

I. Kinds of the Self

“What is unique about the I hides itself exactly in what is unimaginable about a person. All we are able to imagine is what makes everyone like everyone else, what people have in common. The individual I is what differs from the common stock, that is, what cannot be guessed at or calculated, what must be unveiled, uncovered, conquered.”

Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being

The concepts of self and identity are constantly evolving, and their ambiguity manifests itself as both the tendency to preserve and to release the bonds of self-identity, or at least to change it. The complexity of sociocultural environments and the increasing effect of technologies on our day-to-day life facilitate that change or even lead to a process of permanent half-life (crisis) emerging within one's self-identity. The issue here is not just postmodernity introducing deconstruction and diffuse, instant, and puzzling concepts of the self as a result of this deconstruction. What we are concerned with is the intrinsic and extrinsic processes for which we need more capacious concepts than those available in traditional, pre-modern psychologies and philosophies. Non-egological and post-egological self-identity concepts (e.g., intersubjectively mediated, extended, ecological, shared, episodic vs. diachronic, embodied, etc.) seem to better approach “a new sense of self”³³ than, e.g., Kant's concept of the transcendental “I.” Complexity challenges individuals from both the outside and inside. However, their ‘new’ self-identity need not be that complex for individuals to voice who they are under new circumstances, such as in dealing with the increasing effect of technologies on them. The new concepts should be explorative and offer some developmental potentials. Therefore, static sociological terms such as the agents and actors of a network, or discursive inter-subjects, will be revisited here only occasionally, in specific contexts, for instance, self-therapeutic strategies to empower the agential aspects of the “me,” which is passive. If our selves really evolve – and in 1991 Giddens suggested they do – the following question would arise: are the traditional directions of that evolution, such as development,

33 A. Giddens *Modernity and self-identity*, p. 11.

maturation, flourishing, balance, etc., its final destination, or is there a very different phenomenon, for example, a permanent, positive disintegration of self-identity? Whichever of these directions would be expected to be the individual's last destination, they all show a conventional, normative and normalizing character, as they seem to elevate the individual, thus carrying them from their chaotic condition to that of organization, coherence, structure, strength, and mastery, or maturity or adulthood in terms of the life-span. But not all recent concepts of the self would offer recovery, empowerment, diachrony, teleology, wholeness, or, put briefly, *growth*. Rather, *regression*, fragmentation, “deskilling,” or “insanity”³⁴ are descriptive or normative expressions increasingly used to approach present-day self-identities; in particular, those influenced by technological factors. But diagnoses like these are already available. Therefore, searching for a new concept of the self should result in some epistemological and ontological security, and also guidance, in the light of a chronic crisis of the self,³⁵ and chronic disagreement between experts and therapists, as well as the immediately involved. To show their security potentials – as, e.g., vehicles of possible self-development, self-reconstruction, self-recovery, and self-strengthening, etc.–the limitations of these concepts must also be pointed out. Certainly, the narrative self and the embodied self belong to the most fashionable and most discussed contemporary concepts; the former because of its integrative properties, the latter because of its integral ones, and both because of their developmentalism.

1. Developmental Psychology Meets Phenomenological Psychology³⁶

Developmentalism is one of the most powerful paradigms in contemporary cognitive psychology. Its original proponents were Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Their four- and six-stage theories of personal cognitive development, encompassing socio-moral growth, inspired a number of scholars who continuously developed the developmental approach. Searching for the trajectories of personal self-development, scholars such as Robert Selman and Robert Kegan (both developmental psychologists), Anthony Giddens (a sociologist) and Ken Wilber (a philosopher and theorist of integral human growth) also elaborated

34 A. Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity*, pp. 138–159.

35 A. Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity*, pp. 138–159.

36 “Phenomenological psychology is distinguished in all its characteristics from introspective psychology,” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The phenomenology of perception*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 52.

inter-, intra- and transpersonal “stages” of individual self-development.³⁷ Wilber’s inclination to spiritualism and esoterism made serious reception of his developmental model impossible. But reading the developmental manifestos of the theorists of posthumanism, their esoteric character can be noted, too: “the human desire to acquire new capacities (. . .), to expand the boundaries of our existence”³⁸ is rooted in a religious “quest to transcend our natural confines. . .”³⁹

Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul’s reason into the higher natures which are divine⁴⁰.

But the following book (with some critical exceptions such as Agamben’s and Lingis’ adoption of the “glorious” approach) does not explore esoteric and eschatological explanations⁴¹ of the human self’s posthumanist evolution (with its related perturbances). Instead, it draws on developmental and phenomenological psychology, the philosophy of biology, and philosophy of mind to examine posthumanism’s cognitive and experiential –and thus naturalist – foundations, including the new materialism theory as a posthumanist extension of the Embodied Self Theory. Developmentalism belongs to them, and its rise is parallel to the rise of the phenomenological theory of intercorporeality with its most recent, posthumanist ontologies.

Kegan’s construction of the evolving self concerns human growth in connection with the understanding of reality. Over time, across five developmental stages, a transformative learning process occurs. This process changes the way we know

37 Ken Wilber’s core works *Integral psychology* and *A Theory of everything* were first celebrated as resolving the body-mind problem on the basis of integral realism.

38 Nick Bostrom, “A history of transhumanist thought,” *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 2005, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 1.

39 N. Bostrom, “A history of transhumanist thought,” p. 2.

40 Giorgio Pico della Mirandola, *On the dignity of man*, Cambridge, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1965, p. 5.

41 For a critical approach to eschatological and also racial myths on human development, see Ewa Nowak, “Now choose life, so that you and your children may live. Eschatology of perfectibility, niddah, and the scandalon of race hygiene at 1850–1945,” *Ethics in Progress* 2016, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 103–117 (in Polish; one of the outcomes of this research project), doi: 0.14746/eip.2016.1.6. For a critical approach to maldevelopment myths founding disability concepts see idem, “Anthropology and disability. The origins, shift and revival of the paradigm,” *Ruch Filozoficzny* 2017, vol. LXXII, no. 3, pp. 137–157 (in Polish).

and understand things,⁴² in terms of objective reality and our relations with objects. “We *have* object; we *are* subject,”⁴³ he claims. Objects are “those elements of our knowing or organizing that we can reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon,”⁴⁴ e.g., identify with them, and, finally transform the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. In particular, we cannot reflect upon the subject and the self without focusing on self-complexity, and the focus itself must coordinate different perspectives of consciousness. As Kegan’s perspectivism theory shows affinities with that of Kohlberg and Selman, and all these theories are well known, it would be sufficient to refer to the fifth-order consciousness, which Kegan describes as the most integrative – i.e., integrating the self and the other – and, therefore, as “self-transformational.” It is the other and the otherness that reorients one’s feeling of self from particular, ego-centered identity. The cognitive-structuralist approach to self-development corresponds with the phenomenological and the narrative approach of the self that is experienced or storied from the first-person perspective, and which needs to be complemented with the third-person perspective (the so-called objective perspective). However, integrating the self and the other, which was explored by Kegan at the level of conscious and subconscious (deep level) cognitive operations, found its “partner” in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the experience of one’s self as always already embedded in the world and not even related to the world. Contemporary phenomenological and cognitive concepts of the self, i.e., post-egocentric and thus extended, shared, allocentric and ecological, including the embodied self, seem to be extrapolations of the classic, self-developmental theory proposed by Kegan, especially because of the balance between egocentric and allocentric aspects of self-identity, which involves realism; meaning realism of the physical/material, social, or epistemic environment⁴⁵ with which one has relations.⁴⁶

42 Robert Kegan, *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 17.

43 R. Kegan, *In over our heads*. . . , p. 32.

44 R. Kegan, *In over our heads*. . . , p. 32.

45 The egocentrism-allocentrism dichotomy is also explored in the phenomenology of spatiality and self-awareness, see Dan Zahavi, *Self-awareness and alterity*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1999; also Shaun Gallagher, “Review: Complexities in the first-person perspective. Reviewed work: *Self-awareness and alterity* by Dan Zahavi,” *Research in Phenomenology* 2002, vol. 32, pp. 238–248, as well as in the new environmentalism and dialogue ethics.

