

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**THE SUBJECTIVE/OBJECTIVE DICHOTOMY IN PERSONAL IDENTITY:
The Necessity of Embodiment**

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by

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"Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that',
but a matter of 'I can' "

(Merleau-Ponty)

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INTRODUCTION

Talking to a friend, when I had barely begun the research that eventually led to the writing of this thesis, I tried to explain the case in favour of my intuition that a person is, and must be, an embodied being. Her immediate reply, "but that is obvious, isn't it? ... at least, to any person who is not philosophically minded...", unsettled me: if it was so straightforwardly plain that people are embodied beings, then I was embarking upon a redundant project. "Yes...", I unconvincingly agreed, as one does when one is not interested in justifying philosophy to a pretentiously chatty taxi-driver. As I returned home, though, it was clearer to me that the necessary embodiment of people was not as obvious a thesis as my friend had first thought.

It is a common element of many religions, not least the Christian tradition of the Western world, that there is life after death, a life devoid of the imperfections inherent to our present embodied state. What happens in death, then, is that the body truly dies, but the spiritual side of the person persists in a more perfect and enjoyable environment. This belief is supplemented in the Christian tradition with the idea that, at the end of the (material) world, the body resuscitates and joins the soul, the beginning of a painless and joyful existence. This resuscitated body, though, is not the dead body, by then decomposed and turned into dust, but a body not subject to the shortcomings of its material nature, that is, a 'non-material body'. This is certainly paradoxical, even self-contradictory. A believer would quickly appeal to the consequences of the original sin in an attempt to make the aura of self-contradiction vanish, but we need not enter into theological arguments.

The philosophical work required to ground these religious truths was undertaken by the Christian Philosophy of the Middle Ages. However, its influence in later philosophical developments is only limited. It was a modern philosopher (perhaps the first modern philosopher), Descartes, who made this duality of substances, mind and body, available to us. (Curse or blessing?) Although certain parts of his work support a close connection between the mind and the body, it is the neat dualism of other passages, together with his identification of the person as an immaterial substance, that continue to be the starting point for present-day discussions of the nature of persons. In a way, Descartes provided the guide-lines and the framework for the subsequent philosophy of personal identity.

Materialist philosophers, on the other hand, have insisted on the material character of persons, but their accounts have been triggered by a desire to counter-attack the Cartesian position. Thus, they have argued that people are essentially material, and that their alleged mental properties, such as pains, desires and beliefs (that is, the Cartesian mind without the substantialist connotation), are reducible to material properties. Some have even maintained that talk of persons and personal identity is altogether mistaken, and should be replaced by talk of bodies and the relations (of causality, resemblance, etc) between the different stages of those bodies.

As a matter of fact, there is no consensus among people (philosophers or non-philosophers) about the relationship between embodiment and persons: some will argue that possession of a body is not a necessary condition of personhood; others will reply that they cannot conceive the

idea of, or understand what is meant by, disembodied persons. The positions defended by philosophers may be complicated by technical nuances, ranging from substantial dualism, to property dualism, or to reductionist materialism, among others. But that they have felt obliged to argue in one way or another is enough to show that the necessity-of-embodiment thesis is not plainly obvious.

Having thus justified the need for research into the necessity-of-embodiment thesis, I would like now to outline the standpoint from which the argument develops. After what has been said about Descartes's influence on subsequent accounts of personal identity, it may seem foolish to claim that the current project originates independently of the Cartesian model. Yet, one of its underlying themes strives to overcome the mind-body dichotomy. In order to do so, a new characterization of the body is required, one on which the necessity-of-embodiment thesis can firmly stand: in particular, a mechanistic conception of the body will have to be resisted. On the other hand, an assault on the view of the person as a sum of mental and bodily properties will follow, placing the person on an altogether different level, and thereby ensuring that no reductionist account succeeds.

The second main theme of the argument incorporates the subjective-objective dichotomy. Approaches to personal identity are twofold: on the one hand, it is maintained that the person is understood better from a first-person point of view, that is, as a subjective 'I'; on the other hand, it is also maintained that the correct approach is a third-person viewpoint, that is, that the person is better seen as an individual, member of a class. Furthermore, these two viewpoints present themselves as openly opposed and mutually exclusive: consideration of the person as a member of an

objective class will result in a failure to fully comprehend his irreducible subjective nature. Thus, they appear to be irreconcilable positions.

Nevertheless, an attempt will be made at reconciling, or bridging, these standpoints. The latter is, in fact, what gives rise to the structure of this thesis. Therefore, the proposal of a non-mechanistic account of the body, as well as of a non-reductionist view of the person, are intermediate stages in the process of overcoming the first-person/third-person, or subjective/objective, dichotomy.

The investigation into the nature of the person could be understood in either of two ways, depending on whether 'person' refers to an *individual*, or to a *kind*. This work is primarily concerned with the latter view, that is, the analysis of the necessary conditions that a person *qua* kind must fulfil: eg, being a subject and being embodied. Nevertheless, the individual/kind distinction is important because if 'person' referred to an individual, different considerations to the ones offered here would be needed, especially an analysis of the identity conditions of particulars.

An objection that could be posed against the line followed in this work is that it is not sufficient to overcome Cartesianism. A Cartesian theorist could argue that the Cartesian Pure Ego could continue to exist after death as an individual disembodied Ego. The Cartesian theorist could even argue that the individual disembodied Ego would not, and need not, count as a member of the kind person (one of the necessary conditions of the person *qua* kind being the possession of a body), insisting that all that is required is that it exist as an *individual* Ego. Therefore, the Cartesian theorist could conclude that this work fails to successfully refute the idea that disembodied individual Egos can exist.

A conclusive answer to the objection in the last paragraph is not provided here, for as has been suggested, this thesis is primarily concerned with the necessary conditions of the person *qua* kind. However, the Cartesian argument proposed above should not be allowed to go unchallenged. If, as it is argued, the disembodied individual Ego is not a person, an account of what it is is required. The Cartesian theorist cannot simply say that the disembodied individual Ego is not a person; on the contrary, he must be pressed for a more detailed account. Once such an account is provided (or an attempt is made to provide it), it may turn out that the Cartesian view that disembodied Egos can exist as individuals is not so coherent as was first thought.

* * *

Before starting the exposition, the chapter-by-chapter structure of the argument, without entering into details, will be briefly advanced. **Chapter 1** introduces certain methodological considerations that will relate to the general topic of personal identity. **Chapter 2** is a criticism of the possibility of disembodied persons, and in particular, of the view that disembodied people can be perceivers of, and agents upon, the world. Some general aspects of the nature of perception and agency, which will reappear in later chapters, will be put forward: especially, the relation between perceivers/agents and the world. **Chapter 3** is the presentation of the second main theme in the argument, the subjective and objective approaches to the problem of personal identity. After rejecting Nagel's own project for unifying both approaches, the guide-lines of a successful unification are outlined. The rest of this work is, in fact, a more detailed elucidation of those guide-lines.

Thus, **Chapter 4** is a rejection of a mechanistic conception of the body, as well as an analysis of other aspects of the objective viewpoint, like the 'person-as-a-natural-kind' thesis. In **Chapters 5** and **6**, there is a shift from the objective to the subjective viewpoint. **Chapter 5** is a criticism of three accounts in which the subjective side of the person is either reduced or denied altogether. In the course of criticizing those views, a more positive account of the status of the person as subject is developed, an account that takes Kant as the starting point. **Chapter 6** is the elaboration of those Kantian insights into a non-reductionist account of the person, supplementing Kant's formal conditions of personhood with some material conditions. It also includes a tentative analysis of the relation between a person, understood in non-reductionist terms, and his material body. Nonetheless, such a relationship is not taken too seriously, since the material body resembles the rejected mechanistic conception of the body too much.

Chapter 7 is the beginning of the reconciliation of the subjective/objective dichotomy. After having denied that a person is a material body, a definition of embodiment in non-mechanistic terms is proposed, paying attention to the relation between a person and the external world: a person is embodied because of the sensory and intentional links to the environment. **Chapter 8** attempts to specify in some detail what those sensory links are; that is, it attempts to make clear what the connection is between the person-as-perceiver and the world. **Chapter 9** is a central chapter, for it argues, on the one hand, that the sensory (perceiver) relation to the world is not sufficient to explain the place of the person in the world, and on the other hand, that the perceiver and the agent sides of the person are closely interdependent. After refuting the idea that this duality

of perceiver and agent somehow threatens the unity of the person, the stage is set for the final chapter. Thus, **Chapter 10** is an analysis of the relation between the person-as-agent and the world, by defending the necessity-of-embodiment thesis in connection with the primacy of bodily action. It contains a detailed exposition of different views in Action Theory (perhaps too detailed, it may be argued), but it serves the aim of showing the deficient account of the body present in them.

Note

The notes to the main text, which have been reduced to the minimum so as not to interrupt the normal flow of reading, will be found at the end of the whole document.

Chapter 1

DISEMBODIED EXISTENCE AND POSSIBILITY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Some philosophers defend the possibility of disembodied persons¹; others deny it. Among the former, some affirm that disembodied existence is not *de facto* true; others insist that there are disembodied persons. There are, then, three different positions:

- i. those who maintain that disembodied existence is possible, although it is not true;
- ii. those who affirm that disembodied existence is possible, and true;
- iii. those who deny the possibility of disembodied existence.

This chapter will discuss what is meant by saying that disembodied existence is possible. What counts as possible? What is the relationship between the following concepts: conceivable, intelligible, nonsensical, self-contradictory, inconsistent, incoherent? Is possibility the same as conceivability? Is possibility simply the lack of self-contradiction? Many questions of personal identity are addressed by imagining thought-experiments, which are supposed to be possible situations; but, are they really possible?

1.2. TWO CRITERIA OF POSSIBILITY

1.2.1. Imagination

First of all, a few quotations:

"each of us can quite intelligibly conceive of his or her individual survival of bodily death. The effort of imagination is not even great. One has simply to think of oneself as having thoughts and memories as at present, visual and auditory experiences largely as at present, even, perhaps - though this involves certain complications - some quasi-tactual and organic sensations as at present, whilst (a) having no perceptions of a body related to one's experiences as one's own body is, and (b) having no power of initiating changes in the physical condition of the world, such as one at present does with one's hands, shoulders, feet and vocal chords." (Strawson, 1990:115)

"Consider a family called Brown who live in what is supposed to be a perfectly normal semi-detached home. Imagine that things of an unusual nature start happening. [...] One day the father, Mr. Brown, conjectures that the house may be haunted by a poltergeist. After he discusses this with the family, to the amusement of some members and the wonderment of others, one of the children begins to receive premonitions of what is going to happen. She says that a person, an invisible person, P, has 'talked' to her. She then qualifies this and says that the person has not really 'talked' to her but rather 'let her know' like 'thoughts popping into her head'." (Gillet, 1986:377-8)

"Let us suppose that one day I fall asleep in my armchair. [...] When I 'wake up' this time, it is not like waking up on other occasions. Though I feel just as I usually do..., part of my experience... is absent... I have, I believe, become a disembodied spirit." (Harrison, 1973-4:44-5)

The argument underlying the above passages runs as follows:

- (1) if something is imaginable, then it is possible;
- (2) we can think of (imagine) a person living in a disembodied state;
- (3) therefore, disembodied persons are possible.

In the critical analysis of this argument, it will be claimed that the first premise is false (and, therefore, the conclusion does not follow): there is no straight road from the ability to imagine to possibility.

1.2.2. Intelligibility

Intelligibility is an alternative criterion of possibility. Armstrong (1968:19), for instance, distinguishes between empirical and logical possibility. Disembodied existence, he says, is logically, although not empirically, possible. He puts forward two reasons to support this assertion: first, the claim that there are disembodied persons *seems* to make sense; second, it is not self-contradictory. Therefore, he concludes, there is no logical obstacle: disembodied persons are a logical possibility.

Penelhum (1970:10ff) distinguishes between senseless and unintelligible. When somebody says that something lacks sense, he is simply making an autobiographical remark; what he is trying to say is 'I don't understand what that means'. On the other hand, when somebody affirms that something is unintelligible, he is putting forward a logical assertion. 'What you are saying is unintelligible' means 'what you are saying is incoherent'. (It is assumed here that 'incoherent' and 'inconsistent' are interchangeable.) A further difference between both concepts is that an accusation of unintelligibility requires logical proof, while one of senselessness does not. In the latter, a personal incapacity is recognized, and no further explanation is needed; in the former, however, a logical argument is required in order to show that something more than personal incapacity is being affirmed.

Penelhum goes on to describe three cases where unintelligibility or incoherence can occur: one, when a belief has concealed contradictions; two, when the notions being used to express a certain belief have been previously discarded; three, when the notions have not been explicitly discarded, but are ruled out by other discarded notions. (Finally, Penelhum's last remark - that the belief in round squares is too obvious to be considered unintelligible - will be ignored.)

1.3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BOTH CRITERIA

1.3.1. Self-contradiction and intelligibility

1. Armstrong claims that 'disembodied existence' is logically possible, that is, intelligible. He obtains this conclusion from the following considerations: it seems to make sense and it is not self-contradictory. However, intelligibility cannot be equated with those two conditions.

First, intelligibility is not the same as the appearance of sense. Something can appear to make sense and yet be completely unintelligible. More specifically, something can have a familiar structure or a recognizable form, and fail to be intelligible: perhaps there is grammatical structure, but the words together have no meaning, or perhaps the words have an independent meaning, but lack any meaning when considered as a whole. For example, 'the sahj coldt and we that cult' seems to have a familiar form, but the words have no meaning: it is simply something that has just this moment been made up; alternatively, 'the book is the devil in disguise',

when taken literally, has no meaning, because there are no devils that can take the appearance of a book.

Second, unintelligible is different from self-contradictory. 'A round square' is something self-contradictory: we attach sense to the different words and see that their meaning is mutually exclusive (if something is square, it cannot be described as round); it is also unintelligible. However, the gibberish made up above is not self-contradictory: it is simply unintelligible, it lacks any meaning at all. Therefore, self-contradiction and unintelligibility cannot be identified.

From this dual consideration, it follows that something can have the appearance of sense and not be self-contradictory, and, nonetheless, be unintelligible. If, as it is outlined here, intelligibility is the criterion for possibility, then 'disembodied existence' is not possible, since it does not comply with the intelligibility condition. Now, what does intelligibility as the criterion of possibility amount to? Let us examine two other accounts.

2. Penelhum's criterion of possibility is lack of incoherence or self-contradiction. As it has been explained above, though, self-contradiction is not the same as impossibility. Although something self-contradictory is impossible (like round squares), the reverse does not hold: something can be impossible even if it is not self-contradictory. On Penelhum's account, a devil in disguise would count as something possible, because it is not self-contradictory; similarly, a disembodied person would be possible, too. However, there is more to possibility than mere lack of self-contradiction, as will be shown more clearly later. Penelhum's criterion is too rash: from the alleged lack of self-contradiction of 'disembodied existence', its

impossibility does not follow. Penelhum's account, then, does not clarify what intelligibility means.

3. Hocutt (1974) criticizes Penelhum's position. He considers unintelligibility to be a sociological notion, instead of a logical one, as Penelhum suggests. That something is unintelligible, Hocutt says, means that no-one can understand it. The autobiographical statement 'this does not make sense to me' and the statement 'this is unintelligible' are not at two different levels (personal and logical, respectively, as Penelhum maintains), but at the same one: the former involves a single person, whereas the latter involves many more. Thus, when it is said that 'disembodied existence' is an unintelligible notion, what is meant is that nobody can understand it. There is no logical test that settles the question about the intelligibility or not of 'disembodied existence'; it is simply a more practical matter: do people make sense of it or not? If they do not, then it is unintelligible.

Hocutt wants to conclude that 'disembodied existence' is an unintelligible notion. However, the obvious reply is that for centuries people have made sense of such a notion: in fact, it is part of many religious beliefs, especially in our western, Christian society. In this case, either 'disembodied existence' is intelligible, and therefore possible (preserving the truth of Hocutt's sociological notion of intelligibility), or his criterion fails.

Hocutt denies the existence of tests of intelligibility: the only test, he says, is people's ability to understand. If something is not understood, it needs more explanation.

"If we are intelligent, informed, and competent in the language, our petition will have force. If we are very intelligent, very informed and very competent in the language, our failure to understand will constitute presumptive evidence that no one else is likely to succeed."
(52)

The key question is: who is the competent person? Hocutt may answer that he and others like him, all very intelligent people, who deny the intelligibility of the concept of disembodied people. On the other hand, those who claim to understand the notion of disembodied existence, would point at themselves (and many more), all very intelligent people, as well. Obviously, this line of argument does not settle the question.

In short, then, the proposal according to which intelligibility is the criterion of possibility is not conclusive. If, on the one hand, intelligible is understood in logical terms as lack of self-contradiction (along Penelhum's and Armstrong's lines), it is not sufficient as a criterion of what is possible. If, on the other hand, a sociological approach is adopted, then the alleged intelligibility of a certain notion cannot be easily and definitely settled.

1.3.2. Imagination and science

Let us return to imagination as the criterion for possibility. This idea is frequently found among philosophical discussions of personal identity. As seen in the quotations at the beginning of the chapter, in thought-experiments, in considerations of one's own fate, or in describing the first-person point of view of a disembodied person, the power of imagination is used in order to conclude that what is conceivable is possible. A critical review of this idea is proposed in the following paragraphs.

1. Attention to detail. In these sorts of examples we are asked to imagine something: usually, a picture painted with very broad strokes, as if the details did not matter. However, it will be argued that they do matter, and that it is when the whole situation (including the finer details) is imagined (or an attempt is made to imagine it) that the entire project collapses.

Smithurst (1980-1) proposes the following comparison. On the one hand, he says, we can imagine a man immersed in water for a long period of time, who comes up breathing. Here, we are asked to imagine a situation which hardly contains any details, but just a very general description. On the other hand, could we imagine the same man under water by giving a description of the movements of his flooded bronchia? Could we imagine the progressive flooding of his bronchia, the subsequent troubles for his respiratory system, the lack of oxygen affecting the heart, etc, together with his coming up breathing after all that? Imagination succeeds in the former case, whereas it fails in the latter. The difference between both cases is the attention paid to the details: if the relevant details are explicitly present when one is imagining the man under water (as in the latter description), then imagination will fail. Imagination is successful only because a very general picture is taken into account, while many pertinent and necessary details of that picture are deliberately left out. Thus, an appearance of possibility has been produced whereas, in fact, the whole situation is impossible.

In Strawson's quotation above, he himself points at the place where the difficulty lies: how are quasi-tactual and organic sensations to be imagined without a body? He claims that the general effort of imagination required is not great, but why does he not try to spell out the details involved in such a picture? If he tried, he would probably find himself in trouble.

This is why it is easier to speak in general terms: because ignoring the relevant details (like the processes of perception in a disembodied state) avoids many difficulties, making the desired conclusion (ie, that disembodied persons are possible) easier to reach.

Strawson's position needs some qualification. Although he affirms that it is conceivable that one should survive his own bodily death, such a disembodied existence is only "logically secondary". This is due to the fact that what is logically primitive is the concept of a person, which is neither a pure consciousness, nor a body, nor a compound of both. That the concept of a person is primitive means that he is the subject of both states of consciousness and corporeal characteristics.

He goes on to say that "a person is not an embodied ego (consciousness), but an ego might be a disembodied person, retaining the logical benefit of individuality from having been a person" (103). That is to say, the existence of a disembodied person is secondary with respect to a person; the former can only make sense after the notion of a primitive person. Such a disembodied person could only be individuated by reference to the former person: 'I am the disembodied person that, when embodied, did such-and-such', for instance. In this sense, memory of the embodied state plays a crucial role, so that if memory fades, and finally disappears, the disembodied person would not be able to think of himself as an individual, distinguishable from other people, the chair he is sitting on, and so on. In Strawson's view, the idea of a pure (disembodied) ego from birth is not conceivable, for he would have no memory of his previous embodied state (what previous state!), and therefore, would not count as an individual. But this amounts to making memory, in the case of the disembodied person (not from birth), a necessary property of his, because if his

memories totally disappear, then he would cease to be an individual; that is, he would be like the disembodied ego from birth.

Moving on, similar problems arise in Gillet's example: what are the mechanisms involved in the communication between the child and the spirit? This detail is not given by Gillet. He simply suggests that it is not like a normal process of oral conversation between two embodied persons, but rather like "thoughts popping into her head". Obviously, this does not help very much in providing an account of how communication happens: how are the spirit's thoughts popped into the child's head?; how are they to be distinguished from mere hallucinations?

2. Imagination and science. Scientific hypotheses help us understand the world; in this way, science can help us understand what is possible and what is not. For example, we can imagine an iron bar floating on water. However, according to scientific facts, it is not possible. The impossibility is clearly manifested if we consider the chemical properties of iron and water. From these properties, other superficial features of iron follow, like the impossibility of its floating on water. The former chemical properties give an account of the latter superficial features. Our effort of imagination concerned only the latter properties, not the former: we were asked to imagine that an iron bar could float on water, without changing the chemical properties of iron. However, unless those underlying properties are modified, the more superficial ones will not vary. That is to say, our effort of imagination is useless, unless it includes a change in chemistry. But, as far as our knowledge is concerned, the chemical properties of iron are inherent features of things. Therefore, something that appeared to be conceivable is not possible.²

It is argued, then, that simple imagination is not the criterion of possibility, because our scientific theories have a say; that is, if what seems to be possible contradicts our present scientific knowledge, then there is a *prima facie* case for denying its possibility. In the case of disembodied existence, science is unable to give an account of how perception in a disembodied state occurs, or how a disembodied person acts upon the world. Simply saying, as it has been suggested, that something is an example of extra-sensory perception (ESP) is nothing more than a label, and an explanation is still required. Until that is properly accounted for, there is strong *prima facie* evidence for denying the possibility of disembodied existence.

It could be objected that science proposes hypothetical explanations, which may turn out to be wrong; in that case, the constraints that science poses on imagination as a criterion for what is and is not possible do not seem to be so powerful. If we rely on scientific explanations to deny the possibility of a product of imagination, and such explanations might be false, then the significance of what science says is diminished.

The reply is twofold. On the one hand, in relation to the hypothetical nature of scientific explanations, the following could be said. If science discovers essential properties of things, then some (many?) of its findings will not turn out to be wrong in the future. Kripke (1980) considers the case of gold, whose atomic number is 79. Now, if the latter is an essential property of gold, then it is not possible that the atomic number of gold is not 79; that is, the atomic number of gold is necessarily 79. (However, this model might not be applicable to the class 'person', if it turns out that person, unlike gold, is not a natural class, something which will be minutely discussed in a later chapter.)

On the other hand, science, as it stands at present, gives us an explanation of many phenomena. As a matter of fact, it provides us with an account of how the processes of perception and action occur, including certain physical organs in embodied persons. However, those who defend the possibility of disembodied existence fail to give an account of how those people in a disembodied state get to perceive the world and act upon it. They are quick to say that it is *not* like ordinary processes, but what are the processes involved? They simply cannot give a satisfactory explanation. Until a better theory of reality is found (one that may³ include disembodied as well as embodied personal perception and action), the present one is still valid.

3. Extrapolation from other possible worlds. The next point is not so directly related to disembodied existence in particular, but to the so-called 'puzzle' cases which are used in discussions of personal identity (see Flew, 1985). Take the case of the prince and the cobbler (or any of its variations, like Robinson and Brown, Mr. Boltitude and son, and so on): one fine morning, a prince wakes up in the body of a cobbler, surrounded by the cobbler's world, although still conscious of his royal origin and life (he remembers being acknowledged as prince, for instance); and vice versa. It is said that the best available hypothesis for explaining what has happened is to say that there has been an exchange of bodies between two people. That is, it is assumed that were we to live in the possible world where the example of the prince and the cobbler is set, we would realize that the memory criterion of personal identity prevails. Therefore, it is concluded, personal identity consists in memory identity, not only in that possible world, but in our actual one, too.

However, our actual world does not host those kind of examples. Why would we be allowed to make such a rash extrapolation from other possible worlds to the actual one? That extrapolation may be made, but not in such a straightforward and simple manner. Certain aspects would require consideration: description of the details, explanation of how the body-exchange took place, and so on. In short, then, 'puzzle' cases are resolved far too quickly.

4. *Appeal to imagination begs the question.* Disembodied existence is said to be conceivable because it is previously supposed to be possible. This is especially clear in the paper by Harrison mentioned above. He says he wants to defend the view "that people do not need to have bodies, that is, that it is not logically necessary that people have bodies" (44). At this point, one would expect some sort of philosophical argument trying to prove such a thesis. Instead, what is found is a very entertaining story, that begins with a dream and goes on to tell the adventures of an allegedly disembodied person, who manages to be re-embodied... After the tale, the disembodied person engages in philosophical thought, disputing the possibility of disembodied existence:

"I found what I read interesting enough, though *naturally* I did not agree with those passages which attempted to prove the logical or conceptual impossibility of disembodied existence" (48; my emphasis).

One may wonder whether Harrison thinks that such a story does the job; or whether he thinks that the whole question is so obvious that no argument is required. In the paper, however, he clearly begs the question. Why does it seem so obvious to him that disembodied existence is logically possible? Because he is a disembodied person himself; ie, because disembodied existence is deemed possible in the first place.

Summarizing, then, imagination cannot do the job it has been claimed to do in dealing with questions of personal identity. Basically, imagination as the criterion of possibility is constrained by scientific facts about the world: certain facts about the world are necessarily the way they are (like, the atomic number of gold being 79). When it is argued that imagination succeeds, that is due either to a rash assumption of what is imagined (no attention to detail, extrapolation from other possible worlds), or to a question-begging use of the imagination.

1.3.3. Imagination and Cartesianism

Imagination could be used to argue in support of a Cartesian view of personal identity; that is, the view according to which people are disembodied Egos. In 'Imagination and the Self', Williams states the following pro-Cartesian argument. One could ask oneself: 'could I have been someone else?' An answer could go as follows. I can easily imagine that I might have had a different body or different psychological features (including memory), and still be me. If this turns out to be true, then possession of a certain body, and/or possession of certain psychological features, are not necessary for me to be the person I am. Therefore, I am a Cartesian Ego.

The key notion in this argument is the idea that I could have been someone else. For instance, what does 'I might have been Napoleon' mean? It seems to mean that there might have been a possible world where Napoleon existed, I existed, and Napoleon was me. Probably, Napoleon would have the same external appearance; so, it would not be possible to

tell the difference from an external, third-person point of view. From a first-person point of view, however, I could imagine being Napoleon; that is, I could imagine the world from Napoleon's point of view: the desolation of Austerlitz, memories of past love affairs, the awareness of my short stature, and so on. I could even say things like 'I am conquering the world'.

What does 'I' in the above sentence stand for? Usually, 'I' stands for the speaker, the person who utters the sentence. The speaker here is not Napoleon, but the person imagining being Napoleon (in fact, could he not imagine being someone else, too?). On the other hand, such a person is, as it were, only playing the role of Napoleon on that particular occasion. 'I' is, therefore, ambiguous between the real person and the one he is impersonating (ie, Napoleon). However, Williams argues, from the fact that the 'I' is ambiguous between the speaker and Napoleon, it does not follow that the 'I' stands for something else, a Cartesian Ego. The idea that 'I' is a Cartesian Ego is an illusion produced by a tricky imagination. Imagining myself without any of my present (corporeal or psychological) features is different from demonstrating that I do not need any of those characteristics to keep my own identity. Therefore, imagination alone cannot prove that I might have been someone else, or that I could have had a different body and still be me.

1.4. CONCLUSION

The point of this chapter is twofold. First, it has been shown that the claim that disembodied existence is possible is not univocally understood by those who defend it: some people appeal to a logical sense of 'possible', others introduce sociological considerations, and others still place imagination at the centre of that claim. Second, the identification of imaginability and possibility has been particularly criticized: on the one hand, science constrains what is possible, but not what is imaginable; on the other hand, the allegedly successful move from imaginability to possibility is due either to a faulty reasoning (eg, a rash extrapolation from other possible worlds to the actual world), or to an insufficient description of what is imagined, or to a question-begging implicit assent to the idea that what is imaginable is also possible.

With these methodological considerations in view, it can now be seen that the thought-experiments that abound in philosophical literature will not be regarded in the present work as offering crucial arguments to illuminate the topic of personal identity. This less colourful, less spectacular method, I believe, will deliver better results.

Chapter 2

PENELHUM ON DISEMBODIED PERSONS

2.1. DISEMBODIED PERSONS DEFENDED

After the previous general considerations about disembodied existence, this chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the arguments put forward by those who defend the possibility of disembodied persons. In particular, the discussion will focus on two main topics: perception and agency. The initial intuition that both perception of the world, and the subsequent action upon it, are made possible by the phenomenon of embodiment will be argued for; therefore, both perception and action are impossible in a disembodied state. Nonetheless, some philosophers suggest that perception and action could take place in a disembodied state, and those arguments will be addressed now; especially, the arguments found in Penelhum's *Survival and Disembodied Existence*.

2.1.1. Vision and hearing¹

An embodied person's perception of the world takes place through certain physical organs, like the visual and auditory systems. These organs are the perceptual link between the person and the world. Could a disembodied person see (or hear) the world? 'See', on the one hand, means 'perceive by the eye'; but since the disembodied person lacks eyes, the physical organ for vision, he² could not be said to see in this sense. In another sense, 'see' means 'have visual experiences': here, no explicit mention of something physical is made, so that the disembodied person

could be said to see in this second sense. A disembodied person, then, could have visual experiences of objects: the same experiences that an embodied person would have in optimum circumstances.

A second question is whether disembodied people would occupy a specific place in space. Obviously, since they lack bodies, they would not occupy a place in the same way in which an embodied person is situated at a certain point p in space; ie, a point which is determined by the situation of the person's body. However, disembodied people could be said to occupy the same place that a normal observer would occupy if the latter saw the things the disembodied person sees; that is, disembodied people could be said to be at the centre of their own visual field. And that seems to be a definite place in space, one that could be precisely determined in virtue of the account they give of their visual experiences. For example, if they said that they saw the fridge in front of them and the cupboard to their left, at a certain distance, then it should be concluded that they were placed at an exact point p in the kitchen. Two consequences follow.

First, a difference between embodied and disembodied people. In the normal state of embodiment, two different people cannot be located at the same place in space simultaneously; however, in a disembodied state, such a principle does not apply: if two different disembodied persons gave an identical description of their visual experiences, it would have to be concluded that they were located at the same place at the same time. In the embodied case, such a situation is impossible, because of the properties of material bodies; in the disembodied case, however, since people lack material bodies, such a situation would be possible. An

equally possible alternative is that a disembodied person could occupy the same place as an embodied person.

Second, for disembodied people, their being where they are would *consist in* their seeing things the way they do. If they saw things differently, or if they saw a different part of the world, then they would be at a different point. Analogously, if they did not see (or hear) anything at all, they would not be anywhere at all.

An embodied person usually moves in order to correct his visual experiences, that is, in order to obtain a better perception of something, when what is seen is not clear (perhaps it is half-hidden, or the angle of vision is not favourable). Could a disembodied person do so? Could he move deliberately from one place to another? This problem is closely linked to the general question of agency, which will be dealt with later. However, it can be anticipated that disembodied people could not move in the sense of activating their locomotive system (a physical organ), and therefore, would not be able to correct their visual experiences in this way (ie, the way of the embodied person). Could they get a better perception (change of the angle of vision, for instance) without any physical movement, just by trying to do so? At this point, Penelhum points at the similarity with aspect-switching perception, as in the picture in which a duck or a rabbit are alternatively seen. The latter, he argues, provides an analogy for the disembodied person's obtaining a better perception just by trying. This point will be taken up later, when discussing disembodied agency.

It has been maintained that disembodied persons could occupy a definite place in space, from which they would be able to see (ie, have visual

experiences of) the world. What would happen if they did not occupy a place in the world? Could they still see (or hear) the world? Penelhum says that, in that case, they could see clairvoyantly. Clairvoyance is perception of the world by extra-sensory means. It is usually put together with other phenomena, like telepathy, and telekinesis, under the heading 'extra-sensory perception (ESP) phenomena'. Many experiments have been carried out in parapsychological laboratories, in order to find out whether ESP really occurs. It has been said that there is evidence in support of ESP (see Thakur, 1976), which in turn would support the claim that disembodied persons can see clairvoyantly. A full discussion of the problems involved here is not intended. Suffice it to say that the mechanisms of ESP have not yet been found, and that it is difficult to make room within our physics for the claim that ESP can be scientifically explained. Until the powers of explanation and prediction of a theory of ESP can be tested, we can only give it the benefit of the doubt.

2.1.2. Bodily sensations

Could disembodied people have bodily sensations? Obviously, they could not have perceptions of their own bodily states, because they have no body. A pain, for example, could not carry information about the place of the body where some damage has been caused; nor could a tickle inform them about the definite point in the body where the sensation comes from. However, sensations could carry information about something in the environment. For instance, when a sensation of heat is felt, it would mean that the temperature in the surroundings is rising; similarly, a tickle could mean that a certain kind of stuff is around, producing a particular type of sensation; or a pain may mean that a different kind of substance is around,

the one that brings about the sensation. In this sense, it has been suggested, disembodied people could have bodily sensations.

2.1.3. Touch

It appears as if it would be impossible for a disembodied person to have a sense of touch³. How is it possible to touch anything without a body? When something is touched, there is a contact between two material things (for example, my hand and the keyboard on my computer). It is impossible to touch something that lacks materiality (for instance, an immaterial keyboard on an immaterial computer). Similarly, an immaterial person could not touch any material objects.

Nonetheless, it has been claimed that a disembodied person could learn by touch "in that it might feel rough or warm to him, when it *was* rough or warm" (34). In this sense, a disembodied person could learn about his external environment, although not about his body.

A final general objection to the above account of disembodied perception would go along the following lines: in giving disembodied people the possibility of seeing, hearing, having bodily sensations and so on, have disembodied people not been given their body back? The answer is negative. If it was the case that they had a body, they would be able to see/hear it; their bodily sensations would carry information about their own body (instead of what is beyond their skin); they would be able to occupy some space that other objects could not occupy simultaneously. That is, the account given so far is an account of disembodied perception for disembodied persons.

2.1.4. Disembodied agency

In an embodied agent, a distinction can be made between two types of actions: basic and non-basic. The former are actions which do not require the previous doing of another action. There are two main groups of examples: on the one hand, mental actions, like imagining, saying something to oneself; on the other hand, movements of one's own limbs or members. In order to imagine something, or move my left arm, I do not have to carry out any previous action. Unlike these, a non-basic action requires that the agent perform a previous action. For instance, raising a table requires the movement of the agent's arms and hands in a conjoined effort.

What would count as an example of a basic action for a disembodied person? Obviously, not the movement of the agent's limbs, because he has no body. What, then? It has been suggested that a mental act, the mental act of trying or willing. Thus, if a disembodied agent wanted to raise a table (a non-basic action), there must be a previous act of trying, which is analogous with the embodied person's movement of arms and hands.

This notion of trying or willing needs more examination. Two different senses of 'trying' can be distinguished. First, a technical sense (trying to do something, deciding to do something, willing something). When somebody tries to do something in this sense, he is determined to carry out an action, and must provide the means for that action. For example, if someone tries to raise a table, he must try *somehow*: in the case of an embodied agent, by using his arms; in the case of a disembodied agent, by

his mental act of trying. Clearly, this is not an explanation of what is meant by the disembodied person's trying or willing: such a notion is presupposed, rather than explained. This sense of trying is, then, rejected: simply saying that the disembodied agent tries to raise the table by trying is not a satisfactory explanation (if it is an explanation at all).

Second, a psychokinetic sense, which consists in "privately urging something to happen that I want to happen" (39). For instance, dice are shaken and thrown, and a person is asked to will a certain score; if the willed score happens, it is said that people can affect the course of events just by willing. This would be what happens in disembodied agency: the agent could raise a table just by willing it, in the sense of urging something to happen. Penelhum accepts that no explanation of the connection between the willing and the physical change in the world is given (ie, that it seems to be a mysterious power had by the agent), but he adds that perhaps certain correlations could be found (for example, between the intensity of the willing and the height of the risen table), making the whole phenomenon less mysterious. That is, if certain correlations (similar to those studied by science) were to be found, then the air of mystery would vanish.

Furthermore, Penelhum rejects the possibility that the raising of tables could count as basic actions for disembodied agents. The main reason seems to be that if the raising of a table was a basic action, then there would be no need for the act of willing (because in basic actions no previous action is required); then, it would be as if the table was the agent's body at the time, and this is a very awkward conclusion to draw. The motif behind Penelhum's rejection is that if spirits could occupy physical objects, then they could also occupy the bodies of embodied

persons (like in mediumistic communication). However, he does not welcome the possibility that spirits should be able to occupy a medium's body, using it as their own body⁴.

A question was posed above and left unanswered: could a disembodied person get a better perception just by trying? The answer is affirmative, since trying (in the psychokinetic sense) is a basic action: the disembodied person acts on the world just by trying. Thus, while in an embodied state, people would move from one place to another to get a better perception, in a disembodied state, a mere act of trying would do the job.

2.2. DISEMBODED PERSONS DISPUTED

After the exposition of certain arguments defending the possibility of disembodied perception and action, attention will be directed to the critical analysis of those arguments. Since one of the main contentions of this thesis is to defend the necessity of embodiment for personal identity, the whole thesis is a criticism of the opposite view (the possibility of disembodied persons). More particularly, it will now be shown how unsatisfactory Penelhum's arguments are. A definite refutation of those arguments may not be achieved, but it will at least be stressed that there are many shadows and unclear passages. Thus, the path will have been cleared for a positive account of the necessity of embodiment for personhood in the following chapters.

2.2.1. Vision and hearing

Penelhum proposes two different senses of 'seeing' (seeing as perceiving by the eyes, and seeing as having visual experiences), and maintains that a disembodied person could see in the sense of having visual experiences. A disembodied person could see* without the help of any physical organs. Seeing* the world is the same as seeing it, but without any physical organs being involved. That this is the way in which Penelhum constructs seeing in the disembodied state is supported by the fact that he understands vision in the disembodied case on the model of vision in the embodied case: a disembodied person sees* what an embodied one would see in normal circumstances; that is, both of them would have the same visual experiences. The visual experiences being the same, the only difference lies in the mechanism of vision: whereas an embodied person sees the world, a disembodied person sees* it.

This duality of senses does not end the controversy about vision in a disembodied state; on the contrary, here is where the problems begin. For instance, is Penelhum right in constructing disembodied vision as a special case of embodied vision? It has been suggested that, in opposition to what he seems to think, the sort of perceptual experiences had in an embodied state do not have to continue in a disembodied state. Could it not be the case, for example, that a blind person sees perfectly well, after his death (that is, in a disembodied state)? Or could he not become deaf at the same time as recovering his sight? A blind person is blind due to the malfunctioning of his visual system (body); but when he becomes disembodied after dying, why should he still have the same deficiencies as when embodied? In general, there is no reason to presume that disembodied experiences would be similar to embodied ones. In that case,

and extrapolating from these examples, the perceptual experiences of a disembodied person need not be constructed on the model of the experiences of an embodied person. These considerations undermine Penelhum's approach to the topic, based on such an analogy.

If the question is pressed a little further, we could ask why the experiences of a disembodied person should be the experiences *of a disembodied person*. Why should they be attributed to him, as if he was still an individual (ie, according to the model of attribution of experiences to embodied people)? Why should he have stable and continuous experiences as opposed to unrelated and chaotic ones (eg, he may have myopic experiences one day, perfectly good sight the next day, and so on)? Without a body, such possibilities cannot be prevented. (For related considerations, see Puccetti, 1967.)

