

Mixed Emotions
The Phenomenal Experience of Recognition

by

Tobold Leif Rollo
B.A., University of British Columbia, 2006

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I defend the argument that the conventional account of recognition as a process of linguistic intersubjectivity does not adequately explain the occurrence of non-propositional appraisals of the recognition experience such as shame and trust. I present an alternative account consisting of two distinct but related ‘moments’ comprising the encounter between self and other: the standard linguistic form of intersubjectivity, which I term the ‘narrative moment’, and an affective and behavioural intersubjectivity that I term the ‘phenomenal moment’. Through a concise analysis of contemporary recognition theories, classical phenomenology, and contemporary empirical research on the ‘phenomenological self’ I conclude that the success and failure of recognition depends in some instances on mitigating the tension between the self’s ‘narrative’ and ‘phenomenal’ appraisals of the other, or what I term ‘phenomenal dissonance’.

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INTRODUCTION

When a Native person is seen walking along the road, others can see their dignity because it stands out in the way they carry themselves, also the way they face life. Other people want to know what a Native person has they don't have - we say that others lack a feeling of truth within. If a person doesn't have this feeling within, they do not feel comfortable. They are looking for something to happen that brings them comfort. -- Twylah Hurd Nitsch (Seneca)¹

Theories of recognition must posit a subject, a consciousness, a self, who desires recognition, an affirmation, a confirmation of value from the other. The interaction between self and other is commonly posed as a struggle, a dialogue, the intersubjective source of self-esteem and identity. It is seen as an engagement that promises to transform us and provide us with the confidence to be, or rather become, who we are. Accordingly, in the absence of recognition we are said to suffer serious trauma to our self-esteem, identity, and agency. Theories of recognition therefore turn on questions concerning the recognitive encounter between self and other. How do we see our selves in the moment of recognition? How do we see the other? What are the pre-conditions of this intersubjective meeting? These are the general questions that we will be attending to in the following.

More specifically I would like to explore how we see, experience, and understand our selves and others in different ways at the same time. Why might the subaltern continue to feel misrecognized despite ample public apologies, dialogue, legislation, and reparations? How is it that the emotion of shame exists concurrently with pride? What motivates the hegemon to engage as a partner in dialogue with a 'lesser' or even 'contemptible' subaltern? I will be arguing that contemporary recognition theories offer

¹ Nitsch, Twylah Hurd. "Bridging the Gap with other People," *In the Words of Elders*. P. Kulchynski, D. McCaskill, and D. Newhouse eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 88-89.

inadequate explanations to these problems because they conceive the moment of the encounter as housing a single mode of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, a single channel of understanding, a single medium of meaningful exchange: language. Thus, the encounter between self and other is understood as a hermeneutic event, a site of interpretation, a bringing to bear of all the meanings that constitute a person's history, culture, identity, and nothing more. By this account my self and the other encounter each other carrying our storied lives, which we speak from and through. According to recognition theories, for our meeting to move forward as a genuine recognition process it must be a perpetual meeting of backgrounds, a series of what I will be calling 'narrative moments'.

I will be arguing that the conceptual scope of this hermeneutic process, the narrative moment, alone cannot convincingly address the difficulties I just identified. For sometimes despite everything we think we know about the other, despite everything we have interpreted, despite all the understandings engendered by our storied accounts, we often discover the surprising persistence of our trust in the other, our shame in ourselves, and of our desire for recognition. Many have attempted to attribute this interference in our narrative understandings to the workings of the *subconscious*, as in psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity. In our argument, however, we will be focusing primarily on the domain of conscious experience, for the most part because it is the experiential life of human beings that provides recognition with its normative force, but also because I think there are simpler and more productive answers to be found in conscious experience.

I will examine whether that the inexplicable persistence of trust and shame in our storied encounters with the other is best explained with reference to a parallel moment,

one that finds varying degrees of support in virtually every accepted theory of the self, mind, cognition, emotion, and subjectivity. Along side the narrative moment I suggest there is a simultaneous mode of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, a concurrent channel of understanding, a parallel medium of meaningful exchange: pre-theoretical, or *phenomenal* experience. The ‘phenomenal moment’, as I shall call it, is comprised of our consciously accessible, pre-theoretical and emotional appraisals of the world, thematizations of the others’ expressions and behaviour that, I shall argue, often manifest in tension with or in direct contradiction to our narrative interpretations. In the phenomenological tradition what we are refereeing to has been called an empathic encounter, for this reason I will be referring to it as the phenomenal moment. The tension that emerges between the ‘narrative’ and ‘phenomenal’ moments I will term ‘phenomenal dissonance.’

In these two moments we are in effect two selves, that is, we reflect on others and our selves in two distinct and interrelated ways that are present, if implicitly, in most recognition theories. The ‘narrative self’ stands as our understanding of others and our selves as being a certain type of person that engenders specific roles, rights, and responsibilities. Certain things make sense for me to do or to believe by virtue of me being who I am and I cannot legitimately or even intelligibly be asked to do or believe otherwise. Likewise, I understand and interpret the other through and against my particular tradition, ways, or cultural background. Who *you* are can only be interpreted and understood from my situatedness in a particular horizon of meaning. Neither you nor I could be otherwise.

The ‘phenomenal self’ is our unmediated pre-theoretical understanding of others and our selves as living, acting, feeling, and accessible subjects. When I see an other’s expressions and behaviours I immediately understand the other as a separate being like myself, a being who is at this moment experiencing shame or pride, is worthy or unworthy of trust, is open or closed to dialogue. But already this is to attribute a great deal more to the self than is considered prudent by theorists sympathetic to the linguistic turn in philosophy, for whom language is constitutive of thought. Accordingly, a large part of what follows will be an exploration of the scope of the phenomenal and its role in the recognition experience.

I would like to provide a brief roadmap of the major moves of the thesis, which is separated into three chapters titled ‘Self and Recognition’, ‘Alterity’, and ‘Intersubjectivity’. In Chapter I we introduce the dual narrative and phenomenal selves in a little more depth after which we identify their inchoate presence in Hegel’s master/slave dialectic. Continuing on to an exploration of recognition theories developed in chiefly Hegelian terms we will explore two distinct and emblematic contemporary recognition theories. The first is articulated by Axel Honneth in his book *The Struggle for Recognition*,² wherein Honneth seeks to naturalize Hegel’s metaphysical conditions for struggle for recognition by positing a social psychological (Meadian) ‘looking-glass’ self.

The second is represented in the dialogical recognition theory of Charles Taylor, who in the tradition of Gadamer portrays the encounter between self and other in terms of pure linguistic or narrative intersubjectivity. Taylor does, however, adapt a *thin* phenomenal self with spatio-temporal orientational capacities from the work of Merleau-

² Honneth, Axel. 1995. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. J. Anderson trans. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ponty. By the end of Chapter I it will become apparent why the turn to linguistic intersubjectivity was perceived as a necessary advance; how else could we think about mutual understanding other than through some identifiable medium of exchange such as language? In short, language overcame the problem of solipsism.

In Chapter II we will explore the charge of solipsism by way of introduction to Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. Husserl proposed that we could suspend our natural attitudes of the world and rely instead on 'categorical intuitions' and presuppositionless understandings to get at the essences of things. As we shall see, phenomenologists like Husserl rejected the claims of Max Scheler and others that the epistemic boundaries between the self and the other were dissolved in an unmediated empathic encounter. Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued that we can perceive the other because our own bodies at times present themselves as something unfamiliar to us. Any further knowledge of the other is mediated through language and culture. This position will lead us to a brief discussion of Martin Heidegger, who argued that we do not know the other directly, but through the world of things (eg, tables, cars, houses) which point to a social world populated by others. From Heidegger's focus on how tradition determines our relations with others by shaping the world of common meanings it is a short step to Gadamer's focus on language and the shift from phenomenological intersubjectivity to hermeneutics and mutual interpretation.

With a survey of the phenomenological tradition and the problem of solipsism in place we will then turn to an exploration of the scope and depth of the phenomenal self. We will do so with reference to a host of significant empirical evidence which will not only establish a basis of the *thin* version of the phenomenal self advanced by Merleau-

Ponty and Charles Taylor, but also for a *thick* version of the phenomenal self containing a fascinating vindication of Scheler's empathic moment. With an initial *thick* version of the phenomenal self on the table we will return to our recognition theories to clarify the nature of interference in the narrative encounter.

With the scope of the phenomenal self sufficiently explored, we will begin Chapter III with two minor developments. The first will be to argue that our phenomenal understandings constitute a distinct background running parallel to our culturally derived horizons of meaning, our 'narrative' background. The second development will come out of an investigation into the kind of intersubjectivity that the phenomenal background affords. Here the widely accepted model of emotions as 'appraisals' will be utilized, with particular attention paid to the phenomenal experience of SHAME. We will seek to distinguish the phenomenal manifestation of SHAME from its narrative counterpart, which will cast some light on the occurrence of phenomenal dissonance, or the unexplained presence of SHAME and other emotions.

We will then return to Honneth and the symbolic interactionist explanation of the struggle for recognition, which I will argue is incomplete and offers little insight into phenomenal dissonance. Furthermore, the rudimentary self-awareness Honneth posits instead of a *thin* phenomenal self is ill equipped to explain even basic intersubjectivity and shame. We shall see that the theory of the reflective 'looking-glass' self harbours a relatively *thick* phenomenal subject. Next we will return to Charles Taylor and his version of a dual background: a *thin* phenomenal self that orients us in the physical world and a narrative self that orients us in the social world. It is a problem for Taylor that shame emerges wholly from the narrative moment. We will conclude that the

phenomenal dissonance between narrative and phenomenal in the recognition experience is inexplicable without reference to some irreducible emotional appraisals of the other that fall into tension with our propositional understandings. Propositional understandings of the encounter between self and other cannot adequately account for phenomenal dissonance.

In our conclusion we will briefly discuss work in political theory that has focused on the emotional life of the subaltern and demonstrates the kind of attention to the phenomenal dimensions of experience delineated in this thesis. I will draw from of Sonia Kruks' *Retrieving Experience*,³ wherein she uses Simone de Beauvoir's work on the phenomenal and emotional experience of the subaltern to critique the theories of the subject defended by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Finally, I will offer some concluding thoughts on how the claims concerning intersubjectivity defended in this thesis bear on the politics of recognition and the prospects of reconciliation.

³ Kruks, Sonia. 2001. *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

CHAPTER I: SELF AND RECOGNITION

The future of self research will depend in large measure on how successfully broad theoretical advances are able to link together specific bodies of research that deal with self and identity.¹

Dual Moments and Dual Selves

The experience of *misrecognition* or *nonrecognition* can be devastating and it behoves theorists to ascertain so far as possible the character of the experience motivating recognition claims. The experiences of cognitive success and failure are often immediate, emotive, and intuitive, and often the significance of the event is only fully disclosed when we reflect and re-present ourselves in the moment. Only in reflection can we appreciate the full gravity of our choices and the implications for our identity.

The distinctly Western preoccupation with self-interpretation has been explored by Charles Taylor in his *Sources of the Self*.² Though it is not explicit in Taylor's work, the experience of the self in the moment of recognition and in memory are central features. As Ian Craib writes in *Experiencing Identity*: "[A]ny sociological account of our world must imply something about the way people experience the world."³ The principal material of philosophical inquiry here is the impulse behind the politics of recognition and the moment of encounter. Our methodological access is through the transformative

¹ Leary, M. and Tangney, J.P. 2003. "The Self as an Organizational Construct in the Behavioural and Social Sciences," *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Leary, M. and Tangney, J.P. eds. New York: Guildford Press, p. 13.

² Taylor, Charles 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

³ Craib, Ian. 1998. *Experiencing Identity*. London: Sage Publications, p. 1.

and remedial experience wherein I receive affirmation of my 'self' through the other and she through me.

So far we have spoken of experiences as conscious events even though our social relations no doubt admit of myriad *subconscious* psychological motivators. Still none of these will become the explicit basis of recognition claims. The experience of difference and of having an identity are the issues that bring such claims to the fore. Thus, if we are interested in the practice of recognition we must concern ourselves with the conscious manifestations of identity as opposed to its unconscious or subconscious sources. As Sigmund Freud himself commented:

If philosophers find difficulty in accepting the existence of unconscious ideas, the existence of an unconscious consciousness seems to me even more objectionable...And after all, a consciousness of which one knows nothing seems to me a good deal more absurd than something mental that is unconscious.⁴

Hidden mechanisms will only be useful to our inquiry insofar as they manifest in ways that we can access through reflection. Accordingly, psychoanalytic and neuropsychological approaches to identity and recognition will be referenced only insofar as they produce social experiences that can be reflexively addressed.

The potency of such experiences notwithstanding, important debates have congealed around the topic of whether it is plausible or even desirable that the politics of recognition gain further traction. The consequences of a continuing shift toward recognition-based institutional arrangements are a matter of contention, but at a deeper level these arguments, which ostensibly wrestle over the coherence of theory and the risks of practice, seem to presume the experiences upon which recognition is predicated.

⁴ Quoted in Zahavi, Dan. 1999. *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, p. 204.

Which is not to say that recognition is a finite experience - an isolated event. As Charles Taylor James Tully have persuasively articulated, recognition is part of an ongoing process rather than an end-state. What is important to note is how we verify how the process of recognition is doing its work, not through the satisfaction of governing principles, propositional attitudes, or some procedural finality, but through the continuous reflective appraisals of interlocutors. Unfortunately, the political realm has yet to accommodate this recursive and aspect of identity formation. In a section of his discussion with Nancy Fraser, entitled “On the Phenomenology of Experiences of Social Injustice”, Axel Honneth makes the following argument regarding the importance of experience:

[T]he conceptual framework of recognition is of central importance today, not because it expresses the objectives of a new type of social movement, but because it has proven to be the appropriate tool for categorically unlocking *social experiences of injustice as a whole*. It is not the particular, let alone new, central idea of oppressed collectives - whether they are characterized in terms of “difference” or “cultural recognition” - that is now to provide the basis for the normative framework of a theory of recognition. Rather, what gives rise to - indeed compels - such a categorical revision are the findings that have been compiled concerning the moral *sources of the experience* of social discontent [my emphasis].⁵

I would argue that these ‘moral sources’ are rather narrowly interpreted in contemporary recognition politics and that we can explain the failure of recognition politics in particular cases in the experiences of those involved. Many of these failures are indeed puzzling. For instance, it is now routine for the procedural demands of recognition to be formally satisfied - ie, the subaltern may receive the stipulated reparations, rights, and public apologies - yet there is simultaneously a failure to generate the key experience of recognition for the subaltern, usually because the sacrifices of the

⁵ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p. 133.

hegemon are *experienced* as either empty, begrudgingly tendered, self-aggrandizing, or self-serving. Debates about the desired ends of the politics of recognition are thus concerned implicitly or explicitly with its beginnings, with our *experiences of the other*, or what is termed alterity. We will return to the theme of alterity in the next chapter, but we will attend in this chapter to a matter of principal importance: how we theorize subjectivity and our experience of the self.

To begin, more moderate theories of the subject typically explore multi-dimensional facets of selfhood and are as such well suited to describing the depth of the recognition experience. The theories advanced by Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth attempt to describe the self in a way that appreciates our social, reflective, and experiential relations to ourselves and to others. We shall explore these approaches below, but first I wish to introduce the dimensions of selfhood these authors develop. Within the western tradition there are at least three broad notions of the self that have each come to dominate social theory at particular points in history. We shall introduce all three, but for the purposes of our argument we will reserve our main discussion to two of them.

Traditionally, literature on the self has offered an uneasy partitioning of self-knowledge into meaningful social understandings and meaningless non-social understandings. Recently the designation of certain self-understandings as meaningless has come under scrutiny. Leary and Tangney articulate three crucial domains of selfhood that despite significant experiential support rarely appear as equal partners in social theory. We will explore them in no particular order.

