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Brain Damage and Personhood

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for the degree of

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Anne Jennifer Mackenzie

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ABSTRACT

In certain cases of specific brain-damage, neurologists are often puzzled about the patient's status as a person. They suggest that the person is changed, diminished, or even absent, but it is not clear why. Can a philosophical account of personhood help answer their questions?

My aim is to show that a philosophical understanding of personhood can be improved by taking account of actual cases of brain-damage. At the same time, a philosophical analysis enriched in this way can help to dispel uncertainty and perplexity concerning those cases.

I outline a necessary condition of personhood and show reasonable justification for it. The condition combines the notions of consciousness, being a continuing subject of experience, and awareness of being such a subject. Assuming the condition is justified, I go on to consider its application. I suggest that cases of very specific brain-damage may provide clues to capacities which are essential if the condition is to be satisfied. A closer examination of what must be the case if an individual satisfies each of the parts of the condition shows that this is difficult to determine.

The main part of my project has two sections. Firstly, I focus on the condition itself. I show that memory for experiences is essential for having a sense of oneself as a continuing subject of experience and I answer possible objections to this claim. Memory alone is insufficient, for the memories need to be processed into something like a narrative. This processing calls for a basic linguistic capacity and so this capacity is also necessary if the condition is to be satisfied.

In the second part of my project, I select accounts of brain-damage described in the literature. I choose seven cases where experiential memory is impaired, one case where linguistic capacity is lost, and one case of profound deafness where linguistic capacity did not develop until quite late. A final case is an example of very severe brain-damage where minimal memory and linguistic capacity were recovered while much else remained lost.

Considering these two parts together, I point out how the philosophical analysis can help us to understand just what it is that the patients have lost. At the same time, the case studies show that the sense of self is diminished when there are specific memory and linguistic deficits. The patients, despite being mobile, articulate and intelligent, cannot function as persons in many respects. Their difficulties support my claims about the necessity of memory and linguistic capacity. Further support comes from the case where memory and linguistic capacity are recovered to some extent in the face of devastating losses.

Overall I try to show that a philosophical analysis of the concept of a person will be enhanced if we take note of cases of specific brain damage. We can gain insights from sympathetic accounts of the lives of these patients and an enhanced philosophical account can contribute to our understanding of the plight of the brain-damaged.

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CHAPTER 1

When ordinary people suffer certain types of brain-damage it is sometimes difficult to describe what has happened to them. I don't mean in the physiological sense, since very precise physiological descriptions of the damage are often possible. It may also be possible to give a technical psychological description of what has happened, but this may not explain much to the family and friends of the patients. There are puzzling cases where not even the professionals treating the patients can answer seemingly straightforward questions. What has happened to the person I knew? What does it feel like to the patient? Is the patient a whole person or just part of what he was before? In very severe cases we may even doubt that there is a person there at all.

Maybe philosophical accounts of what it is to be a person will help to answer these types of questions. If they do not then perhaps they are defective or inadequate accounts. It might be objected that even a relatively full account could not cover the broad range of possible cases because there will always be some on the borderline. I have two replies to this. Firstly, an account doesn't have to be complete to be helpful and secondly, it doesn't have to come up with a definite answer to the puzzles in order to throw some light on them.

Most accounts of what it is to be a person are based on average or normal people who interact socially in everyday life. I intend to take a plausible account of what it is to be a person and consider it in the light of cases which are not classed as average or normal. A comprehensive analysis of what it is to be a person is beyond the scope of this enquiry but I would like to try to isolate and examine some reasonable key necessary conditions for personhood.

Two areas of disagreement or uncertainty about such conditions concern their legitimacy and their application. Reasons for classifying some beings, but not others, as persons often give a clear cut but controversial decision. The controversy in these cases concerns the legitimacy of the reasons rather than their application. For example, disagreement or puzzlement about whether a newborn baby or a dolphin is a person centres on whether a condition of personhood is plausible or not; "shows evidence of reasoning powers" seems to apply to dolphins but not to the newborn baby. Those who think that the baby is a person and the dolphin is not are more likely to question the *legitimacy* of the condition than to argue that it applies to the baby but not the dolphin. Disagreement about *application* on the other hand, involves cases which are puzzling because it is not clear whether they satisfy a given condition. Does "has the capacity for self-consciousness" apply to dolphins or not; to newborn babies or not? It is this latter

sort of puzzle which arises in the assessment of some individuals who have suffered brain-damage.

I will propose a necessary condition of personhood and show reasonable justification for it. Once I have done this I am not going to examine its legitimacy in any greater depth, I will assume that it is legitimate, analyse it more closely and try to see if some of the puzzling cases do indeed satisfy it. If we consider these neurological cases in conjunction with some potential key conditions of personhood perhaps we may, through trying to understand the individuals involved, be able to clarify our thinking on those conditions and vice versa. That is, we might be in a better position to deal with the question of legitimacy.

PERSONS AND HUMAN BEINGS

One thing which is certain about the brain-damaged is that they have not ceased to be human beings any more than someone who loses a leg or both eyes ceases to be a human being. If we suppose that these individuals may cease to be *persons* or that their status as *persons* may change or be diminished, then a distinction between the concept of a person and a human being is presupposed.

The term "person" is often taken to be synonymous with "human being" but I will treat these as quite distinct terms for two reasons. Firstly, there may be cases where we want to classify an individual as a human being but not as a person and, secondly, there may be individuals who seem to count as persons but not as human beings. The term "human being" is often used to mean only, "member of the species *Homo sapiens*"; this is a purely biological meaning and it is the only one I will use.

Unless "person" and "human being" are taken to mean different things we may have trouble explaining some common intuitions people have about particular cases, actual or hypothetical. As a result of accident or disease, all higher brain activity can cease irreversibly in a human being. Without functioning lungs, heart and other organs, such an individual is a living human being who, for survival, relies entirely upon carers to provide a warm, healthy environment and nourishment. A healthy baby or someone in a temporary coma might be thought to be in the same condition but in these instances there are expectations of development or recovery. The intuition many people have is that it is not wrong to withhold nourishment from the case of such severe brain damage, while it is wrong in the case of the baby and the temporarily comatose.

An example of this is the 1990 court judgment in the case of Nancy Cruzan who died when feeding tubes were removed from her stomach.¹

This sort of intuition is not universal for the course of the Cruzan case was far from plain sailing; but it may be more widespread and stronger in another type of case. Where all brain function has permanently ceased as a result of severe damage, a human being can be kept alive using machines. These artificial means can also be used, where necessary, to support life in premature babies, the temporarily comatose, and even conscious individuals. In all these cases death would result if the machines were turned off, so, if killing is wrong, then it would be wrong to turn off the machines. A common intuition here is that it is not wrong to turn off the machines where there is an irreversible and total loss of brain function; nor does it seem wrong to take organs for transplant. In these instances legal proceedings to allow respirators to be turned off face much less opposition.²

These intuitions do not imply that the death of severely brain-damaged human beings is of no consequence, rather they highlight a difference between such cases and the death of those with functioning brains. This contrast does not seem so stark if we compare the death of a human being whose brain is fully functioning with a case where someone, through trauma, lapses into a permanent coma, that is, where all higher brain activity stops permanently. Here only one of the human beings dies but intuitively, the sense of tragedy in these two cases is

¹ Dworkin, 1991. After a car accident Nancy Cruzan remained in what was described as a permanent vegetative state for seven years. "Only the lower part of her brain stem continued to function. She was unconscious to the environment . . . She was fed and hydrated through tubes implanted in her stomach . . . She was washed and turned regularly, but all of her limbs were contracted and her fingernails cut into her wrists." p 14 She did not need a respirator and if fed and nursed she could have lived for thirty years. A Missouri court granted an order allowing feeding to be discontinued. The Missouri Supreme Court overturned that order after an appeal and this judgement was upheld by a five-to-four vote when Cruzan's parents appealed to the US Supreme Court. A further petition, introducing new evidence, to the original lower court was successful and not opposed. Feeding was discontinued.

² Gibbs, 1990. There will be more reservations since the case of Jackie Cole who, after a brain haemorrhage, was said to be in a vegetative state which could last indefinitely. Her family applied for a court order to turn the respirator off, the judge stayed his decision, and six days later Jackie Cole woke up and subsequently recovered. p 50 Nonetheless there is less opposition to turning respirators off in these cases, showing that the intuition outlined above *is* more widespread.

similar, and if they are caused deliberately, there seems to be little difference in the intrinsic wrong that is done.³

I think that the difference which is highlighted by these intuitions is that between a mere living human organism and a person. The tragedy in cases of severe, permanent brain-damage is the destruction of a person. Those who turn off the machines, or take organs for transplant, consider that the person formerly connected with the human organism ceased to exist prior to their causing the death of the organism. I think these intuitions also show that we place a higher value on persons than we do on mere human beings, since the sense of loss or wrongness associated with the destruction of the functioning brain is greater for many than that associated with the death of a human being whose brain is already destroyed.

A further conclusion might be that a person is something over and above a living human organism; for example, a human being with sufficient brain function, or potential for such, to permit some social interaction. We can imagine, however, a genetically non-human individual with whom everyday social interaction is possible; a being that we would want to classify as a person but not as a human being. It does not matter that there are no such beings, the fact that they are intelligible in works of science-fiction is enough to show that the terms "person" and "human being" are distinct. In addition, some people want to classify animals such as the higher apes, as persons. In this instance the individuals do exist and although we might not agree with this classification, it is intelligible. This reasoning shows that the concepts of a person and a human being are logically distinct.

Disagreement, however, is not necessarily because "person" and "human being" are thought to be synonymous but rather it may be claimed that they are coextensive terms. That is, as a matter of fact the only persons that there are, are human beings and all human beings are persons. If it is only a matter of fact then the absence of a logical connection between the concepts is not germane to the issue. All that needs to be shown is a significant contingent connection between the concept of a person and human beings.

Jay Rosenberg argues for such a connection. He draws an analogy between the bestowed status of citizenship and personhood. Initially a community of

³ Mercy killing of the very ill or the very old is a prima facie counterexample for it may not be seen as intrinsically wrong but this introduces complicating factors which are not assumed here.

individuals count themselves and each other as citizens of a state, "by acknowledging in practice that each member of the community, oneself included, is the subject of certain rights and entitlements and of certain duties, responsibilities and obligations". When the nation is a going concern, however, persons become citizens automatically by satisfying certain "matter-of-factual conditions", such as being born in a certain area.⁴

Drawing on the notion of a natural kind for some terminology, we can go on to say that under this concept a citizen is a member of a legal kind. In classification by birthplace, however, a citizen is a member of a genetic kind. While there is no logical or conceptual connection between these two kinds, they are connected through certain practices.⁵

Personhood is, similarly, a bestowed status where a community of individuals count themselves and each other as persons by "acknowledging, protecting, and enforcing certain rights and responsibilities . . . 'person' is an ethical kind".⁶ Let us designate this ethical kind by (P). Rosenberg outlines two candidates for the matter-of-factual condition. The first is membership of the species *Homo sapiens*, membership of a genetic kind, (H), and the second is membership of the group of rational beings, membership of a functional kind, (R). Can personhood be bestowed on the grounds of (H) or (R)?

. . . Our implicit moral theory posits a connection between (P) and (R).
 . . . the (ethical) status "person" ought to accrue only to members of the functional kind "rational being".

. . . Our moral practice, in fact, is to couple (P) and (H). That is, we bestow the status of personhood automatically on all and only human beings - irrespective of their actual performance capabilities.

. . . It is in consequence of this moral practice that the collection of persons (acknowledged persons) is in fact coextensive with the collection of human beings.⁷

If this connection is to be on a sure footing the moral practice needs to be justified on the basis of the implicit moral theory, there has to be some connection between (H) and (R). There is no such connection which justifies our practice of counting *only* human beings as persons, if other rational beings were found,

⁴ Rosenberg, 1983, p 113.

⁵ Rosenberg, 1983, p 113.

⁶ Rosenberg, 1983, p 114.

⁷ Rosenberg, 1983, p 117-118.

machines or apes, they would be persons.⁸ Counting *all* human beings as persons fares better according to Rosenberg, because all non-rational human beings "do stand in some special relationship to rationality or to entities which are rational beings". They are potential or former rational beings, or the offspring of rational beings.⁹

This connection between (H) and (R) is crucial to Rosenberg's argument but it is contrived. He feels that there must be a connection partly because there is "clearly" a connection between (H) and (P) - ". . . it is pretty clear, nevertheless, that newborn infants and certain comatose or brain-damaged individuals are counted as persons".¹⁰ There is no support given for this and I think that some practices count as evidence against the belief that it is "pretty clear". Some of these are the very puzzles and dilemmas which have motivated this thesis and to dissolve them by this sort of edict will give no comfort or insights. The family of Nancy Cruzan, according to Rosenberg, had lost neither the human being nor the person that was Nancy. "Clearly" there had been a devastating loss, but of what, if not the person they had known and loved?

If the (H)-(P) connection is not clear then the (H)-(R) connection is not so sure because part of its support is that it is "some justification in principle for our moral practices" (ie the "clear" (H)-(P) connection).¹¹ The reality of the situation is that the newborn, comatose and brain-damaged *are* treated very differently from fully rational adult human beings who interact mutually as persons. It does not follow from this difference in practice that such human beings are badly treated; there are sanctions against the mistreatment of many supposed non-persons such as dogs and bears. Even where animals are utilized for food or research there are sanctions against doing this in a way that causes unnecessary distress to the animals. It does not even follow that human non-persons will be classed with other beings, such as animals, which are not treated as persons. Nor, as seems to be implied, does it follow that there is some form of unjust discrimination analogous to excluding human beings from full personhood on the

⁸ Rosenberg, 1983, p 115. ". . .while certain dolphins and chimpanzees do have their casual advocates, their case has yet to be pressed with any seriousness. So, in fact, only human beings get counted as persons."

⁹ Rosenberg, 1983, p 118.

¹⁰ Rosenberg, 1983, p 115.

¹¹ Rosenberg, 1983, p 118.

basis of their skin colour, sex, or race.¹² These points illustrate fears which, I think, often motivate arguments which seek to show a reasonable connection between (H) and (P), but we could, instead, reassess our implicit moral theory in the light of our actual practices.

The categories of potentially rational being and formerly rational being can lead to the terms "potential person" and "former person". There may be specific moral practices associated with these categories which are significantly different from the moral practices associated with persons. This seems a reasonable supposition to me and thus we could reanalyse the concept of a person using the additional terms (R_p), (R_f), (P_p) and (P_f). Moral practice would no longer justify the (H)-(P) connection, "all human beings are persons", and implicit moral theory could be seen to guard against the imagined injustices and atrocities which seem to motivate the desire to count all human beings as persons.

I conclude, therefore, that the claim that as a matter of fact all and only human beings are persons is not justified. Moreover, even if it were true the puzzling problems which I am considering would still exist and would merely require rephrasing. Whatever account is to be given of "person", I hope it is now clear that merely being a living human being is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition. What I do think is relevant to the formulation of an account, however, is the apparent fact that persons can become mere living human beings as a result of severe brain-damage.

CONDITIONS OF PERSONHOOD

Under what conditions is an entity to be classed as a person? A descriptive account involving certain properties is the more usual route taken when answering this question. There is also, however, a moral notion of "person" as an agent with rights and responsibilities. This either is an extension of or supervenes on the descriptive, non-moral sense depending on whether a naturalist or non-naturalist ethical stance is taken. It is only if the basic conditions of personhood are satisfied that an individual is eligible for the moral classification and it is basic, nonmoral conditions that I will examine.

¹² Rosenberg, 1983, p 115. "It has not, alas, always been so [that all human beings get counted as persons]. There was a time when only those human beings who, for instance, spoke the right language got counted as persons. . . .when only beings who had white skin or 'Aryan ancestry' got counted as persons."

There are various properties of persons commonly put forward as necessary and significant in that all persons must have these properties and few non-persons will have them. Sufficient conditions, on the other hand, often define only a subclass of persons, or it may just be difficult to tell if they are necessary as well. Typical candidates include such properties as rationality, self-consciousness, being a language user or having beliefs and desires; but no property or group of properties emerges as a clearcut condition of personhood, picking out all and only persons.

Two difficulties arise with properties like these. Firstly the properties can be interpreted in very different ways; rationality widely construed may apply to the activities of agents, animals and some machines while in the narrow sense of deliberative reasoning it may only apply to some agents.¹³ Secondly, various groupings of properties seem equally plausible as conditions of personhood. This may explain both differing philosophical opinions and the lack of supportive and critical arguments.¹⁴ It is possible that these various groupings all seem plausible because underlying them, or entailed by them, are some common factors which are essential elements of personhood. A combination of some of these factors may give a minimal condition of personhood which all persons will have and which will plausibly not apply to non-persons.

I want to try and show how some basic notions can be woven together into a plausible condition of personhood. A person is conscious at least some of the time. A person is a subject of experience. A person endures, that is, a person is not a momentary entity. A person is aware that she is indeed a person. Without this self-recognition an individual would not be able to take her place in the community of persons, that is, would not be able to behave as a person.

Consciousness is a property that any person will have but it can be defined in a number of ways ranging from minimal awareness as opposed to unconsciousness, to awareness with understanding and it is construed differently by behaviourists, materialists and dualists. Despite this, however, there is no disagreement that if the capacity for consciousness is eternally totally absent in an entity then that entity is not a person: stones, trees and cars are not persons.