1. The Mechanism Problem. An initial problem for Penelhum's account of vision in a disembodied state is that no explanation is given of how it takes place. In embodied vision, there is a material external object that affects a material subject through material organs (eyes, nerve endings and so on), producing the appropriate visual experience. The having of visual experiences is brought about through, and explained by, the physical mechanisms of vision. Thus, Penelhum's two senses of seeing considered above are unified in the embodied case: an embodied person has visual experiences because he perceives by the eyes. Let us try to apply this model to the disembodied case: there is a material object that affects an immaterial subject ..., but how! How is the connection made possible? What is the analogue of the embodied person's physical organs of vision in the disembodied case? How is the visual experience produced? No account of the mediating processes is given. It is simply assumed that

such visual experiences are possible, although it is not said how. Nonetheless, just saying that a disembodied person sees* the world (although perhaps a useful notation) does not amount to giving an explanation of how such visual experiences are produced. Therefore, Penelhum's construction of disembodied vision according to the model provided by embodied vision fails; ultimately, disembodied vision is postulated, but not explained.

It could be replied that such an objection relies too heavily on the human mechanisms of vision and is, therefore, too parochial. We say of different animals (belonging to different species) that they can see, even if their visual mechanisms differ a great deal from the human mechanism for vision. Similarly, the reply goes, disembodied persons could be said to see, even though their visual mechanisms are also different from the human model. What this amounts to is the acknowledgement that vision is a functional term, so that different physical mechanisms can all perform the same role (see Snowdon, 1990:142). In that case, then, Penelhum can avoid the Mechanism Problem.

This reply certainly diminishes the impact of the previous objection to Penelhum's account. One last comment will be added, which, even if it does not settle the question, will however make explicit the differences involved. It is one thing to argue that different material mechanisms can carry out the same role of producing visual experiences; it is another thing to argue that *immaterial* mechanisms can carry out that task. The latter goes against certain assumptions that are part of our understanding of the process of vision, in a way that the former does not. The latter has an air of unintelligibility about it (what are immaterial mechanisms?), not found in the former. Therefore, the analogy with animals (and the ascription of

vision and visual experiences to them) does not in itself provide an example on which disembodied vision might be constructed.

2. *The Objectivity Problem.* It is the problem of where the *content* of disembodied visual (and, in general, perceptual) experiences come from. Concerning the embodied case, three points must be borne in mind. First, the content of an embodied person's perceptual experiences comes from the world, due to a series of *causal relations* that hold between individual objects in the world and the perceiver. These relations can be generalized for all instances of objects belonging to the same type, and for all (or almost all) perceivers, members of the same species. There are, then, certain causal laws relating the environment and individual perceivers; for instance, neural laws.

Second, and because of these causal relations, perception exhibits what can be called the aboutness of perception: perceptual experiences are about objects that are *objective*, in the sense that their nature, or essential character, is independent from the perceiver's dispositions or mental phenomena. For example, my visual experience of a tree is about an external object (a tree), independent from my seeing (or my being prepared to see) it; that visual experience is an instance of a causal law linking trees and perceivers in general. Visual experiences are, then, experiences of something in the world; that is, the subject perceives the external world.⁵

Third, the object of perception, the external object in the world, is a *constitutive* part of the experience, so that if the object did not exist, no experience about that object could be had. For instance, a visual experience of a tree includes the real objective tree in the world as part of

the visual experience itself. The latter can be expressed by saying that visual (in general, perceptual) experiences are *de re*. Consequently, there cannot be visual experiences of non-real, non-objective trees. The importance of the latter will become apparent shortly, when presenting the distinction between perceptual and hallucinatory experiences. (See Burge, 1986, for a more detailed formulation of the objectivity and causality conditions of perception.)

In the disembodied case, however, causal links between the environment and the perceiver are difficult to find. This is partly due to the Mechanism Problem, that is, to the fact that nothing analogous to the causal neural laws linking external objects and perceivers in the embodied case can be found in the disembodied case. In fact, this is an instance of a more general problem, that of accounting for the interaction between the material and the immaterial. Now, once this causal link between an external object and the perceiver is lost, the aboutness of perception is also called into question: is perception about external, independent objects; or are the objects of perception dependent on the subject's perceiving them? The latter amounts to a denial of the objectivity of perception: that is, the difference between perceiving something, and the object of perception existing with independence of such an act of perceiving. Now, if the objectivity of perception is denied, then the disembodied perceiver's experiences are purely inner, and have no world-involving component. To that extent, they have no content, for the latter comes from the external world.

That the latter is Penelhum's position can be seen by considering his analysis of the spatial location of the disembodied perceiver. Penelhum claims that, for a disembodied person, his being where he is consists in his

seeing (or hearing) things the way he does. That is, the disembodied person's spatial position is understood as a sensory property; that is, as a phenomenological "disposition to affect sensitive beings with certain experiences" (Evans, 1980:95). For a disembodied person, being at a place p is a sensory property because it consists in having such and such visual (or auditory) experiences. For embodied people, however, being at a place p is not just (the same as) having certain experiences, since somebody could still occupy a point p in space in the absence of any visual (or auditory) experiences; consider, for instance, cases of sleep or coma.

A closer analysis will show that there are two perspectives involved here. From a third-person point of view, even if an embodied person did not perceive anything in the world (like in cases of sleep), he could still be located in space by others: other people could say, referring to him, that he is sleeping in his bedroom. From a first-person point of view, though, he would not be able to locate himself if he did not have any perception of the world⁶.

In the disembodied state, a person would not be able to self-locate himself if he did not have any perception: 'I am where I am because I see so and so'. The difference with the embodied person lies in the third-person perspective: if he did not have any perceptions, others would not be able to locate him in the spatio-temporal world. When he has perceptions, and he communicates with other people, the latter have the necessary information, and can place him at a definite spatio-temporal position. If he lacked perception of the world, other people would not be able to locate him. Why is it so? Because he would not be able to self-locate himself in

the first place. That is to say, self-location affects the third-person location of the disembodied person.

Unlike this, in the embodied state, there is independence between both perspectives: a person can be located by others even if he cannot self-locate himself. In the disembodied state, there is not such an independent criterion. The only criterion for the location of a disembodied person by others is his own self-location, communicated to others. This amounts to saying that there is only one way of knowing whether there are disembodied people, and where they are: communication with them; or better, communication from them to us.⁷ The dissimilarity with embodied people must be stressed; for the latter, materiality allows for independent ways of spatial location, not available in the disembodied case.

This dissimilarity is due to the fact that embodied people do not understand spatial location as a sensory property, but as a primary property, in the sense that there is something, independent from the dispositional property itself, that grounds the disposition to have certain experiences. Thus, although being at a place p is the ground for the disposition to have such and such visual (or auditory) experiences, it is not the disposition itself (unlike the disembodied case, in which ground and disposition are confused). This is similar to the way in which a certain arrangement of molecules is the ground for the fragility of a certain object, but is not the fragility itself. Evans argues that this distinction is a "deep conceptual prejudice of ours", and that its omission produces a "sense of disquiet" (102) hardly avoidable. This deep conceptual prejudice is what has been referred to as the objectivity of perception, that is, the idea that the objects of perception are existentially independent from the subject's act of perceiving. This, in turn, requires a distinction between the subject

of perception and the external, objective world. When this distinction is not made explicit, the result is a confusion of both spheres, so that the subject's perceiving, and what he has experiences of, are not properly distinguished. Ultimately, it results in perceptual experiences devoid of content.

A criticism that could be made is that the immediate (or direct) object of perception is not an external object, but an internal 'something' (call it sense-datum, representation, or what you like). Even if this assertion does not appear to be intuitive, its plausibility emerges when we consider cases of hallucinatory perception. In the latter, unlike in cases of genuine perception, the subject sees something that does not exist in the world; therefore, it is argued, the immediate object of his experience must be something internal. Now, if that is the case with hallucinations, then that must also be the case with genuine perceptions, for the processes involved in perception are the same. The latter move is supported by the idea that whether the experience is genuine or hallucinatory, there is something common to both, the fact that it looks to the perceiver as if so-and-so were the case. Therefore, it is concluded, perceptual experiences are inner experiences.

Penelhum does seem to conceive of visual experiences as inner, at least in the disembodied case, for he argues that the disembodied person would be able to see in the sense of having visual experiences, even if these do not contain an outer element (which conveys the contentual component of the experience). If the previous argument from hallucination is correct, then Penelhum might be able to avoid the Objectivity Problem.

Nonetheless, the previous argument from hallucination has recently come under attack. Snowdon (1990) has argued that there is not an inner core of perception in the sense described above. Although 'looks'-sentences ('it looks to the perceiver as if...') are true both in cases of hallucination and in cases of genuine perception, they are not necessarily made true by the same state of affairs. It might be the case that they have "disjunctive fulfilment conditions", which means that the same 'looks'-sentence could be made true (1) if there is a certain external object perceived by the subject (in the case of a true perception), or (2) if it is as if there is a certain object being perceived (in the case of a hallucination). If this reply works, then the analysis of hallucinatory experiences cannot be extrapolated to other types of perceptual experiences, like genuine perceptions. Therefore, it might still be argued that genuine perceptual experiences are world-involving, in the sense that their content comes from the external world. Thus, the criticism still holds that, insofar as Penelhum conceives of experiences in the disembodied case as inner, then they lack content (or, at any rate, genuine content).

Furthermore, it could be argued that, insofar as the object of perception is *constitutive* of the perceptual experience itself, since disembodied experiences do not involve a relation to an external object, then such perceptual experiences cannot obtain. It is not simply that perceptual experiences are the result of a causal relation between objective elements in the world and the perceiver, but also that the external object in the world is itself part of the perceptual experience (ie, it is a *de re* experience).

Thus, the difference between genuine perceptions and hallucinations becomes clearer. In cases of genuine perception, there is an object in the

world that constitutes the perception, whereas hallucinations lack such an object and are, therefore, an empty gesture. Perceptual experiences are *de re*, whereas hallucinations lack a real object; hallucinations, therefore, do not count as genuine perceptions.

A consequence from this is that insofar as Penelhum's account of disembodied perception tries to cut across both genuine perceptions and hallucinations, by characterizing perceptual experience in terms of their inner subjective appearance ('it looks to the perceiver as if...'), then he fails to appreciate the real issue, the fact that perceptual experiences are *de re* attitudes, directed to particular objects in the world. This is fatal for Penelhum's project, for if disembodied experiences are not constituted by an external object, then they are not genuine perceptual experiences. Furthermore, non *de re*, disembodied, perceptual experiences are not even possible, since they are not constituted by an external object.

3. *The Challenge.* Those who, like Penelhum, defend the possibility of disembodied perception want to argue that the content of disembodied perceptual experiences is similar to the content of embodied perceptual experiences. Thus, they conceive of disembodied perception as embodied perception minus the embodied perceptual mechanism. This is coupled with the idea that perceptual experiences are purely inner, and do not contain a world-involving aspect; in other words, that the perceptual state one is in is not constituted by any element external to the perceiver himself (what Burge, 1986, has referred to as 'individualism'). Thus, it would be argued that a disembodied person's perceptual experiences are the same as the perceptual experiences of an embodied person.

This line of argument has been counter-attacked by arguing that perceptual experiences are world-involving: one, the content of our perceptual experiences is causally dependent on the objects of the external world; two, real objects in the world are constitutive of the perceptual experience itself. If this is so, it cannot be conceded to those who defend the possibility of disembodied perception that the experiences of disembodied perceivers have the same content as the experiences of embodied perceivers; or, indeed, that the experiences of disembodied perceivers, characterized in purely subjective phenomenological terms, are the same as the perceptual experiences of embodied people.

Therefore, the challenge to accounts like Penelhum's is similar to the challenge posed by McDowell to Cartesian accounts of perceptual experience. According to McDowell, the Cartesian gap between inner and outer is such that "subjectivity is confined to a tract of reality whose layout would be exactly as it is however things stood outside it" (1986:151). A person's psychological states are, therefore, characterized with total independence of the way the external world is. In such a picture, contact with, and experience of, the world is not so much problematic and fallible as truly mysterious. Take the case of perception. If a person's perceptual experiences are characterized exclusively in phenomenological terms (its seeming to the perceiver as if...), then those experiences are "bland or blind", closed to the light coming from outside, thereby failing to reveal the external world. In this context, the intentionality of experience becomes a magical affair. How can the perceiver jump from the infallibly accessible, self-standing, inner realm to the external world without falling in the abyss that separates these realms?

Following McDowell's lead, Penelhum's account can also be labelled 'Cartesian'. Therefore, it is just as magical that a disembodied person can have disembodied perceptual experiences, bearing in mind that perceptual experiences should convey information about particular objects in the external world. The disembodied perception theorist must supply an alternative explanation to the one suggested above in terms of causal and constitutive (*de re*) links between the perceiver and the world. The latter is sometimes provided by appealing to the imagination: it is possible to imagine the same perceptual experience in a completely different world, and even when there is no world at all. (One such case is the brain in the vat hypothesis, which will be discussed later.) However, as argued in the last chapter, imagination alone cannot do all the work, for it simply begs the question at hand.

2.2.2. Bodily sensations and touch

The question of whether disembodied people can have bodily sensations will now be addressed. First of all, let us consider the following account of bodily sensations for embodied people. Bodily sensations have a twofold function: on the one hand, they carry information about something outside the body (a certain substance that tickles, or hurts); on the other hand, they carry information about the body itself (where the tickle or pain come from).

In the account of bodily sensations for disembodied people given by Penelhum, the second element is missing: bodily sensations carry information only about the surrounding environment. However, what would be the usefulness of such information? The usefulness of bodily

sensations for embodied people derives from the fact that the information coming from the environment is related to the information coming from the body itself. Because I feel *where* something is tickling me, and because I detect the object that is tickling me, I can do something about it. Because I feel the pain in my leg, and see that a pin is stuck in it, I can relieve the pain by pulling out the pin. It appears that bodily sensations, insofar as they do not relate the information coming from the environment to the information coming from the body, would not be very useful to a disembodied person.

Nonetheless, this does not show the impossibility of bodily sensations for disembodied persons. It simply shows that an argument could be made from an evolutionary point of view: the evolutionary history of the species would have got rid of something completely useless; since bodily sensations are not helpful for disembodied persons, then the latter will not have any bodily sensations. It could be replied that perhaps disembodied people have evolved in a way (different from embodied people) that confers some utility to the possession of bodily sensations that convey information about the external environment alone; and that those who are in an embodied state may not know what the function of bodily sensations in a disembodied state is. For an argument against the possibility of bodily sensations in a disembodied state, let us turn to related considerations about the sense of touch.

For embodied persons, the sense of touch provides information about the environment: something is warm, or rough. Who learns those things about the environment? The person who touches. How does such a person get such information? By touching; ie, by feeling something with his body (in particular, with his limbs). In touching something, two material things are

in contact; in feeling that something is rough, an embodied material person must touch a material rough object.

Penelhum claims that a disembodied person could feel the warmth or roughness of something (ie, learn something true about such an object) by touch. However, if a disembodied person lacks materiality, how could he get such information about the environment by touch? If touching something requires a material subject, then a disembodied person cannot touch anything; and, therefore, he cannot learn anything about the environment by touch.

Analogous considerations can be applied to bodily sensations. Let us analyze bodily sensations as carriers of information about the environment; ie, there is something that tickles or hurts. To whom is the information carried? To the person who feels the tickle or the pain. How is the information carried? In the embodied case, the answer is obvious: there is a stimulation of certain nerve endings which is interpreted by the organism as a ticklish or painful feeling in a part of the organism's body. The body acts as the medium through which information about the environment is passed on to the person. The person learns that there is a particular ticklish or painful substance in his environment because it affects his body. Therefore, the information conveyed about the external environment cannot be separated from the information about the body itself.

In the disembodied case, however, there is no explanation of how information about the environment is made available to the person. The problem lies in the fact that bodily sensations convey two messages, and one of them (information about the body) is missing.

2.2.3. Agency

Penelhum suggests that disembodied people could act upon their environment, because they could bring about changes in the world by a mental act of willing or trying. An initial difficulty with this view is that, as Hampshire (1959) has said, if agency is an internal event, how can willing something be distinguished from thinking of something as desirable? For instance, what would be the difference between willing that a certain score occur after throwing the dice, and thinking of the occurrence of a certain score as desirable? But, if there is no difference between them, is it the case that whatever the disembodied agent thinks of as desirable will happen? If there is nothing external to account for the difference, why is it the case that willing something, instead of thinking of something as desirable, brings about changes in the world?

If this is what agency in the disembodied state consists in, then it is very different from agency in the embodied state, for in the latter a clear distinction is made between thinking of something as desirable and doing it. Somebody may think that global peace is desirable and, nonetheless, do nothing to achieve it (perhaps due to laziness, or perhaps due to the genuine belief that the problem is beyond his sphere of influence). On the other hand, someone may do something about global peace, even though he does not consider it to be desirable (he may have been forced to act).

A second difficulty for Penelhum's account is his claim that a disembodied person would be able to act on a material world. Now, how would it happen? Penelhum acknowledges that, analogously to the technical sense

of trying that he rejects, the psychokinetic sense does not offer an explanation of the connection involved between willing and bringing about changes in the world. The problem of interactionism, that is, the question about the possible connections between the material and the immaterial, is one that has worried philosophers for a long time. Nonetheless, not only does Penelhum fail to suggest a solution, but also chooses to ignore it by claiming that interactionism is possible, although no explanation can be given. In fact, as has been mentioned, interactionism is a problem not only for his account of disembodied agency, but also for his account of disembodied perception of the world.

Finally, the alleged intelligibility of the idea of acting by an act of willing will be questioned. Penelhum's acting by willing is similar to those cases where magicians bring about a change in the world without touching the object. Thus, it might be argued, if people find the latter example intelligible (which does not amount to its possibility; see chapter 1), then they would also find Penelhum's example intelligible.

The example of the magician is found intelligible because it resembles more common cases of agency: for instance, the case where somebody moves a table by pushing. The magician, using his skill, does not have to sweat in pushing the table; he may simply use his magic wand, or magic dust, or utter some magic words. Note that there is a gradation here, from the common case of pushing the table, to the use of the magic wand (which the magician *touches* the table with), to the act of sprinkling magic dust, and to the utterance of a magic formula (where there is no physical touching involved). The latter examples are understood because of their similarity with the usual case. Therefore, the usual case in which a table is moved by pushing is epistemologically primary with respect to the rest.

Penelhum's psychokinetic sense of acting by trying could be similarly regarded as epistemologically dependent on the common case of acting. The disembodied agent in Penelhum's example would be like the magician who makes things happen by uttering a magic formula; only he does not even have to pronounce the magic words, but simply mentally will the movement of the table. But, if that is the case, then in the same way in which the example of the magician is epistemologically dependent on the usual case of acting by physical contact, the disembodied agent's example of acting by willing is also dependent on the common case of embodied agency (ie, acting by physical contact). Now, if the former cannot be made intelligible without the latter, then disembodied agency can only be defended as a sophisticated variation of embodied agency, and the latter needs investigation, something that will be carried out later on.

Another way in which the intelligibility of disembodied agency could be called into question is by arguing that, in the same way in which perception is *de re*, so is agency. Therefore, the charge is not only that Penelhum ignores the causal links between the agent and the world, but also that he fails to account for the constitutive (*de re*) links between them. The latter can be brought out as follows. The object of one's actions is a constitutive part of the intentional action itself. For example, my intention to move a table is directed to a particular table in the world. Thus, my intention is not identifiable independent of the particular table onto which it is directed. (Similarly, it has been argued that my perceptual experiences cannot be individuated irrespective of their object in the world.)

The importance of *de re* intentional action can be stressed by reflecting on the difference between two sorts of cases. According to the first case, one intends to move a table; according to the second, one intends to move a table, but suddenly, when one is about to carry out one's intention, another table appears within one's reach, with the result that one moves it. In the first case, the table one moves is the table one intends to move. In the second case, the table one moves is not the table one intended to move, but a table that turns up out of nowhere. Without an account of intentional action in *de re* terms, such a distinction could not have been made. Furthermore, the second case would not count as a *de re* intentional action, for it is only as a result of luck that the agent moves that table. The latter case is dependent on the former.

The basic role of *de re* intentional action can also be seen by considering the relations between the intention to move *a* table, and the intention to move *any* table: the latter is dependent on the former. The general principle is that abstract intentions are secondary with respect to concrete ones.

Moreover, to argue against a *de re* conception of intentional action is to invite the accusations of mystery and magic considered in the perceptual case: how does a purely subjective intention in the inner realm succeed in bringing about a change in the world? The way to avoid the problem caused by the inner/outer gap is to make the objects of intentional action part of the intention itself.

2.3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the notion of a disembodied person, or more particularly, the notions of a disembodied perceiver and a disembodied agent, have been under intense scrutiny. The core of the argument is that no account can be given of where the content of the disembodied person's experiences comes from; in particular, does such a content come from the external, objective world? This, in turn, affects the disembodied person's action upon the world: can he act upon those objects perceived as existing in an external, independent world? Furthermore, to the extent that the disembodied person lacks links to the world, both at the levels of perception and agency, is he a person at all? That is, are these links to the world not necessary for a person to be a person? The answer to this question cannot be given just now, but the next chapters will address it, culminating in chapter 7, where a definition of embodiment is provided. Before doing so, the other main strand in this thesis, the dichotomy between the subjective and objective points of view, will be introduced.

Chapter 3

THE SUBJECTIVE/OBJECTIVE DICHOTOMY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Madell complains that "contemporary discussions of the problem of personal identity generally display little or no recognition of the divide which ... is at the heart of the problem" (1991:127). That divide is the dichotomy between the subjective and objective approaches. The core of the objective approach is the 'person-as-a-natural-kind' thesis: a person is a member belonging to a natural kind (namely, human beings), whose essence is the same as that of other members belonging to such a kind. Therefore, the solution to the problem of personal identity comes from the discovery of the essence of the natural kind person.

According to the subjective approach, analysis of persons as merely objects, members of a certain kind, fails to capture a central element of personhood - the fact that persons are essentially perspectival, that they have a point of view. This essentially perspectival character of persons is not simply the idea that my experience is partial (that I cannot, for instance, see the world as a whole, or from all points of view, but I can only see that face of things available to me from the position I occupy), but the idea that *I* am a certain object, that there is a property which consists in being uniquely me (or being mine), manifested in the question "what is it for some element of th[e] objective order to be *me*?" (130).

Those who defend a subjective approach, like Madell, argue that, since the objective approach fails to account for this irreducibly perspectival

fact, then "we must bid farewell to the idea that our understanding of persons is governed by a conception of human beings as *merely* a certain sort of object in the world, a natural kind" (131; my emphasis). Therefore, a proper theory of personal identity must account, on the one hand, for the fact that people are objects in the world (although not "merely" so), and on the other hand, for the irreducible subjective fact that I am one of those objects in the world, or rather that one of those objects is me. That is, a theory of personal identity must provide an account of the unification of the subjective and objective approaches, of the person as both subject and object.

Although one may expect Madell to give such a unitary account, he goes on to say that "it does not appear even intelligible to suggest that the two sides of the subjective/objective dichotomy may be *aspects* of one and the same entity" (141; my emphasis). Despite Madell's claim, certain attempts to reconcile the subjective/objective dichotomy can be, and have been, made, notoriously that of Thomas Nagel, one of the champions of the subjective standpoint. (A review of different attempts to overcome the objective/subjective dichotomy can be found in Janaway, 1983-4.)

3.2. NAGEL'S PROJECT OF UNIFICATION

3.2.1. Introduction

In his book *The View From Nowhere* (see also 'Subjective and Objective'; Nagel, 1979b), Nagel takes up the discussion of the identity statement 'I am TN (Thomas Nagel)', a statement which bears a most important

philosophical truth for the topic of personal identity. It is his contention that 'I am TN' is not only true, but also non-trivially informative and remarkable. It is non-trivial in that, unlike 'I am I' or 'TN is TN', it conveys some information which cannot be grasped at first sight, and whose understanding requires a certain amount of philosophical insight. It is remarkable in that it is the (somewhat inadequate) verbal formulation of a deep intuition, the fact that "I, who am thinking about the entire, centerless universe, [am some]thing so specific as *this*: this measly gratuitous creature existing in a morsel of space-time, ... [some]thing so *small*, and *concrete* and *specific*" (61).

The analysis of 'I am TN' is also an attempt to shed light on the controversy between first- and third-person, or subjective and objective, approaches to personal identity, and to unify both standpoints, without reducing the former to the latter.

3.2.2. Things vs modes of presentation

The statement 'I am TN' could be taken to mean either (a) that there are two different things which are in fact identical, or (b) that there is one single thing, comprehensible under two different modes of presentation. In the former case, 'I' and 'TN' refer to two different things; in the latter, 'I' and 'TN' refer to the same thing under two different aspects. How does Nagel understand 'I am TN': are 'I' and 'TN' things, or are they modes of presentation?

View (a) has been defended by Malcolm (1988), who maintains that Nagel's text contains an underlying Cartesian assumption, the idea that

there is an I (Self, Subject) which happens to be identical with an ordinary person, TN. Thus, I and TN are two different entities which are in fact identical. The arguments Malcolm offers in support of this view are, on the one hand, the peculiar treatment of I and TN, and on the other hand, the accidental connection between I and TN.

The following two quotations are, according to Malcolm, representative of Nagel's treatment of I and TN:

"this thinking subject regards the world through the person TN" (60);

"I have had to rely heavily on TN's experience, language, and education, and I do not constantly subject each of his pretheoretical beliefs to detached assessment" (62);

"I am *a* subject that can have a conception of the centerless universe in which TN is an insignificant speck, who might easily never have existed at all" (61).

The first sentence quoted suggests the idea that there is a Self hidden behind the person TN, looking at the world through the eyes of TN. This idea can be understood either in the literal sense that there is an inner Self who uses TN (a different entity) as his window to the world, or in the non-literal sense in which somebody may sometimes say that he looks at the world through his own eyes, meaning that he sees the world by using his eyes. Only if the former sense is the one intended by Nagel could he be accused of postulating an inner Cartesian Self.

Furthermore, Cockburn has criticized the idea that Nagel falls into a Cartesian conception of the self, for Nagel affirms that 'I am TN (a person/human being)', which is inconsistent with the Cartesian approach:

that is, if I am TN, then I cannot be "something distinct from, which is located within, TN" (1994:381).

Nonetheless, the thesis that I and TN are two different entities appears to be vindicated in the other two sentences quoted above. According to the second one, there are two different entities, one of which relies heavily on the other for its conception of the world. The idea that there are two different entities is confirmed in the final sentence, where the gap between both entities is broadened by suggesting that one of them could have existed even if the other one had not.

The latter seems to lead to the idea that the connection between I and TN is accidental. This could mean either that TN's existence is not necessary for I's (my) existence, or that I could have been somebody else other than TN, or both things. The argument might go along the following lines. Situations can be thought of in which TN "might never have existed at all": for instance, if TN's mum and dad never met; or if they conceived a girl instead of a boy; or if they conceived a boy whose genetic make-up was radically different from TN's (whatever this may mean). From here, some people may be inclined to conclude that, instead of TN, there would be NT, and that I is (am) NT. Therefore, I and TN are accidentally connected.

Before going any further, it must be stressed that Nagel's position in this topic is not crystal clear, and that as well as claiming that TN "might easily never have existed at all", he maintains that "the connection between me and TN is [not] accidental ... however, ... something essential about me has nothing to do with my perspective and position in the world" (61-2). Let us leave the question of the connection between I and TN for

the time being. It will suffice to say that, even if Nagel does not defend such an accidental connection, the latter is compatible with his position.

Arguments against the idea that Nagel supports view (a) are, first of all, the following assertions:

"the objective self [I] is not a distinct entity. Each of us, in addition to being an ordinary person, is a particular objective self, the subject of a perspectiveless conception of reality" (63);

"it [the objective self, I] shouldn't be given a metaphysical interpretation" (66).

Moreover, and apart from what Nagel himself says, it could be argued that if two things are identical, then there are not two things, but only one. Take the classical case of Hesperus and Phosphorus, which were supposed to refer to two different heavenly bodies: one of them was visible in the evening ('Hesperus'), and the other one was visible in the morning ('Phosphorus'). Later, people realized that they were not two different objects, but the same one (as a matter of fact, the planet Venus). Therefore, when it is said that 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' what is meant is that what were thought to be two different objects are in fact one single object, under two different aspects. The same could be said of such identity statements as 'the person who lives at 10 Downing Street is the Prime Minister', 'the Prime Minister is John Major', and 'I am John Major': there is one person which is presented to us under two different aspects.

This leads to the view (b), that in 'I am TN' there is one single object comprehensible under two different modes of presentation. This is the interpretation of Nagel's text given by McGinn:

" 'I' refers to me under the mode of presentation 'bearer of an objective conception', while 'TN' refers to me under the mode of presentation 'creature with this specific point of view' " (1987: 267-8).

Besides, it agrees not only with Nagel's negative statements quoted above, but also with other positive ones:

" 'I' as referring to me *qua* subject of the impersonal conception of the world which contains TN" (64, my emphasis);

"the objective self is the only significant *aspect* under which I can refer to myself subjectively that is supplied by the objective conception of the world alone" (65, my emphasis).

3.2.3. Analysis of 'I am TN'

After the conclusion reached in the previous section that 'I' and 'TN' do not refer to two different things, but to the same thing under two different modes of presentation, it remains to be seen what those modes of presentation are. However, the matter is not straightforward, for both 'I' and 'TN' can be understood in either of two ways. On the one hand, 'I' may be:

- (i) the subject of an impersonal and centreless conception of the world, what Nagel calls 'the objective self'; or,
- (ii) the subject of a particular, centred experience (eg, 'I have a toothache').

On the other hand, 'TN' may be:

- (iii) the ordinary person TN, as conceived by me and other fellow persons; or,
- (iv) the person TN as objectively conceived, that is, under the impersonal perspectiveless conception of the world.

According to this, 'I am TN' could be analyzed as one of the following four theses:

- (A) the subjective self (ii) is the ordinary person TN (iii);
- (B) the objective self (i) is the ordinary person TN (iii);
- (C) the subjective self (ii) is TN-under-impersonal-conception (iv);
- (D) the objective self (i) is TN-under-impersonal-conception (iv).

First of all, the notions of the objective self and the impersonal conception of the world must be explained. Nagel claims that, as well as having a conception of the world from a subjective point of view, one can also achieve an objective conception of the world. A central aspect in achieving the latter is the realization that there are other points of view in the world, apart from one's own. Thus, one detaches oneself from one's personal point of view, accepting the possibility of an impersonal perspective. Along this line of progressive detachment from one's own perspective, one also accepts that there might be perspectives that escape our human understanding; that is, that there might be non-human points of view in the world (Madell may call this 'the overcoming of the person-as-a-natural-kind thesis'). The result of this process of reaching an objective conception of the world is a conception of the world from no particular point of view, but including all possible points of view: the impersonal perspectiveless conception of the world. One of the elements contained in this impersonal conception is oneself, the person one is; or, as Nagel puts it:

"This centerless world contains everybody, and it contains not only their bodies but their minds. So it includes TN, an individual born at a certain time to certain parents, with a specific physical and mental history" (56).

This is what has been labelled 'TN-under-the-impersonal-conception'. It is different from 'the ordinary person TN' ((iii) above) in that the latter is an object in a personal, centred conception of the world, the centre being oneself.

The objective self, on the other hand, is the subject of such an impersonal conception, able to look at the world from any perspective:

"it is the perspectiveless subject that constructs a centerless conception of the world by casting all perspectives into the content of that world" (62).

It is different from the subjective self in that "[the objective self] can step away from the unconsidered perspective of the particular person I thought I was" (63), whereas the subjective self's perspective onto the world cannot be separated from the particular person it is. The fact that the objective self can separate itself from the particular person through which one's perception of, and action upon, the world takes place is what gives rise to the alleged accidental connection between I and (say) TN (something to which the discussion will shortly return). The objective self, however, is not a common universal subject: "each of us, in addition to being an ordinary person, is a particular objective self" (63-4).

Bearing this in mind, which one of the previous four theses catches the sense of Nagel's assertion 'I am TN'? Why does the latter offer a solution to the subjective/objective dichotomy? It must be remembered that 'I am TN' expresses here the sense of amazement at the fact that one of the objects in the world is me; that is, that in an impersonal conception of the world, there is an object that is me. It would seem, then, that neither (A)

nor (C) are the appropriate interpretation of 'I am TN' for, as has been previously quoted, 'I' refers to me "qua subject of the impersonal conception of the world which contains TN" (64), whereas in (A) and (C) 'I' is the subjective self.

According to McGinn (see quotation above), (B) is the correct interpretation, 'I' being the 'bearer of an objective conception', and 'TN' the 'creature with this specific point of view'. However, it is problematic whether 'TN' is the ordinary person TN for, as Nagel has insisted, 'I am TN' does not simply mean that the speaker's name is TN; that is, the philosophically laden use of the sentence 'I am TN' is different from the use of such a sentence in ordinary contexts. Nagel suggests that one may say, introducing oneself to somebody else, 'I am TN', but this is not the philosophically interesting identity statement under discussion.

Therefore, (D) is Nagel's interpretation of 'I am TN': first, it expresses the idea that there is an objective, perspectiveless, conception of the world, of which 'I' is the subject; second, the idea that one of the objects of such an impersonal conception is me (that is, TN). Furthermore, 'I am TN' unifies the subjective and objective standpoints, because I/objective self is the *subject* of an objective conception of the world which contains the *object* TN. In other words, I am a subject (the subject of an objective conception), and can refer to myself in the first person; and I am also an object, publicly identifiable in the third person (an object in the impersonal conception of the world).

3.2.4. Criticisms

1. *The accidental relation between I and TN.* It has already been mentioned that Nagel does not make it absolutely clear whether the relation between I and TN is accidental or not. However, other defenders of the subjective approach, like Madell, are more assertive: "there is no way of entertaining the possibility that 'I' and its objective setting are anything but contingently connected" (1991:141). This possibility goes hand in hand with the idea that I could have been someone else: if I and TN are only contingently related, then it is possible that I might have been NT, instead.

Cockburn has argued that this possibility is not simply the result of a vivid imagination (something that has already been rejected as the criterion of possibility; see 1.3.2.): we can make sense of the idea that I could have been someone else, if a context can be thought of in which the words 'I could have been NT' can get a hold. For instance, if my/TN's mum and dad had conceived a baby whose genetic make-up was radically different from mine/TN's, then I might feel envy if I consider my/TN's present make-up to be highly defective. In such a context, the possibility that I could have been NT is not just "an idle sequence of mental imagery" (1994:383), but a situation where such attitudes as envy are applicable. (Similarly, I might express my envy after losing a Mercedes at a raffle, by saying 'I could have owned that Mercedes'.) Here is a situation where the sentence 'I could have been NT' has a use. Therefore, the idea that I could have been somebody else makes sense.

There is, however, a reason why such a possibility is not immediately obvious, the fact that I could not have had a different origin (including

genetic make-up) from the one I actually have (for instance, NT's origin); for if *per impossibile* I had had a different origin, then I would not be TN, but NT, and therefore, it would not be the case that *I* could have been someone else.

It is these two different, apparently contradictory, sets of claims (one, the idea that I could have been someone else makes sense; two, the idea that if I was someone else, then *I* would not be me) that has led some philosophers (see Mackie, 1980) to distinguish two senses of 'I'. On the one hand, the *transcendental* 'I', which stands for 'the subject, whatever it may be, of this series of co-conscious experiences and thoughts' (or 'the subject, whatever it may be, of these experiences'). On the other hand, the *empirical* 'I', which stands for the human being/person in question (eg, TN).

Although there is, in principle, the possibility that 'I' may refer to two different things in the transcendental and empirical uses, as a matter of fact both uses refer to the same thing, the person/human being TN. Whereas in the empirical use the reference is direct, in the transcendental use the reference is indirect: 'the subject, whatever it may be, of these experiences' is factually the person/human being TN. There are, therefore, two different rules that give the meaning of 'I' (depending on the transcendental or empirical uses), rules that converge in ordinary circumstances: 'I' is, in fact, the person/human being TN.

According to this, when I say 'I could have been someone else (other than TN)', 'I' should be understood in the transcendental use: 'the subject, whatever it may be, of these experiences' is not the person/human being TN, but someone else; that is, unlike in ordinary circumstances, the

transcendental 'I' is not the empirical 'I'. On the other hand, when I say 'I could not have been someone else' ('I could not have had a different origin'), the 'I' is the empirical 'I', that is, the person/human being TN. Therefore, the alleged contradiction between those two claims vanishes on closer inspection, for a distinction has to be made between the two different uses of 'I'.

This, however, is too sketchy an account of the transcendental use of 'I'. First of all, it must be made clear that 'I' is an indexical pronoun, which refers to the particular person/human being uttering it on each occasion. This is the primary referential use of 'I'. So far, Mackie need not contend this, for he in fact affirms that there is an empirical use of 'I'. The difficulties arise when this so-called empirical use is not treated as primary; in particular, when the transcendental use of 'I' is characterized with total independence from the empirical use.

Thus, what happens when I entertain the possibility that I could have been somebody else? First, I must rely heavily on a vivid imagination, *pace* Cockburn:

"I do not construct an apparently objective course of events and then have to identify myself with some item already in it: rather I tell a story about myself as centre [...] in constructing a subjective, egocentric, story I can think of 'I' simply as the subject, whatever it may be, of these present experiences and do not include any features of any individual essence which may prevent me from coherently imagining ..." (Mackie, 1980:55-6).

Second, and with the aid of the imagination, I am able to make certain assumptions that will help me entertain the possibility that I could have been somebody else. What particular assumptions I make will depend on whom that 'somebody else' is. For instance, if as Williams (1973a)

suggests, I could have been Napoleon, then I must assume that Napoleon is not dead, as well as that I was not born in the twentieth century. In general, assumptions about my actual origin and the 'somebody else's' origin are important. But I must also ignore certain details of my own life, like the fact that I never wear hats, or that I cannot ride horses. Were I not to ignore these facts, how could I entertain the possibility of being in the battlefield, commanding my army, on the verge of defeat at Austerlitz, for example?

Together with the use of the imagination, I must also lose some sense of reality, so that I can use 'I' without making it refer to the person/human being I in fact am. Thus, when I say 'I could have been somebody else', 'I' refers to 'the subject, whatever it may be, of these experiences', but in such a way that 'I' is not linked to any empirical person. Therefore, the transcendental use of 'I' is in fact a figurative use, rather similar to what children mean when they say, while playing, 'I am a pirate'. What children mean is that they can abstract certain features they have, so that they can consider themselves to be pirates: for instance, instead of a normal hand, they have a hook, and so on. The transcendental use of 'I' shares this strategy of abstraction, although taken to the extreme, so that 'I' does not possess any of the features that may hinder this exercise of the imagination. The result is that the transcendental 'I' is a postulated, figurative 'I', without referring to any empirical person/human being. If this is the case, then the alleged accidental connection between I and TN does not follow, or perhaps follows in a figurative sense.

2. *The special character of 'I am TN'.* As has been previously pointed out, Nagel dismisses those contexts in which, for example, one introduces oneself to someone else by saying 'I am TN' as philosophically irrelevant.

He maintains that he wants to "explain why 'I am TN' seems to say more about the world than that the person speaking is called TN" (60). Well, one such context may be the situation in which there is an impostor claiming to be me, and I complain 'I am TN', meaning not just that my name is TN, but that there is a case of deceitful impersonation. Could Nagel be thinking of this sort of example? The answer is no: when analyzing the metaphysically interesting identity statement 'I am TN', he is trying to capture the amazing (to him) fact that one of the objects in the impersonal conception of the world is me. Could it be that Nagel's sense of amazement is derived from the fact that I and TN are accidentally connected: since it is not necessary that I be TN, how extraordinary it is that I am TN! However, if such a connection is not accidental (as it has been shown above), then the sense of amazement disappears. If so, then, the identity statement 'I am TN' is not special in the sense in which Nagel claims it to be, that is, as conveying the belief that *I* (the objective self) am one of the objects in the impersonal conception of the world.

