed by the continuity of consciousness alone.

### **5.1. A gap as a pure inference?**

The immediate difficulty in the claim that gaps are experiential is this: There appears to be something very odd and self-contradictory in the notion of gap phenomenology given that the term ‘gap’ is used to refer to a temporal interval during which a subject is not conscious. When

<sup>38</sup> It seems that there are some verbal issues. There are some ‘gaps’ that cannot be no longer called ‘conscious’ in the proper sense. For instance, death, as well as some non-recoverable brain injuries, is a gap with a permanent unconsciousness. I wonder, then, if we should still call these episodes ‘gaps’ unless we allow for the idea of resurrection.

consciousness is said to be gappy, it usually means that our inner mental life is alternated by conscious and unconscious periods. However, the claim that there is certain phenomenology directly related to gaps strikes us as contradictory. For gaps to be phenomenally conscious states, there would have to be something it is like for a subject to experience. This is to say that a subject would have to be conscious in order to experience temporal intervals during which s/he is not conscious. This would require the subject to be both conscious and unconscious at the same time.

This problem naturally leads us to think that what may be called the ‘phenomenology’ of gaps is only a retrospective awareness derived from retrospective inference. It can be said that our awareness of gaps is primarily based on inference rather than experience. For instance, during dreamless sleep, only the clock tells me that I have been asleep while I believe that I have not. The two experiences – the pre-sleep experience and the post-sleep experience – seem to be so successive that they leave no trace to assure me that I have been sleeping. In case we ‘know’ that we have been asleep for a while, we know it by seeing the clock and realize how much time has elapsed. So, it appears that our awareness of a gap occurs only as a retrospective inference.

Dennett (1997) shows how our awareness of a gap is fundamentally grounded in the retrospective inference by drawing an analogy between a temporal gap in consciousness and a spatial gap in a blind spot.<sup>39</sup> Just as we do not see the blind spot, we are not aware of the temporal gap between temporally dispersed experiences. Instead of a single, definite stream of consciousness, he says, there are multiple, parallel channels through which information entering the nervous system is under continuous editorial revision. Our thoughts and experiences are accomplished through this multi-track processing of information from sensory input.

According to this view, no single central headquarters in the brain has a role in re-presenting and re-discriminating already processed and discriminated information through a specialized, localized

<sup>39</sup> The blind spot is frequently used as an analog for a temporal gap in streams of consciousness. For instance, James (1890/1901) also draws the same analogy to support the idea that a temporal gap in consciousness is not experiential: “In the unconsciousness produced by nitrous oxide and other anesthetics, in that of epilepsy and fainting, the broken edges of the sentient life may meet and merge over the gap, much as the feelings of space of the opposite margins of ‘the blind spot’ meet and merge over that objective interruptions to the sensitiveness of the eye. ... even where there is a time-gap the consciousness after it feels as if it belonged together with the consciousness before it, as another part of the same self” (1891/1901, p.237).

portion of the brain. To have no information from the area of the retina does not pose any problem for the brain since the brain is simply not designed to “fill in” missing details. There is no information lodged in the region of the retina, and there is no single higher-order processor that fills in the lost information. Instead, the relevant area in the retina is simply neglected.

So, according to Dennett, it is a mistake to assume that “the brain is providing something when in fact the brain is ignoring something.” In other words, “*An absence of information is not the same as information about an absence*” (1997, p.87). There is an absence of information during certain periods – during episodes of a certain type of seizure, for instance. The sufferer of the seizure notices a gap only retrospectively through inference. Just as we are not aware of the fact that we are receiving no information from a blind spot, the sufferer is not aware of the temporal gap because the brain leaves the gap neglected and unfilled. There is only an absence of experience during the temporal gap, not an experience of an absence. Dennett thus concludes that the most striking feature of consciousness is its discontinuity.

If this view is right, we have to admit that we are capable of becoming aware of temporal gaps only inferentially and retrospectively, not through direct experiences during the gappy periods. In this case, what we call the phenomenology of a gap must always be an experience derived from retrospective inference. However, in my view, there may be a reason to think that gaps are themselves experiential in the sense that there is something it is like to get through them. It may be that our awareness of a gap is fundamentally based on a direct experience of a gap rather than inference. Furthermore, I conjecture that the phenomenology of a gap makes the inference of a gap possible, not vice versa.

Dennett holds that a temporal gap is not an experience of an absence but an absence of an experience. However, I wonder if there is also an experience of an absence and if the phenomenology of a gap is such an experience. In my view, the analogy between a temporal gap in consciousness and a spatial gap in the blind spot does not appeal well because there is a phenomenal difference between the ways in which we are aware of time and space. Even though the



brain does not intend to fill out missing details in the blind spot, there is no valid reason to think that the same holds for a temporal gap. Contrary to the case of the blind spot, it may be that temporal gaps are still looked after by the brain to some extent; as such, an experience of an absence with respect to time (as opposed to space) can be thought of as a kind of temporal awareness.

In what follows, I will explore such a possibility using the case of dreamless sleep. It may be that a subject's inferential reasoning that s/he has experienced dreamless sleep is grounded in the subject's experience during the period during which s/he was asleep.

## **5.2. The experience of dreamless sleep**

Sleep can be discussed broadly in two aspects relevant to the stream of consciousness: sleep with a dream and dreamless sleep. It is widely believed that dreaming is a specific kind of consciousness. While dreaming, a subject sometimes holds control over thoughts<sup>40</sup> and other times does not. On both occasions, there is something it is like for a subject to have a dream. A dreamless sleep, on the other hand, is traditionally viewed as a typical example of a temporal gap that interrupts the stream of consciousness based on the assumption that while a subject is asleep deeply without dreaming, one's consciousness is entirely absent. Therefore, the experiences before and after sleep are said to be distinct streams of consciousness.

If an episode of dreamless sleep is an episode of unconsciousness during which the self is a temporally extended individual by virtue of the fact that consciousness is unified over time, then for every 24-hour cycle, at least two individual selves are generated along the biological life of a single human being. No doubt, this is an unwelcome consequence that conflicts with how we intuitively think of our own existence. From a phenomenological perspective, it seems that we are aware of experiences before and after a dreamless sleep as parts of a single, unified stream of experience temporally paused by the period of the dreamless sleep cycle instead of as two distinct streams.

<sup>40</sup> A kind of dreaming when a subject maintains his control over thoughts is often called a lucid dream.

The best phenomenal support for this phenomenon, in my view, comes from the way gaps are specified phenomenally. It may be that the gaps are not devoid of consciousness entirely. It may be that, just as while dreaming, there is a specific kind of phenomenal consciousness that persists during dreamless sleep cycles. One's inference that one must have had a deep, dreamless sleep may have a direct phenomenal basis.

The question of whether consciousness disappears during dreamless sleep is, indeed, a matter of controversy. Generally speaking, sleep, unlike dreams, has rarely been a theme discussed in mainstream philosophy. This is probably because sleep (excluding dreaming stages) has been long assumed to be a state of unconsciousness, while consciousness has been a theme tackled by most philosophers. However, according to Windt (2020), this is a mistake because sleep is phenomenally more interesting and diverse than dreams. In fact, it can be said that dreams comprise only one part of the phenomenology of sleep. Given that humans spend around one-third of their lifetimes sleeping, if we leave out the phenomenology of sleep, we ignore a large part of what constitutes our experiential life.