Being conscious entails being conscious of some experience, at least some physical or psychological state. A conscious being, then, is a subject of experience but this falls far short of what is involved in the concept of a person.

¹³ Tooley, 1983, p 135.

¹⁴ Tooley, 1983, p 91.

A person is an enduring entity in that there is some continuity of experience, being a person is not a momentary state nor a collection of disconnected momentary states. The notions involved in being a non-momentary entity are those of temporal succession and identity over time. The conditions of personhood must be such that a person cannot be construed as something which pops in and out of existence because then the sense of identity as that particular person may be in doubt. Thus a person is at least an enduring subject of experiences where it is clear that those experiences are experiences of that subject.

It also seems important that the subject should be self-aware in the sense that she is aware that she is a continuing subject of experiences. This seems to entail that she will understand the concept of a continuing subject of experience, that is, have some fairly accurate notion of what sort of things fall under this concept.

Why is self-awareness important? Might it not be enough for a being to grasp the concept of a continuing subject of experiences and to believe that it is such a subject. Would this be enough to class that being as a person? Suppose I live in a community of enlightened Buddhists who have some awareness analogous to memory of their previous lives and whose present lives are shaped by expectations and hopes concerning their future incarnations. If I, with no such awareness of any previous life of my own, fully understand the concept of a continuously reincarnated self, if I believe myself to be such a being and if I live with the supposition that what I do in this life will determine the nature of my next life, can I be classed in the same way as my fellows? It seems that I have much in common with them.

The others in my community, however, can engage in projects which span several lifetimes; I cannot, because I can have no knowledge of my projects beyond this lifetime. Did I start one in my previous life? The others in my community can develop mutual relationships which span several lifetimes. I cannot, because I don't know if I have even met any of them in previous lives. I may understand what sort of beings they are but I am not *aware* of being one myself even if I believe that I have been reincarnated. So, despite having much in common with them, there are crucial differences which set me apart from them.

The analogy can be carried over to persons. Persons have the ability to formulate and carry through projects and to enter into meaningful relationships. If I have the concept of a being that needs nourishment and believe that I am such a being, my beliefs will cause me to store food. But if I am not aware that I have embarked on this exercise I may forever be setting out to do it, or I may end up with too much food because I am not aware that I have already taken action. That

is, although I am in some sense self-conscious I do not seem to have the degree self-consciousness appropriate to the type of being I believe myself to be. Similarly, without an awareness of where I stand with other people I cannot engage in even simple everyday interactions. This "thin" sort of awareness is all I really have in that Buddhist community, whatever I am, I am not one of them and, analogously, this sort of self-awareness is not enough for personhood. There is nothing which unifies the experiences to make them significantly different from a set of experiences belonging to different subjects, just as any previous lives I lived are as alien to me as the lives of others.

A minimal condition, then, seems to be - having the concept of a self as a continuing subject of experiences and being aware of oneself as such a subject.

ASLEEP, DRUGGED OR STUNNED

Conditions of personhood should not be dependent on unbroken consciousness. There are occasions when an individual is not conscious, when asleep or in a coma, and as previously stated, a person is not the sort of thing that pops in and out of existence. This means that the condition must involve some sort of capacity for awareness rather than constant awareness.

Having a capacity for self-awareness is not, however, a straightforward condition. Firstly, a distinction can be made between the notion of a capacity which is blocked and a mere potentiality. An anaesthetic does not destroy the capacity for self-awareness it just introduces a negative factor which prevents it. A person under anaesthetic does not need to change in order to become conscious and self-aware, all that is required is the removal of the negative factor. A potential for self-awareness, on the other hand can be construed as requiring actual changes such as the developmental changes of an embryo. Thus a wide notion of capacity encompassing immediately exercisable and blocked capacities is appropriate here: a sleeping person has the capacity for self-consciousness but an embryo merely has the potential for self-consciousness. Is using this broad notion of capacity satisfactory?

It raises a second difficulty, maintaining a distinction between actual and potential persons. A drugged person does not have the immediately exercisable capacity for self-awareness but we want to maintain that he is still a person so we use the notion of a blocked capacity where only the removal of some negative factor is required for the capacity to be exercised. A potentiality, on the other hand, involves more change than the removal of negative factors; a human

embryo has the potential but not the capacity to run, developmental changes must take place before there is any capacity to run.

A negative factor blocking the capacity for self-awareness might be some small injury, a bump on the head causing unconsciousness. The removal of this negative factor involves the restoration of some physical state of the brain as with the recovery from anaesthetic or drunkenness. Progressively more serious injuries involve a greater degree of repair, either naturally or as a result of intervention, and it seems that the notion of removing a negative blocking factor blends into the notion of bringing about a change.

If we specify that any change should not involve "those structures that are the positive, constitutional basis of consciousness and rational awareness",¹⁵ we have to say what constitutive structure must not change. This suggests that the basis of a capacity is part of the constitutive nature of an individual and if capacities are the only basis of the condition of personhood then being a person is dependent on one's constitution. This is precisely what I argued against earlier when making the distinction between persons and human beings. The same sort of arguments apply to this claim as apply to the claim that it is the constitution determining species membership that determines the conditions of personhood.

If we do not make such specifications then the distinction between potential and actual persons is lost. The changes that occur when someone recovers from brain damage range from the restoration of peripheral pathways to the transfer of functions to an entirely different part of the brain and cases of non-recovery or minimal recovery may be seen as involving only blocked capacities.

This difficulty may be overcome if we make a further distinction. There is a difference between capacities which have been exercised and those which have never been exercised. Potentiality falls into the latter category so we can maintain the distinction between potential and actual persons by stipulating that "the capacity for awareness of oneself as a continuing subject of experience" is a capacity which must be exercised at some time. I conclude, therefore, that it is necessary for the capacities in question to have been exercised at some time but that it is not necessary to be constantly aware of oneself as a continuing subject of experiences in order to be classed as a person.

Given that we have some notion of what entities are persons and what entities are not, and despite border disputes and grey areas, I have proposed that a plausible necessary condition of personhood must involve consciousness, the

¹⁵ Tooley, 1983, p 153.

concept of a continuing subject of experiences and awareness of being such a subject. I will abbreviate this condition to, "having a sense of self over time"

THE RELEVANCE OF BRAIN-DAMAGE

My project is to further analyse this condition of personhood, "having a sense of self over time", into more basic elements and to determine some crucial necessary conditions for those elements. It might be possible to organize these elements into some structure of dependency showing how a person can develop or evolve. Daniel Dennett finds his chosen conditions of personhood fit into this sort of structure, but with this kind of analysis it is hard to be sure that there are no other routes to the desired end. For example Dennett reasons that self-consciousness dependent on the ability to use language but in the absence of this ability there might other ways to be self-conscious in an adequate sense.¹⁶ How could this be discovered? It is in this secondary assessment of basic elements, necessary conditions and possible structures that I think the study of brain-damaged individuals is relevant.

It is possible that some of those recovering from brain damage are also developing persons in the sense that they are striving to achieve anew or regain some degree or status of personhood. There are several issues to be addressed here. Is the recovering patient as much a person as before; a different person; the same to some degree but different in some significant sense; the same person but diminished in some way? Is it legitimate to talk of degrees of personhood?

If personhood is a matter of degree two possible models seem obvious. One is the development of human infant from birth to the stage where the condition of personhood is fully satisfied and the other is an evolutionary model where various entities like animals or machines show a range of evidence for possessing some of the basic elements of the condition. Some cases of brain-damage are so puzzling that neither of these models is appropriate in an explanation of those cases.

¹⁶ Dennett, 1978, p 271-81. Dennett's conditions are of moral personhood and he argues that a special sort of self-consciousness is a precondition of this status. Self-consciousness on his interpretation is dependent on the capacity for verbal communication but someone who has had a left hemispherectomy loses this ability although they may understand limited spoken and written language. In some severely aphasic stroke victims the ability is even more curtailed and if we do not expect recovery in these cases how are we to judge their moral standing? Are they really incapable of any self-consciousness in Dennett's relevant sense?

Often brain-damage involves a very specific capacity, the ability to name things or to recognize faces. We can observe the overall effect of this deficiency and in some cases we see recovery, the development of a substitute capacity, or other attempts to compensate for the loss. Some of the losses, the substitute techniques or compensations occasion the puzzling questions about the status of personhood. I think that if we analyse the condition of personhood and examine relevant accounts of brain-damage each may suggest factors that help in understanding the other.

In pathological cases we may see how the condition breaks down and whether there is more than one way of satisfying it. Maybe "having a sense of self over time" may be partially satisfied, as it must be in infants if it is the sort of condition which develops after birth. There may be a further developmental model or it may become clear how recovering cases fit either the childhood growth model or the evolutionary model. At the same time, close philosophical analysis may help in discovering exactly what is lost for the patient and what are the likely consequences of that loss. In a wider sense this type of study might have significant implications for understanding how normal individuals function, how children develop and the legal standing of those whose actions may be directly affected by brain-damage.¹⁷

LOCALIZERS VERSUS HOLISTS

Crucial to this reasoning is a moderate localizing approach to mind-brain function which maintains that, in general, particular parts of the brain are involved in particular functions. It is important to distinguish between global functions, like seeing and linguistic ability, which are better explained as composite functions involving several specific functions, and thus possibly several different parts of the brain, and those specific functions themselves. It is the latter which are disrupted by localized lesions but as a consequence of this a global function may be disrupted. It is also possible that an individual with brain-damage can lose the ability to perform one function while all other functions are intact. Both types of cases can be compared with "normal" individuals to further

¹⁷ Gardner, 1975, p 13, 27, 45. Gardner is very optimistic about the light that this sort of study can throw on crucial issues in psychology and its profound philosophical implications but I wish to confine myself to considering the sense of self over time alongside selected cases which seem relevant to it.

the understanding of neurology and psychology and I think that this comparison can also throw light on the philosophical question of what a person is.

Holist objection

There is, however, a holistic approach to mind-brain function which views the mind as a functioning whole over and above any localized functioning. Thus holists see the above comparison as misguided in that it is not possible to separate specific functioning from functioning as a whole. Maurice Merleau-Ponty strongly states this objection.

How are we to co-ordinate this set of facts and how are we to discover by means of it what function, found in the normal person, is absent in the patient? There can be no question of simply transferring from the normal person what the deficient one lacks and is trying to recover. Illness, like childhood and 'primitive' mentality, is a complete form of existence and the procedures which it employs to replace normal functions which have been destroyed are equally pathological phenomena. It is impossible to deduce the normal from the pathological, deficiencies from substitute functions, through merely changing the sign. We must take substitutions as substitutions, as allusions to some fundamental function that they are striving to make good, and the direct image of which they fail to furnish.¹⁸

The holistic account assumed by this objection interprets the relevant cases of brain-damage as the loss of the ability to perform abstract actions, the substitute function involves only concrete actions. For example, a patient may not be able to swing his right foot but must imagine himself in an actual situation where that action is required, such as in kicking a ball, the movement is then a concrete response. In this way the patient is able to perform the same movements as the normal person but not in the same way as that person nor even an actor. The substitute techniques - visual stimulation with actual objects or imagining a concrete situation - are not clues to what the normal person does, even at a subconscious level. Compensatory skills allow the patient to cope but they do not replace what has been lost and they are not an illustration of what has been lost.

This objection can be answered in several ways. Firstly, the evidence for the moderate localizing account of the mind-brain is strong:

. . . there is a gradient of neural zones, a cluster of functions, each of which is more likely than not to be associated with a certain brain region; at the same time, there exists considerable variability among individuals and across ages, as well as the strong possibility that a specific kind of impairment may result from a rather wide set of lesions.¹⁹

¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p 106-7.

¹⁹ Gardner, 1975, p 26.

The evidence fits this picture much more closely than it fits the very generalized holistic account.

Secondly, there are two types of testimony from patients themselves which count against the objection. Some patients suffer severe damage but during and after recovery are able to describe the nature of their difficulties. Others, while severely impaired in one respect, can describe their condition coherently through some roundabout means. Often neither of these testimonies fits well with the holistic account nor with the "abstract-concrete" picture. Disabilities described may be very specific functions, the previously normal person may know exactly what function is lost.

There are also many cases where the patient cannot offer any testimony, as in severe aphasia, but where all behavioral evidence suggests that they should be classed with the previous group as further support for the localizing account. Holists might be skeptical about behavioural evidence but then they would have to show how unreliable behavioural evidence can be distinguished from reliable behavioural evidence. We can often describe quite clearly what it is that the brain-damaged patient cannot do. Even if we cannot say exactly what is involved in a specific function, it is possible to assess its importance by comparison with normal cases.

Another broad reply to the holist's objection concerns the deduction of normal function from the inabilities or substitute functions of the patient. It would be naïve to think that a substitute was merely a slowed down version of normal functioning. Substitutes can be recognized as such by both patients and those who interact with them, and by observing a wide variety of cases it is possible to gain insights into both normal and pathological conditions. The patients who can only perform concrete actions highlight the ability of others to perform abstract actions. This is an insight into the normal gained through the observation of the pathological.

Finally, the question of completeness is not straightforward; the "localizer" does not necessarily deny the completeness of the brain-damaged individual. Gardner says of a stroke victim:

. . . was I relating to a full person, one whose feelings, emotions, and personality had survived more or less intact despite his severe affliction, or to someone who was a mere fragment of what he had been, capable now only of diminished emotions and perceptions, and a diminished sense of self?²⁰

²⁰ Gardner, 1975, p 43.

Gardner's question seems worthy of thorough investigation, and I hope to show that we can come to a greater understanding of the sense of self in particular if we include the brain damaged in our investigations.

Materialist objection

The proposed investigation might also be criticized by materialists on the grounds that the account of personhood used is a concept of folk psychology based on an inadequate understanding of normal individuals. It is a concept formed in the absence of scientific enquiry and as such does not provide "an adequate theoretical framework within which we can answer" the questions raised. The materialist might suggest that the effects of brain-damage "should be taken as an occasion for finding out more about the brain such that we can begin to understand the results, rather than for forcing the results to fit with our prescientific assumptions."²¹

I do not think that we would learn much that would be of use in helping us to relate sympathetically to the brain-damaged by following this advice, although we might understand in detail their impairment. Our relationships with other people seem inevitably grounded in some "nonscientific" concept of persons and until we have clear evidence that it is inadequate, we are justified in using such concepts in our theoretical framework. The fact that any such concept is based on normal cases does not rule out the possibility that it can be extended or modified to cover the pathological cases. Nor can we assume in advance that these cases do not in some sense fit the existing concept of person. Oliver Sacks, for instance, sees many of his patients as normal in some sense, it is up to us, he feels, to discover how to let this normality show itself. We cannot do this, I think, without considering some pathological cases carefully when we undertake a philosophical analysis of the concept of a person.

²¹ Churchland, 1986, p 180.

CHAPTER 2

The condition of personhood, "having a sense of self over time", is, I maintain, a necessary condition. If this is so, then clearly an individual who does not satisfy this condition is not a person. It may not be so clear, however, whether or not the condition *is* satisfied, this is the issue of application that I discussed earlier. How could we tell that the condition was not satisfied in a particular case? What do we say of an individual if the condition appears to be only partially satisfied?

I do not make any claims about the sufficiency of the condition. If an individual clearly satisfies the condition then I think it is highly likely we would want to say that such an individual is a person, but if this is not the only necessary condition of personhood then it is not sufficient. Looking at the puzzling cases of brain-damage can help for there may be instances where the condition holds but perplexity remains. Of course, there are necessary conditions which encompass many non-persons as well. For example being sentient, but I assume that this is entailed by "having a sense of self over time" and thus needs no discussion.

An entity is a person only if that entity has the concept of a continuing subject of experiences and is aware of being such a subject. If this necessary condition is to be of use in explaining puzzling cases, then we must be reasonably clear whether or not it is satisfied. With this end in view I will now discuss it in some more detail and examine the matter of application.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness, as I have already mentioned, can be interpreted in a number of ways. Several levels of consciousness are recognized clinically with measurements based on behavioural responses to sensory stimulation. "These levels tend to shade into one another and the transition from one to the next is often difficult to define".¹ This is not the only difficulty in stipulating what is meant. There are subliminal experiences which affect "conscious" responses; there are highly complex activities which we can perform without "paying attention" to them; brain activity during some REM sleep resembles waking brain activity; there are blind individuals who are apparently not aware that they are blind; there are brain-damaged individuals who can learn complex cognitive skills but are not aware that they have done so.² While Churchland takes these latter

¹ Williams, 1970, p 15.

² Churchland, 1986, p 321.

difficulties as grounds for questioning the coherence of the notion of consciousness, I prefer to try and clarify the way in which I am using the term.

SUBJECT OF EXPERIENCE

For a start we can think of consciousness as opposed to nonconsciousness or the unconsciousness of anaesthesia and look at cases where there is no disagreement about application. Since the sort of consciousness required entails being a subject of experience, I will look at these two notions together.

We usually attribute consciousness to an entity on behavioural grounds. We know what it is to be aware ourselves and we know that much of our behaviour is a response to experiences of which we are aware. We observe in a cat or dog, similar types of response which suggest to us that animals are also aware. Physiological grounds further support this but having a similar physiological makeup is not on its own enough for the attribution of consciousness. There must be some sign of response, most usually behaviour. This does not commit us to a behaviourist analysis of consciousness, certain behaviour is just seen as evidence of consciousness, an indication that the entity in question is a subject of experience.

