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# An outline of a theory of person-consciousness: Three kinds of self-awareness<sup>\*</sup>

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**Abstract:** 1. Introduction; 2. Indexical self-awareness; 3. Detached self-awareness; 4. Social self-awareness; 5. Basic social self-awareness; 6. Developed social self-awareness;

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We talk about people as if they are self-conscious, and of being so as a necessary condition for being a person. But what is self-consciousness? Often it is described as the capacity for having higher-order thoughts about oneself, for instance, beliefs about one's beliefs about oneself, or perhaps a desire to have a certain belief about oneself, and so on.

But is this all there is to it? People engage in a lot of activities that seem to require all sorts of mental states about oneself, both second-order and others. To be self-conscious involves being able to think about oneself in a whole range of different situations that require different ways of conceiving of oneself. The self that one is conscious of does not present itself in the same way throughout: one is aware of oneself in different ways. The capacity to entertain higher-order thought, it will be argued, does not on its own explain what is going on in all these cases.

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To be a person is, no doubt, closely related to having self-consciousness. Persons cannot only think about themselves in a straightforward way. They can also plan for a better future, dream about being somebody else, reflect over what would have happened during the holidays had they been together with somebody else than they actually were, think about how other people's reactions during the day influenced their own behavior, regret something they did or did not do, and much more.

The kind of self-consciousness that supports all these different ways of thinking about oneself is complex. Self-consciousness is necessary not only for performing purely cognitive tasks, but also to engage in social relationships, and to have an ethical outlook on things. It makes it possible to have concerns for oneself and others, to reason about emotions and values and general moral issues. It is important not to conceive of self-consciousness as a purely mental and context-independent condition. What makes us self-conscious is a combination of mental, physical, and contextual factors.

Below, I will present three types of self-awareness: indexical, detached, and social self-awareness.<sup>1</sup> Together they constitute the complex kind of self-consciousness that is necessary to entertain a full range of thoughts about oneself. I call this person-consciousness, because a person, at least in principle, should have access to the full range of thoughts about oneself that complex self-consciousness makes available.

Each of these kinds of self-awareness are necessary, and together they are sufficient, for full-fledged self-consciousness. They are differentiated by their functions, and each has its counterpart in some specific capacity without which the self-awareness in question could not develop. I will present them one by one, and finally explain how they together constitute the kind of self-consciousness that we expect persons to exhibit.

Initially, I would like to make a terminological remark about why I use 'consciousness' on some occasions and 'awareness' on others. I will limit my use of 'self-consciousness' to those cases in which I refer to the general condition, involving all three kinds of self-awareness. It is possible to be aware

of oneself in any single one of the three ways to be described below, without being aware of oneself in the other ways. Thus one can have some level of self-awareness, without being conscious of oneself as a person in the full-blown sense. This occurs, for instance, in varieties of brain damage. Furthermore, the word 'subject' should be understood in as a neutral and philosophically non-committal way as possible.

## 2. INDEXICAL SELF-AWARENESS

Indexical self-awareness is based on perceptual information that the subject has about herself.<sup>2</sup> The indexicality in question refers to the fact that the subject is aware of herself and her states as given in the actual context. Her state of awareness and the content of the states of which she is aware are dependent on the particular context. The context comprises the location in time and space where the subject is situated.

The states that give rise to indexical self-awareness are those that carry information about the subject herself, either directly or indirectly.<sup>3</sup> They can be about both the subject's mental and bodily condition. We perceive our bodily states directly, through proprioception (muscular and joint sense) and interoception (autonomic and visceral sense), and indirectly, by perceiving the external world and thereby getting information about our position, orientation, and relation to other objects.

We receive information directly about our mental states in having perceptual experiences and sensations, which are directly caused by informational states within or outside the boundary of our body. Informational states represent the context from the subject's point of view. They are always centred on the experiencing subject, and the information is essentially first-personal. It is conditioned by the subject's position in the context. Informational content depicts what things are like or how they appear to a particular subject, and that in turn depends on how the subject interacts with

them. The informational content could not by itself provide the subject with a point of view, or give rise to indexical self-awareness. The subject must interact with the surroundings to attain it. The reason for that is twofold.

First, interaction with the environment is necessary to distinguish between oneself and the rest of the world, that is, to experience oneself as a distinct individual. Without differentiation, there cannot be a point of view. The subject discovers herself as a causal power through other objects, by simultaneously using her body and her different senses in interacting with them. The objects will alternatively resist or give way for the subject, and so will she when the objects impinge on her.

Second, merely receiving information about the external world is not sufficient for locating oneself in it. Continuous interaction with the surroundings is needed to make the subject aware of her position in relation to other objects in the context. Perceptual content, based on merely passive observation, would not help the subject grasp the relation between the objects and herself, but only the relations between the observed objects.

Perception of the world is active: subjects do not wait for things to unveil themselves to them, but search actively for information.<sup>4</sup> As the subject moves around in different directions for different purposes, she will gradually impose a structure on the perceptual field. The subject is placed at the centre, with the surrounding items organized around her. The point of view is always tied to the subject and her location. She perceives the world from her own perspective, and her point of view is anchored in her body. She can update the information and keep the structure coherent on her own initiative or as a response to the acts and movements of other individuals and to the character of the environment. The structure functions as a complex and constantly changing map of a single world with the subject as an unarticulated constituent at its centre, which carries current information about the present situation.

