Edmundo Balsemão Pires
Burkhard Nonnenmacher
Stefan Büttner-von Stülpnagel

Editors

Relations of the Self

René Thun
Marburg

**RICŒUR ON SELF-CONSTITUTION BY ALTERITY-EXPERIENCE.
HERMENEUTICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE FRACTURED COGITO**

Introduction

After deconstruction and critics of the Cartesian cogito and the crisis of the subject, the notion of the self plays an important role for theoretical philosophy as well as for practical philosophy. As philosophers like Michel Foucault, Bernard Williams or Charles Taylor make clear, the self is an important notion for explaining actions and practical beliefs; ascribing actions and beliefs presupposes an entity to which they can actually be ascribed, without such an entity the ascription would not make sense. When making such ascriptions, we – at least implicitly – claim that there somehow is a *reliable* entity existing in time. But there seems to be some trouble with the concept of the self and (personal) identity, since some philosophers like Derek Parfit[1] and - in certain regards - Gerson Reuter[2] maintain that under certain ontological constraints such an entity like a self with personal identity does not exist. The crucial question, I posit, is, whether we need an ontology (in a strong sense) of the self, and – if that should indeed be the case – which ontological approach is most suitable to describe a fundamental notion of our ethical praxis in a non-monistic manner and without strong metaphysical claims.

But why is the notion of the self so interesting for philosophers? It seems to be, because it is fundamental for reflecting praxis – but at the same time it is not definable by merely descriptive criteria. Authors like Searle maintain that the self is an irreducible notion.[3] In his opinion, the self is not analyzable in terms of naturalistic notions only, for eyample the mapping of regions of the brain, because, to only mention one point, such a reductive

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[1] Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford 1984, 210-17.

[2] Gerson Reuter, *Wem schreiben wir mentale Eigenschaften zu? Biologische Lebewesen als Subjekte von Erfahrungen*, in: W. Detel / A. Becker (Hrsg.): *Der natürliche Geist*, Berlin 2008, p. 65-96, p.83. At least he seems to consider the state of an person as a secondary matter of human life or it seems as if personal identity or personality would be an epiphenomon. But we don't have to think about substances if we are talking about a person and an organism. Already Plessner used the term of double aspectivity to binding back the talk of subtance as a matter of different vocabularies (H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*, Berlin 1975).

[3] John R Searle, *Rationality in Action*, Cambridge/Mass. 2001, p. 74.

perspective lacks the external reasons of actions done by a given person.[4] A self, Searle maintains, is not only led by his inner reasons (I would prefer to say "causes"), but by norms recognized by a group of people, and this is an important moment in rationality. At first glance one could object that without a brain there would be neither self nor person; and this, obviously, would be absolutely correct. But the crucial point is not whether human beings are embedded in the material world – this is a given for reasons I will return to later – but rather the *vocabulary* which is necessary to explicate the notion of the self, since this seems to raise problems for a mere naturalistic reasoning. If the notion of the self should turn out not to be definable, there still is no reason to despair; Donald Davidson provides a clue to this question when he articulates his doubts about definitions concerning the concept of 'truth:' some notions are so elementary and simple that one just cannot find even simpler notion to analyze them.[5] On the other hand, this does not mean that we could not bring forth some explicating remarks to a context or constellation of terms and concepts. Therefore, even if we cannot define the fundamental notion of the self, we can still formulate the aims and functions of this concept. But there seems to be a reason for problems concerning the possibility of an ontology of the self. The ontological problem results from a temptation, namely the temptation to find an apt *image* or *picture* or at least a *metaphor* for every notion or concept that describes a real entity - (maybe this is due to the occular fixation on imaging in the modern sciences). In our case we can speak of an ontological metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson point out.[6] If we think about something which is not a *direct object* of experience, we begin to depict this experience or try to find an image for what we mean, when trying to verbalise our experience. Finally this means that there has to *correspond* an *entity* describable in a certain way with an extension in time and space. But this does not seem to be an apt way of thinking about the concept of the self - as I would like to show in the following.

If we are talking about something, we should explicate the reasons for our utterance, or at least we should investigate, if we can at least justify our concepts.[7] In the case concerning the notion of the self we have no direct perceptive access. But this does not mean that the notion of the self is nonsensical or meaningless. A further aim of this paper is to show how we can approach to the notion of the self under a methodological point of view. The empirical or descriptive method seems to be useless here, because we cannot perceive the 'self' directly.[8] What we can perceive are bodies, gestures and utterances, but no 'self.' [9] My

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[4] Searle critizises Williams for neglecting the importance of external reason for rational decision making.

[5] In Davison's opinion the concept of 'truth' is not definable. See: Donald Davidson, *Über die Torheit des Versuchs die Wahrheit zu definieren*, in: M.Sandbothe (Hrsg.), Wozu Wahrheit?, Frankfurt 2005.

[6] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago 1980. This does not mean that the use of ontological metaphors would have no value. At least they have an orientating function in reasoning, but we have to treat them with care.

[7] Here I cannot discuss the problems evolving when we reflect the relation between assertions and justification when regarding the truth-value of our believes. For a discussion of the relation of truth, assertion and justification see: Crispin Wright, *Thruth and Objectivity*, Havard 1992.

[8] This obviously brings to mind Hume's critique of the concept of the 'I,' namely, that the I is not directly perceivable. But I do not follow Hume in the consequences he drew. I rather understand it as a concept related to function and activity, than as a substance or substantial entity.

suggestion is, that the notion of the self is rather an abductive than descriptive one, and this is reason enough to fundamentally rethink ontology. An ontology that is unable to integrate the function or form of executions is a worthless.