Thus, what is meant by "subject of experience" is not just that something happens to, or changes in, the subject. A metal bar expands when heated but it experiences neither the heat nor the expansion; a football does not experience being kicked. As the temperature rises, however, a cat becomes less active, it experiences both the warmth and lassitude, a dog experiences being kicked. We attribute consciousness to the dog but not to the football. The cat and the dog are subjects of experience but the metal bar and the football are not. All are objects in the world but the cat and the dog are conscious of at least some of the things which happen to them. There is a difference in the responses of the dog when it is anaesthetized, its behaviour is such that we no longer attribute consciousness to it. At this level of consciousness and in these particular entities there is generally agreement about what is conscious and what is not conscious. The metaphysical question as to the nature of the intimate relationship which exists between subject and experience but not between an object and changes it undergoes is not explained. While we do not know what it is that unifies subject and experience, the lack of such an explanation does not prevent us forming and successfully using the concept.

CONTINUING SUBJECT OF EXPERIENCE

The concept of a *continuing* subject of experience involves the notions of temporal succession and identity over time. The subject is the very same subject from moment to moment over some length of time and the experiences are related in that they are the experiences of that particular subject over that time. Once again we can consider the concept without specifying the nature of any unity relationships. Being aware of a continuity of experience is not being aware of the nature of the unity relation, whatever it is, that ensures identity over time unless that relation just is the awareness of continuity. If we assume that there is some unspecified answer to this question it is possible to pass on to the consideration of how it is that we attribute continuity of experience to a subject, what are the criteria we use and what evidence is there.

Continuity of experience is not merely a continuous succession of momentary experiences which happen to a single subject; that would be indistinguishable, insofar as what is experienced is concerned, from a continuous succession of experiences where each one has a different subject. That is, while there is a subject aware of each experience, there is no sense of the continuity. What evidence could there be to justify continuity of the subject? In thought experiments positing body swaps, brain transplants and the transfer of mental or psychological characteristics, identity appears to be more closely connected with psychological characteristics than with physical characteristics. Thus an explanation of the awareness of continuity will involve an examination of a subject's psychological states and this in turn will involve analysis of behaviour (including testimony). At this stage I do not think we can rule out the possibility that a sense of continuity could also involve physical characteristics; it may be that our intuitions in thought experiments are influenced by the much greater role played by psychological factors, thus obscuring the importance of physical continuity.

A continuing subject of experience is more than the subject of a series of unconnected momentary experiences. The differences in experience must involve connections and the most obvious possibilities are memory and expectation. These might not have to be the elaborate and explicit thoughts of the average adult human being but they would have to be clear enough to enable the continuing subject to carry out life's necessary projects. Many animals seem to undertake projects which take some time to complete and they must have some sense of the stages they have reached in such things as hunting for food or rearing young. Their behaviour can be usefully explained in terms of memory and expectation. A cat seems to remember where its food dishes are and if they are

relocated it does not take long for the cat to remember the new spot. Squirrels store food for the future.

In the light of this explanation, however, some behaviour is very puzzling. I have seen hamsters which have been raised in laboratory conditions for several generations, diligently remove all the food pellets from their feeding dish and store them in the far corner of their cage. Although they have been fed regularly all their life and never needed a store they appear to expect lean times ahead or at least a future need for food. An even more puzzling case, cited by Dennett, is that of the digger wasp which puts a paralyzed cricket in its burrow as food for its hatching young.

. . . the wasp's routine is to bring the paralyzed cricket to the burrow, leave it on the threshold, go inside to see that all is well, emerge, and then drag the cricket in. If the cricket is moved a few inches away when the wasp is inside making her preliminary inspection, the wasp, on emerging from the burrow, will bring the cricket back to the threshold, but not inside, and will then repeat the preparatory procedure of entering the burrow to see that everything is all right. If again the cricket is removed a few inches while the wasp is inside, once again she will move the cricket up to the threshold and re-enter the burrow for a final check. The wasp never thinks of pulling the cricket straight in. On one occasion this procedure was repeated forty times, always with the same result.³

This sort of behaviour which is presumably instinctive, loses its purposeful appearance in some circumstances. Ascribing expectation and memory to the conscious subjects is no longer a good way of explaining behaviour in these cases for there is now the appearance of an automaton. The actions are like those of a mechanical device but we can see how, in the appropriate circumstances, those same actions appear purposeful and rational. The wasp and the hamster have nervous systems which respond to stimuli but they do not appear to have learnt anything from their experiences, their responses to their situations do not change as the circumstances change. It is this sort of change in response which distinguishes a continuing subject of experiences from a subject of experience which endures but does not have more than spatio-temporal continuity. A continuing subject of experience in the sense in which I want to use it, must have some sense of the continuity of its experience.

This seems to be more clearly the case as we observe sentient beings with more and more complex nervous systems, but the examples of the wasp and the hamster show that appearances can be misleading. Maybe we just don't know how to set up a situation in which more evidently calculated behaviour is shown to lack purpose. An extreme sceptical approach suggests that in the right

³ Dennett, 1984, p 11.

circumstances all apparent continuing subjects of experience might be seen as automatons. The problem, then, is stipulating what conditions must be satisfied in order for the experiences of a particular subject to have continuity.

In the behaviour of higher animals we see changes following certain events, behaviour is modified according to what is experienced and those modifications appear rational. It is conscious and not reflex behaviour which changes, if the same events happen to an unconscious animal there is no change in the relevant behaviour. This seems to be evidence for a sense of the continuity of experience; there is no such evidence in the case of the wasp so we may surmise that it has no sense of continuity in its experiences. There is the possibility, however, that what we observed was some sort of reflex behaviour and there might be other wasp behaviour which *is* modified by experience. This could be more obviously so in the case of the hamster if, say, it were taught to negotiate a maze. Any animal training seems to be evidence for a sense of the continuity of experience.

Another possible explanation of the difference between behaviours in response to experiences is suggested by Tooley: the extent of the sense of continuity might be a matter of degree.⁴ This would mean that the more rational action of the cat is the result of the awareness of some previous experience and the modification of behaviour in the light of that awareness. The hamster or the wasp on the other hand, either have no sense of any continuity or the time span of any such sense is not long enough to be effective in modifying behaviour. Momentary experiences can, of course, result in modification of behaviour - once bitten twice shy. This sort of modification can, however, be explained as an involuntary aversion reaction where conditioning requires only one occurrence of a strong stimulus, rather than as a conscious modification of behaviour.

Duration might not be the only variable involved, cognitive capacities also vary greatly. The range of information that can be registered and retained by a continuing subject of experience is a matter of degree and even when the same information is absorbed there could be degrees of the depth of understanding. When it comes to assessing a continuing subject of experience we might say that in a cat the sense of continuity is not only shorter, but thinner and shallower than in a chimpanzee.

⁴ Tooley p 300. Tooley's discussion is in relation to the unification of desires and preferences existing at different times into a single, non-momentary interest but I think what he says applies to the unification of experiences too.

This would also explain why it is difficult to say definitively what marks an entity out as a continuing subject of experience, less evidence for continuity may reflect a lower cognitive capacity rather than a shorter duration of awareness. There is a vast difference between a cat and the average adult human being and even if we all agree that the cat is not a person and the human is, this may be no help in considering puzzling cases. The abilities to adapt as a result of past experience and to plan ahead are necessary conditions of personhood, but over what space of time and to what depth of understanding?

SELF-RECOGNITION

The situation must be different when we come to consider self-consciousness or self-awareness in the sense of being aware that one is a particular continuing subject of experiences. This self-recognition is the part of the condition of personhood that is most certainly absent in non-persons. We should have some clear reasons for deciding whether or not it is absent or we will not be able to give constructive consideration to the puzzling cases.

Just having a sense of continuity in one's experiences is not enough for realization that one is such a subject. That realization requires an understanding of what such a subject is. Being aware that one is a continuing subject of experience entails grasping the concept of a continuing subject of experience. Small children can quickly develop a sense of the continuity of their experiences, but recognizing that this is a way some things are and others are not seems to be a further step. Only when they have the distinction between persons and non-persons sorted out can they recognize that they themselves are persons. In some cases - infantile autism, perhaps - there is no such recognition and this may be seen as a defect in personal development.

Here again there may be matter of degree which depends on the degree of continuity experienced and the level of conceptual understanding. Being aware of oneself as a conscious subject of experience is not possible if one has no notion of what such a subject is. Direct experience of being such a subject is not enough. An individual who satisfies the self-recognition part of the condition will presumably show that he understands what entities do and do not satisfy the condition, and, in addition, he will exhibit behaviour which is appropriate to such self-conscious subjects.

Thus, there will be a minimum level at which persons recognize other persons and interact with them in what is considered to be an appropriate way. Although persons may choose to go and live in isolation as hermits, they originate

and develop in a social setting, even if that setting is only a small family group. Like any continuing subject they will be able to carry out life's necessary projects and being social by nature they will interact socially and be able to form characteristic inter-personal relationships.

The concept is constructed in a social environment and incorporates inextricably meshed social and personal perspectives. Without the sense of being one among others in the world I do not think individuals could interact and behave appropriately in social situations. Their personal projects will also be limited to some extent, by what is socially acceptable and what is practicable. The beliefs which underlie the sense of continuity must be reasonably internally consistent, must harmonise with the beliefs of others, and they must not be at odds with the nature of the world. This sort of coherence is part of truly grasping the concept of, and recognizing oneself as, a self-conscious continuing subject of experience.

There does not have to be a complete matching of beliefs, for individuality and disagreement are common, and there is also room for eccentricity. Any one who believes that he is lighter than air, and the musically incompetent who believes he is a great musician, will find some of their projects and relationships frustrated, but it takes more than this to cast doubt on their status as a person. We may get along well with the madman who thinks he is Napoleon and he may be well able to look after his own needs. Some types of incoherence may be more significant than others and, yet again, there are degrees of incoherence.

WHEN DOES THE CONDITION NOT APPLY?

So, have we a clearer understanding what evidence would lead us to decide that the condition of personhood did not apply to a particular entity? We can probably decide when an entity is not a conscious subject of experience but the absence of a sense of continuity is not cut and dried. Some behavioural evidence seems to count for and some counts against continuity of the subject so we have to decide what evidence is the most relevant. Perseveration - persistent, repetitive behaviour despite frustration - counts against while the conditioned response and "teachability" seem to count for, a sense of the continuity of experience. All of these, however, may appear to be present in a single entity.

Bearing this in mind, we can move on to deciding if an individual understands the concept of a continuing subject of experience, and counts himself as one. There should be behavioural evidence for this, behaviour appropriate to such a subject who interacts with like subjects. Once again it is not clearcut

because some inappropriate behaviour does not necessarily mean that the condition of personhood does not apply.

So far it seems that it is going to be difficult to say definitely whether or not certain conditions apply. Secondly, we must recognize that it may not be a matter of simply satisfying or not satisfying a condition. Rather we may find that the condition is satisfied to some degree. Furthermore it seems possible that the condition may sometimes appear to be satisfied and sometimes not, in one particular individual. This, clearly, does not provide a good enough starting point for seeking useful answers to difficult questions so we must consider the issue in greater depth before confronting the puzzles.

I think that the next step is to turn from the examination of the individuals and to consider, instead, the condition itself. In particular, the sense of continuity, and overall, the sense of self. To start with, there need to be connections for continuity. Since psychological states seem to be most important for continuing identity, the most plausible candidates for such connections are memories. That would seem to be the obvious way that people feel they exist outside the present, they remember things that went before.

Memory is problematical as a criterion for identity over time but I hope my discussion of it will show that it is adequate despite problems. I will suggest that memory is essential to a sense of continuity but that, on its own, it cannot do the job. The sort of memory necessary for the sense of self needs to be processed. I will show how it needs to be processed and further suggest that some linguistic capacity is essential for this processing.

I think that the reasoning for these ideas must, of course, stand up to philosophical scrutiny, but I also think that there is relevant empirical evidence which must be considered as well. This evidence comes from the neurological studies of brain-damaged patients. I will focus on those with memory impairment and language loss and present some cases which may support my argument.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter I wish to show why it is that I think memory and some linguistic capacity are essential for having a sense of self as I have outlined it.

TWO OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW

There is a school of thought which claims that the self is a narrative construct, that it is "constituted in and through language"¹. This is not usually taken to mean that there is some story that an entity must articulate before that entity can be classed as having a sense of self, that is, classed as a person. Rather there is some story which that entity *could* articulate, an implicit story essential to the recognition of oneself as a continuing subject of experience.

The elements of the story involve the experiences of that very subject. Thus the claim seems to presuppose that memory is essential for the development of the sense of self, for if these experiences are not remembered then there is not even the *possibility* that the subject could articulate the required story. Some ongoing experiential memory is needed for the subject to be able to recognize her own particular story as distinct from the stories which depict other subjects. Otherwise a subject might be able to articulate the required type of story without ever recognizing that it did or did not constitute her own self.

Opposed to the strong claim that the self is a product of language are the counterclaims that thoughts, beliefs, concepts and even the sense of being a continuing subject of experience can be ascribed to entities which clearly lack linguistic capacities, namely animals. These counterclaimants often want to class some of the higher animals at least, as persons without claiming that those animals have any linguistic capacity.² Once again memory seems to be

¹ Kerby, 1986, p 210. Novitz, 1989, states ". . . narrative is integrally involved in our search for a coherent self-image." p 62. If this is plausible and if a coherent self-image is necessary for an entity to have a sense of self, then it is possible that some form of narrative plays a role in the development of personhood.

² Singer, 1979, p 95, "... the claim that language is necessary for reflective thought consigns the nonhuman animals to the level of conscious, but not self-aware, existence. But is this claim sound? I do not believe that it is." "There is nothing altogether inconceivable about a being possessing the capacity for conceptual thought without having a language and there are instances of animal behaviour which are difficult to explain except under the assumption that the animals are thinking conceptually."

presupposed for if there is a sense of the continuity of experiences, those experiences will be remembered ones. (This claim should not be confused with another view which accepts that linguistic capacity is essential to personhood and then goes on to assert that some animals, for example apes, dolphins and whales, do have such a capacity. This latter view raises no difficulty for my necessary condition of personhood.)

Neither claim denies that memory plays an essential role in having a sense of self over time, but this can be challenged nevertheless. Despite clear memory defects, memory gaps and false memories we can develop and sustain successfully our sense of self with no lack of continuity or unity. Periods of deep unconsciousness do not in themselves diminish the sense of the continuity of the self, even though there is no memory for the duration of the coma. Nor does conclusive evidence that we have misremembered something or invented a memory create a sense of disunity of the self. Therefore it cannot be through memory that we attain our sense of self.

Thus, there are objections which suggest that neither memory nor linguistic capacity is essential for having a sense of self. I will argue, however, that they both are but that they are interdependent and cannot be considered in isolation. I do not think that what I say will commit me to also saying that language is necessary to all forms of thought; it may or may not be the case that beings with no linguistic capacity can think, believe or deploy some concepts. I will claim that if an entity has no linguistic capacity then it cannot satisfy my necessary condition of personhood. The role played by memory does not require some unbroken accurate record of experiences but there must be a particular type of memory, namely memory of experiences, and I will answer the objections about incompleteness, falsity and gaps in such memory. I will claim that if an entity lacks that sort of memory then it cannot be a person.

MEMORY

The sort of memory which seems to contribute most crucially to our sense of self is not memory for cognitive skills, motor skills or rote skills. These cannot convey the sense of being a continuing subject of experience. Remembering how to distinguish colours, ride a bike or recite multiplication tables does not contribute to what I think it is that makes me a person. I could lose these skills without feeling that I was any less a person than I was before. Robots used in industrial manufacturing acquire many such skills through the programming of their computer memories but these robots are not considered to have any sense of

self because of this. I do not deny that the loss of these skills might result in a person feeling diminished or changed but this need not alter the fact that she is aware of being a continuing subject of experience; the loss is itself one of those experiences.

It is experiential memory which is most crucial to the development of the sense of self. The information conveyed by experiential memory is the information that a particular experience is my experience and not someone else's, and experiential memory also allows me to know that an experience is mine after it has occurred. These two features are necessary if I am to be aware that I, as this particular subject of experience, have a past. If I do not know this then I cannot be *aware* of being a *continuing* subject of experience.

There seems to be no other plausible way that we could come to know this about ourselves. If we were merely informed in some way that certain things had been experienced by us we would have no sense of *being* the continuing subject. Ulric Neisser sees the sort of knowledge which is based on the memory of personal experiences as knowledge of the "extended self", extended in the sense that it reaches beyond the present.³ Once the sense of continuity has been grasped through the awareness of present and past experiences there are expectations about the future, this is part of what it is to have the sense of being a *continuing* subject.