3. The notion of the objective self. If the Nagelian project of unification of the subjective and objective standpoints is to succeed, he must give an account of the objective self as (identical with) an object in the world (or rather, expressed in Nagel's own terms, as an object in the impersonal conception of the world). As has been seen, the objective self is the result of a process of progressive abstraction, starting from one's own perspective on the world, but accepting the possibility that it (the objective self) can adopt other perspectives.

A problem for Nagel, though, is the apparent lack of reality of the objective self; in other words, does the objective self belong to the world? Nagel's remarks concerning this topic are ambiguous. On the one hand, he

maintains that "each of us, in addition to being an ordinary person, is a particular objective self, the subject of a perspectiveless conception of reality" (63-4). He also explicitly affirms that "I stop short of excluding [the objective self] from the world *entirely*. ... The objective self is the last stage of the detaching subject before it shrinks to an extensionless point" (62; my emphasis). Like Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, Nagel claims that the self is the limit of the world; unlike him, he does not exclude it from the world "entirely". On the other hand, consider the following quotation:

"Th[e objective] conception [of the world] does not itself imply anything about who its subject is, or even that he exists at all inside the world being described. So far as the content of the objective view goes, it might be of a world in which I, its subject, never have existed and never will. But since the objective conception *has* a subject, the possibility of its presence in the world is there" (64).

On the one hand, it appears that the objective self is nothing more than a postulate, that which through a process of abstraction forms an impersonal and perspectiveless conception of the world. Furthermore, it cannot be an element of the world under the impersonal conception because, if it were, it would not be the *subject* of such a conception. (The impersonal conception of the world includes TN and TN's perspective on the world, as well as other persons and their perspectives. Thus, if the objective self were an element of the world under the impersonal conception, it would be TN, but not the subject of such a conception.) On the other hand, if it is not an element in the world (an object), then the project of unification of the objective and subjective standpoints collapses. Hence, the peculiar status of the objective self: neither in the world nor "entirely" outside it.

Is there a way out? It may appear that there is not for Nagel's own project. However, it will be argued next that a different account of the unification of the subjective and objective standpoints is possible, which does not face the difficulties encountered by the one just reviewed.

3.3. PROPOSAL FOR A NEW PROJECT OF UNIFICATION

Nagel has forcefully stated the case against reductive conceptions of reality (particularly, against the reduction of mental events/states to physical ones). The central idea is that the subjective character of experience will be left out of a purely objective conception of reality, something he has vividly expressed as the idea that "we will not know exactly how scrambled eggs taste to a cockroach even if we developed a detailed objective phenomenology of the cockroach sense of taste" (25), or in his famous remark that we do not know what it is like for a bat to be a bat (see 1979a). The point being made is that there are specific (regarding the species) differences which cannot be captured in purely objective terms, and that a subjective use of the imagination is required.

This idea has also been explained by claiming that our experience of the world is perspectival, that is, that the world is experienced from a particular point of view. Thus, the point of view of a bat is different from our point of view, and we cannot comprehend the former in objective terms. The notion of perspectivity, though, is richer than that, for it also refers to the idea that there is an irreducible subjective fact which consists in being uniquely me (or mine): my personal experience of the world (not just the specific one) cannot be understood from an objective standpoint,

either. Therefore, a successful unification of the subjective/objective dichotomy must start by acknowledging the perspectival character of our relation to the world.

At the level of experience, perspectivity is not just the partiality of experience (the fact that I cannot perceive the world from all points of view at once), but also what could be called 'the subjectivity of experience': the fact that my experience of the world (including myself) is not accessible from an objective viewpoint.

At the level of thought, perspectivity can be manifested by calling attention to the gap between descriptive/objective thought and indexical thought, between 'the so-and-so is F' and 'I am F'. As Perry (1979) has explained, the entertaining of the former ('the so-and-so is F') will give rise to a different course of action than the latter ('I am F'): for instance, if I read in the paper that the one millionth user of the Brynmor Jones Library has won a prize, but am not aware of the fact that I am the one millionth user of the Brynmor Jones Library, then I will not claim the prize. This suggests the irreducibility of indexical thought to descriptive thought, as well as the necessity of the former.

It is a further claim whether 'the so-and-so' and 'I' are two distinct modes of presentation of the same entity, the former being the objective, and the latter the subjective, one. Madell has argued that this way of looking at the question fails to understand what is at stake in the subjective/objective dichotomy: "no response which simply amounts to positing [a first-person mode of presentation] something which is common to everyone can meet it" (134). Madell's concern seems to be that if the first-person mode of presentation is common to everyone, then that which is being uniquely me

is lost. However, 'common' could be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, it could mean that everyone who engages in indexical thought use 'I', the first-person mode of presentation, in the same way; that there is one mode of presentation, the same for every use of 'I'. On the other hand, it could mean that each person who engages in indexical thought uses 'I' in a different way, as Husserl has maintained: "each man has his own 'I'-presentation (and with it his individual notion of I) and this is why the word's meaning differs from person to person" (quoted in McGinn, 1983:61).

Madell's worry would be acceptable in case 'common' was understood in the former sense, but not if it is understood in the latter sense. In fact, it is the latter that is the proper way of understanding it. If the 'I'-presentation was the same for everyone, then there would not be an epistemological barrier between the way in which I know myself, and the way in which I know someone else, but such a barrier is there. Therefore, Madell's worry can be dismissed: the difference between objective and indexical thought can be grasped in terms of modes of presentation, without reducing the subjective to the objective.

Turning now to Nagel's own project of unification, it will be remembered that his understanding of the 'I' and 'TN' modes of presentation gives rise to several problems: the former occupies a peculiar position (neither in the world nor outside it); and the latter is an object in the world, but in the world under the impersonal conception. It will now be suggested that such a unifying project is misguided, because a high price has to be paid: how can it succeed in unifying the subjective and objective sides of the person if the latter is hardly recognizable, either under 'the objective self' or under 'TN-under-the-impersonal-conception' presentations? In other

words, is the person, the subject-matter of the topic of personal identity, subjectively identified as 'the objective self', or objectively and publicly identified as 'TN-under-the-impersonal-conception'? Instead, the unification of the person is the unification of the subjective self (see (ii) in 3.2.3.), the subject who ascribes both mental experiences and bodily characteristics to himself, and the ordinary person as conceived by me and other fellow persons (see (iii) in 3.2.3.). The latter involves the recognition that a person is an object in the world (and a member of a kind), but not in the same way in which a stone, for instance, is an object. Therefore, this element will have to be taken into account in a successful unifying project.

Finally, the identity statement 'I am TN' captures the idea that there is something, a person, comprehensible under two modes of presentation: the subjective, first-person 'I', and the objective 'TN'. This is true and informative, but not remarkable in the way claimed by Nagel (because, among other things, the relation between I and TN is not accidental). In fact, 'I am TN' has to be analyzed as the first of the four theses mentioned above: the subjective self (ii) is the ordinary person TN (iii).

This new proposal of unification can be exemplified, on the one hand, in perception, and on the other hand, in action. In perception, the person not only perceives the world, but also himself in the world (his own location, some of his bodily features), as a subject of experience. In action, the person is able to act upon the world and himself as part of the world, from his condition of subject of action, of agent. That is, there is a reconciliation of the objective and subjective sides of the person.

In short, the ingredients of this new proposal of unification are:

1. the person as essentially material,
2. the treatment of the person as member of a kind,
3. the perspectivity and subjectivity of experience,
4. the irreducibility and non-eliminability of the subjective side of the person,
5. a view of the person as perceiver and agent, and
6. the interdependence between perception and agency.

In the remainder of this thesis, attention will be paid to the foregoing list. In particular, the objective and subjective sides of the person will be dealt with, in order to subsequently propose the promised reconciliation. Thus, in chapter 4, the objective approach (including the 'person-as-a-natural-kind' thesis) will be analyzed in detail. It will also help to link the two main strands in this work, the subjective/objective dichotomy and the necessity of embodiment. Next, chapters 5 and 6 will focus on the subjective side of the dichotomy, suggesting the proper way of understanding the status of the person as subject.

Chapter 4

EMBODIMENT AND THE BRAIN

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Is possession of a body necessary to be a person? Or rather, could there be a person who lacked bodily characteristics? Cartesian dualists would answer that the existence of a body attached to the mind is not necessary; that a person is constituted by his mind; and that the body is only a contingent feature, something the person could do without. At the other extreme, materialists would argue that a person is essentially a material entity; that postulating disembodied persons is simply the result of a fanciful imagination.

In the recent materialist tradition, possession of a body has sometimes been identified with possession of a brain. The brain is an important part of a person's body, the neurophysiological centre, from which control over the correct functioning of many cognitive and practical abilities is exerted. It is considerations like these that have prompted the view that the brain is the crucial part of the body as far as personal identity and survival are concerned. Further support can be found in the widely acknowledged fact that brain death is the criterion for human death. In this view, a person is his brain, while the rest of his body is only an accompaniment.

This chapter will carefully examine and criticize such a position. The criticism of the view that possession of a brain is necessary and sufficient to be a person will offer the opportunity to introduce some ideas about what possession of a body in the context of personal identity should

amount to. Moreover, this chapter will offer the continuation of the argument about whether there can be disembodied persons (see chapter 2).

4.2. NAGEL ON PERSONAL IDENTITY

Thomas Nagel (1986) analyzes the concept of self in an analogous way to such natural-kind concepts as gold. It is commonly held in philosophy of language that our intuitive concept of gold does not determine the extension of what is called 'gold'. There are things that are like gold in their external appearance, although they do not share the internal essence of gold. What gold is is a matter of scientific discovery. Scientists discover whether something is gold or not by looking at the internal structure of the thing in question. In general, the extension of natural-kind terms is determined by science, and not by the intuitive concepts people possess. Analogously, it is argued, the intuitive concept of self does not determine whether something is a self or not. What people are is, in part, a matter of scientific discovery, and, in part, a question of philosophical reflexion. In what ways do these two parts relate to one another?

Philosophically speaking, the idea of myself is the idea of something which can be subjectively identified, and which can also be observationally objectively identified as a persisting object in the world. Or, as Nagel puts it: "I am whatever persisting individual in the objective order underlies the subjective continuities of that mental life that I call mine" (40).

At this point, the philosophical analysis ceases, leaving a blank that has to be filled by science. The task for science is to discover what meets those conditions, as specified by philosophy. Nagel's empirical hypothesis is that the self is the brain. That is, the brain is what underlies the continuous mental life I call mine. The functioning brain is the core of the self. The rest of the body is integrally attached to it, and it is also part of the self. However, since I could survive the destruction of my body, whereas I cannot survive the destruction of my brain, only the latter is essential to the self.

4.3. PERSONS AND NATURAL KINDS

A problem that is usually posed in connection with questions of personal identity is whether what a person consists in is a matter of scientific discovery or not. Nagel and others (like Mackie, 1976) think it is. Nagel supports his claim with Kripke-like considerations about natural-kind terms. Kripke (1980) maintains that what counts as gold is determined by scientific hypothesis. If people want to know whether something is gold or not, they rely on a chemist's judgement; they do not ask a child, since children usually call gold whatever stuff is shining yellow, without any other qualifications. The chemist, on the other hand, looks at the internal constitution of the substance, at its chemical structure, in order to determine whether it is gold. The last stage of the argument is simply to partially apply such an analysis to the concept of a person, concluding that what counts as a person is a matter of empirical, scientific hypothesis.

4.3.1. Does science give essential features?

One question that has to be asked is whether or not science gives essential properties of things. If it does not, then Nagel's argument collapses, since the latter is based on the idea that there are certain internal properties of things that determine what such a thing is. So, the question about whether there are essential features of things has to be considered.

Locke (1959) distinguishes between two senses of essence: real and nominal. The real essence of a substance is its internal constitution, the particular way in which its internal atoms are organized; the nominal essence is the complex abstract idea which we associate with the name in question. Taking gold as an example, its real essence is the internal chemical structure of particular instances of gold; on the other hand, its nominal essence is the complex idea, the set of defining characteristics, associated with the name 'gold' (that is, yellow, shiny, malleable, fusible, soluble in *aqua regia*, and so on).

In classifying something as gold, Locke goes on, it is the nominal essence that is taken into account; that is, it is checking whether or not the particular object is yellow, shines, is malleable and so on. The nominal essence of gold is, then, the set of necessary and sufficient characteristics that define what gold is. The real essence, on the other hand, is unknown: "We in vain pretend to range things into sorts, and dispose them into certain classes under names, by their real essences, that are so far from our discovery or comprehension" (III, VI, 9). How do we classify things, then? By their nominal essence: "the ranking of things into species is done by us according to the ideas that *we* have of them" (III, VI, 13).

What does the name 'gold' (in general, natural-kind terms) stand for? Locke seems to think that the name 'gold' stands for the complex idea in the speaker's mind; things are classified and named according to their nominal essence. However, this would make communication difficult (if not impossible), since different people associate different descriptions with the name 'gold': for some, gold is the yellow, shining substance from which expensive jewellery is made; for others, it is the shining yellow, malleable, soluble substance used in chemical laboratories; and still, other people could attach to it a different set of characteristics. How could this problem be avoided? Locke says that:

"They [men] have supposed a real essence belonging to every species, from which these properties all flow, and would have their name of the species stand for that." (III, VI, 49)

"In the general names of substances, whereof the *nominal* essences are only known to us, when we put them into propositions, and affirm or deny anything about them, we do most commonly tacitly suppose or intend, they should stand for the *real* essence of a certain sort of substances. [...] and therefore the mind, to remove that imperfection as much as it can, makes them, by a secret supposition, to stand for a thing having that real essence" (III, VI, 17-8).

Locke realizes that people intend to refer to real essences when using names like 'gold'. 'Gold' refers to the stuff whose internal constitution is such-and-such, not to the nominal essence that may vary from speaker to speaker. Nonetheless, Locke considers this procedure to be an abuse of words, a "preposterous and absurd" way of communication, since "our names stand for ideas we have not, or (which is all one) essences that we know not, it being in effect to make our words the signs of nothing" (III, X, 21). That is, Locke acknowledges the existence of such a practice, but does not welcome it.

In summary, Locke's conclusion is that the real essence of a substance like gold is unknown to us¹. The only essential features available to us are the ones included in the nominal essence; the essence of gold is, then, the set of properties that define and classify a particular instance as gold.

Putnam (1975) has challenged this Lockean conclusion, by criticizing two assumptions present in many theories of meaning:

- i. that to know the meaning of a term consists in being in a certain psychological state; and,
- ii. that the meaning of a term (intension) determines its extension.

Putnam criticizes the assumption that the meaning of a term like 'gold' is an idea present in people's minds, which in turn determines the extension of the name 'gold'. He gives the Twin-Earth example, exactly like our Earth, except that the chemical structure of water is not H₂O, but XYZ. People who live on Earth, and those who live on Twin-Earth, are both in the same psychological state when they want a glass of water, for instance, but while the person on Earth refers to the stuff whose internal constitution is H₂O, the Twin-Earthian refers to the stuff whose internal structure is XYZ. It is possible, then, to be in the same psychological state (thirst for water), but differ in the extension of the term (H₂O, XYZ). Therefore, the meaning of a term, understood as being in a psychological state, does not determine the extension of that term.

Another thesis defended by Putnam is what he calls 'the division of linguistic labour', according to which different people play different roles in a linguistic community. Some people know how to distinguish a genuine piece of gold from a fake one; the rest simply borrow the term

from those experts, and use it like they would (ie, intending to mean by 'gold' what the experts would) in their daily life. Discussion over a particular instance is settled by the experts, who appeal to the internal micro-structure of the object to determine whether or not it is gold.

That is, there are ways of finding out the real essence of gold and water (in general, natural kinds). Real essences can be known. Furthermore, it is a necessary truth that the real essence of a substance is what it is, and not something else: it is a necessary truth, for instance, that water is H₂O, and could not be XYZ. The name 'water', then, stands for the real essence of water, not for its nominal essence.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there are discoverable properties of gold and of other natural kinds, which can be taken to be crucial in determining whether or not an ambiguous instance is to be classified as, say, gold. In this sense, it can be said that there are essential properties of things. It must be noted, though, that 'essential properties' is not used here in a strict sense, and that sometimes differences in nature may be more a matter of family resemblance than one of common, necessary and sufficient properties. Differences between families in the animal kingdom may, for instance, be a matter of overlapping characteristics, rather like a gradation of grey colours, instead of black or white.

4.3.2. Is 'person' a natural-kind term?

Nagel's argument would also fail if 'person' was not a natural-kind term, since, in that case, the alleged analogy between gold and person would not

work. Before this possibility is examined, let us first consider whether there are natural kinds.

Locke asks himself this question, but his answer is ambiguous:

"it is evident they [the nominal essence of things] are made by the mind, and not by nature";

"if several men were to be asked concerning some oddly-shaped *foetus*, as soon as born, whether it were a *man* or not, it is past doubt one should meet with different answers. Which could not happen if the nominal essences, whereby we limit and distinguish the species of substances, were not made by man with some liberty; but were exactly copied from precise boundaries set by nature";

"though the mind of man, in making its complex ideas of substances, never puts any together that do not really, or are not supposed to, co-exist; and so it truly borrows that union from nature";

"nature makes many *particular things*, which do agree one with another in many sensible qualities, and probably too in their internal frame and constitution: but it is not this real essence that distinguishes them into species; it is men who ... range them into sorts" (III, VI, 36).

Although, on the one hand, he affirms that men classify things into sorts, according to their interests, on the other hand, he maintains that there is a certain order in nature, which men copy. Nature makes things similar in their internal constitution, in their real essence; there is a natural order. However, classification into species does not come from nature, but is made by men, according to the nominal essence of things.

But if only the nominal essence is taken into account, and different people have different nominal essences, two problems arise. First, how is arbitrariness in the classification to be avoided? Is the classification grounded on sound and stable characteristics, which do not vary from speaker to speaker? Second, how is communication possible? Is it

guaranteed that people refer to the same objects (especially when those objects are absent)?

Locke is divided: he wants to affirm that names stand for the nominal essence of things (and that real essences are unknown), but he sees the difficulties posed by such a thesis: arbitrariness and lack of communication. This may be the reason why his assertions are ambiguous.

However, if as has been pointed out above, the unknowability of real essences is denied, then names can stand for real essences without being made meaningless; real essences, that is, that belong to the natural order. Thus, real essences and natural kinds can be affirmed without absurdity. Moreover, the kind of considerations discussed by Putnam provide further support in favour of the thesis that there are natural kinds (like gold or water), whose internal constitution can be discovered by science. The existence of natural kinds is more clearly manifested by contrast with non-natural kinds, like chair or table (in general, artefact-names). The latter are not found in nature, but made by man, with human purposes and designs; their essence is not obtained by scientific investigation, but determined by the human designer in the function assigned to them. Therefore, to the question posed a few paragraphs ago, the answer is that there are natural kinds.

Bearing this in mind, the next step is to consider whether 'person' is a natural-kind term. In order to do so, it will be useful to analyze the similarities and differences between a couple of terms: 'person' and 'human being'. At the same time, the notion of person defended in this paper will acquire more definite contours.

The notion of a human being collects the features included in the species *homo sapiens*. It is a concept coming from biology, and, like many other biological notions (such as lion and tiger), it stands for the members of a certain natural species, which can be characterized and distinguished from members of other species in the animal kingdom. In this sense, it is a natural-kind term, and science can discover what is essential to the species *homo sapiens* as opposed to other species. This notion of a human being resembles Locke's notion of a man, different from that of a person. According to Locke, man is an animal, and the identity of man is the identity of an animal:

"This also shows wherein the identity of the same *man* consists; viz. in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body." (II, XXVII, 7)

The identity of man consists in the continuation of the same life in the same living body. Even though some particles are replaced, the replacement is slow and progressive, so that talk of the same life is still possible, as shown in the sameness of the body. On the other hand, "person stands for ... a very intelligent being, that has reason and reflection..." (II, XXVII, 11), whose identity consists in sameness of consciousness. In this sense, if the consciousness of a prince's past life (including memories and other psychological traits) abandoned him and entered the body of a cobbler, he would still be the same person as the prince, although in the cobbler's body; however, he would not be the same *man* as the prince, because there is no continuity of the same body.

It must be made clear that the distinction between human being and person proposed here does not copy Locke's distinction. For Locke, possession of a body is necessary for being a man, although it is not necessary for personal identity (sameness of consciousness being the necessary and sufficient condition). Here, though, it is argued that possession of a body is necessary both for being a man and for being a person. Therefore, Locke's account of persons is at odds with the one defended in this thesis.

But let us focus on the distinction between human being and person. After arguing that human being is a natural kind, let us consider why it differs from the non-natural kind person. Locke claims that a person "is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery" (II, XXVII, 26). The relationship between the notions of person and agent is exemplified by Locke in the following way: if a sleep-walking man kills somebody, he cannot be held responsible for the murder committed whilst asleep, since he is not conscious of what he was doing in his sleep, and, in consequence, is not the same person, and cannot claim the murder to be his.

Ignoring Locke's own views on the notion of a person manifested in this example (such as the fact that personal identity is the same as sameness of consciousness), there are some insights worth taking into account. There is, on the one hand, the idea that a person is an agent; and, on the other hand, the view of an agent as somebody who is held responsible for his actions. (The notion of agency will reappear later on in this work, and its importance and relevance to the subject of personal identity will be made clear then.)

Locke's insight can be applied to two special uses of the notion of a person: in legal cases, the class of persons does not only include individual human beings, but also institutions and corporations; in alleged cases of multiple personality, it is said that several persons inhabit the same human being. The concept of a person that emerges from these special cases cannot be straightforwardly identified with that of a human being: a person is a subject of action and responsibility, liable to punishment or reward, subject to other people's admiration or praise (ie, moral attitudes). A person is an agent, subject to moral evaluation. According to this, institutions are persons because they are liable and responsible for what they do. Similarly, in cases of multiple personality, the actions of different personalities are evaluated, praised or punished, separately; moreover, different personalities will claim to have nothing to do with the other personalities, being independent agents with respect to them.² In summary, a person is an agent, responsible for his actions. In this sense, it is different from a human being, towards whom moral attitudes cannot be adopted (unless the notions of human being and person are mistakenly identified).

Bringing the argument to an end, 'person' is not a natural-kind term, unlike 'human being' or 'gold'. Thus, the similarity between the concepts of gold and person drawn by Nagel does not hold. Therefore, the essence of a person, what personal identity consists in, is not a matter of scientific discovery, unlike the case of gold or other natural kinds.

4.3.3. Objection: person as a natural kind

An objection to the view that person is not a natural kind could be constructed along the following lines. Certainly, classification into *homo sapiens*, dolphins and so on is made in accordance with similarities found in nature. However, this is not the only possible natural classification. It could be the case that different natural species have certain features in common, which can be put together making up a new class. In fact, this is so in the case of a person: it is a natural kind, but one that cuts across the classification into *homo sapiens*, dolphins, and so on. Person and *homo sapiens* are natural kinds, although in different senses.

Such a view (or, at least, a similar one) has been put forward by Wiggins (1976, 1980) and others (Kitcher, 1979). In fact, Wiggins suggests that the concept of a person is "*akin* to a natural kind concept" (1980:172), and offers an analogy. The concept of a vegetable refers to different sorts of plants which are both savoury and edible by human beings. It is not a natural kind concept, although it includes members of many different natural kinds (*Cruciferae* family, *Leguminosae* family, etc). Analogously, person is not a natural kind, but includes members of many different natural kinds. Regarding the concept of person, Wiggins adds, there is a natural component (that is, people must be animals); but there is also a functional, or systemic, component, so that persons "perceive, feel, remember, imagine, desire, make projects ..., conceive of themselves as perceiving, feeling, remembering ..., have, and conceive of themselves as having, a past accessible in experience-memory and a future accessible in intention ..." (171).

This account is naturalistic, in the sense that persons have an animal component and are found in nature. However, 'person' is not a natural-kind term, because the classification into persons cuts across natural kinds, and in doing so, a non-natural component is introduced. The analogy with vegetables will show this point. Classification into vegetables is made by human beings, according to their nutritional and culinary interests: they are the plants that human beings eat. Nature simply classifies plants into families (*Cruciferae*, *Leguminosae*, and so on), not into 'plants edible by humans beings' and 'plants not edible by humans'. Analogously, nature classifies animals into different species (*homo sapiens*, dolphins, and so on); afterwards, considering human interests, people make cutting-across classifications into 'persons' and 'non-persons'.

It follows, then, that the question of personal identity is not an empirical one: although there is a natural component, the non-natural component suggests that what is essential to a person cannot be discovered by empirical means. There are not two different senses of natural kind, one for person and a different one for human being. The alleged former sense (the one for person) is not, in fact, a natural kind, since the classification into persons and non-persons is made according to non-natural characteristics. Thus, the rejection of Nagel's analogy between person and gold is still valid.

4.3.4. Conclusions

1. Person is not a natural kind, unlike gold. This can be shown by considering the case of a very perfect mechanical replica of a human being, and asking whether it could be taken to be a person. There is a crucial dissimilarity between natural kinds (like gold) and mechanical robots. In the case of gold, complete knowledge of its internal constitution is sufficient to establish whether a particular instance is gold. However, the case of the robot is different, since the most complete knowledge of the robot does not itself determine whether it is a person. The question about the personhood of the robot is still possible. Whether a particular robot is a person depends on where *we* draw the line between persons and non-persons: nature itself does not draw that line. Personal identity, then, is not just a matter of discovery: an element of decision is also needed.³ Therefore, person is not a natural kind, because classification under the categories 'person' or 'non-person' includes an element of interpretation, not present in the classification of other things under the categories 'gold' or 'water'. Person is better understood as an interpretive schema, rather than as a natural kind.

2. The question whether human being is a natural kind is altogether different, and its discussion is not a main point of this chapter. In analyzing a particular instance, if the features that characterize a human being are met, then it is a member of the species *homo sapiens*; if it has certain elements in common, but differs in others, it may be considered to be a member of another species. If there was life on another planet, for instance, and scientists wondered whether or not its inhabitants were human, similarities with the human species would be crucial: if the differences were too big and important, they would not be classified as

human. The method employed here differs from the one used to establish whether robots are persons: the former is, but the latter is not, empirical.

3. As far as Nagel's argument is concerned, there is a fundamental flaw: person is not a natural kind, so that whether or not a particular instance is a person is not a matter for empirical investigation.

4.4. THE SUFFICIENCY AND NECESSITY OF THE BRAIN

Nagel's views on personal identity stress the necessity and sufficiency of the brain. This work is committed to the view that embodiment is necessary to be a person. Do Nagel's views amount to the thesis that the brain is all that is needed for embodiment, in the context of personal identity? Let us analyze this possibility in the hope of getting a clearer account of what possession of a body means. Since Nagel does not explain his notion of a brain (perhaps because he considers it to be a question for neurophysiologists, not for philosophers), two accounts of the brain will be proposed.

According to the first account, the brain is an organ of the species *homo sapiens*, which happens to be essential to the identity of the species. Briefly, the human brain controls the movement of the limbs, receives and organizes sensory inputs coming from the different senses, recognizes emotions, deals with articulated speech, is the seat of memory and attention, and so on. Dazzled by the important functions carried out by the brain, some philosophers have argued that:

"The real essence of personal identity will be whatever underlies and makes possible the unity of consciousness. [...] It is an empirical question what makes co-consciousness possible ... we know at least the outline of the answer: what makes co-consciousness possible is the structure of the central nervous system and the persistence of that structure through time." (Mackie, 1976:200)

On this account, the brain and the central nervous system are the key organs that constitute the identity of the members of the human species. As long as the brain remains the same through time, the identity of the human being is preserved.

The second account of the brain accuses the first one of parochialism, of not being abstract enough to include other non-human individuals under the category of persons. Different biological species, the argument goes, do not have to possess the same biological organs, although they must have one organ or another that plays the role played by the conjunction of the brain and the nervous system in the human species. On this second, functionalist account, personal identity in general does not consist in the possession of a human brain; for other species, whatever organ that plays the same functional role played by the conjunction of brain and nervous system in the human case constitutes the identity of the species. (See Shoemaker, 1984a:126ff.)

Before passing on to other matters, it will simply be pointed out that both the parochial and the functionalist accounts consider personal identity to be a matter of scientific enquiry. This is due to the fact that they fail to distinguish between a person and a human being. When such a distinction is made, it becomes clear that possession of a brain (or whatever organ plays the role of the human brain) may be essential to the identity of a member of the human species (or a member of other species), but does not

constitute personal identity. Let us now see whether other objections arise.

Of these two accounts, which is the one Nagel has in mind when he suggests the necessity and sufficiency of the brain for the identity of a person? If it is the first one, Nagel can be accused of giving an account which is species specific, only applicable to the human case. If he modifies it so as to include other species (that is, if he adopts the functionalist account), he must specify the role played by such organs. On the functionalist account, it is not a particular organ that is important, but the *role* played by that organ. Is such a role necessary and sufficient to be a person; ie, does personal identity consist in having an organ with a certain role?

Against the adoption of the parochial account of the brain, it has been objected (Glover, 1988) that it is not clear whether all parts of the human brain are necessary for the identity of a person. And if they are not all necessary, which are? Nagel argues that a person is his brain because he can survive the destruction of other parts of his body, but not the destruction of his brain. It is similarly argued now that a person may survive the destruction of certain parts of his brain, in which case those parts are not, on Nagel's own grounds, essential to the person. But if that is the case, then the claim that a person is his brain is not narrow enough so as to exclude those parts of the brain which are not an essential part of the person. The objection does not disappear if a functionalist account is adopted, for it is unclear what role played by the human brain, or by other organs in other species, is in fact necessary for the identity of an individual person. Are the control of limb movement, or articulated speech,

necessary? Or the recognition of emotions? Or the remembering of past experiences?

Before going on any further, I would like to introduce certain considerations that will receive further treatment later on. In characterizing the human brain, both the functions of organizing sensory inputs and controlling movement and speech have been mentioned, although not enough emphasis has been put on them. These functions of the brain serve to connect the body as a whole to the external world: through them, the body is able not only to learn about what goes on around it, but also to intervene and affect the course of worldly happenings. The brain, then, plays the crucial role of opening the door for an exchange between the body itself and the external world.

The question that must be asked now, if Nagel's thesis is to stand, is whether or not the brain is sufficient for that exchange to take place. This question can be divided into two parts. Firstly, is the brain the physical ground for exchange at the sensory level? Obviously, it plays a necessary role, but other physical organs are also involved: in vision, for instance, the eyes (with their own complexity), the nerves transmitting the visual stimuli⁴; in hearing, the ears (external and internal organs); and so on for other senses. Secondly, is the brain the physical ground for exchange at the intentional level, that is, for intervening in the external world? The brain sends responses (depending on the sensory inputs) to the nerves, which are connected to the muscles, producing the desired movement, for instance, of limbs and mouth: several organs, other than the brain, are then required for intentional action on the world. In short, although the human brain has an important function to carry out, it is not the only organ required for perceiving, and acting upon, the world.⁵ Possession of a

brain in the functionalist sense is not sufficient for this exchange at the sensory and intentional levels, either, since the role played by the brain (or other organs in other species) is not enough to guarantee sensory and intentional contact with the world (at least, if the role of the brain in other species is the same as in the human species): the role played by such organs as ears or limbs, distinct from the role of the brain itself, is also necessary.

In conclusion, Nagel's view that possession of a brain is necessary and sufficient to be a person fails, both in the parochial sense and in the functionalist sense, for possession of a brain does not amount to full embodiment, in the definition of embodiment hinted at here, that is, as actively participating in worldly happenings. Furthermore, it may be anticipated that to the extent in which traditional materialist theories fail to conceive of the body as playing an active role in the world, they also fail to capture a central idea of what possession of a body, in the context of personal identity, means. (More on this point later.)

4.5. BRAINS IN A VAT

4.5.1. The hypothesis of the brain in a vat

According to the hypothesis of the brain in a vat (Putnam, 1981; see also Evans, 1982:249ff), it could be the case that one's brain was kept alive in a vat, connected to a super-computer, so that it received sensory inputs to the nerve endings as if it were seeing the world or hearing sounds, although, in fact, the inputs were coming from the computer. Thus, the

computer might, for instance, produce the image of a tree in front of us, which would lead us to think that there is a tree in front of us, although there is no real tree in front of us, but only an image of a tree produced by the computer.

The importance of the hypothesis of the brain in a vat is that it is a counter-argument against the view defended in this work: that embodiment (especially in the sense hinted at in the last section) is necessary to be a person. Several arguments will be put forward to show that brains in a vat cannot be persons, preserving the truth about the necessity of embodiment.

4.5.2. Can brains in a vat be persons?

The hypothesis of the brain in a vat can be regarded as a sceptical problem about our knowledge of the external world. How do we know that we are not in such a predicament? How do we know that when we perceive a tree it is a real tree that we are perceiving, and not an image induced in us by a computer? Nonetheless, the sceptical problem will not be addressed here. Instead, we will consider whether or not the brain in a vat is a person.

An initial argument against the view that the brain in a vat is a person has already been suggested, when it was argued that possession of a brain is insufficient for full embodiment. Following this suggestion, the discussion that follows will try to cash in on an important difference between the brain in a vat and a normal person. The latter is sensorily and intentionally linked to the world. The brain in a vat, however, receives inputs from the super-computer to which it is attached (equally, it can send outputs back

to the computer), but is not sensorily and intentionally linked to the world. Let us look at this in detail.

As suggested when criticizing Penelhum's account of disembodied perception (see 2.2.1.), perception is a causal concept. For something to be a perceptual experience of something else, there must be a causal relation (according to a law) between an external object and a perceiver. That is, the former causally explains the perception experienced by the latter. Furthermore, such a causal relation is a relation between two existentially independent items: a perceiver, and an object in the external world, whose essential character is independent from the perceiver's dispositions or mental phenomena. In the present case, the experience of a tree had by the brain in a vat is not accounted for, or causally explained by, the existence of a tree in the real, external world; it is just a case of stimulation of the nerve endings of the brain in a vat by the super-computer. Therefore, the input received by the brain would not count as a case of genuine perception.

Analogously, the brain in a vat could form an intention to sit under such a tree, as an output sent back to the super-computer, which would result in it seeming to the brain in a vat that it is sitting under a tree (again, thanks to the hallucinations produced by the computer). However, this is not a case of action, because there is no causal link from the brain in the vat to the world: there is no change in the environment, but only a semblance of it.

But, if the brain in a vat is linked to the super-computer (from which sensory inputs are received), then, is it not linked to something in the world, namely the super-computer? Isn't the super-computer something real, external and different from the brain, as well as existentially

independent from it? Even after granting that there are no trees or other objects that the brain in a vat has images of, there is still a world, whose only object might be the super-computer. In that case, when the brain in a vat has the image of a tree, it does not perceive a real tree, but surely the brain in a vat is genuinely perceiving a state of the super-computer. 'Genuinely' means that the brain in a vat is causally connected to the super-computer, so that a state of the computer causally explains the perceptual experience had by the brain in a vat. Thus, the image is produced by a genuine perception of the real world: not a perception of a real tree, but of a state of the super-computer. Then, the brain in a vat would be linked to the world, and, therefore, might count as embodied, in the same way in which a person is.

It could be replied that for something to constitute a genuine perception of something else, two requisites must be fulfilled. First, there must be a causal connection to the environment. Second, that connection must be of the *right* type: if a tree (causally!) produces in me the image of a house, that is not a genuine perception; however, if a real house produces in me the image of a house, that is a case of genuine perception. Similarly, if a state of the super-computer produces in the brain in a vat an image of a tree, that does not count as a case of genuine perception; genuine perception of a tree should be produced by a real tree in the world. However, since there are no real trees *ex hypothesi*, then there cannot be genuine perception of trees. Therefore, the brain in a vat cannot count as embodied.

This reply to the previous objection, it could be argued, is based on a false analogy between the brain in a vat and us. We know what a tree and a house look like, so we know when the right type of connections are

present, for instance when a tree produces the image of a tree; on the other hand, if a tree produced the image of a house, there would be something wrong. However, it could be said that the brain in a vat does not know what a tree and/or a house *look like*, since it only receives sensory inputs from the super-computer, inducing the image of a tree or a house, respectively. There is nothing external (a tree or a house) with which it can compare the image it has in order to determine whether the right type of connections are present. In other words, the question about the correctness of its perceptions and its causal links to the world simply does not arise for the brain in a vat. Such a question arises, and makes sense, for us, because we are considering the whole example of the brain in a vat from an outside perspective. That is, we know what a house looks like, and know that if a tree produces the image of a house, there is something wrong in the causal link. From the inside, however, the brain in a vat cannot make sense of the distinction between the wrong and right types of connection.

Even if this line of reasoning in terms of the right type of causal links between the world and the perceiver is not found conclusive, there is still another aspect of perception that will prove helpful. It is the previously mentioned idea that the object of perception is a *constitutive* part of the experience. Thus, in my perception of a tree, the objective tree itself is part of the content of my perceptual experience; my experience is, then, a world-involving experience, not an inner experience. However, in the case of the brain in a vat, what would be the content of its experiences? If, by hypothesis, there is nothing in the world at all, its experiences would be devoid of content. Furthermore, insofar as the object of perception is constitutive of the experience itself, since there is no object (ie, an objective, perceiver-independent, item in the world) of perception, then

such perceptual experiences cannot obtain at all. That is, the alleged perceptual experience of a tree had by the brain in a vat is not such, but only a hallucination induced by the super-computer.

Regarding the intentional link with the world, could it be said of the brain in a vat that it can intervene in the world, affecting the course of worldly happenings? It might be argued that since there are no objects in the world (or even, no world at all, as we know it), then it is impossible, by hypothesis, that it should be able to act upon them. Nonetheless, it might be replied, the brain in a vat could form an intention, say, the intention to sit under a tree, even if its actual occurrence could not take place. However, not even this would be possible for the brain in a vat. Our active involvement in the world is intrinsically linked to the content of our perceptions. Thus, when I see a tree, I can form the intention to sit under that tree; was I to lack direct perception of the tree, I could not intend to sit under it. What would be the content of such an intention, and where would it come from? Now, since the brain in a vat has experiences which are devoid of content (or, even more strongly, has no perceptual experiences at all), then it cannot intend to affect the world. In short, the content of our perceptions and the content of our intentions are intrinsically linked, and if the former is missing, then the latter is also affected.

The summary of this extensive discussion is that brains in a vat do not count as embodied in the sense hinted at in an earlier section, that is, in the sense of being actively involved in the world, both at the sensory and intentional levels. Now, inasmuch as this active embodiment is a necessary requirement for being a person, brains in a vat do not qualify as persons.

Chapter 5

REDUCTIONIST ACCOUNTS OF THE PERSON

5.1. INTRODUCTION

There have been two different reactions against the Cartesian model of the person as an immaterial person. First, it has been suggested that the person is reducible to a series of mental and/or physical states. Second, a number of philosophers (called here the 'No-Ownership' theorists) have also proposed the elimination of the Cartesian-like substantialist subject of experience; instead, they maintain, there are only experiences.

In this chapter, both the eliminativist and reductionist theses will be explained and, then, critically reviewed. It will be shown that both theories fail to provide a satisfactory account of what a person is: an account which could free us from Descartes's dualism. More particularly, they do not give an adequate account of the person as subject. Thus, the way will be clear for a positive account of the person in non-reductionist terms in the following chapter.