The merely descriptive approach is aporetic because – as I will show – the self is constituted by its manifold active references (as executions) to the world and other people and not merely by being. And there is no entity which is signified as a self but rather there is an entity to which we ascribe the attribute of having or embodying a self. The self, I suggest, is not an entity, but rather a function or activity of an entity. These are some general reflections about the concept of the self, inspired by the hermeneutics of the self as put forth by Ricœur, most forcefully in his book *Oneself as Another*. Thus, I would like to bring his concept of the self into discussion. [10]

Some Conceptions of the 'Self'

To illustrate the relevance of Ricœur's "hermeneutics of the self," it is helpful to refer to still other concepts. In current philosophies reformulating the subject, the notion of the self is already well established. There are different conceptions of the self, depending on their individual methodological presuppositions. Sometimes the synonymous use of the terms 'person' and 'self' leads to misinterpretation. And the question, if there exists a distinction on another but the level of semantics is well justified. Charles Taylor, for example, makes synonymous use of the two terms. In *Sources of the Self* he tries to describe the history of the underlying framework on which our concept of (personal) identity is developed.[11] This concept is fundamental for our ethics, because the question of identity asks for the *Who* of actions and the subject of practical (moral) beliefs.

To know who you are is to be orientated in a moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary.[12]

This is the context in which the problem or question of the self does arises. In certain regards Charles Taylor makes use of the term 'self' in a strong sense, insofar he seems to identify the notion of the self with the notion of the person. A human being is essentially "a self or a person."[13]. But we can ask for a distinction not only concerning the syntax but also the extension of these terms. Taylor himself remains silent on this. The problem here is that the term *persona* does not seem to be suited to be used as a substitute for the term 'self,' since persona literally means *mask* or a *role* one is playing in public life.

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[9] I would like to remark that gestures (as well as utterances) are no given raw facts, because they presuppose a practice of understanding and therefore certain sets of semantics. As Ricœur maintains, every gesture as a certain gesture implies a constitutive rule (and vocabulary). In this he seems to agree with Robert Brandom.

[10] For a better understanding I did translate - or at least tried to translate - german quotations for the english speaking reader.

[11] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge 1989.

[12] Ibid. p. 28.

[13] Ibid. p. 33.

Above all, the person seems to be a form of living the *public life*. If we follow Kant, the notion of a person does not suggest any subjective dimension like desires or dreams, on the other hand the ethical law is necessary to guide our subjective motivational structure of acting. Rather, the notion of a person seems to encompass other notions like duty or moral actions.

This also seems to be the case in the writings of Harry Frankfurt, who is pointing out the self-mastering of our desires and wishes, becoming our action guiding will. A being, in this sense, is only a person, if it is capable of having volitions of second level, if it does not follow its drives and desires immediately, but if it reflects on and affirms or rejects its spontaneous wishes of the first level. A desire of the first level, for example, would be the desire to eat chocolate. But only if I ask myself, whether I really want to eat the chocolate, only if I reflect on my desires or wishes, only then have I volitions of the second level. Anyone unable to reach volitions of the second level does not count, in Frankfurt's opinion, as a person but as a wanton.[14] I do not follow this path any further, because the problem of the freedom of will would go far beyond the scope of this paper. But these remarks should have made clear that the notion of personhood seems to be bound to the moral dimension and has deep normative implications. At least we can say that the self is a certain aspect of beings called persons, whereby the notion of a self would focus primarily on the subjective aspects. Hence we may suggest, that the difference between the notions of 'self' and 'person' is a difference concerning the emphasis of the subjective (private) and the public sphere.

John Searle reflects the concept of the self at the interface of theoretical and practical philosophy. He offers an approach to the notion of the self guided by theoretical presuppositions of the »Philosophy of mind«. So it is no wonder that Searle brings the notion of the self into the discussion on the relation between neurobiology and the freedom of the will.[15] Thus, the problem of free will can only be a problem for a 'self,' a concept for which he gives a very simple definition: "Conscious activity plus conscious rationality = selfhood."[16] Concerning the problem of a neurobiological foundation of the freedom of the will, he maintains, that a neurobiological approach, describing the neuronal processes of a rational entity, would simultaneously describe the self in a scientific manner.

If one would have a theory of brain processes, which explains how the brain generates the conscious field,[17] together with the experience of acting, and if one would know how the brain generates thinking, in which the constraints of rationality are implemented as constitutive elements, one would get the self for free.[18]

But this concerns only the description of the self by means of neurobiology – founded on poor semantics. He remarks that this approach would only be able to solve the neurobiological problem of the self. And since he sets up constraints for a neurobiological approach only,[19] he would be able to maintain that there is no additional metaphysical

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[14] Harry Frankfurt, *Freiheit und Selbstbestimmung*, Babara Guckes / Monika Betzler (Hrsg.), Berlin 2001.

[15] John R. Searle, *Freiheit und Neurobiologie*, Franfurt a.M. 2004.

[16] Ibid. P. 54.

[17] About this term see, John Searle, *Consciousness*, in: *Annu Rev. Neuroscience* (2000), Vol 23, p. 557-578, here: p. 572.

[18] John Searle, (2004), p. 54-55.