Since indexical self-awareness consists in contextual information gained through the interplay of perception and behavior, both of which depend on the body, egocentricity depends on embodiment and situatedness. Situatedness is

simply the idea that the content of particular thoughts depends on information in the context that the subject is placed in physically. The source must be present in that context. Embodiment means that the capacity to represent and think depends on perception and (bodily) interaction with the environment.

The structure of our maps of the world depends on our physiology and physical constitution, and if we did not have bodies, or if our bodies were different, we would not perceive the world as we do, since our interaction with it would be different. In this sense, the way we represent ourselves and the world depends on acting in a certain kind of way and, consequently, on our being embodied.<sup>5</sup> Embodiment is considered important both from an evolutionary and a developmental perspective.

Indexical self-awareness also involves a non-reflective awareness, or a practical grasp, of oneself as enduring in time, which arises in the tracing of a path through the physical world. This presupposes unity of consciousness, which, among other things, involves the integration of simultaneous information had in different modalities and of simultaneous information had from different sources; consistency among one's actual representations of the world; and storage of representations in working memory.

The subject becomes aware of her continuity in time by continuously interacting with the environment, in discovering that her actions have a causal impact and that other people and things in general affect her. Past interactions leave traces in the subject. The experience of time that is possible at the level of indexical self-awareness is tied to action and the causal structure of events.

To the subject, time is what passes between attained and new goals, the former being transformed into landmarks that can be revisited and together with new goals indicate a certain order among events. The notion of time arising from indexical self-awareness is thus thoroughly subjective, centred on series of events involving the subject and her experiences of these. It is also unreflected, in the sense that it cannot be detached from the condition of the subject. Thus she is not aware of herself as travelling through time or, for instance, as time going too fast or too slow in comparison with the actions that

she performs. She is not aware of time as such.

It is a condition for indexical self-awareness that one's experiences are connected over time in at least a minimal sense. Somebody whose I-thoughts were not at all connected, and who was aware of herself as a momentary being only, would not be able to relate one state to another. She would be a new subject with each occurring experience or thought, one who continually had to start from scratch.

Indexical self-awareness plays an important role for cognition and agency. The specific cognitive role of the concept 'I' depends on the egocentric perspective of thought content as given in indexical self-awareness. If the information that a subject gains about herself were not centred on the subject, it would not move her to action or influence her behavior. All kinds of information could be registered, but would not be localised, or causally connected to any particular sources.

It is impossible to conceive of oneself only from a third-person perspective, because one cannot tie general beliefs to oneself without a first-person conception of oneself. David Lewis' example of the two gods, who know all the facts there is to know about the world, but cannot tell who they are (who is the god on the tallest mountain and who is the god on the coldest one), because they lack indexical representations, is an excellent illustration of this.<sup>6</sup> They have knowledge of the world, but not of themselves or their position in the world.

The cognitive role of particular 'I'-thoughts is given by the way the subject is presented with herself in the actual context, which varies with the context. This presentation will influence her actions, lines of thought, and decisions. Subjects do not normally function in the same way cognitively even if placed in the (qualitatively) same kind of situation, not only because they happen to be at different places in time and space, but also because they happen to be in different individual states at that location. The character of the individual state depends on the history of the subject, the subject's physiological and chemical make-up, her expectations, and other similar

factors.

Indexical self-awareness thus involves an experiential grasp of oneself as a causal power and also a conception of one's position in relation to other objects in the context of action. One experiences the world as distinct from oneself and the objects in it as items (and not fluctuating collections of properties or features) that extend over time. This means that the subject, among other things, grasps the notion of object permanence.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. DETACHED SELF-AWARENESS

Let me now introduce the concept of detached self-awareness, as opposed to indexical self-awareness. A subject with a detached self-awareness does not have to rely on contextual information in representing herself. Her self-representations are cut loose, or detached, from the actual context. She can think of herself generally, as somebody who can instantiate different properties in different domains, where the properties and the domains are independent of each other. This requires a concept of oneself as an individual independent of any particular context, who could satisfy any description, but still remain the same subject in a numerical sense.

The general feature of thought is captured by the so-called Generality Constraint introduced by Gareth Evans. According to it, conceptual thoughts are essentially structured, which means that "if a subject can be credited with the thought that  $a$  is  $F$ , then he must have the conceptual resources for entertaining the thought that  $a$  is  $G$ , for every property of being  $G$  of which he has a conception".<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the subject can think of other objects than  $a$ , of which he has a conception, that they are  $F$ . Structured thoughts can be generalized and combined, and the combinations can be transformed. Full-blown conceptual thought shares these features with language, but that does not mean that thought and language must have a similar representational form.

Detached self-awareness is an instance of the general capacity to engage



in conceptual or symbolic thinking (Deacon 1996). Symbolic thought relies primarily on the relation between symbols, instead of on particular symbols' referential links to things in the world. The symbols are interdefined, and can be combined or substituted for each other according to different sorts of rules or relations, like opposition, contiguity, and part/whole relations. It seems that humans have an innate capacity for general and symbolic thought, and most likely also for detached self-awareness. Obviously, having such a capacity does not by itself imply that the symbols themselves are innate.