Thompson (2015) is probably one of few contemporary philosophers who have attended to the phenomenology of dreamless sleep. He argues that there are reasons to think that some kind of dreamless sleep can be described as a certain mode of consciousness rather than an absence of consciousness. His argument is based on the grounds of both subjective (a subject's report) and objective data (neuro-physiological data) that do not provide strong reasons to think that consciousness entirely vanishes during dreamless sleep (2015, p.13). He also thinks that further philosophical grounds for this can be found in arguments for the phenomenology of dreamless sleep put forward by a tradition in classical Indian philosophy.

According to the Yoga and Vedānta school of thought, dreamless sleep is regarded as a state of phenomenal consciousness of a specific kind. How do we know that we have slept peacefully upon awakening? First, it can be said that we come to know we have had a deep, dreamless sleep by inference since we feel rested after dreamless sleep. It is commonly acknowledged that no memory

of any awareness of the dreamless sleep is involved in my saying upon awakening that I have slept peacefully. In saying so, I am not making reporting my memories based on my awareness of my dreamless sleep. Rather, my statement is simply a retrospective inference from how I feel now.

However, is this really what our experience of waking up from a deep sleep is like? It does not seem so; it still seems that we are *immediately* aware of having slept peacefully. The Yoga and Vedānta school, as Thompson explains, regards this sense of awareness upon waking up as based on a memory encoded by previous experience of being asleep dreamlessly. When we say that we have been asleep deeply and have not known anything, we are making a direct memory report that does not require any chains of inference. It would not be possible for us to make the direct memory report if our experience were entirely absent from the dreamless sleep. If this is the case for dreamless sleep, it is likely that the scope of consciousness is wider than is usually assumed.<sup>41</sup>

Thompson also points out that further support for the claim that the experience of dreamless sleep may come from making a distinction between being capable of having an experience and being capable of making a report about the experiences. Even when one is unable to remember or report what it was like, we should be wary of jumping to the conclusion that one was or is not able to experience. Just as it is hard to believe the behaviorist's conviction that dispositions to behavior (both verbal and non-verbal) are identified with consciousness, it is doubtful that one's being unable to self-report is a reliable source for determining one's experiential state. There could still be a non-reportable experience even when a subject lacks the ability to report it.

Likewise, as Thompson acknowledges, it is important to consider the distinction between the capacity to remember and the capacity to experience. To be unable to remember one's own experience of some period is not equivalent to being unconscious during that time. We may not be

<sup>41</sup> Some empirical evidence might tell us that what is thought to be unconscious temporal gaps can be categorized as some level of consciousness. It may be that consciousness is not entirely absent from patients under general anesthesia or with certain brain injuries. For instance, it has been shown that a certain level of awareness (the so-called the minimally conscious state) is present in patients who were initially diagnosed as being in a vegetative state. Unlike patients in the vegetative state that is characterized of simple auto-motor reflexes, a lack of awareness of oneself and an environment, patients in the minimally conscious state show a certain level of arousal and some fluctuating signs of awareness of the self and the environment (e.g., they can make eye contact and purposefully grasp objects). Recently, the minimally conscious state has become understood as a capacity for consciousness and distinguished from the merely vegetative state (Monti et al. 2010, Owen et al. 2006, Giacino et al. 2002).

able to recall a past event now, but that does not mean we were completely unconscious when it occurred.

James (1890/1901) considers this point as an instance of split consciousness. He says (in the case of a hypnotic subject), “*we must never take a person’s testimony, however sincere, that he has felt nothing, as proof positive that no feeling has been there*” since one’s consciousness may be split into parts that mutually ignore each other while they are coexisting and complementary (1890/1901, p.206) ... It may have been there as part of the consciousness of a ‘secondary personage,’ of whose experiences the primary one whom we are consulting can naturally give no account” (1890/1901, p.210).

I think it is interesting to explore whether the distinction between the capacity to remember and the capacity to experience lies in the fact that one’s consciousness is split into parts. However, for the purposes of the discussions presented in this chapter, it will suffice to say that a mental state may be cognitively non-accessible yet phenomenally conscious. Failure to appreciate such a distinction may be responsible for the failure to acknowledge that there might have been some experience directly related to gaps.

### **5.3. The phenomenology of a gap**

In this section, I make a general claim that gaps are phenomenal in the sense that there is a sense of what-it-is-like to experience gaps. The phenomenology of a gap is a ubiquitous, essential feature of our inner conscious world. There is not only something it is like to experience dreamless sleep, some kind of brain injury, mind-wandering, or sleep-walking, but there is also something it is like to have gappy trains of thought and experiences. I argue that the phenomenology of gaps makes our conscious life phenomenally deep, rich, and diverse by characterizing it by lively, rhythmic, and dynamic features.

I appreciate the gappiness of consciousness in the full sense: consciousness is, no doubt, inherently and persistently gappy in the way that Strawson (1997, p.422) describes. However, I

suspect that the right way to characterize a gap is to think of it as a period of unconsciousness. In one sense, consciousness, per Strawson's observation, seems to contain frequent, sudden discontinuities such that a stream metaphor is not applicable. This, however, does not mean that consciousness vanishes entirely and then restarts after a certain unconscious interval.

As Dainton (2000, pp.118-9) remarks, Strawson is mistaken in presuming that thoughts and experiences are discontinuous owing to periods of complete unconsciousness. Even though it is true from a neurological point of view that our mental life operates largely on unconscious processes of cognition, phenomenally speaking, we seem to take temporal gaps as pauses rather than full stops. Instead of thinking that multiple new streams appear and disappear every time there is a gap, intuitively, it seems most plausible to think that consciousness continues to flow despite frequent pauses and disruptions. Our intuition about the persistence of the stream of consciousness does not seem to be entirely explicable with reference to memory or inference. There may be more than that; there may be solid phenomenal grounds for it.

According to Dainton (2000), regardless of all the discontinuities and interruptions that occur in consciousness, there still remains enduring constancy and continuity of consciousness. Our thoughts take place "in the context of a relatively constant continuous mass of peripheral experience, bodily, emotional and perceptual, which together constitute the phenomenal background" (2000, pp.118-9). The idea is that even though the passage of individual thoughts is discontinued, consciousness continues by virtue of the continuity of background phenomenology (what Dainton calls the phenomenal background).

However, in my view, consciousness can be said to continue even before we refer to such a peripheral mode of awareness. It is crucial to view the stream of consciousness as a whole, not as an individual stream of one individual thought. The existence of a gap during a course of a thought poses a threat to the stream of consciousness only when experiences are posited as a single horizontally stretched line.

However, it is not that one experience occurs, pauses, and ceases before another experience comes and goes such that there is no experience at all during the temporal pause between the two experiences or between the passages of each experience. This is far from what experiences are like from a phenomenal perspective. Our inner conscious world does not seem to be phenomenally structured in such a way. It is characterized by much more complex and heterogeneous features. The entire stream of consciousness is an ensemble of both synchronically and diachronically dispersed experiences. Experiences with varied temporal extensions overlap both horizontally and vertically such that none of conscious thoughts and experiences can occur without being the background of each another.

In this respect, I think Bergson's description is the closest to explaining how experiences form the whole stream, which in turn, gives rise to experiential continuity "as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought" (1913, p.100-1). If Bergson is right, we have little reason to think that a temporal pause in the course of a single experience or between two distinct (groups of) experiences constitutes a period during which consciousness vanishes completely. When one experience pauses, others have already started and are continuing.