46 “We begin not with thoughts but with our body’s engagements with the earth – with intercorporeal activities,” Kenneth Liberman, “An inquiry into the intercorporeal

Developmental cognitive models of consciousness and embodied consciousness, and cognitivist models of mind and embodied mind inspired by Francisco Varela's et al. *The Embodied Mind*,⁴⁷ seem to be equally supportive, as long as one is considering self and identity in terms of human beings. As the title of this book claims (as does the core thesis of the related research project), *posthumanism* and *transhumanism* emerge from the very foundations of humanism, such as a human being's self-transcendence, human growth, development (evolution) of their identity, and even from their embodied self. Confirming that thesis through the suitable arguments is one of the aims of this book. Phenomenological and hermeneutic theories demonstrate this argumentative potential, as they do argue there are indissoluble interrelations between mind (conscious and unconscious) and body. They also support the concept of the experiential and cognitive horizon (field), which allows one to conceptualize those kinds of trans- and post-human agents that distinguish themselves by phenomenal features such as extended, ecological, intercorporeal, and crosscorporeal self-identity. Here, these features will be defined as representative for the posthumanist "stage" of human development. Agents exhibiting these features are to be defined as autopoietic or techno-autopoietic systems that are extended, ecological, intercorporeal, etc., in as much, as our 'extensions' may be artificial, not only natural (environmental). "Relational holism"⁴⁸ and inclusive, high-complexity, autopoietic dynamical systems are thinkable as one of the implications of these features which originate from the embodied self. Because these implications may involve not only interpersonal (social) relations but also certain relations with realities such as animals, artificial devices (prostheses, implants), allografts, virtual realities and a variety of techniques called 'enhancements' or 'enhancers,' sharp boundaries between the "human" and "posthuman" have yet to be specified.

relations between humans and the Earth," in: Suzanne L. Cataldi and William S. Hamrick (Eds.), *Merleau-Ponty and the environmental philosophy*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 41.

47 Francisco J. Varela, Evan T. Thompson, Eleanor Rosch, *The embodied mind*, Evanston, The MIT Press, 1991.

48 Evan T. Thompson, Francisco J. Varela, "Radical embodiment: neural systems and consciousness," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2001, vol. 5, no. 10, p. 420.

2. The Embodied Self

The embodied self and the embodied mind belong to the most influential concepts for thinking about the human being beyond the body/mind dualism, and to adapt the embodiment as a precondition of experiential and cognitive processes. At the same time, both concepts refer to the interplay (interrelations) between cognition and its natural (physical, biological), social, artificial, symbolic, digital, etc. environments. As will be shown in the chapter “The Kinds of the Body,” the embodied self concept applies to a wide spectrum of entities, including micro- and macro-organisms, living and artificial beings. The concept is rooted in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s double thesis, according to which ‘I am by body’ and ‘I have my body.’ Asking provocatively, “Is our body our self?”⁴⁹ Varela et al. try to show that our bodily reality, our embodied self – thus, natural, sensing, functional – is not less dynamic than our mind. In fact, body and mind are, to a great extent, engaged in the same, unitary, complex, and dynamic psychophysical system: one reality with a multitude and variety of aspects distinguishable for researchers. There can no longer be “an abstract, disembodied observer who (. . .) encounters matter as a separate and independent category.”⁵⁰ Asking “Is our body our self?” Varela et al. suggest our actual embodiment is even not the only materialization of ourselves. Its temporality and spatiality, related instruments and techniques, activities and interactions, changes and exchanges, nutrition, atmosphere, information – also belong to one’s embodiment. The entire experiential horizon and the entire experiential and perceptual pattern are centered on the body. It is subjective, but also objective; it is mine, but not only mine. There is mind if–and only if–there is a brain and a peripheral neural network making the embodied me interconnected with the world around. “I am a body which rises towards the world,” as Merleau-Ponty puts it.⁵¹ “Notice that we are not talking about a direction of causality. And we are not dependent on neuroscience to validate experience; that would be scientific imperialism.”⁵² We can problematize the embodied self in terms of psychology, phenomenology, philosophy of biology, philosophy of technics, the narrative self and literature theory, Eastern philosophical traditions, therapy –and this is what this book does.

49 E. T. Thompson, F. J. Varela, “Radical embodiment,” p. 65.

50 E. T. Thompson, F. J. Varela, “Radical embodiment,” p. 64.

51 M. Merleau-Ponty, *The phenomenology of perception*, p. 65.

52 M. Merleau-Ponty, *The phenomenology of perception*, p. 73.

The ‘incarnate subject’ concept has a long history in cultures, religions, and philosophies. Step by step, the French phenomenologists Malebranche, Maine de Biran, Bergson, and Merleau-Ponty elevated Descartes’ “union of the soul and the body”⁵³ to the paradigm of the self not only embodied but also interconnected with fellow embodied selves and the surrounding reality. “The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment.”⁵⁴ Nowadays, the nature of ‘definite environments’ is changing. The question of how technologies affect the embodied self is worth examining.⁵⁵ Does it co-evolve in parallel with the increasing presence of technologies in our lives and experiential horizons?⁵⁶ Or is it suffering from disintegration, losing its agential energy and becoming a *patient*? What exactly within a living organism, body, and embodiment is susceptible to manipulation and prone to techno-poiesis? In this book, the Embodied Self Theory will be predominant as a framework to integrally weigh up all the pros and cons of becoming the thesis ‘we, humans, face posthumanism as the next stage of the human development’ justified.

3. The Narrative Self

3.1 An Outline of Narrative Theory

Narrative theory belongs to the highly-esteemed (but also highly discussed) highly-esteemed concepts of the self for the highly integrative and therapeutic effects of autobiographical narration, as “the I tells the story of the self and the story becomes part of the Me.”⁵⁷ Constructing one’s own biography by means of a “storied nature of human experience”⁵⁸ is the narrative method in a nutshell. Is there no self

53 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The incarnated subject. Malebranche, Biran and Bergson on the union of body and soul*, trans. P. B. Milan, New York, Humanity Books, 2001, p. 34.

54 M. Merleau-Ponty, *The phenomenology of perception*, p. 71 (this quotation will also reappear in the chapter “The Evolution of Body Concept” in this volume, which describes the ‘stages’ of ‘bodily constitution’ to show how its identities evolve to achieve what is called today ‘posthuman’).

55 H. Jonas, *Leben und Organismus*, p. 339.

56 Klaus Kornwachs, “Stanislav Lem: Summa technologiae,” in: Ch. Hubig, A. Huning, G. Ropohl (Hg.), *Nachenken über Technik*, Berlin, Edition Sigma, 2013, p. 233.

57 Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, Amia Lieblich, Introduction to: *Identity and story*, Washington DC, APA, 2006, p. 3.

58 D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, Introduction to: *Identity and story*, p. 4.

without narrative? To answer this question, it is worth reiterating how difficult it is to achieve a narratively-managed selfhood in overwhelming experiences.

For Immanuel Kant, first-person autobiographical narratives were “not exactly sources for anthropology” but were “nevertheless aids”⁵⁹ in understanding oneself, being understood by other subjects, and getting involved in intersubjective relations. Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer explored the crucial role of narrative ability for shaping one’s individual self. “Being able to say” something with reference to oneself implies referring to oneself as another. This ‘another’ is being revealed, identified, and confirmed by the “I” that stories and re-stories her life course as a sequence of experiences, both personal and interpersonal, active and passive. To provide a story form for her life, the I must use “a capacity more specific than the general gift of language that expresses itself in the plurality of languages”⁶⁰ to report on single, isolated episodes connected by the logical conjunction or grammatical particle “. . . and . . .” (according to “the method of the AND, ‘this and then that’”⁶¹) or ordered consecutively, as in “they do X,” “they stop doing X,” “they do Y,” “they stop doing Y,” etc. Storying and re-storying transforms single episodes into a chain of experiences, or into an elaborate composition (“fabric” in English, “Gewebe” in German) filling one’s self-identity. Nietzsche pioneered the art of narration as the very source of coherence and meaning, as he was also the discoverer of the crisis of modern subjectivity and selfhood. However, to provide narratives that are both auto-creative and autobiographical with some factual content (still associated by modern societies with truth and authenticity, not just with the originality of the narrative itself), that is, to minimize the effect of confabulation or, by and large, “the competence to style life” (*dieser Kompetenz der Stilisierung des Lebens*)⁶² which seem fundamental for artistry,⁶³ the narrative ability is to refer to a subject’s authentic activities, experiences and agential abilities: “By ‘being able to act,’ I mean the capacity to produce events in society and nature. This intervention transforms the notion of

59 David Kaplan (Ed.), *Reading Ricoeur* (Introduction), Albany, State University of New York Press, 2008, p. 2.

60 Paul Ricoeur, “Devenir capable, être reconnu,” *Esprit* 2005, vol. 7, trans. Ch. Turner. L’Institut Français du Royaume-Uni, p. 1.