Memory gaps

As I have mentioned, however, there are problems with supposing that memory on its own could explain continuity. Firstly, sleep or unconsciousness causes gaps in memory, thus we cannot suppose that the sense of continuity that we have is some sort of mirroring of a continuous, remembered record of experience. Even if there was some compensating mechanism which explained the lack of memory due to unconsciousness, other gaps give rise to greater difficulties. Many experiences are completely forgotten; there can be parts of a person's life for which no experiences can be recalled even with prompting; photographs which stand as the only evidence a subject has for some conscious experience. Yet the average person can have as great a sense of continuity of

³ Neisser, 1988, distinguishes among "several kinds of self-specifying information, each establishing a different aspect of the self. These aspects are so distinct that they are essentially different *selves*: they differ in their origins and developmental histories, in what we know about them, in the pathologies to which they are subject, and in the manner in which they contribute to human social experience." p 35.

experience as can the rare individual who is a complete mnemonist. How can an awareness of continuity originate or develop from the almost universally gap-ridden phenomenon of an individual's experiential memory?

False memories

A second problem in explaining continuity on the basis of memory concerns vivid experiential memories which turn out to be false, or at least distorted.⁴ Once the subject becomes aware that this can happen the status of the self-specifying information drawn from memory must be suspect. If there is a sense of continuity supported by some of the memories this might be only imagined. A sense of continuity that we know could be mistaken is surely not good enough to underpin the concept of a continuing subject of experience as required by the condition of personhood?

Too much of a good thing

The third problem is almost the converse of the first. Despite the gaps there is a lot of self-referenced information available to us through memory and it grows continually as we continue to experience things. If there were no gaps the quantity would be enormous but even as it is there is enough to create what Novitz calls a "bewildering array of bits and pieces"; actions, passions, beliefs which have changed with time, values which have shifted and neuroses which have waxed and waned.⁵

The need to establish order

Often there is nothing in these memories of our experiences to indicate the exact order in which they occurred. We may remember swimming at the beach then travelling home where we reflect on the pleasure of the day, but we may clearly remember two experiences but be unable to say which occurred first. Did the thrilling boat ride precede the day at the beach or not? When did belief in Santa Claus cease in relation to other life experiences? How do all the remembered trivial experiences fit in and, more significantly, why would they be classed as trivial in the first place?

⁴ Barclay, 1986, p 82, quotes from an account where the subject knows that the experiences could not have occurred as they were remembered. Salaman, E.(1970) *A collection of moments: A study of involuntary memories*. (London, Longman Group).

⁵ Novitz, 1989, p 58-59.

A large collection of experiential memories can perhaps give us a sense of having a past but that in itself is not enough to support a sense of being a continuing subject of experience. A sense of being a continuing subject involves having expectations about the future as well as memories of the past. To have expectations means that we think that certain things must follow from the events of the past and present. I do not mean that we must know exactly what will occur but we must have the feeling that there is a sequence of events which will continue. How could this arise from a collection in which we perceive no definite sequential ordering?

It might be thought obvious that the remembered experiences of childhood preceded those of adolescence which preceded those of adulthood; and that a remembered cause must have preceded its remembered effect. Wouldn't this provide a sufficient framework for the ordering of experiential memories? Thus, if I clearly recall my first day at school and casting my first vote, there isn't anything in the memories themselves which shows that one experience occurred before the other but certain factual knowledge makes ordering simple. I remember a hoped for event which did not happen and I remember the disappointment felt because it did not happen, the frustrated hope must be prior to the disappointment, logic determines this order.

So far as most individuals are concerned, however, experiential memories are not rich enough in factual or logical clues to establish a sequence. If our memories were complete then a causal chain might be obvious and ordering would be a simple matter, but the amount of material would be overwhelming and the task of recalling whether or not A occurred before B would be daunting if not impossible. As it is, there are normally gaps in the memories of our physical and mental experiences, gaps which cannot be filled by prompting, nor by extreme efforts to recall, so factual or logical clues are of limited use. Nor, as I have said, is there some intrinsic feature of memories which indicates their order.

In spite of these apparent difficulties the concept of a continuing subject develops, as does the sense of being such a subject. Understanding this concept and being aware that one is such a subject demand a grasp of the ordering of experiences; how they should be ordered and how that ordering appears to the subject. This is part of the sense-giving exercise which leads us to form expectations on the basis of our remembered experiences. Grasping this sense of ordering, however, does not apply to all our remembered experiences. For a start we do not and probably could not put all our remembered experiences in chronological order, but if we did how would we perceive anything in that ordering which would lead us to form expectations? The perception of a blue

sky, followed by thoughts of tranquility, followed by the perception of a roar, followed by perplexity, followed by the sensation of flying, followed by the perception of a blue sky, followed by a feeling of dread, followed by the perception of a blue sky, followed by pain, followed by confused noises, followed by the perception of a blue sky . . . Thirty seconds of life with very different experiences following the perception of a blue sky. What expectations are formed on the basis of these remembered experiences?

Sorting the wheat from the chaff

A sense of continuity means that there is something more than just an arbitrary connection between the experiences. Sequential ordering itself is not possible on the basis of remembered experiences but even if it was it does not seem to provide the right sort of connections.⁶ To see the right sort of connections we have to be able to separate the significant experiences from the trivial ones which are merely experiences of the background conditions.

Significance is not something that is intrinsic in an event or experience. Just as there is no feature of an experience or our memory of it which indicates its place in relation to all other experiences, so there is no feature which indicates the importance of any one particular experience in relation to another. Nor, as Novitz points out, do causal sequences of themselves afford special significance to any of the events in our lives.⁷

Here then are difficulties with the notion that experiential memory is the bedrock of our sense of self, our sense of being a continuing subject of experience. The presence of memory gaps seems obviously to count against the possibility that experiential memory is a source of continuity. The experiential memories that we do have may be false or distorted, so any sense of continuity dependent on them could be spurious. Despite gaps, however, we have an enormous quantity of experiential memories, but there are insufficient contingent or logical pointers for sequential ordering and no apparent characteristics which would allow us to sort the wheat from the chaff, the significant from the trivial.

⁶ Hayden White (1981) makes some interesting points in his discussion of annals. In annals there is no inauguration, they just begin; there is no central subject; there is no story about that subject; there is no conclusion, they just terminate. The only meaning recorded events have is their registration in this kind of list. What rule or principle of meaning requires the annalist to record any particular event, or to pass one over? There is not the sort of connection we expect between the elements of a story. (p 8-9)

⁷ Novitz, 1989, p 61.

How could we bridge the gaps, disregard distortion, establish order, and highlight significant experiences linking them in a way that manifests unity and continuity of self?

This is precisely what a narrative account does.

NARRATIVE

Some of the characteristic features of a narrative account are, I think, relevant here. The basic material from which narratives are constructed has much in common with the average individual's experiential memory. If the objections concerning memory do not apply to narrative accounts then maybe they are not compelling objections to memory.

Gaps need not destroy continuity

A narrative account generally takes up less time than the course of events it seeks to convey. In the case of historical narratives, a century of change can be covered in an hour long lecture; it takes much less time to read an account of the rise and fall of the Roman empire than it took for that empire to come and go. Even a detailed narrative used to instruct can be a short affair. In telling a child how I made an omelette I will not include things like walking to the fridge, picking up the eggbeater or setting down the jug after adding the milk.

Clearly, much is left out of these accounts, both events in the causal chain and details of all the entities involved. A good account, however, can convey a sense of complete continuity. Despite enormous gaps which must occur in the material of the lecture, for instance, the story line is a continuous strand which bridges the gaps and this is why gaps do not necessarily threaten continuity.

Falsity need not be a worry

As I have already mentioned, we know that some of our vivid memories can turn out to be false or distorted when checked against an independent standard. How could we be cognizant of our histories if the basic data are unreliable? This worry is lessened if we judge our remembered history as we would a story. A story can convey a message or depict a state of affairs without using factually accurate information. Fables, parables and metaphor are examples of this; their truth or accuracy is not on the surface and our remembered histories could be like these. When Neisser suggests that memory might be important because it makes interpersonal relationships possible thus strengthening the coherence of human groups, he continues:

Note that even rather sloppy memories can serve this purpose: my recall of a shared event must be close enough to yours to avoid bizarre discrepancies, but it need not be accurate in every detail. Unsurprisingly, this is just the level of mnemonic accuracy that people generally achieve.⁸

This conjecture might just as easily apply to our own individual histories.

Most adults develop a more or less standard life-narrative that effectively defines the self in terms of a particular series of remembered experiences. These accounts are continually being extended (and occasionally revised!), creating a narrative structure much like that of more formal autobiographies. As in the case of social relationships, the memory that supports these narratives need not be highly accurate. It also need not deal in detail with every epoch of life.⁹

Sequential order

A narrative incorporating experiential memories can, in the absence of logical or factual clues, make the sequential order of those memories clear. The versatility of the narrative form is such that memories themselves can appear in any order in the narrative but, if the story is well expressed, the temporal sequence is obvious. No causal chains need to be invoked, nor do times need to be stated - "I was enjoying the beach but not as much as I had enjoyed the boat ride".

It is not always possible to put memories in an exact sequence but this does not necessarily result in a muddled feeling. A narrative may include descriptions of several states of affairs without fully indicating their order, this does not result in confusion. Furthermore, if all an individual's experiential memories were merely completely ordered in a story it would not give a sense of being a continuing subject of experience. Ordering must be accompanied by a meaningful development so that we have a sense that life is going on.

Significant or trivial

Not every experiential memory is crucial to an individual's sense of self. A narrative can select the memories which contribute to a sense of continuity and unity; it emphasizes some, marginalises some, and, through its connections, gives them coherence in a way that points to future possibilities. Significance comes from the part that an experience plays in some story or narrative, from the way it

⁸ Neisser, p 48.

⁹ Neisser, p 49.

is connected or related to other experiences.¹⁰ Selection, emphasis and coherence are part of the meaningful development necessary for a sense of self.

This seems to me to be the basis of the claim that the self is a narrative construct or that "to be human is not simply to have a history . . . but to be cognizant of this history".¹¹ Neither a complete but unordered account of my experiences, nor a complete chronicle of them is an adequate basis for forming a sense of self, but this can be remedied if the narrative form is used to order, prune and shape that account from the basic data of our experiential memories.

The idea of a narrative construction applied to experiential memory, then, seems to overcome problems concerning bridging gaps, false memories, sequential ordering and distinguishing significance. Doing the job is one thing, but is it the only way to do the job? Novitz claims that it is - "Without narrative, there simply is no way of emphasizing some events, marginalizing others, *and* at the same time relating all in a significant whole".¹² Is there no other way that we could apprehend our sense of self?

Perhaps significance could be conveyed through the strength of our emotional responses. A strong emotional response accompanying an experience would indicate that it was significant, would make it stand out from background experiences. These sorts of feelings are at the core of our very being and the story we appear to need might just be an elaboration. If this were so then personhood might be ascribed to animals and those human beings, such as babies and very young infants, who may not be able to grasp a story, but who could very well experience strong emotions. Could they understand a situation through the way they *feel* about it? That is, could they understand its relevance to them as a continuing subject? This is the sort of understanding required.

¹⁰ Waldman, (1981) in a criticism of White, claims that the presence of so many empty years in the cited annals suggests the author is establishing a level of significance for included events, a level we do not yet comprehend. p 244 I think that we do not comprehend the significance because no connections have been established between the events. The only relation they bear to each other is that they appear on the same list which orients them temporally, that is the only significance that the author has established. Any further significance that we read into the annals is a product of our own narrative construction.

¹¹ Kerby, 1988, p 242, p 235. Here I take "human" to mean "person" rather than "member of the species *Homo sapiens*".

¹² Novitz, 1989, p 61.

EMOTIONS AND NARRATIVE

Martha Nussbaum describes an attitude to emotions which would rule out the above possibility.

It is that emotions are not feelings that well up in some natural and untutored way from our natural selves, that they are, in fact, not personal or natural at all, that they are, instead, contrivances, social constructs. We learn how to feel, and we learn our emotional repertoire. We learn emotions in the same way that we learn our beliefs - from our society. But emotions, unlike many of our beliefs, are not taught to us directly . . . they are taught above all through stories. Stories express their structure and teach us their dynamics. These stories are constructed by others and, then, taught and learned. But once internalized, they shape the way life feels and looks.¹³

. . . [emotions] themselves have a cognitive content; they are intimately related to beliefs or judgments about the world in such a way that the removal of the relevant belief will remove not only the reason for the emotion but also the emotion itself.¹⁴

Thus, there are connections between beliefs about what is valuable or important and emotions. In other words, emotions like anger, guilt, love or grief can only be felt if we understand or recognize the value of things which are damaged, desired or lost. If we do not recognize or at least believe that something is significant or valuable why should we regret its loss? I will not be angry about something to which I attach no significance. Thus, significance cannot be conveyed through emotional responses in the absence of any story because emotions seem to depend on a prior belief that something is significant and that significance can only be portrayed by telling a story. The recognition of significance comes through an understanding of some sort of narrative.

I see two obvious objections to this attitude to emotions. Firstly, we often come to recognize that something is important to us only when we experience grief or anger at its loss or damage. Secondly, animals like dogs can show clear evidence of anger, say if they are provoked, yet we do not feel the need to credit them with having made an evaluative judgment which requires that they understand some story.

Strong emotion seems to reveal value

The first objection points to common cases where the recognition or attribution of significance seems to come only after a strong emotional reaction. People take many experiences for granted; the environment, personal possessions,

¹³ Nussbaum, 1988, p 226.

¹⁴ Nussbaum, 1988, p 231.

personal abilities and other people can be part of a subject's life and that subject may never consider them important. If an experience or memory concerning one of these things is accompanied by strong emotional feelings it may seem to the subject that such a feeling reveals significance. "I never realized how important her friendship was to me until I felt devastated by her departure." Surely it is the feeling of devastation that conveys the significance of the friendship, rather than the part that the friendship plays in a story informing the emotion.

It seems perfectly true to say that we recognize the significance because of the strong feelings but it is another matter whether or not the attribution of significance to an experience is on account of those feelings. In other words, do I recognize that the friendship is valuable or do I recognize that I value the friendship? Do we attribute significance or value to something *because* we regret its loss? Most people would say that we regret its loss because it was valued. Regret may be an overt indicator of the value of something that is lost where the value is held implicitly.

Patricia Greenspan raises just such a point in her discussion of a case of conflicting emotions. The subject of these emotions loses in a political contest where the winner is a friend as well as a rival. The only thing at stake in the contest is political status. Pleasure at a friend's success is tempered with bad feelings which surprise the subject. "Only after a moment of reflection am I able to discover the reasons for my emotion."¹⁵ The subject fancied that she had no political ambitions and was surprised to learn, through an emotional experience, that this was not so. If political ambition is the reason for the emotion, then the subject must already have beliefs about the desirability of political status, that is, it is something already valued, already of significance to the subject, although this has not been consciously acknowledged. What is the source of this significance? How is it connected with the experience of failure? Not all failure results in disappointment, so failure itself does not elicit the emotion. If the strong emotion fades it is still possible to regard the experience of losing as significant. While an emotional response alerts the subject to significance, only a story can select and emphasize to construct that significance and without such a story the emotion cannot be felt.

This is how a story can shape the way life feels and looks, as Nussbaum suggests, and in a more general way a society's stories can shape the emotional experience of whole communities. Many of our values involving morals, family, wealth, and success differ between cultures. The same incident may elicit

¹⁵ Greenspan (1980) p 230.

different emotions in different people because the value judgments that they make are based on different beliefs. The way that a value such as "it is better to be a male than a female", becomes entrenched in a society is through the myths, in a broad sense of "myth", of that society. This value can be traced in the respected religious, educational and entertaining stories typical of that society although it may never be explicitly stated. This would explain the disappointment felt in some societies when daughters rather than sons are born and if there is no explicit expression of the value, it would also explain the surprise some people might feel when they experience such disappointment. In the previous example the losing candidate did not explicitly extol the value of political success but other acknowledged values and internalized stories probably entailed it.

It does not seem, then, that we attach significance to events or experiences because of the strong emotional response that they elicit. Furthermore, we often acknowledge that things are valuable or significant before we have any emotional response concerning them. My health is very valuable to me and its loss would be distressing but no emotion informs me now of this value. What conveys significance in the absence of strong emotion? A narrative will do this by placing an event or experience in context, highlighting it and eliminating irrelevant information. Kerby describes narrativity as:

a principle of intelligibility and not simply a vehicle for a pre-given and evident sense Narrative expression is not the mere communication of information or data, but a sense-giving and synthetic activity.¹⁶

Thus we are led to the conclusion that "it is often the story within which events are framed that first gives them their importance."¹⁷

Perhaps this is wrong, maybe significance is evident in experiences but we have failed to see how it is. Sometimes, however, an experience will only be judged as significant in retrospect, a trivial incident which throws two people together or a decision lightly taken may have a profound effect. This sort of significance can really only be conveyed by a narrative or story which includes later events, because it is through these events that the earlier ones are seen to be significant. It is only when the connections and relationships which a narrative depicts are understood that importance becomes evident. Moreover, we can change the relative importance of events or experiences by changing the story. A child will not be so terrified about a badly grazed knee when she understands that

¹⁶ Kerby, 1988, p 239.

¹⁷ Kerby, 1988, p 241.

she will not bleed to death from it. History can be rewritten in a way that totally alters the significance of events; great deeds of heroism can appear insignificant in an account which portrays economic factors as the crucial elements and vice versa. Thus while emotions may alert us to the significance of things we had not consciously considered we do not attach significance on the basis of strong emotional responses.