Analogously speaking, I propose that the experience of my own individual, continuing existence as a stream of consciousness is akin to the way we listen to a symphony than a cello suite. Our experiences do not line up in an orderly manner. They are not like constituents of one single linear melody but more like harmonies that contain a melody as only one part of them. Individual notes in the symphony merge into one single harmony for some time, and some notes escape from the harmony to later form another one. There are many pauses, but they hardly occur at the same time during the course of the performance. While there are some pauses locally, the whole stream of the musical piece continues in various manners manifesting various intensities and impressions.

Pauses are commonly acknowledged as an essential part of music in the sense that music cannot be created without them. Their purpose is not to break the stream of music but to enrich it by

providing rhythm. That is, silence does not interrupt music but is rather integrated into the whole stream of the musical piece. Just as the musical tones that take part in a symphony are played simultaneously to form harmonies and horizontally to form melodies (with different lengths, degrees, and strengths), our experiences and thoughts (with varied temporal extensions and intensities) intermingle into a single unified stream of consciousness.

Temporal gaps, in my view, are an important part of this complexity of the stream of consciousness. However, there are cases when the conductor pauses his or her entire orchestra all at once during the performance of a single piece. Isn't it that there is no experience of hearing during such pauses? I think that this occasion can be more appropriately described as hearing silence than not hearing at all. When the conductor creates such pauses, s/he does not intend to stop the musical performance but to play silence as a part of the whole performance. Silence is often used to intensify a dramatic effect of sounds that are immediately following (or being followed by) the silence. What we hear is not a complete blackout but something as having been silent – something as having been absent. In this context, the silence seems to be experiential in the sense that there is *something* it is like to hear *nothing*.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, I suggest that temporal gaps hardly break the whole stream of consciousness and that they are themselves experiential with a unique phenomenology.

#### **5.4. Challenges**

If it is true that the stream of consciousness as a whole complexity rarely discontinues, we may be able to preserve the idea of individuality of the self, the idea that self is an individual with reference to continuity of consciousness as its sole phenomenal grounds. The problem of bridging temporal gaps may not arise because the entire stream of consciousness is composed of experiences that overlap both horizontally and vertically and that are temporally extended in various degrees. Accordingly, there is no problem of diachronic identity since there is no question of whether the

<sup>42</sup> It is not surprising that composers are interested in the experience of silence. For instance, John Cage intends to provide an experience of 'nothing' through the experience of silence in his famous work 4'33': the performers are not to play their instruments for the duration of the piece (which lasts four minutes and 33 seconds, throughout the three movements).

self of this stream of consciousness and that of another stream of consciousness are one and the same. Insofar as continuity maintains through gaps, my continuing existence as an individual can be secured.

The scope of consciousness, in my view, can be extended to cover not only one's ordinary conscious life in addition to states of dreamless sleep, some clinical cases of brain damage, and cases of being put under general anesthesia. However, what of cases during which there is neither arousal nor awareness of any sort (such as comas)? Does the entire stream of consciousness discontinue at one time in such cases?

I think we should say that the self as a temporal individual is extinguished while in a coma since it loses the sole grounds for its continuity. When the whole stream finishes with no residual of any mode of consciousness, then the self can be no longer temporally extended. I wonder if we should consider comas and similar cases as a 'gap' in consciousness to begin with. If it is a gap, I think it should be treated as a permanent gap like death (perhaps, we should properly call it 'the end' rather than 'a gap'). Such a permanent 'gap' (one devoid of all phenomenology) is properly understood as a real sense of discontinuity that cuts the stream of consciousness altogether and all at the same time. Then, again, no problem arises regarding the experience-based self to bridge a gap either since it does not have to. The whole flow of consciousness ends, and so does my individual existence.

Then, one might wonder if this is a promising way to handle the challenge of gappy consciousness since it seems that the question of whether the proposed view is justified is largely an empirical matter. This is one way to undermine the problem of what it could be on the grounds of what it really is. So, even though it is successful, it would be only contingently (not necessarily) true. Even when it is right to say that dreamless sleep is not a period during which consciousness is entirely absent, we cannot rule out a metaphysical circumstance in which consciousness is full of gaps that are characterized by complete unconsciousness.

Imagine a world in which humans are governed by different neurological and physical rules such that consciousness is completely absent while sleeping. How shall we understand my continuing



existence over time in such a world that allows less than 20 hours of continuity of consciousness per day? My answer to this will not be much different from that in the case of a coma. My own individual existence is understood in terms of the continuity of consciousness: 'I' is a concrete, temporal individual in virtue of being the unity of diachronically extended consciousness. Thus, if there is no experience at all during the period of sleep, an individual self continues only upon waking up and goes out of existence just before falling asleep.

Perhaps, when there is nothing it is like to get through sleep, it is no longer properly called sleep but something else. We had better consider it as some occasion like 'death' rather than 'sleep' or as a permanent 'end' rather than a temporary 'gap.' It is more likely that an organism goes into 'stop' mode than 'sleep' mode. Even though the new self that comes into existence each morning retains all the memories of the previous self and identifies itself with the previous self, I hold that the new self, from a strictly phenomenal perspective, is not the previous self since it is not a temporal extension of the previous one due to the discontinuity of the stream of consciousness.

The self as a concrete individual lives only once, and is not repeatable or exemplified on any other occasion: 'I' exists once and only once. If the problem arises of identifying a subject before an entire unconscious interval with a subject after that interval, it is because the self as a subject of experience is understood with reference to something other than the continuity of consciousness.

One may also point out that the phenomenology of a gap is possible only on the assumption that accompanying experiences are already established as ongoing consciousness. It seems that even if we are aware of a gap, we are aware of it as a kind of a phenomenal contrast between experiences with and without a gap. When there are no accompanying experiences, there may be no awareness of a gap. That is, a gap will be left purely void of any experiential qualities.

It follows, then, that the phenomenology of a gap is a derivative sense of phenomenology secondary to overall consciousness rather than a direct awareness of a gap. Recall the case of hearing silence proposed as the auditory analog of the awareness of a gap. In order to experience silence, there must have been other experiences as the background by virtue of which we

distinguish phenomenally between hearing sounds and hearing no sounds. During the period when a conductor pauses his orchestra, we still hear, smell, see, and feel the concert hall (including other audience members, let alone all the thoughts running through in our minds). Even when we are in a vacuum where there is no medium through which sound waves can travel to our eardrums, our seeing, imagining, and thinking might still be ongoing. If so, the period that is assumed to be a gap is not really a gap as it relates to the problem of preserving the experience-based self.

A simple response is to say that this is exactly how gaps are experiential in our everyday phenomenology. Just as experiences with and without sounds are experienced in the backgrounds of other non-auditory experiences, our experiences of gaps are experienced in the backgrounds of other overlapping experiences. I wish to stress that we should suspect the assumption that our ordinary conscious life is composed of entirely unconscious periods that interfere with the whole flow of consciousness that much and that often – not only during every dreamless sleep or mind-wandering episode but also between individual thoughts or even during the course of a single thought.

When it comes to the link between the phenomenology of the continuity of consciousness and my own individual existence, I believe we should not localize the stream of consciousness into a single or a specific group of experiences or a specific mode of experiences but take the entire flow into account. Subsequently, we may appreciate that the stream of consciousness is more sustainable than is usually assumed. Regardless of multiple and frequently appearing localized gaps, the whole flow of consciousness has a strong tendency to remain intact in our day-to-day experiences.