61 Doro Wiese, *The powers of the false. Reading, writing, thinking beyond truth and fiction*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2014, p. 24.

62 D. Thomä, *Erzähle dich selbst*, p. 154.

63 In which the illusion effect requires distance to reality (*macht sich jene Kohärenz vom faktischen Lebenslauf los*), D. Thomä, *Erzähle dich selbst*, p. 153.

events, which are not simply what happens. It introduces human contingency, uncertainty and unpredictability into the course of things.”⁶⁴

Thus, narrative ability is about the arrangement and re-arrangement of the changeable, fleeting, and instant life occurrences and life experiences of nearly all life spheres in order to provide a diachronic, relatively coherent, legible and meaningful plot, by means of storytelling. This plot will be continuously developed, constantly updated, re-storied, and re-interpreted day after day. A subject’s ability to do this is the ability to narrate herself, including her willingness to do this, which Nietzsche considered to be the key form of the will to power. As a consequence, the narrative ability which originates from a subject’s life and practical potentials would be empowering to her self-confirmation as an individual. In that sense, one may formulate an imperative of sovereign, auto-biographical narration. That imperative would make the narrator responsible for her self-identity in the ethical perspective inasmuch as she is dealing with the question about her identity, which is not established forever and is far from coherence. Therefore, the narrative theory of the self seems nearly perfectly tailored to meet the need of contemporary humans with their chronic identity crises and, in particular, with their experience of chronic self-alienation.

‘Being able to narrate’ occupies a pre-eminent place among the capacities, insofar as events of whatever origin become legible and intelligible only when recounted in stories; the age-old art of story-telling, when applied to oneself, produces life narratives which the historians articulate as history. Emplotment marks a bifurcation in identity itself – which is no longer merely the identity of the same – and in one’s own identity, which incorporates change as *peripeteia*. One may speak, consequently, of a narrative identity: the identity of the narrative plot that remains unfinished and open to the possibility of being told differently or of letting itself be told by others.⁶⁵

“Composition”⁶⁶ emerges from bridging “the episodic dispersal of the narrative and the power of unification unfurled by the configuring act constituting *poiesis* itself;”⁶⁷ as the narrative ability is *poietic*, which also means efficient and causative.⁶⁸ “This narrative necessity transforms physical contingency, the other

64 P. Ricoeur, “Devenir capable,” p. 2.

65 P. Ricoeur, “Devenir capable,” p. 2.

66 Paul Ricoeur, “Life in quest of narrative,” in: D. Wood (Ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur*, London, New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 20–33.

67 P. Ricoeur, “Life in quest of narrative,” pp. 20–33.

68 For the strong connection between action and speech see Arendt: “Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: ‘Who are you?’

side of physical necessity, into narrative contingency, implied in narrative necessity.⁶⁹ Despite the limitations of the narrative concept of the self⁷⁰ discussed in the next section, in his *Time and Narrative* (III), Ricoeur advocates for the strong narrative concept of the self that “appears both as a reader and the writer of its own life.”⁷¹ One of these limitations – especially in clinical contexts – implicitly addresses a self-narrative disconnectedness from empirical evidence which provides the first-person perspective with a private, hermetic, unexaminable sense or truth: “meaning is always emergent, never quite fixed and how, in the ontogenetic process of making meaning over time, knowledge is transformed even while it is maintained. This microhistorical process of genetic epistemology renders each person’s ideas unique, even while, from birth onwards, each one of us willy-nilly co-opts to others in making our own sense of the world.”⁷²

Daniel Dennett’s idea of replacing Ricoeur’s narrative self-identity with the “center of narrative gravity”⁷³ was drawn from theoretical physics and biology.

This disclosure of who someone is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds (. . .). This disclosure of ‘who’ in contradistinction to ‘what’ somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does. It can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity,” Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 178–179; and Merleau-Ponty: “Language is a life, is our life and the life of the things (. . .) language is not a mask over Being, but – if one knows how to grasp it with all its roots and all its foliation – the most valuable witness to Being,” even when silent, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The visible and the invisible*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1968, pp. 125–126.

69 P. Ricoeur, “Life in quest . . .” p. 142.

70 Some authors argue that “only narrative truth is attained in psychotherapy,” Eugene Winograd, “The authenticity and utility of memories,” in: Ulric Nesser, Robyn Fivush (Eds.), *The remembering self: Construction and accuracy in the self-narrative*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 244. On the other side, “biographers are well aware that people may “improve” their stories of the past for social reasons.” By Wittgenstein the “love of a good story frequently got the better of his concern for accuracy,” Michael Ross, Roger Buehler, “Creative remembering,” in: U. Nesser, R. Fivush (Eds.), *The remembering self*, p. 214.

71 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and narrative III*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 246.

72 Christina Toren, “How do we know what is true,” in: Rita Astuti, Jonathan Parri, Charles Stafford (Eds.), *Questions of anthropology*, Oxford, New York, Berg Publishers, 2007, p. 310.

73 Daniel Dennett, “The origins of selves,” *Cogito* 1989, vol. 21, p. 169, also, “Why everyone is novelist?,” *The Times Literary Supplement* September 1988, pp. 16–22; and Nicholas

That center would be able to describe one's condition also in terms of a naturalized, embodied self. Dennett's heterophenomenological method additionally reinforced the third-person perspective as a necessary contribution to one's self constitution. "Our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control and self-definition – Dennett argues – is not spinning webs or building dams, but telling stories, and more particularly, concocting the story we tell others – and ourselves – about who we are" as "a unified agent whose words they are."⁷⁴ However, Dennett's creative agency (though fictional) is able to provide an individual with multiple selves,⁷⁵ in the form of "quasi-selves, semi-selves, transitional selves," which would imply a personality disorder from which some contemporary subjects would prefer to be liberated, rather than be inflicted with. But some other subjects were probably satisfied with such and other implications of Dennett's theory, like "the description of the narrative self as the computer software program running on the hardware computer of the brain" allowing "that such a self can survive many physical manifestations. In addition, descriptions that deploy computational language may be more appealing to contemporary readers than the language of souls."⁷⁶

Despite the unexpected multitude of narrative selves (and even narrative gravity centers!), a human brain shows a clear preference for "coherence and single-mindedness to dissonance and conflict,"⁷⁷ for causality over passivity, for decision making over arbitrariness, etc. (however, not necessarily a clear preference for reality over fiction). That favored version of me will be stated as my very "real" self, as both authors explain. Why the heterophenomenological or objectively hermeneutical method can be useful in clinical contexts was exactly examined in McCarthy: "gathering the data of first-person reports of conscious

Humphrey, Daniel Dennett, "Speaking for our selves: an assessment of multiple personality disorder," *Raritan* 1989, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 68–98.

- 74 Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness explained*, London, Penguin Books, 1992, p. 418.
- 75 Although persons with traumatic experiences desperately miss their past identities, having new ones. "I want to write of the pain I am feeling right now, of the lukewarm tears that will not stop coming into my eyes – for what? For my lost breast? For the lost me? And which me was that again anyway...? I want to be the person I used to be, the real me." This is one of the feminist poets who "encourage a multiplicity of selves (...) that touch, meet, cross, and blur according to context must all be given voice," Audre Lorde, *The cancer journals*, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 1978, p. 37.
- 76 Joan McCarthy, *Dennett and Ricoeur on the narrative self*, New York, Humanity Books, 2009, p. 59.
- 77 J. McCarthy, *Dennett and Ricoeur on the narrative self*, p. 56.

experience, observing subjects' emotional and physiological behavior, bracketing any worries about the ontological status of the objects of conscious experience, and taking a third-person stance toward the phenomena concerned.⁷⁸

3.2 The Narrative Self in Humanist Clinical Contexts and Beyond Them

Further objections to the narrative approach to an individual self would address:

1. subjects with limited linguistic competence, such as young children yet unable to narrate or to use symbols, complex motions, etc.;
2. subjects suffering from semantic dementia, word-finding difficulties, and agrammatism;⁷⁹
3. traumatized subjects;
4. subjects with neurological impairments or brain injuries;
5. subjects suffering from functional and psychomotor disabilities or from the loss of motor abilities;
6. subjects in a coma and those with conditions such as locked-in syndrome;⁸⁰
7. subjects with posthuman experiences whose narratives are simulated in literary works or fine arts.