The self is, in fact, somehow involved in (1) people's experience of themselves (though a self is not needed for consciousness per se), (2) their

perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about themselves, and (3) their deliberate efforts to regulate their own behaviour. However none of these three specific uses of ‘self’ captures the nature of the self in a way that encompasses all of the others. Thus we must either concede that ‘self’ has at least three very different meanings (not a desirable state of affairs if we desire precision and clarity) or else arrive at a definition that encompasses all three of these uses.⁶

The third (3) we will call the ‘autonomous self’. It describes the experience of the self as a volitional agent and author of actions. The autonomous self is sometimes conceived in the spirit of Cartesian philosophy as a disengaged and rational agent who exercises an objective application of reason to experience, but it may also be thought of in terms of the capacity to reflect upon and make decisions based on experience. Though it is often referred to as the *first*-person perspective, we might hold that when we adopt a vantage of ourselves as disengaged agents we are actually entertaining a vision of ourselves as *third*-person objective witness to our own experiences. The reason I propose this shift in usage is that there is another way of understanding ourselves which refers to conscious life but does not involve detachment or disengagement. What we will call the ‘phenomenal self’ (1) is often described as our ‘immediate epistemic self-awareness’, which refers to our pre-reflective, embodied, and orientational *first*-person perspective. This is the self of immediate and direct perceptual experience, experiences that may or may not become the object of reflection. Both first- and third-person perspectives are discernable in our memories and in the moment, as Dan Zahavi illustrates it in *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*:

I can be prereflectively self-aware of my current perception, and I can reflect and thematize this perception. But I can also reflect upon myself as

⁶ Leary and Tangney, “The Self as an Organizational Construct in the Behavioural and Social Sciences,” p. 8.

the intentional agent and subject of experience, that is, I can reflect upon myself as the one who thinks, deliberates, resolves, acts, and suffers. If I compare that which is given in two different acts of reflection, say, a perception of chirping birds and a recollection of a promenade, I can also focus upon that which has changed, namely the intentional acts, but I can also focus upon that which remains identical, namely, the subject of experience.⁷

The phenomenal self will receive comprehensive treatment in Chapter II, where we will explore alterity in preparation for our investigation of the phenomenal dimensions of recognition in Chapter III.

Leary and Tangney's second self (2) we will term the 'narrative self' and describes the experience of the self as having an identity, a social and 'storied' life. Our particular cultural backgrounds are populated by people who share more or less in our identities and values. Our propensity to entertain a shared or indirect understanding of the self means that in conjunction with the *first-* and *third-*person standpoints, we also assume a more or less *second-*person perspective. This narrative domain of selfhood, commonly referred to as the 'subject of language',⁸ emerged when the account of intersubjectivity championed by early phenomenologists failed in the eyes of many to bridge the epistemological chasm of solipsism. Just how do we understand the world and others 'directly' as the phenomenologists claimed? If we reject metaphysical claims, what then is at the heart of the subject and her relations?

A theory of intersubjectivity grounded in language was subsequently developed and soon came to include diverse approaches ranging from speech-act theory to

⁷ Zahavi, Dan. 1999. *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, pp. 138-139.

⁸ Redman, Peter. 2000. "Introduction," *Identity: A Reader*. P. du Gay, J. Evans, and P. Redman eds. London, UK: Sage Publications, p. 9.

Foucauldian discourse theory. The phenomenal subject was not initially discarded, however. As we shall see in Chapter II, theorists such as Heidegger, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein had from the start posited an explicit connection between the phenomenological subject and linguistic intersubjectivity. Contemporary theorists are much less clear on how subjects are volitional agents and today the threat of hyper-constructivism and the postmodern ‘death of the subject’ have prompted more and more writers to re-introduce a modified autonomous or minimal phenomenal self capable of salvaging human agency. Language provided a bridge between self and other, but not without threatening autonomy.

I have introduced on these three dimensions of selfhood - autonomous, phenomenal, and narrative - because each continues to enjoy broad philosophical, scientific, and experiential support. Historically each has emerged as an alternative to earlier approaches and what was perceived as a failure to capture deep intuitions about self-knowledge. The phenomenal self was developed in the late 19th century when it became clear that the independent consciousness of Kant, Locke and Descartes was irretrievably plagued by the philosophical anathema of solipsism, not to mention an irreconcilable dualism. If the self was primarily disengaged from the world how could it truly *know* the world or the other? This epistemological problem led many phenomenologists to posit that we make sense of the world and others directly, not through reason or dubious representations.

Each of the three dimensions along with their transitional and recombinant variants are strongly present today. In his historical analysis of Western concepts of selfhood from the 17th century onward, Jerrod Seigel observes that “the basis of selfhood

in Western culture has been sought primarily along or within three dimensions, ones that are familiar and should be easily recognizable by anyone.”⁹ Seigel identifies a tripartite theorization of bodily, relational, and reflective selves,¹⁰ and analogous dimensions have been found in recent work in cognitive linguistics and neuro-psychology. We will touch on these findings in the next chapter.

This broad support has led many to argue that a multi-dimensional model of the self captures how we experience and consequently understand and *identify* ourselves. The least problematic account of selfhood takes these various dimensions of the self to be complementary constituents of a holistically or pluralistically conceived subject.¹¹ Similarly, Paul Ricoeur has recently traced the semantic history of the term ‘recognition’ through three phases of use: Kantian, Bergsonian, and Hegelian.¹² But it is not simply the predominance or simplicity of a tripartite approach that should attract us. In contrast, one-dimensional models of the subject often ascribe the totality of conscious experience to a single facet and make it difficult to explain intersubjectivity let alone the intersubjective basis of recognition.

⁹ Seigel, Jarrod. 2005. *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in the Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ More psychoanalytic accounts of multi-dimensionality can be found in 2001. *Individual Self, Relational Self, Collective Self*. C. Sedikides and M.B. Brewer. eds. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor and Francis (Psychology Press). Also see 1999. *The Plural Self: Multiplicity in Everyday Life*. J. Rowan and M. Cooper. eds. London: Sage Publications.

¹² Ricoeur, Paul. 2005. *The Course of Recognition*. D. Pellauer trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

If, for example, the self is conceived as an autonomous agent in the Cartesian sense of cool reasoning over and above one's own experiences, we have the problem of explaining why we would need or desire recognition. If, on the other hand, the self is conceived as an illusion generated at the intersection of manifold narratives, as Daniel Dennett proposes, it is unclear how she would be capable of experiencing recognition at all.¹³ We might reasonably ask how it is that either disengaged or illusionary selves can be *present* in such a way as to *experience* the process. This critique will re-emerge later in our exploration of Axel Honneth's recognition theory. But it is not just the reflective self that is incomplete in isolation. As Seigel has observed, to attribute all consciousness to a narrative self is to court "the danger of privileging the form of selfhood too much over the substance."¹⁴ What we invite is a conflation of 'physical identity' with 'social identity' and, I wish to argue, however they are expressed, recognition claims cannot be motivated or satisfied by the force narrative self-understandings alone.

I suggest that the ontological premises behind one-dimensional subjects are of little use to our discussion since they preclude recognition by placing a chasm between the self and the other. Quite simply, any model that oversimplifies or rejects the subject or our sense of the other (alterity) is incapable of offering a theory of *intersubjectivity* sufficient to make sense of the dissonance between our multiple appraisals of an intersubjective situation. This is why Seigel argues that "one-dimensional theories are liable to give an inadequate account even of the element of the self they highlight, since

¹³ See Dennett, Daniel. 1991. *Consciousness Explained*. New York: Little Brown and Company, p. 418.

¹⁴ Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, p. 651.

they occlude its debt to the others.”¹⁵ More to the point, it is not even clear whether we could call a uni-dimensional self a true self. For just as Charles Taylor has argued that an autonomous subject radically disengaged from any sense of its own orientation in moral space would be unrecognizable, so too would a being that did not experience itself as a volitional agent or as a perceiving consciousness.

As noted above, recognition theorists have developed the connections between identity and the narrative self while ascribing necessary albeit secondary roles to the phenomenal dimension. To understand how this came to be we must investigate the origins of recognition theory and to prepare we must familiarize ourselves with relevant elements of Hegelian philosophy. Although Hegel provides us with one of the earliest and most influential articulations of the intrinsic social reality of human existence, as Honneth observes:

[T]he core conceptual content of what we today call ‘recognition’ has hardly been addressed further; instead, the concept is employed vaguely, usually with passing reference to Hegel, for attitudes and practices by which individuals or social groups are affirmed in certain of their qualities.¹⁶

Many of the models of intersubjectivity used to understand the recognition experience are adapted from Hegel’s master/slave dialectic and his philosophy of self-consciousness. The Hegelian dialectic has proven amenable to theories that focus on struggle, identity formation, agency, and human flourishing. To investigate the core conceptual content of recognition we must therefore begin with more than just a passing reference to Hegel. For

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Honneth, Axel. 2006. “Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions,” *Inquiry*, 45, pp. 505.

according to Seigel, “Hegel made selfhood the key to understanding literally everything, while simultaneously providing the most remarkable example of a seemingly three-dimensional account that was one dimensional at its core.”¹⁷

The Hegelian Self

Philosophers in Hegel’s era were preoccupied in large part with explaining the mystery behind the unity of consciousness: Why is our conscious life an ordered and meaningful experience rather than an incomprehensible muddle of raw sensory input? What is the nature and source of the conceptual framework that organizes reality? Kant famously argued that the unity emerges by virtue of our being in two realms.¹⁸ We exist in a noumenal realm of reason and concepts which order the raw experiences we face in the phenomenal realm of physiological impulse and sensory experience. Hegel rejected this, Kant’s transcendental dialectic, arguing that consciousness is not unified in the particular (ie, the individual) but in the absolute (eg, a culture). The absolute is comprised of beings that discover the unity of consciousness by seeing not *things* but *relations*, including the relations of the self.¹⁹

This is important to our discussion because Hegel is interpreted as holding that only that which has been recognized through consciousness is validated as a part of ‘reality’. The conscious self, too, must be validated through recognition from others for it

¹⁷ Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, p. 39.

¹⁸ Kant, I. 1965. *Critique of Pure Reason*. trans. N. Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

¹⁹ Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A.V. Miller. trans. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

to have a firm sense of its own reality, to possess what Hegel refers to as ‘self-certainty’.²⁰ What emerges from these conditions is the classic Hegelian master/slave dialectic. According to Hegel, the self may seek to force the other into submission and secure a stable source of recognition and the experience of being actualized. Two equal beings enter into a struggle for freedom, each with the desire to wrestle recognition from the other and a confirmation of the self’s independence. Each seeks to procure the honour and prestige that will confer the desired sense of being more than just a creature of base needs. The being that risks its life and chooses freedom over mere existence will rise to become the master, while the being that chooses mere life over freedom resigns himself to slavery. The master receives recognition from the slave who receives none and therefore exists only as a thing for the master.²¹

In addition to securing recognition, the master no longer has to toil with nature to satisfy his basic needs; the slave is exploited to secure both actualizing recognition and survival. It is at this stage that we encounter Hegel’s extraordinary reversal, for as it turns out the master’s newly realized sense of self-certainty and independence - his reality - turns out to be wholly dependent on the slave, a thing, and therefore tragically hollow. In the meantime the slave has developed a kind of inner discipline as a result of having actively engaged with nature to provide for the master and having lived in perpetual fear of death at the master’s hand. For Hegel, not only does the slave’s fear induce a reflexive self-awareness, the precursor to a genuine sense of self-certainty and importance, the slave’s objectification of nature through labour has produced things that bear the mark of

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

the slave's creative purpose, things that confer recognition unto their maker.²² Through fear the slave's consciousness is activated and through work the slave is actualized. In the end the slave does not overthrow the master; he simply surpasses him as a consciousness.²³ This is the classic recognition account that has become the prototype upon which so many modern conceptualizations of identity and the desire for recognition have been theorized.

What is important for our purposes is to look at how Hegel's work has been used to set the terms and the limits of contemporary discussion. Siegel has argued that Hegel offers a somewhat three-dimensional view of being wherein base (phenomenal) sense-certainty and the socio-historical (narrative) self are constituted by the reflective absolute (autonomous) consciousness manifest through human beings. To concentrate our argument we will be focussing on how the narrative and phenomenal dimensions have been picked up and thematized today. Those who have traditionally drawn upon and interpreted Hegel tend not to preserve the relationship between these two aspects of the self. Early on, the left Hegelians' focus on the individual undermined intersubjectivity and fell victim to the charge of solipsism, while right Hegelians tended to advance a dogmatic metaphysics. Thinkers such as R.R. Williams²⁴ and Philip Kain²⁵ have

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Williams, R.R. 2003. "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: New Critical Essays*. A. Denker and M. Vater eds. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books.

²⁵ Kain, Philip. 2005. *Hegel and the Other: A Study of the Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: SUNY Press.

developed a third, socio-intersubjective interpretation of Hegel, similar variants of which serve as the basis of contemporary recognition theories.

Though both Kant and Hegel claim to predicate their inquiries on experience, Hegel's phenomenological project is rather different from the work of those now identified as phenomenologists and their conceptions of the phenomenal self. Indeed, Hegel's portrayal of recognition as an essential human experience within cultures is far more amenable to narrative accounts of self, subject, and identity, especially when integrated with the linguistic expressivism of Herder. Today, language is understood as the fabric of intersubjectivity and recognition, with the master/slave dialectic providing an account of the desire behind the *struggle* for recognition: parts seeking an understanding of themselves within the whole.

The modern relationship presumed between alterity and recognition is conditioned by Hegel's idealism. Prior to recognition, the subaltern other is experienced (by hegemon and subaltern both) as a base dependent object, a *thing*, and after recognition he is transformed into an affirmed independent subject, a human being. In our contemporary use of the paradigm the shame that stems from the perception of oneself as mere thing in the eyes of the other and in one's own eyes, as illustrated in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre,²⁶ Edward Said,²⁷ and Franz Fanon,²⁸, becomes the impetus for recognition claims. In Chapter III we shall see how too literal an interpretation of the

²⁶ See Sartre, J.P. 1946. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. H. Barnes trans. New York: Washington Square Press.

²⁷ See Said, Edward. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.

²⁸ See Fanon, Franz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. C.L. Markmann trans. New York: Grove Press; and Fanon, Franz. 1968. *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

language of subject and object leads recognition theorists to discount the phenomenal dimension of the self. But for now, with Hegel's paradigm in place, we will turn to the recognition theories of Axel Honneth and Charles Taylor. As Judith Butler has noted, "any theory of recognition would have to give an account of the desire for recognition, and recognize that desire sets the limits and the conditions for the operation of recognition itself."²⁹ Here our goal will be to identify how the dual narrative and phenomenal self has been figured to explain the desire for recognition.

Axel Honneth's Perspective-Taking

To set up the discussion, Axel Honneth's description of the basis of recognition claims is worth quoting at length:

Up to the present day, when individuals who see themselves as victims of moral maltreatment describe themselves, they assign a dominant role to categories that, as with "insult" or "degradation," are related to forms of disrespect, to the denial of recognition. Negative concepts of this kind are used to characterize a form of behavior that does not represent an injustice solely because it constrains the subjects in their freedom for action or does them harm. Rather, such behavior is injurious because it impairs these persons in their positive understanding of self -an understanding acquired by intersubjective means. There can be no meaningful use whatsoever of the concepts of "disrespect" or "insult" were it not for the implicit reference to a subject's claim to be granted recognition by others.³⁰

To get at the motivating source of the relation, Honneth offers an interpretation of Hegel which focuses on the early Jena writings on the social and communicative preconditions of ethical life rather than the later master/slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

²⁹ Butler, Judith. 2001. "Giving and Account of Oneself," *diacritics* 31, 4, p. 30.

³⁰ Honneth, Axel. "Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition," *Political Theory*, 20, 2 (May, 1992), pp. 188-189.

According to Honneth, the later dialectical recognition model provides necessary explications of the *experience* of recognition but within a metaphysical framework of stages in the development of Spirit which stands in contradiction to Hegel's earlier more 'sociological' work.