[19] Notice that Searle does not follow a reductionist approach to the self. Rather, neurobiology has to reconstruct the natural constrains of a self, which already presupposes a concept founded by another (phenomenological?) vocabulary.

entity inside the body, which we could call 'self.' The self is embodied by the brain and is realized by it. But no ontological reduction is possible.[20]

Other authors maintain that the self is embodied in the body. Founded on this idea is the approach to the self with the body as its central term.[21] This approach is already present in the writings by Nietzsche, who identifies the body with the self, whereby the body is not only the self but is also the "big reason" – the body knows what is right and what is wrong: "Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, is a mighty Lord, an unknown wise - he is called self. He lives in your body, he is your body."[22]

It has to be mentioned, that in most theories the self is not reduced to the body, but the body is considered as a central notion in a theory of the self; and there is no reduction but an emphasis. Even Ricœur reflected in his earlier writings the body as an important notion. But the body cannot be the offspring of our self- and world relations.[23] Because these relations depend on the perspective of a self, grave problems would emerge in attampting to reason the notion of perspective or perspectivity in recurring to the body exclusively.

Halten wir vor allem dies fest: wenn wir mit dem Gegenstand beginnen und nicht mit dem Leib, wenn wir also vom Wahrgenommenen zum Wahrnehmenden zurücktasten, dann laufen wir nicht gefahr, von dem Ding in der Welt zu einem anderen Ding in der Welt, nämlich dem Leib als Gegenstand , wie ihn die Psycho-Physiologie von außen betrachtet und wissenschaftliche erkennt, weiterverwiesen zu werden. [24]

[Let us first notice that by beginning with the object and not with the body, by moving from the percept to the perceiving, we do not risk being referred from the thing in the world to another thing in the world, by moving from the precept to the perceiving which would be the body-object such as psycho-physiology observes it from the outside and scientifically knows it. This body-object is still a precept.]

Therefore, the body can be described as just an aspect of the self. And the body is for example important in mediating between self and world, at least in so far as it describes the receptivity and finitude of the self.[25] But a strong recourse to the body would imply the danger for reflection on the relations between self and world. This approach to a notion of the self, guided by a philosophy of the body, suggests that there would be a primate of

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[20] This is rather a report and not an argumentative discussion. Searle maintains that the self is causal but not ontological reducible to brain states, since the first person perspective of the self is not describable by terms of the observer's perspective. The simple point is this: the self is caused by brain states but is it not identical with brain states. There seems to be good evidence fort his thesis because drugs causing certain effects on the brain, and thereby our way of thinking, and perceiving can be dramatically changed. But this does not imply that neurobiology is apt to give a well founded semantics of the self.

[21] Bernhard Waldenfels, *Das leibliche Selbst*, Frankfurt a.M. 2001.

[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathutra*, Nietzsche KSA Vol. 4, Colli and Montenari (ed.), Berlin/ New York 1980, p. 40.

[23] I would agree to the position maintaining that the body is the ontogenetic offspring of these relations. But this is not so relevant for a philosophical analysis, which is interested in avoiding a duplication of 'reality' and in pointing out systematic questions.

[24] Paul Ricœur. *Die Fehlbarkeit des Menschen*, Freiburg / München 1989 (1960), p. 39.

[25] This is also pointed out by Helmut Plessner in his "Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch," where he overcomes the Cartesian dualism. And instead of talking of dualism he suggests to speak of 'a double aspectivity.'

immediacy. And this would lead to methodological problems concerning naive realism, for example aesthetic realism, because immediacy would mean that aesthetic experience is a matter of mere causal relations. But we do not understand anything in aesthetic experience, if we do not apply concepts. I would suggest that we will not understand the role of the body exactly if we neglect or overlook the notion of mediation which takes place in language and other forms of symbolic exchanges, and by which the body can be reflected as a body. The 'body' itself is a result of (symbolic and cultural) mediation.

After this short survey of the different methodological approaches to the concept of the self, I would like to go on in explicating Ricœur's hermeneutics of the self. One important aspect in his hermeneutics of the self is the form of the constitutional constraint for the self, insofar as he presents an interaction theory. This means, that the experience of alterity is one constraint for the constitution of the self. Before I will go on explicating the forms of alterity experience and the notion of the self in the writings of Ricœur, I will make some general remarks on the relevance of alterity and / or otherness in Ricœur's writings.

Alterity and its meaning for a notion of the self in Ricœur's writings

Oneself as Another is not the first and only book in which Ricœur describes the self and the other as a dialectical relation.[26] It seems that Ricœur already had been working on the notion of the self and the experience of alterity in his earlier writings - at least implicitly. Already in his – also in anthropological regards interesting – Fallible Man he reflects the concept of a person as a synthesis of self and other. Namely in the last chapter of the book, "The Practical Synthesis," he explicates the synthesis of the self and the alterity / otherness. This synthesis can be regarded as a farewell to a monadic[27] conception of the self, as explicated, for example, in the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger.[28]

The monadic status of the self in the writings of Nietzsche depends upon the reduction of the self to the body (german: Leib / french: Chair), as mentioned above. The self, or what the body encompasses, is a plurality of different wills.[29] Although configured in a pluralistic manner, the self seems to be a private matter and is locatable in the body. Alterity, in form of other persons or symbols, plays hardly any role in Nietzsche's conception of the self. But Nietzsche's conception of the body as an important item for reflections about subjectivity is a notable influence for contemporary authors. Currently, Bernhard Waldenfels, who is one

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[26] The predicate 'dialectical' means here a relation of at least two moments or notions constraining each other; the result is a kind of reciprocity or interdependency.

[27] It must be emphasized, that the predicate 'monadic' has nothing to do whith the 'Monad' as it way coined by Leibniz.