These subjects are limited in their effective, narrative, and autobiographical storytelling. Heterophenomenology would not be sufficient for accessing information about who a subject is, and to provide empowering feedback for her. Technological tools such as the brain-computer interface can detect “signs of consciousness,”⁸¹ the meaning and relevance of which can be encoded and interpreted with the help of additional “behavioral assessment” and “volitional”⁸² brain activity assessment, which seems to match Dennett’s criterion of objective

78 J. McCarthy, *Dennett and Ricoeur*, p. 66.

79 Sergei V.S. Pakhomov, Glenn E. Smith, Susan Marino, Angela Birnbaum, Neill Graff-Radford, Richard Caselli, Bradley Boeve, David S. Knopman, “A computerized technique to assess language use patterns in patients with frontotemporal dementia,” *Journal of Neurolinguistics* 2010, vol. 127, p. 129.

80 Damien Lesenfants, Camille Chatelle, Steven Leureys, Quentin Noirhomme, “Brain-Computer Interfaces, Locked-In Syndrome, and disorders of consciousness,” *Médecine/Sciences* 2015, vol. 31, no. 10, p. 904.

81 D. Lesenfants et al., “Brain-Computer Interfaces,” p. 904.

82 Dina Habbal, Olivia Gosseries, Quentin Noirhomme, Jerome Renaux, Damien Lesenfants, Tristan A. Bekinschtein, Steve Majerus, Steven Laureys, Caroline Schnakers, “Volitional electromyographic responses in disorders of consciousness,” *Brain Injury* 2014, vol. 28, no. 9, p. 1173.

observation. A large number of studies “have concluded that high-level cognition can be observed in the absence of purposeful motor responses, suggesting a potential dissociation between behavioral expression of consciousness and consciousness per se.”⁸³ Also, diagnoses of dementia,⁸⁴ neural injuries, and serious mental disorders and related disintegrations, to a large extent require the objective clinical observation of a subject’s expressions and behaviors.

Subjects with transplanted or implanted organ,⁸⁵ or implanted intelligent devices⁸⁶ may also be temporarily disadvantaged in their approach to themselves; however, the problem is not restricted to the narrative self. Radical allograft experiences are documented case-by-case and will be examined in this volume together with experiences with artificial devices. Unlike these cases, the posthumanist experiments seem to be colonized by fictional and utopian narratives offered from scholars’ meta-perspectives and literature. Authentic first-person reports on a posthuman self/identity are scarce. There is no certainty as to whether posthuman creatures showed interest in self-identity or were rather satisfied with their post-egological and post-personal existence. However, as long as we are dealing with the originally *human* element in post- or ‘neohuman’ creatures, interest in self-identity will prevail, at least at “the next ego balance”⁸⁷ level. That balance would not necessarily be achieved through the approach of the narrative self, but through the “care of the self” originating from “our capacity to tenderly and lovingly care for the body,”⁸⁸ both in silence⁸⁹ or in the middle of narratives and discourses.

83 Dina Habbal et al., “Volitional electromyographic,” p. 1173.

84 Stephan Millet, “Self and embodiment: A bio-phenomenological approach to dementia,” *Dementia* 2011, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 509–522.

85 “So brain transplantation, at least initially, will really be head transplantation—or body transplantation, depending on your perspective,” Robert J. White, “Head transplants,” *Scientific American: Your Bionic Future* 1999, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 24.

86 Frank E. Johnson, Katherine Virgo (Eds.), *The bionic human*, Totowa NJ, Humana Press, 2006; for persons reduced to “commander data” see Sidney Perkowitz, *From bionic humans to androids*, Washington DC, The Joseph Henry Press, 2004, p. 173.

87 Robert Kegan, *The evolving self. Problem and process in human development*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 104.

88 Audre Lorde, *Sister/Outsider: Essay and speeches*, New York, Crossing Press, 1984, p. 88.

89 See Daniel Hutto, Shaun Gallagher, “What’s the story with body narratives? Philosophical therapy for therapeutic practice;” also, “Understanding others through primary interaction and narrative practice,” in: Jordan Zlatev, Timothy Racine, Chris Sinha, Esa Itkonen (Eds.), *The shared mind: Perspectives on intersubjectivity*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2008, pp. 17–38; Jan Assmann, “Einführung” in *Schweigen. Archäologie der*

Van den Berg examined the relationship between continuity, discontinuity, and the concept of a self whose coherence and balance were supported by narrative ability, as I tried to show above with Ricoeur and Dennett's narrative theories. If a radical jump from human to posthuman identity implied a decline of the narratively structured self, there would be a radical discontinuity within the latter. However, according to van den Berg, discontinuity paradoxically promises more structure than continuity and homogeneity:

Discontinuity means: Intransitivity, a jump, a gap, disconnectedness, something accidental and open-ended. This sounds quiet puzzlingly. We are so used to the connectedness and the transition that we are no more able to imagine how can something arise outside connection. It is like an idea left in the air (...) The idea of structure without continuity does not come to our mind. However, one may only talk about the structure when no continuity (...) Continuity makes everything homogenous and nothing is more structureless than the homogeneous (...) Or I expressed it in a wrong way: Conversely, homogeneity implies continuity.⁹⁰

But, still, such implications presuppose basic dialogical relations between myself and someone else in the commitment, trust, and mediation of language.⁹¹ Otherwise, single episodes can “be connected without necessarily being coherent,”⁹² but they must be voiced.

3.3 Between Narrative, Silence and Dysnarrativa

Modern-day research findings across cultures raise objections to a structured or even narrated self. One rather “should embrace the significance of the silence (...). Needless to say, as there are various kinds of silence, we must examine its extent and meaning with careful attention (...) Silence that conveys the presence of the ‘Nothingness’ may well be telling more than any spoken words,” whereas “quick verbalization may easily destroy the life of the image.”⁹³ Instead,

the hidden secrets of silence and non-verbal interaction [are to be explored]. There is a great deal being expressed non-verbally through body movement, facial expression, eye contact, breathing etc. (...) Amplification of the image is usually being unfolded in

literarischen Kommunikation, vol. IX, hg. von Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann. Munich, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2013, p. 22.

90 Jan Hendrik van den Berg, *Metabletica. Über die Wandlung des Menschen. Grundlagen einer historischen Psychologie*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960, pp. 56–57.

91 Rober Kegan, Lisa Laskow Lahey, *How the way we talk can change the way we work. Seven languages for transformation*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2001, p. 30.

92 D. Wiese, *The powers of the false*, p. 24.

93 Meguchi Yama, “Ego consciousness in the Japanese psyche: culture, myth and disaster,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 2013, vol. 58, pp. 57–58.

silence, which, of course, is not only true of Japanese psychotherapy but is also the case cross-culturally with practitioners where image is central.⁹⁴

In the Japanese tradition, continuity and continuous self-narratives are not considered as a relevant contribution to the self, as the latter need not to be conceptualized as a unity or diachrony of conscious contents. Kitarō Nishida, who can be regarded as a Far Eastern hermeneutic thinker, held a more daring view called “mu no ba sho.” According to this philosopher, the contradictions and dissonances lived or performed by an individual neither presuppose nor imply “an ultimate discreteness”⁹⁵ of herself (they do not ruin its coherent representation as one of a synchronic – not diachronic – multitude). “The unity of consciousness, namely the self, is not possible in a merely straight-lined process. All the phenomena of my consciousness are many,” Nishida asserts, “and, at the same time – as mine – also one. This is a unity of opposites in the shown sense;”⁹⁶ it is likely that it is possible to articulate and story this unity in language, logic, semantics, and narrative forms very different to ours, but probably as open-ended forms. Also, narration, as a tool for giving shape, structure, and content to the human “I,” has a completely different meaning in each of these cultural circles. An example of functioning at the interface between these two cultural ‘tectonic plates,’ which never formed a monolithic continent, if only because they attach very different importance to the role of narrative in defining the self and its vicissitudes, is Megumi Yama, an American psychotherapist with Japanese roots. She examines two completely different models of the self. Each of these models is encased in a strong normativity that has endured for hundreds of years. The Japanese model, an example of “Eastern selfhood,” is non-egological, decentered, “speechless,” and “blank,” while the American model, which is an example of “Western selfhood,” is individualistic, centered (egological), permanently storied and restoried. “It is even doubtful” if the Japanese psyche really has a “center” or a “conscious self.”⁹⁷ The true Japanese “self” is *nothingness* and can be explained using traditional myths, like the one about heavenly ancestors. A person who is asked about their “self,” even in a diagnostic or therapeutic context, expresses herself sparingly and cautiously; it is not her who is the main agent,

94 Megumi Yama, “Ego consciousness,” p. 58.

95 Robert Wilkinson, *Nishida and Western philosophy*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, p. 118.

96 Nishida Kitarō, *Intelligibility and the philosophy of nothingness. Three philosophical essays*, trans. R. Schinzinger. Westport Conn, Greenwood Press, 1958, p. 197. “The contradictory nature of the self’s mode of being is manifest also in our awareness of our own mortality, our own ‘eternal nothingness: that every living being must die, and that our self faces permanent negation in death,” Wilkinson comments, *Nishida and. . .*, p. 118.