Animals - emotions without narratives

The second objection to the narrative explanation of emotions points out that animals show evidence of emotions. Despite this we may not feel that they are capable of grasping the necessary narratives which embody the structures of these emotions. A dog may snarl in anger, cringe in fear and frisk for joy. Behaviour is not the only evidence, these activities often take place in situations where we would expect to feel such emotions ourselves. We recognize provocation, mistreatment or affection in the actions of the dog owner and it seems reasonable to suppose that the dog can appraise these situations too and that they evoke the appropriate emotions in the dog. Does the dog respond merely to a stimulus or does it grasp a simple story which makes sense of the situation. This seems to me to raise two issues which might be quite separate, what is involved in an emotional response and what it is to grasp a narrative.

The social constructivist view of emotions, which Nussbaum's account embraces, sees emotions as primarily socially determined but this does not deny that there is some biologically based response involved.¹⁸ While she says that emotions are "not simply blind surges of affect, stirrings that arise from our animal nature . . .",¹⁹ there is such a component in emotional response. It is reasonable to assume that the apparent emotional behaviour of certain animals has similar biological grounds to some human emotional responses.

This behaviour is also constrained by social organization, where it is present, and, once again, it seems reasonable to assume that some of these constraints are similar to social constraints on human emotional behaviour. Similar biological grounds could account for our perception of certain animal

¹⁸ James Averill (1980) outlines the notion of a biological system "based primarily on ethological analyses of behaviour".(p 58) As such, "biology only contributes elements to, and sets limits upon, the social construction of emotional behaviour". (p 67) Thus an adaptive function of two similar biological systems might involve a similar set of responses merely because of biological constraints.

¹⁹ Nussbaum, 1988, p 231.

behaviour as an emotional response. Some common factor in social organization could account for our perception of a more general similarity between the overall pattern of responsive animal behaviour and human emotions. The narrative account of emotions does not claim that the understanding of basic narratives is *all* that there is to emotions but only that it is of crucial importance to some emotions at least.

James Averill, in an outline of the social constructivist view, defines emotions as syndromes, sets of "interrelated response elements", organized coherently "primarily by social and not biological evolution". There are social rules for the constitution and regulation of emotion and heuristic rules which most of all need a vehicle like narrative.²⁰ This sort of theory maintains that even the sense that emotions are somehow beyond our control is socially determined *to some extent*.²¹ This sense is partially an intrinsic feature of the narratives which embody the rules, narratives which we internalize to the extent that we perceive emotions as being natural feelings rather than "transitory social roles . . . institutionalized ways of interpreting and responding to particular classes of situations".²²

In support of a social constructivist account of emotions Rom Harré lists cultural variety in standards of valuation, cultural variety in what is encouraged or suppressed, cultural variety in strength of feeling, historical changes in the emotional repertoire of a continuous national culture and culturally distinctive "quasi-emotions" or "felt states of being that are closely related to the physical conditions of life". He continues:

These kinds of cases could be multiplied a hundred-fold. There can be little doubt that, even if there are some universal emotions, the bulk of mankind live within systems of thought and feeling that bear little but superficial resemblance to one another.²³

Averill suggests that the acquisition of new or the relinquishing of old emotions as a child becomes an adult are changes which can be better understood

²⁰ Averill, 1986, pp 100, 105-110.

²¹ Averill, 1986, p 108.

²² Averill, 1986, p 100.

²³ Harré, 1986, p 10-12. This statement seems too extreme to me as much cross-cultural understanding and explanation is possible. It depends, perhaps, on how "the bulk of mankind" and "little but superficial resemblances" are interpreted. I do think that the sentiment expressed does apply to cases like those Harré cites and perhaps also to some systems of thought and feeling within which women live as opposed to those of men in the same culture.

in the light of social construction theory.²⁴ As more rules are learned and others clarified emotional responses have a gradually changing social basis. Other changes that may be taking place will also contribute to changes in emotional response but Averill's suggestion that "much adult emotional development involves the acquisition and refinement of heuristic rules" provides a good basis for explaining the difference between the emotional responses of a child and an adult.²⁵ This explanatory power extends to disabilities which result when the internalization of the appropriate rules is inadequate or incomplete.²⁶

The same sort of pattern can be traced in animal development and might be seen as emotional development analogous to that of humans.²⁷ There are several reasons for caution, however, in assuming that animal emotions are very like human emotions. Firstly, "it is now apparent from studies of both child and adult human subjects that emotion and cognition are closely interwoven . . . [and] a similar conclusion is emerging from studies of animal behaviour".²⁸ I take this to mean that the greater the capacity for understanding and learning the greater the emotional repertoire. In general this capacity increases with experience and with the growth and development of an individual. Hinde sees learning affecting "the appraisal of the situation which evokes the emotion in the first place". Elementary capacities are acquired first but there are also "more complex capacities, such as those involved in the development of the self-concept and the capacity to empathize with others".²⁹ If emotions are limited by the capacity for understanding then where that capacity is itself limited, as in many animals, we may be justified in attributing only the fundamental emotions.³⁰

A second reason for caution concerns the extent to which biological factors determine apparent emotional behaviour. Human emotional development takes place in a social setting and it can be minimal in cases of social deprivation; it can

²⁴ Averill, 1986, p 99.

²⁵ Averill, 1986, p 108.

²⁶ Averill, 1986, p 109.

²⁷ Beer, 1982 p 260. "Social development in some species involves loss of attachments as well as formation of attachments, and progressive change in the use of and the response to signals, which bespeaks flexibility of resource rather than fixity of habit."

²⁸ Hinde, 1985 p 987.

²⁹ Hinde, 1985 p 987.

³⁰ What these are seems to vary. According to Bolles, 1987, p 151, fear, joy and perhaps anger are basic, Hinde, 1985, p 990, sees surprise, anger, shame, etc as 'fundamental', for young children at least, whereas pride, for example, is more complex.

vary greatly in different settings. This is also the case to varying degrees with animals, but deprivation is less and less of a disadvantage the further one gets phylogenetically from human beings.³¹ It seems that in so called lower animals a greater proportion of apparent emotional behaviour is biologically determined. This is not always at the expense of social organization, as in the case of ants, say.

Thus while animals exhibit apparent emotions they may not have what Hinde refers to as "the more complex capacities, such as those involved in the development of the self-concept and the capacity to empathize with others".³² This is because, firstly, their behaviour is more biologically determined and thus more of it is akin to automatic response, it is predominantly like blind surges of affect arising from their animal nature. Secondly, the cognitive capacities of animals are not sufficient for the development of the sort of emotions most closely involved in a self-concept. That is, the complex emotions most concerned with, and involved in, interpersonal understanding - sympathy, pity, love, hate, guilt, embarrassment. These are emotions that require a detailed understanding of the ongoing events surrounding a particular situation and such insights can only be taught through narrative.

If the complex emotions are primarily social constructs then it is quite possible that we may misattribute or fail to attribute emotions to people from other cultures, historical periods, or age groups, either because of our own cultural bias or because of ignorance of their culture, historical context, or stage of development. In the case of animals then, it seems to me that we are much less likely to be able to tell what their experience is let alone whether it is a particular complex emotion. It is possible that we might overdescribe a situation, invent a story about it, without justification.³³ There seems to be little doubt that animals

³¹ Beer, 1982 p 260. "Deprivation of [social interaction] even for short periods, may have profound and long-lasting deleterious effects on social and cognitive development. On the other hand there are cases of animals raised in isolation from normal social contact which nevertheless showed little if any deficiency in social behaviour at maturity. Such cases multiply with phylogenetic distance from the human."

³² Hinde, 1985 p 987.

³³ Dennett 1978 points out how easy it is to read more than necessary into a situation. A dog wants to sit in a chair occupied by her master and so she scratches at the door with "the *intention* that her master *believe* she *wants* to go out".(p 275) In contrast "the more modest hypothesis is that the dog believes her master is conditioned to go to the door when she scratches".(p 276) If a first order intentional interpretation is sufficient to describe the situation the third order interpretation is unjustified.

express fear, anger and excitement, but these are sometimes classed as basic or fundamental animal emotions. This classification suggests that they transcend social and cultural diversity because they are primarily biological responses. Thus these emotions do not depend on the capacity for narrative understanding.

I conclude that the second objection to the narrative explanation of emotions, that animals clearly experience emotions although they do not understand narratives, does not refute Nussbaum's analysis if we allow that the basic emotions are not the ones that are crucial to the development of a sense of self. It is not so easy to dismiss this objection if we consider the behaviour of animals such as gorillas or chimpanzees. If we accept that some strange behaviour of foreigners is emotional even though we do not understand it or recognize the particular emotion experienced, why should we not be prepared to do the same with ape behaviour?

This brings me to the other issue associated with the second objection, the grasping of a narrative. It may be possible to do this in some rudimentary way that is not beyond the capacity of an ape. If that is the case then the objection is further weakened because the animal behaviour most reasonably described as emotional, may be accompanied by a capacity for narrative understanding. This issue will be addressed when I consider the role of language in the construction of a self-concept.

Before I do this I will summarise the discussion so far. My two-part claim is that if there is no linguistic capacity in a very broad sense which I will explain, then the necessary condition of personhood which I outlined earlier cannot be satisfied; and, if there is no experiential memory then that condition of personhood cannot be satisfied. There are two commonly made opposing claims - that the self is a product of language, and that no linguistic capacity is needed for personhood. I deny the latter without necessarily embracing the former.

Neither view denies the importance of memory but the essential role of memory can be questioned because of its inherent gaps, distortions and sometimes demonstrable falsity. These things pose no problem for a narrative which can successfully convey its meaning and a sense of continuity despite gaps and

Caution is also required in ascribing anger to an animal if it shows aggressive behaviour as there are often other explanations which place more emphasis on biologically based responses.

inaccurate material. If the criteria which apply to narrative are appropriate for memory then the objections about gaps and falsity can be answered.

I have raised other problems concerning experiential memory. Despite its gaps there is an enormous amount of material which in itself has no characteristics which show how events should be ordered, nor how the trivial differs from the significant. A way that we can make sense of this sort of material is through the narrative form. I have answered an alternative view that sense, or significance at least, might be given through varying strengths of emotional response. In so doing have shown that a sense of order and significance is itself a determining factor in many emotions because of their narrative nature. This being so once again we are thrown back onto narrative expression as a sense-giving activity to explain our sense of being a continuing subject of experience.

The narrative account of emotions fits well with a social construction theory of emotions which explains cultural, historical and age group variation in emotions. Narrative explains how we can generate and follow the complex sets of rules underlying many emotions, especially the heuristic rules which govern finer points.

I do not want to claim that narrative understanding in the sense that we generally use it is essential for personhood. I do think, however, that by considering features of narrative and what is involved in understanding a narrative we can get some notion of things that *are* essential.

LANGUAGE

The claim that the self is a narrative construct need only entail that there is a rudimentary story essential to the recognition of oneself as a continuing subject of experience. No fully articulated story is necessary. The story must be grasped in some way by the subject, its meaning understood. The question is, then, what sort of capacities does a subject need to understand this rudimentary narrative?

Narration is independent of words

Perhaps the most common notion of a narrative is of a story related or written in a language such as French or English. One account claims "the meaning of a narrative is a product of its language, and cannot be said to mirror

the nature of the 'real' extra-linguistic, past events".³⁴ If words are the vehicle that a narrative needs then a high degree of linguistic ability seems necessary for composing or understanding a narrative. Seymour Chatman says, however, that narrative is a "deep structure quite independent of its medium . . . narrative is basically a kind of text organization [that] needs to be actualized".³⁵ Chatman also points out that a narrative can be expressed without using words, they are not the ultimate components, "those ultimate elements are, rather, events and existents in a chain of temporal causality or at least contingency".³⁶ This suggests that linguistic ability is not necessary.

Here we seem to have two opposing claims; the meaning is a product of the language of the narrative or alternatively, the meaning is embodied in the organization of the basic elements of the narrative and is independent of and prior to the language of the narrative. I think that there are two points to be clarified here. In the first claim, how is "language" to be interpreted, and in the second claim, what is the nature of the basic elements of a particular narrative?

A spoken or written narrative may be independent of words in that the same story can be conveyed using different words. It might be told in different languages or the same connections might be established between the same events and existents using different phraseology. There is another sort of independence when the message which a narrative seeks to convey is not directly addressed by the words used, the message of a parable for instance. Very different narratives can convey the same principles or concepts, as is the case with myths from different countries. In all these cases the narrative is only independent of any particular set of words, not words *per se*. If the meaning is a product of the language then it must be in a general sense of "language" rather than the particular words used.

It is possible to be more or less general in matters like this and the most obvious extension of the generalization beyond words is sign language. Signs are conventions which are learnt and used in the same way as words, they convey ideas and information. There are also conventions used in mime, films and

³⁴ Kerby, 1988, p 240. This is Kerby's interpretation of a point made by Roland Barthes in relation to historical narrative. I assume that it can be applied to narrative in general whether the elements are "real" or imaginary.

³⁵ Chatman, 1981a, p 117.

³⁶ Chatman, 1981b, p 261-2. The examples of alternative expressions which Chatman gives are mime, a comic strip without bubbles or captions and a silent movie without titles.

pictures; Chatman mentions conventions in films for summarising events over a long duration as examples - "a peeling calendar, perhaps, or a 'transition-montage' of shots accompanied by dolorous music".³⁷ What happens to the independence of narrative if the notion of language is not restricted to words but extends to a wider range of conventions used to communicate ideas?

Narration is dependent on language

Chatman's claim is that the deep structure of a narrative is independent even of such conventions or signs, they are "second-order signs for conveying the first-order narrative elements - events, characters, props and setting".³⁸

It is important to understand just what sort of independence we have here. It could be construed as total independence, such that the meaning of a narrative is a product of the organization of the basic elements in the total absence of any "second-order signs", in the total absence of language in a very general sense. On the other hand, it could be independence from any particular set of signs, independence from the language actually used, whether it is words, sequences of film shots or any other conventions.

I do not see how "text organization" could be grasped in the absence of any language-like conventions, that is, in the absence of a medium. Events and existents may be evident to the senses but a selection must be made, only some will be relevant to any particular narrative. The only way that we can indicate which ones are relevant is through the story.

The chains of causality or contingency are not obvious either. If we accept Kerby's remark that the artifacts which are the basis of historical narrative can be seen to justify *numerous* stories,³⁹ then we can see that the chains of causality and contingency must also be selected. "He showed his ignorance of protocol by failing to bow to the queen." "He insulted the queen by failing to bow." Identical events and existents but different connections; here conveyed through linguistic conventions, although we could tap the head with a finger to convey ignorance and thumb the nose to indicate an insult.

In the absence of these selections, that is in the absence of some expressed narrative, we are back with Novitz's "bewildering array of bits and pieces". Selection of events *and* of connections is a "sense giving activity" and this is

³⁷ Chatman, 1981b, p 262.

³⁸ Chatman, 1981b, p 262.

³⁹ Kerby, 1988, p 239.

precisely how Kerby describes narrative expression.⁴⁰ Chatman's "ultimate elements, . . . events and existents in a chain of temporal causality or at least contingency", are not the "bewildering array", so they must be the *already selected* events and connections. This selection is, itself, part of narrative expression and it requires the use of conventions. If no conventions are used then no selection has been made.

We cannot recognize which elements are selected as relevant, why and how the selection is made, if we cannot understand and use the conventions. These conventions are at least what Chatman calls "second order signs", they are a language, in a broad sense of "language". The selection of the ultimate elements and connections is achieved through linguistic expression. That is, the *creation* of the "text organization" is a linguistic exercise and therefore it cannot be *totally* independent of second order signs. The independence of narrative can only be independence of any particular set of second-order signs, it is not independence of second-order signs *per se*.

This sort of independence in which a narrative is not tied to one particular medium means the same narrative can be articulated in words, sign language or perhaps the movements of a dance. This is the same sort of independence that I discussed earlier in relation to a narrow sense of language which embraced only words. Chatman shows how the notion of language can be broadened to include other conventions such as those used in mime or films. Thus, a narrative can indeed be independent of words *per se* but not totally independent of the broader range of conventions used to convey ideas and information in a narrative form.

Broadening the notion of language

It follows from this that we need a system of conventions to take the very first steps from the bewildering array of experiential memories towards a coherent sense of self. Our ordinary spoken language does this very well, but so do Sign and, according to Chatman, other conventions. This is why I think we need to consider more than just words when estimating linguistic capacity.

There are limitations on the sort of conventions that fall under this broader notion of language. They must be the sort of conventions that can do the job in hand. They must enable us to delineate and select events and existents, and to portray connections within our selections such that sequential order and significance can be established.

⁴⁰ Kerby, 1988, p 239.

It seems, then, that the initial two apparently opposing claims may be reconciled. The Kerby-Barthes account would be unreasonable if we took it to be saying that the meaning of a narrative was a product of the particular set of words used. I have given several examples to show that this is not the case. Meaning must then be a product of language in a more general sense and once we have generalised to different phraseologies and different languages it seems logical to consider other means of relating stories.

Chatman argues for the independence of narrative from its medium. If we take this to mean that some sort of narrative structure can exist in the total absence of a medium, we find that no structure or organization is possible. What Chatman is most charitably understood to be saying, however, is that we are not tied to a particular medium. Then from his discussion of widely different media we can conceive of a far broader notion of language in which words have no privileged position when it comes to narration.

Thus, the first claim, that the meaning of a narrative is produced by language, is reasonable since language is necessary for the very creation of the narrative structure. The second claim, that narrative is independent of its medium, is also reasonable because the same story may be told using quite different sorts of conventions. I hope that my discussion of these two claims has highlighted the necessary connection between narrative and language, and justified a broad notion of language which embraces more than words.