[28] The reasons for calling Heidegger's theory as a monadic conception of the self, I will present later, when discussing Heidegger's concept of conscience.

[29] This interpretation results by the lecture of some relevant passages. In the aphorism „About the deniers of the body" Nietzsche writes, that the body is "a plurality with one sense, one war and one peace, one herd and one shepherd" (Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p. 39). And later in *Also sprach Zarathustra* Nietzsche mentions the plurality of the wills of the self and their dynamic under the term „Wille zur Macht" (ibid. p. 146-49).

of the best known representatives of phenomenology, deals with the notion of the bodily self.[30] But this concept of the self is otherwise integrated into the broader context of a philosophy of "responsivity."[31] I view of the concept of responsivity, which seems to be akin to Ricœur's notion of "mediation" as an anthropologically defining property of man, Waldenfels' conception, as well as Ricœur's, is a theory of interaction. For it is obvious that response can only happen if there is someone to whom I can give an answer or respond to (by means of words, looks or gestures).

In Die Fehlbarkeit des Menschen [Fallible Man] Ricœur reconstructs the process of recognition between entities as persons by other persons. The person is a certain 'entity' possessing certain abilities, or the term 'person' means the ability to mediate the own self – with all its subjective interests, preferences and so on – to the other in the mode of understanding. This can be regarded as an integration of different perspectives of the first person and the second person perspective, whereby the third person perspective is included. But there arises the problem concerning the status of the synthesis. What entitles us to speak about the synthesis of perspectives, since no stereoscopic view is possible, which would include the perspectives of two distinct persons? We cannot see through the eyes of the other. Since we cannot have or see the other's perspective, we must introduce the synthesis of different perspectives on a different way. The perspective is not an object of direct experience as cheese or cherry trees are. But there is a rather pragmatic way to justify the introduction of the synthesis of different perspectives as an abductive notion.

The term of a person and the recognition of an entity as a person is founded in the experience of the other's actions and speech-acts, or other acts of signification. In fact, this way of constituting the self (as a person) seems to be – at first glance – very similar to Heidegger's approach of the term 'being-with' (Mit-sein), because it is based on reading or interpreting 'behavior' or conduct. The public is the sphere where the self (as a person) counts. An entity can only be a person, if it presupposes other persons.[32]

Ricœur develops his theoretical model of the self and its interactions along the idea of 'synthesis,' which can be examplified by the Kantian term of respect. The concept of respect is a synthesis of what Ricœur calls character and bliss. Character means, in this context, the perspective toward the humankind; it is the normative access to the world of things and persons. Ricœur also synonymously says field of motivations.[33] One may be sceptical about this conception, insofar as the practical synthesis comprises character and bliss. The question that arises is this: is the character itself not a kind of practical synthesis? Or: does the notion of respect presuppose a more fundamental couple of notions: the self and the other? And the problems grow more complex when we reflect the character as a synthesis of the affective and the practical perspective. How many synthesises do we have to consider? These objections

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[30] Bernhard Waldenfels, (2001).

[31] Ibid., p. 365. See also Kathrin Busch (ed.), *Philosophie der Responsivität. Festschrift für Bernhard Waldenfels*, München 2007.

[32] This seems to be nearly a commonplace in the philosophy of person and authors like Charles Taylor maintain this too. See: Taylor 1989, p. 33-35.

[33] Ricœur (1989), p. 90.

are justified with regards to ontology. But Ricœur is interested in the more functional or pragmatic aspect of the synthesis because it describes the conditions of our practical relations like recognition and moral beliefs. Therefore we do not need to ask how the character is generated. Rather we want to know which terms are constitutive for the underlying structure of moral praxis.

What Ricœur calls "character" seems to already be a result of a synthesis because "my character" as Ricœur notes, "is not the contrary of this mankind, but the view on it from a certain place; a city-view from a certain point, a particular totality."[34] And later he says: "the character is nothing but the tightened access to all values of all human beings across all cultures."[35] Here we have a relation between the self and the other on a very abstract level. Ricœur does not give any clues or rather, he does not describe a praxis in which this relation could be explained. And sometimes it seems as if Ricœur would try to explain the public sphere of persons only by recurring to a particular self-consciousness. One problem consists in the mere active and circular manner of Ricœurs description, since we do not know from where we can get some (abductive) evidence for the synthesis by experience.

But this suspicion can be rejected. In his Symbolism of Evil, Ricœur tries to explicate the practice of confessing. Sin and flaw are experienced in form of passivity or infection. The confession has the task of clearing up this confusing experience.

Die Erfahrung, die der Bußfertige eingesteht, ist eine blinde Erfahrung: sie liegt zugeschüttet unter der Emotion, der Furcht, der Angst; eben diese emotionale Note verlangt nach Objektivierung in diskursiver Rede: das Bekenntnis drückt die Emotion aus, dröngt sie nach außen, die sich sonst über sie zuschlösse als ein Eindruck der Seele; die Sprache ist das Licht der Emotion; durch das Bekenntnis wird das Schuldbewusstsein in das Licht des Wortes gehoben; durch das Bekenntnis bleibt der Mensch Wort bis in die Erfahrung seiner Absurdität, seines Leidens, seiner Angst.[36]

[The experience of which the penitent makes confession is a blind experience, still embedded in the matrix of emotion, fear, anguish. It is this emotional note that gives rise to objectification in discourse; the confession expresses, pushes to the outside, the emotion which without it would be shut up in itself, as an impression in the soul. Language is the light of the emotions. Through confession the consciousness of fault is brought into the light of speech; through confession man remains speech, even in the experience of his own absurdity, suffering, and anguish.]