97 M. Yama, “Ego consciousness,” p. 53.

actor, or inventor of what is happening to her. She is also not influenced by others who dominate over her “I,” because in her native culture, such an “I” simply does not exist. In conversation with others, such a person does not attribute specific features, intentions, or labels to her listeners, because this would be a sign of her domination over them. Instead, she tries to guess and infer the qualities of others from a broader context and relationship.⁹⁸

The Japanese therapist acts in a similar way. Instead of asking *what am I?*, she prefers to ask what emptiness is and whether a given person experiences it properly, meaning that she releases herself from the limits of her psychosomatic condition to open herself to the whole and draw energy that is essential for her own life activity,⁹⁹ as Yama emphasizes. Nonetheless,

what at first glance appears to be ‘Nothingness’ is not literally nothingness but may well contain everything that might gradually unfold into the future. But it cannot be understood by ordinary rational thinking and therefore cannot be expressed with words at first. Put another way, I could say that in the ‘Nothingness’ there are buds of all the possibilities which do not have any words; these possibilities are not yet even images that could be apprehended in a dream.¹⁰⁰

Seemingly the “nothingness” is filled with energetic potentialities which cannot be considered in terms of Freud’s unconscious nor in terms of Dostoyevsky, Bakhtin,¹⁰¹ or Miłosz,¹⁰² for the polyphonic, polymorphous, multiple, meandering, serial-pluralistic etc. selves explored by these authors rather develop in line with the fluxus of chaotic technological stimuli surrounding and penetrating a Western individual. In the Polish psychotherapeutic tradition, two names may, to some extent, correspond with the Japanese psychoenergetic tradition, e.g., Antoni Kepiński and Kazimierz Dąbrowski. It is, however, not silence and nothingness, but the immanent mental potentials of a disintegrated self that is able to re-integrate, and, therefore, to re-empower herself and to rise above crisis.

98 M. Yama, “Ego consciousness,” p. 53.

99 M. Yama, “Ego consciousness,” p. 53.

100 M. Yama, “Ego consciousness,” p. 57.

101 Obviously, Bakhtin’s “dialogic imagination,” “internal dialogism” and dialogised self may inspire the theorists of narrative self today, see Michael Holquist, *The dialogic imagination by M. Bakhtin*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 173.

102 According to Aleksander Fiut, Miłosz was “against polyphony and for a variety of voices,” Chapter “The identity game,” idem, *The eternal moment. The Poetry of Czesław Miłosz*. Trans. T. S. Robertson, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, University of California Press, 1990, p. 208, note 10. The “variety of voices” permanently rattling and reverberating through our daily ‘self’ can be illustrated with some lines from Miłosz:

Ewa Nowak - 9783631822159

A positive disintegration process requires dialogical space in which “internal dialogism” can be facilitated by the external one. However, the dialogized self, the narrative self, the post-narrative self,¹⁰³ and the “Japanese” open self are distinct concepts regardless of their weakening nucleus. Premodern Western concepts of the self were focused on such a “nucleus,” whereas the contemporary concepts were less and less “nuclear,” as Denis de Rougemont demonstrates:

... distinguish the person from all it is not individual, persona, ‘strong individuality’, sensitive soul, intellect, even elementary and often deceptive self-consciousness – the fact remains that belief in a distinct self and recourse to an absolute value of the person are virtually universal in the West (...) Far from dissociating the self, the psychological researchers of the 20th century name and reveal those forces tending to dissociate it, the neuroses assailing it on all sides, and recover, by the detour of their ‘objective’ descriptions, the Pauline opposition of the two men in me: the tyrannizing natural man (tyrannized in turn by the law) and the liberating spiritual man (...) there are so many realities approved in the West and ignored in the East,¹⁰⁴

and vice versa.

3.4 Literary Narratives on Becoming Posthuman

Contemporary literature loves voicing experimental narratives of transhuman and posthuman protagonists, while records on the authentic first-person self narratives are difficult to access and scattered throughout medical papers. Philosophers also conduct thought experiments to analyze what it might be like to be(come) an animal, to share one’s own brain with another human being that is a donor’s extension, or to replace one’s own natural brain with an artificial one to achieve a transtemporal identity.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Nagel¹⁰⁶ and Martina

“I am walking about. No longer human.
 Visiting our thick forests and houses and manors.
 (...) I am abstracted
 with disturbing questions from the end of my century,
 mainly regarding the truth, where does it come from . . . ?”
 (Czesław Miłosz, “The Hooks of a Corset”)

103 See Galen Strawson, “Episodic ethics,” in: Daniel D. Hutto (Ed.), *Narrative and understanding persons*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

104 D. de Rougemont, *The myths of love*, p. 194.

105 Martina Nida-Rümelin, *Der Blick von Innen. Zur transtemporalen Identität bewusstsensfähiger Wesen*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2006, pp. 48–53.

106 Thomas Nagel, “What is it to be a bat,” in: David J. Chalmers et al. (Eds.), *Philosophy of mind classical and contemporary readings*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Nida-Rümelin developed related case studies to show human cognitive skills are limited, especially when confronted with inter-species reincarnation. Thus, becoming radically transhuman or posthuman would be a kind of anthropomorphic and anthropocentric illusion. In philosophy, using thought experiments remote from reality is a legitimate research method, as Nida-Rümelin admits.

Two case studies developed in the thought experiment convention will be presented below. Both related narratives were selected from modern and post-modern literature, namely Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) and T. Richard Brown's *The Face in the Mirror* (2012). They report on the radically posthuman experiences faced by the two main characters. Both novels are originally structured as first-person narratives with elements of internal and external dialogism. In both novels, the sequence of narratives and the actual course of events are correlated. It allows a researcher to follow the changes in both biographies and to detect, on the basis of the narratives, when the human and personal self abruptly confronted with non-human experiences face discontinuity and disintegration, and whether their subsequent persistence leads to growth (i.e., becoming posthuman) or, on the contrary, to regression and degradation. Both cases will be complemented by Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Heart of the Dog* (1925), which is briefly recapitulated, for the novel includes first-person and clinical narratives about a fictional experiment which involves turning an animal into a post-animal. Of course, applying narrative methods unavoidably implies expression and understanding trans- or nonhuman experience through the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric filter. The fiasco of the narrative method could not be more spectacular than at the initial moment of its application, which can only be hypothetical or literary (as literature can transgress the bounds science must respect).

3.4.1 Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*

Franz Kafka¹⁰⁷ depicted, in a vivid way, the experience of a sudden and brutal reincarnation (*Körperwechsel, Metamorphose*)¹⁰⁸ of a man's soul into a body of a

107 See Sander L. Gilman, "Die Ängste des jüdischen Körpers. Aus Anlass der unwiderstehlichsten Kafka-Biografie, die es bis heute gibt: Reiner Stack lehrt uns, ein Genie neu zu lesen," *Literaturen* 2003, vols. 1/2, II, pp. 12–18; also Karel Kosik, "Das Jahrhundert der Grete Samsa. Von der Möglichkeit oder Unmöglichkeit des Tragischen in unserer Zeit," in: Kurt Krolop, Hans D. Zimmermann (Eds.), *Kafka und Prag*. Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1994, pp. 187–198; Karl-Heinz Fingerhut, "Die Verwandlung," in: Michael Müller (Ed.), *Franz Kafka. Romane und Erzählungen. Interpretationen*, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam, 1994.