Symbolic thought depends on intentionality and the capacity to entertain representations that are independent of the presence or even of the existence of what they represent, as in daydreams and fantasies.<sup>9</sup> Let us say that a mental state is intentional if it can be (but not necessarily is) about something that either is not present in the environment of the subject of the state or does not exist in the actual world. Further, a subject is intentional if she is capable of being in an intentional state that plays a certain psychological role to her. This role is equivalent to the mode or attitude that the content is conceived under, for instance, hope, belief, or desire. Psychological roles can be described by reference to their function in reasoning or behavior. I think that the basic intuition behind Brentano's characterisation of intentionality is that intentionality releases the subject of the representations from general contextual constraints on what can be thought or represented.

A detached self-awareness is necessary for many types of activities. A subject whose thoughts are general and systematic can think conditionally and make plans. Third-person thoughts express a perspectiveless view, which, among other things, enables the speaker in a formal sense to put herself in somebody else's place, engage in counterfactual thinking, and look upon the world from a descriptive, or objective, standpoint. She can disengage herself from her own perspective, perhaps even from any perspective. The latter ability prepares, for instance, for planning for groups, also when the planner is herself a member of the group, or for co-operative planning and co-ordination of actions. In such cases, the planner must be able to plan both from an egocentric

and a general point of view.

The kind of thinking described above is not accessible for somebody with only an indexical self-awareness. Indexical thought as such is neither general, nor context-dependent, but depends for its meaning on the presence of the referent in the context of thought. On the other hand, as mentioned in section 2, detached self-awareness cannot on its own function as an impetus to action or even as a basis for it, as in planning for oneself. The reason is that it is not related to specific contexts in the real world. In fact, it is impossible to conceive of oneself as a particular individual from a third-person perspective only, since one cannot tie general beliefs to oneself without a first-person conception of oneself.

Thus, generality makes it possible to conceive of oneself as an object among others. It also provides a formal or logical notion of identity, both over time and domains, in the sense that properties can change along both axes without the identity of oneself doing so. In reasoning about oneself, one does not normally question that one is the same person in the first step as in the last. Identity is presupposed by the generality as such.

This points in the direction of a sort of 'blind' application of 'I'.<sup>10</sup> The identity is ensured simply by the subject's claiming her identity by using different tokens of 'I'. The mere expression of 'I' suffices to guarantee the identity of the subject in a formal sense. 'I' is used immediately and directly, and the use does not involve any specific or particular conception of the numerical identity of oneself. It does not say anything about the metaphysical foundations for personal identity, but identity is just a formal condition for it.

This does not mean that personal identity only amounts to unity of consciousness. It means that the conditions for personal identity cannot be extracted from the concept of a speaker on which 'I' is based. One does not need to keep track of oneself in thinking and talking about oneself. Reasoning about oneself is not like keeping track of an object in one's vicinity. To attach a first-person perspective to general thought means to refer from a privileged point of view. The subject sets the rules for her identity, and there are no other

restrictions for it than that she keeps on referring to herself with 'I'. The identity of the subject is thus presupposed by the concept 'I'.

Indexical self-awareness, and the first-person perspective it contributes, together with the capacity to entertain general and systematic thoughts constitute a unifying principle. It constitutes the basis of personhood. That unifying principle is what makes it possible for me to use 'I' repeatedly to stand for myself. It keeps mental states together and makes it possible for one to conceive of oneself as a being enduring through time.

Continuity is as important for detached self-awareness as for indexical self-awareness. Without an understanding of oneself as a continuer, one cannot, for instance, reason about or plan for oneself. Rationality requires a concept of oneself as enduring over time. A punctuate mind without a grasp of the past and without the capacity to anticipate the future would not have any reason to, for instance, revise her system of beliefs.

Moreover, for those who take concern to be a distinguishing mark of persons, a punctuate mind could never be a candidate for personhood. Concern requires a conception of beings as extended through time, because it is future-directed. It takes into account prospective, possible states of the object for the concern. Furthermore, concern is motivated by knowledge of the past of the object of concern, whether this object is oneself or somebody else.

The faculty of judgement depends on the capacity both to retain thoughts over time and to understand that one thought is related to another. It also depends on being in states with content that are related to each other in various ways, for instance, as implying, contradicting, or excluding each other. Duration and continuity of the sort that would debar punctuate minds from being speakers are prerequisites for self-consciousness.

In the course of everyday life, we do not reason about ourselves as pure or formal subjects. As mentioned above, we use dynamic contextual presentations of ourselves as a starting-point in thinking about ourselves. These presentations maintain the cognitive role of 'I', that is, its role in agency and reasoning.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, we often conceive of ourselves in different ways

which influence how we reason, attributing social roles or psychological properties to ourselves that seem well-suited in a certain line of reasoning. Finally, states like concern for oneself seem to depend on a sharing of emotions that does not emerge just by having the formal capacity to think general thoughts and to combine concepts in a way that follow syntactic and semantic rules. The last remark leads over to the third kind of self-awareness: the social one.

#### 4. SOCIAL SELF-AWARENESS

Person-consciousness relies on yet another element: social self-awareness. This is based on a capacity to understand one's relations to other people as of an emotional, social, and normative kind. A subject capable of social self-awareness can focus on her emotions and recognise those of others; she can interact with other people in a way that takes psychological states into account and relies on recognising their beliefs, desires and various other intentional attitudes; and she can furthermore grasp the nature of normative and ethical relations between subjects. Finally, she can relate all these kinds of information to appropriate or inappropriate courses of action and evaluate alternatives.