Already this quotation shows how alterity and passivity are important aspects for a hermeneutic of the self. It is the symbolic dimension which is constitutive for self-understanding. Ricœur worked out this passive experience, rooted in symbolic processes, later in Time and Narrative and above all in Oneself as Another.

In the last chapter of Das Selbst als ein Anderer [Oneself as Another] Ricœur takes another way for making explicit the relation of self and otherness / alterity. It is the dialectical relation of selfhood and alterity or otherness.[37] The relation can be defined in two ways. We

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[34] Ibid., S. 87.

[35] Ibid., S.99.

[36] Ricœur, *Symbolik des Bösen*, Freiburg / München 1971 (1960), p. 13-14.

[37] Paul Ricœur, *Das Selsbt als ein Anderer, München* 1996, Chapter 10.

can reflect this relation (1) as the recognition of the other as oneself or somebody (who-question), as for example a (feeling of) strong solidarity, and (2) as oneself as an other, by the transformation of ourselves through time. But, what is more important I think, is the question how this relation can be accounted for or reconstructed. Already in Time and Narrative Ricœur gives some advices on how to make explicit the relation of the self and the other, concerning the transformation of the horizon of the self in the domain of aesthetic experience.

Mimesis - A Stage of Mediating Experiences

With the threefold mimesis Ricœur offers an important model for aesthetic experience or the experience of art in relation to the processes of self-transformation, as described it in the first volume of Zeit und Erzählung ["Time and Narrative"].[38] In the third chapter he shows how the symbolic dimension, by the example of literature, can be constitutive of self-understanding as well as personal identity. The form of this threefold mimesis is as follows: We have certain values and habits in our praxis to evaluate situations or actions. When we read a book we can apply our normative believes and – maybe – transform them. Then, after reading the book, we can go into everyday life with the transformed or new configured norms or normative beliefs. And in the everyday world we may apply our newly configured believes again. In short, the world of persons is also a world of symbolic mediation, of works as a special kind of objects. Objects in this sense can be described as items with reference to personality or a world of persons, of selves, without maintaining that the understanding of the intentions of the author – who also is a self – is the aim of the work.

Recurring to Aristotle's Poetics, Ricœur emphasizes, that a fable is a mimesis of action. Under this commitment reading a narration presupposes two abilities: the ability of action understanding, what Ricœurs calls practical understanding and the ability of narrative understanding.[39] The practical understanding presupposes three properties or dimensions of actions. Actions are analyzable in terms of structural, symbolic and temporal properties. In contrast to ordinary physical events, action understanding presupposes the competence to apply a semantic of action. This semantics of action can be thought of as a net of concepts. To understand an action as an action we must be able to apply concepts like aims or purposes, motives and the idea of an acting subject or actor.[40] And these conditions are necessary for talking about mimesis I. This term simply refers to our pre-understanding of acting as common to reader as well as to author. Mimesis I is the name of the vocabulary, concerning actions, which must be shared by author and reader and it deals already with the symbolic mediation of action. Due to this reasons Ricœur can maintain, that a work (of literature) exemplifies a world.[41] And to understand such a work and its world we must - vide Taylor - be able to orientate us in it.

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[38] Paul Ricœur, *Zeit und Erzählung*, Band I: *Zeit und historische Erzählung*, München 1988.

[39] Ricœur (1988), p. 92.

[40] Ibid. p 90-91.

[41] This is also an important point in the fifth chapter of Ricœur's *Die lebendige Metapher*, Chapter 5., München 1986.

On this basis mimesis II is possible. This mimesis is the transformation of our common action understanding into fable or plot. It is the application of our already given vocabulary of action. Ricœur emphasizes the importance of this stage of mimesis, because it has a mediating function.[42] Mimesis II is the stage where events and actions are configured into a plot determining the sense of actions or events. It brings them into a story and thus makes them cohere. It is simply the world of the text. But this world is not given in a positivistic manner. The world of the text is no given item, as are, for example, the sensations of heat or of pressure. The world of the text has to be constituted by the act of reading. And therefore the act of reading is the interface between the world of a text and the world of a reader. Ricœur makes his own use of mimesis. The term mimesis does not refer to a product or an entity. It is rather a lable for a conscious act or an activity.[43] The act of reading is the transition from mimesis II to mimesis III, the last stage of mimesis.

In this regard he agrees with Ernst Cassirer, who also maintained the significance of the public space of representations and symbols. As an example Cassirer mentions language, in order to show that it is impossible to have a proper being without being "improper:"

Language is thus no means only an estrangement from our self; rather it is, similar to Art and every other "symbolic Form" a way to our self, it is productive in a sense that in virtue of it our I consciousness and self-consciousness can be constituted.[44]

What Cassirer mentions but vaguely, is described here more precisely by Taylor, who considers language as the main medium of self-mediation.

My self-definition is understood as an answer to the question who I am. And this question finds its original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define Who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially to the space moral and spiritual orientation within my most important defining relations are lived out."[45]

The self, in this regard, seems to be an interface of the public and the private. When we are talking about the self, we also presuppose alterity, which is constitutive for the self already in reference to language as a constitutive moment of identity. And this signifies a kind of abyss, not only between Heidegger and Cassirer, but also between Heidegger and Ricœur. At least I was unable to find a passage giving evidence that Heidegger explicates the "Mit-sein" under the aspect of self-constitution by communicated or objectivated sense. Although quoting Heidegger, Ricœur is quite different in thinking about the notion of the self. One important point, by which the difference between Ricœur and Heidegger can be determined more precisely, is the notion of conscience. Conscience is a faculty of the self, and it also plays an important role in a hermeneutics of the self. It also is an enrichment of the concept of the self by indicating the form of relations to world and other selves. While language and speaking of one's own identity is a conscious activity, the conscience seems to indicate the aspects of activity and passivity in self-constitution.