108 See M. Nida-Rümelin, *Der Blick von Innen*, pp. 31, 313.

monstrous insect. In Kafka's biographical context, his *Metamorphosis* portends the approaching exclusion of a fraction of people from the human world, their dehumanization and, finally, the Holocaust. *Metamorphosis* emits a profoundly tragic message which can also be interpreted as a posthumanist *à rebours*. Gregor Samsa's experience does not spread any breakthrough-related optimism which permeates present-day posthumanist visions. Samsa's features, his behavior, his human and interhuman way of life get completely annihilated through different, repulsive traits and behaviors of a primitive animal organism. Although able to cognitively and emotionally track his day-by-day experience, which characterizes Kafka's literary style when he starts narratively reporting on Samsa's metamorphosis from a first-person perspective, it is an animal identity which predominates and absorbs his original identities as a young man with his human embodiment. To emphasize the key stages of Samsa's gradual transition from a human to animal condition, related excerpts are accompanied by my meta-comments such as «human experience; «animal experience («non-human experience, respectively); «transitory experience; «being out of the place in the human world; «posthuman experience¹⁰⁹ to stress. However, taking Nagel's conclusion seriously (that there is no possibility to cross the gap between human and animal first-person perspectives), transitory and animal experience remained out of Samsa's cognitive and emotional scope. Let us track Samsa's metamorphosis' trajectory step by step, following the milestones of Kafka's narration.

- "This morning Gregor was unable to get out of bed unaided. Lying on his back, he lifted his head with effort and saw some strange belly divided in brown segments («non-human, animal experience). Several struggling legs (...) waved helplessly (...) against each other (...) before his eyes..." («animal experience).
- "What has happened to me? he thought." "Well, supposing he were to say he was sick?" («human experience). "He felt a slight itching up on his belly (...) He was even unusually hungry" («animal experience).
- "... there came a cautious tap at the door behind the head of his bed. 'Gregor,' said a voice – it was his mother's – 'it's a quarter to seven. Hadn't you a train to catch?' That gentle voice" («human experience).
- But "Gregor had a shock as he heard his own voice answering hers, unmistakably his own voice (...) but with a persistent horrible twittering squeak behind it like an undertone, that left the words in their clear shape only for the first

109 Unlike *Metamorphosis*, T. R. Brown's novel includes explicit references to such experiences (see below).

moment and then rose up reverberating round them to destroy their sense” (*«transitory experience»*).

- “His immediate intention was to get up quietly without being disturbed, to put on his clothes and above all eat his breakfast, and only then to consider what else was to be done, since in bed, he was well aware, his meditations would come to no sensible conclusion” (*«human experience»*).
- “And he set himself to rocking his whole body at once in a regular rhythm, with the idea of swinging it out of the bed” (*«human experience»*).
- “Gregor was now much calmer. The words he uttered were no longer understandable, apparently, although they seemed clear enough to him, even clearer than before” (*«transition experience»*).
- He “... laid his head on the handle to open the door wide... but immediately, as he was feeling for a support, he fell down with a little cry upon all his numerous legs” (...) “his legs had firm ground under them; they were completely obedient, as he noted with joy” (*«transition experience»*).
- “But when at last his head was fortunately right in front of the doorway, it appeared that his body was too broad simply to get through the opening.” “Slowly, awkwardly trying out his feelers, which he now first learned to appreciate, he pushed his way to the door to see what had been happening there” (*«transition experience»*).
- “For there stood a basin filled with fresh milk (...) he did not like the milk either, although milk had been his favorite drink” (*«transition experience»*).
- “... his only regret was that his body was too broad to get the whole of it under the sofa. He stayed there all night spending the time partly in a light slumber” (*«animal experience»*).
- “... a piece of cheese that Gregor would have called uneatable two days ago... Gregor’s legs all whizzed towards the food (...) and [he] sucked greedily at the cheese” (*«human and animal experiences confronted»*).
- “One after another and with tears of satisfaction in his eyes he quickly devoured the cheese, the vegetables and the sauce; the fresh food, on the other hand, had no charms for him, he could not even stand the smell of it” (*«animal experience predominates»*).
- “... crawled up over the windowsill (...) in some recollection of the sense of freedom that looking out of a window always used to give him. For in reality day by day things that were even a little way off were growing dimmer to his sight” (t) (*«melancholic human mood accompanies becoming non-human»*).
- “... about a month after Gregor’s metamorphosis (...) he had formed the habit of crawling crisscross over the walls and ceiling. He especially enjoyed

hanging suspended from the ceiling; it was much better than lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; one's body swung and rocked lightly..." (*«non-human experience»*).

- "‘Come in, he's out of sight,' said his sister (...) They were clearing his room out; taking away everything he loved" (estranged and banned from the familiar world) (*non-human experience as a radically estranged*).
- "(...) he would certainly be able to crawl unhampered in all directions but at the price of shedding simultaneously all recollection of his human background?..." (*«non-human, traumatic experience»*).
- "(...) he [Gregor's father] lifted his feet uncommonly high, and Gregor was dumbfounded at the enormous size of his shoe soles (...) An apple thrown without much force grazed Gregor's back and glanced off harmlessly (...) The serious injury done to Gregor" (*«human experience, conscious suffering and persecution»*).
- "‘We must try to get rid of it,' (...) ‘He must go,' cried Gregor's sister, ‘that's the only solution, Father' ... True, his whole body was aching, but it seemed that the pain was gradually growing less and would finally pass away." "‘And what now?' said Gregor to himself, looking round in the darkness" (*«experience of being out of place in the human world»*).
- "Then his head sank to the floor of its own accord and from his nostrils came the last faint flicker of his breath" (*«non-human existential experience, agony»*).
- "(...) the charwoman arrived early in the morning (...) She thought he was lying motionless on purpose (...) her eyes widened (...) ‘Just look **at this, it's dead**; it's lying here dead and done for!' (...) ‘Dead?' said Mr. Samsa (...) Indeed, Gregor's body was completely flat and dry (...) ‘I should say so,' said the charwoman, proving her words by pushing Gregor's corpse a long way to one side with her broomstick" (*«human consciousness of being perceived and treated as a thing; Freudian impersonal “Es;” reification; annihilation to the brute matter»*).

*

The narrative in *Metamorphosis* is mostly composed of sentences from a first-person perspective, quoted from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and completed by a minimum of additional closely related phrases, with almost no meta-comments. The story reports on several core stages of physical, functional, and mental transition of a young adult male Gregor Samsa from his recent human to his present transhuman condition. One morning he awakes in the form of a huge beetle as a reincarnation of the complete human individual. The order of the narrative

corresponds to the gradual experiential evidence increasing Gregor Samsa's certainty about his abrupt, mysterious transfiguration.¹¹⁰

The protagonist wakes up from his dream, in the same way as a patient wakes up from a coma after undergoing an operation: *it is finally over, it is a fait accompli*. However, this awakening is just the beginning – the beginning of the end, to be exact. The end to which leads the martyr nature of the human ego and identity¹¹¹ confronted with his animal embodiment. That embodiment lacks its natural interactive attitudes. There is a human self locked inside of that, and there the world of the reality of life outside, and all interconnections between the two sides go ignored.

Despite the broad polysemy¹¹² as an integral element of horror of this superficial, physiognomic, but with time also organic, functional, experiential, mental and behavioral degradation of a human imprisoned in a caricaturally huge insect body, it is possible to consider, as part of a mind experiment, Gregor Samsa's case as an allegory of a radical posthuman experience. However, in this forced experience, nothing leads to the development of his identity and no factors which extended – and literally materialized – Samsa's self-identity in the 'ecological' manner, as the experiential deep ecology theory suggests (post-egoic interrelations with the universe of life, belongingness to the natural *oikos*, a biotic symbiosis or communion with fellow organic lifeforms, sympathizing with them, etc.). None of these postanthropocentric¹¹³ ideals apply to the Samsa's experience.

In contrast, Samsa's metamorphosis implies a brutal degradation and collapse of his identity. A gradual decline of an "ego" trapped in a body, which in no way resembles Samsa's original body nor human body. Samsa's entire identity is inserted into another, primitive living organism, imprisoned and suppressed.

110 In Kafka's original literary concept Gregor Samsa's transfiguration allegorically depicts his brutal and absurd alienation from the social context as a Jew, see V. Krischel, *Kafka*.

111 Eugen Bleuler, "Die Ambivalenz," in: Manfred Bleuler (Ed.), *Beiträge zur Schizophrenielehre der Zürcher Psychiatrischen Universitätsklinik Burghölzli (1902–1971)*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt, 1979, p. 87.

112 It is rooted in the biographical context examined, *inter alia*, by Sander L. Gilman, "Die Ängste des jüdischen Körpers." *Literaturen* 2003, vol. 1/2, II, pp. 12–18; K. Kosik, "Das Jahrhundert der Grete Samsa," pp. 187–198.

113 They rather tend to the Buddhist inspirations voiced by M. Yama. See, e.g., John Seed, "The ecological self," *Earth Light Magazine* 2005, vol. 14, no. 4; and Matthews Freya, *The ecological self*, New York, Routledge, 1991; Arne Naess, "The shallow and the deep long-range ecology movement: A summary," *Inquiry* 1973, vol. 16, pp. 95–100.