But, it may still be that this response is irrelevant to the idea that gaps are themselves experiential. All that has been said is that consciousness, if it is perceived as a whole, continues to flow despite localized temporal gaps and disruptions. The phenomenology of a gap, however, is not necessarily required to preserve the stream of consciousness since consciousness can be said to flow continuously regardless due to the flow of other non-gap experiences.

This proposal can be unpacked into the following two claims: the claim that there are rarely complete discontinuities in the stream of consciousness presuming that gaps are only parts of the stream itself and the claim that gaps are phenomenal in the sense that there is something it is like to get through a gap. These are two distinct claims that are supported by two distinct grounds since to defend the first is not to defend the second. So, the questions we should be directly concerned with are, ‘What is the nature of the phenomenology of a gap?’ and ‘Is it an awareness relative to other ongoing experiences, or is there an experience of a gap itself?’

As a response to this, I argue that there is a phenomenology that is solely dedicated to gaps. In my view, this phenomenology should be considered a basic grounds for the phenomenal contrast between experiences with and without gaps. What kind (or mode) of experience represents gaps? One way to specify this may be to consider it as consciousness with empty contents, as consciousness without being conscious *of* (something). It may be argued that the phenomenology directly related to a gap is an experience with no intentional objects and their properties. It is an experience of absence, but it is not the same as an absence of experience in the sense that there is something it is like to get through that temporal interval.

In my view, this corresponds to the view of the classical Indian philosophy that is used by Thompson (2015), according to which there is a peculiar experience in dreamless sleep – the experience of not-knowing or not-cognizing – on the grounds that there are no outer or inner objects present to consciousness and no self is presented as a cognizer or knower. It seems that the experience of not-knowing can be construed as a typical case of an experience that lacks content. There is something it is like to unknow or uncognize, and, by virtue of this, it can be said that there is something it is like to be asleep deeply and dreamlessly.

However, there is something absurd about this approach. Specifically, it presumes that there is a kind of phenomenal consciousness without contents and that the stream of consciousness sometimes continues with contents and sometimes continues without contents. Thus, it is natural to wonder if this sense of bare consciousness is ever possible. It seems hard to imagine that there could be such a

contentless experience as a decent (though limited) sense of awareness. Is it possible to think without what is thought or to feel without what is felt?

To claim that there are conscious thoughts and experiences with empty content seems to intentionality deny the most basic feature of consciousness. Here, we are probably trapped in some linguistic tricks. Language often misleads us, and therefore, it should be acknowledged that being grammatically correct is distinguished from representing what it is phenomenally like. The syntax of our language allows us to use expressions such as ‘a thought of nothing’ or ‘feeling of nothing,’ and yet, it does not follow that there is such a thought or feeling. For instance, is there such an experience as hearing silence – an auditory perception with empty auditory content? Isn’t hearing silence is equivalent to no hearing at all? When we say or think we hear silence, what we mean by it is more likely that we do not hear *certain* sounds that are expected to be heard in a *certain* context – the sounds of music in the concert hall, for instance.

However, if we literally mean that we hear or experience silence in the sense that no sounds are presented to the auditory experience, I wonder if it is equivalent to say that hearing does not occur at all (i.e., that there is no hearing at all). Also, this is to say that the phenomenology of silence is no phenomenology at all. We cannot hear silence unless we do not hear at all; we cannot see anything unless we do not see at all, and we cannot think anything unless we do not think at all. There is really no hearing, seeing, or thinking.

If that’s the case, it may be that there is nothing it is like to experience a gap rather than there being something it is like to experience nothing. If a gap is thought to be consciousness with no content, then it is possible that there is no consciousness to begin with. It follows that we will have to dismiss the terms ‘phenomenology of a gap’ completely, as there is no such phenomenology.

Nevertheless, I believe there is something phenomenally genuine about the claim that consciousness is not entirely absent during a gap. There might be some ways to enhance the explanatory force of the classic Indian philosophical intuition that there is something it is like to get through a gap. First, we may insist that there can be contentless experiences. For instance, some

mental states such as anxiety and depression do not require a specific intentional object and its qualities to be represented as contents. One can be anxious without being anxious *about* a specific matter. When asked, ‘what are you anxious about?’, one’s answer sometimes is, ‘I do not know. I just feel anxious.’ The same holds for depression. If anxiety and depression are examples of consciousness without being conscious *of* (anything), it may be that the phenomenology of dreamless sleep is something like an overall conscious state without being conscious *of* [something].

However, it is far from clear whether these general moods are experiences of a lack of contents since they are still said to have content in the sense that they are *about* everything or every aspect of life in general. Even though it is true that there are some specific psychological states that lack intentional contents, a difficulty remains. Mood disorders like anxiety and depression have certain characteristics in virtue of which being anxious is distinguished from being depressed. If the phenomenology of a gap is something like this, how should it be characterized in ways that distinguish it from anxiety or depression? Certainly, we are not generally anxious or depressed during a gap. Then what specific mood do we feel when we get through a gap? It does not seem plausible to classify the experience of a gap as some kind of mood disorder. In my view, the phenomenology of a gap, if it is construed in this way, will likely remain a non-specified phenomenology that eventually will raise doubts about its existence.

The idea of being conscious without being conscious *of* may have some support from the notion of the pre-reflective or non-reflective mode of consciousness, which is mainly defended by Sartre and continental phenomenologists. According to phenomenologists, consciousness is generally divided into pre-reflective consciousness and reflective consciousness. Reflective consciousness is an objectifying consciousness that is considered as an intentional theme of a higher-order meta-awareness. Reflection occurs when I direct my attention to my experience. In doing so, I turn my experience into a theme of my attention. In reflection, my experience (a first-order mental state) becomes an object of my attention (a second-order mental state).

In contrast, pre-reflective consciousness is argued to have a non-objectifying structure. In the mode of pre-reflective consciousness, an experience is given not as an intentional object but as a very subjective experience. Pre-reflective consciousness is a specific mode of the self-consciousness within which experience is conscious *of* itself (or self-conscious) without turning itself into an intentional object. So, while reflective consciousness is introspectively accessible, thematic, explicit, and transitive, pre-reflective consciousness is a non-introspective, unthematic, implicit, and intransitive mode of awareness.<sup>43</sup>

According to phenomenologists, reflective consciousness is limited since it always operates on the duality between a subject and an object, the reflecting and the reflected on. Reflective consciousness implies that in order to have a conscious experience, we must be conscious of it as an object by considering it as an intentional theme of meta-awareness.