As mentioned above, indexical self-awareness primarily expresses a perceptual sensitivity to oneself and others as in the first hand physical and contextually located agents. Detached self-awareness builds on conceptual capacities and knowledge of logical relationships and consists in the ability to reason about oneself from a third-person view. In contrast, social self-awareness arises from subject-subject interaction, and builds on an exchange and sharing of emotional, attentive, and intentional states. The interaction follows certain patterns and norms.

As opposed to the other kinds of self-awareness, social self-awareness is not primarily a way of separating or distinguishing one individual from another. On the contrary, it consists in discovering (already existing)

similarities between oneself and others, which may result in a transfer of characteristics and states between oneself and the other. The transfer subsequently leads to a recognition of oneself as a social being, a subject among other beings of the same kind, the interaction of which is partly based on norms and values. As will be argued below, this recognition is necessary for being conscious of oneself as a person, that is, a subject characterized by its ability not only to reason and act intentionally, but also to be responsible for its actions and be in a position to praise and reproach the statements and acts of her fellow human beings. If a subject did not realise that she was of the same kind as other people, she would not relate to other people in the manner requisite for interpersonal relations and obligations or for following ethical rules.

Social self-awareness comes in two varieties, one basic, or primitive, and preparatory and another more elaborated that develops over time, none of which can be explained in terms of the other. I will start by describing the first kind, henceforth called BSSA, for basic social self-awareness. In the next section (section 5) I will consider the other kind.

## 5. BASIC SOCIAL SELF-AWARENESS

BSSA consists in experiencing other subjects as living beings similar to oneself and not mere objects that one can influence causally by physical action. BSSA is connected to a mainly perceptual recognition of emotions, needs, motivations, and other fundamental psychological states in other subjects. It does not have to involve higher-order thought, neither does it presuppose having a theory of mind. It builds on what is visible on the surface of the other subject, and on the emotions and attitudes that attention and observation directly give rise to in the viewer.

To have a theory of mind basically means to understand, first, that other subjects have mental states that reflect how these subjects experience the

world, and then be able to grasp how various mental states are related psychologically, either on an inferential basis or - a weaker claim - by association. A subject who has a theory of mind will understand that actions depend on mental states, for instance, beliefs and desires, and that actions are not governed directly by reality, but by a conception of reality, which goes beyond that which is given to the senses. This knowledge involves a grasp of the distinction between appearance and reality.

A weak notion of theory of mind may stop at the claim that a subject has such a theory if she understands that other subjects are not mere physical objects and that one can communicate with them in other ways than purely mechanically. In this weak sense, BSSA includes having a theory of mind. The ability to recognise others as living beings, similar to oneself, which is crucial for having a BSSA, has two origins. Together they yield this ability. One is active and goal-directed and consists in attention contact between subjects. The other origin of BSSA is passive and automatically induces a certain mental state in the subject.

The active origin of BSSA, attention contact, occurs when a subject directs her attention to the attention of another subject who as a consequence directs her attention to the attention of the first subject.<sup>12</sup> It is based on the capacity to focus attention. Mutual attention-focusing occurs when two, or more, agents focus their attention on the same object. It may emerge spontaneously from attention attraction, which is directly triggered by stimuli, and behavioral interaction. One can discover what another subject attends to by checking the direction of her gaze and her general behavior towards a salient object in the environment. Attention contact occurs when attention is turned from the checking of bodily behavior to the other subject's eyes and gaze. Eye contact can, for instance, be used to monitor the other subject's level of interest and also reactions that do not register in extrovert behavior or actions. Attention contact is, as noted by J. C. Gómez, often set off by touching or gesturing.

It has been suggested that during attention contact the inner or mental

states of the attending subjects are mutually revealed. But how is this possible? It does not seem likely that attention contact by itself produces either a recognition or an understanding of the mental states of the other. Nor does attention contact seem to do so when combined with the capacity for general thought as it appears in DSA. There is a first-person perspective as well as a certain phenomenology connected to many kinds of mental states that escapes generality as such. We need to appeal to something else to understand how this primarily experiential gap between the inner and the outer is bridged. A candidate for this role is provided by the phenomenon of directly shared emotion.

An example of directly shared emotion that arises passively is emotional contagion like contagious crying. Locke describes contagion as "a social process by which a behavior spreads, more or less unconsciously, from one individual to nearby observers".<sup>13</sup>The original lexical sense of the word is to pass on a disease by touch or contact. Infants and small children tend to pick up the emotional states of people in their surroundings. Emotions are evoked in others by display, as by facial expression and behavior, or by sound, as in contagious crying among babies placed in different rooms. Also adult people can react in this way. Laughter is known to be contagious, and it is not unusual that adults watching a movie start crying when the main character does so. Hatfield *et al.* emphasize the multifaceted character of contagion and provide evidence that it is multiply determined by behavioral, physiological, psychological, and social factors.<sup>14</sup>It can be produced by innate as well as acquired stimulus features and also by mental simulation.