Honneth advances a pattern of recognition derived from early-Hegelian 'practical relations to the self': self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. Each of these can be viewed in contemporary terms as a target of disrespect that can inflict immense psychological damage. The first, self-confidence, is tied to the security one forms as an infant with respect to the love and concern of others.³¹ This feature holds across cultures because of the universality of the parent-child relationship. Severe trauma such as rape or torture can destroy this basic confidence. Next, self-respect refers to our status as morally responsible self-legislating persons possessing characteristically universal Kantian dignity and rights.³² It is from this vantage that we engage in public (Habermasian) discourse. Finally, self-esteem refers to our social standing as valuable, unique, and particular, and is qualified through a culture's contribution to the common good.³³ This contribution is essential in the modern context because to give praise to a non-contributing group would simply parallel the unqualified recognition of classic honour systems. The concepts of self-respect and self-esteem which were conflated in traditional honour societies are today acknowledged as distinct arenas: rights-based recognition and identity-based recognition.

³¹ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, pp. 95-107.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 107-121.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-130.

As opposed to single form of recognition advanced in the master/slave dialectic, here all three phases of recognition must be met to guarantee the full development of persons in society and as such they constitute the 'formal conception of ethical life'. For Honneth, the necessarily reciprocal nature of these phases of recognition represents the internal logic of social life and a genuinely ethical society is one that secures conditions which allow everyone the opportunity to attain these practical relations to the self. The problem that remains - the problem Hegel dissolved by situating the unity of consciousness in the absolute rather than the particular - is why human beings necessarily desire and struggle to attain recognition from the consciousness of the other. If not a dialectical movement toward the whole, what is it about the self that drives us?

Honneth poses the question as to what compelled groups to make the shift from traditional to post-tradition conceptions of recognition. In other words, what features of selfhood prompted subjects to look inward and demand recognition based on social identities as distinct from social positions? The growth and maturation of intersubjective identities is predicated, according to Hegel, on the individual's ability to intuit themselves, their consciousness, in the other. But according to Honneth Hegel nowhere completes this line of thought and the problem goes unresolved.³⁴ How and why do we seek recognition? For possible answers Honneth turned to social psychological models of selfhood, in particular to the work of Herbert George Mead.³⁵

Mead himself began with the pragmatist principle that subjects become aware of themselves only when the physical world imposes resistance to their plans and forces a

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁵ Mead, G.H. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. C.W. Morris ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

reflexive perspective of self assessment. The self comes into view when it runs into something. Mead observed, however, that it is not the self which becomes the focus in most cases. Obstacles generally prompt greater scrutiny of the world rather than the self. Except for a category of distinctly ‘social’ obstacles. In navigating our social relationships with others we are often faced with resistance from others, thus forcing us to turn inward to reflect on ourselves as the source of desires and intentions. Honneth held that the self that falls under scrutiny in this moment is the ‘me’: the consciousness of social expectations and norms observed from a second-person perspective as we attempt to see ourselves as others see us. This position of reflection allows us to take a normatively sensitive attitude toward the world and ourselves.

The self that performs this scrutinizing is identified as the ‘I’, a decentred observer not itself reflectively accessible, which stands as the spontaneous creative source of resistance to forms of recognition. This other-stimulated interaction between the neutral ‘I’ and the social ‘me’ forms the self-conscious subject and the process is intended to explain in naturalized terms the Hegelian development of self-consciousness and the perpetual desire for recognition. The unpredictable ‘I’ disrupts the recognition patterns that are otherwise maintained through our social perspective-taking. It is the reflexive ‘me’ consciousness that gives us the experience of agency. As Kath Woodward explains in *Understanding Identity*:

Mead presents an empirical self, but one which is reflective, and conscious of the positioning of that self within the broad framework of social relations through the operation of the imagination...Through the operation of conscious reflexivity, this is a self which is capable of exercising some agency in the process of identity formation.³⁶

³⁶ Woodward, K. 2003. *Understanding Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 9.

We might have discussed these further, but Honneth has since abandoned Mead's social psychology as a method of naturalizing the Hegelian model because it is doubtful whether dialogical recognition as a process and a concept can be properly understood in terms of the second-person perspective-taking. In a reply to critics, Honneth concedes:

I have come to doubt whether [Mead's] views can actually be understood as contributions to a theory of recognition: in essence, what Mead calls 'recognition' reduces to the act of reciprocal perspective-taking, without the character of the other's action being of any crucial significance; the psychological mechanism by which shared meanings and norms emerge seems to Mead generally to develop independently of the reactive behaviour of the two participants, so that it also becomes impossible to distinguish actions according to their respective normative character.³⁷

In other words, it is unclear what Mead's approach tells us about recognition if all perspective-taking amounts to is a monological thought experiment featuring an imaginative construct of the other, as opposed to a dialogical practice between self and other. Likewise, Honneth has abandoned the notion of the spontaneously creative 'I' as prompting the shift from traditional to post-traditional modes of recognition. In an interesting psychodynamic turn he now attributes this to the *subconscious* need to control one's environment; a profound drive to dominate that emerges in infancy.

The 'I' – which, for Mead, was the prereflective locus of all spontaneous impulses – can no longer be seen as the 'origin' of the rebellion against established patterns of recognition...I now assume that the impulse to rebel against established forms of recognition can be traced to a deep-seated need to deny the independence of those with whom one interacts and to have them, 'omnipotently', at one's disposal.³⁸

³⁷ Honneth, "Grounding Recognition," p. 502.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 503-4.

Wishing to preserve the dialectical struggle Honneth contends that “the permanence of the ‘struggle’ for recognition stems not from an unsocializable ego’s drive for realization but rather from the anti-social striving for independence that leads each subject to deny, again and again, the other’s difference.”³⁹ In short, we have in essence gone from the sociological ‘I’ to the psychoanalytic ‘Id’.⁴⁰

There are difficulties that arise for recognition theory if we take Honneth’s move seriously. We might reasonably ask what real gains he has made in shifting from the logic of recognition as an internal monological perspective-taking to an interior subconscious ego-centrism. For if a Meadian approach made us suspicious of the ethics of an I/me relation, Honneth’s revisions leave us questioning the ethics of recognition altogether. It is difficult to resolve, for instance, how the ethical force of recognition, not to mention the need for self-confidence, respect, and esteem, could plausibly follow from a desire to dominate the other and deny their difference. We seem to gain an explanation of the force behind the struggle for recognition at the expense of its ends.

We are also left without a definite concept of the self. In a way it is fortunate that Honneth rejects both the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ of the sociological account, since preserving just one or the other would limit us to the untenably monolithic subject we met earlier. As Ian Raib observes: “If I were only an ‘I’ then I would be involved in no social relationships whatsoever; if I were only a ‘me’ then I would be an inanimate object

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 504.

⁴⁰ Honneth qualifies his reliance on the psychoanalytic to explain the dynamic in full: “Regarding the question of whether there could be a unified source of all impulsive rebellion against established forms of recognition, we find ourselves in the domain of wild speculation.” *Ibid.*

defined by others.”⁴¹ Still, we might derive a familiar set of experiences from the Hegelian phases of recognition in Honneth’s work. To start, the self clearly has an embodied and phenomenal dimension, given the pre-linguistic origins of self-confidence. The self also admits of a strong narrative dimension, as evidenced by the public origins of self-respect and self-esteem. It has been my aim here to illustrate Honneth’s Hegelian inspired variant of a dual self, a self who desires recognition. When we return to Honneth’s work in Chapter III to discuss Meadian intersubjectivity we will explore whether the account privileges one particular dimension of selfhood at the expense of the overall approach. For now we shall turn to our second recognition theorist, Charles Taylor.

Charles Taylor’ Dialogical Recognition

Like Honneth, Taylor has highlighted the harm and injury entailed in the experience of *misrecognition* and *nonrecognition*:

[O]ur identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.⁴²

Both Honneth and Taylor underscore the role of the narrative self in forming social identities, but where Honneth adapted a social psychological (and now psychoanalytic) approach to Hegel, Taylor has drawn on various phenomenological sources including

⁴¹ Craib, *Experiencing Identity*, p. 5.

⁴² Taylor, Charles. 1994. “The Politics of Recognition,” *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*.. A. Gutman ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Wittgenstein to provide a more thorough account of selfhood and intersubjectivity. More so than Honneth, I would argue, this diversity of sources permits Taylor to appreciate the complexity of selfhood.

Taylor begins his *Sources of the Self* by presenting a case for the communitarian formulation of the social world. He writes that notions of dignity, respect, and well-being may take distinct forms in different cultures, yet they speak to a universal aspect of moral life for all human beings. Qualitative social distinctions come out of a seemingly innate desire to connect with the good and as such these ‘strong evaluations’ are grounded in a moral point of view that allows us to make sense of ourselves as agents. The set of strong evaluations one holds takes place against a particular historical and cultural background or framework, within which one must orient themselves and consider the questions: ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What kind of person should I be?’ One’s answers to these questions delineate an identity which, although understood in terms of individual authenticity is nevertheless constituted in conversation with other members of my culture through ‘webs of interlocution’. Taylor states it succinctly: “Strong evaluation is essential to identity, and identity is essential to being a fully functioning human being.”⁴³

Taylor’s communitarian approach attributes a narrative structure to the ‘I’ in the question “Who am I?” Here we are far from the autonomous⁴⁴ or phenomenal⁴⁵ sense of the self, for we exist as selves only with reference to others. But this does not mean that Taylor has ignored the diversity of self-understanding. He of course rejects the notion of

⁴³ Taylor, Charles. “Reply to Commentators,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54, 1 (March 1994), p. 209.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

a self that stands over and above culture and experience, a Kantian agent of reason situated outside the particular and constituted monologically. It is true that the categories of dignity, respect, and well-being which Taylor cites as universal have the ring of Kantian universals, but this is because they are particularly Western conceptualizations. Where Kant wants to say human dignity and so on are necessary moral principles, Taylor wants to identify them as expressions of a life inevitably lived with others.

The intersubjective formation of identity is still very much the domain of the narrative self, but Taylor also attributes a significant role to the phenomenal dimensions of self-experience. From the work of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, Taylor observes that just as meanings in language emerge within a culture and its practices, our basic experiences take place against a background of a field of perception. Taylor therefore refers to ‘agent’s knowledge’: our non-theoretical, pre-representational, and proto-linguistic understandings.⁴⁶ There is a grounding link here between the phenomenal and the narrative with respect to everyday life. From the work of Merleau-Ponty, Taylor brings forth the observation that our access to the world is enabled and constrained by our embodied perception. We necessarily see the world from a particular standpoint by virtue of our body’s spatial and sensory point of view.

But the phenomenal self is not just an orientational situatedness. For Taylor, as with Heidegger, “[l]iving with things involves a certain kind of understanding, which we might also call ‘preunderstanding.’ That is, things first figure for us in their meaning of

⁴⁶ Taylor, Charles. 1995. “Overcoming Epistemology,” *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 10.

relevance for purposes, desires, activities.”⁴⁷ This understanding allows us to physically negotiate our world without thinking about it. In phenomenological terms we are adept at ‘coping’ with the world in a conscious but not yet reflective way. Taylor argues that this coping enables and constrains how we negotiate the physical world.

[T]he mass of coping is an essential support to the episodes of conceptual focus in our lives, not just in the infra-structural sense that something has to be carrying our mind around from library to laboratory and back. More fundamentally, the background understanding we need to make the sense we do of the pieces of thinking we engage in resides in our ordinary coping.⁴⁸

We are always dealing with a holistic perception of the world, a ‘background understanding’ that is sustained and evolved in what Taylor calls “the embedding of reflective knowledge in ordinary coping.”⁴⁹ In this way our experience of the world provides a pre-theoretical check against our possible misunderstandings. This argument places Taylor in the realm of realism, but a relatively uncontroversial one. In appreciating our everyday physical coping “one awakes to unproblematic realism rather than a daring philosophical ‘thesis’.”⁵⁰

Though it goes undeveloped, in addition to the linguistically based field of intersubjectivity that Honneth describes, Taylor also seems to hint at an adjunct category of phenomenal intersubjectivity. He states, for instance, that the “ability to be charming or seductive exists not in my body and voice, but in body-voice-in-conversation-with-

⁴⁷ Taylor, Charles. “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

interlocutor.”⁵¹ It is not simply the words we speak that make an impression, therefore, it is our presence as speaker. The relation of self to other is not exhausted by the pure linguistic exchange, there is also a *thin* phenomenal moment. It should be settled, however, that this potential phenomenal moment is not distinct from and merely a variant of the narrative moment. For although the communication is not exclusively linguistic, the meanings conveyed emerge along with language in culturally distinct practices. Thus intonation and body language are conditioned *by* rather than conditions *of* communication. We will address this issue more in Chapter III, but in this short introduction I hope to have shown how Hegel along with his philosophical progeny Honneth and Taylor identify the desire, medium, and goals of recognition in the inherent structure of sociality: for Honneth in the *Struggle for Recognition* it is primarily a function of the perspective-taking ‘me’, and for Taylor it is inspired by an innate disposition toward the good and necessarily against a cultural background.

With the Meadian spontaneous and creative ‘I’ in serious doubt it seems we are invited to ascribe disruptions in recognition patterns to the narrative moment as described by Taylor. Is this moment enough? I would like to explore the possibility that the narrative moment alone is insufficient to explain certain types of emotional interference in our storied accounts. The main question I wish to address is why does the subaltern continue to have fresh experiences of shame and distrust despite dialogue and despite receiving the very public apologies, rights, and reparations she believed would be enough?

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

In the next chapter we will explore the scope of the phenomenal moment in the intersubjective exchange. We will do this by way of introduction to the major moves made in phenomenology, past and present, in dealing with the self's relation to others. This will prepare us for our return to recognition theory in the third and final chapter. In Chapter III, then, we will establish whether and to what extent we have been privileging the narrative self in the recognition of identity. In short, we shall discern whether we have moved toward a conflation of self with 'social identity' in the politics of recognition.

CHAPTER II: ALTERITY

To the extent that I am not just a mind, and not just a lived body, and to the extent that my existence depends on a biological constitution, knowledge about the brain can enrich my knowledge of myself and of the capacities that make me what I am. The idea is not to replace one discourse with another, but to supplement one with the other.¹

Phenomenology and the Problem of Solipsism

We were introduced in the previous chapter to the recognition theories of Honneth and Taylor, and I made the argument that while they had after Hegel articulated a dual self at the centre of the recognition experience they did not clearly delineate the significance or function of the phenomenal self. This is a problem when we see that too strong a focus on the narrative approach leaves us unable to account for certain patterns in the experience of recognition, namely, interference in the narrative moment. In order to explain the full range of experiences of *misrecognition* and *nonrecognition*, then, we require an understanding of the narrative moment, where social understandings are engaged, and its relation to the phenomenal moment, where our perceptual understandings occur.

Before we can explore this relationship in depth we need to show how the phenomenal self is thought to provide intersubjective understandings. It has not traditionally been thought up to this task. According to Dan Zahavi, “phenomenologists have often endeavoured to unearth pre- or extralinguistic form of intersubjectivity, be it

¹ Gallagher, Shaun. “Self Narrative, Embodied Action, and Social Context,” *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur’s Unstable Equilibrium*. A. Wiercinski ed. Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, p. 409.

in simple perception or in tool-use, in emotions, drives, or body-awareness.”² But as we have seen with Taylor, the phenomenal self seems too rudimentary, to *thin* to add much to the depth of intersubjectivity necessary for genuine recognition. The shift to linguistic intersubjectivity and its focus on language provides a medium and a relation to the other which explains the formation of identities and clearly sets the pre-conditions of intercultural recognition. Zahavi summarizes the basic case made against phenomenology thus:

To speak a foreign subject, of an other, is to speak of something that, for essential reasons, will always transcend its givenness for me. Qua foreign subject, it will be in possession of a self-givenness that, in principle, is inaccessible to me. For this reason phenomenology will be unable to account for its and must, therefore, remain solipsistic, in its foundation as well as its results. This criticism has been related to one of the most decisive paradigm shifts in twentieth-century philosophy: the turn from the philosophy of subjectivity to the philosophy of language.³

The theories generated subsequent to the ‘linguistic turn’ have proven central to our understanding of membership in storied communities such as families, classes, and nations. As Paul Ricoeur has demonstrated, our experiences through life are woven together in narrative time to form a coherent life story.⁴ Narrative is what organizes and thematizes experience to make sense of our lives. And yet we are not the sole authors of these stories, as Alasdair MacIntyre⁵ and Charles Taylor have shown; our narratives are

² Zahavi, Dan. 2005. *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 176.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴ Ricoeur, Paul. 1984. *Oneself as Another*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; and Ricoeur, Paul. 1984. *Time and Narrative*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

⁵ MacIntyre, A. 1985. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London. Duckworth.

always co-authored by others through interaction and dialogue. The ‘subject of language’ paradigm captures the experience of selfhood, right down to the link between psychological harm and the imposition of hegemonic narratives depicting the natural inferiority or depravity of subaltern groups. We locate ourselves in a particular cultural narrative, in a particular social background, or we do not locate ourselves at all. To see why phenomenal experience has not been seen as up to the task we must take a condensed tour through the tradition of phenomenology, paying particular attention to the problem of alterity, the perception of otherness, beginning with its originator Edmund Husserl.