The relation between the two modes of consciousness has some hierarchical structure. Pre-reflective consciousness is considered more primary and fundamental than reflective self-consciousness; it is also thought to be a condition for reflective self-consciousness. Reflective

<sup>43</sup> It is worth reading Zahavi (2004, 2006, 2014) and comparing it with Kriegel (2004, 2005, 2009) for further details regarding the distinction between reflective and pre-reflective consciousness. Both Zahvi and Kriegel (2015) defend pre-reflective consciousness, but there is an important difference: Kriegel, from his self-representationalist stance, advocates one-order theories as opposed to higher-order theories and considers pre-reflective awareness as a mental state's inner, peripheral awareness of itself as opposed to external awareness of intentional objects. His view reflects Brentano's (1874/1973, pp.153-4, 179-80) secondary awareness and Gurwitsch's (1985) marginal awareness. In this tradition, experience is thought to have double intentional objects: a primary (external) object, which is the ordinary sense of an intentional object, and a secondary (internal) object, which is the experience itself. In this view, experience, instead of taking a lower-order experience as its intentional object, is conscious of itself in a closed loop of being its own intentional object. That is, a mental state is said to be self-conscious (intransitive self-consciousness) by virtue of being conscious of itself (transitive self-consciousness). In contrast, Zahavi, as a Husserlian phenomenologist, denies that pre-reflective awareness is this sense of peripheral awareness of experience itself on the grounds that it is still an awareness *of* an object even though it is an awareness *of* itself. He argues that insofar as an experience is considered as an object of intentionality, there is an inevitable risk of infinite regress – the problem of infinitely many conscious states. If a mental state is conscious by virtue of being an object of an inner awareness (and, in turn, the inner awareness itself is considered to be a mental state), then for it to be conscious, it has to be conscious by a further inner awareness, and so forth. Thus, according to Zahavi, the only way to have pre-reflective consciousness free from the vicious regress is for it to be a non-objectifying awareness. In pre-reflective consciousness, experience is presented not merely as an extraordinary object-consciousness but as “subjectively lived through” (Zahavi 2014, p.16). Our conscious experience is not objectified in the sense that I am not reflecting or introspecting on the experience in the explicit and thematic way. It is also not presented through some objectification of being perceived as an object by an internal awareness. Following Husserl, who, unlike Brentano, does not identify the givenness of experience with the givenness of object but instead takes it to be constitutive of the modes of consciousness (Zahavi 2004, p.82), Zahavi argues that a mental state becomes conscious not by virtue of being perceived as an intentional object by itself or by another mental state but by virtue of being pre-reflectively and non-objectively lived through and through.

consciousness always presupposes pre-reflective consciousness in the sense that in order to reflect, thematize, or objectify, there must first be that which is to be reflected on, thematized, or objectified. According to Husserl, as Zahavi (2005, p.163) explains, the nature of reflection is to grasp something that was already given prior. If nothing is to be grasped, there cannot be an act of grasping. In this sense, reflection in the phenomenological tradition is *not* considered as a *sui generis* conscious state since it, as an intentional act, necessarily involves a motivation.

One may think of the phenomenology of a gap as similar to this pre-reflective mode of consciousness. Regardless of its non-objectifying structure, however, I think that pre-reflective consciousness is different from a contentless experience. When a phenomenologist says that a mode of consciousness is given pre-reflectively, s/he does not seem to mean that experience can come with no contents. Instead, s/he means that we are reflectively aware of the contents of experience while pre-reflectively aware *of* experience itself. A better way to describe is to say that experience is pre-reflectively self-aware, without using the term 'of' in 'being aware of' since pre-reflective self-awareness refers to the reflexive feature of experience – the feature of experience's being self-aware (or self-awareness).

There is a phenomenal difference that arises from the differences between intentional objects. That is, there is a difference between what it is like to see a *red* object and what it is like to see a *blue* object. However, there is also a phenomenal difference arising from the difference of experience itself. In other words, there is a difference between what it is like to *see* a red object and what it is like to *imagine* it. The latter is given to us pre-reflectively, implicitly, and unthematically in the sense that it is not conscious by being an intentional object of any further inner awareness.

This is far from the claim that attitudes can come without content and content without attitudes. When experience is said to be conscious even in the pre-reflective sense, it is given as a whole in the sense that the (re)presented object is appearing in a certain way. To say that I am reflectively aware of an apple but also pre-reflectively aware of my visual experience of it (or, to rephrase, my

visual experience of it is pre-reflectively self-aware) is not the same as to say that my awareness is an awareness of nothing.

In my view, the phenomenology of a gap cannot be explained in terms of a contentless experience since it is not at all obvious that there is such an experience with no content or empty content. I do not see why the experience of nothing is not the same as no experience at all. The kind of phenomenology directly related to a gap should be more than a mere experience of nothing.

In my view, the phenomenology of a gap, if it is to be a genuine sense of experience, should be thought of as an experience with some content of a certain kind. More specifically, I take it as an experience with temporal content: it is an awareness *of* a temporal interval or duration. Consciousness with temporal content means consciousness that has temporal intentionality (i.e., consciousness that takes a duration or an interval as its intentional content). It is basically time-consciousness, an experience *about* or *of* time. In this sense, I posit that the phenomenology of a gap is still consciousness with content; it is still being conscious *of*.

I suggest that the best way to specify what it is like to have peaceful, dreamless sleep is to think of it as a kind of temporal awareness, an awareness of duration. One simple fact about sleep is that, as Searle (2004, p.201) notes, we seem to maintain a sense of the passage of time even during sleep such that we are aware, upon awakening, of how much time has elapsed while we were asleep.<sup>44</sup> This sense of time enables many of us to habitually wake up at a given time without an alarm clock.

This awareness of duration, in my view, is fundamentally phenomenal rather than purely inferential. As James (1890/1901, p.201) acknowledges, our knowledge of the passage of time would not be possible if the mind were not active during the interval. So, I claim that this sense of the temporal duration (rather than of pure absence or nothingness) is experienced during dreamless sleep.

It is true that there are no particular intentional objects represented to experience during the cycles of dreamless sleep, yet it does not follow that there is no experience at all or that there is an

<sup>44</sup> Searle also points out that the temporal awareness that arises during sleep is fascinating but insufficiently appreciated in philosophical discussions.



experience of nothing. There is still a residual experience *of* something, an experience with temporal content, the duration. In virtue of this peculiar awareness, I think experiences before sleep and experiences after sleep appear to us as a single, diachronically unified consciousness with a temporary interruption of sleep rather than as two distinct individual streams.

In my view, this can be generalized further as follows: if there is a phenomenology that is solely dedicated to a gap, it is best characterized by this sense of time, by an awareness of duration rather than awareness of an absence or nothingness. Gaps in consciousness are commonly considered as being temporal intervals that are absent of experiences. However, I believe it is more appropriate to say that this minimal sense of temporal awareness is encoded in gaps. Thus, this temporal awareness can be said to be a genuine sense of experience. During gaps, there is still a sense of time, and thus, a sense of continuity is maintained. This sense of temporal awareness unifies what appears to be mere discontinuities of consciousness with its experiential continuity. That is, in virtue of the phenomenology of a gap, consciousness is experienced as a temporally extended unity such that we do not experience one stream before a gap and another new stream after the gap; instead, we experience one and the same consciousness as continuous with some temporary interruptions.

The phenomenology of a gap is not merely a bare awareness but a genuine experience that has duration (or time) as its intentional content. What appear to be mere discontinuities of consciousness are now understood as experiential continuity. Consciousness is said to be gappy in the sense that there are no particular perceptions or thoughts but is still said to be continuous in the sense that there is something it is like get through those gappy stages of the stream.

## **Conclusion**

I conclude this chapter with some additional remarks about the proposal that the phenomenology of a gap is a kind of basic temporal awareness, an experience of duration. One potential concern is that the question of whether gaps are experiential is a largely empirical matter. There might be no

evidence from objective data that tells us that there is ongoing consciousness even in this basic sense of temporal awareness. The continuity thesis, then, will have to be restricted as a local matter whenever a gap occurs; every time one falls into sleep and wakes up, a new stream of consciousness begins. This is not a consequence I aim for in providing the argument for the phenomenology of a gap because if this were the case, our own continuing existence as a temporally extended individual could not be secured with the sole phenomenal basis of the continuity of consciousness.