There seems to be a direct matching between perceptual input and triggered emotion going on in the brain, resembling the observation-execution system pertaining to motor activity that has been discovered in monkeys. What happens in the latter case is that when one monkey watches another grasping something, similar neurons fire in the brain of the observer as in the performer of the action. It has been argued that this constitutes a kind of rudimentary understanding of actions.<sup>15</sup>

In a similar vein, it has been argued that observed or reproduced motor activity will give rise to the same emotion in the observer as in the subject that exhibited the behavior originally. One factor that makes this possible are intermodal neurons, such that respond to auditory, visual, as well as other perceptual stimuli. Execution and interpretation of affective displays apparently are linked neuronally. Vocal and facial activity, for instance, seem to be linked, facilitating both transmission of emotion to others and sharing of emotion without the emotion's being triggered in a similar situation as the original one. The close link between motor activity and emotion is exemplified in the therapeutical advice to laugh when you feel sad. If you succeed, you will feel less sad, at least for a little while.

Responses like contagion are automatic and do not involve any recognition of what lies behind the emotional display. They can in metaphorical terms be described as a kind of reverberation. Experiences of emotion transmitted by contagion do not in themselves constitute display of empathy, but they are precursors of empathy. This is why contagion is so important for becoming a social being, as I defined social being above. When attention contact is added to the phenomenon of contagion, the first-person and the third-person perspectives of the emotions that accompany certain behaviors converge or unite. There is a reciprocity to contagion that will open up for the recognition of mental states in others. It works in the following way.

If the emotion of a subject provokes a similar or a complementary one in another subject, the reciprocity and mutual attendance to each others emotions will induce an awareness of oneself as a being among others of a similar sort, sharing various kinds of mental states, in particular emotional and affective states, but also perceptual and attentive ones. Thus reciprocity of emotion is as important as sharing of emotion for empathy.

Empathy is a kind of compassion and sympathy that seems to be necessary for, for instance, moral engagements and commitment as well as feelings of indignation or deep concern for somebody else. The reason why empathy is integral to such activities is not only that it provides the motivation



for engaging oneself in the predicament of the other, but also that valuation springs from and is imbued with emotion. J. Haugeland describes the role of emotion for appraisal and valuation in terms of ego involvement.<sup>16</sup> He maintains that

actual, current feelings (...) may be essential factors in real-time understanding. People do get involved in what they hear, and their own reactions affect the listening - what they notice, how they conceptualize, what it reminds them of, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

Without the capacity for sharing emotion, involvement will not get off the ground, and ethical appraisal will hang loose.

As I see it, empathy depends not only on the sharing and reciprocity of emotions. It also depends on the fact that one has grasped both the nature of the circumstances that caused the original emotion in the other subject and that subject's reaction to these circumstances. This demands several kinds of discriminative power, as concerns behavior, experiences, emotions, interaction between subjects, reactions to particular events, and so on. Empathy makes it possible for a subject to share somebody else's mental state by grasping the background that caused it, even if it is impossible to physically share the situation or context that originally gave rise to the emotion.

Moreover, empathy depends on grasping the point or aim of the action that usually follows upon the emotional reaction, that is, why or to what end it is performed. This can in some cases not be understood if not the original action or event that caused the emotion in the first place is also grasped. As Haugeland remarks, empathic understanding presupposes continuity. Haugeland writes that "a single event cannot be shameful, embarrassing, or foolish in isolation".<sup>18</sup> It is only as described in a context, like an episode, a narrative, or a series of events, that it becomes significant.

Events cannot be assessed in isolation, because there is an abundance of possible interpretations. In the absence of clues, it may be impossible to assign a single event any significance or sense at all. Events also gain significance by

being incorporated into the personal history of a subject as the subject herself conceives of this history. Thereby they are given a special role in her life. This remark brings us to developed social self-awareness.

#### 6. DEVELOPED SOCIAL SELF-AWARENESS

The second kind of social self-awareness (henceforth DSSA) is the result of subject-subject interaction on the basis of normative, sociocultural rules. It concerns how the subject conceives of herself as a person among other persons, with not only a bodily and mental continuity over time, but with a personality and a social role that are continuous. Moral bonds or "contracts" exist between people and contribute in shaping the way in which people think of themselves as persons. The particular discourse of the society will as well shape the conceptions that persons have of themselves, since it provides a framework for conceptualising and articulating oneself as a public being.<sup>19</sup>

The behavior described in connection with BSSA was either automatic or attention-based. Behavior that depends on DSSA is rule-based. The rules are basically regulative, but in some cases constitutive.<sup>20</sup>Regulative rules are such that regulate an already existing behavior, while constitutive ones are such that give rise to a behavior that had not existed had the rules not existed. An example of the first kind might be rules governing co-ordination of food-gathering in a small, native village. An example of the second kind is the rules for the game of chess.

The most fundamental kind of regulative rules does not get transferred between contexts or expanded. This means that the rules are not adjusted to new situations or changed to support a new sort of behavior. Such rules regulate stable patterns of behavior. An example is behavior as it emerges in ontogenetic ritualisation. A typical case is when arm-raising acquires the function of a request to be lifted. An infant spontaneously raises its arms towards its mother who responds by taking it in her arms and lifting it. The

child will soon grasp that arm-raising will make the mother lift it, and the mother knows that when the child raises its arms, she should respond by lifting it up. Other forms of regulative rules can, on the contrary, be adjusted, changed, and transferred between contexts. These rules will be general, generative, and recursive, and can develop to regulate behavior. An example of such rules is traffic-rules, on sea or land.