Linguistic capacity

If we can only make sense of our experiences through narrative expression then the capacity required to grasp a narrative must at least be the ability to perform this activity on the raw data of our own experiences. If we can do this successfully then we have created a narrative. In making sense of our lives we create, or recreate in the case of remembering, at least Chatman's "text organization".⁴¹ In grasping implications and significance we are exercising a linguistic capacity for narrative expression and this is essential to a sense of being a continuing subject of experience.

Conventions are not the sort of thing which can be private to one individual, they entail agreement and agreement implies mutual understanding between

⁴¹ Kerby seems to be saying something similar when he states, "we must view language, at least where the self is concerned, as a development of experience rather than a mirroring of it." (Kerby, 1986, p 220.)

several parties. Thus, there is inevitably a public aspect of self-narration, it must be publicly clear that there is a story that could be told *by the subject*. Kerby refers to this as "a 'prenarrative quality of experience', a story that we are in before anyone tells it".⁴²

An objection to the view of the self as a narrative construct is that "at the level of everyday reality our narratives . . . have little of the consistency or coherence of full blown autobiographies".⁴³ Neisser, however, points out that although most adults may develop a standard self-narrative, there are wide individual and cultural differences depending on how much concern there is with the past.⁴⁴ So what is public is not something like an autobiography, but many of the selections and connections are obvious through the things that we do, things which are only intelligible in the light of our inner story. The sense-giving has begun already if we are managing to interact in society, if we can relate to others, and if we can undertake and carry out at least some simple personal projects. This is the linguistic capacity necessary for a sense of self. A full story need not be explicitly expressed but we must be able to contemplate the possibility of a self-narrative in order to have a fully developed sense of self.

Finally, this sort of capacity develops over time as conventions are learnt and so it will be present in varying degrees. The range of projects and relationships is greater in the average adult compared with most young children. The interaction between adults is generally more complex than the interaction between young children. Bearing this in mind, I claim that if this linguistic capacity is permanently absent in an entity then that entity is not a person.

I have argued that experiential memory is essential to our sense of self but that we need something like narrative expression to make sense of our memories. I have also argued that some language-like conventions are necessary for narrative expression to be possible. Narrative expression as I have outlined it, seems to be the only way to make sense of our memories. Therefore, I conclude that some linguistic capacity is also necessary for having a sense of self.

⁴² Kerby, 1988, p 236.

⁴³ Kerby, 1986, p 213.

⁴⁴ Neisser, 1988, p 49.

CHAPTER 4

I will now review some specific cases in which either experiential memory or linguistic ability has been affected. In some cases the patients themselves can testify, either because they are not totally incapacitated or because they have recovered. These testimonies may be supplemented by the reports of therapists. In other cases, however, all we have is the report of a therapist or someone closely associated with the patient.¹

MEMORY

Two categories of memory defects which can affect experiential or autobiographical memory are *retrograde amnesia* - the difficulty of recalling events preceding the onset of the amnesic period; and *anterograde amnesia* - the difficulty of retaining events that occur after the onset of amnesia.

Korsakoff's Syndrome

Korsakoff's syndrome has an acute initial stage in which the sufferer is very confused and often confabulates. This can be followed by a chronic stage in which the sufferer appears to lack initiative, seems unmotivated and shows little emotion. Characteristic symptoms involving memory are retrograde amnesia for some years preceding the illness and severe anterograde amnesia following onset. The inability to learn new material and form fresh memories is very evident in most cases. Gardner reports:

. . . nonlinguistic materials are unquestionably easier for Korsakoff or Korsakoff-like patients to learn and retain than are materials formulated in language.

In all the cases we have described . . . patients have displayed particular difficulty in recalling verbal materials . . . Clearly, the same patients can comprehend and understand ordinary spoken language in a relatively

¹ Where possible I use direct quotations from subjects, close associates, or authorities. I will not critically evaluate these reports, I want to see what we might learn if we take them at face value. That does not mean that I think these reports are above criticism, the therapists' evaluations are made in the light of their own concepts of personhood.

In some of these reports the writers use the terms, "human", "humanity" or "human being" where I feel the reference is to persons or personhood rather than having anything to do with species membership. Where these terms occur in this chapter I am assuming they refer to persons.

normal way, even though they exhibit less spontaneity in initiating conversations and tend to favor brief, often vague responses.²

. . . It seems to me that if the Korsakoff patient were tested in the ways that we test animals - nonverbally, exclusively by tapping motor behavior - he would seem entirely normal The reason that the Korsakoff seems so woefully disturbed is because we are comparing him with other human beings who are primarily "linguistic" (rather than "motor") creatures, and who have preserved and developed a sense of history, that is, of a coherent past.³

LANGUAGE

I have used a very broad notion of language in my previous discussion and it might seem difficult to imagine that we could learn much from any individual so impaired as to lack the minimum capacity required. I think there are, however, cases which can be instructive. Those who develop normally and who have an excellent command of the spoken and written word may rely on that language almost completely for a sense of self. If they lose their linguistic capacity they may not have sufficient alternatives to fully maintain that sense. By close observation we may be able to make a reasonable estimate of the degree to which it is diminished, if indeed it is, and thus to estimate the importance of linguistic ability to the sense of self. Some are never exposed to or included in the type of social interaction which is necessary for the development of linguistic ability. Those born profoundly deaf can suffer in this way and have often been presumed to be imbeciles.

Aphasia

There are various types of aphasia or linguistic impairment. Some of them only involve one aspect; there are various disorders of spoken language, others of written language and there are reading difficulties. Clearly, some of these would in no way damage the linguistic capacity to the extent that a sense of self is lost. Global aphasia, however, involving several of these aspects leaves an individual with no ability to express or comprehend the language in which there was previous fluency.

² Gardner, 1975, p 200-1.

³ Gardner, 1975, p 206.

Deafness

Prelingual, profound deafness is not caused by brain injury or disease but I think it is appropriate to mention it here because sufferers may be severely incapacitated linguistically. In this area Oliver Sacks has again asked the important question, "What is it like for the subject?" In many cases we can be sure that there are no other deficits, for the subjects may acquire language later and show normal intellectual and social skills. Often, however, especially when isolated, the deaf have been taken to be imbeciles, individuals incapable of functioning as normal persons.

. . . to be defective in language, for a human being, is one of the most desperate of calamities, for it is only through language that we enter fully into our human estate and culture, communicate freely with our fellows, acquire and share information. If we cannot do this, we will be bizarrely disabled and cut off - whatever our desires, or endeavors or native capacities. And indeed, we may be so little able to realize our intellectual capacities as to appear mentally defective.⁴

Around 1800 the Abbé Roch-Ambroise Sicard was seriously concerned about the plight of the uneducated deaf. He asked why someone who had, apart from hearing, the same sense impressions as others, could not acquire ideas. He concluded that it was because the deaf person had no symbols for fixing and combining ideas.⁵ This is a condition akin to aphasia but there is a difference:

One might say that language has already done its work here (if it has work to do in the formation of mind and character). If one is to explore the fundamental role of language, one needs to study not its loss after being developed, but its failure to develop.⁶

JIMMIE G.

Jimmie G. suffers from Korsakov's syndrome. The plight of this cheerful and apparently healthy forty-nine-year-old man is described by Oliver Sacks.⁷ In 1975 Jimmie thought that the year was 1945 and that he was only nineteen years old. In 1945 he had been in the navy. He still had vivid memories of a full and interesting life up to this date but, apart from rare fragments, there his memories

⁴ Sacks, 1989, p 8-9.

⁵ Sacks, 1989, p 14-5.

⁶ Sacks, 1989, p 38. My purpose, of course, is not to explore the fundamental role but to show that there is a fundamental role, and cases of language loss are relevant to this.

⁷ Sacks, 1985, p 22-41.

appeared to end. He had continued to serve in the navy until 1965 and was perfectly competent at that time. His condition deteriorated rapidly in 1970 to the extent where he had to be hospitalised. Besides suffering from retrograde amnesia Jimmie has severe anterograde amnesia with recent memory traces persisting for only a minute or so.

Sacks held a normal sort of conversation with Jimmie but after a two minute absence from the room Jimmie remembered none of this and failed to recognize Sacks. Jimmie did not seem to know where he was nor why he was there, he asks:

I see these beds, and these patients everywhere. Looks like a sort of hospital to me. . . . Maybe I *work* here . . . Do I work? What's my job? . . . No, you're shaking your head, I see in your eyes I don't work here, I've been *put* here. Am I a patient, am I sick and don't know it, Doc? It's crazy it's scary . . . Is it some sort of joke?⁸

On intelligence testing [Jimmie] showed excellent ability. He was quick witted, observant, and logical, and had no difficulty solving complex problems and puzzles - no difficulty, that is, if they could be done quickly. If much time was required, he forgot what he was doing.⁹

Jimmie's scientific knowledge was that of a bright high school graduate from the mid 1940's. He was completely baffled by information concerning the transuranic elements, by photographs of the earth taken from the moon and by a picture of a modern aircraft carrier. The stress caused by these things and the terror caused when he saw the face of an older man in the mirror soon disappeared, however, as memory traces vanished so quickly.

With time, Jimmie developed a "sense of familiarity" with the layout of the hospital and Sacks reports:

. . . in some sense [he] recognized some of the staff, although he confused them, and perhaps had to do so, with people from the past . . . Since he's been at our Home - that is, since early 1975 [written in 1984] - Jimmie has never been able to identify anyone in it consistently. The only person he truly recognizes is his brother . . . but he cannot understand why he looks so old. These are true meetings, Jimmie's only connection of past and present, yet they do nothing to provide any sense of history or continuity.¹⁰

Keeping a diary was unhelpful as therapy, for Jimmie did not recognize the entries, writing or style, as his own.

⁸ Sacks, 1985. p 24-5.

⁹ Sacks, 1985, p 25.

¹⁰ Sacks, 1985, p 33.

. . . [he was] always astounded to find that he wrote something the day before . . . and indifferent - for he was a man who, in effect, had no 'day before'. His entries remained unconnected and unconnecting and had no power to provide any sense of time or continuity.¹¹

Jimmie gave others a sense of "something missing" and Sacks wonders if he is "a mere succession of unrelated impressions and events".

Jimmie both was and wasn't aware of this deep, tragic loss in himself, loss of himself. (If a man . . . has lost a self - himself - he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it.)¹²

When asked how he felt, Jimmie said that he didn't feel anything at all; not miserable, not happy, not even alive, "I haven't felt alive for a very long time."¹³ There were, however, times when Jimmie seemed to Sacks to have a continuity and unity, this was when he participated in the communion service.

. . . he was no longer at the mercy of a faulty and fallible mechanism - that of meaningless sequences and memory traces - but was absorbed in an act . . . of his whole being . . .¹⁴

Music and drama also absorbed his attention, he enjoyed gardening, perhaps re-creating remembered gardens of his youth, and short term mental challenges gave glimpses of "something that endured and survived". Sacks seems to be suggesting that this is the soul, that is, something which "constitutes and determines personal being".¹⁵

WILLIAM THOMPSON

Mr Thompson suffered from Korsakoff's syndrome but unlike Jimmie, he was in a much earlier phase. Three weeks earlier he suffered a high fever, ceased to recognize his family and was in a confabulatory delirium when Sacks first saw him. Mr Thompson thought Sacks was a customer - an old friend - a kosher butcher - a mechanic - a doctor - a customer again - all in the one short conversation.

So it would happen, with variations every time - with improvisations, always prompt, often funny, sometimes brilliant, and ultimately tragic. Mr Thompson would identify me - misidentify, pseudo-identify me - as a dozen different people in the course of five minutes. He would whirl,

¹¹ Sacks, 1985, p 34.

¹² Sacks, 1985, p 34.

¹³ Sacks, 1985, p 34-5.

¹⁴ Sacks, 1985, p 34.

¹⁵ Sacks, 1985, p 37.

fluently, from one guess, one hypothesis, one belief, to the next, without any appearance of uncertainty at any point - he never knew who I was, or what and where *he* was, an ex-grocer, with severe Korsakov's, in a neurological institution.

He remembered nothing for more than a few seconds. He was continually disoriented. Abysses of amnesia continually opened beneath him, but he would bridge them, nimbly, by fluent confabulations and fictions of all kinds. For him they were not fictions, but how he suddenly saw, or interpreted, the world. Its radical flux and incoherence could not to be tolerated, acknowledged, for an instant - there was, instead, this strange, delirious, quasi-coherence, as Mr Thompson . . . continually improvised a world around him. . . . So far as *he* was concerned, there was nothing the matter. . . .

. . . [he was] continually creating a world and self, to replace what was continually being forgotten and lost . . . for such a patient *must literally make himself (and his world) up every moment*.¹⁶

In his interpretation of the plight of this patient, Sacks takes a strongly narrative view of the self. "A man *needs* such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self".¹⁷ Knowing something about the disease, he asks what Mr Thompson's experience must be like; does he sense the "abysses of amnesia"; does he know he must bridge them; when his confabulations don't correspond with reality, does he feel this; what *is* his "feeling of reality"; does he feel as if he has lost something?

It is certain that he is not at ease - there is a tense, taut look on his face all the while, as of a man under ceaseless inner pressure; and occasionally, not too often, or masked if present, a look of open, naked, pathetic bewilderment. What saves Mr Thompson in a sense, and in another sense damns him, *is* the forced or defensive superficiality of his life: the way in which it is, in effect, reduced to a surface, brilliant, shimmering, iridescent, ever-changing, but for all that a surface, a mass of illusions, a delirium, without depth. . . .

[It] strikes everyone who has been in contact with him for any time - that under his fluency, even his frenzy, is a strange loss of feeling - that feeling, or judgment, which distinguishes between 'real' and 'unreal', 'true' and 'untrue' . . . , important and trivial, relevant or irrelevant.¹⁸

Sacks asked the Sisters at the Home whether they thought Mr Thompson had a soul. They confirmed Sacks' feeling that, unlike Jimmie G., Mr Thompson had a total loss of "inner reality", "something very disquieting had happened to him, to his spirit, his character, in the ordinary, human sense"; with Mr

¹⁶ Sacks, 1985, p 104-5.

¹⁷ Sacks, 1985, p 106.

¹⁸ Sacks, 1985, p 107.

Thompson, unlike Jimmie G., "one never feels, or rarely feels, that there is *a person remaining*".¹⁹

H. M.

In 1953, at the age of 27, H.M. had an operation to treat severe epilepsy. This young man was completely incapacitated by his disease which could not be controlled by drugs. The operation involved bilateral removal of the hippocampus and its related structures.²⁰

His personality was unchanged after surgery, and his IQ actually rose from 104 to 119, presumably because of the reduction in the frequency of seizures. He displayed normal memory for the events of his early life, except for a vague period of retrograde amnesia covering one or two years just prior to the operation. Long-standing skills such as reading, writing, and certain facets of his trade were retained without difficulty. But the operation's unanticipated and awful consequence was that H.M., like a severely afflicted Korsakoff patient, was completely amnesic for events which occurred subsequent to it and was totally unable to learn new materials.

Except for Dr. Scoville, whom he had known for many years prior to surgery, he was completely unable to recognize members of the hospital staff; he did not recall and could not learn the way to the bathroom; he did not remember the death of a favorite uncle, although he was reminded of it constantly, and became genuinely upset at each telling.

. . . He could not remember his new address, even after six years of residence; he could not master the names of his neighbors, or even recognize them on the street He would solve the same jigsaw puzzles day in and day out without exhibiting any improvement in performance, and would read the same newspapers over again. He could not even be left alone in the house, for he tended to invite in strangers, thinking they must be friends of the family whom he had failed to recognize.

This last activity indicates that H.M. was aware at least superficially of his memory deficit. He was even known to say explicitly, "I have trouble with my memory." He also did manage to acquire at least a few items of information subsequent to his operation, such as the layout of rooms in the house, the name of John Kennedy, a picture of The Beatles. Essentially, however, H.M. has remained a man who lives completely in the present, from moment to moment; much of his conversation is vague, qualified, almost embarrassed; only the early years of his life retain any coherence in his mind.²¹

¹⁹ Sacks, 1985, p 108-10.

²⁰ This radical operation was initially contemplated because such an operation had been performed in animals with no noticeable effect. (Gardner, 1975, p 195.)

²¹ Gardner, 1975, p 196-7.

H.M. was able to learn some procedures involving motor skills provided the procedure did not take too long. After 215 trials he failed to show any progress learning one maze but learnt a simpler one in 155 trials.²² He learnt mirror tracing, and mastered the Tower of Hanoi which he solves in the optimal number of steps although he does not recall even having encountered the puzzle before. He is not aware that he has learnt the skill, that he has the knowledge, that he is using his knowledge on the task at hand, not aware, that is, in any sense that he can report.²³ And how does he feel?

Right now, I'm wondering. Have I done or said anything amiss? You see, at this moment everything looks clear to me, but what happened just before? That's what worries me. It's like waking from a dream; I just don't remember.²⁴

PATIENT KOCH.

This patient suffered from a series of brain hemorrhages and his condition after neurosurgery is described by Luria.

The postoperative course was smooth, and quite soon the patient was able to walk about the clinic unaided. No significant changes in his behavior occurred throughout the period of investigation.