5.2. HUME'S REDUCTIONIST THESIS

Hume criticizes both the conception of the self as a substance and our talk of personal identity. He argues that the self is nothing more than a fiction, and that talk of personal identity is the result of an illusion of the imagination. Let us consider both theses in detail.

Adopting a general empiricist background, he argues that the ideas we possess are derived from corresponding impressions. From where is the idea of self derived? Bearing in mind that the idea of self is the idea of something "invariable and uninterrupted", it must come from an impression which also exists invariably and without interruption. Nonetheless, impressions, such as "pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time" (1975:162); that is, impressions do not exist invariably and uninterruptedly. Therefore, the idea of self cannot be derived from any impression. Now, if such an idea is not derived from any impression, then it is not possible that we have such an idea: it must be a fiction. Two questions arise. First, how is such a fictitious idea acquired? What is it based upon? Second, if the idea of a self (as something invariable and uninterrupted) is a fiction, what account can be given of what people are?

Turning to the second question, Hume mocks the usefulness of introspection to find the inner self:

"For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other... I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception." (162)

He goes on to say that people

"are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement." (162)

There is not a 'something' to which experiences are ascribed, but just a succession of experiences themselves (perceptions, in Hume's

terminology). The connection between the different experiences takes place according to relations of resemblance, contiguity and causality. My present experiences resemble, or are contiguous with, former experiences, which are brought to the present by the faculty of memory. In addition, my experiences also interact with each other as cause and effect: impressions bring about ideas which, in turn, give rise to other impressions. In this sense, memory is not what constitutes personal identity; rather, memory is what discovers the relations existing between experiences.

Let us return to the question about the sense in which talk of personal identity is fictitious. What is such talk based upon? According to Hume, it is based on a confusion, in our normal way of thinking, between the notions of identity and diversity. The former is the "idea of an object that remains invariable and uninterrupted through a variation of time"; the latter is the "idea of several different objects existing in succession, and connected together by a close relation" (163). However distinct both ideas are, we are tricked by the imagination into ascribing identity where there is only diversity.

Some of the causes for this confusion are suggested by Hume: when a comparatively small part of an object varies, for example, the change is ignored in favour of the unchanged part, leading us to affirm the identity of the whole; or, when there is a gradual change, the latter is not usually perceived; or, when some parts are substituted for, but both the old and new parts serve the same purpose, the substitution is ignored in favour of the common end or purpose, giving an impression of identity. Thus, Hume can conclude that

"all objects, to which we ascribe identity, without observing their invariableness and uninterruptedness, are such as consist of a succession of related objects." (165)

If talk of identity in general is a mistake, so is talk of personal identity. The assertion that I am the same person as yesterday is a mistake: properly speaking, there is a diversity of related objects (resemblance, contiguity and causality). In order to justify this absurdity, we either "feign the continued existence of the perceptions of our senses", or "imagine something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts, beside their relation" (164). Thus, the belief in an underlying substance to which experiences are ascribed is erroneous; and so is talk of personal identity.

5.3. CRITICISMS OF HUME

Two main criticisms of Hume's position will be proposed: the first one concerns his reductionist analysis of persons as bundles of experiences; the second one attacks the idea that there is not a substance-like perceiver or thinker of the experiences, that is, the idea that there is nothing over and above the bundle of experiences.

5.3.1. The bundle of experiences vs the person

Against Hume's contention that a person is a "bundle or collection of different perceptions", it can be argued that the identity conditions of the bundle are different from the identity conditions of the person: whereas a particular experience is a necessary part of a bundle, it is not a necessary

part of a person. On the one hand, the identity conditions of a bundle include every single element contained in it. If one single element was missing (or added, or substituted for), there would be a different bundle. For instance, if a bundle consists of the elements {E, E', E*}, and another bundle consists of the elements {E, E*}, then it cannot be said that the former is the same as the latter, since there is an element present in the former which is missing in the latter. Thus, every element of a bundle is a necessary part of it.

On the other hand, the identity conditions of a person do not necessarily include all the experiences had by a person. The painful experience I am undergoing at the moment does not necessarily belong to me; if I had not touched the burning pan, for example, I would not have had such an experience. Thus, the identity conditions of a person are not the same as those of a bundle of experiences. Therefore, a person cannot be reduced to a bundle of experiences.

5.3.2. Kant: the subject of experiences is here to stay

Hume is sometimes accused of failing to appreciate a crucial internal incoherence in his criticism of the idea of personal identity. Thus, the accusation goes, when he says that "I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception", his denial of the self is invalid, for it is precisely the 'I' that can never observe any thing but the perception, that he is looking for. In other words, in order to refute the notion of the self, he requires to presuppose that very same notion.

From an approach sympathetic to Hume's position, it might be replied that the 'I' which is presupposed is not the same as the notion of the self being criticized, but that the former is just a way of talking (the normal way of talking), highly influenced by the Cartesian-type account of personal identity. If so, then, Hume's problem is not so much one of internal inconsistency, but one of lack of precision: perhaps he should have made it clear that "I" and "myself" were not to be regarded as philosophically laden notions, but rather in the way in which non-philosophically minded people may use them.

However, Hume is not safe yet. Consider the following argument. According to Hume's reductionist thesis, people are a bundle of perceptions, connected through relations of resemblance, contiguity and/or causation. Thus, experiences E and E' belong to the same bundle if they are connected through some of those relations. Now, how could Hume distinguish between experiences that are connected through one or more of those relations, but do not belong to the same bundle, and those experiences that are not only so related, but also belong to the same bundle? For instance, think of two different experiences that resemble each other, are spatio-temporally contiguous, and causally related (ie, when the first experience occurs, we expect the occurrence of the second one), but whereas one of them, E_1 , belongs to bundle₁, the other, E_2 , belongs to bundle₂. Is the latter possible? If it is, how could Hume place them in the appropriate bundle, if attention to the relations between them is not sufficient? If it is not, how can Hume disallow it? It appears as if his only way out is to make reference to a subject of experience (self), a common 'something' to which the experiences are ascribed. But if this is the case, then his reductionist account of personal identity fails.

It could be maintained (in fact, it has been maintained; see Kitcher, 1990:101) that Hume was aware of this difficulty: that his account of persons as a bundle of experiences related by resemblance, contiguity and causation, does in fact presuppose the notion of the self (or mind, or subject of experiences) which is supposed to reduce and replace. In the appendix to the third book of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, he shows his uneasiness regarding this matter:

"upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*, I find myself involved in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent" (1975:173);

"there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences.*" (175-6; my underscoring)

Hume's concern is the following dilemma: on the one hand, if the sort of objection considered in the previous paragraph (ie, the lack of a way of distinguishing between those experiences that are appropriately related, but do not belong to the same bundle, and those that do belong to the same bundle) is to be avoided, then he must allow for real connections between experiences; but on the other hand, real connections cannot be allowed because they are not perceived. If he was to concede that the mind could perceive real connections, then he would be letting in the notion of a self or an individual mind through the back door.

In this context, what Kant is able to provide is that real connection between experiences lacking in Hume, a connection which is not the product of external perception, but the result of an act of the faculty of understanding. But let us take a step at a time.

Kant, like Hume, acknowledged that the introspective approach to personal identity was faulty. In Kant's own terminology, the self is not given in intuition. This, however, does not warrant a total and sceptical denial of the self, along Hume's lines. On the contrary, there must be something beyond the experiences themselves, to which the latter belong (or, are ascribed); there must be something that *really* unifies the experiences, so that a distinction can be made between the group of experiences that, being connected through relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation, belong to the same bundle, and the group of experiences that, although connected through the appropriate relations, do not belong to the same bundle.

In the *Transcendental Deduction*¹, Kant starts by talking of the "synthesis of the manifold", which refers to the idea that the unity and conjunction of the manifold (that which is perceptually received by our sense-organs in intuition) cannot be given to us by the senses (the faculty of sensibility); instead, it is the result of an act of the faculty of understanding, since unity has its origin in the subject himself, not in the objects. More simply, the result of our perception of the world lacks unity and order, since the latter cannot be found in the objects themselves, but is provided by the subject of the perception. Now, within the subject, it is not the faculty of sensibility (which is pure receptivity), but the faculty of understanding, of categories, that produces such a unity. This act by which our experiences (or rather, representations) are orderly arranged is called synthesis. Thus, the order perceived in the world is the result of the acts of synthesis applied to the objects of intuition.

The central element in the Transcendental Deduction is what Kant calls the "synthetical unity of apperception", or "transcendental unity of apperception":

"The *I think* must accompany all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought; in other words, the representation would either be impossible, or at least be, in relation to me, nothing." (130)

This is a complex thesis, but a proper understanding of it will show how Kant refutes Hume's denial of personal identity. The first point present in the above quotation is the previously mentioned idea that cognition requires both an external and an internal component. Thus, unless what is received from the outside in intuition is supplemented by an internal element of order (by an internal rule), we would have no experience at all:

"the manifold representations which are given in an intuition would not all of them be *my* representations, if they did not all belong to one self-consciousness" (131; my emphasis);

"the synthetical unity of consciousness is, therefore, an objective condition of all cognition, which I do not merely require in order to cognize an object, but to which every intuition must *necessarily* be subject, in order to become an object *for me*" (134; my emphasis).

This act of giving unity and order to the objects of intuition is an act of synthesis, as explained above. Furthermore, this act of synthesis is a necessary act, if the objects of intuition are to become objects of cognition *for me*. That is, without such a synthetical unity, what is given to me in intuition would not become an object of my experience, something to be cognized by me. Kant expressed this by saying that the "transcendental unity of apperception" is an *a priori* condition of experience. For me to have experiences is not sufficient that there be an object of intuition, but

such an object must be conceptualised, that is, brought under the categories. There is no experience without the faculty of understanding.

The unity of apperception also includes an element of self-consciousness:

"I am, therefore, conscious of my identical self, in relation to all the variety of representations given to me in an intuition, because I call all of them my representations",

"...otherwise I must have as many-colored and various a self as are the representations of which I am conscious." (132)

Self-consciousness should not be understood in the Cartesian sense of awareness of a separate entity, a self: as mentioned above, such an entity is not given in intuition. Self-consciousness is, rather, my awareness of the fact that, since all my representations are precisely *my* representations, then they must be unified under (or, ascribed to) the same numerically identical self:

"all *my* representations in any given intuition must be subject to that condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as *my* representations" (quoted in Strawson, 1966:95).

The alternative to this position is a view of the self as various and multiple, in which every representation would be ascribed to a different subject. The requirement of self-consciousness prevents this possibility. (In a more modern context, a similar position, which will be considered in detail in the next section, has been defended in terms of the notion of a momentary thinker or subject of experiences.)

To sum up, these are the ingredients of Kant's refutation of Hume. First, Hume's difficulty was the lack of real connections between perceptions.

Kant's reply consists in arguing that not only are there real connections between mental experiences, but also that those connections are *necessary* for cognition: without the synthetical unity of apperception, the representational character of my experiences (representations) could not be accounted for. That is, I could not account for the fact that they are experiences for me, that they convey information for me. The latter is not only the thesis that there could be no experiences *for me*, but the thesis that there could be no *experiences*, since the having of experiences requires the faculty of concepts. In other words, without the *a priori* unity of apperception, without a subject that produces the judgements where the synthesis of the manifold under categories takes place, there would be no experience at all. This argument is most devastating for Hume's project, for it implies that, on the one hand, if Hume's denial of the self is a denial of such a subject, then it follows that no experiences at all can be had; on the other hand, if Hume admits the existence of experiences, as he must do, then he is in fact presupposing the notion of the self he tried to do away with. In such a case, his uneasiness in the appendix to the third book of the *Treatise of Human Nature* is justified, for his own account needs the notion of the subject of experience he set out to abolish.

Second, the necessary connections between representations through acts of synthesis allow for the refutation of the view that people are a bundle of perceptions, and that nothing underlies such a bundle. The fact that certain representations are unifiable by synthesis means that they are *my* representations: they are synthesized by an act of my understanding. Thus, the difficulty faced by Hume, according to which he could not distinguish between experiences that are connected through the appropriate relations (of resemblance, contiguity and causation) but do not belong to the same bundle, and those experiences that are appropriately

connected and belong to the same bundle, is not a problem for Kant. He can use his notion of a synthetic unity of apperception, and argue that those representations (experiences) which are conjoined together by synthesis, belong to the same subject of experiences; in other words, they are *my* representations. Thus, it can be shown that Hume's reductionist thesis is mistaken, for it cannot account for the real connections between experiences, which makes up the unity of consciousness.

Third, the idea that the self can be reduced to a series of empirical laws of association (resemblance, contiguity, causation) among experiences is rejected by two more considerations. One, empirical laws of association cannot meet the requirement of universability and necessity that is needed to explain the connectability among experiences. Kant explicitly opposes the objective validity of the categories to the subjective validity of the laws of association:

"a judgement is nothing but the mode of bringing given cognitions under the objective unity of apperception ... a relation which has objective validity, and is perfectly distinct from that relation of the very same representations which has only subjective validity - a relation, to wit, which is produced according to laws of association" (136-7).

Two, it has been suggested (Hatfield, 1992) that the laws of association would be conceptually inadequate for the task concerning the Transcendental Deduction, since the former are couched in the language of factual causal relations, whereas the Deduction demands an argument cast in the language of right. That is, even if the laws of association were universal and necessary, they would only establish universal and necessary causal *factual* relations among experiences, whereas what is needed is an argument that shows the *right* or entitlement to make such relations among experiences. The latter must be *a priori*, and derives from the unity of

apperception, as explained above: without the latter, I would not be entitled to call my representations mine. Support for this view can be found in Kant's definition of 'Deduction':

"Teachers of jurisprudence ... distinguish in a cause the question of right (*quid juris*) from the question of fact (*quid facti*), and ... give to the proof of the former, which goes to establish right or claim in law, the name of *Deduction*" (119);

together with his claim that,

"all attempts at an empirical deduction, in regard to give *a priori* conceptions, are vain, and can only be made by one who does not understand the altogether peculiar nature of these cognitions." (121)

Kant's rejection of Hume is not, however, a defence of Cartesian theses, since the doctrine of the unity of apperception does not amount to a substantialist account of the person. The unity of apperception is a formal requirement, but does not make any claims about the nature of the person, the subject of experiences underlying the different representations. Consider the following quotations:

"in the synthetical unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that *I am*" (146);

"by this I, or He, or It, who or which thinks, nothing more is represented than a transcendental subject of thought = x, which is cognized only by means of the thoughts that are its predicates, and of which, apart from these, we cannot form the least conception." (308)

The result of the unity of apperception is that there is a subject to whom representations belong (or, are ascribed), and that it is the same subject for all representations. However, nothing else can be known about it, either as it is in itself (noumenon), or as it appears (phenomenon). The attempt

to infer from the unity of apperception the idea that such a subject of experiences is a simple, immaterial, identical through time, substance is a mistake, unveiled in the Paralogisms.

Kant makes clear the error of reasoning made by rational psychologists (among which Descartes may be included): they expect an intuition of the subject of thought as object, to which the category of substance (and the properties of simplicity, immateriality and identity through time) could be applied; but when such an intuition is not given, they mistake the unity of consciousness itself for the awareness of a unitary substantial being. For us to have knowledge of a substantial being, there must be something that is given in intuition. But the subject of thought cannot be given in intuition, for it is precisely that which unifies the different contents given in intuition, the unity of apperception. The rational psychologists' error consists in supposing that from the abstract formal properties regarding the subject of thought follow other properties regarding the nature of such a subject.

In summary, what Kant adds to the question of personal identity is an account of what being a subject consists in, the formal conditions of subjecthood. In this sense, he distances himself from Descartes's *Cogito* and from Hume's scepticism. Against the former, he maintains that the subject of thought is not given in intuition as an object. Against the latter, he argues that there are necessary real connections among experiences, and that a reductionist account of personal identity could not explain how it is that my experiences are *mine*.

5.3.3. Persons vs person-stages

Kant's defence of subjects of thought, beyond experiences and the relations among them, is all-important, for it allows for a distinction between two different kinds of categories in our conceptual scheme: basic particulars and those things (especially, states and processes) which depend on basic particulars for their identification. The latter distinction is in fact Strawson's (1990):

"For if we think, once more, of the requirements of identifying reference in speech to *particulars* states of consciousness, or private experiences, we see that such particulars cannot be thus identifyingly referred to except as the states or experiences *of* some identified *person*. States, or experiences, one might say, *owe* their identity as particulars to the identity of the person whose states or experiences they are." (97)

An instance of an experience of pain, for example, must be identified as someone's pain. Even when the expression 'that pain' is used ostensively to identify a particular experience, it must be short for 'the pain *you* have just felt' or 'the pain you are causing *me*', or something similar, where a reference to the person who suffers the pain must be present.

Strawson's notion of a person is not the same as Kant's transcendental subject of thought, for the former incorporates empirical properties, like the possession of a body (see Strawson, 1966:97-112, 163-9). However, a person includes the property of being a subject, to whom experiences (states and processes) are ascribed. As Strawson has powerfully argued, the identification and re-identification of the latter would not be possible without the previous identification of the former. (More on this in the following chapter.)

The notion of a person as a temporally extended subject has recently come under attack. Understanding experiences as events, Aquila (1979) has introduced the notion of *momentary thinkers or perceivers*, which "would exist precisely as long as each particular thought or perception itself exists" (113). He concedes to the reductionist that there is no persisting Cartesian-like subject of experience; but, since experiences are particular events involving particular thinkers (ie, a relation among a spatio-temporal position, an individual thinker/perceiver and the experience itself), he allows for the existence of a subject of experience.

The key element here is the notion of a momentary thinker. What is the difference between the notion of a subject of experience in Strawson's terms and that of a momentary thinker? In other words, what is the difference between a person and a person-stage? Persons have persistence conditions over time: they occupy room in spatial, as well as in temporal, dimensions. Person-stages, on the other hand, are time-slices of people; that is, people at a certain time. On Aquila's account, the momentary thinker to whom a certain experience is ascribed at t is different from the momentary thinker to whom a different experience is ascribed at a later time t' , even if both count as the same person in Strawson's terms.

An interesting consideration here is that the notion of a person-stage is dependent on the notion of a person. (See Noonan, 1989:122ff.) In many respects, a person-stage can undergo the same experiences as a person, particularly if they are of an instantaneous nature. For instance, both persons and person-stages can be said to have a toothache, in the sense that at a precise time t they suffer from toothache. There are, however, certain actions, such as running a marathon and reading a book, which could be ascribed to a person, but not to a person-stage, since they involve

a process which requires longer periods of time. Therefore, 'longish' actions cannot be ascribed to a person-stage. This means that, as far as the ascription of experiences is concerned, person-stages are secondary with respect to persons: person-stages are those persons to whom 'longish' actions (in general, 'longish' experiences) cannot be ascribed.

A major difficulty for person-stages is the ascription of memory experiences. Memory experiences are ascribed to people because the same person who claims to remember something (from the inside, from a first-person perspective) was present at the time when the remembered experience occurred. However, if person-stages do not have conditions of persistence over time, then they cannot claim to remember anything.

It could be argued that the above criticism relies too heavily on the actual notion of memory, and that a new notion, that of *q*-memory, could be introduced. Parfit (1975) has defined it in the following terms:

"I am *q*-remembering an experience if (1) I have a belief about a past experience which seems in itself like a memory belief, (2) someone did have such an experience, and (3) my belief is dependent upon this experience in the same way (whatever that is) in which a memory of an experience is dependent upon it." (209)

That is, where Strawson would say that a person remembers something that happened to him, the reductionist may say that person-stage₂ *q*-remembers something that happened to person-stage₁. In the latter case, the fact that it is the same person is not presupposed: a certain *q*-memory experience could be attributed to a subject different from the subject to whom the experience occurred. Therefore, the notion of a momentary subject of experience could be rescued.

A feature of first-person thought is that certain inferential (as opposed to causal) relations hold between different thoughts. For instance, from the thought that I am F and the thought that I am G, can be inferred the thought that I am F and G. No further premises concerning the identity of 'I' are needed. First-person memory claims follow the same pattern: from the thought that I see so-and-so, the memory claim that I saw so-and-so can be inferred, without the need for any premises stating the identity of the person in question. It is a feature of I-thoughts that they span over a period of time: the 'I' who had the experience is the same as the 'I' in the memory-experience. Therefore, if the subject of experience is understood as a momentary subject of experience, then he would not have first-person memories.

The strategy of this argument is not a direct attack on the notion of q-memory. Instead, there is an appeal to the characteristics of first-person thought. Therefore, it can be concluded that a momentary subject of experience would not be able to entertain first-person memory thoughts, not because of the logic of 'remembering', but because of the logic of I-thoughts.

In fact, this point can be analogously extended to the whole reductionist project of personal identity. According to Hume, the relations among mental states are causal. However, it could be suggested, causal relations alone will not suffice to explain the complexity of people's mental life. Consider, for instance, the relation between an intention to do something and the action that follows. It is not simply that intention *I* causes action *A*; it is, rather, that intention *I* involves a commitment to do action *A*. This means that intention *I* must typically be followed by action *A*, and that if the former was followed by action *A'* instead, it will be said that *A'* is not

the right sort of action. For example, if I signal for a left turn while driving (that is, I make my intention to turn left public), and then fail to do so, I can be reprimanded for not doing the right thing. In short, then, the idea of a commitment² built into the notion of an intention cannot be explained in causal terms; the notion of commitment is a normative one. Therefore, there are normative relations among mental states. To the extent to which a reductionist account fails to include them as part of people's mental life, the reductionist project is a failure.

5.4. A SECOND REDUCTIONIST THESIS: PARFIT

As has been mentioned, according to Hume, there are three types of relations between experiences: resemblance, contiguity and causality. It has also been said that the existence of these three types of relations among certain experiences does not guarantee their belonging to the same bundle. A particular example of this objection will now be described, and then the proposal suggested by Derek Parfit to meet that objection will receive critical attention.

Imagine that I am daydreaming, when a very loud thump suddenly wakes me up, and that the same happens to my friend daydreaming next to me. My daydreaming and my waking up, two different experiences, belong to the same bundle, Hume would argue, because they are contiguous. (Incidentally, 'my' in 'my daydreaming' and 'my waking up' should not be regarded as implying ascription of experiences to persons. In what follows, the notation is changed so as to avoid the charge of begging the question.) Since my friend also undergoes the same experiences as me

(first, daydreaming, and then, waking up), couldn't my friend's waking up (let us call it 'waking-up₂') be associated with my daydreaming (let us call it 'daydreaming₁')? In other words, since daydreaming₁ is contiguous with both waking-up₁ and waking-up₂, why is it the case that daydreaming₁ and waking-up₁ (and daydreaming₂ and waking-up₂) are collected together in the same bundle? As far as the three types of relations mentioned by Hume are concerned, daydreaming₁ and waking-up₂ (and daydreaming₂ and waking-up₁) could belong to the same bundle. Parfit's solution is to make the experiences dependent on a body: daydreaming₁ and waking-up₁ belong to the same bundle because they depend on the same body. Let us examine this view.

It is Parfit's contention that the unity of consciousness can be explained in an *impersonal* way, that is, without reference to persons. He maintains that "these two unities [the unity of consciousness at any time, and the unity of a whole life] must be explained by describing the relations between these many experiences, and their relations to the person's brain" (1984:217). That is, the core of this reductionist project lies in the fact that he questions the existence of a subject of experience to whom experiences are ascribed. More precisely, he holds that, in one sense, we are subjects of experience, but he denies that "the subject of experiences is a *separately existing entity*, distinct from a brain and a body, and a series of physical and mental events" (1984:223).

A case of a conception of persons as separate entities is the Cartesian view of the Pure Ego. Parfit endorses Lichtenberg's criticism that Descartes was wrong when he stated his 'I think, therefore, I am'; instead, he should have favoured an impersonal description, like 'It is thought: thinking is going on'. It could nonetheless be objected that, if several

thoughts are expressed in this impersonal manner, there would be no way of distinguishing whether they belong to the same person or not; and that, therefore, reference to persons is necessary.

Parfit's answer is the relativization of experiences to a particular life: some experiences belong to a certain life, while other experiences do not. But is this not an effective relativization to persons, only using another name? In other words, are lives not identified by previously recognizing persons, that is, as the life of a person? No, they are not, since the individuation of a particular life is relative to a particular body, not to a person. Thus, where Lichtenberg said 'It is thought:...', Parfit proposes instead 'In the particular life that is now directly causally dependent on body A, it is thought:...'. Thus, Parfit concludes, the unity of consciousness can be accounted for in an impersonal way, in terms of the interrelations between the mental and physical events constituting a person's life (which is dependent on a certain body).

5.5. CRITICISM OF PARFIT: EXPERIENCES ARE ASCRIBED TO PERSONS

This section will oppose the reductionist's claims that there is a basic level at which talk of persons is unnecessary, and that the causal relations among experiences, causally dependent on a body, can provide an account of personal identity. It will be argued that experiences, *qua* particular experiences, are necessarily owned by a person. This point, though, should not be confused with the causal dependence of experiences on a body. People's visual experiences depend on their body, because they see

through their body's open eyelids, because the orientation of their body's eyeballs and the location of their body itself condition their field of vision. However, this is different from the ascription of visual experiences to a body. Visual experiences are causally dependent on a body, but they are ascribed to a person. That the two questions are different is something that Strawson affirms:

"They [the sort of facts considered above] explain why I feel peculiarly attached to what in fact I call my own body; they even might be said to explain why, granted that I am going to speak of one body as *mine*, I should speak of *this* body as mine. But they do not explain why I should have the concept of *myself* at all, why I should ascribe my thoughts and experiences to *anything*." (93)

The reductionist would oppose Strawson's account and insist on the fact that he is talking of an impersonal level, where persons are unnecessary. At that level, it is argued, experiences are ascribed to (or owned by) a body. An argument supporting the reductionist's position could be that non-human animals can also be ascribed such experiences as pain. If this is so, why should the ascription of experiences to persons not be understood as the ascription of experiences to a human body (in the same way in which ascription of experiences to animals are regarded as ascription of experiences to non-human bodies)?

It could be replied that the analogy with the ascription of experiences to animals is not a valid model. Certainly, such experiences as pain are easily ascribed to animals: in particular, to animals which are closer to us, like dogs or cats, although its ascription to other animals, like green flies, is not so straightforward. Moreover, there are other types of experience, particularly those connected with first-person thought, such as shame or pride (see Campbell, 1992:390), or the previously mentioned

autobiographical memory, which are not so easily ascribed to animals. It is a feature of the ascription of shame (or pride), and memory experiences, that self-consciousness is required on the part of the subject to whom the experience is ascribed. For me to feel ashamed (or proud), I must be aware of myself as the person who has done something wrong (or praiseworthy). In this sense, it could be maintained that it is difficult to say of an animal that it feels ashamed (or proud) *of itself*.

Nonetheless, some people may want to argue that certain animals (particularly, those closer to us) appear to behave as if they felt ashamed after telling them off (perhaps, they go to a corner and lay on the floor hiding their tail and looking sad). They may be inspired by certain experiences with apes, who have not only been taught to associate their names with the word 'pain', but are also able to play a little trick on the experimenter, so that, under certain circumstances, they learn to indicate someone else's name if it means that they themselves will be rewarded first. This sort of evidence is said to support the claim that animals are self-conscious. Could we say that those animals are self-conscious in the same sense in which people are self-conscious?

This question could be debated for quite some time. What is clear is that those who may want to ascribe experiences of shame and pride to animals, could do so by defending that the latter possess a certain degree of self-consciousness and are, therefore, subjects of experiences, in the same way that people are. That is, they would argue that animals, in that respect, are like people. What they could not conclude, though, is the reductionist claim that experiences can be ascribed to bodies, instead of persons. Animals would not be ascribed experiences *qua* bodies, but *qua* subjects of experience, that is, insofar as they are like people. Therefore, the

reductionist fails in his claim that ascription of experiences to animals offers a model on which an impersonal account of the ascription of experiences could be constructed.

A source of the problems faced by the reductionist may be that he is misled by the fact that the boundaries of the person coincide with the boundaries of the material body, and mistakenly takes the latter to be the real subject of experience. The distinction between the material and the sensory/intentional bodies discussed in the following chapter may shed some light on this issue.

Before this question is abandoned altogether, though, it might be useful to pay some attention to a counter-example against the idea that experiences are identifiable-dependent on a subject of experience. Zemach (1975) considers the possibility that there may be a person with psychic powers, who may be able to 'feel' (ie, know about) somebody's distress without knowing who the person is (perhaps the other person is in a different room, and the psychic has never met him). After some time, the example goes, the psychic may feel the same distress again, realizing that it is the same feeling as before, and may identify who is suffering the experience - the person sitting next to him, say. Therefore, Zemach concludes that "it is not necessary that we identify feelings by reference to some previously identified person", and that "it is false that a feeling of some person must be imagined as belonging to the same person in all the possible worlds in which it exists" (123).

What Zemach's example shows, if anything, is that a person endowed with psychic powers could know about someone's distress without knowing who the person is. What it does not show (contrary to what Zemach

seems to believe) is that such a distressful experience could exist without a bearer. It is clear that such an experience is someone's, even if the person in question is not (yet) known. Therefore, the example has not succeeded in showing that experiences are independent of a subject of experience. On the contrary, it helps to show that, even if those with psychic powers could 'feel' experiences in such a way, such experiences would belong to someone. The thesis that identification of experiences is dependent on the person who has them is not a temporal thesis (it is not about what occurs first: the experience or the person), but a conceptual one: it stresses that experiences must have a bearer. Zemach's example is similar to the following: speaking on the phone to an unknown person (perhaps one is working for 'The Samaritans'), one can identify someone else's distress without knowing who the distressed person is. However, that does not mean that the distressful experience exists without the person who suffers it.

To be more precise, it could be suggested that the thesis about the necessity of a subject of experience concerns experience-tokens, not experience-types. Experience-types (like an experience of distress or a thought that $2+2=4$ as used in a lecture by a psychiatrist or a mathematician, respectively) are not ascribed to a person. But as soon as reference is made to a particular experience of distress, the question 'whose experience is it?' is one that must be answered. In short, it is conceptually true that experience-tokens are ascribed to a person.

5.6. AN ELIMINATIVIST THESIS: THE NO-THEORY

The 'No-Ownership' theory (or, NO-theory) is said to have been defended by Wittgenstein (1969:67), when he suggests two different uses of first-person pronouns, like 'I' or 'my': the use as subject (in 'I have a toothache' and 'I see so and so'), and the use as object (in 'I have a bad tooth'). The fundamental difference between both uses is that while the 'I' in the latter sentence can be replaced by (and, therefore, refers to) 'this body', the 'I'-as-subject does not refer to anything in the world; there is nothing of which it can be said that has a toothache or sees so and so.³

The NO-theorist distinguishes two senses of 'ownership': first, there is ownership by a body (causal dependence of experiences on a particular body); second, ownership by a Cartesian-like Ego. The former type of ownership is contingent: what is owned by a particular body *B* could have been possessed by a different body *B'*. The latter type is necessary, since the experiences of an Ego *E* could not have belonged to *E'*. However, the NO-theorist denies the existence of an Ego behind the body. Therefore, only the first type of ownership exists: experiences are contingently owned by a certain body.

The main tenet of the NO-theory, then, is the non-referentiality of 'I'; that is, the idea that the 'I' in the 'I'-as-subject use does not denote an object in the world. Anscombe (1981), has expressed it in the following way: the 'I' in thoughts like 'I am standing', 'I see a variety of colours', or 'I jumped' is not a name or any other type of referring expression.

Malcolm (1979) undertakes the task of identifying four different ways in which the 'I' could have been a referring expression, none of which works. The first proposal is that 'I' denotes *this body*. It is rejected, though, because it is possible to think of a certain case in which I am in a state of sensory deprivation, so that I cannot obtain any information about my body. Such a situation does not mean that I lack consciousness of myself, because I could say to myself 'I won't let this happen again'. But, then, if such a thought makes sense, 'I' cannot refer to my body, since I am in a state of sensory deprivation. What is the referent of 'I', then?

Malcolm's second proposal, following Hume's insight, is that 'I' refers to *a bundle of experiences* (sensations, thoughts, feelings, and so on). Two alternatives are open: first, 'I' refers to each different thought, or sensation, which forms the bundle; second, 'I' refers to something underlying those thoughts and sensations. In the former case, if 'I' refers to every single thought, then the referent must be changing all the time, but that may seem to differ from our use of the pronoun 'I': does it really denote an ever-changing referent? In the latter case, if there is something else that underlies the different experiences, there must be a way of unifying such experiences; but, what is the unifying principle?

This leads to the third alleged referent of 'I': *a person*. When I say, Malcolm argues, that 'I am standing up', I mean the same as when I say 'NM (Norman Malcolm) is standing up'. A problem arises here. If 'I' referred to a particular person (NM, for instance), I might mistake the referent. For example, I might falsely think that I am EA, and not NM, with EA's origin and history. In that case, then, if I said 'I am standing up', I would mean 'EA is standing up'. But my thinking that I am EA would not have any influence on the truth (or falsity) of such a proposition. That

is, it would be a true proposition if *I* am standing up, independently of whether 'I' refers to EA or to NM (however different their histories may be). In short, 'I' in 'I am standing up' cannot mistake a person for another; however, if 'I' stood for a person, such a mistake would be possible. Therefore, 'I' does not refer to a person.

The fourth proposal is a *Cartesian Ego, Soul or Self*. An initial objection can be posed in the following terms. When Descartes affirms that 'I am a thinking thing', does 'I' refer to just one thinker, or to ten thinkers thinking in unison? A second objection questions whether there is a conception under which 'I' is included, in the same way in which London is a town or the Nile is a river. So far, the idea that such conception is a human body or a person has been rejected; could it be a self?

Anscombe's own suggestion (and Malcolm's too) is that 'I' is not a referring expression. In that case, the proposition/sentence 'I am NM' is not an identity proposition/sentence, because 'I' is not an object that can be identified (or misidentified) with the object NM. There is no conception under which 'I' falls; there is only use. That is, the difference between 'I' and 'NM' is that while 'NM' falls under a conception (a person), and has a referent in the world, 'I' does not fall under any conception and does not refer. The latter distinction between conception and use can be made clear with an example. If somebody asks a room full of people, 'who is NM?', I can either say 'I am' or raise my arm; both responses have the same purpose, the same use.

5.7. CRITICISM OF THE NO-THEORY

5.7.1. Immunity to error through misidentification

As seen previously, there is a passage where Wittgenstein proposes the distinction between two different uses of the word 'I': the use as subject (in 'I have a toothache', 'I see so and so'), and the use as object (in 'I have a bad tooth', 'I have a bump on my forehead'). The difference between both uses is that 'I' in the use as object refers to a material object, a particular body (in fact, 'I' can be replaced by 'this body': 'this body has a bad tooth', 'this body has a bump on its forehead'), while 'I' in the use as subject does not refer to anything. Thus, since 'I' identifies an object in the former use, the possibility of misidentification is open, whereas such a possibility does not arise in the latter use:

"One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying: The cases of the first category involve the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error, or as I should rather put it: The possibility of an error has been provided for. [...] It is possible that, say in an accident, I should feel a pain in my arm, see a broken arm at my side, and think it is mine, when it is really my neighbour's. And I could, looking into a mirror, mistake a bump on his forehead for one on mine. On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have a toothache. To ask 'are you sure that it's *you* who have pains?' would be nonsensical."
(1969:67)

In the Wittgensteinian tradition, immunity to error through misidentification appears to be linked to the non-referentiality of the word 'I': since 'I' does not refer to any object in the world, 'I' cannot be misidentified. Immunity to error through misidentification is a

consequence of the fact that there is nothing to be misidentified, because 'I' does not refer.

There is another tradition, exemplified by the work of Evans (1982) and Shoemaker (1984), where both theses are distinguished. In the following discussion, an attempt will be made to show that the thesis that 'I' is immune to error from misidentification does not necessarily lead to the idea that 'I' lacks a referent in the world. Therefore, the immunity to error through misidentification of 'I' does not commit one to the NO-theory. Furthermore, it will be argued that, unlike Wittgenstein's characterization, immunity to error through misidentification is not only a feature of mental self-ascriptions ('I' in the use as subject), but also of bodily self-ascriptions. Therefore, the referent of 'I' cannot be a Cartesian Ego, a thinking thing, but a person, understood as a subject of both mental and bodily self-ascriptions (see 6.2. below). The following explanation stems from Evans's account of demonstrative thought, and is intended more as a tentative gesture than as a fully worked-out theory.

Evans's account goes as follows. First of all, he proposes a distinction between identification-dependent and identification-free knowledge. Let us explain what identification-dependent knowledge is by means of an example. When the knowledge that my neighbour is German is the result of two propositions: one, that Petra is German, and two, that my neighbour is called Petra, it is said that my knowledge is dependent on a previous identification of the form $a=b$ (where a and b are two different Ideas; in this example, Petra and my neighbour). On the other hand, when knowledge is not identification-dependent, then it is identification-free.⁴

Identification-free judgements, unlike identification-dependent judgements, are immune to one kind of error: since they do not involve an identification component, they are immune to the possibility of error through misidentification. For instance, the judgement 'I see so and so', obtained in the process of normal perception, is not an inference from two such other judgements as 'someone sees so and so' and 'I am that person'; it is an identification-free judgement, and, therefore, immune to error through misidentification. This means that I could be mistaken about what I see, but not about that fact that *I* see it.

The argument required to show that 'I' in 'I see so and so' is immune to error through misidentification is the following. In cases of demonstrative identification, there is an information-link between the object in question and the thought entertained by the subject about that object. Such an information-link, however, may not be sufficient to identify the right object. For example, when a man is seen on television, the information-link does not provide us with the ability to pick up the right person (namely, the person giving the report on television, perhaps hundreds of miles away, and not the person inside the television set, as some people, unfamiliar with the mechanisms of television, may think). What is needed to have discriminatory knowledge about the object in question is the ability to locate it in space and time. Once its spatio-temporal location is available, we will know which object is taking part in demonstrative thoughts (like the thought that this man is bald, when referring to the man giving a report on television). Demonstrative thoughts (like, this man is bald) are identification-free: on the one hand, there is discriminatory knowledge about the object present in the thought (this man); on the other hand, there is a direct link subject-object not mediated by an identification component.

I-thoughts, being sorts of demonstrative thoughts, are information-based. This means that the thought that I see so and so is based on information I can obtain about myself. Due to the information I can obtain about myself, I can self-locate myself in the spatio-temporal order.⁵ Therefore, I-thoughts are identification-free: there is discriminatory (self-locating) knowledge about the object involved, and such knowledge is direct, not mediated by any previous identification.

The feature of immunity to error through misidentification follows suit: if there is direct discriminatory knowledge about the object involved in I-thoughts, then there is no possibility of picking up the wrong person. Immunity to error through misidentification, then, is a consequence of our way of gaining knowledge about the world and ourselves, knowledge which is identification-free; it is not a consequence of the fact that 'I' does not refer.

5.7.2. The case of bodily self-ascriptions

On Wittgenstein's account, immunity to error through misidentification is only found in the 'I'-as-subject sentences. Since 'I' in the 'I'-as-subject use does not refer to any object, there is no possibility of misidentification. On the other hand, 'I' in the 'I'-as-object use refers to a particular body, so that the possibility of misidentification arises; therefore, 'I' in the 'I'-as-object use is not immune to error through misidentification.

Shoemaker (1984b) distinguishes between two types of immunity to error through misidentification. On the one hand, there is absolute immunity in

sentences like 'I see a canary': it cannot be the case that I misidentify the person who sees a canary (it cannot be the case that it is someone else, although I think it is me). On the other hand, there is circumstantial immunity in sentences like 'I am facing a table': I could be deceived by a set of mirrors, so that it may seem to me as if I am facing a table, but the truth is that it is someone else who faces the table. Here, there is circumstantial immunity because, depending on the circumstances, the possibility of error through misidentification may appear. Nonetheless, sentences which have circumstantial immunity may be transformed into others with absolute immunity: thus, the sentence 'I see a table in the centre of my field of vision' has absolute immunity; it is immune whatever the circumstances.