Writing in the early twentieth century, the self-proclaimed founder of the phenomenological movement, Edmund Husserl, commended Descartes for taking the experience of the subject seriously, and saw a proto-phenomenology nascent in the empiricism of David Hume, who argued that we ought to locate natural principles such as ‘causality’ in the mind rather than out in the world. Hume had made a kind of transcendental move, arguing that those categories and laws which we believe inherent in the world are actually imposed on it by the mind (or rather, through the mind).⁶ As we saw in the discussion of Hegel, Kant had posited a noumenal realm of things-in-themselves to explain the unity of conscious experience, though he claimed we still have no direct access to actual things-in-themselves. This claim was rejected by Hegel, who argued that all things could be known because all things are in the end constructed through consciousness, whether consciousness recognizes this immediately or not. Consciousness for Hegel is a property of the whole (eg, a culture) manifest inchoately

⁶ For Hume’s influence on Brentano and Husserl see Moran, Dermot. 2000. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. New York: Routledge, pp. 34, 41, 69, 139-140.

through individuals who must recognize things in the world if such things are to be confirmed in their significance; human beings as parts themselves will naturally attempt to be actualized through the other.

But Edmund Husserl would follow his mentor Franz Brentano in suggesting that both neo-Kantian and Hegelian philosophers had missed the point and were consequently partaking in pseudo-philosophy: obscure and mythical speculation over what amounted to a pseudo-problem of consciousness. Brentano conceived of philosophy as a rigorous science and sought to purge it of conjecture by focussing on first-person descriptions of experience rather than speculating on its metaphysical relations. He therefore undertook an ‘empirical psychology’, or as he also called it, ‘descriptive phenomenology’.⁷ Much like the positivists, Brentano took the self-evidentiary nature of our inner-experiences as the only legitimate object of investigation and from this approach he would argue that there are no purely unconscious mental acts. Anything that can be said to be ‘perceived’ or ‘known’ in any meaningful sense was something of which we are necessarily consciously aware.

Husserl would take this approach of relying on our inner-experiences and apply it to consciousness and philosophy in general. Through an analysis of what was given through *intuition* alone Husserl hoped to develop a systematic approach to all scientific and philosophical inquiry. Unlike the intuitions that served in Kant’s philosophy to temporally organize raw sensations that are then ordered through the imagination and reason, Husserl posited ‘categorical intuitions’ capable of delivering the ‘givenness’ and

⁷ Brentano, Franz. 1995. *Descriptive Psychology*. B. Müller trans. London: Routledge.

the essences of complex relations.⁸ The task of the phenomenologist was to exercise a ‘transcendental reduction’, a ‘bracketing off’ or ‘suspension’ of everyday attitudes toward the world in order to arrive at the essences of things rather than their crude material existence or practical uses, as well as the transcendent nature of the subject. Trusting this intuition ensured a presuppositionless understanding of the world and other. Husserl writes:

This phenomenology, like the more inclusive pure phenomenology of experiences in general, has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts, as experiences of human or animal experients in the phenomenal world that we posit as an empirical fact. This phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must describe in terms of what their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences.⁹

In terms of alterity Husserl rejected earlier approaches that cast our understanding of the other in terms of an ‘empathic encounter’ wherein alterity was directly perceived and registered as an undeniable (phenomenal) fact. Here we do not have to think or theorize about the possibility of thoughts and feelings in others because in the face-to-face encounter they are more or less expressed through the body and especially the face. Max Scheler termed our direct access to the other an ‘expressive unity’.¹⁰ To bring the charge of solipsism and the question of whether others are knowable, as Descartes did, is

⁸ Husserl, Edmund. 1970. *Logical Investigations*. J.N. Findlay ed. New York: Humanities Press, §40.

⁹ Husserl, Edmund. 1975. *Introduction to the Logical Investigations*. E. Fink trans. The Hague: Nijhoff, §1.

¹⁰ Scheler, Max. 1973. *The Nature of Sympathy*. P. Heath trans. London: Routledge, p. 255.

to undertake the folly of privileging a speculative attitude over an experiential (phenomenal) fact. Scheler writes:

For we believe ourselves to be directly acquainted with another person's joy in his laughter, and his sorrow and pain in his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands, with his love in his look of affection, with his rage in the gnashing of his teeth, with his threats in the clenching of his fist, and with the tenor of his thoughts in the sound of his words. If anyone tells me this is not 'perception' for it cannot be so, in view of the fact that a perception is simply a 'complex of physical sensations,' and that there is certainly no sensation of another person's mind nor any stimulus from such a source, I would beg him to turn aside from such questionable theories and address himself to the phenomenological facts.¹¹

Both self and other are present in these direct encounters with alterity, as Dan Zahavi notes in the case of our empathy for a sorrowful child:

I am both self-aware and aware of somebody else. I am conscious of two different subjects. What is it that permits me to distinguish between my own experiences (of empathy) and the Other's experience (of sorrow)? Whereas my own experience is given to me originally in the first-person mode or presentation, this is obviously not the case with the child's sorrow.¹²

For Scheler, the bare facts of this experience, our self as perceiving on the one hand and our perceiving another self on the other, provide concrete substantiation of the existence and epistemic accessibility of both self and other. The general intuitive approach has been popular among philosophers since the ancient Greeks, and even modern philosophers of language, such as Wittgenstein, seem to appreciate the depth of the pure phenomenal moment.

We do not see facial contortions and make the inference that he is feeling joy, grief, boredom. We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant,

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 254

¹² Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, p. 143.

bored, even when we are unable to give any other description of the features.¹³

In general I do not surmise fear in him - I see it. I do not feel that I am deducing the probable existence of something inside from something outside; rather it is as if the human face were in a way translucent and that I were seeing it not in reflected light but rather in its own.¹⁴

My thoughts are not hidden from [the other], but are just open to him in a different way than they are to me.¹⁵

Like Wittgenstein, the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty observed an empathic dynamic: “I live in the facial expressions of the other, as I feel him living in mine.”¹⁶ Like Scheler, the alterity of the other does not arise as a problem:

A face is a centre of human expression, the transparent envelope of the attitudes and desires of others, the place of manifestation, the barely material support for a multitude of intentions. This is why it seems impossible for us to treat a face or a body, even a dead body, like a thing. They are sacred entities, not the ‘givens of sight’.¹⁷

But unlike Scheler and Wittgenstein to some extent, Merleau-Ponty and Husserl posited factors operating behind the scenes. For them, the alterity we locate in the other should not be asserted as a brute fact, for the pre-conditions of the encounter already exist in our embodied selves.

¹³ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1980. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology II*. Oxford: Blackwell, §570

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §170

¹⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1992. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: Volume II*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 34-35.

¹⁶ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *The Primacy of Perception*. J. Edie ed. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, p. 69.

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1963. *The Structure of Behaviour*. A.L. Fisher trans. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 167.

To this point Husserl and Merleau-Ponty each surmised that the human body contains an otherness that prepares us to receive external otherness. When I touch my left hand with my right hand, for instance, I perceive at once a ‘double sensation’ that engenders alterity: I experience what it is like to be touched (by an other) and what it is like to touch (an other).¹⁸ The French existentialist Jean Paul Sartre asserted that the opposite was in fact true; it is the presence of the other that generates the experience of alterity in oneself. We are induced under the gaze of the other to reflect upon ourselves and our bodies as mere objects for the other as subject.¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty regarded the thesis that the other is the origin or the experience of alterity as unworkable because it could not explain how we would recognize the gaze in the first place.

Unless I learn within myself to recognize the junction of the for-itself and the in-itself, none of those mechanisms called other bodies will ever be able to come to life; unless I have an exterior other have no interior.²⁰

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, we could not recognize the objectifying significance of the other’s gaze without first acknowledging that he is indeed an other, thus shifting the origin of alterity back within the self.

Martin Heidegger, too, would not locate the source of alterity in the self. Instead, he saw it emerging from the interaction of the self (*Dasein*) with the world of things (technologies) since the existence of these things necessarily refers to a social world necessarily populated by others. Alterity is manifest in our relation to others through the matrix of artefacts, so to characterize intersubjectivity as a relationship between

¹⁸ Zahavi, *Subject and Subjectivity*, p. 157.

¹⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 302-305.

²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. C. Smith trans. London: Routledge, pp. 427-428

independent selves is to misunderstand the ontology of the self. *Dasein* and the other are part of a general 'we' that resides in a historically particular tradition. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, too, recognized the significance of the social realm and both claimed that the object of intentionality - whatever thing it is we perceive before us - admits of something we cannot access by virtue of our particular perspective though it is accessible to other subjects.²¹ Zahavi observes that Husserl went so far as to call his project a *sociological* transcendental philosophy,²² since "the structure of the world contains essential references to others, subjectivity cannot be understood except as inhabiting a world that it necessarily shares with others."²³ The phenomenal moment is even in its most transcendental formulation always conditioned by the alterity present in the body and - without the ontological primacy attributed to it by Heidegger - an intersubjectivity mediated through the historic world of things.

Sartre, too, acknowledged the social dimensions of intersubjective relations, though he believed Heidegger had unjustifiably depicted a world that was characterized by the mutual interdependence of things rather than by a mutual struggle between individuals.²⁴ For Sartre, it is through struggle with an imposing and unknowable 'radical' other that alterity comes into consciousness. Emanuel Lévinas shared with Sartre this general notion of radical alterity and he held that there is nothing in the self that can prepare us for our encounter with the other; they will always appear before us as

²¹ Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood*, p. 167.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 174.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

²⁴ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 481.

a revelation.²⁵ Moreover, the other presents itself as a demand for respect, shifting the phenomenal question of perception into one of ethics.

In this very brief overview we have moved some distance from Scheler's empathic encounter. In summary, where Scheler saw alterity as a brute fact of the face-to-face phenomenal moment; Heidegger saw it as embedded in a mediated world of things; Husserl and Merleau-Ponty saw it as culturally conditioned, but ultimately derivative of an alterity present in the corporeality of the self; Sartre saw it as manifest in the self through a struggle with a radically unknowable other; and Lévinas saw it as a startling and mysterious ethical demand from the other.

But the phenomenal problem of alterity would be subject to a much more critical discussion as the fundamentals of the phenomenological approach themselves came under scrutiny. Much to his consternation, and despite his own admission of cultural contingency, Husserl's students and subsequent German and French phenomenologists dispensed with the possibility of an untainted intuition and a genuinely presuppositionless bracketing off of attitudes. Heidegger would argue that tradition shapes the givenness of the world,²⁶ and his student, Gadamer would further elucidate how language enables and constrains what is available to our intuitions.²⁷ To be fair, Husserl himself granted that a particular (narrative) form of self-awareness is made possible through language.²⁸

²⁵ See Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1969. *Totality and Infinity*. A. Lingis trans. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

²⁶ See Heidegger, Martin. 1996. *Being and Time*. J. Stambaugh trans. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

²⁷ See Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1989. *Truth and Method 2nd Edition*. J. Weirich and D.G. Marshall trans. London: Sheed and Ward.

Through the Other a type of self-awareness is made impossible wherein I apprehend myself as seen in the midst of the world as a person among persons, and as an object among objects. Whereas (pure) reflection never turns me into a true mundane (psychophysical) object to myself - it thematizes me, it does not mundanize me - this can happen intersubjectively, when I use language to describe myself through concepts acquired from the Others, for instance, when I read, appropriate, and accept a psychological or psychiatric diagnosis concerning myself.²⁹

The general refiguring of self and alterity through the lens of culture and language would bring a new focus on linguistic intersubjectivity to bear on the phenomenal project.

Transitional variants of the project would emerge in the form of *existential* and *hermeneutic* phenomenology, which would replace the Husserlian transcendental reduction with a hermeneutic circle of *interpretation*. No longer was it a matter of the experience of a transcendental ego; it was now a matter of socially determined rules, practices, and meanings. It was believed that the intersubjective relation of self to other could no longer be sustained by a theory of 'expressive unity' or a doctrine of internal alterity. One could only hope to know the other through the medium of language. The problem of alterity shifted accordingly from the phenomenal moment to the narrative moment and linguistic intersubjectivity would quickly become the new paradigm for social inquiry.

The Science of Alterity

Notwithstanding the advantages of this shift, we might reasonably ask what if anything we may have left behind. Are there any gaps in the narrative account or features that might find better explanation with reference to a phenomenal moment? One thing is

²⁸ Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, p. 161.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

clear, while narrative approaches to the self elegantly weave together the tapestry of our social selves, the phenomenal referent in such accounts, the thread and the loom of selfhood, are almost always presupposed. As Zahavi illustrates:

Not only can I be aware of myself as a perceiving or remembering subject, I can also be aware of myself as a hard-working Hawaiian physicist or as a tubercular middle-aged male. Despite these obvious and radical differences, it should not be forgotten, however, that we are dealing with different types of *self-awareness*, and not with different subjects. In each case, I am aware of *myself*.³⁰

Likewise, “[i]f an experience is reflectively accessible to me in recollection, it is necessarily and automatically given as *my past* experience.”³¹ There is clearly an aspect of selfhood that is seen as persistent through the various thematizations of our lives, an ‘I’ which stands at the centre. To whom, then, are we referring when we ask the question ‘Who am I?’ The self-awareness that serves as the centrepiece of our narrative accounts and the lead character in our narrative thematizations of experience is not simply a derivative of the narrative. The ‘Who’ in the question ‘Who am I?’ requires a story; the ‘I’ is both the creation *and the persistent referent* of our stories. This raises the question ‘To whom do our stories refer?’

As we saw in the previous chapter, Daniel Dennett’s illusionary self represents the extreme hyper-constructivist pole on this issue. Dennett holds that the human being is a crude and passive sensory system a mere shadow or illusion of selfhood generated by the convergence of narratives. The radical position invites problems of agency and ethics arise (though Dennett does not see them as problems), but it is no less an issue for more modest subject-as-language accounts. Critics claim that discursive representations of the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

self “cannot provide the basis for an account of responsibility, that if we are, as it were, divided, ungrounded, or incoherent from the start, it will be impossible to ground a notion of personal or social responsibility on the basis of such a view.”³² Many contemporary theories of the self are therefore charged with conceding too much to discourse, leading more careful thinkers to argue for an agency that is contextual, and an intersubjectivity that is variable but nonetheless embedded in particular horizons of meaning, life-worlds, patterns of discourse, language games, or regimes of truth. They are less clear on where they locate agency and the intersubjective accessibility of others. I would like to suggest that these features are more manifest from the phenomenal domain of selfhood.

Recently, the study of cognition and consciousness has provided strong evidence that there is more to the phenomenal dimension of selfhood than conventional representations currently admit. Theorists have to varying degrees incorporated the basic findings, so it is possible to distinguish between strong and weak versions of phenomenal selfhood. The weak version posits a phenomenal sense of consciousness and agency. As mentioned, theorists of the linguistic turn have often tried to maintain a role for some rudimentary consciousness capable of providing the sense of volition as well as the raw experiential materials required for the narrative construction of identity. Just such a minimal self has been confirmed through research in neuro-pathology. Neuro-psychologist Antonio Damasio has observed a functional distinction between a ‘core’ (phenomenal) consciousness and an autobiographical (narrative) self,³³ and through

³² Butler, “Giving and Account of Oneself,” p. 22.