. . . He was a man with no physical abnormality, who greeted us warmly, obligingly offered a chair, and was perfectly prepared to talk. He easily gave his surname, his place of work, described what he usually had to do in the course of his work, and indicated the criteria by which the quality of his work could be estimated. He had no difficulty in describing his family, the occupations of his two children and the usual conditions of their family life at home. He had a good memory of the period during the war in which he served.²⁵

Luria goes on to outline the patient's intact previous knowledge. Logical operations, mathematics, the interpretation of proverbs and pictures, and complex linguistic tasks presented no difficulty. There was "an impression of complete integrity of the patient's higher levels of gnosis and praxis, speech and intellectual activity."²⁶

²² Gardner, 1975, p 197.

²³ Churchland, 1986, p 370-1.

²⁴ Milner, cited in Churchland, 1986, p 370, cites Milner, Brenda (1966) "Amnesia following operation on the temporal lobes". In *Amnesia*, ed. C. W. M. Whitty and O. Zangwill. London: Butterworth.

²⁵ Luria, 1976, p 257-258.

²⁶ Luria, 1976, p 258.

This impression of the considerable psychological integrity vanished completely as soon as tests were carried out to study the patient's memory and his orientation in his surroundings, in place and time, and in his own state.

. . . A profound disturbance of consciousness was discovered. A normal subject . . . automatically recalls traces of his direct experience and at once assesses his place, the time, and his own state. This patient was forced to pick out from situations in which he found himself some particular cue and to interpret its importance, and thus eventually to reach logical conclusions regarding the whole circumstances of the situation. Naturally this led to marked defects in the evaluation of the surrounding situation and of his own state or, in other words, to a profound disturbance of consciousness. These defects were even more conspicuous in the evaluation of time, or recall of the immediate past.²⁷

The patient sounded unsure of himself on these matters and his estimations were often far from the mark. He seemed vaguely aware of this.

Naturally, under these conditions the patient's assessment of his own state was very poor. He was unable to answer exactly whether he was fit or not, and instead simply guessed. If he interpreted the surrounding situation as a hospital, he would conclude that he was ill - he then had to form an hypothesis about the part of him that was affected. If certain features of the situation suggested to him that he was in an educational establishment, he would postulate that he had come there to study, that he was taking part in a refresher course, and no idea of illness entered his head.²⁸

This patient's confusion and disorientation were also evident in his behaviour and Luria points out how this whole picture "reveals the intimate connection between the states of consciousness and the disturbance of memory."²⁹

PATIENT KUR.

This thirty-year-old electrician had a brain hemorrhage caused by a ruptured aneurism. One year after being operated on, the patient showed only mild neurological changes but had a very severe memory disturbances.

This assumed the form of a massive Korsakov's syndrome in a patient remarkable for the integrity of his gnosis, praxis, and speech, and also of his consciousness, his orientation in place and time, and his awareness of his own state.

²⁷ Luria, 1976, p 258.

²⁸ Luria, 1976, p 260.

²⁹ Luria, 1976, p 260. I take it that here "states of consciousness" are states of self-consciousness, of place, time and personal state. That is, the sort of states which are normally experienced but which this patient must try to deduce.

. . . It was easy to communicate and converse with the patient. He knew quite confidently that he was in the Burdenko Institute. He had a very good memory of his distant past. He knew the nature of his work and the surname of his manager, his senior assistants, his team mates, and his shift foreman. He remembered his previous pass number. In all these areas, he displayed a very clear and precise memory.

Nevertheless, he could not tell the address of the apartment to which he had recently moved shortly before his illness began. "I moved house but I can't remember the new address. I used to live at Novodachnaya Station, but then - I find it difficult to recall the name of the place where I now live, I do not know the address. . . . I do not know what happened to me or from where I was admitted to hospital."

The patient's memory for current events was more seriously affected. "I have no memory of the present," he said, "I cannot retain anything and cannot deny anything. . . . I do not know what I have just done or from where I have just come, . . . I can recall my past very well, but I have no memory of my present. . . ." When asked whether he had ever seen the person testing him, he said: "I cannot say yes or no, I can neither affirm nor deny that I have seen you. . . ." The patient gave the same answer when asked how long he had been in the hospital and what he had done that morning; he had difficulty in saying even what time of year it was. Since he had no direct sense of time, into which mnemonic coordinates are always interwoven, in reply to any such question the patient would always begin to make a detailed analysis of the situation, attempting to discover its minutest features and to draw the necessary conclusions from them. For instance, when asked "What time of year is it?" - he looked carefully through the window and began to argue; "Well, there is snow on the rooftops . . . not much of it . . . certainly winter or fall . . . still a few yellow leaves on the trees . . . if it were winter they would all have blown away . . . it must be late fall."³⁰

The immediate past did, however, leave some indistinct traces, but the patient could not recall them voluntarily, or relate them to any definite time. On the day after he had taken part in a demonstration to students, he vaguely remembered being taken somewhere and students being there, but said he didn't know when or where this had happened. After some time he had a limited "sense of familiarity" with the clinic and some of the doctors but his vague reminiscences had no time frame.

This case is distinctive because:

. . . the disturbances of memory were associated with complete preservation of consciousness, they were unaccompanied by [irrelevant associations] or confabulations, the mobility of the primary processes remained completely normal and there was no evidence of pathological inertia.

. . . The patient was quite unable to extract what he thought from his memory, but at the same time he could activate, by way of reminiscence,

³⁰ Luria, 1976. p 288-9.

impressions received two or three days previously in the course of an earlier test.

. . . These primary memory disturbances were reflected neither in the patient's logical thinking nor in his intellectual behavior.³¹

CLAPARÈDE'S PATIENT

Claparède wished to test the hypothesis that affect aroused by pain would establish more lasting memories in a Korsakoff patient.

He hid a pin between his fingers and, while shaking hands with a woman patient, jabbed hers. Within a few minutes the patient was unable to recall the incident, yet she refused to shake hands with him again, and pulled hers back as he approached her. In an attempt to explain her conduct, the patient admitted her fear lest she be pricked with a pin, though ostensibly unaware of the fact that precisely that had happened to her earlier. All she would admit in justification of her suspicion was that the thought had crossed her mind, for people do sometimes hide pins in their hands. Claparède discussed this incident and other instances of memory failure in this amnesic patient, as illustrating a fundamental derangement in establishing links between impressions and the self.³²

Talland discusses this case in relation to a person's notion of self. There seems to be a failure in the subject to associate personal experiences with herself, there is a disturbance in the "feeling of me-ness."³³

C. SCOTT MOSS

C. Scott Moss, a clinical psychologist, had a stroke at the age of forty-three. Initially he was paralysed on his right side but total aphasia was a more severe and persistent symptom. He could not communicate except in gestures or neologisms. He could not read and his understanding of others was limited. As soon as he was able Moss began to dictate an account of his subjective experiences and his wife has also recorded her perceptions of his illness. Moss writes:

I knew the language I used was not correct but I was quite unable to select the appropriate words. I recollect trying to read the headlines of the *Chicago Tribune* but they didn't make any sense to me at all. I didn't have any difficulty focusing; it was simply that the words, individually or

³¹ Luria, 1976, p 296-7.

³² Talland, 1965, p 73.

³³ Talland, 1965, p 296-7.

in combination, didn't have meaning, and even more amazing, I was only a trifle bothered by that fact.³⁴

Moss also describes his emotional state as he remembered it.

As I look back on it now , I had relatively little concern for the children, my wife, or the home - I was too far out of it to care. I had come so very close to death that I more or less welcomed it. It was indeed, as I experienced it, a very painless way to go. In fact, for a long time afterward I was confident that I was living on borrowed time, and I expected it to expire at any moment. It was as if the stroke had benumbed any emotional investment in the future and I simply shrugged at my perception of my imminent demise.³⁵

Moss slowly recovered some limited speech and although he was barely able to converse he made some token visits to his office. He did not find what was still a great linguistic disability, frustrating, and later wondered why.

I think part of the explanation was relatively simple. If I had lost the ability to converse with others, I had also lost the ability even to engage in self-talk. In other words, I did not have the ability to think about the future - to worry, to anticipate or to perceive it - at least not with words. Thus, for the first five or six weeks after hospitalization I simply existed. So the fact that I could not use words even internally was, in fact, a safeguard. . . . It was as if without words I could not be concerned about tomorrow.³⁶

It is difficult to explain what it was like to be entirely without internal verbalizations. I bathed, shaved, and selected my clothes with appropriateness, for instance, on the few occasions when I got dressed, but without words to express what I was doing, even to myself. It was as though I could perform the automatic habits that I had learned through a lifetime, but would be lost once the demands were made for increasing abstractness.³⁷

When Moss first found himself anticipating something he felt his inner speech was returning. With time normal anxiety over his immediate performance also returned. After his stroke he seemingly did not dream for four months:

. . . my stroke apparently impaired either the ability to have dreams or my capacity to remember them. . . . It was as if during the daytime I had no words to express what was happening and at night I had no dreams - it was a complete and total vacuum of self-speech for me.³⁸

Despite this vacuum he did, however, have waking memories of this period.

³⁴ Moss, 1972, p 4.

³⁵ Moss, 1972, p 4.

³⁶ Moss, 1972, p 5.

³⁷ Moss, 1972, p 6.

³⁸ Moss, 1972, p 9.

Dealing with abstractions was another difficulty and with the lack of expectation and paucity of memories there was a sense of being fixed in the "here and now":

So both the past and the future had faded for me, and I existed almost exclusively in the present. . . . I was unable to keep in mind a verbal outline of what I had to say. This in broader perspective is what happened to me generally. I was unable to generate a gestalt of either my previous life or of the future, and therefore life beyond the immediate situation was meaningless. This restriction held not only for my work but for all personal life as well.³⁹

Moss is sceptical that this condition is a variation of amnesia and feels that it is more like "cultural shock", a reaction to a world that he can no longer make sense of nor understand.⁴⁰

Moss's wife, Bette, describes his early days at home after his stroke:

. . . He wasn't interested in anything. . . . He ate and slept at our house but without much interaction. . . . He really didn't care much about anything. He didn't think about it, as I know now, so how could he be worried about it. . . . He had no memory for past events. He knew vaguely that we had been to California, but he didn't remember people, even people that we really knew well. Perhaps he could picture them in his mind when I introduced the names, but he sure couldn't remember anybody's name . . . His whole past seemed to have been wiped out. He was in some ways, a cabbage, but not really.⁴¹

JOSEPH

Joseph, an eleven-year-old, had been born deaf; he had no language whatever; he was diagnosed as retarded and then autistic but even when his deafness was recognized he was assumed to be stupid and no attempt was made to teach him any language. At eleven he had only gesture and pantomime, and a marked ability to draw, "he looked alive and animated, but profoundly baffled." When he began to learn Sign it obviously gave him great joy and he wanted to stay at school all the time.

His distress at leaving school was painful to see, for going home meant, for him, return to the silence, return to a hopeless communicational vacuum, where he could have no converse, no commerce, with his

³⁹ Moss, 1972, p 10.

⁴⁰ Moss, 1972, p 14.

⁴¹ Moss, 1972, p 28.

parents, neighbors, friends; it meant being overlooked, becoming a nonperson, again.⁴²

Sacks considers various inabilities which are consequences of Joseph's deafness:

Joseph was unable, for example, to communicate how he had spent the weekend - one could not really ask him, even in Sign: he could not even grasp the *idea* of a question, much less formulate an answer. It was not only language that was missing: there was not, it was evident, a clear sense of the past, of "a day ago" as distinct from "a year ago." There was a strange lack of historical sense, the feeling of a life that lacked autobiographical and historical dimension, the feeling of a life that only existed in the moment, in the present.

. . . His visual intelligence . . . was good, in radical contrast to his profound difficulties with verbally based problems . . . he "got" cartoons, he "got" visual concepts. It was this that above all gave me the feeling of intelligence . . .

. . . Joseph saw, distinguished, categorized, used; he had no problems with *perceptual* categorization or generalization, but he could not, it seemed, go much beyond this, hold abstract ideas in mind, reflect, play, plan. . . . It is not that he lacked a mind, but that he was not *using his mind fully*.

. . . A human being is not mindless or mentally deficient without language, but he is severely restricted in the range of his thoughts, confined, in effect, to an immediate, small world.⁴³

LYOVA ZASETSKY

Sublieutenant Zasetsky, a bright, twenty-three year old, engineering student, was serving in the Russian army in 1943. On March 2 a bullet penetrated his brain and he has subsequently written:

. . . I tell people I've become a totally different person since my injury, that I was killed March 2, 1943, but because of some vital power of my organism, I miraculously remained alive . . .⁴⁴

A. R. Luria presents Zasetsky's account of his plight and also comments extensively on this patient, whose progress he had observed for twenty-five

⁴² Sacks, 1989, p 38-9. I do not interpret "nonperson" literally here. Joseph is forced by circumstances to relive some of his previous but recent languageless experiences. If he was a nonperson then, he may feel that he is again to some extent.

⁴³ Sacks, 1989, p 40-1.

⁴⁴ Luria, 1972, p 12.

years.⁴⁵ Zasetzky suffered a severe memory loss for both experiences and language; his vision was disturbed to the extent that he saw nothing in his right visual field, there were gaps in his left visual field, and what he did see did not appear stable; his sense of his own body had changed and, with it, his reactions; he lost the ability to orient himself in space; his world was truly shattered.

Zasetzky struggled to regain some language and with great difficulty he spent twenty-five years trying to convey his feelings through writing a journal, an account which he wrote himself but which he could not really read. As Luria puts it:

He worked on this journal day after day for twenty-five years, searching for words with which to express himself, sometimes putting in an entire day to write just half a page. . . . Although he learned to write quickly and automatically, this was a far cry from being able to express his ideas in writing. To do so he needed words and these did not come easily. . . .⁴⁶

It is not a continuous autobiographical account, Zasetzky explains why not:

I've repeated the same points over and over again in my story and may do it again, because I'm always forgetting what I've written and what I still want to say. So often I forget something important, I just overlook it.

I can only write and keep a small amount in mind at a time. I try to strengthen and fasten these ideas so that they'll finally "stick" in my mind.⁴⁷

Despite these difficulties Zasetzky gives a graphic description of what it was like after his injury:

It's depressing, having to start all over and make sense out of a world you've lost because of injury and illness, to get these bits and pieces to add up to a coherent whole.⁴⁸

My head was a complete blank then [right after the operation which followed his injury]. I just slept, woke, but simply couldn't think, concentrate, or remember a thing. My memory - like my life - hardly seemed to exist.

At first I couldn't even recognize myself, or what had happened to me. . . . My head wound seemed to have transformed me into some terrible baby.⁴⁹

Right after I was wounded, I seemed to be some newborn creature that just looked, listened, observed, repeated, but still had no mind of its own. That's what it was like in the beginning. Afterwards, when I'd had a

⁴⁵ Luria, 1972, *The Man with a Shattered World*. Although Luria's name appears on this book, he considers Zasetzky to be the real author.

⁴⁶ Luria, 1972, p 76.

⁴⁷ Luria, 1972, p 80.

⁴⁸ Luria, 1972, p xxi.

⁴⁹ Luria, 1972, p 9.

chance to hear words that people use again and again in conversation or thinking, various clusters of "memory fragments" developed, and from these I began to make some sense out of the life around me and remember what words meant. . . . Because of my injury I'd forgotten everything I'd ever learned or knew . . . everything . . . and had to start from scratch to develop again . . .⁵⁰

Because of that head wound I'd become an abnormal person - except that I wasn't insane. . . . My memory's a blank. I can't think of a single word. All that flashes through my mind are some images, hazy visions that suddenly appear and just as suddenly disappear, giving way to fresh images. But I simply can't understand or remember what these mean.

Whatever I do remember is scattered, broken down into disconnected bits and pieces. That's why I react so abnormally to every word and idea, every attempt to understand the meaning of words.⁵¹

. . . I wonder: Is this really me?⁵²

Still, I want to think I can prove to people I'm not a goner, not a hopeless case, that all I need is to learn to remember and speak again, to be able to use the kind of mind I had before I was wounded.⁵³

Luria did not just give Zasetzky professional treatment, he became his friend and admirer. His account of Zasetzky's progress helps to further our understanding of the man and to explain why Zasetzky's journal was of paramount importance.

As our friendship developed I had a chance to witness his long, relentless fight to recover the use of his damaged brain - to live, not merely exist.⁵⁴

. . . he would have to collect those fragmentary recollections, provide some sense of continuity, and - what was most difficult - write sentences that add up to a logical account of things.⁵⁵

Why bother with this difficult, exhausting work? Was it necessary? In the end he decided it was, for he was not fit for anything else (he could not help around the house, got lost when he went for walks, and often failed to understand what he read or heard on the radio). All such things were beyond him. Yet he could try gradually to assemble the bits and pieces of his past, compare and arrange them into episodes, create a coherent view of what his experiences and desires were. This was still possible. Hence, writing his journal, the story of his life, gave him some reason to live. It was essential in that it was his only link with life, his one hope of recovering and becoming the man he had once been. Perhaps if he developed his ability to think, he could still be useful, make something of his life. Reviving the past was thus a way of trying to

⁵⁰ Luria, 1972, p 10.

⁵¹ Luria, 1972, p 11-12.

⁵² Luria, 1972, p 13.