Evans (1982) argues that immunity to error through misidentification is also a feature of bodily self-ascriptions. It has already been explained how immunity to error through misidentification follows from our discriminatory knowledge about the world; in particular, from our knowledge of ourselves. Now, our knowledge about ourselves includes both our bodily and mental properties. Therefore, it may appear that both bodily and mental self-ascriptions are immune to error through misidentification. Let us consider this in more detail.

There are two ways in which we can obtain information about our bodily properties. First, knowledge based upon the proprioceptive sense, the sense of heat and cold, the sense of balance, and so on; knowledge which can be expressed in sentences like 'I am hot', 'I am falling down' and 'my legs are crossed'. When this knowledge is obtained in the normal way and under normal circumstances (ie, banning such possibilities as being told by someone else, or being under the effects of drugs, etc), and the subject has

discriminatory (spatio-temporal) knowledge about the object in question, it does not make any sense to ask 'someone is hot, but is it me who is hot?', or 'someone's legs are crossed, but are they my legs?'. It must be stressed that Evans is only interested in the knowledge of bodily properties that is obtained in normal conditions; unusual circumstances are banned from the very beginning. The result is, then, what Shoemaker calls absolute immunity to error through misidentification.

There is, on the other hand, knowledge about our position, orientation and relation to other objects, based upon our observation of other objects. For instance, 'I am in front of a tree', because I see it; or 'I am over the coast of France', when seen from an airplane. In these examples, it does not make any sense to say 'someone is in front of a tree (or over the coast of France), but is it me?', when such knowledge is obtained in the appropriate way and under normal circumstances.

It could be replied that the following situation is possible. Imagine a rugby match in which the players are trying hard to get possession of the ball, so that they end up on top of each other. One of the players suddenly feels a pain and sees what he thinks is his left hand bleeding, and says to himself 'my arm is bleeding; I won't be able to go on playing'. When he finally manages to stand up, he realizes that his hand is OK, and sees that one of his team-mate's hands is bleeding. Is this not an error of identification concerning bodily self-ascriptions?

Evans's reply would be that it is not an error of misidentification, but a malfunctioning of the perceptual system. Under normal circumstances, when the person's perceptual apparatus works properly, such an error would not be committed: people do not usually mistake their arm for that

of their neighbour. The above example, however, is not normal, because the player's perceptual mechanism fails. What happens is that, first, the player feels the pain in his left hand, probably because it is being squashed by other players; he, then, sees the bleeding hand, associates the blood and the pain, and rashly concludes that it is his hand. The malfunctioning may be attributed to the improper match between the painful sensations coming from his hand and his visual perception of a bleeding hand.

Similarly, if someone wore a pair of glasses which were connected by radio waves to someone else's brain, so that he did not see what was in front of him, but what was in front of the other person, he would be mistaken in saying 'I am facing a table', for instance, if he in fact was not. However, this is not a counter-example against Evans's thesis, because Evans is explicitly affirming that bodily self-ascriptions are immune to error through misidentification when the information is obtained in the normal way. The latter example of the wired up glasses, as well as Shoemaker's set of mirrors (1984b) and the case of the rugby player, do not meet this requirement of normality.

It should be noted that the reticence to accept that bodily self-ascriptions are immune to error through misidentification seems to lie in a resilient Cartesianism: the idea that I could have had a different body, whereas I could not have had a different self. That is, I can be mistaken about my bodily self-ascriptions ('I have a bad tooth') because the 'I' in them is not properly me; it is only my body. Strictly speaking, I am only the 'I' in such mental self-ascriptions as 'I see so and so' and 'I think such and such'. Therefore, I can commit an error of misidentification in my bodily self-ascriptions; in fact, how can I be sure that I am not wearing a pair of wired up glasses, as in the example above? Such an error, though, cannot be

committed in mental self-ascriptions: it is *me* who sees and thinks. Therefore, in order to resist Cartesianism, immunity to error through misidentification must be applied both at mental and bodily levels.

Chapter 6

A NON-REDUCTIONIST ACCOUNT OF THE PERSON

6.1. INTRODUCTION

After the foregoing criticism of the NO-theory and the Humean and Parfitian reductionist theses, a non-reductionist account of the person will be suggested. The main advantage of a non-reductionist approach is that the person is regarded as a whole, and both mental and physical characteristics are equally valued. There is a balance between the Cartesian preference for the mental features of the person, and the physicalist view of the person as a series of physical states. There is also a balance between the immutable Cartesian Ego and the critique of substantialist accounts in reductionist or eliminativist terms.

In this chapter, the main tenets of the non-reductionist position will be exposed. Thereafter, and bearing in mind that one of the central purposes of this work is to defend the necessity of embodiment to be a person, the relation between a person and his material body will be studied in detail.

6.2. THE NON-REDUCTIONIST THESIS

6.2.1. Person as a logically primitive concept

'Being primitive' is a relative notion: something is primitive with respect to something else. In this sense, a person is primitive with respect to a mind

and/or a body. "The concept of a person", says Strawson, "is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness. The concept of a person is not to be analyzed as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima" (1990:103). The aim of this proposal is to go beyond the deadlock resulting from the widely accepted division of the person into mind and body (or mental and physical characteristics). Instead of starting with the mind and the body as the initial notions and, then, arriving at the idea of a person as a conjunction of the two, the process is reversed: the person is the starting-point, the logically primitive concept, and the mental and physical characteristics make sense only in relation to the person. A person is a different category altogether: not a mind, not a body, and not a sum of both. (See Ishiguro, 1980.)

6.2.2. M- and P-predicates

Although it is claimed that the person is not reducible to a series of mental or physical states, it is surely true that people have both bodily and mental characteristics. So, how is a person to be defined? Precisely as that type of being to whom both bodily and mental properties can be ascribed. Two different authors have suggested:

"the individual concerned, including oneself, should be of a certain unique type: of a type, namely, such that to each individual of that type there must be ascribed, or ascribable, *both* states of consciousness *and* corporeal characteristics." (Strawson, 1990:104)

"Our customary use of 'I' simply spans the gap between the mental and the physical, and is no more intimately connected with one aspect of our self-conception than the other";

"a person is no more a thinking thing than a bodily thing" (Evans, 1982:256, 261).

According to Strawson, there are two types of predicates ascribable to people: M- and P-predicates. M-predicates, like 'weighs ten stone' or 'is in the drawing-room', are those predicates which can also be ascribed to material bodies that lack consciousness; for instance, it can be said that the table weighs ten stone, or that the table is in the drawing-room.

P-predicates, on the other hand, are those predicates not ascribable to material bodies. They can be subdivided into two groups. The first group includes those P-predicates which do not ascribe states of consciousness, although consciousness is presupposed in the being to whom they are ascribed. An example is 'is going for a walk', which can be ascribed to such conscious beings as people, cats or dogs. The second group is formed by those P-predicates which ascribe states of consciousness, like 'is in pain', 'is thinking hard' or 'believes in God'.

It could be said that Strawson's characterization of M- and P-predicates does not provide an exhaustive definition of a person. In particular, some of the P-predicates he mentions are not uniquely ascribed to people: such predicates as 'is in pain' or 'is going for a walk' are also ascribable to dogs or cats. Moreover, for some P-predicates (like 'is smiling', or 'is going for a walk') it is not even necessary to be a person, since someone can be a person even though he may be unable to smile or walk about. (See Moulder, 1973; and Williams, 1973c.)

It is true that Strawson's position is by no means perfect. For one, he fails to provide an appropriate account of the status of animals, somewhere in between persons and material bodies. On the other hand, though, it is not a shortcoming that he does not give strict necessary and sufficient

conditions for something to be included in the category 'person', since it could be argued that he never attempted to do so. His account is a reaction against two traditions: the Cartesian tradition, which maintains that persons are pure Egos, with no essential material features; and the reductionist tradition, for being an inadequate way of dealing with Cartesianism. Against these, Strawson maintains that a person has *both* corporeal and mental (or psychological) characteristics. Thus, in affirming that M-predicates are ascribable to a person, he is simply saying that a person has something in common with other material objects. In arguing that people are those beings to whom both M- and P-predicates can be ascribed, he distinguishes them from material bodies (and, it could be added, from animals, once the necessary qualifications are incorporated¹). Therefore, this account succeeds in opening the door to a whole new approach to the concept of a person, where the latter is not secondary with respect to the notions of body and mind.

The spirit of Strawson's account can also be found in Evans's analysis of the concept of a person. Like Strawson, although adopting a first-person point of view, Evans says that there are two types of predicates a person can ascribe to himself: bodily and mental predicates. Among the former are those predicates of which knowledge can be obtained through the person's proprioceptive sense (like, 'my legs are crossed'), his sense of heat and cold, or his sense of balance (like, 'I am falling down'). Among the latter are included predicates regarding beliefs or visual experiences.

This dual component is very important, for it supports the special status of persons as beings in the world: on the one hand, persons, like other material objects, have corporeal characteristics which are essential to them; on the other hand, they have certain features not possessed by other

material things. The details of P-predicates ascription will now be considered.

6.2.3. The logical features of P-predicates

The central aspect of P-predicates is that their ascription to oneself is logically linked to the ascription of the very same predicates to other people. That is, one would not know how to ascribe a certain P-predicate (like 'is in pain' or 'is depressed') to oneself, unless one knew the circumstances under which that very same predicate could be ascribed to others. Or, as Strawson himself puts it,

"It is a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way one does, that one should also ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them, to others who are not oneself" (1990:99).

On this account, then, and unlike the solipsist or behaviourist positions (which regard first- or third-person ascription, respectively, as the logically primary type of ascription), self- and other-ascription lean on each other, so that neither of them is logically primary.

The conditions for the ascription of P-predicates, although logically related, is different in the first and third persons. One ascribes P-predicates to others in the presence of adequate behavioural criteria, while one does not ascribe them to oneself on the basis of such behavioural criteria. Or perhaps it should be pointed out that not all P-predicates follow this dual way of ascription, but "it is true of some important classes of P-predicates, that when one ascribes them *to oneself*, one does not do

so on the strength of observation of those behaviour criteria on the strength of which one ascribes them to others" (Strawson, 1990:107).²

The following example will make things clearer. Consider the P-predicate 'is depressed'. As far as its self-ascription is concerned, one ascribes it to oneself without having to rely on the observation of one's own external behaviour. As far as its other-ascription goes (eg, 'Peter is depressed'), one relies on Peter's behaviour (apathy, lack of energy, melancholic look) in order to ascribe such a predicate to him. Therefore, 'is depressed' is one of those P-predicates whose ascription is different in the first- and third-person, although logically linked.

The point made by Strawson in terms of predicate-ascription can also be established at the level of thought, in terms of what Evans calls the *Generality Constraint* (1982:100). Evans understands the entertaining of a thought as an addition of two abilities: one concerning the Idea of an object; the other concerning the concept of a property (in the thought that a is F (Fa), a is the object and F is the property). The Generality Constraint can be expressed by saying that the entertaining of a thought, like a is F, lies at the intersection of two series of thoughts: one, a is G, a is H, and so on; the other, b is F, c is F, and so on. Entertaining a thought, then, is an ability (or a sum of two abilities), in the sense that one should know what it means to ascribe other properties to the same object, and what it means to ascribe the same property to other objects. For example, the thought that Peter is British cannot be entertained unless one knows what is meant by (and is ready to entertain) such thoughts as John is British, Mary is British, on the one hand; and Peter is English or Peter is a student, on the other hand.

The Generality Constraint, as a condition for the possession of thoughts, establishes that, for someone to be able to ascribe a certain predicate to himself, he must also be able to ascribe it to other people. The application of the predicate 'is depressed' to oneself is conceptually linked to the ascription of that very same predicate to others. Furthermore, the Generality Constraint is valid not only for mental ascriptions, but also for bodily ones. The thought that *I* am in front of the cupboard, for instance, implies the ability to ascribe such a property ('being in front of the cupboard') not only to people, but also to dogs, fridges, and so on.

6.2.4. One objection

Many objections have been made against non-reductionist accounts of the person. The one that follows has been singled out because it goes against the core of the non-reductionist approach. Kjaergaard (1969) has criticized the view that persons are logically primary (with respect either to a disembodied person or to a body). His argument goes as follows:

- (1) according to Strawson, there are two basic particulars: material bodies and persons;
- (2) he also claims that a person has or possesses corporeal characteristics (a body);
- (3) he argues that a disembodied person lives only a secondary existence, dependent on his previous embodied existence;
- (4) therefore, persons are not basic particulars, since they depend on material bodies for their identification;
- (5) therefore, material bodies are the only basic particulars.

The point of this objection is that the non-reductionist position, as it is defended by Strawson, is incoherent, because, although he maintains that persons are basic particulars, his following discussion of the nature of persons shows that they are not (at least, if the consequences of his arguments are followed to the end).

But, what is a basic particular? The notion (briefly mentioned in the previous chapter) is introduced in the context of an opposition to reductionist analyses of the person. There, a distinction is made between things and states or processes (of things), the difference being that the former can be identified (or re-identified) by themselves, whereas the identification of the latter depends on the prior (in the sense of conceptually prior) identification of the things whose states or processes they are. As discussed in the preceding chapter, identification of a pain requires the prior identification of the person whose pain it is. "Hence, given a certain general feature of the conceptual scheme we possess, and given the character of the available major categories, things which are, or possess, material bodies must be the basic particulars." (Strawson, 1990:39)

Kjaergaard's objection seems to rely on the following analogy. In the same way in which identification of a pain depends on the identification of the person who bears the pain, identification of a person depends on the conceptually prior identification of a material body. Therefore, neither pains nor persons are basic particulars; only material bodies are. From here, it is only a small step to the view that persons are material bodies; a step taken, for instance, by Williams (1973b).

What has to be shown, in order to resist this conclusion, is that persons are different from material bodies. One way of doing this is to argue that if persons were material bodies, then personal names and pronouns would be interchangeable *salva veritate* with expressions referring to a person's body; and, then, look for contexts in which substitution does not only not preserve the same truth-value, but also contexts in which substitution is illicit, because it breaks semantic conventions (eg, 'NN is proud of his body' and 'NN's body is proud of his body'). This leads to the conclusion that persons are categorically different from material bodies. This line has been taken, in a recently published paper, by Glock and Hyman (1994).

The argument to be developed here, though, consists in an analysis of the relationship between a person and his material body. A simpler model of such a relationship will be proposed, one which will help us to understand the differences between a person and his material body. In the course of doing so, the discussion will prove crucial in making the notion of a person's body more precise.

6.3. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A PERSON AND HIS MATERIAL BODY

6.3.1. Definitional connection

According to certain materialist theories, the connection between a person and his material body is *definitional*: that is, a person is defined in terms of his material body; a person is identified with a particular material body. What does this amount to? Wittgenstein (see Pears, 1988) offers the

following considerations regarding the connection between a person and his body. Although it is true that a person cannot exist without a body, the definitional connection does not capture that in which the relationship between a person and his material body consists. First, it makes sense to say of a person that he can change his body. Second, there are two lines which connect a person with the world: one going from his perceptual organs to his centre of consciousness; the other, from his centre of consciousness to the organs that implement his behavioural reactions in the world. As a matter of fact, both lines run through the same body, but they could be disrupted and attached to two different bodies. Therefore, Wittgenstein/Pears conclude, a person is not identical with his material body.

In the next few pages, both the idea that a person can change his material body, and the latter possibility of a disruption in a person's connection to the world will be considered. It will emerge that there are two ways in which a person's embodiment can be analyzed.

6.3.2. Presuppositional connection

Let us suppose that (A) somebody's personal line is broken in a *consistent* way, so that such a person always speaks through someone else's mouth. Since it might be protested that this description of case (A) begs the question (for two different persons are said to be involved), it will be re-described in the following way: there is somebody who, for example, feels a pain in a certain body's leg (let us call it 'body₁'), although he manifests the pain through the mouth of a body ('body₂'), distinct from the body in which the pain is felt. One way of coping with this example would be to

suggest that such a person has two bodies: one for his perceptual, and one for his behavioural, interaction with the world, respectively. A problem for this proposal would be the paradoxical fact that the person would appear to be located in two different points in space, but the paradox may be solved by specifying whether one is referring to the location of the person's perceptual organs (perceptual body), or to his behavioural organs (behavioural body).

Let us further suppose that (B) someone's personal line is broken in a completely *chaotic* manner, so that he feels pain in different, unpredictable legs, and manifests the pain through unpredictable mouths, different from the bodies in which he feels the pain. Could it be said that such a person has a body, although scattered in different places? What would be the limits of that person's body? And how could we identify and re-identify his body, and the person, in such anomalous circumstances?

In order to grasp what is going on in both (A) and (B), let us compare them with the situation of a normal person. In the normal case, there is, it has been suggested, an unbroken personal line which runs through a single material body. This is what Pears refers to as the *presuppositional* connection between a person and his body:

"It is a familiar fact that, when a person's right hand is hurt, there is a line running into the seat of his consciousness and out again to his mouth. He says 'I am in pain', and though the word 'I', as used by him, does not mean 'this body', it does presuppose the integrity of this personal line. There has to be a connection running back from the mouth that speaks through the seat of the consciousness of the pain to the injured part of the body." (252)

So far, then, the difference between the normal case and (A) seems to be that in the former the personal line flows along one single body, while in

the latter there is a personal line running from one body ('body₁') to the seat of consciousness and out to the other body ('body₂'). In (A), it could be said, there is one single person (one personal line) with two material bodies. (When the notion of sensory and intentional embodiment is introduced in a later chapter, it will be possible to argue that in the normal case, unlike in (A), the person's sensory and intentional levels of embodiment take place in the same material body.)

In (A), then, the relative similarity with the normal case allows for the presupposition of a personal line, although one that involves two material bodies. In (B), however, the relative similarity existing between (A) and the normal case totally disappears. There is no way of telling where the personal line begins and ends. Since chaos is total, there is no way of determining how the person's sensory and/or intentional links with the world are instantiated. The presuppositional connection is, therefore, lost. The question about how many material bodies there are cannot be answered; that is, our concept of person, body and the relation between them cannot be applied to such cases as (B).

6.3.3. The unique role of my body

Pears argues that the fact that people may be able to change their bodies shows that the definitional connection between person and material body is not valid. But, what does it mean to say that people can change their material bodies? And, does this model support the view that people's connection to their material bodies is not definitional?

An initial problem for this model seems to be that, rather than helping Wittgenstein/Pears to find an alternative to the Cartesian and definitionalist accounts, it results in an embarrassing dilemma. If having a particular material body is not necessary for people to be who they are, that is, if people can change their material body and still be themselves, then the Cartesian position appears to be vindicated. If people can leave their actual material body, acquire a new one, and still be themselves, then somehow they are so detached from their body that what they are is independent from what their body is.³ However, the Cartesian danger aside, arguing that a particular material body is necessary for someone to be the person he is, and that he cannot change his body without being a different person altogether, apart from sounding too extreme (people can in fact change part of their material bodies in transplants and surgery, and still be themselves, with perhaps minor changes of personality), somehow suggests that people are material bodies. But the latter is precisely the definitional view being resisted here.

In order to find a way out of this dilemma, it is important to make a distinction between ownership of material body, and ownership of such things as clothes, a car, and so on. People do not own their body in the same way in which they own a house or some clothes. Therefore, they cannot change their body in the same (easy) way in which they change their clothes.

But, if 'my' in 'my body' does not signify ownership, what does it signify? 'My' stresses the special and unique role that a particular material body plays for a person. 'My body' means that, of all the different bodies in the world, this particular one is specially significant for me, because it is the one on which my experiential contact with the world causally depends.

This amounts to saying that I obtain information about, and act upon, the world through this particular body: its position, for instance, conditions what I shall perceive as well as what I can do.

Wittgenstein says something that is relevant here: "the man who cries out with pain, or says that he has pain, *doesn't choose the mouth which says it*" (1969:68). That is, once he feels pain, he can only express it (if he wants to do so) through a particular mouth. There is no range of possibilities, from which he chooses the mouth he prefers; nor can he express his pain through different mouths on different occasions. This is due to the fact that a certain mouth is *imposed* on him, rather than chosen by him. In general, it could be said that our own body is similarly imposed on us, and we have no alternative: we interact with the world through that particular material body. Such a body is unique because it is the only one given to us; because it is the only one on which our experiential contact with the world (both at sensory and intentional levels) depends. This special relationship between a person and his material body could be called 'metaphysical ownership', as opposed to the legal ownership that characterizes the relation between a person and his many possessions, like his car or his clothes.

This distinction between legal ownership and causal dependence turns out to be crucial in avoiding the previous dilemma; the Cartesian half of the dilemma, in particular, can be avoided. First, talk of metaphysical ownership should be understood as causal dependence of a person's experiences on a particular body. Second, if talk of ownership of body is not logically on the same level as ownership of (say) clothes, neither is change of body on the same level as change of clothes. Furthermore, our body is imposed on us, rather than chosen or changed at will. In

consequence, the alleged Cartesian gap between Ego and body is not a gap: a special and close connection exists.

These considerations have important consequences for the terms in which the matter at hand is expressed. The question is whether people could possibly change their body. But the latter question cannot be asked, because there is no choice open to people in the first place; instead, their body is something given. Therefore, viewing the problem as an alternative between possibility/impossibility of change of body is incorrect: both options are based on the mistaken assumption that people own (ie, legally own), rather than causally depend on, their body. This line of enquiry, therefore, fails to show that the relationship between a person and his material body is not definitional.

Something positive that emerges from the previous discussion is the idea that there are two ways in which the notion of a body can be taken: first, the body as the link between person and world, that which makes the person's experiential interaction with the world possible (in previous sections, this was called the sensory/intentional body); second, the body as a material entity. Such a distinction appears clearly in the example (A) above, the case of a person whose causal interaction with the world was dependent on two different material bodies, instead of one; that is, the person's sensory and intentional body was instantiated in two different material bodies. The case (A), then, makes explicit two levels that might be confused in the normal case: the sensory/intentional level of embodiment, and the material level of embodiment.⁴

Thus, some accuracy can be introduced to the question regarding the connection between a person and his body. According to the

definitionalist view, people are their material body. Those who defend a presuppositional link, on the other hand, refer to the fact that people have a sensory and intentional body linking them to the world. At first sight, both types of connection seem to be compatible. What remains to be seen is whether the relation between a person and his material body is definitional. In the next section, a different type of relation will be outlined.

6.3.4. The relationship between a person and his material body

Is the relation between a person and his material body one of constitution? Consider the case of a statue and the amount of clay it is made of. The relation between statue and clay is not one of identity, because different criteria of identity apply to the statue and to the amount of clay: even when the statue no longer exists (perhaps it has been broken), the clay is still there. The pile of clay after the breakage is not (the same as) the statue, but is (the same as) the clay that made up the statue. Could it be a relation of constitution? A definition of constitution could go along the following lines: x constitutes y at t if, and only if, x could be a substratum of y 's destruction (see Doepke, 1982). According to this, the relation between statue and clay counts as one of constitution, since the pile of clay remains after the destruction of the statue.

Lowe (1989) has tried to apply this model to the relation between person and body. First of all, though, he considers whether living organisms (like oak trees) are constituted by parcels of matter. The answer is affirmative: the stuff that makes up a living organism can continue to exist after the destruction of the organism itself. Thus, since a human being (a member

of the species *homo sapiens*) is a living organism, then human beings are constituted by parcels of matter.

An important feature of the relation of constitution is that it is not a contingent relation. If the relation of constitution were contingent, then living organisms, although material, need not be constituted by a particular parcel of matter (a particular collection of material particles), as opposed to a different parcel of matter. But since the relation of constitution is not contingent, then, living organisms are essentially material, where an essential property is one which an individual cannot lose without ceasing to exist.

Bearing this in mind, and allowing for a distinction between a person and a human being, Lowe asks himself whether or not the relation between a person and the human being that person is is one of constitution. Consider the following argument:

- (1) constitution is a transitive relation;
- (2) constitution is not a contingent relation;
- (3) since human beings are constituted by matter, then they are non-contingently material;
- (4) if persons were constituted by human beings, then they would be non-contingently material; that is, they would be essentially material;
- (5) immaterial persons are possible;
- (6) therefore, persons are not constituted by human beings or by matter.

Lowe's main obstacle for accepting (6) is his endorsement of the conceptual possibility of immaterial persons: persons are not essentially

material, since loss or lack of materiality does not mean loss or lack of existence. However, premise (5) in Lowe's argument need not, and will not, be accepted by those who share the sort of considerations offered in previous chapters, where arguments against the possibility of disembodied persons were proposed.

A different objection against the view that a person is constituted by his material body is that it amounts to analyzing the person into more basic components. Thus, persons would lose their status as basic particulars, becoming reducible or analyzable into other more basic elements.

At this point, and although already discussed earlier in this chapter, it is worth remembering the distinction made by Strawson between basic and non-basic particulars. In order to define what counts as a basic particular, two features are stressed. First, no private particulars (such as experiences and sensations) can count as basic, because their identification (and re-identification) is dependent on other particulars: the person whose experience or sensation it is. Second, basic particulars must be observable, so that theoretical constructs (like particles of physics) are excluded: "it is clear enough that in so far as we do make identifying references to particulars of this sort, we must ultimately identify them, or groups of them, by identifying reference to those grosser, observable bodies of which perhaps, like Locke, we think of as the minute, unobservable constituents" (1990:44). What counts as a basic particular, then? Basic particulars are publicly observable objects in the spatio-temporal order, such as chairs, dogs or persons; that is, those "things which are, or possess, material bodies" (39).

According to this, the statue in the example would be a basic particular: it is a material body whose identification is not dependent on anything else. Would the clay that makes up the statue be a basic particular? No, because identifying reference to it depends on the object (the statue) that it constitutes. If we ostensively referred to it as 'that clay over there', meaning 'that amount of clay', we could still ask 'do you mean the clay of the statue?' (or, to clarify matters, 'I mean the clay of the statue'). Therefore, something (like the statue) can be a basic particular independently of whether it is constituted by something else. Questions of constitution cut across questions about basic particulars.

A reply to the objection that a person does not count as a basic particular if such a person were constituted by his material body is that persons are basic particulars because their identification is independent of the conceptually previous identification of other objects, not because they are not constituted by other elements. That is, persons would still be basic particulars even if they were constituted by material elements (material body).

There is still an objection against the view that the relation between a person and his material body is one of constitution. It goes as follows. In the example of the statue, there is nothing else that makes up the statue apart from the clay; that is, the statue is a parcel of matter (clay) with a certain shape. In the case of the relation between a person and his material body, though, there is more to being a person than just having a body: a person has psychological characteristics, too. However, if the relation between person and material body was modelled on the relation between statue and clay, it would seem as if the psychological attributes of the person had been left out. The objection is that whereas constitution

exhausts the relation between statue and clay, it does not exhaust the relation between person and material body. Therefore, if the former is a relation of constitution, then the latter only *resembles* it to a certain degree.

This objection, however, is not decisively fatal, because the case of the statue and the clay has been intended simply as a guide in the discussion, not as a perfect model. In this sense, there are many similarities between the relation statue/clay and the relation person/material body. One, the identity conditions of the person and of his material body are different: after death, when there is no longer a person, there is still a body; therefore, their relation is not a matter of simple identity.

Two, identifying reference to the material body of a person is conceptually dependent on the person whose body it is (like reference to the clay depends on the identification of the statue); in this sense, neither the clay nor the material body are basic particulars. Therefore, it is concluded that, although it is true that such material bodies as chairs and dogs are basic particulars, this does not support the move that persons are not basic particulars. Kjaergaard's objection was based on the analogy between the identification-dependence of pain on people and the identification-dependence of people on their body. However, a more detailed examination has shown that, similar to the case of the statue, it is the person's material body that depends on the person, and not vice versa. Thus, persons are basic particulars, not identical with their material body.

Before this chapter is finally drawn to an end, it might be worth making it clear that the foregoing analysis of the relationship between a person and his material body is not intended as a reductive analysis (or even as

opening the door to a possible reductive approach). It can certainly be argued that talk of persons and personal identity at the intentional level is in itself enough, and need not be matched by a parallel non-intentional level of discussion. The self-sufficiency of the former, as an interpretive schema different from the scientific one, is something that will pervade the whole of this thesis. Nonetheless, the analysis of the relationship between a person and his material body is pertinent at this point as a way of showing that Kjaergaard's objection (ie, that material bodies are conceptually previous to persons) is mistaken, thus reinforcing the idea that persons are categorically distinct from material bodies.

Furthermore, this discussion of the relationship between a person and his material body is the perfect introduction for the following chapter. Returning to the necessity-of-embodiment thesis, and after having rejected the identification between a person and a material body, a new definition of embodiment will now be proposed. As sketched in chapter 4, it is a notion that will pay attention to the active involvement of the person in the world. More importantly, it will be the beginning of the promised reconciliation of the subjective and objective sides of the problem of personal identity.

Chapter 7

DEFINITION OF EMBODIMENT

7.1. DESCRIPTION OF TYPES OF EMBODIMENT

In the first place, there is what might be called 'normal' embodiment; ie, the body that includes all the sensory and motor mechanisms (limbs, eyes, ears, and so on) of a normal person. A person who possesses this type of body will be called 'the maximally embodied person'. Such a person is not just a stipulated entity: it is the actual person in the actual world. It is the maximally embodied person because a person who possesses a more complete body cannot be found in the actual world¹. In a different possible world, the notion of maximum embodiment may include all the elements of a maximally embodied person in the real world plus other features (perhaps, a new sense or a greater number of limbs.)

Using the above notion as a starting point, other types of embodiment can be characterized. In particular, cases of amputation. These cases can be defined in terms of the above standard notion: amputated embodiment is the notion of a body that lacks one or more of the features that characterize 'normal' embodiment. Since such a body can lack one or more organs, the notion of amputated embodiment admits of degrees: lack of eyes, lack of eyes and ears, paralysis in limbs, and so on. An extreme case of amputation might be the paralysed person who also lacks sensory perception of the world. The latter could be considered 'the minimally embodied person'. (A matter of further discussion will be whether there is embodiment in such a condition.)

7.2. TWO NOTIONS OF EMBODIMENT

Two notions of embodiment emerge from the previous descriptions. The first one will be called *paradigmatic embodiment* (the term is borrowed from Shoemaker, 1976), and includes two requisites: sensory and intentional embodiment. A person is sensorily embodied if such a person is causally connected to his environment, so that the latter produces in him experiences which are true perceptions of his surroundings. Analogously, a person is intentionally embodied if such a person is causally connected to his environment, so that the person's intentions to act produce appropriate responses from his body in order to bring about changes in his environment. Thus, if a person is both sensorily and intentionally embodied, then such a person is paradigmatically embodied.

Both cases of 'normal' embodiment and cases of amputated embodiment (parasitic on the former) are examples of paradigmatic embodiment. The paralysed person who is cut off from sensory perception (and perhaps the brain in the vat), though, would not count as an embodied person, since he lacks both the perceptual and the intentional links with the world. According to such an account of embodiment, the minimally embodied person is not embodied at all.

The notion of sensory/intentional embodiment proposed above is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the phenomenal body, as opposed to the objective body. The body conceived of objectively is the physical object, made up of flesh and bone, comprehensible by the natural sciences (medicine, physics, etc). The phenomenal body, though, is the

body as it is presented in our own personal experience, at the level of sensation, perception, and action. It is, for instance, the body we know to have been stung by a mosquito, and exactly where, without having to look for the bite. For a blind person, for instance, the stick with which he 'touches' things as he walks about is part of his phenomenal body.

An important feature of the phenomenal body is that it is not an object, at least in the traditional sense of object, like a chair or a fridge. Merleau-Ponty offers several considerations in his attempt to show the non-objective status of the phenomenal body:

- i. the phenomenal body is always present to us, whereas worldly objects are sometimes absent;
- ii. the phenomenal body is an affective 'object', whereas external things are just the object of my representations: in the case of pain, for instance, the phenomenal body is the place where I feel the pain, whereas the cause of the pain is the external object;
- iii. in kinaesthetic sensations, it appears clearly that I move external objects *with* my body, whereas I move my phenomenal body directly (I do not move my phenomenal body with something else, as if it was an external object);
- iv. in the case of my phenomenal body, I do not have to look for it in order to know where it is, unlike external objects (eg, where I have been stung by a mosquito).

That my phenomenal body is not an external object in the world does not imply that it is distanced from the world itself; on the contrary, it is what opens the person to the world:

"The [phenomenal] 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, to identify oneself with certain projects and to be continually committed to them." (1962:82)

"The body is our general medium for having a world." (146)

"I become involved in things with my body, they co-exist with me as an incarnate subject, and this life among things has nothing in common with the elaboration of scientifically conceived objects." (185)

Now, this opening of the person to the world through his phenomenal body is not the sort of opening available through knowledge. It is not an intellectual opening, but a vital one, in the sense that the world available is a world of meanings (eg, verbal meanings in speech):

"A certain experience of touch felt in the upper arm *signifies* a certain feeling in the forearm and shoulder along with a certain appearance of the same arm ..." (151; my emphasis).

"Whether a system of motor or perceptual powers, our [phenomenal] body is not an object for an 'I think', it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium." (153)

The second notion is that of *biological embodiment*: a person is biologically embodied if his brain is in the skull of his body, and stands to it in certain relationships which do not exclude paralysis, blindness and so on (Shoemaker, 1976). According to this notion, the paralysed person who is cut off from sensory perception counts as embodied.

What is the relation between both notions of embodiment? Could either of them be said to be primary with respect to the other? Shoemaker offers two considerations in favour of the view that paradigmatic embodiment is primary. First, the notion of biological embodiment makes sense only by comparison with the notion of paradigmatic embodiment. This can be

shown in the following way. The notion of biological embodiment is based on the identification of the brain as the centre of the person's consciousness. The brain has the key functions of controlling and organizing the perceptual inputs coming from the environment, as well as bringing about appropriate behavioural responses to such inputs, such as movement of limbs and articulated speech. Now, the fact that somebody's brain may function despite paralysis and perceptual deficiencies (ie, that somebody may be biologically embodied) appears intelligible only because such a case is understood on the model of other cases in which the brain's functions include the control of perceptual inputs and behavioural outputs (ie, cases of sensory/intentional embodiment).

The second reason is derived from the fact that, in normal circumstances, cases of paradigmatic embodiment are also cases of biological embodiment. For instance, 'normal' people (ie, those who have been described as maximally embodied) have their brains inside their skulls, standing in certain relationships to their bodies: they are both biologically and paradigmatically embodied; they are not just biologically embodied.

This is the reason why a case of biological embodiment without any degree of sensory/intentional embodiment is difficult to find in the actual world. It is possible to imagine, and talk about, a paralysed person who is cut off from sensory perception, but could such a person actually be found? It is also possible to make up a story, and entertain the possibility of a world in which a disease paralyses people's limbs and makes them deaf, blind and cut off from any kind of sensory perception; such a person, however, would have an intact brain, not damaged by the disease, inside his skull (Shoemaker, 1976:112-3). Such a person would have a brain and the physiological appearance of a body, although it would not function like

one (there would be no movement of the limbs, no perception of the world). It would be like a perfect replica of a human being.² But, can instances of biological embodiment be found in this world?

An example of biological embodiment might be the person in a comatose state: external appearance of a person, but no sensory and/or intentional interaction with the world. Or perhaps there is still some kind of connection to the world! It has been reported that when people wake up from a coma, they claim to have been able to hear something. If this were the case, it would not be a case of genuine biological embodiment, because a small degree of sensory connection to the world would still remain. There are also cases of deeper coma, which last for years, with no apparent sign of recovery. In this state, people's eyes are open, and there are visible blinks and face twitches, but these are not taken to imply some sort of interaction with the external environment. On the contrary, a look at these comatose people's EEG (encephalogram) indicates that there is not enough activity going on in their brains to suggest that perception or purposeful action occur.

This prompts the question about the functions carried out by the brain of a biologically embodied person, bearing in mind that they are not perception- or action-related. What counts as an instance of biological embodiment may be clearer, if an answer to this question could be found. This is the task undertaken in the remaining sections of this chapter.

7.3. THINKING AND EMBODIMENT

It could be maintained that the function of the brain is thinking, and that thinking can take place in the absence of any sensory or intentional interaction with the world; therefore, a biologically embodied person could still think. Under the name 'thinking' many different things are usually included: "solving problems, remembering, planning what one is expecting to do, planning what one is about to say, imagining things, considering opinions, making judgements" ('Nervous System', in Gregory, 1987:530ff). Some sort of analysis is required here.

Two different cases of thinking can be distinguished: on the one hand, thinking about a philosophical problem; on the other hand, thinking how to move a heavy object from one place to another. The former is a mental or theoretical exercise; the latter is a practical one. While the former may be said to take place in one's head (or, brain), without the involvement of anything external, the latter will include such things as measuring the distance, weighing the object, trying to lift the object to feel how heavy it is, and so on.

7.3.1. Practical thinking and embodiment

In relation to this second sense of thinking, it is necessary that the person in question be connected to the world: first, he must be able to perceive the object, the distance, the obstacles in his path, in order to imagine or visualize the alternative ways of carrying out the task; second, he must decide which is the best way of doing it, and physically carry it out (ie, use

his hands and arms to lift it up, walk carefully minding the obstacles, perhaps changing slightly his previously decided route, until he reaches his destination). Only when the object has been moved, has the action of thinking been accomplished.

The point of this example is to argue that thinking is not only something that happens in the brain, without the need for anything else, so that as long as the brain works properly, thinking still takes place. There is a sense of thinking according to which the person who thinks must be causally connected to his external environment, so that inputs can be received from the world and outputs sent back to the world; that is, such a person must be sensorily and intentionally embodied. According to this, the paralysed person cut off from sensory perception cannot think how to move an object from one place to another: on the one hand, he can neither perceive the object, nor the distance, nor the obstacles; on the other hand, he cannot actually move the object. In a state of biological embodiment, then, it is not possible to think in this practical sense.

It may be objected that the previous account of practical thought is too strong, and does not leave room for other more general cases. The foregoing description of the steps taken by somebody who intends to move an object from one place to another is a very detailed one. However, somebody may form a more general intention to do something. For instance, a magician could form the intention to move a mountain in the abstract, as in a fairy story. He simply intends to do it and the mountain disappears, without having to worry about the distance, the obstacles, or anything.

The reply to this objection will follow a similar line as a point made in the discussion of Penelhum's views (see 2.2.3. above). It will be argued that general intentions do not make sense unless modelled on more specific ones. The idea that a magician can have a general abstract intention to move a mountain is intelligible because there are other more specific cases, where objects are moved from one place to another through intermediate steps. It is because these specific cases are the model that the magician's example can be understood, as a case where the onerous intermediate steps can be missed out. Therefore, if specific cases are primary with respect to the general ones, then the thesis still holds that in a state of biological embodiment it is not possible to think in the practical sense.

7.3.2. Theoretical thinking and embodiment

Could theoretical thinking be possible in a state of biological embodiment? It may appear so, since theoretical thinking takes place, as it were, in one's head. Working out an addition, or solving a philosophical problem, appears to be something that can be done without the causal connection to the world required in practical thinking. In support of this, we have the example of paralysed people (or people suffering from other sensory deficiencies) who get university degrees, and manage to achieve far better results than many so-called 'normally' embodied people. Theoretical thought, then, could occur in the absence of any sensory and/or intentional interaction with the world.