³³ Damasio, Antonio. 1999. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt. p. 154.

investigations into neuro-pathology he has determined that the latter is dependent on the former:

The results of neurological disease validate the distinction between core consciousness and extended consciousness. The foundational kind of consciousness, core consciousness, is disrupted in a kinetic mutisms, absence seizures, and epileptic automatism, persistent vegetative state, coma, deep sleep (dreamless), and deep anesthesia. In keeping with the foundational nature of core consciousness, when core consciousness fails, extended consciousness is disrupted, as exemplified by patients with profound disturbances of autobiographical memory, core consciousness remains intact.³⁴

Damasio's work is well corroborated, and the mass of new evidence behind core consciousness is enough to cast serious doubt on the hyper-constructivist claims made by Dennett and others that the self is simply an illusion.³⁵ Our sense of ourselves as volitional can be identified in the dynamics of embodied phenomenal consciousness. The experience of the autonomous self discussed in the previous chapter can be seen as more or less dependent on our phenomenal experience of agency. Gibbs proposes that our sense of volition,

as the causal basis for action, is perhaps the most convincing evidence for the "I" we experience as persons. For instance, I make a conscious decision to raise my right hand, and my body somehow responds accordingly. Much of the persistent belief that we are the "authors" of our actions is rooted in the systematic patterns of actions that appear to follow from our wilful intentions.³⁶

This sense of wilful intention, furthermore, is not a just a theory of agency surmised by inductively reasoning through a personal history of bodily action corresponding to will.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

³⁵ Galen Strawson identifies what he calls a minimal self in S. Gallagher and J. Shear eds. 1991. "The Self," *Models of the Self*. Exeter: Imprint Academic, pp. 1-24.

³⁶ Gibbs, Raymond W Jr. *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 22.

The experience of agency is not an intellectual accomplishment. A moment's reflection confirms that wilful intentions and bodily movement are an experiential unity, even if on reflection they are conceptually analyzable. Indeed, this is precisely why others perceive us as goal-directed subjects; a point made explicitly by Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty earlier on.

Recognition theorists acknowledge this core self of experience and agency, yet it is not what they have in mind when they discuss selfhood. They would have little difficulty accepting Damasio's findings regarding the core self as rightly credited with making furnishing the narrative self with sensorial as well as volitional experiences.

Shaun Gallagher describes these basic functions:

In self-narrative the construal of the character (the self) as agent or sufferer depends on the ability of the narrator to self-attribute action, and such self-attribution is necessarily based on the sense of agency and ownership (in the case of agentive action) and the sense of ownership (in the case of the sufferer). This means that even if other aspects of the minimal self are intact, the person who lacks a sense of self-agency or self-ownership would be incapable of self-narrative.³⁷

However, it is not perceived to offer much more than this. Charles Taylor makes it clear that this notion of the self is different from the one he wants to engage:

I remember an experiment designed to show that chimps too have a 'sense of self': an animal with pain marks its face, seeing itself in the mirror, reached with its paws to its own face to clean it. It somehow recognized that this mirror image was of its own body. Obviously, this involves a very different sense of the term from the one I wish to invoke.³⁸

³⁷ Gallagher, "Self Narrative, Embodied Action, and Social Context," p. 12.

³⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 32-33.

The conceptual limits of selfhood must capture the fullest sense of the meaning-filled lives of human beings if these lives are to be understood as distinct from the lives of chimpanzees. In terms of meaning, however, there is an emerging body of evidence suggesting that the phenomenal self is capable of thematizing a great deal of intersubjective experience. It may be closer to the empathic encounter originally proposed by Scheler than the reflectively generated self in Honneth or the socially embedded self in Taylor. We will be returning to recognition theories in the next chapter, but for now will attempt to delineate the widening scope of the phenomenal. As Zahavi observes, “If one chooses to identify the conscious with the thematically known, one has adopted a terminology that reflects a far too narrow conception of both consciousness and manifestation.”³⁹ We shall thus attempt to broaden our conceptions here. Let us begin at the beginning: infancy, and what is referred to in the literature as ‘primary intersubjectivity’.

In his work with children, Merleau-Ponty found that before infants had seen themselves in a mirror, and long before they had acquired linguistic competency, they seemed to have a basic sense of self and otherness. He great significance in the fact that the infant will reciprocate a smile, shrink before a threatening gesture, and perform a host of mimicking facial gestures before ever knowing itself as a social being.⁴⁰ Merleau-Ponty attributed these capacities to the way our bodies provide access to the world and he seems to have been right. Recent studies in developmental psychology have demonstrated that infants as young as 42 minutes almost certainly have the capacity to distinguish

³⁹ Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, p. 207.

⁴⁰ Zahavi, *Subject and Subjectivity*, p. 208.

between themselves and others, while twelve day old infants can imitate as well as understand when they are being imitated.⁴¹ Pre-linguistic children appear perfectly capable of discerning between things (objects) and people (subjects).⁴² Not only do human beings possess a basic sense of self, they appear to understand the basic sense of selfhood of others.⁴³ The question naturally arises: How is it that infants have what amounts to a natural capacity for intersubjectivity?

To briefly shift our discussion in a more empirical direction, one of the most promising answers lies in the discovery of ‘mirror neurons’.⁴⁴ At first observed in monkeys and then in humans, mirror neurons were found to be active during goal-directed action, whether that action was being performed by the self or, surprisingly, when seen performed by another. More recently mirror neurons have been linked to emotional interactions. Raymond Gibbs notes, for example, that “single-neuron recording

⁴¹ See Stawarska, B. 2003. “Facial Embodiment in ‘Invisible’ Imitation,” *Theoria at Historia Scientiarum: International Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies* 7, 1, pp. 139-162; Meltzoff, A. N. 1995. “Understanding the intentions of others: Re-enactment of intended acts by 18-month-old children,” *Developmental Psychology* 31, pp. 838–850; Meltzoff, A. N. and Brooks, R. 2001. “‘Like Me’ as a building block for understanding other minds: Bodily acts, attention, and intention,” *Intentions and Intentionality: Foundations of Social Cognition*. B. F. Malle et al. eds. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 171–191; Meltzoff, A. and Gopnik, A. 1993. “The role of imitation in understanding persons and developing a theory of mind,” *Understanding Other Minds: Perspectives from Autism*. S. Baron-Cohen, H. Tager-Flusberg, and D. Cohen eds. New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 335–366; Meltzoff, A. and Moore, M. K. 1977. “Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human neonates,” *Science* 198, pp. 75–78.

⁴² Legerstee, M. 1999. “Mental and Bodily Awareness in Infancy,” *Models of the Self*, S. Gallagher and J. Shear eds. Thorverton: Imprint Academic, pp. 213-230.

⁴³ Stern, Daniel N. 1985. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. New York: Basic Books.

⁴⁴ Rizzolatti, G. et al. 1996. “Premotor cortex and the recognition of motor actions,” *Cognitive Brain Research* 3. pp. 131–41.

experiments in humans have demonstrated that the same neurons become active when the subject either feels pain or observes others feeling pain.”⁴⁵

It is important to note that although the process is neurological, insofar as thought and feeling are also neurological it presents itself as conscious experience. As Dieter Lohmar makes clear, “the performances of mirror neurons have an “internal view,” i.e., they can be experienced by me and these experiences are accessible to phenomenological description.”⁴⁶ Mirror neurons do much to explain some common experiences, such as ‘ideomotor’ behaviour or how we move *with* athletes on television; and ‘emotional contagion’ in general, which is the automatic mimicking or synchronizing of movements, facial expressions, postures, and emotional vocalizations.⁴⁷ One of the more convincing interpretations of this evidence argues that *before (and in coordination with) our observations of others through a particular cultural lens, we have already thematized the other and experienced them as intentional, knowing, and feeling subjects.*

We do not understand the intentions, actions, and emotions of others because we theorize about their minds or project our own mental lives into them by analogy. We understand their mental lives because, as Wittgenstein noted, ‘my thoughts are not hidden from [the other], but are just open to him in a different way than they are to me’. The common human body is thought to provide a common template of understanding, again not through my analogical projection of embodiedness onto another, but through the immediate recognition of movement and expression. Each of us by virtue of being a

⁴⁵ Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognition*, p. 36.

⁴⁶ Lohmar, Dieter. 2006. “Mirror neurons and the phenomenology of intersubjectivity,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 5, pp. 5-16.

⁴⁷ Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognition.*, p. 249.

human body possess neurological structures that provide a proprioceptive sense of embodiment, that is, we each possess a pre-reflective sense or understanding of our body's posture, position, and capacity for movement.

It is these basic understandings that allow for intersubjectivity. Thus, Gallagher observes that “empathy, or social cognition, consists of a ‘resonance’ existing between the observer’s and the observed agent’s motor systems, forming a ‘shared manifold’ between the observer’s body schema and the agent’s body schema.”⁴⁸ In *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, Gallagher echoes Scheler:

[I]n most intersubjective situations we have a direct understanding of another person’s intentions because their intentions are explicitly expressed in their embodied actions, and mirrored in our own capabilities for action. For the most part this understanding does not require the postulation of some belief or desire that is hidden away in the other person’s mind, since what we might reflectively or abstractly call belief or desire is expressed directly in their behaviour.⁴⁹

Although the other is always perceived and understood as an independent subject by virtue of the first-person givenness of my own embodied consciousness, this common subjectivity ensures that the behaviours of others will have clear meaning for me, whether experienced directly or simply visualized in the imagination. Gallagher explains:

[W]hen I consciously simulate or imagine myself doing a certain action, or imagine you doing that action, or prepare to imitate an action that you

⁴⁸ Gallagher, Shaun. 2004. “Hermeneutics and the Cognitive Sciences,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 11, 10, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Gallagher, Shaun. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 224.

have just completed, the brain areas activated for my cognitive acts are the very same ones that are activated for my own actual motor behaviour.⁵⁰

It goes without saying that the empathic encounter between embodied subjects is not culturally limited. Gibbs cites that despite important cultural variations, “there remains a large degree of similarity across cultures in their association of body experience and emotion.”⁵¹ The consistency of human emotional expression across cultures admits of a 6% to 8% variation.⁵² We might say that mirror neurons offer the potential of a pre-theoretical corporeal *lingua franca*.⁵³ Indeed, it is an often overlooked but immensely significant aspect of intersubjectivity that “[w]hen nonverbal messages contradict verbal ones, we *trust* the nonverbal ones more.”⁵⁴ Trust, then, can be established on a non-linguistic basis. Indeed, we often find ourselves trusting or distrusting others despite everything we know (through storied experience) about them. We will return to this important matter of trust in the next chapter.

Finally it should be noted that the embodied actions of human beings are almost always goal directed, which introduces a strong pragmatic element to the possibility of intersubjectivity. An infant understands emotions and goal-directed action directly but it does not yet understand the cultural context of those expressions. Language and culture, I

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognition*, p. 257.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁵³ Young, I.M. 2005. “Throwing Like a Girl,” *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 156.

⁵⁴ Kramer, Erik Mark. 2004. “The Body in Communication,” *The Body in Human Inquiry: Interdisciplinary Explorations of Embodiment*. V. Berdayes, L. Esposito, and J.W. Murphy eds. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, p. 65.

would suggest, grow out of this need for contextualization, out of the desire for common goals imbued by a primordial understanding of the goal-directedness of behaviours exhibited others and ourselves. Drummond holds that this is the basis of interaction with both familiar and foreign subjects.

A cognitive transaction can begin in this empathic experience, for I can understand the other's claims about the world only to the extent that I can empathize the other's perceiving life, thereby recognizing other possibilities for experiencing the world from different perspectives and with different interests.⁵⁵

The movements and emotions of the other show to us prior to any *theory* of goals just when the other has attempted to do something and when they have achieved something (I think of an individual attempting to catch a fish with their bare hands for an entire day and the smile on their face when they finally catch one).

This of course does not mean that *all* proprioceptive understanding in the self is directly understandable to others or that perceptions cannot be mistaken. There is a great deal we can demonstrate to the other and, conversely, a great deal we can learn from imitating others. However, the intersubjective process of teaching and learning is not perfect and I am of the conviction that this is where the conceptual tools of language come on the scene. That said, Hubert Dreyfus has argued on the basis of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and recent work in cognitive science that neither representational thinking nor propositional structures are necessary for mastering activities.⁵⁶ When we do not share a common language, therefore, our embodied practices can become the vehicle

⁵⁵ Drummond, J.J. 2006. "Respect as a Moral Emotion: A Phenomenological Approach," *Husserl Studies*, 22, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Dreyfus, Hubert. 2002. "Intelligence without representation – Merleau-Ponty's critique of mental representation," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 1, pp. 367–383.

of translation. Wittgenstein and Heidegger become likely allies in such an interpretation of practical being in the world.⁵⁷ Wittgenstein writes: “The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.”⁵⁸ What I wish to emphasize is that the pragmatic origins of linguistic meaning are enabled, constrained, and informed by pre-reflective embodied thematizations of experience.

The Empathic Encounter

Much more can be said about such phenomenal thematizations.⁵⁹ But at this point we might reasonably question the limited domain assigned to phenomenal consciousness as well as the distinction we have seen made between the phenomenal self and the expansive set of meaningful human exchanges attributed to the linguistic or narrative self. For if the phenomenal self is in fact the centre of a broad range of meaningful intersubjective dynamics - affording us with a pre-linguistic and pre-theoretical

⁵⁷ I do not hold that these capacities are limited to *human* beings. As many cultures (particularly non-Western cultures) will attest, with regard to the phenomenal moment intersubjectivity is not limited to our species. Lohmar observes that in the study of mirror-neurons “it has become clear that there are no inter-species barriers in this type of bodily understanding of other subjects: Non-human primates interpret the movements of the human experimenter in the same way as they interpret the movements of their own species. We may suppose that the reverse is true as well.” In Lohmar, Dieter. 2006. “Mirror neurons and the phenomenology of intersubjectivity,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 5, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §206.

⁵⁹ For work on what the role of the face see Cole, J. 1998. *About Face*. Cambridge: MIT Press; Cole, J. 1997. “On being faceless: selfhood and facial embodiment,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 4, pp. 467-484. For a discussion on the role of the eyes and ‘mutual gaze’ see Stawarska, Beata. 2006. “Mutual gaze and social cognition,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 5, pp. 17-30.

understanding of otherness, trust, goal-directed actions, expressions, postures, emotions, and emotional vocalizations - does not the experiential basis of recognition perhaps owe more to the phenomenal than just its basic sense of agency and consciousness?

Indeed, even if we do attribute the vast majority of responsibility for the successes and failures of recognition to discourse, there are links between language and phenomenal experience that tempt us to look even closer at the role of embodiment. The view that there is only a circumstantial connection between meaning and the world now faces serious challenges. We should be cautious when evaluating these arguments, but current research on the connections between language and the body suggests that our comprehension of linguistic meaning, especially the language of emotional states, is at least partially founded on a repertoire of existing embodied understandings.

[I]n contrast to theories that claim language symbols are grounded solely in other symbols, these results imply that understanding language calls on bodily states involved in perception, imagery, and action.⁶⁰

[L]anguage about emotions is grounded in emotional states of the body, and simulating those states is a prerequisite for complete and facile understanding of the language about those states.⁶¹

It has been argued further that *all* linguistic meaning is necessarily founded on embodied understandings.

Mark Johnson and George Lakoff have argued that the sophisticated meanings that emerge in language and indeed in thought are built up from basic bodily

⁶⁰ Arthur, M.G., Havas, D., Becker, R., and Rinck, M. 2005. "Grounding Language in Bodily States: The Case for Emotion," *Grounding Cognition: The Role of Perception and Action in Memory, Language, and Thinking*. D. Pecher and R. Zwaan. eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 118.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

understandings such as UP and DOWN. These basic notions serve as cognitive (metaphoric) models upon which corresponding experiences can be mapped. The deep cognitive process is revealed in how we speak about things. It is rather common, for example, that the idea of consciousness and health are conceived in terms of UP, since when one is conscious and healthy they are standing UP as opposed to lying DOWN.⁶² Thus, according to Lakoff and Johnson, all thought, however sophisticated, is traceable in principle back to phenomenal experience. It has been argued forcefully that this is the only way linguistic communication could have possibly been developed and sustained. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone asks how language could have received its initial footing in our minds if not from the rich corporeal lives of early humans.