Constitutive rules may develop from the latter kind of regulative rules. An example of constitutive rules that seem to have evolved from regulative ones is such that prescribe how to play different games using a ball, like football, rugby, basket ball, and so on. Kicking (or throwing) round, small, and light objects appears to be rather a natural activity among children, that can be regulated in order to avoid accidents, quarrels, and so on. Then a particular game may be created, in which the rules will be such as to tell when some action  $x$  is to be counted as a  $y$  within the game. These rules will constitute the game. Another example is rules for singing and performing music. To sing and make music seems to be a spontaneous behavior, that is regulated in different ways in different cultures and societies. But in some societies, for instance, in the West during the XXth century, new forms of music have been created artificially with the help of constitutive rules.

Most rules are tacit. We do not reflect upon them. Many of them we would not even be able to formulate upon reflection. Constitutive rules, though, are often explicit. They are learned not only by repeating the actions of others, but also by verbal description and instruction. A grasp of rules that are generative and recursive combine with having a detached self-awareness, since the latter rests on the same capacity for general thought as the former. Grasping sociocultural rules, and especially constitutive ones, requires furthermore that the subject has a capacity for symbolic thought as described in section 3. Symbolic thought makes it possible to conceive of the meaning of symbols as primarily relying on the relation between the symbols, and not between individual symbols and external objects.

An understanding of the intentional, rule-governed behavior of other

people presupposes that one can reason about their mental states. This means that an explicit theory of mind is necessary for DSSA. It allows the subject to understand that she as well as other subjects construct models of reality that do not always agree with each other or with the external conditions. By using a theory of mind, subjects can infer mental states from behavior, and on the basis of these inferences attribute mental states both to themselves and others. Moreover, people can interpret and reason about mental states and their connections to behavior, which will enable them to predict behavior and future states of mind.

To conceive of the behavior of other subjects in accordance with a theory of mind is a way to render their behavior meaningful and purposive. It involves understanding utterances and actions as directed at particular goals. This capacity for making events meaningful is useful for orienting among incoming information, for adapting and concentrating in the flux of information, especially in the absence of behavioral patterns or explanatory models that might take care of the input without the subject's conscious attention. The capacity to think in accordance with a theory of mind has its origin in attention-focusing. There is a fundamental connection between attention and intentionality. If the subject cannot focus her attention, she will not be able to figure out the aim of much of what goes on around her, and the external world will not make sense. The information that she picks up will not be assimilated into patterns of intentional action. This will leave the subject disoriented and unable to act except for by direct response to stimuli.

However, taking an intentional perspective in the sense of using a theory of mind is not sufficient to be a social being. A person interprets her fellow beings not only from an intentional perspective with the help of a theory of mind. She also takes particular sociocultural rules into account. By making the assumption that people follow such rules, she implicitly presupposes that since they do so, they can be held responsible for their actions. Of course, acting in accordance with a rule does not imply responsibility for one's actions. For instance, one might be forced to follow the rule, or just happen to follow it.

Nevertheless, the default assumption in social contexts is to hold people responsible for what they do.

The capacity for rational deliberation is often emphasized in accounts of how decisions are reached concerning ethical questions. Rational deliberation is, as opposed to understanding based on ego involvement, made from a general, third-person view and is assessed according to logical criteria.

Rovane maintains that persons are such that they deliberate from a rational point of view and are normatively committed to achieve overall rational unity.<sup>21</sup> Therefore they are susceptible to rational modes of influence. The aim of deliberation is to make an all-things-considered judgement about what is best to do, and this is achieved by, among other things, resolving conflicts among one's psychological attitudes and accepting the logical and evidential implications of these attitudes, ranking preferences, assessing opportunities for action, and evaluating possible outcomes.

Rovane draws the attention to an important characteristic of being a person; that of interacting by conversation as governed by norms instead of by brute force or purely causally. Nevertheless, I believe that a characterisation of persons only from a rational point of view leaves out the core of human ethics: the direct mutual recognition of oneself in others, and of others in oneself. This recognition is not based on normative considerations on a theoretical foundation, nor on higher-order thought.

The preference-ranking and evaluation of possible actions required to assess the ethical behavior of persons does not only rely on having a detached self-awareness and a knack for logic. The person making the evaluation of other people's actions must also be able to imagine how other people feel about and value different situations. Otherwise she will run the risk of assigning the wrong values to possible outcomes.

In cases of decision-making, the capacity for general and normative thought has to be accompanied by a capacity for empathy as soon as the decisions involve other subjects than the decision-maker herself, or else the value-assignments that she makes will be unfounded. The rational point of

view must be built on mutual attention and empathy to work. As I see it, the ethical person is intrinsically emotional and social.

Rovane mentions the social dimension of ethics in relation to what she calls mutual engagement.<sup>22</sup> This engagement builds on rational influence, as it is exerted in co-operative activities. Such activities occur when agents pursue a common goal, as in Gricean verbal communication, or together engage in justification during which "agents ask one another to present and defend the reasons on which they have acted or are proposing to act". Rovane emphasizes verbal and rational behavior to the exclusion of functions of a lower-level kind that nevertheless constitute an integrated part of rational behavior.

For instance, emotional involvement is important. Research in psychology and neurophysiology has shown that emotions are crucial for decision-making as well as for agency. For instance, people with damage to those parts of the brain that sustain emotion are incapable of making choices and executing actions.<sup>23</sup> Emotion provides the drives and motivations for taking a specific course. It moves the subject from passive deliberation to action.