Thus, I find it worth exploring some empirical possibilities that are a condition for the basic temporal awareness during the gappy phases of consciousness. In my view, the most basic condition for it may be explained by the hypothesis of a biological clock (an innate time-measuring mechanism in biological organisms, including humans). It is assumed that we have the faculty of registering time-measurement that regulates the cycle of circadian rhythms, by virtue of which we are often able to estimate durations with a high degree of accuracy without the aid of external indicators. Various habitual behaviors of animals and plants (e.g., the hibernation of bears) cannot be satisfactorily accounted for unless we presume such rhythmic processes internal to them.

The common view about such processes is that, as Whitrow (1972, p.67) explains, they occur “far below the level of consciousness.” Nonetheless, I think we should not rule out a possibility that our residual sense of time during a gap could be triggered by these peculiar rhythmical processes even when we do not recall or think that we were explicitly aware of every heartbeat and every breath during the period. Even though the time-keeping processes are not an awareness in the explicit sense, they are an implicit mode of awareness that generates the awareness of duration. In this context, our concern is not the explicit awareness of cognitive time imposed socially and scientifically but the experiential, phenomenal sense of duration. I believe the latter sense of temporal awareness could be enhanced by the presumption of the existence of the biological clock.

Endorsing the biological clock hypothesis also helps us deal with a challenge that might arise from another direction: specifically, from the idea that there can be no awareness of time where there is no awareness of movements or changes. The assumption behind this challenge is the

Aristotelian thesis that denies that time exists without motion or change. So, the phenomenology of a gap may be doubted on the grounds that our awareness of time is a derived sense of awareness secondary to the awareness of movement, change, and succession. If the phenomenology of a gap refers to an awareness of empty duration, we can ask if there is such phenomenology. Time without change may be a conceptual, logical possibility, as Shoemaker (1969, p.368) argues.

However, this does not seem to be a phenomenal possibility. Time may possibly exist without change, but the experience of time does not. With reference to the existence of the biological clock, however, the phenomenology of a gap is no longer the experience of the pure duration with no accompaniment of motion. It could be that the internal time-tracking processes represent the required motion in the most basic sense. The phenomenology of a gap can be understood as an experience of time from an implicit awareness of biological rhythms. In this sense, James (1890/1901) argues that there is no experience of duration devoid of all sensible content.

Our heart-beats, our breathing, the pulses of our attention, fragments of words or sentences that pass through our imagination, are what people think dim habitat. Now, all these processes are rhythmical, and are apprehended by us, as they occur, in their totality; the breathing and pulses of attention, as coherent successions, each with its rise and fall; the heart-beats similarly, only relatively far briefer; the words not separately, but in connected groups. In short, empty our minds as we may, some form of *changing process* remains for us to feel, and cannot be expelled (1890/1901, p.621).

I believe that my knowledge about my continuing existence as an individual is a kind of first-person knowledge, a direct, immediate knowledge that is not based on (or inferred from) other things such as observations of what I say or do, what others tell me, or what physical or physiological data indicate. I also believe that my own individual existence is known to me from the experience of continuity of consciousness. First-person knowledge of one's own individual existence is possible because of the experiential facts that consciousness is diachronically unified and that the stream of consciousness, if considered as a whole, is not undermined by the existence

of temporal gaps. This is because (if I am right) gaps are themselves experiential. They are integrated into the phenomenology of the entire stream of consciousness.

I argued that if the experience of an absence is not the same as an absence of experience, it is because the experience of an absence is not consciousness with a purely empty content but consciousness with a temporal content in some restricted sense. If our interest is in understanding what it is for a self to be a temporally extended individual with reference to continuity of consciousness and with no involvement of the problem of identity over time, then I believe to allow for the phenomenology of a gap as a part of the stream of consciousness is the most plausible, albeit the most naïve, approach to the experience-based notion of the self.

The ultimate goal of the current proposal is not to fill gaps with non-experiential, non-consciousness components but to fill them with experiences of a certain sort, namely temporal experiences. This proposal does not deny that there are gaps in consciousness but claims that there is a kind of phenomenology by virtue of which there is something it is like to get through gaps. To make this claim is not to exclude gaps from the stream of consciousness but to embrace them as an essential part of it. Gaps are phenomenal features that complete the stream of consciousness. Thus, it should be asked not whether the self can survive over the gappiness of consciousness but how our own, phenomenally rich, individual existence is complete despite the gappy phases of consciousness.

# Conclusion

In this thesis, I attempted to defend the individuality of the self (i.e., the most intuitive, pre-philosophical idea about the self according to which 'I' is an individual of a certain kind that bears certain attributes and relations) and that is itself not an instance of another individual. I argued that the self is an individual. More specifically, I argued that the self is not an abstraction such as a property, a relation, a set, or a state of affairs but a concrete individual particular, a basic unit of the concrete reality in the world.

Certainly, the self can be said to be a concrete individual by virtue of being a body that is extended through space. However, I propose that the minimally construed self is a subject of experience and that being a subject of experience entails more than a mere physical body. At the same time, I rule out the idea that the self is an individual being by virtue of being a mythical, immaterial entity such as a soul or a Cartesian substance. I want to maintain the ontological scope of the advocated notion of the self within the sphere of the physical world. Although I rule out the two most obvious ways to think of the self as an individual – as a body or as a substance (of an immaterial kind) – I believe that the idea of the individuality of the self should not be dismissed. The self, if it exists, is an individual more than anything else.

My aim in this thesis was to seek a theoretically satisfactory way in which self can be rightly said to be an individual without reference to a physical entity, such as a body or a brain, or to any entities whose nature is not bound to the physical domain. That is, the notion of the self I defended is the self that is a concrete individual particular but whose mode of existence is different from that of ordinary three-dimensional objects.

The question, then, is as follows: Is there anything other than ordinary physical objects that can be considered concrete individuals? I have approached this question by drawing attention to the fact that some items in the world are extended through time while not extended through space in ways

characteristic of ordinary three-dimensional items. In my view, there is little reason to rule out the possibility that such essentially temporal items are also a part of the genuine physical reality and that the self, if it exists, belongs to the temporal dimension along with other temporal items.

Accordingly, I introduced sounds as an analog of the self and argued that the self is analogous to sounds with respect to its mode of existence. More specifically, I offered the event account of the self, according to which the self is best understood as an event-like concrete particular that is analogous to a sound particular. My analogy was based on the assumptions that a sound, as claimed by Casati and Dokic (2014) and O’Callaghan (2007, 2009), is an event-like particular and that an event, as claimed by Quine (1985) and Davidson (1985), is a fundamental *sui generis* ontological category of a concrete particular. This proposal seems to align with the idea of the individuality of the self. Therefore, to regard a self as an event-like particular – as an individual in time as opposed to space – can be an alternative approach to the idea that self is an individual without reference to a body or an immaterial substance.

So far, the advocated notion of the self was discussed from a third-person perspective. From this perspective, we can place the self in the category of concrete particulars – more specifically, in the category of event particulars. However, when it comes to the problem of one’s understanding of oneself from a first-person perspective, a question remains: What is it to have my own individual existence as such a temporal particular?