From both an ontogenetical and evolutionary viewpoint, corporeal concepts ground what eventually for humans becomes linguistic. Indeed, corporeal concepts are the essential without which language cannot arise and could not ever have arisen. There would be nothing to hold it together, no body of thought which would anchor it.⁶³

We will not probe any deeper into the empirical research here. I have only mentioned it to bring into sharper relief the possibilities implied in the expanding domain of the phenomenal moment. In light of the present discussion, and before shifting back to our inquiry into recognition theories have conceived selfhood, we shall briefly return to the question of alterity.

⁶² See Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 15; Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

⁶³ Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. 1999. "Sensory-kinetic understandings of language: An inquiry into origins," *Evolution of Communication*, 3, 2, p. 168.

Having left off with Heidegger and Gadamer, each of whom had focussed in different ways on the constitutive character of the social, we will recall that the phenomenal method came to be seen as giving access to a *historical* or *linguistic* way of being in the world. Husserl's promise of a pure transcendental reduction was judged naïve and uncritical and alterity was dropped as a central question in the existential and hermeneutic phenomenologies. Gadamer's thought represents an important departure from the framework of alterity we have been discussing thus far, yet the status of the other still features prominently in his thinking. It has also had a profound influence on the thinking of Charles Taylor. Gadamer held that we are (as Heidegger also put it) 'thrown' into a particular historical and cultural tradition that is not of our making, and whose language admits of prejudices that imbibe us with an unavoidably partial vision of ethical life. It is only through open dialogue with the other - who comes to us from a no less partial and prejudicial standpoint than we - that we can hope to probe and test our beliefs. In a genuine conversation with the other we seek not to understand them from the inside, but to find understanding in what the other communicates to us through language.

In this way the belief systems of the other, or 'thou', for Gadamer represent a foil against which we check our own. But this requires that we resist viewing the other instrumentally and resist assimilating or rejecting their beliefs - what is referred to as 'invidious comparison' - on our own prejudicial terms. It requires an acknowledgment or, rather, a presumption of our own partialities. The hermeneutic *practice* (despite the title of his work, Gadamer did not purport to advance a methodology as such) involves engaging our belief system as a whole and amending it wherever particular instantiations of our beliefs are seen to challenge or contradict what we think of as our general way of

life. Examples of the process are not hard to find; in the West we might think of the discord at play between our faith in universal principles of equality and our concurrent belief in natural racial or sexual inequalities.

The dialogue that we undertake with the other is an exercise in issuing questions, answers, and reasons regarding our beliefs. When we participate in this practice, which is a process of learning through a kind of comparative rationality,⁶⁴ we expose our beliefs and therefore our identities to transformation and it is here, clearly, that we find ourselves back on the terrain of recognition. In his article on comparative rationality titled “Self–other relations and the rationality of cultures,” Paul Healy observes that “on the hermeneutic account, intercultural learning is conceived of as an interactive process grounded in mutual recognition and respect.”⁶⁵

At the outset of this chapter we inquired into the prominence of the narrative self in social theory. We discussed in broad terms the phenomenological approaches to alterity that were seen as deficient insofar as they could not establish the necessary connections between self and other that could make sense of the recognition experience. Language and the discursive subject provided the foundations for a robust intersubjectivity. However, through a brief but revealing excursion into the science of alterity we established that the phenomenal moment of recognition could encompass a great deal more than just the rudimentary sense of agency and self-awareness. The phenomenal moment, anticipated in Scheler’s empathic encounter, overcomes the

⁶⁴ Winch, Peter. 1970. “Understanding a Primitive Society,” *Rationality*. B. Wilson ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 78–111.

⁶⁵ Healy, Paul. 2000. “Self–other relations and the rationality of cultures,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 26, 6, p. 77.

deficiencies we identified at first. In the phenomenal moment we can identify meaningful exchanges that establish the other as a subject (to counter the problem of solipsism), with goal-directed intentions, beliefs, trustworthiness, and emotional states. We distinguish this from phenomenalism, which holds that we do not know anything about a subject perceived other than that it is a subject. We do not, as Wittgenstein observed, ‘surmise’ an understanding of it, nor, as Merleau-Ponty attested, do we simply take things as mere ‘givens of sight’. Rather, we understand others as ‘sacred entities’ through what Husserl called ‘intuition’.

Furthermore, these do not simply constitute the basic *form* of communication into which language pours its genuinely meaningful *content*. The selfhood, beliefs, goals, and emotional states of the other are understood in the moment of expressive unity, where despite (and sometimes in direct contradiction to) what our storied accounts tell us about the moment, we understand without mediation the joy in his laughter, the sorrow and pain in his tears, the shame in his blushing, the entreaty in his outstretched hands, the love in his look of affection, the rage in the gnashing of his teeth, and the threats in the clenching of his fist.

This is not to suggest that culture does not in so many ways direct us in our daily comportment. The ability of culture to determine which movements are deemed appropriate for whom has been soundly illustrated in the work of Butler on ‘performances’ and Bourdieu on the *habitus*, among others.⁶⁶ What the cognitive and neurological evidence shows is that the consciousness engendered by embodiment is not

⁶⁶ See respectively Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso; and Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

infinitely or even principally malleable. We are not blank pages upon which the pen of history and culture is free to write just anything. Or, to repeat a previous analogy, the tapestry that is our storied lives can be woven into myriad patterns, but the common thread and loom of the human body ensure that all are intelligible to all. It is to this theme of backgrounds and mutual intelligibility that we now turn.

CHAPTER III: INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Certainly, attitudes, expressions and actions can all be relevant in constituting adequate recognition. Mere actions and expressions without corresponding attitudes seem mere pretence of recognition, and mere attitudes without corresponding action do not seem sincere either. Furthermore, attitudes without expressions (at least implicitly in body-language or tone of voice) are not accessible to others, who thus cannot ‘get recognition’.¹

Background(s) and Affect

As we discussed in the end of Chapter I, the scope and content of the phenomenal experience has received little attention in recognition theories because of a presiding focus on narrative formulations of the self and intersubjectivity. Our goal in this final chapter will be to apply the *thick* version of the phenomenal self we developed in Chapter II to the recognition theories of Taylor and Honneth. We will then move on to our conclusion and a consideration of questions that emerge from our inquiry.

There are many credible approaches to intersubjectivity that claim to be hermeneutic, but the textual focus of hermeneutic interpretation seems to have led thinkers to discount the empathic encounter. We have seen the intersubjective moment of question and answer shift to a kind of reading of the other-as-text rather than an encounter between embodied human beings. Various theorists have attended to the body, but typically to analyse the way comportment is a product of background. Butler and Bourdieu are important figures in the approach that understands the body as an expression of history and culture and that it appropriately interpreted as text. The neuro-phenomenological and experiential evidence for our pre-theoretical perceptions of self

¹ Laitinen, Arto. “Interpersonal Recognition and Responsiveness to Relevant Differences,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 9, 1 (March 2006), p. 49.

and alterity have not been welcomed or fully explored.² Instead, they are dismissed as so much totalizing scientism.

For his part Taylor has argued that our mode of being is shaped in distinct ways by our bodies and our way of life. This in turn generates at least two distinct backgrounds against which we make our strong evaluations, a *thin* embodied mode of being and a narrative way of being. These backgrounds require unpacking. Taylor illustrates the different modes in a discussion of Heidegger's contribution to the notion of 'engaged agency'.³ Engaged agency is the kind of autonomy that is intelligible against the backdrop of both a world-shaping narrative and a *thin* embodied engagement with the world. Hence, on the phenomenal dimension, UP and DOWN, NEAR and FAR are intelligible and have meaning for me because "of what it is to be a creature embodied as I am."⁴ Furthermore, we have the ability to negotiate the physical world without reflecting on it because we possess an immediate thematization of our physical environment.

² But it is not as if the hermeneutic approach does not benefit from scientific understandings. Currently, one of the more well substantiated theories of perception proposes that we recognize things and relations based on adaptable 'prototypes': "[P]rototype theory suggests that interpretation will be more ambiguous, less objective, more a matter of degree than of complete and full understanding. The meaning of an object will be harder to pin down, and it will be more dependent on the situation. It is more about what Wittgenstein would call 'family resemblance' than about pigeon holes." Gallagher observes that this theory helps explain the appeal of the hermeneutic method: "A prototype helps to map out the territory; to clarify what's different and/or the same in situations. A prototype is not simply one good example; rather it defines a cluster of phenomena, some of which are central and some peripheral. A prototype is a pathway into a hermeneutical circle." In Gallagher, "Hermeneutics and the cognitive sciences," p. 5.

³ Taylor, Charles. 2006. "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger," *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger 2nd Edition*. C.B Guignon ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 204.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

To know one's way about is to be really moving around, handling things, dealing with things, with understanding. What is described in the last two words is not an extra layer of representations mirroring the effective actions; it conveys rather the way we inhabit these actions...This is the point that is sometimes made by saying that it is a kind of 'knowing how' rather than 'knowing that.'⁵

Now I have been arguing that it is not just basic orientational meanings like UP and DOWN and the ability to negotiate the physical world that emerge from phenomenal experience. The world of perception is populated by people as well as things and our coping with the world includes a strong social dimension. Others are not perceived as automata and theorized into persons. In the empathic or phenomenal encounter with the other we recognize a SUBJECT with directly recognizable INTENTIONS, some immediately understandable EMOTIONS, and conduct rendering her more or less deserving of TRUST. Evidence suggests that we might also include the phenomenal understanding of the other's PRIVACY and PERSONAL SPACE.⁶ Though these features are culturally universal, the boundaries of social space will be culturally varied. Together with our basic orientational understandings they constitute a *thick* phenomenal self.

We should say a little more about the role of affect in the phenomenal moment, especially the emotion of 'shame' since, as Fanon has made clear, 'shame' is fundamental in the experience of misrecognition. We should point out first that 'shame' is distinguishable from the related emotions of 'embarrassment' and 'remorse/guilt'.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁶ For the cultural universality of regulation of privacy and personal space see Altman, I. and Chemers, D. eds. 1980. *Culture and Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 75-119. For a cross-cultural analysis of personal space and behavioural communication see Hall, Edward T. 1966. *The Hidden Dimension*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, and 1973. *The Silent Language*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday respectively.

When I understand that you could perceive something bad *about* me (shame) it will not affect me in the same way as you perceiving something bad *happening to* me (embarrassment) or being *done by* me (remorse/guilt). The emotions are related, so much so that they are often conflated, as when we say we are ‘ashamed of what we have done’ or ‘ashamed of what has happened to us’. Both these utterances obscure that fact that it is the aspect of the event that is knowably *about* us that is a source of ‘shame’.

Hence, victims of crimes are often severely embarrassed by the victimization, but they are ashamed by the new label or status of ‘victim’. Similarly in our own behaviours we can discern the distinct but related sense of shame in ‘*I did that horrible thing*’ and remorse in ‘*I did that horrible thing*’.⁷ We have remorse for bad things we *do* but we are ashamed about who we *are* and who we have *become* by virtue of those actions. This is why shame features so strongly in the experience of misrecognition where it is not our behaviours but our identities that are most vulnerable.

We have a fairly good idea what shame is and is not, but how does it manifest in the experience of misrecognition? What is the relationship between the emotion and the event? Traditionally the debates over affect have centred on the relationship between cognition and emotion, with *cognitivists* arguing that emotions are generated by our cognitive propositional judgements about the world and *noncognitivists* arguing that propositions and cognition are unnecessary for educing emotional states.⁸ For the

⁷ See Tangney, J.P. 2003. “Self Relevant Emotions,” *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Leary, M.R. and Tangney, J.P. eds. New York: Guildford Press, p. 387. See also Lewis, H.B. 1971. *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*. New York: International Press.

⁸ For the cognitivist perspective see Lazarus, R.S. 1984. “On the primacy of cognition,” *American Psychologist*. 39, pp. 124-129. For the noncognitivist reply see the aptly titled Zajonc, R.B. 1984. “On the primacy of affect,” *American Psychologist*. 39, pp. 117-123.

cognitivist, then, shame is a product of a storied account (propositional understanding) of how I have been misrecognized. For the noncognitivist, we can understand that we have been misrecognized precisely *because* we have experienced SHAME. Here we have been arguing closest to what has traditionally been viewed as a non-cognitivist view of affect, but thanks to neuropsychological research the debate itself has expanded to include more subtle interpretations that should be considered.

The latest neuroanatomical evidence lends itself to a middle position. An emotion is best explained as an *appraisal*, or a “representation of the relation between an organism and its environment that bears on its well-being.”⁹ Prinz suggests that given the evidence, the cognitivists’ strict propositional view of thinking ought to be abandoned. In a partial vindication of empiricist speculations, cognition is more productively defined as the top-down organismic control of cognitive elements accrued through experience. Organismic control here is simply the idea of actively thinking things through conceptually. For example, I might have the bottom-up experience of a shape, a perception, which I may or may not incorporate into an act of top-down conceptualization (cognition). Emotions occur from the bottom-up. When we may call up an emotional state from memory in top-down cognition we employ an emotion *concept*. These emotion concepts are thought to be absent in infants and animals, though they do possess well-tuned emotional appraisals of the world which ought to be regarded as cognitions that have not been included in an *act* of cognition. To modify the language for our purposes, emotions are aspects of phenomenal background that may or may not be incorporated into a narrative.

⁹ For an excellent survey of the most recent research see Prinz, Jesse. 2004. *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

According to Prinz, emotions are best interpreted as non-propositional judgements that guide us safely through the world. Affect is a way of knowing. So far this sounds fairly noncognitivist. Indeed, there are neurological pathways that go directly from the eyes to the affect centres of the brain, bypassing the propositional evaluative centres.¹⁰ In the case of FEAR, we do not process the perception of a coiled snake propositionally; FEAR is present prior to thinking about whether a snake is there. But this is not to say that emotions like ‘shame’ are always produced nonpropositionally. Misrecognition can be coded in language as well as expressed in behaviour, or both. There are, in other words, both phenomenal and narrative moments of misrecognition. But we have also seen that what is coded in language and understood propositionally is sometimes in tension or even direct contradiction to what is expressed in the other’s behaviour and understood by us phenomenally. The history of aboriginal life in Canada is replete with such events. In the case of recognition, actions do indeed speak louder than words.

But is the phenomenal self so often accused of solipsism really equipped with the intersubjective emotion of SHAME, an affective state normally associated with deep and complex social understandings? The critic would rightly point out that the phenomenal self does not understand that s/he is a woman, an aboriginal, or a homosexual, for these are social constructed understandings. Taylor’s *thin* phenomenal self would grasp the relative positions of our bodies in the encounter with the other. Otherwise meaningless bodily actions and positions might then be interpreted against the narrative background to reveal their culturally encoded meanings. In conjunction with the meanings housed in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

language they form a single mode of being with the other and a single source of (mis)recognition and ‘shame’.

I will not argue that narratively generated ‘shame’ and phenomenal SHAME are identical in character. I wish only to defend the idea that SHAME is more than an emotion we experience from a first-person perspective, as in the narrative domain. SHAME is an appraisal of a relationship between self and other that can occur independently of whatever propositional attitudes or storied accounts we have of the relation. SHAME cannot be the same ‘shame’ of the narrative moment because like so many other emotions it manifests and sustains itself despite the narrative. Yet it also bears directly on the experience of subjugation and prejudice in the face of the hegemon. We walk away from the encounter with mixed emotions, some of them narratively generated, some of them phenomenally generated. I am suggesting that we lead kind of simultaneous dual life with every moment of (mis)recognition a potential dual experience emerging from dual backgrounds.