The new body prevents his previous identity from any kind of manifestation and ability to function in the human world. Living and functioning in a primitive organized bodily microcosmos was a very devastating experience for human beings, Kafka's message suggests.

At the same time, up until the very end, Samsa deals with the dual-perspective (or at least transitional between his original, i.e., human first-person experiential perspective, and the experiential first-person perspective imposition forced on him by his animal embodiment) of his transfiguration: first-person view from within, as a result of a proprioception (as if his former human neural system cooperates with his new animalistic body) and the "clinical"¹¹⁴ view from outside. Later on, Sartre described a very similar experience when thinking about the alienating stare of others when they watch us in the same manner as a naturalist's eyes a netted insect. Samsa has absolutely no control over his transformation; he is just a passive observer. Instead of being preoccupied with his current life, Samsa mourns over the life he has lost.

The reader of *Metamorphosis* is dealing with an account of three processes, progressing and interwoven with each other, which progress over the span of just a few months. The first process is a forced dissociation of an ego and its old and new embodiment. The second process is the progressing disintegration of Samsa's personality. The third process is the desynchronization of Samsa's life, cognitive and social functionalities. The horizon of his life has been narrowed to four walls of his room, soon stripped bare of all objects by his family, and turned into a prison cell. He no longer has access to human reality. He is unable, by any means, to settle in the insect reality. However, there is also no place for him in some sort of third, transhumanistic reality between that which is human and that which is insectile. Each paragraph of *Metamorphosis* renews the drama: initially rebelling against his imprisoning, he finally gets even more excluded from his familiar, human habitat.¹¹⁵ At the same time, his strange embodiment does not offer him any safe shelter, any familiar housing as it is, or as it should be, with a living organism's exterior.

The state in which Gregor Samsa finds himself seemingly bears the stamp of schizophrenia, of which the basic symptom is a duality, the loss of selfhood on behalf of doubling and the presence of two subjects in one body (*dividuum*),¹¹⁶

114 On reincarnation (*Körperwechsel*) and identity see M. Nida-Rümelin, *Der Blick von Innen*, p. 313.

115 See Karl-Heinz Fingerhut, "Die Verwandlung," in: Michael Müller (Ed.), *Franz Kafka. Romane und Erzählungen. Interpretationen*, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam, 1994, p. 57.

116 Towards the false self and schizoid condition, for example the embodied and unembodied self, see Ronald D. Laing, *The divided self. An existential study in sanity and madness*. Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1965, p. 65; also M. Ratcliffe, *The feelings of being*.

foreign and hostile towards each other. The clarity of mind and self-awareness which Samsa retains till the very end are sometimes also observed in “eloquent, educated” schizoid patients. They “are aware of what they have lost. For those patients, the new reality is strikingly different from their former one. The order of things is completely disturbed. People are no longer the same as they were before. Things and other human beings become increasingly peculiar and foreign, and ultimately lose all their connection with the patient.”¹¹⁷ And on the other hand, there is no connection on the patient’s side as well,¹¹⁸ as he is going to quickly and completely forget his past, like Gregor Samsa (but “what about sleeping a little longer and forgetting all this nonsense,” he rhetorically asks).

At all costs, he is trying to rip off this preposterous guise,¹¹⁹ which isolates him from others and additionally makes them repulsed by him in the same way as vermin can. But those closest to him do not want to see a human underneath this hard shell of an insect. Would that be Gregor? Impossible: “. . .Gregor was a member of the family, despite his present unfortunate and repulsive shape, and ought not to be treated as an enemy, that, on the contrary, family duty required the suppression of disgust and the exercise of patience, nothing but patience.”¹²⁰

A man turns out to be internally and subjectively attached to his human body, which he sees as his own. This individualistic form is not only his facade and exterior layer, but also it is the embodiment of his essence; he *is* his body. That attachment is absolute. However, the radical post humanistic view questions its strength in the name of the decentralisation of the anthropocentric and ego-centered identity. The infinite bond exists not because of the evolution which shaped human identity as a species but also as an individual. Evolution – as proved by Hans Jonas¹²¹ – created a generic identity. Meanwhile, Friedrich Dürrenmatt believed that we, people, inherited “a prelogical and premoral brain”¹²² from nonhuman

117 M. Bleuler, “Die schizophrenen Krankheitsbilder,” in: M. Bleuler, *Beiträge zur Schizophrenielehre*, pp. 147–162.

118 Indifference towards reality and alienation are the basic symptoms of the desynchronization in schizophrenia.

119 False, misleading, masking the external, in Arab *mashera*, in Italian: *maschera*, in Polish: *maska* but also *maszkara/monster*, compare Klaus E. Müller, *Der Krüppel. Ethnologia passionis humanae*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1996, p. 234.

120 F. Kafka, *Metamorphosis*, p. 64.

121 In this volume.

122 Undermining anthropocentrism, humanist idealism, myth or progress, myth of science, and the faith in a linear natural history, see Marco Schüller, “Das archaische Gehirn. Über ein Phantasma in Hirnforschung und Literatur,” in: Karin Herrmann,

creatures. Gregor Samsa clashes with this primal brain, mind, and identity trapped in the body of an insect, which has robbed him of all traces of human mentality. It is a drastically self-alienating experience, not a return to the dark, unconscious sources of the conscious. The reshaping of a human brain and mind into an animal one is impossible, even if humanity inherited the archaic core of the mind from its evolutionary ancestors. Dürrenmatt's stance gives us something to contemplate:

I am convinced that the brain has not changed much (*das Gehirn gleichgeblieben ist*). (...) However, suddenly it has become our enemy. It has played the human off against himself, pushing him towards a biological crisis (*eine biologische Krise*). I think that humankind is biologically endangered (*die Menschheit als biologisch in Gefahr*). I am not sure what it will lead to (...), now that we know that the human brain is greater than the human himself (*der Mensch hält eigentlich sein eigenes Gehirn nicht aus*).¹²³

In his novel, *The Heart of the Dog* (1925), Mikhail Bulgakov addresses a reverse narrative towards a fictional experiment with xenotransplantation, aiming to let a dog develop unexpected, post-animal functionalities, although the original aim of that experiment was completely different:

23 December. At 8.30 in the evening a pioneering operation performed (...) the first of its kind in Europe: under chloroform Sharik's scrotum was removed and replaced by human testes with seminal vesicles and vasa, taken from a man aged 28 (...) the hypophysis was removed after trepanation of the top of the skull and replaced by the human equivalent from the same man (...). The aim of the operation: (...) to explore the acceptability of hypophysis transplant and its potential for the rejuvenation of the human organism,

that is, to improve the New Soviet Man, e.g., to create new traits, including ideologies and propaganda slogans inherited as an evolutionary-progressive improvement.

Behind the satiric convention, the dog's inside perspective combined with clinical observation is provided as the main narrative view. As a result, Bulgakov developed an anti-utopia about turning animals into highly developed psychic individuals (or enhancing any organism and subject in that way).¹²⁴

Neuroästhetik. Perspektiven auf ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsgebiet, Kassel, Kassel University Press, 2010, p. 108.

123 Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Dramaturgie des Denkens. Gespräche 1988–1990*, H. L. Arnold, A. von Planta, J. Strümpel (Eds.), Zürich, Diogenes, 1996, p. 115; also Hoimar von Ditfurth, *Der Geist fiel nicht vom Himmel. Die Evolution unseres Bewusstseins*, Wien, Verlag H. Bauer – Medien, 2003.

124 Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Heart of the Dog*, transl. A. Pyman, Moscow, Raduga Publishers, 1990 (e-version).

The consequences of creating a post-animal dog were “incalculable.” Instant advances in the acquisition of language were observed:

He can say a great many words: ‘Cabby’; ‘There’s no seats’; ‘Evening paper’ (...) There is something almost phonographic about it; as though the creature had heard swearwords somewhere earlier on and had automatically, subconsciously recorded them in his mind and was now belching them up in wads. (...) It is as though, having been deep frozen in his consciousness, they are now thawing out and emerging. Once out, the new word remains in use.¹²⁵

Bulgakov’s novel may be a timeless warning about enhancement and eugenics applied to both humans and animals in order to grant them a privileged status. The writer used to work as a military physician and changed his profession after the Soviet Union forced medical professionals to conduct eugenic experiments.