Pettit and Smith suggest that persons make assumptions about themselves and others within a so-called conversational stance.<sup>24</sup> The ability to take this stance depends on being able to reason about beliefs and desires, and to grasp that engaging in conversation involves being constrained by norms about what one ought to believe, desire, and do. A subject can authorise herself or another subject as a conversational interlocutor if three conditions are fulfilled. First, there must be norms governing the formation of belief and desire and subsequent action. The subject should be disposed to, second, recognise these norms, and, third, respond to them in the way they require. Being a conversational interlocutor is not an intrinsic property of the subject, but depends on being authorized either by oneself or by other subjects.

According to this view, it seems that being a person partly depends on the property of being capable of rational deliberation. One might say that this property prepares for the crucial, relational one of being able to take a

conversational stance. As I understand it, whether one has the capacity for rational deliberation partly depends on whether other people believe so. The authorisation has to go both ways, that is, be bi-directional. The person taking the stance to another subject has as well to be authorized or recognized as somebody capable of taking such a stance and of issuing authorisations.

That people engage in a conversational stance and that they have to be authorized to do so appears to be a correct observation. It seems to be verified by examples from real life, as in international politics, where the 'persons' are states, or in hospitals, where the persons can be either patients or close relatives. A corrupt state that behaves in an irrational manner is not permitted to take part in international discussions. The doctor will not turn to a sick patient who cannot think rationally, but to her relatives in order to discuss her illness. Another example of the role of authorisation for personhood can be drawn from how societies treat people who are mentally ill. In some cultures, these people take part in daily life, while in others, they are institutionalized under circumstances that do not seem worthy of human beings or persons. Yet another example occurs during war, when occupying states try to depersonalise the inhabitants by, for instance, refusing to enter into dialogue with them as private persons.

One can take a conversational stance without recognising that persons are intrinsically alike as to their capacity for both thought and emotion. The mutual recognition involved in authorising each other as conversational interlocutors does not necessarily concern anything else than considering whether the other subject has the competence to deliberate rationally. But, as argued above, rational deliberation alone is not sufficient for understanding the evaluative attitudes of other people. One must also take into account their motives, motivations, and emotions. Moreover, if taking the conversational stance rests only on rational deliberation, this might make the conversational stance as a criterion for personhood appear too narrow. Many people may not satisfy the requirements for being a rational deliberator, but still seem fit to be called persons.

The conversational stance could be seen as an addition to Dennett's physical, design, and intentional stances that describe how a person can relate to objects or to other subjects.<sup>25</sup> Dennett introduced a distinction between three ways of predicting the behavior of systems. These ways depend on taking different stances to the system, and thus on treating it either from the physical, the design, or the intentional stance. Predictions from the first stance rely on the physical nature of the system, those from the second on how the system is designed to behave under various circumstances, and those from the third on the system's being a rational agent with beliefs and desires.

In none of these stances are experiences of similarity and community with other beings or emotions like empathy or sympathy mentioned, experiences that prepare for a transfer of characteristics from one subject to another and thus for mutual recognition of each other as of the same kind. To take a stance towards something or somebody is, according to Dennett, to conceive of the other as an object for one's own thought. It requires taking a step back and acknowledging a difference between oneself and the other. This is the opposite of taking the stance of another subject (instead of an object). Yet taking the stance of the other is, as I see it, what in the first place causes the subject to become aware of herself as a subject among others, in the social and ethical sense.

There is an important difference between the conversational stance and Dennett's intentional stance, as emphasized by Pettit and Smith. Pettit and Smith point out that subjects satisfying the intentional stance can "remain passive or mechanical subjects who harmonise and update their beliefs and desires in a more or less autonomic way" (p. 441). Changes and adjustments can be made without effort and without a recognition of why they should be made. Subjects described from the intentional stance lack the normative dimension that Pettit and Smith characterise as interactive and conversational.

A central question concerns what it takes to be considered as answering to the same basic moral rules as other persons. I do not deny that having the capacity for general thought and for taking an intentional stance are necessary



for this. The addition of the notion of a conversational stance constitutes a further step towards understanding what goes on in interpersonal relations. But I suspect that this is still not sufficient. I believe that a social knack is needed too, one that is based on an ability to take the other subject's stance and on the sharing of emotions as in BSSA. It depends as well on knowing the rules that regulate social interaction. When I can see the world through somebody else's eyes and recreate the story behind the emotional and normative attitudes of this person, I will be capable of grasping her predicament. I will then also be able to see myself as any other person, as somebody sharing the same basic human conditions as everybody else.

Does this mean that it would be impossible to make moral judgements if one could not share the feelings of other people? No. In theory it is possible to learn how to rationally deliberate about such things. People with emotional disturbances can learn how to act 'normally' in different kinds of situations, although they do not do so spontaneously, but by explicitly reflecting on how to act. They do not react immediately on visual cues or pragmatic implications (like the host's remark that its getting late, implicating that his guests should go home), but have to reason their way to an understanding of them. Sometimes they go wrong, but do not understand why or how, since the only clue they have is the theory that they have been following. If the theory goes wrong, the mistake is difficult to repair. This kind of impairment affects not only the speed of response and action, that is, efficiency, but also the accuracy of the responses.

To sum up, to recognise somebody as a person depends on being able to take her perspective, that is, on taking the stance of the other. This involves interpretation and authorisation. The interpretation is made from an intentional stance with the help of a theory of mind. It is grounded in knowledge of sociocultural and ethical rules, and relies on ego-involvement as in full-fledged empathy. The authorisation involves recognising the other subject as somebody with similar cognitive and mental capacities as oneself. It proceeds from mutual interpretation and is itself mutual. Together interpretation and

authorisation prepare for holding the other subject responsible for her actions and for considering her as enjoying the rights that we typically ascribe to persons.