Two predictions can be drawn from this thesis. The first is that we should see something like SHAME in those who cannot form propositional narrative accounts. The second is that our phenomenal understanding of SHAME can be inconsistent with our storied accounts. On the first point, research seems to suggest that infants and animals do in fact experience a form of SHAME. There is significant evidence, for example, that infants experience a pre-theoretical and identifiable state of SHAME.¹¹ It is very likely that this phenomenal experience is the basis of the sort of feelings that adults experience

¹¹ Kilborne, Benjamin. “Fields of Shame,” *Ethos*, 20, 2, (June 1992), pp. 232-233.

but there is also no reason to believe that it is subsumed by linguistic intersubjectivity. The latter simply develops along side the former.

Adult human beings are not the only ones capable of feeling an injury to the self. Animals have well documented conscious and emotional lives,¹² and Frans de Waal has identified what he considers the blueprint for human shame and reconciliation in primates.¹³ Drummond describes how tuned we are in the encounter to how the other's body is 'carried':

We empathically encounter moods or general feeling-characteristics in the life of others in experiencing, say, the vigor or sluggishness of their walk, their posture and bearing while standing or sitting, their facial features, or, in general, the manner in which their body is, we might say, 'carried'.¹⁴

We speak of the shaming effect of 'turning one's back' on the other, which we construe in symbolic terms in contemporary institutional forms of recognition. The Canadian government is thus charged with metaphorically 'turning its back' on any number of minority groups seeking recognition. These groups are left to with an undue attenuation of self-worth and an unwarranted experience of shame. Tellingly, the perceptions of institutional behaviour in such cases are almost uniformly drawn from embodied metaphor. We see a similar pattern of embodied metaphor at work in art and religion. In his article "The Primacy of Expression," Albus Mickunas writes:

¹² For a good summary of the literature on animal consciousness see Mitchell, R. 2003. "Subjectivity and Self-Recognition in Animals," *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Leary, M.R. and Tangney, J.P. eds. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 567-587.

¹³ de Waal, F. 1996. *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 104, 110-111.

¹⁴ Drummond, J.J. 2006. "Respect as a Moral Emotion: A Phenomenological Approach," *Husserl Studies*, 22, p. 16.

The expressive power of corporeality is communicated not only across gestures of other bodies, but also provides the locus for transformations from one expressive modality to another, such as direct vision, aural styles and rhythms, to institutionalized records of writing, where the same proud posture, the haughty gaze, the same sorrow of defeat, pervade volumes of poetry and literature. The corporeality reveals the expressive power that is found in the Greek movement toward theocentrism, the pagan “enthusiasm” with arms spread and open toward the sky, and the Christian despatialization and slavish submission in kneeling and prostration.¹⁵

Kneeling and prostration notwithstanding, it is specifically the turning of one’s back - and more tellingly the recipient’s hunched posture and downward gaze - that communicates volumes in the social lives of most primates.¹⁶ The same dynamics of posture and body language are no less pervasive and impactful for human beings.

Recognition Revisited

We will return to the topic of institutional recognition in our conclusion, but at the moment we are prepared to contrast the *thick* version of the phenomenal SUBJECT to the self as described in recognition theories. We begin with Honneth, who has since abandoned the Meadian symbolic interactionist approach to intersubjectivity, but whose socio-psychological arguments in *Struggle for Recognition* still represent a popular ‘looking-glass self’ interpretation of the recognition process. To quickly recap, Honneth sought to explain the struggle for self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem.

¹⁵ Mickunas, Albus. “The Primacy of Expression,” *The Body in Human Inquiry: Interdisciplinary Explorations of Embodiment*. V. Berdayes, L. Esposito, and J.W. Murphy eds. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, p. 43.

¹⁶ Similarly, primatologist Frans de Waal observes: “The uniquely human capacity to turn red in the face suggests that at some point in time our ancestors began to gain more from advertising trustworthiness than from fostering opportunism.” de Waal, *Good Natured*, p. 116.

Recognition on these three levels is necessary condition for producing healthy functioning human beings, but the reasons why we pursue recognition are unsatisfactorily explained through Hegelian metaphysics. Honneth therefore turned to the social and reflective self developed in the work of G.H. Mead. There is very little to the phenomenal self in the Meadian formulation. Mead makes an immediate distinction between social self-consciousness and basic self-awareness:

Consciousness and self-awareness are not on the same level. A man alone has, fortunately or unfortunately, access to his own toothache, but that is not what we mean by self-consciousness.¹⁷ The taking or feeling of the attitude of the other toward yourself is what constitutes self-consciousness, and not mere organic sensations of which the individual is aware and which he experiences.¹⁸

Self-awareness is here rendered in terms of pure first-person sensation and other-awareness is poised as the exclusive domain of self-consciousness, which is the capacity to imagine what one must look from the perspective of another. Mead's symbolic interactionism claims that we are, in the words of C.H. Cooley, 'looking-glass selves' who see through the eyes of others.¹⁹ Consider Mead's description of the emergence of the subject:

The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other

¹⁷ Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 163.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

¹⁹ Cooley, C.H. 1902. *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Scribner's.

individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved.²⁰

What is immediately betrayed in this formulation is the fact that we understand the other as someone capable of holding beliefs about us, a SUBJECT, which itself belies an experience of one's self as capable of imaginative perspective-taking, again, as a SUBJECT. In the terminology utilised by phenomenologists, the subject is manifest not in an understanding that 'I am' but in the understanding that "I can". Self-awareness imparts subjectivity by the very fact that 'I can' take the perspective of another even before I do so. Likewise the other is recognizable as a SUBJECT to me not because 'I can' but because I immediately see that she is an intentional being; '*She* can' take a perspective on me or on anything else, even before she does so. Self-consciousness is thus enabled and constrained by a *thick* self-awareness.

Research on symbolic interactionism has revealed that self-understandings are rarely correlated with other's actual perceptions about us. They are more often than not a product of one's own appraisals of the self. Hence, the *me* is in general a function of my own storied accounts of myself projected onto others, whose actual impressions of me are usually erroneously interpreted.²¹ Narrative intersubjectivity is at a loss to describe our appraisals of ourselves. Those who utilize the looking-glass self paradigm are sceptical of

²⁰ Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 138.

²¹ See Felson, R.B. 1993. "The (somewhat) social self: How others affect self-appraisals," *Advances in Group Processes*, 9, pp. 185-205; Ichiyama, M.A. 1993. "The reflected appraisal process in small-group interaction," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 56, pp. 87-99; Kenny, D.A. and DePaulo, B.M. 1993. "Do people know how others view them? An empirical and theoretical account," *Psychological Bulletin*, 114, pp. 145-161; Shrauger, J.S. and Schoeneman, T.J. 1979. "Symbolic interactionist view of self-concept: Through the looking-glass darkly," *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, pp. 549-573.

the intersubjective capacities of pre- or non-linguistic beings. Many argue, for instance, that a child is only to be a person when they achieve the linguistic capacity of self-reference in the pronoun 'I'.²² The annunciation of the first-person singular signifies our development into a full-fledged person capable of self-reflection and discerning 'I' from 'thou' and 'world'. Language gives rise to consciousness. Again, experience and evidence do not support this view, leading Dan Zahavi to suggest that theorists who hold on to the position remain spellbound by a Cartesian deception.

To claim that the child only gains self-awareness the moment it can discriminate between its own subjective experiences and objective reality is to remain spellbound by the paradigm of reflection...Self awareness does not arise thanks to any discrimination between self and world, but is the condition of possibility for any such discrimination.²³

As Honneth seems to have identified correctly, the Meadian naturalization of Hegelian dialectical recognition is untenable. But where Honneth proposes a narrative self that is motivated to gain recognition by an innate drive to control others, I propose a tension between the interpretations of the narrative self and the irreducible emotional appraisals of the phenomenal self. I cannot speak to the notion that the self has an irremediable drive to control others. There may be some element of truth to the claim. What I can say is that the explanatory substitution of unconscious drives for conscious reflections in recognition theory does little to illuminate the recognition experience or its pre-conditions, or to say why it is a worthy endeavour. The virtual absence of a phenomenal moment in Meadian social psychology is the reason why Honneth's theory

²² Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, p. 175.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

cannot explain the desire for recognition and why Honneth was forced to posit unconscious forces.

Charles Taylor is among the few recognition theorists to have proposed a *thin* phenomenal self with a minimal background constituted through our ‘coping’ with the physical world. Taylor argues that because the social is essentially linguistic the basic meanings we encounter in the phenomenal moment are not interpretable, they can only be described. In keeping with his focus on language Taylor asks that we “think of the difference between articulating how you feel about someone and describing a scene involving that person. Of course, one may contaminate the other, but that is considered a vice. The tasks are distinct.”²⁴ We might agree with the notion that phenomenal experiences are analytically irreducible and open only to description, but this still leaves the range of the irreducible in question. And when we expand the scope of the irreducible phenomenal experience according to our evidence to include more than a *thin* orientational background we find that we must consider description and interpretation together.

When we do we find that there are always experiences of others that do not conform to our narratives, which bring about contradictions and cannot be explain or articulated. When pressed we can only describe how the experience feels to us. I would argue that these moments disrupt the narrative self, producing what we shall call *phenomenal dissonance* and forcing a reflexive reassessment and the desire for change. Thus, cross-contamination of experience with articulation and the phenomenal dissonance it often generates is not only the norm it is also a necessary condition of

²⁴ Taylor, “Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger,” p. 213.

agency. The desire for change comes when narrative coherence breaks down, when phenomenal dissonance signals a disruption of our storied accounts in light of an unexpected and inexplicable emotional appraisal. The focus of social theorists on narrative alone conceals this dynamic by placing emotions at the wrong end of appraisal.

Katz articulates the point succinctly:

Studies almost always end up analysing how people talk about their emotions. If there is anything distinctive about emotions, it is that, even if they commonly occur in the course of speaking, they are not talk, not even just forms of expression, they are ways of expressing something going on that talk cannot grasp. Historical and cultural studies similarly elide the challenge of understanding emotional experience when they analyse texts, symbols, material objects, and ways of life as representations of emotions.²⁵

Articulating how you feel about the other will no doubt play out from one's background and a storied account of your relationship. The events in memory that become the story will be built in large part around interpretations of first-person experiences that have been woven together to form a more or less coherent narrative. But the articulation will almost always include rogue meanings that defy interpretation and are either ignored, uneasily appended to our narrative account, or left as a puzzling remainder. This is why it makes perfect sense in an epiphanal moment to say to the other "Despite everything I thought I knew, I am angry with/ in love with/ ashamed of/ shamed by/ envious of/ resentful of/ intimidated by/ disgusted by/ embarrassed by you! It's true and I'm as shocked as you are!" Most of us have experienced this kind of realization, one that sends us plumbing our memories for reinterpretable experiences that can be rewoven to form a coherent alternate narrative.

²⁵ Katz, J. 1999. *How Emotions Work*. Chicago; University of Chicago Press, p. 322.

But recall that experiencing emotions from the bottom-up is different from when we actively go top-down and recall emotional *concepts* from our past. Emotional *concepts* - the contextualized memories of emotional experience - are already integrated and therefore much less likely to compel a refiguring of our narrative lives. As Sonia Kruks observes, “emotion is...irreducible to intellectual experience, to a single physiological response, or to a discursive effect.”²⁶ The irreducibility of rogue emotional appraisals seems to engender its disruptive power. Adapting Taylor’s language we could say that to know one’s way about the social world is to be really moving around, handling relations, dealing with people, with understanding them. To use the terms of Gilbert Ryle, the phenomenal therefore takes care of our ‘knowing how’, while the narrative constitutes our ‘knowing that’.

One could argue that the contamination of our phenomenal experience by the articulation of prejudices is a serious problem. Many hyper-constructivist thinkers have posited a complete takeover, but most non-Cartesian social theorists implicitly locate agency in some poorly developed and *thin* notion of the phenomenal. de Sousa Santos contends that contamination of the phenomenal signals the utilization of ‘lazy reason’: “The gaze that sees a person ploughing the land only sees in that person the premodern peasant.”²⁷ We might argue that the objectified person is never fully transformed into an OBJECT in these instances. The *thick* phenomenal experience of the SUBJECT is not polluted or negated by the articulation of prejudice; subjectivity remains along side the

²⁶ Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, p. 149.

²⁷ de Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2004. “A Critique of Lazy Reason: Against the Waste of Experience,” *Work in Progress*. Provided to the Victoria Colloquium, University of Victoria. 2006, p. 12.

objectifying articulation.²⁸ Despite the most heinous objectifications of the subaltern, our embodiedness ensures that the hegemon cannot help but see a SUBJECT and the subaltern cannot help but experience themselves as a SUBJECT with all of the unmediated understandings we have already delineated. Kelly Oliver overstates the case, claiming that

oppression and subordination are experiences that attempt to objectify the subject and mutilate or annihilate subjectivity, that is, your sense of yourself, especially your sense of yourself as an agent. Rendered an object the victim of oppression and subordination is also rendered speechless. Objects do not talk. Objects do not act. Objects are not subjects or agents of their own lives.²⁹

Post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault generally claim there is no such thing as a fixed subjectivity and that the promise of dignity through recognition (as if it exists outside power) is simply Enlightenment (that is, Hegelian) blackmail. When confronted with such claims it should be made explicitly clear that identities and norms of dignity are not developed and sustained in a vacuum. I disagree with the claim commonly associated with Nietzsche and the early Foucault, that “[n]othing in man - not even his body - is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding

²⁸ Dehumanizing narratives never completely override the sense of the other as a SUBJECT. Even in the darkest moments of human history the perpetrators of horrors have been acutely aware of their victims as human beings. Nazi propaganda, for instance, was built around a vilification of Jewish culture and Bolshevik values, manifestly human characteristics. Most ordinary Nazi soldiers posted to extermination camps and deathsquads succumbed to ‘disabling trauma’ requiring mental hospitals and rest camps. These positions were eventually given to sociopaths for whom the narrative of Aryan superiority was not required to commit atrocities in the first place. For an interesting albeit journalistic account of how this see Rhodes, Richard. 2002. *Masters of Death: The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust*. New York: Random House.

²⁹ Oliver, Kelly. 2001. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 95.

other men.”³⁰ The evidence simply does not support this view. Judith Butler likewise asserts that there is no human face prior to power:

If the Other confers recognition - and we have yet to know precisely in what that consists - it does this not primarily by virtue of special internal capacities. There is already not only an epistemological frame within which the face appears, but an operation of power as well, since only by virtue of certain kinds of anthropocentric dispositions and cultural frames will a given face seem to be a human face to any one of us. After all, under what conditions do some individuals acquire a face, a legible and visible face, and others do not? There is a language that frames the encounter, and embedded in that language a set of norms concerning what will and will not constitute recognizability.³¹

Insofar as Butler is correct to point out that there is a language that frames the encounter, her totalizing frame of culture does too much work. Everyone possess a legible and visible face insofar as their face can be seen. Infants recognize facial expressions, intentions (including failed intentions), and basic emotions. Animals have complex corporeal and facial communications. But Butler does not mean for us to translate ‘faces’ literally. She wants us to cast the ‘face’ metonymically, to stand for the person and their ‘invisibility’ (to use another metaphor) against certain prejudicial backgrounds. Of course people have faces that are visible, but what matters is their *social* visibility. What Butler and the early Foucault have not recognized is that having a visible corporeal existence is already to be socially visible. We need not rehearse the arguments again, but suffice it to say that while we might have languages that frame the narrative encounter so as to

³⁰ Foucault, Michel. 1977. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, D.F. Bouchard ed. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, p. 153.

³¹ Butler, “Giving and Account of Oneself,” pp. 23-24.

exclude the Other, the norms engendered through language do not fully constitute recognizability.