The account I developed offers an experience-based notion of the self that is rooted in the subjective, first-person perspective. I presented the individuality of the self as the unity of consciousness. In particular, given that the self is an individual in time as opposed to space, I argued that the individuality of the self is best understood in terms of the diachronic unity – the fact that consciousness is unified across time. In other words, the self can be rightly called an individual with reference to consciousness on the phenomenal grounds of experiential continuity – the experience of duration, succession, and change.

Furthermore, by considering the problem of identity as a special problem based on the idea of space, I argued that the problem of the individuality of the self should not be confused with the problem of identity over time. This is because, as James (1890/1901, p.230) acknowledges, no thought, once gone, can recur or be identified with a thought that occurs later, just as one cannot step into the same river twice. Thoughts may be about the same objects, but each thought is unique. So, James writes,

Even then we should have to confess that, however we might in ordinary conversation speak of getting the same sensation again, we never in strict theoretic accuracy could do so; and that whatever was true of the river of life, of the river of elementary feeling, it would certainly be true to say, like Heraclitus, that we never descend twice into the same stream (James 1890/1901, p.233).

The conclusion of this thesis is open-ended. I make some suggestions about what it is for a self to be an event-like particular. There are two views on this: one considers the self as an event of its own that runs through individual thoughts and experiences, and the other regards the self as an event of the stream of consciousness as a whole. The self in the former is thought of as a simple event particular, while it is seen as a complex event particular in the latter. It seems to me that the two views are equally plausible. So, instead of arguing for one, I will predict what consequences can be drawn from each view.

First, the self may be construed as an event-like particular that is equated neither to the content nor to the structure of the stream of consciousness. It may be that the self is an event that exists separately from the stream of consciousness in the sense that there is an event of the self on the one hand and events of thoughts and experiences on the other. This notion tells us that the self is an individual that is distinct not only from other individuals but also from the stream of thoughts and experiences. 'I' is thought to be a subject that has certain relations with consciousness. Yet, given that an event is a concrete particular, my own individual existence fits neatly within the realm of the

world of other concrete particulars. That is, for 'I' to be an individual subject of consciousness, 'I' does not need to be a body or an immaterial substance.

In this view, the stream of consciousness – the very continuity of consciousness – is the only evidence indicating that the self is a living and dynamic particular that moves across time continuously. Generally speaking, one common way I can know directly from my own experience that I am possibly moving is to perceive others as appearing to be moving and passing by. Likewise, from the ever-changing flow of consciousness, I may be able to infer not only that thoughts and experiences are flowing but that 'I' is also flowing. For instance, both the heliocentric view and geocentric view are based on observations that stars, planets, and the sun appear to be moving. From the phenomenological fact that they are moving, we can have both hypotheses that the sun revolves around the earth and that the earth goes around the sun. Similarly, from the same phenomenological fact that consciousness is diachronically unified, it can be hypothesized both that 'I' is a static, invariable, identical pole among changing experiences and that 'I' is the one that moves.

Most philosophical discussions about the self in relation to consciousness have revolved around only one interpretation of continuity of consciousness. The self is commonly viewed as a center of the inner world, as a fixed, invariable point around which everything else revolves. None of my thoughts and experiences are the same; they all come and go. The thoughts may have the same content, but, strictly speaking, as James points out (1890/1901:230) above, they are never the same thought. The self, however, remains invariant and unchanging. Both realists and skeptics seem to implicitly agree to this point.

Nevertheless, we should not forget that the continuity of consciousness can provide equally good phenomenal evidence to support the possibility that the self is an ever-changing and always-moving reality. It may be that consciousness appears to 'me' as a stream like a river by virtue of the fact that 'I' is a constant mover traveling across time. My awareness of myself as the constant mover can be derived from the experiential continuity of consciousness. In this view, we have a dynamic notion



of the self – the self with velocity – with specifications of speed and direction. With the suggestion that the self is an independent, simple event particular (as opposed to ordinary psychological events), this view can offer a version of the event account with the most unique and revolutionary character.

Once we realize that the self is not something invariable and unchanging in the multiplicity of changing experiences, it becomes much easier to deal with many skeptics' concerns about the self. For instance, Hume's complaint that there is no self but only ever-changing experiences as our introspection reveals can be re-interpreted as an honest testimony that implicates the existence of the self as a dynamic, moving reality. This is because it can always be said that my own movement over time gives rise to my awareness of the experiences in a state of flux.

It could be that the self is not a bundle of experiences but the one that goes around it. To think of the self as an independent event particular can also help us find an answer to the question of how the reference of the first-pronoun 'I' does not seem to be there whenever and wherever we look for it. Generally speaking, our language is not an effective tool for catching any change or movement, and what we have is 'I' as a constant mover. Our language is not fast enough to catch such a moving target, which is probably why the first-pronoun 'I' seems to be constantly missing its reference. It is simply too late to fix the self to the static world of linguistic symbols.

This proposal also enables us to view the phenomenology of time-consciousness from a different perspective. If we presume that the self, as an event particular, is itself a moving thing, our experience of time can be accounted for in terms of a relation between two events, an event of the self and an event of the experience. This fits nicely into the framework of the relativist theory of time. For instance, the question of why time seems to pass quickly when we are pleased but not when we are bored may be explained partly in reference to a difference of velocity between a self event and a mental event. If we presuppose the existence of the moving self with varying degrees of velocity, in my view, many problems of time-consciousness may have simple solutions.

The proposed view can also provide a notion of the self with no attachment to ownership over consciousness. Contrary to common belief, the self (in this view) is not said to ‘own’ or ‘possess’ any experiences, even though it is certainly thought to be related to experiences. All the sorrows, joys, excitements, and disappointments are, strictly speaking, not mine. It might be that I just so happen to pass by those mental events. Mental ownership gives us fantasies that the self, as an owner of experiences and thoughts, can manipulate and direct them in certain ways. That is, it is assumed that I entertain some power and right on *my* thoughts and experiences in the sense that I can decide to hold it for a while or give it away.

However, without ownership, I do need not be disappointed about a loss of control of the thoughts and experiences simply because they are not mine (and, therefore, I have no right to claim them as mine or to disown them). It is just that I happen to visit them, stay with them, and leave them behind at some later time, just as a hitchhiker moves from one planet to another on his journey through the galaxy. To have no ownership over thoughts and experiences, however, does not mean that there is no self since the self as an independent, simple, event particular can be related to them without claiming the ownership.

This all sounds good, but there is one immediate difficulty. To think of the self as a single event particular existing independently of the stream of consciousness makes the self no less mythical than a soul or a Cartesian immaterial substance. This view seems to offer a notion of the self as another peculiar and strange being even in the form of an event.

First, it may be said that by opening a gap between experience and the self as its subject, this view introduces the idea of space (i.e., the distance between the experience and the self) and, accordingly, places the self somewhere external to the stream of consciousness.

However, the whole point of the event account is to challenge such a spatial approach to the understanding of the self. Therefore, it may be said that this is not a problem, given the very nature of events. In thinking of the self as an event particular, we accept that it is an individual that is different from ordinary material objects. In turn, the apparent distance between two events – the self

and the experience – is not a physical distance. This is because event particulars are individuals in time as opposed to space; therefore, any two event particulars can be in the same place at the same time. That is, there is no idea of space that needs to be generated as the distance between two distinct events.