First of all, it must be observed that paralysed people are not completely disconnected from the world, that is, they are not instances of biologically

embodied people. They might be unable to move their limbs, but they are still sensorily connected to the world; or they might not be totally paralysed, so that they can find (unusual) ways of responding to the perceptual inputs coming from the world. In this sense, they should be regarded as cases of amputated embodiment, that is, as a sort of defective paradigmatic embodiment, and not as instances of biological embodiment. If this is the case, it cannot be concluded that theoretical thought could occur in a state of biological embodiment, simply because there are paralysed people who get university degrees.

An argument will now be sketched in defence of the necessity of a strong sense of embodiment (ie, sensory/intentional embodiment) for theoretical thinking. Wittgenstein spent considerable time and effort in arguing that following a rule requires a community of rule-followers³. A man in isolation could not follow a rule, for there would be no criteria of correction: correct would simply be what seemed correct to him. However, if there is a community of rule-followers, although something may seem correct to a single individual, it may not be so. The criterion of correction is in the community, not in the individual himself. In this view, then, without a community, there would be neither rules, in particular linguistic rules, nor meaning, nor language.

If these arguments could be analogously applied to the level of thought, then it could be concluded that a community is required for engaging in theoretical thought; that is, without a community of people, there would be no rules, in particular rules of thinking, and therefore, no thinking. Since biologically embodied people are cut off from the world (both at the sensory and intentional levels), they are also cut off from the community of people and are, therefore, in isolation. In such a state, then, there

would be no room left for the notions of rule, language or thought. Therefore, paradigmatic embodiment is necessary for theoretical thought.

The problem with this argument is how far the analogy between language and thought can be pressed; in particular, the similarity between linguistic rules and rules of thought. An example of the latter are such rules as the modus ponens; or, in general, what might be called rationality constraints (which may include the law of non-contradiction as well as the idea that one typically acts on one's intentions, for instance). Rationality considerations constrain the way people think: people do not typically hold contradictory beliefs, for instance. In this sense, these constraints are rules just as much as linguistic rules are. What is not so clear, though, is the connection between rationality constraints and a community of thinkers. At the linguistic level, the connection is made through the form of life: language and meaning emerge from the shared form of life of the community (think, for instance, of the way in which sensation-words become meaningful), so that without a community there would be no language. Are rules of thought similar to linguistic rules in this respect, or are they different in the sense that the same rules of thought may apply to different communities with different forms of life? Are Martians, for example, subject to the same rationality constraints as we are?

In a wider context, the problem could be taken to be the relation between language and thought. Is it possible to think without language? It is obviously the case that people sometimes think without expressing their thoughts, but would it be possible to think *always* without language, or to think before one learns a language? Wittgenstein (1963:329ff) tried to show the intimate connection between language and thought. In particular, he opposed the view that there is a gap between thought and its

translation into language, as if one first had a thought and, then, translated it into a language. Speaking of translation, he argues, is misleading here. It is not the case that a particular thought is first entertained in some sort of neutral way and, then, expressed in English (or Spanish, or any other language). Consider the following quote:

"This case is similar to the one in which someone imagines that one could not think a sentence with the remarkable word order of German or Latin just as it stands. One first has to think it, and then one arranges the words in that queer order. (A French politician once wrote that it was a peculiarity of the French language that in it words occur in the order in which one thinks them.)" (para 336)

When first learning a foreign language, like Spanish, pupils are encouraged to 'think in Spanish', as opposed to first thinking in English, and then make the translation into the other language; on many occasions, the latter procedure will fail to deliver an adequate Spanish sentence. It is not just a peculiarity of French that the word-order in a sentence is the same as the order of thought. Thus, thought is not divorced from language.

In short, then, there is ground to argue in favour of the close relation between language and thought. Wittgenstein's arguments at the linguistic level could be extrapolated to the level of thought: without a community of people, there would be no rules, no language and no thought. People must be 'embodied' in the world; that is, sensory/intentional embodiment is also required for theoretical thought.⁴

Apart from this Wittgensteinian way of understanding the necessary requirement of a community as a group of fellow language-users (rule-followers), there is also a more 'natural' way of interpreting it; that is, as

the causal relations between external objects and the perceiver/thinker. As mentioned earlier (see 2.2.1.), the content of a perceiver's experiences comes from the external, objective world, through a series of lawful causal relations. Thus, my perceptual experience of a tree is the result of a causal link between an objective tree in the world and myself. Similarly, the content of a person's thoughts comes from the external world, as a result of a causal link (or a series of causal links). For example, my thought that there is a tree in front of me is the consequence of a causal relation between an external tree situated in front of me, and myself (who, through my working visual apparatus can appreciate the state of the world). Moreover, the causal link between world and thinker is not only, as it were, inwards (from the world to the thinker), but also outwards (ie, from the thinker to the world). For instance, after perceiving a tree in front of me, I can intentionally decide to pick some apples. What this amounts to is the necessity of sensory/intentional embodiment for thought, in general; that is, a causal connection between the person and the world both at the sensory (inwards) and intentional (outwards) levels. Thinking, not even theoretical thinking, could not take place unless in a state of sensory/intentional embodiment, for the content of one's thoughts comes from the world, and the content of such other mental phenomena as decisions and intentions leads to the world.

7.4. SLEEP AND BIOLOGICAL EMBODIMENT

The case of the sleeping person as a possible case of biological embodiment will now be examined. The sleeping person, it might be argued, is not paradigmatically embodied in the sense in which a person

who is awake (perhaps the sleeper himself when waking up) is: on the one hand, he is not sensorily connected to his environment in the sense of having experiences causally produced by external objects (or, at any rate, not as often or as intensely as the experiences of the person who is awake; some sounds, for instance, may seem to go unnoticed, since he does not react to them); on the other hand, he does not act upon the world, either. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it must be made clear that the distinction made here is between the person who is awake, who is *actually* paradigmatically embodied, and the one who is asleep, who is *not actually* so, since he is not sensorily or intentionally connected to the world at that time. Therefore, if the sleeping person is not a case of paradigmatic embodiment, then he might be treated as a case of biological embodiment, for his brain is in his skull, standing in certain relationships to his body. But, what are those relationships between the sleeping person's brain and his body? This section will analyze what goes on in the sleeper's brain in order to see whether he could count (while asleep) as an instance of biological embodiment.

One alternative is the idea that, even while asleep, there is thinking going on in a person's brain. Malcolm (1959) has criticized this position. He distinguishes between thinking and dreaming, and affirms that the sleeping person does not think, but dreams. There are two main arguments he puts forward in support of his view. According to the first one, there is a criterion for dreaming, whereas there is no criterion for thinking. Two possible criteria for dreaming are considered. One is the behaviour of the sleeping person: if he moves in bed or manifests other types of behaviour, then he could be said to be having a dream; if, on the contrary, he is still, it should be concluded that he is not dreaming. The other criterion is the person's testimony after waking up, that is, the fact that he tells a dream.

Lack of dream-behaviour, however, does not establish that the person did not dream, since he could well wake up and tell a dream. Therefore, the person's report when waking up is the criterion for dreaming; and the content of his report is the content of his dream.

A word ought to be said about what a criterion is. The criterion for dreaming is not a definition of what a dream is. It is rather what determines whether the sentence 'he dreamt' (or 'he had a dream') is true or false. Malcolm's view is that such a sentence is true if the person tells a dream when waking up, and false if he does not. Similarly, then, Malcolm concludes, there are no criteria for thinking in sleep. There is no way of knowing that the sentence 'while asleep, I thought carefully about what you said last night and solved the problem' is true. However, the sentence 'last night, I dreamt I solved the problem that worried you' is true, because the person is telling a dream.

The second argument goes as follows. Thinking requires consciousness; that is, the person who thinks must be aware of what he is doing. However, a sleeping person is unconscious. Therefore, a sleeping person cannot be aware of (the content of) his act of thinking in sleep. Dreaming, however, does not require consciousness: "When someone says that he dreamt so and so, he does not imply that while he was sleeping, he was aware of being asleep or was aware of dreaming" (66). Therefore, it is impossible to think while asleep. The experiences had by the sleeping person are called 'dreams', which means precisely that they are not the kind of experiences had by the awake person (among which might be thinking).

Malcolm's views on what counts as the criterion for dreaming encounter a crucial problem, the fact that it is possible to have dreamt even though no story may be told when waking up. Many people find it difficult to say what they dreamt about the night before, and even whether they had dreams or not. However, scientists studying sleep tell us that people dream most nights. If this is the case, Malcolm's criterion turns out to be too narrow, unable to account for those cases where people dream, although they do not tell a dream after waking up.

From the analysis of sleep in scientific laboratories emerge new considerations about what the criterion for dreaming is. Two different periods can be distinguished in sleep: NREM (No Rapid Eye Movement) and REM (Rapid Eye Movement) periods. REM sleep is characterized by two kinds of components: jerky eye movement, limbs twitches, face twitches, middle-ear muscle twitches, and sudden respiratory changes are the so-called 'phasic' components; muscle relaxation and penile erections are the 'tonic' components. It is currently thought that dream elements are injected intermittently with phasic components. Thus, it is argued that the occurrence of REM sleep is the criterion for dreaming. One of the advantages of treating REM sleep as the criterion for dreaming is that the duration of dreams could be measured in physical time: dreaming occurs when there is REM sleep, and lasts for as long as the period of REM sleep.

Malcolm, in fact, opposes this view.⁵ What is relevant to the discussion in this section (whether or not the sleeping person is an instance of biological embodiment) is the fact that having a dream cannot be identified with thinking. Dreaming occurs in REM sleep, and not in NREM sleep. What is the difference between both periods of sleep? How is the latter to

be characterized? In an experiment carried out by Foulkes (see 'Dreaming', in Gregory, 1987:201-3), different people were woken up and asked the question 'what was passing through your mind?' (instead of the more biased one 'what were you dreaming about?'). Those who were in a REM period before waking up told a dream, whilst those in a NREM period were more vague in the description of their experiences. The latter experiences were not dreams, and have been characterized as 'thinking'. More experiments have been carried out that confirm this duality of experiences in sleep. What is not clear, though, is what this 'thinking', present in NREM sleep, involves.

From the considerations in the previous section, it follows that, since the person in a period of NREM sleep is not a case of paradigmatic embodiment, he cannot think in the practical or theoretical senses mentioned above. So, what is meant by 'thinking' here remains unclear.

Should it, then, be concluded that the sleeping person (either in a period of REM or NREM sleep) is a case of biological embodiment? If the description of the sleeping person as *not actually* sensorily and/or intentionally connected to the world is right, that may appear to be the appropriate conclusion. However, as in the case of people in a state of coma, sleeping people (at least, in some period in their sleep) might still, at some deep level, keep their sensory channels of connection to the world open; in that case, then, they would not count as clear-cut instances of biological embodiment. That they do in fact keep their sensory channels to the world open follows from the fact that people wake up when hearing the buzz of the alarm-clock, or when abruptly shaken (although, on some occasions, they may fail to do so). Consider the following quotation by Merleau-Ponty:

"It is true that this last link makes waking up a possibility: through these half-open doors things will return or the sleeper will come back into the world. [...] In this sense, the sleeper is never completely isolated within himself, never totally a sleeper, and ... never totally cut off from the intersubjective world" (1962:164).

It must also be borne in mind that the dream-experiences occurring during sleep are dependent on the perceptual experiences of the awake person. The structure of the argument should be familiar by now. The content of the dream-experiences is the same as the content of the perceptual experiences, and must come from the external world through a series of causal links. Therefore, dream-experiences require a strong sense of embodiment, which guarantees the possibility of causal relations to the objective world.

7.5. CONCLUSIONS

1. The inability to find clear-cut instances of biological embodiment is symptomatic, because it suggests that biological embodiment is not a real type of embodiment. That is, examples can be made up (like the story proposed by Shoemaker), but there cannot be real people who are biologically embodied, but not sensorily/intentionally embodied. The ultimate reason why the sensory/intentional body is primary with respect to the biological body is, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, that the person is an "incarnate subject", a being existing, or rather living, in the world. 'Living' implies the idea of a vital, meaningful, relation that takes place between person and world, both at the levels of perception and action. Thus, a person who is not sensorily/intentionally embodied, is an impossible

notion: a person is necessarily a being-in-the-world, and cannot be cut off from the world. The notion of biological embodiment, though, still plays an important role, because it helps (by way of contrast) to make the notion of sensory and intentional embodiment clear.

2. An important consequence that follows from the notion of sensory/intentional embodiment, as it has been characterized here, is the closeness between persons and the world: insofar as persons are embodied beings, they are, so to speak, embodied in the world. It is this embodiment in the world that, to a great extent, characterizes what being a person consists in:

"The true *cogito* is not the intimate communing of thought with the thought of that thought: they meet only on passing through the world. The consciousness of the world is not *based* on self-consciousness: they are strictly contemporary. There is a world for me because I am not unaware of myself; and I am not concealed from myself because I have a world." (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:297-8)

3. Merleau-Ponty has repeatedly affirmed that the phenomenal body is not an object, in the way in which chairs, say, are. But, what is it then? The answer is clearly stated in the following quotations:

"I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it [...] I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience, and yet at the same time my body is as it were a 'natural' subject, a provisional sketch of my total being" (1962:198);

"... the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception" (206).

"The subject, which takes a point of view, is my body as the field of perception and action" (1964:16).

Having rejected the identification of the person with his material body (see 6.3.4.), what we are left with now is a notion of the body, the sensory/intentional body, which can be identified with the person as a subject of experiences. The sensory/intentional body, thus free of the mechanistic connotations of the Cartesian approach, acquires a more active and vital status. So, when Merleau-Ponty affirms the identity of the phenomenal body with the subject of perception (and action), the body should not be understood as in the mechanistic account, but as in this newer, more lively, characterization. What remains to be done, now, is to complement the former with a detailed analysis of this subject of perception and action.

Chapter 8

PERCEPTION AND PERCEPTUAL SELF-LOCATION

8.1. INTRODUCTION

When the subjective/objective dichotomy in personal identity was introduced (see chapter 3), it was suggested that the reconciliation of both standpoints was made possible by the consideration of the person as both a perceiver and an agent. These two aspects will now be studied in turn (starting with the analysis of the person as a perceiver), but the discussion will progress towards a more holistic result, in the sense that the person-as-perceiver is dependent on the person-as-agent, and vice versa. Therefore, if perception and agency are to provide the answer to the dichotomy between the subjective and objective aspects of the person, they will do so jointly; they should not be regarded as two separate and independent solutions. Let us begin with the analysis of perception.

8.2. THE PERSPECTIVITY OF PERCEPTION

The role played by perception is relevant to the topic of personal identity because it exhibits a feature which, according to many subjective approaches, must be met by a serious and adequate account of the person: perspectivity. This notion featured prominently in Nagel's attempt at reconciliation. However, the idea that our perceptual experience is perspectival is a complex notion, and requires unravelling.

8.2.1. The partiality of perception

Taking the case of vision as a model, the partiality of perception refers to the familiar fact that only one aspect of an object can be seen at a time. If the perceiver changes his position, he would see a different aspect of the object. The aspect of the object which is seen depends on the position occupied by the perceiver; as his position changes, his visual experience of the object changes, too. Thus, when something is first shown to us, we turn it round in our hands (if it is small enough, like a china vase), or we may go round it (as when we are looking at a building from the outside), in order to obtain a more complete and accurate perception of it. When we become familiar with the object, we can imagine the way it looks, even without actually looking at it: the drawing on the other side of the china vase, or the columns on the invisible side of the building. In a similar manner, what the perceiver hears is also heard from a certain point in space, so that if he moves to a different point, the same sound could be heard less clearly, or distorted, or perhaps different sounds would be heard.

An element that affects our perception is the orientation of our sense-organs. Our perceptual experience not only changes as we move from one point to another, but it also varies if our sense-organs change their orientation. For instance, if we turn our eyes ninety degrees to the right, we would perceive different things, or the same things from a different angle. Consider this example of tactile perception: if I stretch my hands to the front, I feel the bed; if I then turn my left hand ninety degrees to the left, I would feel the cupboard door. Another aspect that affects our perception is the fact that, in the case of vision, our eyes must be open for

us to have visual experience of the world; in the case of hearing, our ears (both external and internal organs) must be free from any impediments that may hinder our auditory experience of the world. What these examples suggest is dependence of perception on the perceiver's physical organs (in general, his body), and in that sense point at the existence of physical constraints on the person's perceptual experience of the world.

8.2.2. The subjectivity of perception

As well as being partial, perception is perspectival in the sense that it takes place from a point of view, the point of view of the perceiver; therefore, there is a reference to a subject of perception. The objects of perception are presented to the perceiver not only as spatially related to each other (the cupboard is next to the fridge, opposite the cooker, above the table, and so on), but also as spatially related to him (the cupboard is in front of him, the fridge is to his left, and so on). In other words, the objects of perception not only form a network of objective spatial relations, but are also subjectively located in relation to the position occupied by the perceiver.

The latter has sometimes been expressed in terms of the existence of an egocentric map that the perceiver is able to make of his environment. (See Evans, 1982:151ff.) The most important feature of such a map is that the perceiver is at the centre, and the rest are to his right or left, at the top or at the bottom, in front or behind, and so on. This subjective map is no different from the map which only reflects objective spatial relations between things. When we look at a map of England, we see that Leeds and Hull are about fifty or sixty miles apart; if we look again, but try to

read it from the position we occupy, then if we are in Doncaster, Hull is on the right, whereas if we are in York, Hull is on the left. In other words, the egocentric map is the objective map, but with the perceiver placed somewhere in it (from his point of view, he is at the centre).

Talk of an egocentric map is reminiscent of those plans which include a cross indicating the place where the person looking at the plan is: the cross is the centre, in the sense that the rest (where the road ahead leads, what is to the left and to the right, and so on) makes sense in relation to it. The same plan can be placed on different spots, as long as the cross is accordingly put on different parts of the plan. Similarly, in an egocentric map of the environment, things are always in the same relation to each other, while the place occupied by the subject/perceiver, and therefore the relation of other objects to him, can change.

This analogy could be pressed a bit further. The plan with the cross is at a certain spot in public space, so that it can be used by many different people: everybody who sees it can identify where they are, and they all have the same idea of what is on their left, right, and so on. Similarly, what one perceiver (say, me) sees from the place he occupies can also be seen by those people placed at the same point (supposing our perceptual apparatus is the same, of course).¹ What this suggests is that my visual (auditory, tactile, and so on) experience of the world is not unique and private, but open to other perceivers. 'I wish you could have seen what I saw', we sometimes say, meaning that the visual experience we had could have been had by the other person, too. The subjectivity of perception, then, should not be understood as the idea that perception is unique and private, but instead, as the idea that perception is common and open to other people. As has previously been argued (see 3.3. above), 'common' is

not opposed to subjective (or perspectival): my visual experience of the fridge in front of me is mine, achieved from the position I occupy (ie, subjective and perspectival), but also could have been your visual experience if you had been there (ie, common).

Therefore, perception is promising as far as the reconciliation between first- and third-person approaches to personal identity goes. Perception is subjective and perspectival, as it is seen from the first-person point of view. However, the material constraints on perception (like the proper working of the sense-organs), and the fact that a perceiver's experience is open to other perceivers (which suggests the idea of a kind) are requirements underlined from the third-person point of view. Moreover, talk of an egocentric map, as opposed to an objective map, will also turn out to be helpful.

8.3. THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTUAL SELF-LOCATION

The problem of perceptual self-location can be expressed in the following terms: can I locate myself in the world on the basis of any perception provided by my senses? I locate other objects in accordance with what I can get from the world through my senses; but can I do so in my own case? Furthermore, can I perceive myself (a person) as an element of the world, without being reduced to the status of a material object? If the problem of perceptual self-location can be solved, the result will prove crucial for the bridging of the gulf between the subjective and objective aspects of the person: on the one hand, the person will be a subject (of perception); on the other hand, the person will emerge as an object among

other objects. (The discussion that follows has been greatly illuminated by Brewer's paper 'Self-Location and Agency'.)

8.3.1. Self-location by acquaintance

The first possible answer seems to be that I perceive and locate myself as I perceive and locate so many other material objects, by perceptual acquaintance with them. The notion of acquaintance appears in Russell (1985), although he uses it in a very technical sense within the empiricist tradition. Thus, he maintains that while the sense-data given in sensation are known by acquaintance, the physical objects which cause such sense-data are known by description. In other words, we know sense-data directly and indubitably, but we know physical objects in a way which is mediated and subject to doubt. Therefore, Russell would not agree with the first sentence of this paragraph, according to which material objects are known by acquaintance. However, and bearing this qualification in mind, the notion of acquaintance will be understood here in a less technical sense, so that it will be possible to say that one is perceptually acquainted with such material objects as fridges and cupboards.

Thus, the argument goes, I can give the exact position of a cupboard because I perceive it (its position) in relation to other objects, and to myself, in the world. I can similarly give another person's exact position because, insofar as he has material characteristics, he is a material object I can see. However, in the case of my own self-location, I am both the object perceived and the subject of the perception; therefore, in order to locate myself, I would have to be perceptually acquainted with myself-as-object as the subject of the perception in question. Unfortunately,

although I can partially perceive myself as a material object with corporeal characteristics², I cannot obtain a pure perception of myself as subject. Therefore, I cannot be perceptually acquainted with myself (as both subject and object), in the same way in which I may be acquainted with such material objects as cupboards.

One reply may be that the dismissal of the possibility of self-location by acquaintance has been too rash. It is true that if vision is taken to be the model of perception, then since people are not visually acquainted with themselves as subjects, it can be extrapolated that they are not perceptually acquainted with themselves as subjects. But vision is not the only sense people have, or indeed the model of perception as a whole.

Merleau-Ponty has been reported (Harré, 1991:94-6) to have maintained that the sense of touch is the model of sense perception. He denies that there is a radical distinction, in one's own case, between touching and being touched, for when one touches oneself, one has only one sensation, not two (the sensation of touching, as different from the sensation of being touched). Therefore, "in touching oneself, perceiver and perceived are simultaneously given to consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, *L'oeuil et l'esprit*; quoted in Harré, 1991:96).

Without having to go as far as affirming the model status of the sense of touch, the former example goes some way towards offering an account of self-location by acquaintance. On the one hand, the perceiver's own self-location is the result of his perceptual (in particular, tactile) experience. On the other hand, the perceiver appears, in the process of perception, not just as an object, but also as a subject. That is, in touching oneself, perceiver (subject) and perceived (object) are contained in the same tactile

experience. Therefore, it could be concluded that people can become perceptually acquainted with themselves in the process of tactile perception. In the next sections, an attempt will be made at providing an account of self-location that can be applied to perception in general, not just to tactile perception.

8.3.2. Self-location by description

An alternative answer could be that I identify myself by description (see Brewer, 1992:20ff): I identify myself with 'the subject of this perception', inferring my position in the world as a result. That is, if I am the subject of perception P , then my location will be L , whereas if I am the subject of perception P' , then my location will be L' . This proposal has an advantage over the previous one: I am not simply an object with which I am (partially) acquainted, but also a subject, the subject of a perception or series of perceptions. Nonetheless, there are certain difficulties with this proposal.

The first one is that the self-identification of myself as 'the subject of this perceptual experience' makes necessary the fact that I happen to undergo such an experience. My experiences are contingently dependent on how the world is, and where I am placed at the time of the perception. If either the world had been different or I had been at a different place, my perception would not have been the same. (If I had been asleep at the time, for instance, I would not have had any such perceptual experiences at all.) However, if I identify myself as 'the subject of this experience', then I cannot make sense of my experiences being different; that is, my having such a particular experience becomes a necessary fact. (In

possible worlds terminology, there is no possible world in which my experiences would have been different.) So, I cannot assume as *a priori* and necessary something that could have been otherwise.

It could be suggested, following Kripke, that the description 'the subject of this experience' does not give the meaning of the name 'I', but helps to fix its referent (in the same way in which 'the stick kept in Paris' does not give the meaning of 'metre', although helps to fix its referent). In such a case, then, it is not a necessary fact that I am the subject of *this* experience for, in the same way in which the stick kept in Paris could have been longer or shorter, the subject who has this experience (ie, me) could have failed to have it. Thus, I am not necessarily identified with the subject of *a particular experience*, but I can still descriptively self-locate myself as a subject. In other words, although the description 'the subject of this experience' does not give the meaning of 'I' (because I could have undergone different experiences), it still serves to refer to me and, therefore, to locate me in the world.

In order to cope with this sort of reply, a second difficulty must be exposed: the self-identification of myself as 'the subject of this experience' begs the question, because it assumes what has to be proved, namely that perceptual experience is self-locating, that I can locate myself as an item in the world in virtue of my perceptual abilities. But if it is presupposed that I am the *subject* of this perception, if this is a premise rather than a conclusion, then the solution to the problem of perceptual self-location is being postulated rather than arrived at. Furthermore, appeal to the notion of reference-fixing description does not avoid this difficulty, for the identification of myself with 'the subject of this experience' in Kripke's

sense, and therefore my self-location, is also an assumed premise, not a conclusion.

A version of self-location by description might be proposed along the following lines (see Evans, 1982). My having the self-locating thought that 'I am here' would be the conclusion of two previous premises: 'Someone is here' and 'I am that person'. The descriptive component would appear when trying to make sense of who 'that person' refers to. It might be argued that it is 'the person from whom the relevant information is being received', where 'the relevant information' is the information obtained about the place in which the person is, including an account of the person's surroundings, together with his perceptual experiences (what is seen, heard, and so on). In such a case, self-location would be the result of perceptual information about the person's environment, without making such perceptual experiences necessary.

Nonetheless, the proposal is unsatisfactory. The descriptive identification of 'that person' as 'the person from whom the relevant information is received' would be correct in certain unusual cases; for example, if there was a causal chain linking the subject's brain to someone else's body, so that the subject received sensory information from that body, instead of his own. In such a case, it would make sense to say that 'I am that person', implying that 'I am the person from whom the relevant information is being received'. However, 'normal' cases are not like that, because the subject's brain is linked to his own body. Therefore, such a descriptive identification is totally out of place. On the one hand, if 'I am the person from whom the relevant information is received' can be applied to 'normal' cases, then the identity statement is trivially true, and the interest of the description nil; on the other hand, if 'I am the person from whom the

relevant information is received' is meant to capture some unusual situation, then it has no pertinence for the solution of the problem of perceptual self-location in the majority of ('normal') cases.

Summarizing, the attempts to solve the problem which have been considered (both in self-location by acquaintance and by description) have failed. What is needed is an account that (i) elucidates the problem of self-location on the basis of the perceptual experience of the subject; and (ii) includes an element of self-awareness (the object is also the subject) not as a prior identification.

8.3.3. The Simple Theory of Perception

What has been called the 'Simple Theory of Perception', or STP (Brewer, 1992:23), meets all the requisites. The STP is rather vaguely characterized as a "holistically evolving pattern of judgements and inferences" (23), from which the subject's location in the world (or rather, his own self-location, since the STP works in the first person) is obtained, on the basis of his own perceptual experience. Alternatively, and given the flexibility of the STP, if the subject's own self-location is presented as an input, then his perceptual experience will be obtained as output. Consider the following examples. If I have a visual perception of the cupboard in the kitchen, and I recognize it as the kitchen cupboard, then I can conclude that I am at a certain point p in the kitchen. (An example of auditory perception would be the following: if I hear the kids playing in the garden, then I must be at a certain point p in space, the exact position requiring a more detailed description of the place where the sound comes from; perhaps, so many yards to my left and so on.) The theory also

works the other way round: if I am at a certain point p , then what I am seeing must be the kitchen cupboard³. Thus, the STP complies with the first requirement at the end of the last section, that self-location be the result of the perceptual experience of the subject.

What about the second requirement, that is, that there be an element of self-awareness (the object *as a subject*), which is not the result of a prior identification? This requirement should have to account for the differences between such other-locating statements as 'the cupboard is in front of the fridge' and the self-locating statement 'I am in front of the fridge', the similarity being that both of them are objects.

When analyzing the logical structure of P-predicates, it was said that their self-ascription went hand in hand with the ascription of the same P-predicate to others; at least, it was argued, one must be prepared to ascribe it to others. This was regarded as an application of the Generality Constraint, the principle according to which the entertaining of a thought is a sum of two abilities: the ability to ascribe different predicates to the same subject, and the ability to ascribe the same predicate (not only P-predicates) to different subjects.

Consider now the predicate 'is in front of the fridge'. In order to understand the self-locating thought 'I am in front of the fridge', one must also understand such thoughts as 'the cupboard is in front of the fridge', or 'Peter is in front of the fridge'. In all three, there is a relation between two objects: cupboard/fridge, Peter/fridge, me/fridge. Peter and I are different from a cupboard in that, following a non-reductionist account of the person, Peter and I can be ascribed both psychological and material predicates: that is, they are subjects as well as objects. But what is the

relation between these locating thoughts/statements? The ascription of such locating predicates as 'is in front of the fridge' to cupboards and myself is part of the following overlapping continuum. I say 'the cupboard is in front of the fridge' on the basis of my perceptual acquaintance with it (expressing a relation between two objects). Then, concentrating on the similarities between a cupboard and Peter's bodily properties, I say 'Peter is in front of the fridge', where there is a relation between two objects, but not only that for (according to the non-reductionist account of the person) Peter is more than just a material object. Finally, due to the fact that both Peter and I are persons, 'Peter' can be replaced by 'I', resulting in the self-locating thought/statement 'I am in front of the fridge'.

It is the Generality Constraint that allows this progressive move from the locating statement about a cupboard to my own self-location. First, the similarity between the cupboard and the material properties of Peter is picked out; then, it is the similarity between the person Peter and myself. All the time, the Generality Constraint requires that entertaining a thought presupposes the ability to ascribe the same predicate to different subjects. The difference with the rejected proposal of self-location by acquaintance is that here there is no appeal to the person's perceptual acquaintance with himself-as-subject; on the contrary, the element of self-awareness is provided by the Generality Constraint. Other people, with whom we are perceptually acquainted, are subjects in the same way in which I am, and the Generality Constraint makes possible the move from the location of other people to one's own self-location.

Two things have been achieved: one, I am similar to other material objects, occupying a spatial position in the world; two, I am also similar to other subjects - I am a subject of experience. Evans says that

"he [the person making a self-locating judgement] must conceive of himself, the subject of whom the property is ascribed, as a being of the kind which he envisages when he simply envisages *someone* seeing a tree - that is to say, a persisting subject of experience, located in space and time" (232).

The element of self-awareness referred to before is not awareness of something internal, a self known by introspection; it is rather the recognition of our perceptual experience, together with the Generality Constraint. Thus, self-location is linked to the location of others in two ways: they are both elements of the world, and they are both subjects. Furthermore, the subject appears as a member of a kind, the kind 'person', which is identifiable by these two properties: being a subject of experience, and being an object in the spatio-temporal world.

The value of this account lies in the fact that self-location is the joint result of, on the one hand, the way the world is objectively (independently of a subject of experience experiencing it), and on the other hand, the subject's course of perceptions and position in the world. Strawson (1966) talks of the distinction, though not opposition, between "a unified objective world", and "a single, subjective, experiential route, one among other possible subjective routes through the same objective world", constituted by the series of experiences belonging to a numerically identical, temporally extended, subject of experiences (104). Moreover, the order and arrangement of those experiences is not independent from the order and arrangement of the objects of which they are experiences, for there are causal relations going from the world to the experiences. (This is all well-known to us; see 2.2.1.) This distinction, what Strawson calls 'the objectivity condition', is a necessary requirement for the possibility of experience (including, needless to say, perceptual experience).

Now, this image of the perceiver (in general, the subject of experience) as moving about in a public, objective world, through which different perceivers can also move, brings to mind the notions, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, of an objective map and an egocentric map. The objective map is the map of a public, unified, objective world, with its own order and arrangement. The egocentric map is constituted by the series of experiences of a particular perceiver, the order of which reflects the objective order, although, since it is the experiential route of a particular point of view in the world, it also includes a reference to the subject, as centre of such a map.

What is relevant to the present discussion is that the egocentric map is made possible at all because the subject of it, the perceiver of that series of experiences that constitute the map, is in fact an object located in the world. In other words, it is because the subject of experience is himself an element of the objective world (objective map) that he can leave an experiential trail behind him, so to speak (egocentric map). This is what is at the basis of our partial acquaintance with ourselves, as well as what allows the move from such other-locating statements as 'the cupboard is in front of the fridge' to such self-locating statements as 'I am in front of the fridge', with the assistance of the Generality Constraint.

8.3.4. The incompleteness of this solution

So far, so good. But was it not stated in the introduction to this chapter that the solution to the gap between the subjective and objective aspects of the person would be the joint outcome of the consideration of the person

both as perceiver and as agent? However, the conclusion from the foregoing discussion seems to be that the person as perceiver is enough to reconcile such a gap. Is this right? It is indeed right that the analysis of perception and the question of perceptual self-location (ie, the self-location of the perceiver as an object in the spatio-temporal order) shows the path to be followed in the process of reconciliation, but this is only the beginning, not the whole answer. To see this, let us return to the notion of an egocentric map of the world.

The egocentric map of the environment (as stated previously) has been characterized as that map which the perceiver forms of his surroundings, on the basis of his perceptual experience of the world. It is egocentric because the perceiver sees himself as the centre, other things occupying a position in relation to that centre. There is not, as Russell suggests, a visual egocentric map, different from an auditory one, and a tactile one. On the contrary, although the egocentric map is formed on the basis of the perceptual experience of the world, this does not mean that it is made out of sense-data, so that the sense-data received by one sense-organ give rise to an egocentric map, whereas the sense-data of other organs produce a different map. Instead, the perceptual contact with the world, although through various channels (organs of perception), is the contact between perceiver and the world, and in that sense the result is a unitary egocentric map (in the same way as there is a unified objective world).

This would have been the whole story if perception were the only level at which there is contact between the perceiver and the world, but there is also interaction at the level of action. An agent's activity on the world requires the prior identification of the objects on which he can act, as well as their spatial relation to him. Since I have a visual map of my house,

with me sitting in the living-room, I can figure out the route I would have to follow to answer the door bell. Had I been in an upstairs bedroom, my egocentric map would have been different, and so would have been the route to the door. Therefore, the egocentric map of the world is a perception- and agency-centred map: it reflects the subject's perceptual experience of the world, and it allows exchange at the level of action. This is why the treatment of the question of perceptual self-location does not give the whole answer: the person, as well as being a subject of perception, is a subject of action. If the gap between objective and subjective is to be bridged, the latter requires some attention.

Chapter 9

INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN ACTION AND PERCEPTION

9.1. INTRODUCTION

So far, the self-location of the subject as an object in the world has focused on the subject's perceptual experience (according to a set of principles in the STP). In this way, a part of the whole world appears in a special relation to the subject: those objects that are perceived by him, his perceived environment. But, as the notion of embodiment has made it clear, that is not the only connection between the subject and his environment, because the subject can also act upon the objects perceived. This suggests a further argument for considering the subject as an object in the world: he acts on the very same objects he perceives. The external world is not simply the subject's perceived environment; it is also the place where he acts. An account of the subject as agent, then, is needed.

Before an analysis of human action and the human agent is given in the following chapter, an attempt will be made to show the connection between the problem of perceptual self-location and the activity of human agents. The aim of this chapter will be to make clear the fact that these two aspects cannot be separated from one another, in that the consideration of the person as an element of the world is a result of both his perception and his action upon the world. In order to do this, several arguments for the necessity of, and interdependence between, perception and action will be put forward, and a possible objection to such an interdependence will be considered. The result will be a more unitary view of the person.

Here, the *de re* characterization of perception and action (see 2.2.1. and 2.2.3.) should be kept in mind. It has been argued that objects in the external world are constitutive of a person's perceptual experiences and his intentional actions. This chapter is concerned with the interdependence and integration of both activities. It is not enough to say that a person perceives a real external object, or that a person's intentions include an object in the world. Rather, one acts on the objects of one's perceptions; that is, the object of one's intentional action is the same object that has been perceived. Conversely, the object of one's perceptual experiences can become the object of one's intentional action. For instance, I see a pen on my desk, and reach out for it, where the same object (a particular pen) is *constitutive* of both my visual experience and my intentional action. It is this integration that is central to the unitary account of the person defended here.

9.2. THE NECESSITY OF PERCEPTION

A person sees, hears, or generally, perceptually experiences the world (or rather, his environment), and then acts in accordance with the perceptual inputs received. In this sense, perception is not only an end, but the means to something else. In other words, without perception there would be no action. Action should be understood in the sense of intentional action, as opposed to mere senseless movement, like the sudden jerks one experiences before falling asleep, or sneezing. Examples of intentional action are moving one's arm to reach for a book, moving one's head when someone else calls out one's name, playing chess or getting married.

It is a feature of intentional action that it requires awareness of events (and objects) in space and time (visual perception of a book in front of us, auditory perception of one's name being called out, and so on), which is acquired in the process of perceptually experiencing the world. Therefore, the performance of intentional actions demands a causal perceptual link between objects and events in the world, and the perceiver. In turn, once the perceptual experience is obtained, there are both causal and constitutive (*de re*) relations between the objects of our perception (for instance, the book in front of us), and the action performed (reaching out for that same book).

An objection to the above account could be posed in terms of the actions of very young children. It could be argued (O'Shaughnessy, 1980:4ff) that babies make movements (eg, the kicking of their legs) which do not seem to require previous perceptions. This is based on the alleged fact that recently born babies are said to possess the organ for vision, but lack an *object* of vision. This can be more clearly understood by comparing newly born babies with older children. The fact that the latter have an object of perception can be seen, for instance, in their act of crawling: when infants crawl, they do so to get an object they perceive. In the act of crawling, infants show that they are perceptually aware of their environment, and respond to certain stimuli. Newly born babies, however, do not show such responsiveness to stimuli; there is no bodily action that serves as the basis for the attribution of an object of perception to such babies. Therefore, it is concluded that newly born babies lack an object of vision.

To this objection, two replies could be made. First, it could be said that such movements as the newly born babies' leg-kicking are simply non-

intentional actions, and therefore do not present an obstacle to the necessity of perception for action, since the thesis being defended here is that intentional actions require previous perceptions.

Second, the idea that children lack an object of perception has been questioned (Burns, 1982:33) thanks to the results of different psychological experiments. In one of them, some two-week-old infants were able to distinguish their respective mums' faces from a stranger's face (see Carpenter, 1974). From that kind of experiment, it has been concluded that newly born babies not only have an ability to see, but also have an object of perception. Furthermore, this piece of evidence reinforces the thesis that intentional actions require perceptions which are appropriate to them. Thus, it can be shown that children's perceptions affect the way they act, that there is a direct relation from the object of perception to the external object onto which the action is directed: the recognition of a familiar face brings about a different reaction from the one produced by a stranger's face.

9.3. THE NECESSITY OF BODILY ACTION

Apart from the subject's perceptual link to the world, there is also a link at the level of bodily intentional action. The body makes the mediation between the subject's decisions or intentions and the carrying out of such plans. Normally, when I have the immediate intention to hit my brother, my body reacts in such a way that the action of hitting my brother is carried out. The function of my body is twofold. First, it distinguishes me from the external world by immediately reacting to my will, desires, and

so on, whereas other objects offer a resistance to be changed, which is only indirectly overcome by applying my own body to them. Second, my body makes my acting upon the world possible.

Moreover, at a more basic level, my body is a precondition for the whole process of perception and intentional action: what is my perceived environment, and in consequence, the setting of my intentional action, depends on where my body is placed. As the position occupied by my body changes, so does my egocentric space.