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[42] Ricœur (1988), p. 105.

[43] Ricœur insisted on this point, and for this reason he preferred the miméis of Aristotle to the concept of mimésis as it was defined by Plato. Ricœur, *Zeit und Erzählung Bd. 1*, S. 59.

[44] Ernst Cassirer, *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften*, Darmstadt 1994 (1942), S. 54.

[45] Taylor (1989), p. 35.

The Self and the Conscience

The self is the only known entity that is responsible for actions. In the final inquiry in One Self as an Other Ricœur explicates three modes of passive-experience constituting the self. Every one of those experiences is a typological example of alterity experience. These modes of passive-experience are the body, the conscience and the other. The motivation for Ricœur is to show that the subject or self is not the offspring of the self. And therefore he recognizes the three modes of passive-experience as constitutive of the self. I would also like clarify my point and to formulate my critique of Ricœur's conception. There is no question that the conscience is an important indicator for the dialectical relation between the self and the other, but my objection is motivated by a simple hermeneutical reflection.

I understand the point of Ricœur's disagreement with the self-glorifying attitude of the (illusionary) souvereign cogito very well and would subscribe to it. But what I cannot share is the emphasis of passivity in his conception. Hence the self gives the answer of the question of "who did this and this and to what end?" But can we explain the conscience by a mere passive experience of alterity? I think we cannot, above all when we try to tread the notion of alterity experience in the manner of hermeneutics. Conscience is not simply an entity inside the body, it is rather a dynamic application of recognized and internalized values. I would suggest to call this the field of normative directedness. Because we are beings with a history and make experiences, we are in a permanent process of modification, sedimentation, affirmation or negation of values and believs. This process can be exemplified by the threefold mimesis as described above. So our conscience is, at least in part, an act of interpretation. But interpretation must be at least a mediated form of passivity and activity. In sum the self is a result of interpretation - no interpretation, no self. Put differently: no self, no interpretation, because an important moment in interpreting is its application. But we will see how the conscience can be regarded as a place for passivity, when we will consider its affective dimension.

Were we to posit that the conscience has its source only within the self, we would be facing a formidable riddle. And what Heidegger calls the "call of conscience" in "Sein und Zeit" has no ground, because Heidegger introduces alterity by way of the anonymous "man" or by the "Gerede" (Gossip) in the mode of "Geworfenheit". For this reason, I would tend to say that Ricœur does not follow Heidegger's notion of conscience for explicating the relation of the self and the otherness / alterity. Despite the term "Fürsorge" (Care) it seems to me as if Heidegger has no place for constitutive alterity experience. His interpretation of alterity seems to neglect an important point in the selfness / otherness dialectic insofar as the conscience cannot be only founded in the "Dasein ruft im Gewissen sich selbst"[46]. It seems that this call is something divine or mysterious. And Heidegger broadens his argument in order to refute the importance of the other for the self, when analyzing the "Mit-sein" (being-with). One interpretation of the self or the "Who" he doesn't accept is the following:

Im Sein mit und zu Anderen liegt demnach ein Seinsverhältnis von Dasein zu Dasein. Dieses Verhältnis, möchte man sagen, ist aber doch schon konstitutiv für das je eigene

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[46] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit,* p. 275.

Dasein, das von ihm selbst ein Seinsverständnis hat und so sich zu Dasein verhält. Das Seinsverhältnis zu Anderen wird dann zur Projektion des eigenen Selbst zu sich selbst »in ein Anderes«. Der Andere ist die Dublette des Selbst.[47]

[In being with and to others consists the being-relation of being-there to being-there. This relation, man would tend to say, is already constitutive for the own being-there, which has an understanding of it's own being and has a being-relation to other being-there. The being-relation to the other becomes a projection of the proper self to itself »as another«. The other is the double of the self].

The talk of „Dublette" seems to be a polemic decoy. There is no necessity to presuppose a doublette in claiming the important relevance of the other for the self. The other – I would maintain – is at least a responsive „Dasein" reflecting and commenting our actions and narrations.

In Ricœur's opinion the case seems to be a little bit different. Although he takes the metaphor of the voice of conscience, as Heidegger describes it, he undertakes an important reinterpretation of Heidegger's position and makes clear the differences.

Dieser De-moralisierung des Gewissens möchte ich eine Auffassung entgegenstellen, die das „Phänomen der Aufforderung eng mit dem der Bezeugung verbindet. Das Aufgefordertsein würde dann - entsprechend der Metapher der Stimme - das dem Gewissensphänomen eigene Moment der Andersheit bilden. Die Stimme des Gewissens zu hören würde dann ein Aufgefordertsein durch den Anderen bedeuten."[48]

[Against this de-moralizing of conscience I want to argue by a model connecting the phenomenon of being-requested with witness. The being-requested would - adequate to the metaphor of voice - constitute the moment of otherness of the conscience phenomenon. To hear the voice of conscience would mean the being-requested by the other]

The significance of the other for the conscience can also be shown in the notion of »shame«. In Ricœur's philosophy of the self there seems to be a blind spot on which I will focus my attention. While working out the conscience as an experience of passivity he did not recognize shame as a radically passive experience and as one moment of conscience. Thus Ricœur did neglect the affective dimension of conscience.