Certainly, any two spatial objects cannot occupy the same place at the same time. However, this does not hold for event particulars. An event is essentially a temporal phenomenon. The temporal dimension is sharply distinguished from the three-dimensional space in that it allows any two individuals to exist at the same time. Also, there is no special problem to think that an event-particular (i.e., a sound from a violin) and its source object (i.e., a violin) occupy the same place at the same time. Note also that even the idea that two individual people exist in the same place at the same time makes sense from a four-dimensionalist's perspective since four-dimensionalism allows for overlapping temporal parts of the two distinct individual people.

In this sense, I do not think that the given proposal is subject to the problem of 'Too Many Thinkers' as Olson outlines (2007: 35-37). There is no need to choose between 'I' as an event particular and 'I' as an animal body in the way we need to choose between 'I' as a brain and 'I' as a whole animal body or between 'I' conceived as a whole and 'I' as an animal body conceived as a part. If we think that the world we live in is full of temporal items like sounds, smells, winds, or movements – that is, if we allow the world to be the living and dynamic reality – the self can also be a part of it. So, the idea that the self is a concrete individual particular can be preserved when the self is not a spatial thing but essentially a temporal thing. So, it can be said that the given difficulty arises only from the lack of an understanding of how event particulars in time differ from ordinary three-dimensional particulars in space.

Another question arises: If the self is an event-like particular that is distinguished from the stream of consciousness (and from any features of individual experiences), then what kind of features can be ascribed to the self? A sound particular, for instance, bears auditory qualities such as timber, pitch, and loudness. Are there certain features that can be attributed to the self in the same

way? By virtue of what features can the self be correctly called ‘self’ rather than another event particular such as a sound, a smell, or a wind? Furthermore, the question of how the self is experienced as an event – as the temporal unity that is extended through time – remains to be answered. Therefore, a deeper level of metaphysical and phenomenological investigations should be carried on to answer these questions. Nevertheless, I believe we can make a weaker claim that the possibility of my own individual existence as a separately existing event-like particular should not be ruled out.

An alternative way to think of the self as an event-like particular is to think of it as a totality of experience, as the whole stream of consciousness that is itself an event-like particular. In other words, the self is conceived as a diachronically unified consciousness itself. Certainly, this view does not tell us a radically new story since it basically repeats the familiar idea of the self as the stream of consciousness. Its real benefits are its familiarity and simplicity. There is no need to appeal to any specific sort of an event particular other than the stream of consciousness: the only material required to account for what it is for a self to be an event-like particular is the stream of consciousness and nothing more. We are required to invest little effort to grasp this view since the only add-on is the idea that the stream of consciousness itself can be classified under the ontological category of events. So, it is natural to feel less resistant to and more comfortable with this view.

Nevertheless, some difficulties arise. For instance, one may wonder what it means to take the stream of consciousness as its totality. If we think of the stream of consciousness, we are confronted with a variety of individual thoughts and experiences that are constantly changing and evolving across time. Since there is no particular thought or experience as the persisting unity, we will have to think of the whole stream as a collection of individual thoughts and experiences. If so, it does not seem easy to claim that the stream of consciousness itself, if perceived as a whole, is a concrete event particular since all there are events of individual thoughts and experiences. To infer from the fact that particular thoughts and experiences are concrete event particulars to the fact that its

collection is also an event particular is a category mistake. The notion of the self in this view looks very similar to that in the bundle theory.

In response to this, it may be said that, as with many other concrete particulars, there is an event particular in a complex form that consists of other event particulars. For instance, a bicycle can be said to be a concrete particular of its own while also having various other particulars, such as its wheels, handles, brakes, pedals, and other parts.

Likewise, it can be said that an event particular can take a complex form that consists of other event particulars. Think of a baseball game. It is an event that is itself extended through time, and it is a complex form of an event that consists of various other events that are also extended through time. Similarly, we can think of the whole stream of consciousness as a complex event particular that has various conscious events as its parts. If we do not allow for a complex event particular, hardly any event can be rightly said to exist, just as in the case of ordinary three-dimensional particulars. This line of reasoning is based on a metaphysical view that is different from the bundle theory, according to which concrete particulars are accounted for wholly in terms of properties with no reference to underlying substrata.

One may also consider the current proposal as operating in the traditional metaphysical framework in which concrete particulars are construed to consist of a substratum and properties. However, given that one of the principal goals of this thesis is to account for what it is to be a self without referring to the category of substance, I think we should rule out the traditional substratum view. I believe the metaphysical position on concrete particulars that suits the proposed view the best is a nominalist one. Even its most extreme version –austere nominalism – let alone trope theories, will do.

Unlike the bundle theorist, austere nominalism states that concrete particulars are the only fundamental entities that are not further analyzable. The only things that exist are individuals (i.e., concrete particulars such as this particular tree or that particular house). I believe the notion of the

self as an event particular, by virtue of being the diachronic unity of consciousness, fits more comfortably within this metaphysical picture.

There is another related problem: If the self is a complex form of an event particular, what distinguishes the self from a non-self or a non-mental event? A baseball game is a baseball game, not a basketball game, by virtue of being a collective of specific events such as hitting the ball, running around four bases, and being called 'out.' However, this does not seem to hold for the case of the self as the stream. It is hard to imagine that any one experience or cluster of experiences is necessary for being the self. For instance, suppose that the only experience allowed for an imaginary organism is pain. In this case, the whole stream of consciousness consists of pain accompanied by no background consciousness. Imagine that the pain occurs and persists during some time, immediately followed by a period of unconsciousness. In such a case, can we say that the self of that organism is 'pain,' given that the self is an event of the entire stream of consciousness?

One answer to this might be that thinking of the self as the stream of consciousness does not mean that the whole consciousness is a cluster of various experiences with various contents; it only means that experiences are temporally organized. Each experience has a certain duration, is followed by others, and evolves and changes over time.

Therefore, it may be suggested that the right way to understand the idea of the self as the stream of consciousness is not to perceive the self as *what* is experienced but as *how* consciousness is experienced as a continuous flow. Even though the stream of consciousness consists of only a single event (in our example, pain), the way the pain is experienced over time is distinctively phenomenal in the sense that there is something it is like for the pain to persist, change, evolve, and stop as followed by unconsciousness. In other words, the pain is experienced as temporally characterized with some duration and change. This line of reasoning appeals to the features of the stream itself rather than its contents.

Alternatively, it may be that we should consider the stream of consciousness literally as a whole in the way the distinction between the stream and its contents does not matter. In this case, the consequence is simple enough: the self as the stream of consciousness continues over time despite changes of individual thoughts and experiences, just as a wooden ship displays its physical continuity over time even when some of its original wooden parts are replaced by new ones. If the stream consists of only one particular experience (pain), we may say that the self continues insofar as the particular experience continues. This is a naïve way to make sense of the notion of the self (i.e., as the stream of consciousness as a totality), but it may still work.

There are other possible views, but I believe the two described above are the most plausible suggestions worth considering when further developing the event account. However, it is unclear which one is best. It seems that the idea of the self as an event-like particular can be framed more comfortably in the second proposal than in the first. It is ontologically less demanding and, thus, more approachable. The first proposal is largely unexplored and probably theoretically more challenging. Nonetheless, it may attract special attention since it may afford, with sufficient specification, a completely new insight into the problem of what it means for the self to be an event particular.

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