The notion of the subject's egocentric space has appeared before. It is constituted by the subject's perceptual environment, which is also his field of action. The subject does not only perceive an external world, from which knowledge is obtained, but also has desires and intentions that result in a change of his environment, implemented through his body (eg, he reaches out for the book in front of him, or moves his head when his name is called out). First, the subject perceives the world through his sensory mechanisms, gaining information about it; then, the subject manifests desires, which result in intentional bodily actions to satisfy such desires, thereby bringing about a change in the subject's environment (his egocentric space). Bodily action, then, ties the subject to the world. Such a tie, however, should not be suffocating. That is, the subject's environment is not pre-fixed: as the subject changes his position in the world, his egocentric space, the setting for his bodily action, varies as well.

A problem with this initial characterization of the link between perception and action is that there appears to be too neat and clear-cut a gap between the subject's perceptual experience of, and his bodily action upon, the

world. In particular, perception appears to be a strictly passive affair, whereas the subject's active involvement only concerns his capacity for action. However, it can easily be shown that perception is active. Consider, for instance, the different bodily movements (of the head, or of the eyes) involved in the visual perception of something round, as opposed to something flat. Similarly, consider the different movements of one's limbs (arms and hands) present in the tactile perception of a two-dimensional surface, or a three-dimensional volumetric object (an essential part of the perception of the latter is the recognition of corners, absent in the perception of the former).

Moreover, it is now commonly acknowledged (against the characterization of perception as strictly passive) that expectation plays an important role in perception. Sometimes, a certain utterance is not understood because one does not expect to hear anything like that. My experience is that when English speakers in this country say something to me in Spanish (usually, a monosyllable, or just a couple of words), I do not understand them, precisely because I do not expect anybody here to talk to me in a language other than English.

What emerges from these considerations is a view of perception as active, not passive. However, this is not the sort of evidence which supports a strong interdependence between the person-as-perceiver and the person-as-agent. Further arguments will now be proposed.

9.3.1. The epistemological argument

It has been consistently pointed out that behaviour is the evidential basis for the attribution of mental life to other people. Since we cannot have direct access to other people's mental states (thoughts, desires, perceptions, intentions and so on), the only possibility for the ascription of mentality relies on the behaviour people show. Language is an aspect of such an evidential basis: we know that somebody thinks that the meal is nice because he tells us so. Similarly, we know that somebody has seen a £10 note because he picks it up. In general, physical action reveals mentality.

Examples can be found not only among people, but also in the animal kingdom. We see the cat around at lunchtime and say that Elsa, the cat, is waiting for her dinner. If we pour some milk in a bowl, we would say that Elsa has seen the milk if she goes to the bowl and drinks it. (I do not intend to discuss these cases in detail, since many different considerations may arise. This is intended as just another way of illustrating the necessity of physical action for the ascription of mental life.)

9.3.2. The argument from solidity

Does the notion of a purely passive perceiver make any sense at all? This is not a question about whether there can be individual cases of perception which do not require the person's active involvement; or whether the active involvement of the subject is comparatively large or small in the whole of the perceptual process. It is not, either, a question that could be answered by appealing to certain psychological experiments, like the one

conducted by Held and Hein (see Hamlyn, 1978) using animals. In this experiment, some kittens were allowed the freedom to move around in their environment, whereas others were kept in a box which was moved around by the experimenters. The conclusion drawn was that the former group of kittens had a better knowledge of their environment than the latter group, underlying the success of certain conditions (particularly, interaction with the world) in the learning process. These are empirical questions, whereas the issue here is whether action is *necessary* for perception.

Hamlyn (1978, 1990) has tried to show that the perception of certain qualities of objects (particularly, impenetrability or solidity) requires action. His argument goes as follows:

- (1) solidity (ie, the impenetrability of an object to pressure or other forms of touch) involves a causal aspect;
- (2) the causal notion of solidity and the notion of a solid object's identity go together; that is, an object occupies a position in space which cannot be occupied by a *different* object at the same time; an object can only move to unoccupied spaces where there are no other objects, etc;
- (3) the link between causal principles and the identity of physical objects could not be understood without our own personal experience of causal interaction with other objects. In this sense, we are like other physical objects. From youth, we grow up accustomed to the fact that we cannot walk through a closed door, although we can walk through if the door is open. Here, the role played by our body is essential. We, because of the solidity of our body, can enter into causal

- contact with other physical objects: we can push something (or somebody) out of the way, and we can also be pushed;
- (4) therefore, the argument concludes, perception of the objective world (as a world of physical objects) requires our interaction with it; that is, it requires that we, as bodily beings, act upon other physical objects.

An implicit assumption in Hamlyn's argument is that perception is concept-dependent, that is, "that we cannot be said to perceive anything unless we have a concept of the object of perception *as an object independent of ourselves*" (1970:163; my emphasis). According to this model, perception does not consist in receiving neutral and pre-conceptual information (usually referred to as 'sense-data'), which is later interpreted in one way or another by the perceiver (these three lines are interpreted as a triangle, this pattern of colours and shapes as a house, and so on). On the contrary, that perception is concept-dependent is the opposite of a view of perception as the gathering of pre-conceptual information. Thus, in perception, objects are presented to the perceiver as a triangle, or as a house. When the object of perception is presented as a pattern of colours and shapes, instead of as a house, it is because the object is not recognized (as a house) by the perceiver, like in abstract paintings. However, this does not support the interpretationist model, for even in the latter case the information obtained in perception is concept-dependent: what is seen is a pattern of colours and shapes. What is even more important for present purposes is that the objects of perception are conceived of as independent entities: a house, a triangle.

With this in mind, the point of the argument can now be seen. Bodily action is necessary for perception because in order for us to perceive solid

objects *as such* (ie, as physical solid objects), we require a certain conceptual background (that physical objects occupy a position in space, that they are causally related to other objects, and so on) which is obtained from personal experience (premise 3): we, as physical solid objects, also occupy a position, and are causally connected to other objects. This personal experience of acting upon other objects is a necessary requisite for our perception of the physical world. Or, as Hamlyn himself puts it:

"A perceiver must be an agent too; otherwise, there would be no possibility of the would-be perceiver attaining the conceptual understanding necessary for perception of a physical world."
(1990:106)

9.3.3. The argument from touch

A further argument for the interdependence between action and perception could be proposed by considering the person's sense of touch. This is a very complex sense, through which many different properties of objects are apprehended. One of those properties is warmth: we put our hands in the bathwater to test its temperature. However, the properties which are relevant to the present argument are those related to spatiality; that is, those properties which inform us about the spatial qualities of an object, namely texture, shape and solidity. By sliding our hands over a surface we know whether it is smooth, rough, bumpy, creased, wrinkled, etc. By feeling an object in our hands we find out about its shape: round, square, conic, etc. 'Solidity' refers to the resistance given by the object: although both a soft toy and a stone offer a certain resistance to our touch, the former's resistance (to be deformed) is considerably smaller. Although all these properties are relevant, it is the latter that is most pertinent to the

argument that follows; particularly, the fact that objects (whether they are soft toys or stones) offer a certain resistance when touched. This quality has led some people to say that touch is the primary sense, since it tells us about a world of physical reality:

"Touch, and not sight, is primitively the most authoritative of the senses, the natural criterion of physical reality, just because acting upon objects necessarily involves touching, the contact of my body with the resisting body that is not my own." (Hampshire, 1959:48)

The argument from touch (O'Shaughnessy, 1980, vol II) goes as follows:

- (1) perceiving is the singling out of items in physical space, and therefore requires an awareness of space;
- (2) awareness of space and the spatial properties of things comes through tactile perception;
- (3) tactile perception involves a capacity to manipulate objects;
- (4) such a capacity is based on experience: manipulation of objects demands knowledge of what it is like to be an object among other objects;
- (5) therefore, perception depends on our personal experience of acting upon other objects.

What the argument is saying is that perception of the spatial qualities of objects (particularly, perception of their solidity) is achieved by tactile manipulation of them; and that such manipulation takes place because we causally interact with them. The latter means that the use of the sense of touch involves movement: we cannot feel the smoothness of a surface without running our hand over it (this is the idea, previously mentioned, that perception is active). But, what is more important is that it suggests that perception is possible because we think of the world as an active

whole, because we think of ourselves as actively engaged in the world of physical objects, exchanging contact with other physical objects (they offer resistance to our touch, and we offer resistance to their contact). In other words, tactile perception is not only active perception, but perception in action. Consider the following quotation by Macmurray (quoted in Paul, 1961:164fn):

"I can only become aware of anything tactually by doing something to it. Tactual perception is *necessarily* perception in action. To touch anything is to exert pressure upon it, however slight, and therefore, however slightly, to modify it. [...] A man may be born blind and yet grow to know the world he lives in and to direct his activities by this knowledge... But is it possible to conceive a human being who never possessed a tactual sense?"

Perception in action refers to the idea that perception can be properly comprehended only in the context of an active world, in a world where people conceive of themselves as agents, the world (or better, their environment, their egocentric space) being their stage. In this sense, the proper understanding of people as perceivers is dependent on an understanding of them as agents.

A special case of perception in relation to which the necessity of the sense of touch has been acknowledged is visual depth. Berkeley argued that the eye is a two-dimensional surface, and can provide information only about two-dimensional properties of things. In consequence, he defended the view that the perception of distance takes place through touch, by feeling the objects and their relative positions. O'Shaughnessy, discussing the case of newly born babies, has supported this idea:

"we identify depth perception through identifying act capacities. For visual depth is a reality only to those who have integrated their visual fields and motor powers." (1980:8)

Macmurray's quotation, though, appears to suggest a stronger thesis: there could not be a human being lacking a tactual sense, since the latter is intrinsically linked to the possession of a body, and people are necessarily embodied. In other words, since persons are embodied beings, lack of the sense of touch would amount to lack of being.

However, it might be argued, this position is too extreme, for the argument relies too heavily on the fact that people have limbs (and particularly, hands). That is, there could be human beings who have had both their arms amputated, and, in such a case, it would be more difficult to argue that they are able to feel the smoothness of a surface, or the conic shape of an object. In such cases, the notion of people without a sense of touch seems to get a foothold. Therefore, the thesis that embodied people necessarily have a tactual sense is more questionable.

It could be replied that, although perception of shape and texture in the human case is very much dependent on the possession of arms and hands, perception of solidity, the resistance given by other objects, on which our conception of them as physical entities is based, could still be achieved in the absence of limbs. We are aware of the presence of an object in front of us when, in a dark room, we bump into a table, even though it may hit our legs or our abdomen, not our hands. In this sense, the close link existing between embodiment and perception of the solidity of physical objects can still be defended. Moreover, the dependence of persons-as-perceivers on the consideration of them as agents can be maintained, for perception (of solidity) requires the active engagement of the person in the world.

9.4. OBJECTING TO THE INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN ACTION AND PERCEPTION

The interdependence between action and perception could be objected to if it could be shown that a person can be divided into two centres (one of perception, and one of action), working independently of each other. This would be the case, for example, if people were able to observe their own actions, as they observe other people's actions, for in that case it may appear that there are two independent centres in the person: one of them controlling perception, and the other one controlling action. But, can they really do this? Can they engage themselves in two different simultaneous activities: acting and observing how they act? Can they observe their actions from the outside, that is, in the way they observe other people's actions?

9.4.1. Two examples

The question of people's observation of their own actions can be approached either from a first- or a third-person point of view. As an example of the latter (a similar example can be found in O'Shaughnessy, 1980:32), consider the case in which a person suddenly undergoes the following strange experience: he hears himself saying something he did not want to say (perhaps, a swear-word; perhaps, a comment out of place), as if he were not really saying it, but as if he were just listening to what he was saying. (In a way it is like the situation in which a mother feels embarrassed after her little son has said something inappropriate or rude to

a boring neighbour.) Such a person knows about what he is saying only by hearing his own words as if they were coming from outside (as if he heard someone else speaking). In such a case, it could be argued, one seems to observe one's actions from a third-person point of view.

A different case is that in which one does not claim to be undergoing strange experiences, but simply tries to observe one's own actions as one performs them. This is the case of the basketball player who tries to concentrate on the different movements of his legs, arms, and the coordination between them, as he approaches the opposite basket. Instead of running with the usual quasi-automatic movement of arms and legs, he attempts to observe the way his body moves (as a teenager who is being taught how to improve his game observes his coach or his favourite players). This case could be taken to be an example of a first-person observation of one's actions. In what follows, both types of cases of observation of one's own actions will be discussed.

9.4.2. The third-person point of view

What can be said of the case in which a person hears himself speaking, as if somebody else (not himself) is speaking? Such a person claims not to be aware of what he is doing, expressing surprise when it happens. He insists that he lacked experience of agency, that he only found out about what was going on by listening to his words.

Perhaps a closer look at his description of the experience may help. Does he describe the situation in the way another person would, that is, from a third-person perspective? Perhaps he makes comments on the inflexion of

the voice, how he stopped for a few seconds before uttering the last sentence, how determined the words sounded, and so on. That is, perhaps he describes his action in the same way in which someone else might have done it. In that case, he could be said to have 'observed' his action (his utterance/performance) in much the same way in which someone else did.

The latter is supported by the element of surprise mentioned above. When one intentionally does something, one is not surprised at, nor does one find out about, the occurrence of the action. However, the person in our example claims to have been surprised when he found out about what was happening. (Notice that the expression 'what was happening', and not 'what he did' is preferred, because there is a suggestion that he did not really do anything, that what happened was not up to him.)

Against the suggestion that such a person was not himself the agent is the fact that the words came out of his mouth, and therefore, it must have been him who did it. It could be further observed that, under normal circumstances, people's utterances come out of their own mouths, not someone else's mouth. However, the latter point will not suffice, for it is clear that this is not a normal case.

With this sort of example we are at a loss about what to say: does the person utter those words himself? Is it his action? It seems as if we lack the conceptual baggage needed to achieve a clear understanding of what is going on. Nonetheless, this should not be too worrying, for this is only an imaginary extreme case, and there is no guarantee that understanding it will shed light on the more usual cases. So, let us concentrate on the latter.

9.4.3. Observation of our own actions

Can a basketball player observe his own actions, in the same way in which a teenager observes his favourite players' actions? The initial answer seems to be undoubtedly negative, for observation requires a detached point of view as in the latter example, in which somebody (a teenager) observes somebody else (player). According to this, observation of oneself is impossible, for one person does not occupy two different points of view at the same time. But this begs the question, for it presupposes the matter in hand, whether a person is in fact the sum of two different control centres, one for perception and one for action. 'Observation of one's own actions' should not be interpreted in this question-begging way.

Another example is the following. While typing this essay, I can try to concentrate on my typing (that is, how I hit the keys, the movement of my hands, the tilt of my head from the screen to the keyboard), not from an agent's point of view (as an agent, I would be interested in writing my ideas clearly, without mistakes; ie, I would be interested in the goal of my physical activity), but from an observer's point of view. The difference between observer and agent seems to be that the observer concentrates on the movements made, not paying so much attention to the end of the action itself, whereas the agent sets his eyes on the final aim of his action. Obviously, people could be interested in the observation of the physical movements, and not in the end of those movements. Therefore, people could be observers without being agents. Therefore, the alleged interdependence of action and perception is undermined.

As with the example of the teenager who observes his favourite players' game, in the case of the basketball player observing his own actions there are two different simultaneous intentional actions involved: one, the action of playing, and two, the action of observing action one. So, is it possible to perform these two different intentional actions at the same time? In general, is it possible to do more than one thing simultaneously? And if so, is the unity of consciousness threatened? Perhaps, it could be argued, it is possible to do more than one thing at the same time because there is not just one control centre in the person. But before this possibility can be assessed, let us examine the examples at hand.

Sometimes, we do two things simultaneously: for instance, we walk while talking to somebody else. (This is similar to when we walk while observing other people's actions.) Also, we hear and see different things at the same time. But can we talk and write simultaneously about two different topics? (Similarly, can I observe your actions closely while writing an essay?) We were confronted here with several different kinds of example. The fact that we can, and do, see and hear different things does not pose a problem, since it is non-interestingly true that, if our visual and auditory mechanisms are in good working condition and not obstructed by any impediments, we receive different visual and auditory inputs most of the time. However, the matter under discussion is concerned with actions in which there is bodily activity involved, ie writing, talking, walking, etc. So, let us concentrate on these.

Regarding the latter, why is it the case that certain actions can be performed simultaneously (namely, walking while talking to somebody else), whereas others cannot (namely, talking and writing about two different topics)? It could be suggested that in the former, no great deal

of attention is required at least in one of the actions (walking does not demand all our attention, and something else can be done at the same time); in the latter, however, attention is required in both actions (writing an essay can only be combined with doing something else in which a great deal of mindfulness is not needed, like chewing gum). Should it be concluded, then, that the problem is centred on the amount of attention necessary? This way of presenting the problem is unclear, for it suggests that it can be reduced to a quantitative question: the amount of attention involved. This approach, though, can be shown to be mistaken.

It is a mark of our physiological make-up that we can only apply our sense-organs in one direction at a time: we have to move our heads to see what is going on behind us, we have to move our hands to touch what is on the left- and what is on the right-hand side. Similarly, we can only focus our attention in one direction. This is not a quantitative fact, but a fact about what human beings are like. In other words, there are physiological constraints on the sort of actions that can be performed simultaneously. I can chew gum and write an essay, but I cannot hammer in a nail and write a letter, since I have no hand left to do it (consider the case in which hammering a nail requires two hands, one holding the nail, and the other, the hammer); the latter is physically impossible.

Nonetheless, this is not the whole story. Again, the main concern here is the analysis of intentional bodily actions; therefore, the agent's intention must be an important factor. The action of typing an essay can either be described as such (ie, the typing of an essay), or as the movement of the fingers in such-and-such a way, accompanied by the movement of the head, and so forth. The action is the same, although under two different

descriptions. The former is the typical description given by an agent; the latter is more likely to be provided by an observer.

The agent's characterization of his action is crucial. What to an external observer may appear as an arbitrary series of bodily movements is described by the agent as a unitary action. The second description (the movement of fingers, head, and so on) is not appropriate because it does not reflect what the agent is doing. That is, the agent is not just moving his fingers and head in a certain way, but typing an essay. As a matter of fact, he does not have to move his fingers in that exact manner in order to type the essay. (Think of the different movements made by an expert touch-typist and a beginner.) On the other hand, there could be exactly similar movements that would not count as the typing of an essay, namely a monkey mimicking a person. Therefore, not all cases in which different movements are made must be regarded as the doing of different things, for in some cases different movements are in fact one single action. Furthermore, what in certain contexts may be treated as separate actions can on other occasions be unified as a single action. A typical example is conducting an opera.

An opera conductor is supposed to do several things at the same time: listen to the singers, introduce the music, stop instruments from playing, and so on. In this case, all the different activities are unified under a single intentional heading: all the activities are directed to the conducting of the opera. This can be made obvious by re-describing the different actions in those terms: he listens to the singers in the execution of their roles in the opera, he introduces the music at the precise moment in the context of the opera, and so on. The opera conductor is above all concerned with the end of his movements and actions: that is, he acts as an opera conductor.

If he just concentrated on the means (how beautifully the singer sings, or how appropriate the music is) as an observer (as somebody in the audience, perhaps), then all the different activities would not be unified in a single action (and, probably the result would be failure). All the different activities added together do not constitute a different action, unless they are all directed towards a single unified goal, unless unified under an intention, the agent's intention.

Not all actions can be unified in the same manner, though: for instance, talking and walking is something I can do simultaneously, as two different actions. Nonetheless, from the agent's point of view, one of them 'takes over' the other: he may describe what he is doing as talking to a friend (while walking), or conversely as going for a walk (while talking to a friend). Therefore, the agent's own description of what he is doing makes one action primary. In this sense, although different actions are performed, it is the agent's description of what he is doing that characterizes his intentional bodily activity.

In other cases, like talking and writing about two different and unrelated topics, the agent can neither unify them as a single action, nor can one of them be said to take over. In this case, then, it is said that those two actions cannot be done at the same time.

Now, how does this affect the observation of one's own actions? In some cases, our human make-up prevents us from acting and observing at the same time; I cannot, for instance, observe your actions closely while writing an essay. On other occasions, observation is a necessary ingredient of an action; how can I paint a portrait of you without looking at your face? Yet in other cases, I can observe myself or other people while

doing something else, as when I stare at others (or myself in a mirror) while walking. Therefore, in a loose sense, we can all observe our own actions. However, when observation is thought of as an intentional, attention-requiring, action, then, like other intentional actions, the former seems to demand the whole of ourselves. But if the hypothesis of the dual control centre in the person is to have any relevance, it is the latter sense of 'observation' that is needed; that is, a person should be able to engage in the intentional observation of something (eg, what you are doing), while intentionally doing something else (eg, writing an essay). The latter would amount to the intentional doing of two separate and unrelated actions (ie, not unified under a single heading, and neither of them 'taking over' the other). But then, the hypothesis of a perceptual centre, different from a centre of action, is self-refuting, for observation has become one of the person's actions. That is, the hypothesis that there could be a perceptual centre, independent from a centre of action, which would in turn undermine the interdependence between action and perception, cannot even take root. On closer inspection, it turns out that perceptions are in fact actions, and that there are no 'pure' perceptions as such. Therefore, there cannot be a 'pure' perceptual centre, different and independent from a centre of action, for all perceptual activity is precisely an action. In the next section, the latter will be connected to a unitary view of the person.

9.5. THE UNITY OF THE PERSON

9.5.1. Criticism of the unity of consciousness

Nagel (1975) has questioned one of the pillars on which people's understanding of themselves rests, "the idea of a *single* person, a single subject of experience and action" (227). He bases his scepticism on the results of certain experiments on split-brain patients, that is, patients whose cerebral hemispheres have been divided. The central piece of evidence is summarized by Nagel when he affirms that "in these patients there appear to be things happening *simultaneously* which cannot fit into a single mind: simultaneous attention to two incompatible tasks, for example, without interaction between the purposes of the left and right hands" (239). He refers to a particular patient, to whom two different words ('pencil' and 'toothbrush') were independently shown in the two different visual fields, each connected to the corresponding cerebral hemisphere; when asked to look for those objects with both hands, his hands seemed to engage in the search with total independence from each other, so that the right hand picked up a pencil and discarded it, while the left hand searched for it; and the other way round with a toothbrush. This case suggests that each cerebral hemisphere can control purposeful behaviour, even in isolation from the other hemisphere.

The picture is complicated by the fact that these people experience no behavioural disadvantage outside the laboratory where these tests are carried out; that is, their daily life, their contact and interaction with the world, is just as successful as any normal person's, showing no limitations at all. "If the patient is permitted to touch things with both hands and

smell them with both nostrils, he arrives at a unified idea of what is going on around him and what he is doing, without revealing any left-right inconsistencies in his behaviour or attitudes" (238).

Nagel's scepticism stems from these two conflicting facts: on the one hand, the fact that the split-brain patients' two cerebral hemispheres work quite independently under laboratory conditions suggests that there might be two minds; on the other hand, the fact that they show no abnormality or inconsistency in their daily life indicates that there is only one mind. It is this dilemma that leads Nagel to conclude that "there is no whole number of individual minds that these patients can be said to have" (241), and by extrapolation it "should cause us to be sceptical about the concept of a single subject of consciousness as it applies to [non-split-brain people]" (242).

According to Nagel's account, the subject of consciousness is identified with the possessor of a mind, and the mind, the seat of consciousness (and, therefore, personhood), with its physical basis, the brain. This Nagelian view has, in fact, already been discussed and rejected (see chapter 4). Then, it was argued that possession of a brain is neither sufficient nor necessary to be a person. Instead, it was suggested that the materiality of the person should be understood in terms of the notion of sensory and intentional embodiment. The latter will prove helpful here, too. It is significant that split-brain patients experience no difficulty in carrying out the tasks of daily life. Like non-split-brain people, they can successfully interact with the world. In this sense, they can be said to be sensorily and intentionally embodied. Then, it can be argued that Nagel's attempt at explaining the materiality of the person in terms of his physical brain is mistaken. Furthermore, Nagel's dilemma was born out of such an

attempt. However, if the approach is incorrect, then the dilemma is not well founded, and Nagel's scepticism about the unity of consciousness does not follow.

As a matter of fact, the proper understanding of the unity of consciousness has already been hinted at. The practical unity experienced by split-brain patients in their daily life holds half the answer, for it suggests that in their *active involvement in the world* people are unified. The unity of consciousness is not speculative or theoretical; it is a practical unity. Split-brain people can carry out any daily task just as well as non-split-brain people. That is, when they are regarded as normal agents in the world, they are just as able and unified as anybody else.

The other half of the answer is to be found somewhere else, in the proper understanding of the *subject* of consciousness.

9.5.2. The person as essentially active

There is a long-standing tradition in philosophy which regards the person as a subject of thought and experience. Consideration of the view of certain authors will make this clear. Descartes's famous definition of himself is "I am a *thinking* thing". Hume, reacting against Descartes, denied that there is such a thing as a substantial self, but such a denial is precisely the denial of a subject of thought and experience: he could never catch himself without a perception, and he could never catch anything but the perception (that is, he could not catch the subject of the perception/experience). Kant, in his criticism of Hume, proposed the transcendental unity of apperception as indicating the formal conditions of

personal identity; he stressed that there cannot be unowned experiences, and that particular experiences belong to particular persons. But, in a way, the framework within which he works is the same as Hume: the transcendental unity of apperception applies to the self as subject of thought and experience.

The predominant view that emerges is one where the person is regarded as essentially passive; it may even be said that the person is a contemplative being. The balance may be redressed by paying attention to the person as agent. If the person is an agent, then he is not just a contemplative being. If he is essentially an agent, then he is essentially active.

In favour of the latter is the fact that the question 'what is person P doing at *t*?' is always pertinent. Such an answer as 'nothing' is not so much a counter-example of the view that people are essentially active, as a short formula for something like 'nothing worth talking about' or 'mind your own business'. Even when people are just thinking, seeing, hearing, or otherwise perceptually experiencing the world, they are still doing something (see Taylor, 1963). What this amounts to is the idea that people are, above all, agents. Even qua subjects of thought and experience, people are agents. Thus, an adequate account of people requires a change of emphasis from the unity of consciousness, understood as the unity of the subject of thought and experience, to the unity of agency. Adapting Kant's famous remark, what characterizes people is not the transcendental unity of apperception, but the transcendental unity of agency.¹

A qualification of the latter statement is needed. Although Kant talked about the unity of apperception as that which unifies people's experiences,

it must be observed that he did not neglect the active aspect of the person. Moving from his discussion of theoretical reason to the characterization of practical reason, he emphasizes the rational, free nature of people. By making their own decisions, Kant says, people escape the natural order and emerge as active beings, as agents. Thus, the move from the unity of consciousness to the unity of agency is in no way an anti-Kantian move: Kant himself provided the ground for it.

Consideration of the person as essentially active succeeds in showing that the objection considered above fails: there cannot be two independent control centres in the person (one of perception, and one of action), because the person is essentially an agent, and the treatment of him as a perceiver is subsumed under his treatment as an agent. It also helps to show not only that perception needs action (ie, what has been called 'the necessity of bodily action' in the text), but that perception is itself the person's activity. Thus, the thesis defended above that perception is active can now be more clearly understood, once it is regarded as one of the activities of the person. What remains to be shown is that the sort of activity that best marks the essential nature of the person is intentional bodily action. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 10

HUMAN ACTION AS BODILY ACTION

10.1. INTRODUCTION

The strategy for the following chapter is to provide an account of human action which is closely linked to the necessity-of-embodiment thesis: the thesis that human action is primarily a bodily action will be defended. Furthermore, and following from the conclusion arrived at in the previous chapter, according to which the person is essentially active, it will be argued that consideration of the human body as body-in-movement is primary with respect to the idea of a resting body which, now and then, acts. Those actions where the notion of body-in-movement is best exemplified are bodily skills. As a result, the person/agent will emerge as an object, an element in the world, but also as a subject of action

10.2. WHAT COUNTS AS HUMAN ACTION?

The first thing to do is to specify what is meant by 'human action', setting the limits of what is going to be the subject of this enquiry. Not everything a human being does counts as human action in the philosophically interesting sense of this phrase. The method of this preliminary approach will consist in a comparison between pairs of sentences: one of which will be a case of human action. Thus, certain features of human action will appear. The pairs of sentences are as follows.¹

(i) Human action vs natural event or process

(1) I caused a fire

(2) a bolt of lightning caused a fire

The difference between both sentences is that the former makes an essential reference to an agent (whether it is something done deliberately or accidentally), whereas the latter does not. Sometimes, such reference is implicit, as in

(3) a burning cigarette caused a fire; or,

(4) the bomb exploding killed a man.

In both (3) and (4), we could ask 'who did it?', and an answer would be available (an arsonist, a terrorist, whether they are known or unknown). Thus, (3) and (4) would become, respectively,

(3') a burning cigarette dropped by A caused a fire; and,

(4') the bomb set off by B killed a man.

In (2), however, the question does not make sense: the fire was not caused by a person, but by a natural event. The grammatical structure of (2) is similar to that of (3) and (4), but philosophical analysis shows a deeper disparity.

(ii) Human action vs bodily movement

(5) I raised my arm

(6) my arm rose

Both sentences have in common the movement of a part of the body. The fact that they are different can be shown because (6) could happen, for instance, if an object going upward hit my arm and made it rise; in that case, it was not me who raised it. The important relation between both sentences is that (5) entails (6), but not vice versa; that is, that I raised my arm entails that my arm rose, but that my arm rose does not entail that I

raised it (it could have been hit by an object, or somebody else could have moved it for me). The second sentence will not count as a human action, but as a bodily movement. This group will also include hiccoughs, coughs, twitches, reflexes, and so on.

(iii) Human action vs passion

(7) I sat down (due to tiredness)

(8) I fell down (because I slipped on a banana skin)

The contrast between these two sentences is sometimes put in terms of what the agent himself actively does, as opposed to what happens to him: only the former are cases of human action. Among the things which happen to the agent are the involuntary bodily movements mentioned in the last paragraph: hiccoughs, coughs, reflexes, etc. This should not be taken to imply that the distinctions in (ii) and (iii) are the same, for in (ii) the fact that human actions involve a bodily movement is stressed, whereas in (iii) the emphasis is put on the active involvement of the agent.

This feature of human action was expressed by Reid (1970; also, Lehrer, 1989) by saying that people possess active power, that is, a power to perform actions. Thus, if I have the power to raise my hand then I also have the power not to raise it. However, I do not have the power to hiccough (in a genuine way, not just pretending to hiccough), or the power not to do it (as far as hiccoughing is concerned, it is usually the case that the more we want to stop it, the worse it becomes). This power is understood as real efficient causation: that is, as people initiating changes in the world.

(iv) Intentional vs non-intentional action

(9) I fired a gun

(10) I fired my neurons

This is the difference between something I do intentionally, voluntarily and/or consciously (like firing a gun), and something I do unintentionally, involuntarily and/or unconsciously (like the firing of my neurons, if indeed this is a correct description of the physiological processes involved in the firing of a gun). Even if the latter (together with the movement of certain muscles and other things) is necessary to fire a gun, it is something I do not do, because it is not (part of) my intention in firing a gun. Thus, intentionality emerges as a key element of human agency.

A related case is that in which I do something deliberately which necessarily involves doing something else accidentally. Thus, my action of correcting a student's essay (something I do intentionally) necessarily involves my spoiling the neatness of the pages with my corrections (the latter being something I do accidentally). If I was asked what my intention was, I would say that to correct the student's essay; spoiling the page, although necessarily involved in my intentional action, is not something I do (since action is intentional action).

Davidson, in a paper called 'Agency' (1980:43-61), has criticized this distinction between what the agent does and the physiological processes necessarily involved in the action. He defends that the latter are also actions of the agent. In order to understand why, it must be explained that he distinguishes between the action and the description of the action. An action can be described in different ways. For example, one and the same action could be described as 'the killing of a person', 'the act of self-defence against an attacker', or 'the stabbing of an enemy'. Similarly, my action of firing a gun could be described as 'the firing of a gun' or 'the firing of my neurons leading to the firing of a gun'. Therefore, since both

descriptions refer to the same action, and the former is clearly an action of mine, then so is the latter. Thus, the physiological processes involved in the performance of an action are part of the action itself, and not something else, different from the action, that causes it.

Against this line of argument, it could be replied that the contrast between sentences (9) and (10) reflects a widely accepted distinction between what the intention of the action is and what is necessary to bring it about; ie, between intentional (description of an) action and the natural conditions of agency. The firing of a gun requires certain physiological processes, but it is the former, and not the latter, that the agent intends to do. The physiological processes can be said to be done by the agent, but only in a non-intentional sense; it is intentional action that concerns us here.

In short, then, human actions are actively and intentionally carried out by a person, as opposed to what happens in nature (natural events or processes), and what happens to people (namely, such involuntary bodily movements as hiccoughing or slipping on a banana skin). Is there a feature according to which the difference between actions and happenings can be more accurately stated? Is there something lacking in cases of happenings that distinguishes them from cases of action? The answer to these questions is parasitic on the model of human action that is defended. In the following two sections, two different general approaches to human action will be considered in some detail.

10.3. MODELS OF HUMAN ACTION: THE NATURALISTIC APPROACH

10.3.1. Basic actions

Such actions as raising one's arm or moving one's leg have been taken to be the proto-examples of human action. The reason appears to be obvious and forceful enough to some philosophers: if moving (a part of) one's body is not something that can be done intentionally by a person, what else would be a better candidate? Danto (1970) calls them 'basic actions', and offers the following definition:

"When an individual *M* performs a basic action *a*, there is no event distinct from *a* that both stands to *a* as cause to effect *and* is an action performed by *M*. So when *M* performs a basic action, he does nothing first that causes it to happen." (257)

Raising one's arm qualifies as a basic action because there is nothing else that a person must do in order to move his arm. Not all actions are basic, but at least some of them *must* be so:

"If there are any actions at all, there must be two distinct *kinds* of actions: those performed by an individual *M*, which he may be said to have *caused* to happen; and those actions, also performed by *M*, which he cannot be said to have caused to happen. The latter I shall designate as *basic actions*." (256)

The reason why there must be some basic actions is to prevent an infinite regress of causation. Actions relate to other actions as cause to effect, so that in order to produce a certain effect, there must have been a previous cause. This cause is in turn the effect brought about by a previous cause, which in turn is also the effect of a yet previous cause, and so on. There

is, then, the danger of an infinite regress from effects to causes and to further causes. In order to stop the chain of causes, it is argued, there must first be an action that is not itself caused, that is, a basic action. Therefore, basic actions are a necessary aspect of human action.

However, the existence (and necessity) of basic actions is not only reached as the conclusion of a philosophical argument. On the contrary, Danto maintains that "we all know, in a direct and intuitive way, that there are basic actions, and which are basic ones" (261). This is supported by the fact that basic actions are not acquired, but rather constitute the standard equipment for action. In the human case, for instance, moving one's arm and moving one's leg are part of the repertoire of basic actions for the normal person, while moving one's hat is not. A paralysed person, on the other hand, is negatively abnormal in that moving his arm is not part of his repertoire of basic actions. (Similarly, a positively abnormal person would be one who could do as a basic action something that the normal person could not do.)

10.3.2. Purposive actions

Richard Taylor (1970) has also offered an analysis of basic actions. Taylor agrees with Danto that a simple act (a basic action) is one that does not require the performance of any other act, but he adds a new element:

"while a simple act, like moving one's arm, need not be purposeful, a complex act, such as moving a stone with one's arm, of necessity is purposeful." (276)

The notion of purpose is explained by comparing the following two statements:

(11) I move my hand, causing a stone to move; and,

(12) I move a stone with my hand (by moving my hand).

The difference between them is that in (11) I move my hand, but the movement of the stone is unintended, whereas in (12) I move my hand first in order to move the stone. In other words, (11) is a simple act, whereas (12) is a complex one, because the movement of the stone requires the previous movement of one's hand. Since not all actions are basic, an account of the role of purpose in human action is needed. This necessity can be seen in two ways. Firstly, an adequate account of (12) makes it plain that there is an implicit reference to a purpose: I moved my hand in order to move the stone. Secondly, the notion of purpose accounts for the difference between intended and unintended effects of one's actions, like the unintended (11) and intended (12) movements of the stone. While the movement of the stone is part of one's intention in (12), it is not so in (11).

Therefore, Taylor's account, whilst acknowledging the distinction between basic and non-basic actions, incorporates the purposive aspect of human action, which is an advantage over Danto's account. This allows the possibility of making finer discriminations between apparently similar situations. Both in (11) and (12), the same external bodily movements take place (a hand moves, which in turn causes the movement of a stone), but the purposes or intentions of the agents and, therefore, the actions they perform, are different.

The element of purpose in human action is further explored by Charles Taylor (1964). With an anti-behaviourist motivation in mind, he distinguishes two aspects of human action: on the one hand, there is something (called the 'goal') brought about in action; on the other hand, the agent's purpose is to achieve such a goal:

"the distinction between action and non-action hangs not just on the presence or absence of the corresponding intention or purpose, but on this intention or purpose having or not having a role in bringing about the behaviour." (33)

It is not enough that the agent intends to move the stone, but such an intention must bring about the agent's behaviour. This is proposed in order to distinguish between those cases where one has the intention to do something, but just before doing it one accidentally brings it about, and those cases where the action follows from one's intention to do so. An example of the former is the case where someone forms the intention to move a stone (by using his hand), but just before doing it, he moves his hand clumsily with the effect that the stone moves. This case is different from the one where the movement of the stone is a result of the intention to move the stone.

Intentionality, therefore, is the feature that distinguishes actions from non-actions. Intentionality is acting with a purpose, not any purpose, but the one given to his behaviour by the agent himself. An intentional description of an action is the description of the agent himself (from a first-person point of view), with the goal of his action in view. The active involvement of the agent is seen in that it is not sufficient that the action be appropriate for the goal; he must also believe it to be so, as manifested in his intention.

10.3.3. Causally and teleologically basic actions

Some philosophers (Hornsby 1980a, 1980b) have argued that the term 'basic action' is in fact ambiguous between causally basic actions and teleologically basic actions. Let us explore the former notion first.

Some actions are related to each other in a causal way, so that doing a certain action a causes a different action a' ; a is, then, causally more basic than a' . For instance, I can cause myself to telephone a friend by summoning up an image of him. In this example, summoning up an image of my friend is causally more basic than telephoning him.

Danto seems to have been thinking of the causal relations among actions, and therefore, his definition of basic actions could be taken to be a definition of causally basic actions. However, if that is the case, such bodily movements as moving one's hand could not count as the proto-example of basic action, or even as a basic action at all. Somebody could say 'I moved my hand by contracting certain muscles', where the action of contracting certain muscles causes the movement of the hand. Moving one's hand, or generally speaking, bodily movements, are not basic actions, for a different action could be found that causes them. The latter cause-action could be a physiological action (or, if talk of descriptions as opposed to actions is preferred, an action described in physiological or neurological terms), like the contracting of my muscles. It is difficult to see what might count as a basic action in this causal sense: perhaps only certain happenings in the brain, or perhaps 'tryings', 'willings', 'attempts',

and so on. In any case, it is clear that if bodily movements are to be basic actions, a different account of basicness is required.

The characterization of teleologically basic actions stems from the idea, suggested by Danto and others, according to which basic actions are those which the agent does directly, without doing anything else previously. In this context, the agent's beliefs and desires make a difference. A teleologically basic action is, therefore, characterized as follows: if agent *A* wants *D* and believes that to get *D* he must do action *a*, which in turn requires action *a'*, then he will do *a'*; action *a'* is, therefore, teleologically more basic than action *a*.