3.4.2 T. R. Brown’s *The Face in the Mirror*

T. R. Brown’s book, *The Face in the Mirror. A Transhuman Identity Crisis* (2012), is admittedly not a literary artwork, but a postmodern exemplification of radical posthumanist S-F. Brown’s thought experiment about the self-identity crisis of the main character, Todd Herschel. He deals with multiple transformations. After he lost his body (his ‘entire body was amputated’) as a result of a nearly fatal car accident, his brain was removed from his corpse and implanted into a new, “neohuman” body, with no more than forty percent of human DNA. In this new embodiment, everything was new: it showed not only human, but also animal properties; it was not masculine, but feminine. Additionally, his brain’s replica had been reproduced in the software.

Todd Herschel wakes up from narcosis, completely oblivious. This moment of awaking shows analogies with Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*. Todd discovers his new situation step by step, the first time by looking at himself in a mirror:

A felis female was standing less than two feet in front of me, green cat slit eyes, mottled black and grey fur and a face that had thin almost human lips, flat cat nose and high forehead, topped by a pair of pointed ears behind which her head was bandaged. (...) As I saw my own hand rise in front of me mirroring the stranger, I realized it was my own reflection in the mirror (...) What happened to me? I asked.¹²⁶

125 M. Bulgakov, *The Heart of the Dog*.

126 T. Richard Brown, *The face in the mirror. A Transhuman identity crisis*, Own Edition, 2012, p. 17.

Despite the low probability of the entire case developed by T.R. Brown in reality, for many experiences described by Todd, analogies with reports delivered by transplant patients and patients with amputees can easily be found. In particular, patients with face allografts must learn to recognize their new physiognomy, drastically changed after facial surgery, and to become familiar with it. A self-reidentification process may take a long period of time.¹²⁷ Undergoing face transplantation provides them with a human face that not always resembles their original one. They have, though, received a *human* face. This was not Todd's experience. After a long period his acceptance of his new embodiment did not extend to his semi-feline, semi-human face.¹²⁸ Although

I no longer saw a monster in the mirror, I didn't see me either. I didn't even see the new me. I saw a stranger, and she gave me the willies. Even though, intellectually, I knew it was me behind those eyes (...) When I looked at the other features of my new face, it's hard to describe what I felt. Fear was part of it, anger, alienation. I have heard of a rare condition where people can't recognize their own reflections. It was like and unlike that. I saw a stranger, but (...) I knew I was looking out through those inhuman eyes.¹²⁹

Todd's existence as "the old human self"¹³⁰ hidden in a feline camouflage was mostly dedicated to dealing with what and who he was now, and to learning to accept the truth about himself. Becoming a transsexual¹³¹ allowed him to undergo spectacular intimate and social experiences, including pregnancy and performing a bisexual, polyamorous marriage. Unlike in Gregor Samsa's case, the initial crisis of Todd's whole embodied self-identity was followed by a gradual recovery, development, and growth. His second identity will show mixed, "hybrid" and "post-personal" (as the posthumanists put it) properties and capacities. His cognitive and linguistic capacities seem to remain intact, regardless of his new embodiment (which apparently belongs to delusions of posthumanism).

The development of Todd's afterlife identity was increasingly controlled by his physiology and other functionalities of his new, half 'feline' embodiment, and which was medically supported. Their influence prevailed over his original brain, except its originally human cognitive functioning. This development supports a popular conviction a human being/a person's identity is concentrated

127 See Carla Bluhm, Nathan Clendenin, *Someone's else face in the mirror*, Westport, London, Praeger, 2009, pp. 93–94; Jennifer Swindell Blumenthal-Barby, "Facial allograft transplantation, personal identity, and subjectivity," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2007, vol. 33.

128 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 334.

129 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, pp. 232, 59.

130 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 377.

131 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 19.

in their brain,¹³² and the brain plays the role of *Hegemonikon*, not only in a living organism but also in shaping and reshaping one's self-identity.

Brown's novel is pretentious, full of very improbable periphery, monotonous and literarily dull. But it cannot in any way be denied one advantage: the first-person perspective based narrative and dialogical convention (though absolutely incomparable with Plato's dialogical mastery), combined with a clinical observation from the perspective of medical practitioners caring for Todd, allowed for the consideration of a few accurate points around the shaping an individual identity based on embodied cognition.

Namely, the creation of identity is influenced not only by the snippets of information gathered and stored in the brain, but also peripheral neural clusters which can regulate parts of the metabolism¹³³ even when disconnected from the central nervous system, and other subsystems:

- “You will likely find you have reflexes to do things you never did before and things you used to be able to do will be difficult;”¹³⁴
- “Your new body has muscle memory that will sometimes respond in ways you don't expect. It will take time, but you will learn to either control it, or get used to it, or even benefit from it;”¹³⁵

as Todd's medical assistants make him aware of. Embodiment is not a passive instrument, nor is it a container and hardware to realize our cognition¹³⁶ and cognitive functions monopolized by the brain¹³⁷, whose replica was supposed to simulate neural functions at the “molecular”¹³⁸ level of artificial intelligence in Brown's novel (Todd's brain was re-written to provide the foundations of Todd's rebirth as a cyborg).

Corporeality, as Brown suggests, is far more complex, independent, and marked by personal experience than is believed by those advocating for locating human's identity solely in the brain and enthusiasts of the “recycled body,” as well as those who celebrate incorporeality, which nowadays posthumanism praises as an

132 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 39.

133 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 113.

134 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 24.

135 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 24.

136 Christian Gärtner, “Cognition, knowing and learning in the flesh: Six views on embodied knowing in organization studies,” *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 2013, vol. 29, p. 340.

137 T.R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, pp. 113–114.

138 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 113.

expression of liberation of man from the embodied and organic and thus a vulnerable, mortal and not always comfortable existence. From a scientific point of view, the doubt expressed by the therapists taking care of Todd that relocating a brain into a new body could imply *insanity*,¹³⁹ but also the collapse of one's mind and his entire previous self-identity is absolutely valid.

Therefore, Todd's personal therapist notes: "I don't think you can avoid having some similarities to our other transplant patients (. . .) As for losing yourself, with as extensive a transformation as you've gone through, your sense of self is going through serious revision. Have you ever heard of transhumanism?"¹⁴⁰ Todd reports on his new embodied identity as if it was "sharing halves of the same soul"¹⁴¹ with someone else whose body he feels implanted into. It is about his brain-related identity and body-related identity and the discontinuity between the two. It is about bridging "the gap" (van den Berg's terms) and re-joining the two heterogeneous systems together. Todd apparently observes himself becoming capable of "having one's actions imputed to oneself"¹⁴²

"You show them you are a person"¹⁴³ and not a hybrid transhuman creature, becomes a kind of Todd's humanist imperative. The need for social recognition and evidence of having evolved into a coherent identity, including the moral self, would be, however, signs of predomination of his original human identity over the animal, said not to have any morals. Watching his own avatar on a computer screen,¹⁴⁴ Todd certainly realized that the life of the mind and all that what a

139 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 114.

140 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 87.

141 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 326.

142 Reinhard Merkel et al., *Intervening in the brain. Changing psyche and society*, Berlin, Heidelberg, Springer Publishers, 2007, p. 219. Brown's novel, however, miraculously spares Todd to be confronted with side symptoms resembling on those of lobotomy: "in the early 1950s lobotomies were still performed at a rate of 5.000 per year in the United States notwithstanding their side effects, which include inertia, apathy, decreased attention, social inappropriateness, and seizures (...). How drastic a change in personality can result from brain surgery has been famously depicted by Jack Nicholson in Milos Forman's movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975). Nicholson played McMurphy, a rebellious patient in a psychiatric ward, who in the end is subdued by lobotomy, thereby turned into an apathetic wreck. With Nicholson's performance in mind one might wonder if a person's identity can get 'extinguished' without it being replaced by a new one, but also without the person ceasing to exist altogether," p. 191.

143 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 370.

144 T. R. Brown, *The face in the mirror*, p. 424.

person thinks of as his self-identity, also includes his own “somatic reflection,” both conscious and unconscious (tacit). We think and feel through our bodies, in particular through the parts making up brain and neural system, stresses Shusterman.¹⁴⁵

145 Richard Shusterman, *Body consciousness: A philosophy of mindfulness and somaesthetics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 113; see also Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the body. Essays in somaesthetics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. And vice versa, our bodies are dependent on our mental life, e.g., some thought, memory – even if not fully conscious yet – or the words spoken by other people result in a blush, pounding of a heart, catching of a breath.