Shame - the Affective Dimension of Conscience

The phenomenon of conscience is akin to the phenomenon of shame. But only a few authors are reflecting on the relation of conscience and shame. The feeling of shame presupposes that our conscience tells us that we have done something to someone we regret. Important is that the other has the function of reflecting my actions and attitudes. The *call* Heidegger writes about, I suggest, is not, as he maintains, simply the inner and proper self. Rather, we have to discuss the so called *call* with regard to interpersonal relations; by recurring to the self alone one cannot make a fundament for the notion of conscience.

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[47] Ibid. p. 124.

[48] Ricœur, *Das Selbst als ein Anderer*, München 1996, p. 421.

Beside the phenomenological, there is a psychoanalytical approach to the problem of the self in regard to the constituting factor of alterity. Leaving the classical categories of psychoanalysis aside, there is an interesting characterisation of the self and the other/alterity, on which the psychoanalyst Günter Seidler focuses: "Ja, gerade der Vorgang der Verinnerlichung, die Umwandlung des Blickes des Gegenübers zur eigenen Funktion der Selbstwahrnehmung, -beobachtung und -beurteilung im Subjekt vermag in ihr ausgedrückt zu werden."[49]

By this conceptualization[50] Seidler articulates his doubts toward the traditional psychoanalytical category »Trieb« (drive) which represents, in Seidler's opinion, a monadic self. The quality "monadic" means that the self is constituted without interaction or, another possibility, it can be in interaction but the self is already constituted by an entelechia. Seidler's approach is interesting not because I want to claim psychoanalysis as a viable method in this matter. Rather, Seidel's approach is interesting because of its affinity toward phenomenology. Seidel himself concedes this affinity towards phenomenology and emphasizes it by the title of the first chapter: "Scham und Schamerleben aus phänomenologischer Perspektive" [Shame and the experience of shame from a phenomenological perspective].

Shame is a phenomenon that necessarily brings the other into discussion. Shame is an affect, and Seidel maintains that it is an "interface affect"[51] (Schnittstellen-Affekt). In his phenomenology of shame he makes a definitional commitment to its relevance for our investigation. He is asking about the place of shame, and he broadens or leaves the frame of identifying reference, which is the theoretical framework in Strawson's *Individuals* to make a meaningful reference to entities describable in terms of time and place. But the space Seidler intents is not the mathematical physical space; nor would he, if this were the case, speak of a wonder. May that as it may, defining the structural elements of »shame« he declares:

"Der Ort der Scham ist ein doppelter; sie ist als Einheit zwei-fach lokalisiert, im Subjekt, das aber mit seiner Ich-Haftigkeit im Prozessverlauf dieses Affektes unterschiedliche Positionen wechselnd besetzt."[52]

[The place of shame is twofold, as a unity it exists in two places: within the subject, which is with it's I - ness during the process of this affect can fill out different positions.]

If we substitute "position" by "perspective" - as discussed above - we could resolve the space-metaphor or transform it into a more common one. This is a fundamental commitment for the subsequent Chapter where he reflects on the relation of self and other explicit. His talking about the double place of shame is not a pleading for wonders but it underlines the relational or dialogical aspect of the affect »shame«. Here he is talking about a permanent shifting of perspectives; the self-perspective and the observer-perspective. When we feel shame or are ashamed, we overtake the perspective of the observer. Shame results, for an example, by failing the observer's expectations; like in the classroom, where we (occasionally)

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[49] Günter H Seidler, *Der Blick des Anderen. Eine Analyse der Scham*, Stuttgart 1995, S. 3.

[50] For Seidler's theory see also: Günther H Seidler, *Scham als Mittlerin zwischen Innen und Außen: Von der Objektbeziehungstheorie zur Alteritätstheorie*, in: R. Kühn, M. Raub, M. Titze (Hrsg.), Scham - ein menschliches Gefühl, Opladen 1997.

[51] Seidler (1995), p. 4.

[52] Ibid. p. 8.

have been ashamed being unable to solve a mathematical exercise on the blackboard. Or we are ashamed when we mistake a strange person for a friend, because we saw the person from behind.

I will make this point as short as possible. In the second chapter he makes a distinctions between "echo" (Widerhall) and real relation (response). An echo is no response-act.[53] Seidler defines »response-act« as "internal reflexivity: Memory, knowledge of one-self-to-other (Wissen von Sich-selbst-beim-Anderen) as conscience, self-consciousness"[54]. And understood in this way we can save autonomy. I will discuss this point with Bernard Williams. He represents a contrast to the position of Heidegger whose concept of alterity we could consider already.

There are obviously some remarkable similarities to the conception of shame like Bernard Williams'.[55] He is interested in shame as a moral term, as a basic concept of our moral life. Like Seidler he considers the phenomenon of shame as a kind of responsivity, whereby the view of the other is constitutive.

"Auch wenn sich die Scham und ihre Motivation in der einen oder anderen Weise immer auf den Blick des anderen bezieht, ist es wichtig, festzuhalten, dass für viel ihrer Operationen der imaginierte Blick eine imaginierten anderen ausreicht."[56]

[Even if shame and it's motivation refers to the view of the other is it important to note that for many of it's operation the view of an imagined other is sufficient.]

But why is the view of the other so important, what is so special about the view in the context of shame? Shame is not only the result of the other's views, but it is the perceiving or imagining of the view of the other in a peccular situation. Shame means a certain experience provoced by the other's view.