Teleologically basic actions are those actions that escape the agent's beliefs in terms of means and ends. Examples of teleologically basic actions are bodily skills, like typing the letter 'p' or tying one's shoe laces, where no beliefs about what one is doing (movements of muscles, and so on) are involved at the time of acting. An experienced touch-typist, for instance, could explain, if asked, what are the movements that she makes in order to type 'p', by such beliefs as the movement of her right hand in such-and-such a way are not conscious beliefs entertained by her when typing 'p'. In the case of somebody who is learning to type, though, beliefs about the movement of one's right hand in relation to the keyboard are present when typing 'p'. Therefore, typing 'p' is not a teleologically basic action for the latter person. Hornsby stresses this distinction by saying that

"The kinds of action in an agent's repertoire that are basic for him are those which he knows how to do, and knows how to do otherwise than on the basis of knowing how they are done by him." (1980b:84)

Bodily skills fit the mould, for they are examples of things one knows how to do, without knowing how they are done, that is, without knowing the neurophysiological processes involved. Consider asking a child how he rides his bike: he might have no idea of the processes involved, nor does he have to know.

The importance of bodily skills in the whole of our actions will become clearer shortly (see 10.5.), when it is argued that they have a primary role to play in our relation to the world. Moreover, the latter picture in terms of teleologically basic actions matches the previous characterization of intentional action as *de re*. Neutral bodily movements (in the way in which Danto appears to conceive them), are not basic; on the other hand, bodily movements like the typing of 'p', or the moving of one's hand towards point p in space rather than p' , are basic in our understanding of intentional action, for the latter reveal an awareness of spatial position and of external objects that makes the agent an element in the world. Neutral bodily movements, like the raising of one's hand in the abstract, are secondary with respect to those other bodily movements and skills in which the external world is a constitutive (*de re*) part.

10.3.4. Concluding remarks

So far, there has been a progressive elaboration of an approach which views such actions as raising one's hand (in general, intentional movements of one's body) as the proto-examples of human action. The inclusion of a teleological aspect has introduced some important variations on the original starting point, although still within what might be called 'the naturalistic approach'.

The label of 'naturalistic' comes from the fact that there is a close connection between human actions and the actions of other animals: both human beings and animals can perform such actions as raising one's arm or moving one's leg. (Compare, for instance, 'Peter raised his hand' or 'Peter killed a man' with 'The tiger raised his head' or 'The tiger killed a monkey'.) The introduction of a teleological aspect is not sufficient to mark off human actions, though, since animals can also display purposive behaviour, namely when a tiger chases after a monkey. Should an account that separates human actions from the actions of other animals be preferred to the naturalistic approach? Let us consider such an account.

10.4. MODELS OF HUMAN ACTION: THE INTENTIONAL APPROACH

10.4.1. Rejection of the naturalistic approach

Carlos Moya (1990) has rejected the naturalistic approach in the following way. 'Jones raised his hand' differs from 'Jones's hand rose' in that the former is an action which logically involves the latter (a happening), and not vice versa (see 10.2.(ii)). It follows that if the former is true, then so is the latter, whereas the latter can be true without the former being so. For instance, Jones's hand can rise because of a spasm or a nervous twitch, in which case it is not true that Jones raised his hand. Therefore, there must be something present in Jones's raising his hand, and lacking in the mere rising of his hand, which makes the former an action. What does Jones add to the bodily movement that is the rising of his hand? How does

Jones bring about such a bodily movement? There are three possible solutions:

- i. Jones raises his hand by doing something else previously, namely a mental act of willing or trying;
- ii. Jones raises his hand by way of a previous physical cause, namely a physical trying;
- iii. Jones himself is the cause of the rising of his hand.

The three solutions, Moya goes on, are unsatisfactory. The first one gives rise to the problem of interactionism: how do mental causes produce physical events? The second one cannot be accepted because it reduces the genuine question of human agency to a mechanistic causation of events. The third alleged solution is not a solution at all: it simply states that there is something special about human agency, namely that human agents can initiate changes in the world, without explaining how it happens.

Moya believes that these problems can only be overcome by rejecting the naturalistic approach altogether. He concedes that the account of basic actions suggests something true: that human beings (and certain animals, too) have a natural ability to move their limbs, and that they can direct their behaviour in a spontaneous way towards a certain goal. Nonetheless, these natural conditions of agency, although necessary, are not sufficient to provide an account of human agency.

Nevertheless, there are other examples of human action in which their irreducible human character (that is, excluding the actions performed by non-human animals) can be adequately emphasized. That is the case with casting a vote, making a promise, or signalling for a left turn while driving.

These actions will be called 'meaningful' actions. Their initial attraction is that they make no room for a distinction that parallels the one between 'Jones raised his hand' and 'Jones's hand rose', and therefore, avoid the difficulties of the naturalistic approach. 'Jones made a promise' is no different from 'Jones's promise was made': if the former is true, then the latter is true; and the opposite also holds, since a promise having been made implies that someone has made it.

10.4.2. Acting as rule-following

At first sight, a common feature of these sorts of actions is their social aspect; that is, the fact that a certain process of learning and socialization has taken place. What has been learnt is a set of practices and rules that govern the correct performance of those actions. In signalling for a left turn, for instance, a certain knowledge of the Highway Code is necessary.

This aspect of human action has led some philosophers, such as Melden (1970), to compare human action to the act of playing games, suggesting that 'playing chess' in fact offers a perfect example of what human action is like. The important point of similarity, it is argued, is that there is a set of practices and procedures, learnt by habitual repetition, that give rise to a rule which is followed by those who share a common form of life. Introducing the idea of rule-following stresses that human actions are normative; that is, human actions can be correctly or incorrectly performed, in the same way in which there are correct and incorrect moves in chess. It must be noted that following a rule is different from acting in accordance with a rule, as when someone who does not know the rules of chess makes a correct move by chance.

The advantage of this account is that it helps to pick out 'pure' human actions, as opposed to the actions of animals. But, can the social and normative aspects of human action be put together with the previous proposal about purposefulness?

10.4.3. Intention and intentional action

It has been maintained that animals show intentionality when, for instance, they chase after their prey; the intention or purpose of their chase is to get the prey. Human beings are also intentional: when they signal for a left turn they intend to turn left; or when they bid at an auction, they intend to purchase a certain object. What is the difference, if any, between both types of example? The latter group of examples reveals a stronger sense of intentionality in that they imply a *commitment* to future actions: when one signals for a left turn, one commits oneself to turning left; and when one bids at an auction, one commits oneself to paying for a certain object. If one fails to turn left or to pay for the object at the auction, one is subject to criticism for not complying (correctly) with one's intention.

Thus, a crucial feature of such actions as making a promise or bidding at an auction is their intentionality, understood as a commitment to future actions. Could this feature be what distinguishes actions from happenings? Could it be said that actions are intentional whereas happenings are not? Certainly, making a promise is an intentional action, and even necessarily so: making an unintentional promise would be the same as not making a promise at all. But, how about the case in which someone is playing with a gun and accidentally pulls the trigger with the

undesired result that he kills somebody? He cannot be said to have killed the other person intentionally, although it is an action of his (not just a happening). In this case, it could be argued that, even if his action is not intentional under the description 'killing somebody', it is intentional under the description 'playing with a gun'. Happenings, on the other hand, are not intentional under any description; for instance, sneezing. Therefore, it can be inferred that "a certain piece of behaviour is an action if, and only if, it is intentional under some description" (Moya, 1990:53). Or, in Davidson's words, "a man is the agent of an act if what he does can be described under an aspect that makes it intentional" (1980:46).

What characterizes, then, an intentional action? Consider the following definition given by Moya:

"a particular activity or piece of behaviour of A is an intentional action (under the description D), if, and only if, in performing that activity or behaviour, under that description, A follows correctly a rational intention of his or hers." (130)

Three elements emerge here. First, in performing an intentional action one is *following* a plan or intention, not simply acting in accordance with an intention. Second, one is following it *correctly* (normative aspect of action). Third, the intention must be *rational* itself, as opposed, for instance, to the intentions formed by a madman.

The first element has already been discussed in connection with Melden's theory. At an auction, scratching one's nose may count as making a bid for a certain item. Now, if I do not know this (perhaps it is the first auction I have ever been to), I may scratch my nose because it is itching, not because I intend to bid for an object. The latter action is an example

of acting in accordance with a rule, not a case of following a rule or intention.

The second element, the normative aspect of action, will be explained further. Moya treats intentions as similar to promises and decisions (as opposed to previous treatments of intentions in relation to wants or desires). If I decide (or promise) to do something, I typically do it; I could change my mind, but there must be a reason for it. The same consideration can be applied to intentions. Although promises to somebody else are public, while intentions are private commitments, neither the former nor the latter can be broken without a reason, even one with such a minimal content as 'I did not like doing it' or 'I could not be bothered'. "In having an intention I commit myself either to make (if I think I will be able) or to try to make (if I do not think I will be able) its content true." (138)

The rationality element of intentional action is made manifest in the fact that, if intentions are systematically broken, then one can start to doubt whether the person in question understands what an intention is. It also emerges from the facts that one cannot intend what one knows to be impossible, and that one cannot intend and not intend the same thing, under the same description, at the same time. What this leads to is the idea that attribution of intentional action goes hand in hand with the attribution of a system of beliefs and desires, ie, a mind. This rational and holistic character of human action has been stressed by Moya in the following passages:

"Intentions can exist only in the wider context of a mind." (61)

"Intentional states are essentially a network, a whole system. They are not discrete, separate items: the existence of one of them has necessary implications for the existence of others." (64)

10.4.4. Concluding remarks

This account of intentional action incorporates the idea, expressed by such authors as Charles Taylor and Richard Taylor, that there is a purpose (teleology) in human action. At the same time, it provides a way of distinguishing between the spontaneous and natural teleology of non-human animals, and the intentionality of human actions. The former are intentions in a weak sense, whereas the latter are intentions in a strong sense²: "we can say of a dog that runs after a ball that its intention is to catch the ball, but we cannot say of it that it has now the intention to catch the ball in two days' time" (67). The reason is not that animals do not have an intuition of time (notice that certain birds are faithful to their partners for life, or that some animals collect food for the coming winter), but rather that they are unable to commit themselves in that sense of 'commitment' which involves a complex network of beliefs and other propositional attitudes, as well as language and a highly sophisticated process of socialization.

Therefore, on this approach, the key element is that human actions are intentional, in the sense of involving a commitment to the future. Furthermore, actions also have a rational and normative aspect. What distinguishes actions from happenings is, then, that actions are intentional under some description, whereas happenings are not.

10.5. THE PRIMACY OF BODILY ACTION

The two approaches to human action outlined above have stressed different features: the defenders of the naturalistic approach place such bodily actions as bodily movements in the centre of the picture, whereas the defenders of the intentional approach not only criticize the centrality of such actions as the raising of one's hand, but also underline the importance of 'pure' meaningful actions (like the casting of a vote, or getting married) that are outside the scope of non-human animal behaviour. What theory, if any, is right? In this section, it will be argued that both of them fail to provide an exhaustive account of human action, for they presuppose a certain view of the body that is mistaken.

Consider the action of going for a run. In running, one does not just move uniformly in one direction: one may have to lengthen or shorten one's step so as not to squash a snail, twist to avoid bumping into somebody else, or stop abruptly at a road junction if there is a car coming. Such actions as lengthening one's step, twisting or stopping abruptly can only be understood in a wider context in which people, quite literally, act against the inertia of their bodies: if one did not lengthen one's step, the snail would be squashed; if one did not stop in time, one would be run over by a car. Similarly, consider the case of the ballet dancer who turns her body round and round, until she stops and starts turning in the opposite direction: she is also acting against the inertia of her body's movement.

The importance of these examples is that they make human action inseparable from the possession of a body. The human body tends, of its own nature, to behave in a certain way, according to the laws of physics.

What people do when acting is to try to modify such a natural tendency, to somehow interfere with the natural behaviour of their bodies: for instance, they act so as to prevent their bodies from continuing to move in a certain direction, at a certain speed, etc. Human action is, therefore, an intentional acting against the natural movement of the human body. In this sense, it could be argued, human action is primarily bodily action.

Nonetheless, this way of arguing for an account of human action that is primarily bodily is not, perhaps, the most appropriate one. It is based on a view of the body as the material body, which, as has been seen above (see chapter 6), is not crucially central to the account of persons proposed here (the relation between person and material body was tentatively analyzed in terms of constitution, although other people may prefer to talk of supervenience). In this sense, the primacy of bodily action will now be defended in a way that pays the necessary attention to the sensory/intentional body.

The human body is not only that which can be directly controlled by the person³, but that through which people get in contact with the world: the body is people's door to the world. The latter means not only that people perceive the world from the position occupied by their body, but more importantly, that their body makes the world accessible as a world for action. From this, an argument can be constructed in favour of the primacy of bodily action. But, in order to see how this could be the case, the nature of such a body must first be explained.

The examples of human action proposed by the defenders of the naturalistic approach (namely, raising one's arm or moving one's leg) convey the impression that the human body is primarily a resting body

that, now and then, performs a movement. This is further supported by their talk of basic actions; that is, the proto-examples of human action are to be found in those actions that cause other actions, without being caused themselves, as if the chain of action began with them, and before there was only inactivity. In this sense, when I stretch my hand in order to move a stone, what happens is that I initiate a completely new and isolated movement (or chain of movements) of my body, as if up until then my body had been totally idle.

The intentional approach, on the other hand, insofar as it emerges as a critique of the former (ie, as an attempt at dealing with the problems arising from the fact that such basic human actions as 'Jones raised his hand' logically involve a happening, that Jones's hand rose), also inherits the model of the body as a resting body. The intentionality that characterizes 'pure' human actions is what brings about the movement of the body. Thus, when I signal for a left turn, for instance, I suddenly initiate a movement in my left arm; if I had not formed the intention to turn left, my body would have remained inactive.

This view of the body as primarily passive agrees with (and perhaps follows from) the idea that the human body is a mechanical device which, like other machines, only works when switched on, or otherwise operated from the outside. Computers, for instance, do not do anything unless the user gives them the order to do so (eg, by pressing the 'enter' key). If the human body was just like a computer, then it would have to be activated from outside, perhaps from the mind. But, it is precisely this mechanistic view of the body that is being resisted here. In this sense, as previously discussed, the body has been characterized as a sensory and intentional body, that is, as a body in active contact with the world. Now, a passive

body could not actively exchange information with the world; only an active body can successfully do so.

Merleau-Ponty, who appreciated this fact very well, proposed the familiar distinction between the objective and phenomenal bodies. It could be said that, while the objective body is a fixed, permanent (and even 'dead') object, the phenomenal body is a live organism, in the sense that it actively interacts with the world. Consider what he says in this respect:

"my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible *task*" (1962:100; my emphasis).

"Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that', but of 'I can'. [...] In the action of the hand which is raised towards an object is contained a reference to the object, not as an object represented, but as that highly specific thing towards which we project ourselves, near which we are, in anticipation, and which we haunt." (137-9)

It has already been mentioned that the world open to the person is a world of meanings, as opposed to a world of represented objects. In this sense, one of the meanings of the world (perhaps, the central one) is that it is a task to which our intentions are projected. The world is centrally a world for action. Therefore, a proposal against the model of the human body as a resting body, in that the human body is primarily a body-in-movement, an essentially active body, will now be put forward. The latter is the natural correlate of the idea, suggested at the end of the last chapter, that people are not passive, but essentially active beings. Furthermore, the resting body is parasitic on the body-in-movement: periods of rest or sleep are a physiological need for carrying out future activities.

Once it is fully acknowledged that the body is an active body, it can be seen that it presents the person with a world which is best characterized as

the stage, the setting of people's life. Thus, the proper way to regard the world is not as a finished and completed object, but as an ever-changing place, changing precisely because of people's impact on it. That this is, in fact, the way we see the world can be appreciated in that people go about their business every day; that politicians promise to *change* the world; that a key ingredient of people's own self-image is their profession, that is, that which captures their relation to the world. Borrowing Heidegger's phrase, it can be said that the world appears to us to be "ready-to-hand", not just ready-to-eye; that is, the world is the place where people develop their potential, the place with which they are actively involved, not just a place they lazily contemplate, as a spectator watches a play. People are not spectators: people are actors. (See Taylor, 1993.)

The world, then, ceases to be simply an objective world, and becomes the person's egocentric space. The latter has been characterized so far mainly as the person's perceptual environment, although it was suggested that there is an agency-centred egocentric map of the world. The sense of this can now be fully understood: the person's surroundings take on a special meaning as things to be done, as possible tasks, as the scenario for agency:

"The word 'here' applied to my body does not refer to a determinate position in relation to other positions or to external co-ordinates, but the laying down of the first co-ordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, the situation of the body in face of its tasks."
(Merleau-Ponty, 1962:100)

The existence of an egocentric map of the world is, then, possible because the person occupies a position in the objective world. The latter does not simply mean the space occupied by relation to other objects, although it presupposes it, but instead refers to the fact that the world and its objects

cease to be mere objects for representation, and become vitally linked to the person, both at the levels of perception and, above all, action.

The importance of the fact that the body-in-movement opens the person to the world can hardly be understated. Merleau-Ponty, in fact, realized how fundamental such a knowledge of the world is:

"our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of [theoretical] knowledge; it provides us with a way of access of the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia', which has to be recognized as *original* and perhaps as *primary*." (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:140; my emphasis)

The originality of such knowledge consists in the fact that it is essentially personal and unique: an experienced basketball player has achieved, thanks to his skilful jumps and twists, a knowledge of the world that will bear little resemblance to the knowledge possessed by a disabled person. Since each person's body possesses different abilities, this practical knowledge of the world will differ from person to person.

Furthermore, it is primary with respect to (that is, precedes, and makes possible) theoretical knowledge. Our human development from helpless babies to fully grown adults is made possible by our ability to do such everyday things as reaching and grasping, coordinating our eye and hand movements, or speaking a language. These are all skills, obtained by constant reinforcement of success stories: when a child stretches his hand to touch something, he may first fail to reach the object in question, but by constantly trying he will eventually succeed; then, he will repeat the movement until it becomes second nature. Once these simpler bodily techniques are mastered, the child may engage in more complicated activities that involve using things as tools to do other things, like using a

spoon to carry the food from plate to mouth. Thus, the foundations are laid for the development of other more important skills, eg learning a language. Therefore, certain 'simple' bodily skills have to be mastered by the child, before he can go on to learn a language; equally, more specialised theoretical knowledge is dependent upon such language acquisition. These bodily skills are the way in which we refine our link to the world: "Habit expresses our power of dilating our being in the world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments." (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:143)

In short, it can be concluded that human action is primarily bodily action. The fact that people show their active power in the process of intentionally acting against the natural behaviour of their bodies has been rejected as a decisive reason. Instead, it has been suggested that it is through their bodies (in particular, through the possession of both common and personal bodily skills) that people open themselves to the world. Not only more complicated actions like the opening of a parachute, but also such abstract skills as working out a sum in one's head, are dependent on the acquisition of 'simpler' bodily skills such as reaching and grasping, and using other objects as tools. Such 'pure' human actions as getting married, not only require knowledge of a language so as to say 'yes, I do' (a mere nod of one's head might be good enough), but also the understanding that by saying those words (or nodding one's head) one is in fact doing something else, namely getting married. That is, getting married presupposes that things, words, or movements of the head are 'tools', instrumental for the performance of other actions. These considerations lead to a view of the body as essentially active (the body-in-movement thesis): without such an active interaction with the world, the 'simpler' bodily skills would not be mastered, and the foundations for the future performance of other actions

would not be laid. It is in this sense that the naturalistic and intentional approaches, as characterized above, have been found inadequate: they lack a proper understanding of human action as primarily bodily, for without the body as a door to the world, there would be no intentional action.

CONCLUSIONS: THE MINIMAL ACCOUNT

At first sight, it may appear that an answer to the question 'what is a person?' could not be provided without considering the many different discourses in which the concept of a person occurs. Since Aristotle's definition of man as a political being, the social, moral and political dimensions of the person have occupied central stage in the understanding of people: what is the relation between an individual and society as a whole, what is the right attitude towards other people, what is the relation between an individual and the State, etc, have been pressing questions in philosophy. More recently, from a feminist perspective, it has been argued that an account of what a person is is not independent from the masculine/feminine polarity, and in that respect the body (in particular, the person's sexual traits) plays a fundamental role.

From both these perspectives, a general objection to the foregoing exposition of the identity of a person could be posed. On the one hand, it could be said that an account of the social dimension of the person is missing. On the other hand, it may be added, although there is a lengthy treatment of the bodily condition of people, there is no emphasis on their sexuality. To the extent to which these crucial aspects are left out, it may be argued, the former exposition is, to say the least, incomplete, perhaps even radically flawed.

However, these two objections fail to seriously damage the core of the argument in the previous pages. The fact that these two aspects have not been discussed at all does not imply a deliberate omission, in the sense

that they have nothing to offer to an account of personal identity. On the contrary, it is from the basic view of people as both subjects and objects, transcending the first-person/third-person dichotomy, that an adequate account of people's sexuality, and of their social dimension, can be given. In this sense, the previous exposition is a minimal account, providing the basis for a subsequent development of people's sexuality, as well as their social nature.

It could be objected, though, that the latter should not be regarded as just a plus on top of the minimal account, but as part of the minimal account itself; that is, that the right conception of people requires that their sexuality and/or their social dimension be considered to be at the centre of what people are. In answer to this objection, it is argued that both the sexual and social aspects can be elaborated from the minimal account in a direct manner. In other words, in the minimal account lies the possibility of a development of the role of people's sexuality, as well as their social character. Let us examine the latter in some detail.

A central theme in the previous chapters has been the bridging of the subjective/objective dichotomy in the treatment of personal identity. Thus, it has been powerfully argued that people are elements of the world, of the objective order: the necessity-of-embodiment thesis, together with the primacy of bodily action, have contributed to this. However, it might still be said that this talk of people as elements of the objective world fails to explain an important difference between such objects as chairs and tables, and people. In other words, the former are objects in a different, more literal, sense of the word than the latter, but this is not properly reflected by talking of people as objects in the world.

Such a difference could be highlighted by considering something crucial to our understanding of people as elements of the world: their relationships with other people. To put it bluntly, people engage in personal relationships, whereas chairs and tables do not. Furthermore, such relationships as being a parent, being the boss, or being a member of the local cricket team, may be a prominent feature of the way one sees oneself, that is, of one's self-identity.

The fact that people establish personal relationships with their fellow human beings is, in fact, an acknowledgment of the subjective side of the person. Strawson (and Evans, too; see 6.2. above) has argued that the ascription of certain P-predicates to oneself is logically linked to the ascription (or possibility of ascription) of those very same predicates to other people. That is, the ascription of some P-predicates to oneself presupposes the recognition of other *subjects*, to whom those predicates could also be ascribed. In other words, there is an acceptance of the fact that people are subjects among other subjects. The latter is the basis from which personal relationships unfold: people engage in personal relationships with those beings who resemble them as subjects. Therefore, the development of personal relationships offers a new argument for the bridging of the subjective and objective aspects of the person, whilst at the same time making clear what it means for a person to be an element of the world. People are elements of the world because they are able to form a network of social relationships with other people. People are, therefore, social beings. Although these sketchy considerations have not been part of the exposition in the main text, they do follow from the nuclear ideas discussed there. That is, the basis has been provided, even if the detailed process of argumentation is missing.

The social dimension of the person can also be shown to follow from the minimal account in connection with this quotation: "all meaningful action is for the sake of friendship" (Macmurray, quoted in Kjaergaard, 1970:173). Macmurray has proposed that the starting point of modern philosophy be shifted from the Cartesian *Cogito*, the 'I think', to the consideration of the person as an active being, the 'I do'. In this sense, human action occupies the centre of the picture: that people are agents is a constitutive, not just a consequential, aspect of our understanding of persons. That people are agents is not something that simply follows from their essential thinking nature; people are essentially agents. In this context, the sense of the quotation above is that human action is purposeful, and its purpose is quite simply the enhancement of personal relationships. Therefore, the essentially active character of people is not separable from their social dimension: "persons", says Macmurray, "are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. 'I' exist only as one element in the complex 'You and I' " (quoted in Kjaergaard, 1970:169). Once again, the basis for these considerations is already present in the minimal account: particularly in the characterization of human action as intentional, and in the attention paid to the active character of persons. In short, then, the minimal account has the basic ingredients required for the inclusion of other aspects of people not explicitly discussed, like their social nature.

Incidentally, consideration of the person as taking part in a complex web of personal relationships helps to bring out a feature which has so far been neglected, the notion of responsibility. When discussing Locke's forensic notion of a person, it was said that people were responsible agents. The responsible character of people, though, has not played a crucial role in the minimal account. However, the latter could be enriched by arguing

that people's responsibility is primarily towards other people, with whom they engage in personal relationships. Furthermore, insofar as personal relationships are lacking or diminished in certain groups, like animals or children, who do not possess a strong sense of intentionality as commitment, then responsibility will also be lacking, or its attribution to them limited. In short, the minimal account, austere as it is, can potentially be supplemented with richer additions.

These basic ingredients will now be reviewed, as a way of summarizing the achievements of the minimal account. Firstly, on the objective side of the subjective/objective dichotomy, the notion of the body has been under intense scrutiny. In particular, the defence of the notion of sensory/intentional embodiment should be regarded as an attempt at freeing the body from the mechanistic connotations inherited from the Cartesian model. Thus, the emphasis has been on the body as a 'live' entity, actively exchanging information with its environment, as opposed to a body that automatically, and blindly, reacts to the orders given by the person. Following Merleau-Ponty's distinction between the objective and the phenomenal body, the difference with the mechanistic position is that in the latter the body is thought of in purely objective terms (ie, as the subject-matter of physics or medicine), whereas the sensory/intentional body, like Merleau-Ponty's phenomenal body, is thought of as a sort of organism, a live intermediary between the person and the world, which conditions not only the knowledge the person obtains from the world, but also his possibility of acting upon it.

This view of the body as the objective body of the natural sciences was referred to in the introduction as 'the mechanistic conception of the body'. The latter has been resisted by proposing a more organic view of the body,

which attends to the position of the person within the world as a whole. Incidentally, an alternative criticism of the mechanistic conception of the body could be suggested in terms of an analysis of desires. Desires, particularly the so-called 'blind desires', are thought to automatically ensue from the person's physiological needs, without rational intervention. If this view could be resisted, then a critique of the body as a mechanical device would follow suit. The elaboration of this argument, though, will have to wait.

It is on this non-mechanistic view of the body that the necessity-of-embodiment thesis has been based. People are necessarily embodied in that they possess a sensory/intentional body that connects them to, and gives them a perspective onto, the world. It is from the perspective of their body that people perceive, and act upon, the world. Were they to lack such a perspective onto the world, as in the nightmare of the brain in a vat, they would not be persons.

Secondly, on the subjective side of the dichotomy, and so as to prevent an over-objectification of the person (that is, an identity of the person with a material body), it has been maintained that people are subjects. Furthermore, it has been sustained that the understanding of people as subjects requires a non-reductionist approach, according to which people are neither an embodied mind, nor a mindful body, nor a sum of mind and body. On the contrary, the concept of a person is primitive with respect to those of mind and body. The latter means, on the one hand, that the concept of person is not reducible to those of mind and/or body, and on the other hand, that the former is conceptually prior, that is, that our understanding of persons precedes our understanding of an embodied mind or a mindful body. In other words, the Cartesian model has been

reversed: Descartes started from the notions of mind and body to reach that of a person, whereas it is now proposed that the starting point should be the concept of person itself.

Following Kantian insights, the person has been characterized as a subject. Thus, a person as subject is that irreducible and non-eliminable entity to which mental experiences and bodily characteristics are equally and necessarily ascribed. Due to the subjective status of the person, talk of the unity of a person (both at the psychological and bodily levels) is possible: different experiences and bodily features, at different times, are all ascribed to the same subject; they are all part of the same person's history because he is the same subject.

Thirdly, having thus separately exposed the objective and subjective sides of the person, a possible way of bridging the subjective/objective divide has been proposed. In fact, two notions have played a very valuable role: those of perception and action. Perception appeared to be suited to the job because the person is not only the subject of his own perceptions, but also an object to be perceived (he can see himself, touch himself, etc). Thus, a solution to the bridging of the subjective/objective divide seemed possible in connection with the 'Simple Theory of Perception', whereby people can locate themselves in the world as a joint result of their perceptual experience of the world, together with their awareness of their status as subjects. People not only regard themselves as objects positioned in the world, and therefore, susceptible to being perceived, but also as objects that are subjects.

However, such a proposal turned out to be an incomplete solution, for perception and action are so interdependently linked with one another that

a one-sided answer, where action was left out, could not be successful. This is the reason why an extensive study of human agency was needed. Two main theses resulted from that analysis: one, that human agency is primarily bodily; and two, that the person as a subject of action is primary with respect to the person as a subject of perception (or a subject of thought and perception). The first thesis meant a re-assertion of both the non-mechanistic view of the body, and of the necessity-of-embodiment thesis, since it appeared that the body was involved in the core of the person's active relation to the world: human action is bodily because people open themselves to the world through their bodies. A relevant conclusion following from the thesis that the person is above all a subject of action is that the question about the unity of the person could finally be settled: as mentioned above, the person is united in so much as he is a subject, but not just any sort of subject, a subject of action, or rather, an agent.

Fourthly, the move away from the Cartesian approach to personal identity has been completed. It was suggested in the introduction that one of the underlying themes of this work was the attempt to overcome the Cartesian model which has for so long dominated philosophical discussions of the person. This has been achieved on several fronts: one, the person is not a sum of mind and body, but conceptually primary with respect to the latter; two, the embodied nature of the person has been properly stressed, for instance, in the primary character of bodily action; three, the view of the body as a mechanical device has been definitely abandoned; and four, the unity of the person does not depend on his being a thinking being, but on his essentially active nature.

Concerning the essentially active character of persons, something not yet mentioned should be borne in mind. It appears that if people are *essentially* active, then people's identity cannot be determined once and for all. Moreover, insofar as they are active beings, they control what they make of their lives and, therefore, of their identity over time. This idea could be supported in different ways. Consider the following three examples. One, people form short- and long-term plans and projects, in the light of which their present behaviour can be understood: a mark of people's actions is that they can be placed within the framework of a certain project. But, in making these plans, people also make their own life. Think, for example, of the adolescent who decides to enter medical school, of the young woman who becomes a nun: these are dramatic decisions, plans, that will radically affect the course of their lives.

Two, consider the case of personal relationships, which form a central ingredient of people's life: somebody may regard his being a father (or his being the boss) as something nuclear in his own self-image, so that if he was to lose his son (or his company), he would feel he was not himself, as if he was a different person altogether. Thus, when people engage in personal relationships, they are directly contributing to the making of their life. Since people engage in different personal relationships in their lifetime (from being a son, to being a husband, to being a father, etc), they are somehow correspondingly changing an important part of their own self-identity.

Three, people's beliefs are also an important part of their life: serious changes in people's convictions bring about critical changes in their life. This is the case, for instance, with the move from a life based on firm

pious convictions to a life devoid of faith in religion; or the case of the husband who suddenly learns that his wife is cheating on him.

In short, then, the point is that people's identity is not fixed at the beginning of their lives. In the same way in which children develop, physically and psychologically, towards adulthood, people's identity (what they think of themselves as well as what others think of them) evolves, too. This, however, is not a *reductio ad absurdum* of the minimal account, for the latter only indicates the chief elements that a philosophy of personal identity must accommodate, whereas the point about personal evolution does not contradict any of them. Furthermore, the fact that people evolve is a corollary from the active character of persons, one of the central components of the minimal account. It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty's quote at the beginning of this thesis should be understood: "consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that', but of 'I can' ". The latter can be taken to mean that, insofar as people are essentially active, their own identity is conditioned by their active nature.

NOTES TO THE MAIN TEXT

Notes to Chapter 1

(1) The authors examined in the following discussion consider a disembodied person as one who has previously been embodied, not one that lacks a body from his origin. Since the former is intuitively more possible than the latter, it is hoped that criticism of the former will also serve as criticism of the latter.

(2) This argument owes a great deal to certain essentialist accounts about the role of scientific discoveries in philosophy (particularly, questions of meaning and modality); see Kripke (1980) and Putnam (1975).

(3) The "may" in the main text should be taken with a pinch of salt, for if it turns out (as some people may want to argue) that science teaches us that embodiment is a necessary property of persons, then disembodied perception and action is ruled out, in accordance with Kripke's previous point. However, this complication may be ignored.

Notes to Chapter 2

(1) The following considerations apply both to vision and hearing, although only the former will be explicitly mentioned most of the time.

(2) Is it right to use 'he' and/or 'she' to refer to disembodied persons? Our present criteria to distinguish male from female people are bodily criteria. Since a disembodied person has no body, such a distinction would appear to be out of place. However, it could be argued that by the disembodied person's character (manifested in behaviour), the distinction male/female could be sustained. (See Gillet, 1986:380.)

(3) The following considerations can similarly be applied to the sense of taste.

(4) Huby (1976) has defended the existence of mediumistic communication. She proposes a distinction between microcosms and persons. In cases of mediumistic communication, what happens is that a different microcosm (other than the usual one) possesses the medium's

body. That is, different microcosms can inhabit the same body at different times. She adds that we should not be put off by the apparent clash with our scientific way of looking at things, because microcosms do not follow scientific laws.

(5) Even in cases of after-images, what is seen is a bright light that is caused by the previous normal vision of something in the world. For instance, the bars of a window seen against a bright sky can later be observed (after-image) as floating in the ceiling with the drift of the eyes.

(6) A counter-example could be the so-called 'lucid dreams', where the sleeping person realizes, while dreaming, that what he is experiencing is a dream, and it is not reality. Could such a person give his exact location, while sleeping (and, therefore, while lacking perception of the world)? In any case, that is not the normal case, and it is not a fatal objection to the point made in the main text.

(7) A difficulty here is whether communication with disembodied people is possible. Cases of mediumistic communication, where disembodied people talk through an embodied person's (the medium's) mouth, have been put forward as positive evidence. Those who reject that this is possible have questioned both the amount of evidence available, and its reliability. Here, it will simply be pointed out that the controversy has not yet been solved, and that there is a *prima facie* case for doubting the possibility of mediumistic communication. In the meantime, the onus to present conclusive evidence is on those who claim it to be possible.

Notes to Chapter 4

(1) However, he adds that angels may have knowledge of real essences and "it is certain his Maker has" (III, VI, 3). The discovery of real essences simply escapes limited human capacities.

(2) See Wilkes (1988) for a detailed description and discussion of one case of multiple personality, that of Miss Beauchamp. According to the records of Dr. Prince, the psychologist who treated this case, there seemed to be different persons, within the same body, at different times. One of the ways of recognizing the existence of more than one person is the observation of their actions, often manifesting distinct (and even contradictory) character traits. It would appear, then, that more than one

agent were involved, and that each agent did not accept responsibility for the actions of the others.

(3) Nonetheless, this does not amount to the consideration of a person as a social construct, ie the idea that society conventionally decides what a person is. The naturalistic component built into the concept of a person prevents such a move by establishing that people are an element of the *natural* order.

(4) This is only a rough example, since many different organs form the eye. A more detailed account would include other elements.

(5) To what extent could we do without our heart or lungs in a normally working body?

Notes to Chapter 5

(1) Quotes of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* refer to a translation of the B edition by J M D Meiklejohn.

(2) The notion of commitment, and its relation to intentional action, will be further explored in a later chapter.

(3) It is a matter of some controversy whether or not Wittgenstein held a version of the NO-theory or, indeed, what his view of the person was. This will not be discussed here. Certainly, Wittgenstein's remarks on personal identity are various and complicated, and their explanation would require a whole new thesis. Thus, and for argument's sake, it will be supposed that he maintained an eliminativist thesis.

(4) Or more precisely, identification-free knowledge is (1) not identification-dependent, and (2) based on a way of gaining information from objects. This second restriction is introduced in order to exclude knowledge that is not information-based, which is relevant in the context of Evans's discussion, although it could be ignored here.

(5) This now seems a rash assumption. The full force of the question of self-location on the basis of the information we gain about ourselves (including our body) will be addressed in a later chapter.

Notes to Chapter 6

(1) As well as M-predicates, those P-predicates which do not ascribe states of consciousness (like 'is going for a walk'), and some P-predicates which do ascribe states of consciousness (Strawson mentions, for instance, 'is in pain'), could be ascribed to animals. Therefore, Strawson's account could be modified to accommodate animals.

(2) This special class of P-predicates Shoemaker calls them P*-predicates. P*-predicates are instantiated in such a way that knowing that they are instantiated in that way is equivalent to knowing them to be instantiated in oneself (1984b:16). This is the origin of the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification, discussed in the previous chapter.

(3) Descartes's view of the connection between mind and body, underlying the division between person and body has been oversimplified here. Descartes himself realized that the relationship between a person and his material body was very close and intimate. (See Coady, 1982-3.) Nonetheless, this oversimplification may shed some light on certain aspects of the Cartesian position.

(4) The possibility of such examples as (A) is not under scrutiny here. Those examples are relevant because they help to determine what is meant by body (namely, sensory and intentional body, as opposed to material body).

Notes to Chapter 7

(1) What can be said of those cases in which babies are born with an uncommon number of limbs, for instance? Would they not count as the maximally embodied persons? The solution might be hinted at by the name those cases receive: cases of defective birth, that is, physiologically abnormal cases.

(2) The problem would be one of attribution of personhood. If such a body did not show any outer intentional behaviour or any sign of perception, what grounds would there be to consider it a person? What

difference would there be between such a body and a stone, for instance? Would the person-like external appearance be enough? Certainly, a sculpture of a person looks like a person, but it is not one.

(3) At least, according to one interpretation of Wittgenstein's work, exemplified by Malcolm (1986, 1989).

(4) Rorty (1992) has proposed a different argument for the close connection between the body and intellectual thought. She suggests that a medically healthy body (a sound maintenance system) is correlative with reliable scientific knowledge (a sound information system). In this context, both bodily sensations and emotions play a crucial role, for they are oriented to both the maintenance and the information systems. For a different argument in favour of the connection between the body and theoretical knowledge, see also Johnson (1991).

(5) First of all, Malcolm argues that a dream is not an event like many other physical events (such as thundering or sleeping), and therefore there is no duration of dreams in real time. Second, he maintains that if REM was the criterion for dreaming, then two inadmissible consequences would follow: one, that people should have to be informed whether they dreamt or not; second, that people could be *mistaken* about having dreams.

Notes to Chapter 8

(1) This idea may need some qualification: what about the painter who sees a richly coloured environment, or the musician who hears more tones than the average person? Could it be said that while we all receive the same sensations, only some of those (more in the case of the trained painter or musician) have a perceptual content? How important a role does our past experience play in perception?

(2) The perception of our own bodies is patchy: we do not usually see most of our heads; if we do (as when we are facing a mirror), we do not see our backs. On the other hand, the interior physiological workings of our bodies usually escape our perceptual experience (with perhaps the exception of the noises coming from our stomach, or the uncomfortable sensations of a sore muscle).

(3) It must be stressed that both examples only apply in normal circumstances, that is, excepting cases where the subject's brain is linked to someone else's body, or other abnormal situations.

Notes to Chapter 9

(1) For a criticism of Parfit's reductionist view of the person that follows from this shift of emphasis from the unity of consciousness to the unity of agency, see Korsgaard (1989). She argues that Parfit's conclusions do not square well with the conception of people as agents.

Notes to Chapter 10

(1) The analysis that follows in the main text bears certain similarities to the one proposed by Rescher (1970), although there are also important differences. Rescher, for instance, distinguishes between action (like looking at or listening to) and termination (like seeing or hearing); only the former, he says, count as human actions. However, I shall treat both seeing and looking at as cases of human action.

(2) It is true that not all human actions involve a strong intention. For instance, when somebody readjusts his position while driving because he does not feel too comfortable, he does not have to form a previous intention including some sort of commitment to future actions.

(3) This way of talking, as if the body were different from the person, should not be suspicious of dualism: at this stage, it should be clear that it is only a way of talking.

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