We negotiate physical as well as social spaces with an intuitive sense of the boundaries and affordances of persons and things. Sometimes these aspects of the encounter become the focal point of our reflective attention, but in most instances they simply exist as an essential background understanding of the other's intentions and emotions. As Drummond explains it:

[I]n experiencing the other's feelings, moods, emotions, and desires, I do not identify myself with the other or become the other or live in the other's feelings and moods. The other is always irreducibly other, and the recognition of the irreducibility of the other – a conscious, free being in her own right – creates the moral space in which we can locate respect.³²

The body is itself a shared horizon of meaning. Thus, when de Sousa Santos asks if it is 'possible to see the subaltern regardless of the relation of subalternity,'³³ we can answer in the affirmative that we really have no choice in the matter. With this in mind, consider how Taylor formulates the emotion of 'shame':

An emotion like 'shame' can only be explained by reference to other concepts which in turn cannot be understood without reference to shame. To understand the concepts we have to be in on a certain experience, we have to understand a certain language, not just of words, but also a certain language of mutual action and communication, by which we blame, exhort, admire, esteem each other. In the end we are in on this because we grow up in the ambit of certain common meanings.³⁴

³² Drummond, J.J. 2006. "Respect as a Moral Emotion: A Phenomenological Approach," *Husserl Studies*, 22, p. 17.

³³ de Sousa Santos, "Critique of Lazy Reason," p. 14.

³⁴ Taylor, Charles. 1979. "Interpretation and the sciences of man," *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*. P. Rabinow and W.M. Sullivan eds. Berkley: University of California Press, p. 34.

At first blush it appears as though Taylor could concede a *thick* version of the phenomenal self, one in which ‘common meanings’ are not the sole dominion of words but tied to the ‘experience of mutual action and communication’. But unfortunately I do not think this would accurately represent Taylor’s view. When it comes to linguistic meaning, Taylor is a coherentist rather than a foundationalist. Shame, therefore, can only be understood with reference to other propositional concepts; it is not irreducible, but it is interpretable. The emotion of shame is generated, as Heidegger would agree, solely through mutual action and rooted, as Gadamer would agree, in common meanings. But then how do we explain phenomenal dissonance and the affected disruption of our storied accounts? If shame is a product of linguistic intersubjectivity, why does it sometimes manifest or persist despite narrative accounts, in infants and in animals?

Taylor will want to argue that he is only interested in shame as experienced by self-interpreting adult human beings who make strong evaluations against a particular cultural historical background. This is fine, but this narrowing of permissible experience raises more problems than it solves. In a discussion of Gadamer, Taylor argues that in order to understand Aztec sacrifice we ought to presume that “we share the same humanness, and that therefore we can ultimately find our feet in Aztec sacrifice because it is a way of dealing with a human condition we all share.”³⁵ Such a leap of faith may be required, but why would we presume the *same* humanness and precisely what shared condition are we talking about?

Presumably for Taylor the leap would be predicated on some disposition toward a connection with the good, but surely such a disposition is not to rooted in the contingent

³⁵ Taylor, Charles. 2002. “Gadamer on the Human Sciences,” *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 140.

propositional understandings that make up our narrative backgrounds. Whence the desire to recognize and be recognized? Taylor, tellingly I would suggest, uses a corporeal metaphor to describe our realization of the commonality - we will 'find our feet' in their way of life - but he does not illustrate it further. Thus, transformative dialogue seems an unlikely undertaking if the only meaningful background we possess to compare is the very source of our prejudices. We can posit competing narratives but this will not explain how we decide between them. If one's narrative background is already sufficiently open to a particular difference then the leap of faith is unnecessary. If it is closed than we need to go outside the narrative to find the source.

Taylor's *thin* phenomenal self leaves these questions unanswered. However it does appear to provide sufficient realist grounding to get comparative rationality off the ground. Taylor argues that we can make transcultural judgments of rationality.³⁶ If we engage with a physical world in the same spatio-temporal way by virtue of embodiment, one can justifiably see whether something is working for someone else and then hear reasons as to why it works. I suggest that to get mutually transformative recognition off the ground in a similar fashion - to explain alterity, the will to engage, our social coping, seeing the same humanness, the understanding of meaningful common condition, and the experience of trust and shame - we need to posit a *thick* phenomenal self. Just how thick is a question I could only briefly consider, though I suggest it is much richer than a simple orientational background and much less rich than the narrative and phenomenal moments combined.

³⁶ See Taylor, Charles. 1982. "Rationality," *Rationality and Relativism*. Hollis, M. and Lukes, S. eds. Oxford: Blackwell Press. pp. 87–105. See also Wong, David. 1989. "Three Kinds of Incommensurability," *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*. M. Krausz ed. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 140–158.

CONCLUSIONS

What both discursive and Enlightenment accounts of the subject fail to consider are the lived, corporeal aspects of subjectivity. Sentient, affective, and emotional experiences come to be a vital constituent of cognition, judgement, and speech. Without considering these aspects, we cannot give sufficiently full accounts of experiences such as humiliation, fear, anger, empathy, or care, out of which acts of resistance are often born.¹

Summary of the argument

In conclusion we shall briefly overview the main points of the argument before moving on to some relevant questions and concerns that emerge from our conclusions. We began in Chapter I by introducing the dual self, narrative and phenomenal, which we then identified in Hegel's master/slave dialectic and the struggle for recognition. Continuing on to recognition theories developed in largely Hegelian terms, we explored how Axel Honneth sought to naturalize the struggle for recognition by positing a social psychological (Meadian) 'looking-glass' self. We then turned to the recognition theory of Charles Taylor, who through Gadamer and Wittgenstein portrayed the encounter between self and other in terms of pure linguistic intersubjectivity. Taylor did, however, adapt a *thin* phenomenal self with orientational capacities from the work of Merleau-Ponty. The predominance of linguistic intersubjectivity in recognition theory along with the charge of solipsism made against phenomenology prompted us to explore the depth of the phenomenal.

In Chapter II the reasons for the charge of solipsism became clear through our introduction to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, wherein he proposed that we could arrive at 'categorical intuitions' and presuppositionless understandings. Husserl

¹ Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, p. 147.

rejected Scheler's argument that any epistemic boundaries between the self and the other were dissolved in the unmediated empathic encounter. Sartre and Lévinas located alterity in the other as well, but they rejected any direct understandings; there was only otherness (radical alterity) and the impact that encounter with otherness had on the self. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty instead located alterity within the self, arguing that we can perceive the unfamiliar because our own bodies at times present themselves as something unfamiliar to me. Any further knowledge of the other is mediated through language and culture. We then shifted to Heidegger, who argued that alterity rests in a world of things that directly entails a social world populated by others. Far from the empathic moment between self and other, Heidegger focussed on how tradition determines our relations with others by shaping the world of common meanings.

From tradition it was a short step to Gadamer's focus on language and the shift from phenomenological intersubjectivity to hermeneutics and mutual interpretation. Although the force of language and culture were acknowledged by all the phenomenologists we discussed, the shift to linguistic intersubjectivity marked a welcome departure from the problems thought to plague empathic encounters and radical alterity. With our admittedly brief survey of the tradition in place, we then explored the depth of our phenomenal experiences of the other through scientific evidence. We found significant evidence for the *thin* version of the orientational self advanced by Merleau-Ponty, but also significant evidence for a socially conscious, *thick* version of the phenomenal self and a fascinating vindication of Scheler's empathic moment. With an initial *thick* version of the phenomenal self on the table we were set to return to Honneth and Taylor to see what was lost or gained by its exclusion from their recognition theories.

Chapter III began with a formulation of contemporaneous backgrounds based on *thick* phenomenal and narrative moments. At this stage we also introduced the model of emotions as ‘appraisals’ and the phenomenal experience of SHAME as an appraisal of the relation between self and other. We distinguished the phenomenal manifestation of SHAME from its narrative counterpart by the unexplained presence of SHAME and other emotions. This made sense, however, when we related the experience to the fact that some form of SHAME is present in pre-linguistic infants and non-linguistic animals.

We then returned to Honneth and the symbolic interactionist explanation of the desire for recognition. What we found was that the theory of the reflective ‘looking-glass’ self, which claims that we become subjects by virtue of seeing ourselves through the eyes of others, has already smuggled in a SUBJECT capable of discerning an ethical relationship between self and other. The capacity and desire to engage in reciprocal perspective-taking is left unexplained and finds no hope of elucidation in the rudimentary self-awareness it puts in place of the phenomenal. Honneth was correct to abandon the approach, but the unconscious desire to control that he chose for an alternative seems even less suited to a robust theory of recognition. In the end it seems that Honneth’s goal of explaining the motivation behind the struggle for recognition cannot rest on a theory that does not locate the desire for recognition in a background understanding of self and other.

Charles Taylor presented us with a dual background that includes a *thin* phenomenal self that orients us in the physical world and a narrative self that orients us in the social world. Shame, we saw in Taylor, belongs wholly in the narrative world. But again we found it difficult to explain the unexpected emotional incongruences that

emerged during our encounters the other. We concluded that the phenomenal dissonance between narrative and emotion in the recognition experience seemed inexplicable without reference to irreducible emotional appraisals of the other that might conflict with our propositional understandings. The ability to see the humanness in what our storied accounts tell us is atrocity and to see familiarity in practices our narrative background casts as monstrous, none of this seems plausible without some common horizon. Recognition and reconciliation is simply a non-starter without something that shocks us out of our narrative background and suspends our propositional vantage. As we demonstrated, competing narratives are not present in all cases of phenomenal dissonance, nor could their presence explain how we decide. Hence, we found that the *thin* phenomenal self of Taylor could not explain phenomenal dissonance or the understandings it potentially offers.

The Phenomenal Moment

In closing I would like to discuss an example of a relatively *thick* phenomenal self applied in social theory. In *Retrieving Experience*, Sonia Kruks develops the work of Simone de Beauvoir to explode the notion subjectivity advanced by the early Foucault and Judith Butler. Kruks critiques Foucault for highlighting the body as the site of subjectification while neglecting whom it is that the panoptic gaze tracks and who is complicit in the self-surveilling. Kruks argues that the phenomenal subject is a source of agency that is presumed in Foucault's work, as it is in the thought of Butler. Kruks writes:

[J]ust as Foucault tacitly attributes more agency to the subject of disciplinary practices than his explicit formulations admit so too does

Butler. For her account implies a notion of the subject as more than the illusory effect she claims it to be. To start with, we need to pause at that little phrase in her account of gender performance: ‘under duress.’ For if it were the case that the subject is no more than an illusion, brought into being by repetitive gender performance, why would the issue of duress arise?²

Of course the issue of duress makes sense only if there is phenomenal SUBJECT there who is *thick* enough to experience duress despite the ‘self’ constituting of strictures of power. Kruks maintains that “Butler, like Foucault offers us no sense of the experiential dimensions of becoming a subject under duress, or of how it feels to endure punitive consequences if one performs one’s gender deviantly.”³ The pressing question in this instance is “Who is it that endures the punitive consequences?” The answer is to be found in the phenomenal. Kruks argues that “Foucault’s disciplinary subjects do not appear to feel fear, anxiety, frustration, unhappiness,”⁴ and so a theory of the subject that draws on both structural and emotional backgrounds, as found in Beauvoir, “offers what Foucault lacks.”⁵

The phenomenal self is left out of Foucault and Butler, but so too is the phenomenal other and the empathic encounter. As an example, Kruks cites that many (most notably Hanna Arendt) have argued that pain confounds linguistic expression and remains the quintessential incommunicable experience. But Kruks observes that it is a leap to go from linguistically incommunicable to the categorically non-communicable.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*

As she explains, “bodies in pain do, to varying degrees, express their condition, and through our own sentience we can also directly feel-with the pain of others.”⁶

In another remarkably insightful passage she relates how, “it is only when we experience a sense of outrage or hurt, a profound feeling of injustice, at unequal pay for women for example, that we are likely to decide to act.”⁷ Yet the ability to feel-with the other depends in large part on being able to exist in a phenomenal moment with the other. Kruks argues that because many women cannot *feel-with* the pain experienced by other women in poor working conditions in the West, it is much easier to mobilize women around the more tangible issues of domestic violence and rape. Describing her own *feeling-with* experience in helping a battered Nigerian woman, Kruks explains that we are “in immediate intersubjective apprehension of another’s experience of pain. The apprehension takes place in the dimension of sentience, and is not a primary function of conscious evaluation or discourse.”⁸ Here Kruks is articulating something very close to the phenomenal moment, wherein PAIN may prove one of the more salient and provocative perceptions.

I do not wish to suggest that phenomenal dissonance is in every instance a productive thing. Indeed, depending on the narrative understanding it parallels the result might fulfil Claus von Bormann’s critique of hermeneutics, that it does not lead to the opening but to the closing of the mind and the entrenchment of prejudice.⁹ That said, if

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸ *Ibid.*

there is a desire to engage in dialogue at all, as our argument goes, it will come from the phenomenal. Moreover, the emotional appraisals that bear in recognition scenarios appear far more likely to produce the sympathetic and reconciliatory *feeling-with* that Kruks describes. I also do not wish to imply that the phenomenal moment cannot be mistaken, for surely not all emotional appraisals are perfectly accurate and some can be flat out wrong. However, I would contend that this capacity to be right or wrong is a feature of the theory rather than a problem. Aside from the fact that both the scientific and experiential evidence demonstrate the accuracy of our emotional appraisals (unlike the perspective-taking approach), the fact that the phenomenal moment can be ambiguous or wrong merely speaks to the necessity of ongoing dialogue, of the narrative encounter. You can tell me if I got it wrong the first time, and perhaps during that discussion I will see it more clearly.

We perceive in simultaneous phenomenal and narrative moments the meanings found in the other's bodily comportment. The *meaning* of having an individual or group 'turn their back on you' (You should be ashamed!) is as unmistakable as the sight of a bright-eyed smile (I am very happy!) accompanied by an extended hand (Please reciprocate!) because *the event is thematized prior to interpretation*.¹⁰ Thus we are able to negotiate or 'cope' in these social spaces without conscious reflection. We can further thematize the experience through a storied interpretation of the moment, one that may or

⁹ Grondin, Jean. 2002. "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding," *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. R. Dostal ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 45.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion on the semantic content of facial expressions see Wierzbicka, A. 1999. *Emotions across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

may not link up with the phenomenal experience. Our desire for coherence typically requires that one of the moments in tension must concede or adapt to the other and as we saw in the case of trusting, it is usually our stories. In our recognition experiences, therefore, we might say that *seeing* really *is* believing.

The critic would also rightly interject that in contemporary society not all acts of misrecognition involve actually turning one's back on another, and likewise not all attempts at engaging in recognition involve expressions of openness and vulnerability. Though we will not elaborate on it here, I would suggest that insofar as this is true of the politics of recognition it is precisely the reason attempts at recognition in contemporary politics are routinely ambiguous and ultimately unfulfilling and unsuccessful. Most failed attempts at recognition employ a process as divorced from an empathic encounter as one could devise. The hegemon - usually a televised official but often via newspaper, mail, or anonymous representative - delivers an indication of transformation, apology, reparation, and an invitation to question and answer. Recognition here is a non-starter because the subaltern is left to speculate as to the intentions of the hegemon, whether or not they were vulnerable to transformation, whether an apology was genuine, whether reparations were made in earnest, whether a question was sincere and an answer authentic. What counts as an appropriate action on the part of the hegemon is not cut and dry.

If, as we have seen, emotions are a form of direct appraisal in the visual field, then the hegemon in most cases provides so few opportunities for recognition as to be considered absent. To be a partner in mutually transformative dialogue one first needs to be visibly present and then perceptibly vulnerable. One cannot TRUST an interlocutor that one cannot see or evaluate and the hegemon in contemporary politics or recognition

has been in my estimation thoroughly disembodied, invisible. Iris Marion Young observes that “it is this non-linguistic character of the communication that, perhaps paradoxically, actually enables it to take place in situations where people do not share the same language or culture.” We can ‘speak’ a certain lingua franca through our bodies.¹¹ Perhaps this is why Hegel tendentiously used the face-to-face master/slave imagery he did, to prime our intuitions. Little wonder that what is in contemporary politics the hegemon’s version of a reconciliation process is at variance with the reality of the subaltern. I agree whole-heartedly with the critic who points out that institutional recognition is rarely an empathic encounter, but I would also suggest that this is a major reason why institutional recognition continues to fail.

¹¹ Young, “Throwing Like a Girl,” p. 156

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