Social self-awareness, as I have been describing it, is necessary for planning when the plan involves other individuals than oneself, as is often the case in daily life. It is also necessary for participating in co-operative activities that, for instance, may demand co-ordinative strategies. Furthermore, it facilitates predicting the behavior of others, as their behavior depends on drives and motives, affects and emotions, and agreements and engagements. It is moreover a precondition for fulfilling moral obligations when based on personal agreements and for feeling responsible for other people. An important factor in all this is empathy, which makes it possible to put oneself in somebody else's shoes, not merely intellectually, but also emotionally.

To reflect on one's situation and entertain future-directed thoughts about oneself in a self-concerned way requires a grasp of personal identity other than the one obtained in indexical and detached self-awareness. Something more than just a logical understanding of identity or a conception of oneself as a causal power with a short-term continuity over time is needed when reasoning depends on attachment to the object of thought. The accompanying conceptions that people have about themselves and that others have about them will also influence the reasoning. What matters in reasoning about oneself as a social being is continuity, not exact identity.<sup>26</sup> There are several different, pragmatic conditions for continuity, based on biological, bodily, psychological, or social factors. Which type of personal continuity over time that will become pertinent in various cases depends on the particular context.

As noted in relation to detached self-awareness, the repeated use of 'I' in trains of thought does not demand psychological continuity in the broad sense of the subject's having a similar character over time or remembering most of her past life. Reasoning about oneself is not like keeping track of an object. It is more like composing a narrative about oneself, in the sense that in many contexts, one's line of thought about oneself and others is motivated by one's

floating conceptions of oneself and others: the social status, the character, the past events in life, and so on.

The view that the self depends not only on intrinsic characteristics, but also on relational ones, is put forward in Mead.<sup>27</sup> Mead distinguishes between the I and the me. The me is constituted by the way other people conceive of me, while I am the one who reacts on their conceptions. The I will in turn influence the way other people think about the me. The self will thus evolve in a dialectics between the subject herself and the social context she is set in.

Consequently, although social self-awareness is not necessary for reasoning about oneself in the formal sense, it is crucial for thinking about oneself as a social being, and it provides the impetus to act on these thoughts. Likewise, indexical self-awareness is necessary for the capacity to execute actions by locating the subject in a particular context and also for experiencing oneself as a particular individual with a first-person perspective. Detached self-awareness, finally, ensures that one can shift one's attention from the present context to other circumstances and have a detached point of view. The three kinds of self-awareness together constitute full-blown self-consciousness or person-consciousness.

That person-consciousness depends on having all three kinds of self-awareness means that the human mind cannot be separated from the body or from the physical and social environment. Properties that have been thought to distinguish humans from other creatures on earth, like rationality, the capacity to reason and make decisions, cannot be attributed to the mind alone. Persons, conceived of as self-conscious beings, have mental, physical, as well as social characteristics.

This has consequences for how we explain personal identity. It cannot be done with respect to consciousness or body alone. Personal identity is not a once and for all-thing and cannot be accounted for in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Instead, persons are continuers, mentally, bodily, as well as socially, and whether an individual is taken to be a continuer or not is decided by praxis. What guarantees the continuity of a particular individual in a

particular situation is a context-dependent issue. In everyday life, there are a number of factors that we appeal to in order to test an individual's continuity. Not all of them has to be fulfilled or emphasized in every particular case.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>For an extensive discussion of indexical and detached self-awareness, see Brinck, *The Indexical 'I'*, Kluwer: Dordrecht (1997) and Brinck & Gärdenfors "Representation and Self-Awareness in Intentional Agents" *Synthese* (1999).

<sup>2</sup>On perceptual content, see ch. 5 in Brinck (1997) and Brinck (1999a).

<sup>3</sup>G. Evans (1982) sections 7.3 and 7.4.

<sup>4</sup>Merleau-Ponty (1945) and Gibson (1986).

<sup>5</sup>This is argued, from different perspectives, in *e.g.* Brooks (1991), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Merleau-Ponty (1945).

<sup>6</sup>(1979).

<sup>7</sup>Piaget (1937).

<sup>8</sup>Evans (1982) p. 104.

<sup>9</sup>Brentano (1973).

<sup>10</sup>Brinck (1997), ch. 6.3.

<sup>11</sup>In speech and conceptual thought, the presentation is a kind of *de re* sense. The *de re* sense functions as a conceptualization of the content carried by an informational state. See Brinck (1997) and Brinck (1999b).

<sup>12</sup>Gomez (1994), Gómez (1998).

<sup>13</sup>(1993).

<sup>14</sup>(1994).

<sup>15</sup>Arbib & Rizzolatti (1996).

<sup>16</sup>(1985).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* p. 240.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* p. 245.

<sup>19</sup>Harré (1998).

<sup>20</sup>Searle (1969).

<sup>21</sup>(1998).

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.* p. 116.

<sup>23</sup>See *e.g.* Damasio (1996).

<sup>24</sup>(1996).

<sup>25</sup>See *e.g.* (1981).

<sup>26</sup>Brinck (1997), (1999b); Johnston (1987).

<sup>27</sup>(1934).

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