"Die Grunderfahrung der Scham besteht darin, dass ich von den falschen Leuten in einer falschen und unangenehmen Lage auf unangemessene Weise gesehen werde. Diese Erfahrung ist direkt verbunden mit Nacktheit..."[57]

[„The fundamental experience of shame consists in being seen by the wrong people in a wrong and uncomfortable situation in a inappropriate manner. This experience is connected directly with nudity."]

At a first glance this seems to be a very good example for hetoronomy, because our actions would happen only in virtue of the view of the other. Hence the decision is not determined by the actor's own maxims and choices. But Williams maintains, that shame is a kind of moral emotion or feeling, which plays an important role for our autonomy. I don't want to discuss the relation between shame and autonomy deeper, rather I want to pay attention the one important point concerning the concept of conscience as it is understood in the term of voice or „call". Williams brings together the view, as discussed by Seidler and the voice, as mentioned by authors like Ricœur, Heidegger and Kant. Not that Williams

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[53] Seidler (1995), p. 88-89.

[54] Ibid. p. 89.

[55] Bernard Williams, *Scham, Schuld und Notwendigkeit*, Martin Hartmann (Transl.), Berlin 2000.

[56] Ibid., p. 98.

[57] Ibid., p. 91

would follow Kant or Heidegger, but to feel shame one has to internalize the voice of the social life or the other. The other - or the metaphor of the view of the other - is more precisely described by the values I already accepted.[58] Therefore we make a little interpretation of his notion of guilt. Guilt and Shame seem to build a pair of terms to describe the conscience essentially.

"Wenn wir unsere Scham verstehen, werden wir vielleicht auch unsere Schuld besser verstehen. Die Struktur der Scham enthält die Möglichkeit, die Schuld zu kontrollieren und von ihr zu lernen, weil wir durch sie ein Verständnis unserer ethischen Identität erhalten, durch das die Schuld einen Sinn erhält. Scham kann Schuld verstehen, aber Schuld kann sich nicht selbst verstehen."[59]

[If we understand our shame we will eventually understand our guilt better too. The structure of shame contains the possibility to control the guilt und to learn by it, because we obtain by this an understanding of our ethical identity, by shame guilt obtains it's sense. Shame can understand guilt, but guilt cannot understand itself.]

This account of »conscience« in the context of shame seems to be a true contribution to a conception of the conscience of the self. It is not only the cognitive access, which at least Heidegger maintains. For a hermeneutical approach Seidel's reflections on shame and conscience can be regarded as enrichment, because it points out the affective dimension of conscience founded in alterity experience.

Doing and being - is there an exclusive form of self-reference?

In this concluding section I want to make reference to the title. Self-reference is in question and I want to present a distinction made by Ricœur whithout reflecting the notion of self-reference at all. But what makes the difference between a self-referential system and a self-referential self? It may be that the self can be described as a system, but this does not mean that every self-referential system has a self. In a certain sense the self, as Nietzsche describes it, seems to be a self-referential system but in the typical manner of all self-less systems. This is due to the opacity of the self or the monadic character of the self. The self seems to be a system with a certain direction of interaction, namely a centripetal one. The same we can observe in other (naturalistic) system-theoretical approaches to the term self reference. Self reference is described in terms of nervous system and it's particular structures. From a hermeneutical standpoint this is not wrong, but it is only informative for the neuroscientific or cybernetic discourse. Even biologists like Humberto Maturana are admitting a double-existenz of structure determined systems (as man is). The double-existenz concerns the branch of state and the branche of interaction (language).[60] The latter is not describable in terms of neurophysiology.[61] So, something is missed. The hermeneutical approach like

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[58] Williams (2000), p. 99.

[59] Ibid., p. 109.

[60] Humberto Maturana, *Biologie der Realität*, Frankfurt a.M. 2000, p. 208.

[61] Ibid., p. 206. He says that the higher human functions (language, love, abstract thinking) don't happen inside the brain.

Ricœur's offers the possibility of an important distinction concerning the term »self reference« and makes clear the difference between self-referential systems without self and a system (we call it man or person) able to be in relations not only in terms of recoursivity but in responsivity. In Ricœurs concept there seems to be an oscillation between a centripetal and centrifugal direction of reference, or, in short, the reference is reciprocal. The self knows that it is a possible point of reference of other selves.

What is the most important point in Ricœur's conception of the self is the narrative identity in virtue of public representations (art, narrations). This form of identity is not a mere description of all the circumstances the self has been in nor is it a mere description of events or an already fixed identity. The crucial point is the activity of narrating oneself, the identity of a being (entity) is a result of a doing due to narration and acting. So, the self is just not *doing* "me" but it is *self-signifying* in face of other selves. Furthermore the self can be described as an activity of transforming and responding to practical beliefs and values. We cannot talk about persons or selfs mere by ascription by others.[62] The sphere of the self as a world of persons needs the ascription of each other as persons including the self-ascription as a person. Maybe someone would make the objection, that here is an inconsistency, because earlier in the text I maintained a difference between the notion of a person and the notion of a self. But with the notion of the self I intend to give the world of persons and their relations a broader perspective, comprising the narrative, the affective and the bodily dimension - but without reduction.

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[62] This point of reciprocal ascription seems to be neglected for example by Strawson, who only claims, that persons are entities to which we ascribe mental states. Butt he point of responsivity is missed. Taken in this sense, persons are not only entities to which we make ascriptions of mental states but make such ascriptions to each other - including self-ascription. And the reality of self-ascription for example is given in narratives.