⁵³ Luria, 1972, p 35.

⁵⁴ Luria, 1972, p 17.

ensure a future. That is why he undertook this exhausting labour, spending hours, days, years searching for lost memories.⁵⁶

Zasetsky himself was in no doubt about the importance of his journal.

This writing is my only way of thinking. If I shut these notebooks, give it up, I'll be right back in the desert, in that "know-nothing" world of emptiness and amnesia. . . .

Another reason for this story was that I wanted to develop and expand my memory, to break through this aphasia. And writing this "Story About My Illness" really has done more than anything to help me develop my memory and use of language . . .⁵⁷

A more technical description of the awful damage contrasts with Luria's positive view of Zasetsky and the task which still occupied him at the time that Luria's book was published.

The bullet that penetrated this patient's brain disrupted the functions of precisely those parts of the cortex that control the analysis, synthesis, and organization of complex associations into a coherent framework . . .⁵⁸

His comprehension definitely reflected a mind restricted to undeciphered images.⁵⁹

. . . though he was unable to grasp the point of a simple conversation, or of many grammatical constructions, he left us an amazingly precise description of his life. It required uperhuman effort for him to write one page of this journal, yet he wrote thousands. Despite his inability to cope with elementary problems, he was able to present a vivid account of his past. Furthermore, he still had a powerful imagination, a marked capacity for fantasy and empathy.⁶⁰

I have chosen these nine individuals because I think they can each contribute to our understanding of how personhood may be threatened. The type of memory deficit associated with Korsakoff's syndrome seems to be fairly common and the six cases here cover a number of points. There are many accounts of aphasia but most involve only a partial loss of linguistic capacity and often the questions pertinent to a sense of self are not addressed. Moss thought so deeply about his own plight that he covered many relevant points. Sacks, because of his sympathetic interest in how life feels to his patients, also touches on

⁵⁵ Luria, 1972, p 78.

⁵⁶ Luria, 1972, p 83-84.

⁵⁷ Luria, 1972, p 86.

⁵⁸ Luria, 1972, p 113.

⁵⁹ Luria, 1972, p 118.

⁶⁰ Luria, 1972, p 155.

relevant points in his description of Joseph. I included Zasetzky, not because of his memory deficit and not because of his linguistic deficit, but because he seems to show, through his remarkable account, his *personal* survival against terrible odds.

CHAPTER 5

The philosophical points I have made can, I think, help us to understand how the status of personhood might be changed through brain damage. These points can also help to explain why some cases give rise to perplexity. In addition, the material in Chapter Four can make a useful contribution to the philosophical analysis.

MEMORY - WHAT IS LOST OR ABSENT

Relationships and projects

Memory seems to be necessary for a sense of continuity, that is, for a sense of having existed before the present, *and* the feeling that life will go on, for continuity is more than merely having a past. Experiential memory is the particular sort of memory which is crucial but in Korsakoff's patients, and those with Korsakoff-like symptoms, the capacity to remember new experiences is almost entirely lost. There is a sense of continuity over a very short time span as memories can last for one, two or maybe even twenty minutes, and this makes some superficial, interaction possible. Long-term, deeper relationships are not possible, however; keeping promises or appointments is out of the question for a patient will not remember such obligations; nor can the patient undertake any personal projects, not even the simple tasks associated with everyday living.

Coherence

Anterograde amnesia destroys the material needed to make sense of our present. Experiential memories are the bedrock of our histories and, as Kerby puts it, ". . . to be human is not simply to have a history . . . but to be cognizant of this history".¹ In addition, Neisser points out that the ". . . more or less standard life-narrative that effectively defines the self in terms of a particular series of remembered experiences . . . [is] continually being extended".²

Now we can see what happens in Korsakoff's syndrome. While the patient is a continuing subject of experience with a history, he is not cognizant of this history; nor is he in a position to extend his self-narrative for he does not have the requisite material. That material does not need to be detailed, comprehensive, or highly accurate - even rather sloppy memories make permanent interpersonal

¹ Kerby, 1988, p 235.

² Neisser, 1988, p 49.

relationships possible and thus strengthen the coherence of human groups³ - but, for these patients, there is effectively nothing. Consequently, in the social situation, the patient will not have a self-narrative which adequately coheres with those of others.

On an individual level he may fare no better for his self-narrative should make sense of his present situation; but this involves understanding where he is, why he is there, and what projects he is involved in at the moment. This sort of understanding is absent. Jimmie G. tentatively guesses where he is; Mr Thompson confabulates wildly; H.M. feels as if he is waking from a dream. Even the "vaguely remembered" experience of patient Kur. does not contribute to any sense of self for it is not connected with other experiences in a coherent account to give a sense of either continuity or unity.

Significance and meaning

This lack of connection, and lack of memories to be connected, also means that there will be no significant events for the patient. Significance comes from the part an event plays in that inner story which is apparent through the things we do. Although the patient is aware of present experiences, he cannot relate them to previous experiences and so whatever happens to him can play no part in his story. Without the meaningful development of experiential memory through narrative expression, there is no sense that life is going on, no sense of progression from the past to the future, no highs and lows. Jimmie G. reports that he hasn't felt alive for a very long time, and he gives others the impression that something very important is missing. Mr Thompson gives the impression of a man who has lost ". . . that feeling, or judgment, which distinguishes between 'real' and 'unreal', 'true' and 'untrue' . . ., important and trivial, relevant or irrelevant".⁴

Emotional responses

There are restrictions on the patient's emotional life. I have discussed and accepted a view of the narrative nature of emotions; to have a full emotional repertoire an individual must have the capacity to grasp a narrative. In most Korsakoff sufferers the requisite stories have been internalised already. That is, those individuals should be able to experience the emotions appropriate to their culture. Each instance of a complex emotion, however, involves the elements of a

³ Neisser, 1988, p 48.

⁴ Sacks, 1985, p 107.

current mini-narrative. These elements are arranged in a way which echoes the internalised narrative; that is how the emotion is evoked in the individual. Can the Korsakoff sufferer experience emotions?

H.M. was obviously grief-stricken every time he was told of his uncle's death. Most of the elements of this story were already fixed in H.M.'s intact memory, only the last piece was missing and during the short time that H.M. could hold that little extra he clearly experienced the emotion. In other cases, however, much more of the current basis for an emotion may be affected by the anterograde amnesia. What of emotional experience in these cases?

Talland states, ". . . at the moment of an event, amnesic patients relate it [the event] to themselves much as do other men and women."⁵ Thus, many of their responses will appear perfectly normal, as does H.M.'s apparent grief. Where amnesic patients differ noticeably from normal is in their

. . . weirdly detached attitude to events that would normally arouse emotional effects. This may be due to the fact that emotions have to build up over short spans of time and, though their initial reaction may be proper to the occasion, Korsakoff patients fail to sustain and develop it into a full-fledged affective response.⁶

This is in accord with some points made in Chapter Four. Jimmie was sometimes scared but only fleetingly, when asked how he felt he said he didn't feel anything at all. Mr Thompson, despite apparent dis-ease showed no deep feelings. The narrative that Korsakoff sufferers cannot grasp is the narrative which connects with their present, thus their emotional response is severely diminished. But surely H.M.'s short-lived grief is real? I think it is and that brings me to a consideration of preserved memories in these patients.

MEMORY - PRESERVED OR PRESENT

Cognitive and procedural memory

Despite the damage, memories of cognitive and motor skills remain. H.M. retained the skills of his trade; patient Koch., an engineer, could describe his work, do mathematics and interpret proverbs. All the patients with memory defects retained their knowledge of language and most could converse easily so it was obvious that they were intelligent and educated.

⁵ Talland, 1965, p 299.

⁶ Talland, 1965, p 299-300.

Furthermore, the patients can still add to some of these memories. H.M. learned the Tower of Hanoi puzzle and a simple maze, Jimmie G. developed a sense of familiarity with the layout of the hospital. Things like this - or being able to remember the name of John Kennedy, to recognize a picture of the Beatles, the response of Claparède's patient to the pinprick - show that the individual is a continuing subject of experience. With reference to such abilities, Neisser says, ". . . performance gains are based on information stored in the past, but not necessarily information about a past *self* . . . [they] need not be accompanied by any experience of the self that transcends the present".⁷ Thus personhood may be in doubt, for the same sort of things can be said about trained animals. In fact Gardner feels that if the Korsakoff patient were tested in the way that we test animals, he would appear normal.⁸

In Chapter Three I made a distinction between memory for cognitive, motor or rote skills and experiential memory. I pointed out that the former does not contribute crucially to the sense of being a continuing subject of experience. The presence of these memories does not necessarily mean that a subject satisfies the condition of personhood. We could say with some justification, that Claparède's patient remembered the pinprick, and remembered that it was Claparède who was responsible, but she fails to associate these memories - if such they are - with herself. They cannot be classed as experiential memories.

An inner story in suspense - or terminated

The most significant memories which these patients retain, are experiential memories of their lives before the onset of anterograde amnesia. These can form as complete and coherent a self-narrative as the experiential memories of the average adult. The patients can easily report things that they have done, describe their relationships with friends and family members, and recount many events in their lives. That is, they have an inner story and they can verbalise it clearly - a very high level of self-narration is possible.

There is no doubt that Jimmie G. associates his navy experiences with himself, or that patient Kur. feels that he himself once lived at Novodachnaya Station, there is a "feeling of me-ness", as Talland puts it. Patient Koch. offers a warm and polite greeting, introduces himself and gives some details of his family, war service and occupation. How could we fail to believe that here is a full person?

⁷ Neisser, 1988, p 46, 47.

⁸ Gardner, 1975, p 206.

The stark contrast between Korsakoff sufferers and normal persons only becomes evident when the self-narration has to connect with the present. There is a complete disconnection between the content of the inner story and the material being currently generated. This is more than the disconnection we might see in someone suffering from a period of retrograde amnesia. A patient may have no memories of a few months, say, before an accident, and no memory of a few months following it. Then he continues his life with no difficulties relating to people or going about his business. He can say, "I had an accident which caused a gap in my memory but I'm fine now". There is a gap in his memory but no gap in his self-narrative.

This is not the case with Korsakoff sufferers; it is as if their present experiences fall into a void and the gap remains open ended. In fact, it hardly seems like a gap at all for no opposite side is in view. It is as if the self-narrative is finished. This story is all they have to give them a sense of self and so it is almost as if their sense of self is terminated too. Is this what throws Mr Thompson into a frenzy of confabulation, trying to fabricate a connection between his present and the story which expresses his personhood? He has a story but he doesn't feel as if he is in it now.

Patient Kur. presents a different picture for he seems to be aware of his loss. That is, he has a story which includes his past history and explains why, at present, he has no direct sense of time or place. He understands that he has anterograde amnesia and understands its implications. He knows, as does patient Koch. to some extent, that he must look for external clues to solve the mystery of his present state or situation. Like procedural memory, ". . . improvements in the ability to see how we ourselves are physically and socially engaged . . . need not be accompanied by any experience of the self that transcends the present".⁹ These improvements result from our perceptions of the features of our environment and our perceptions of the characteristic species-specific responses of others present. Such perceptions can provide self-specifying information in an immediate and unreflective way.¹⁰ Relying on this sort of direct perception often results in a mistaken assessment or, there may not be enough information for any judgment on the part of the patient as to his present situation. For all his realizations, patient Kur. lacks a sense of self over time.

⁹ Neisser, 1988, p 46-47.

¹⁰ Neisser, 1988, p 37-43.

These patients show the devastating effect of anterograde amnesia. It prevents them from functioning as persons in a crucial way by isolating them from their self-narrative. Their lives lose significance and emotional content. They have no ongoing sense of continuity and no direct coherent explanation of their present state or their likely future. Personal projects and personal relationships are beyond them.

Some capacities which are preserved, however, provide evidence for continuity of experience while others show awareness of a clear self-narrative. I think that it is the tension or contradiction between what is lost and what is preserved that is the source of the puzzles about personhood. The losses indicate that the condition of personhood is not satisfied but as we converse with a living, reminiscing human being we cannot accept this conclusion. It seems that the person is finished and yet is there before us; not dead, not in a permanent vegetative state, but greeting us warmly, offering us a chair, and telling us all about himself.

What can we learn from this analysis? Firstly, I think we can see how the amnesic differs from the average person who lives at the latest point of a continuing narrative which foreshadows the future and who is assuredly *in* his self-narrative now. The amnesic's self narrative is finished, it does not include his present and therefore it foreshadows no future. Secondly, I think that with deeper understanding we can work out ways to make life easier for amnesics as it was for Jimmie G. when he was gardening. Eventually, however, he will see an old man's hands when he looks at his own, a frightening situation for a nineteen year old.

Is Jimmie a fragment of a person, a person to some degree? What has survived the ending of his inner story? Sacks makes a distinction between Jimmie and Mr Thompson in this matter, saying that Jimmie gives the impression of something remaining but Mr Thompson does not. While the condition of personhood is apparently not now satisfied in amnesics, it has been in the past and some of that past is still accessible to them. Furthermore they believe that they are persons, they often behave like persons, they have a good linguistic capacity and they do have ephemeral experiential memories.

LANGUAGE

Loss of linguistic capacity

Scott Moss gives a clear account of his aphasia and I think we must trust his professional judgment when he declares that he did not suffer from amnesia. He

has already done most of the interpretation in his account so I will just summarize the most relevant points.

Moss describes his condition as simply existing and says that it is hard to explain what it was like. Without even internal verbalizations he could not think - "engage in self-talk" - let alone converse with others. Perhaps this "self-talk" is the first step in self-narration. It is necessary for the selection of the elements and connections in the most rudimentary self-narrative where words are the medium. Where verbal language is highly developed I think it probably dominates any other form of linguistic expression unless an extra effort is made, as with a mime artist for instance.

Moss lost his past, therefore, not because he lost his capacity to remember, but because he lost the capacity to process memory in a way that gave it meaning. Without this meaning no sense of his past, no anticipation, and no emotions were possible; there was no story expressing a past, there was no story that hinted at a future, and no story to form a basis for complex emotions. He probably found it hard to explain what it was like because there was nothing to support a sense of self. Sacks' remark, "If a man . . . has lost a self - himself - he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it", seems appropriate here.¹¹ I think Moss probably comes as close as possible to describing his situation when he says that he existed almost exclusively in the present; that "life beyond the immediate situation was meaningless".

Bette Moss's account supports this. She says that he wasn't interested in anything, interest requires understanding; he didn't interact much or seem to care; "he was in some ways, a cabbage, but not really". Why "not really"? Here, as with the amnesics, something remained; at least the normal everyday habits which, to some extent, allowed Moss to fit in with the family routine; much of his behaviour was appropriate.

As language returned Moss found himself beginning to worry about things, or rather, he knew his language was returning when he realized that he was anxious. Narrative expression would have been automatic once linguistic capacity returned and so it is not surprising that the first sign of recovery that Moss noticed was an extension of life outside the present.

Undeveloped linguistic capacity

Joseph is an example of an intelligent human being isolated from the social environment which is necessary for the development of a linguistic capacity. To

¹¹ Sacks, 1985, p 34.

use linguistic conventions successfully one must first at least be exposed to them. The responses of others reinforce successful use and narrative expression becomes possible, bringing with it developing self-awareness. Being deaf, Joseph had no exposure to the most prevalent linguistic conventions so his behaviour showed no sign that understood them at all. Thus there was nothing for others to respond to, nothing to be reinforced.

Clearly, Joseph had abilities based on his visual perception but, while he could see what was going on, he could not discern the sort of connections and ideas used in a narrative. He could not see how a whole day's activity can be encapsulated in a five minute account. He could not distinguish the motives behind actions. He could not process his own experiential memories into a coherent history expressing his sense of self so his life lacked an autobiographical dimension.

The conclusion that Joseph was not capable of understanding meant that there was no further attempt to communicate with him using conventions. Thus there was no exposure, no understanding, no chance of successful use, no capacity for narrative expression, and, therefore, no development of a sense of self as I analyzed it in Chapter Three. His enthusiasm for school and the opportunity to communicate in Sign was, in these circumstances, very understandable.

Individuals with no linguistic capacity are isolated from any self-narrative because they cannot express it, even to themselves. Without an inner story they are limited as persons in a similar way to aphasics. They cannot grasp the ideas necessary for planning and executing personal projects or for participating in personal relationships. They cannot connect their past with their present in a way that points to their future, and, more so than with amnesics, they cannot contemplate their past. Of course much of their behaviour makes it clear that they are continuing subjects of experience, but that is not sufficient for personhood.

"I'LL FIGHT ON"

As a title for a self-narrative, this definitely foreshadows the future and to do so implies an understanding of the past. Clearly a personal project has been conceived and embarked upon by the writer. Only a person could have chosen such a title.

Lyova Zasetky is quite different from the other individuals described in Chapter Four. He says that he has become a different person and suggests that the person he was has died. I am not dealing specifically with the issue of being the

same person after brain injury, although I think it is an important issue, but I think that in Zasetzky something central to his personhood is preserved. It is preserved because he recognized that it was crucial to his survival and hoped for recovery, and as a consequence he "fought with the tenacity of the damned" to restore it - it was his inner story.

Initially, with no memory and no linguistic capacity, he feels that his life doesn't exist. There is nothing to give him a sense of continuity, nothing to be processed and no processing capacity, there is no sense of self - "at first I couldn't even recognize myself". He likens his initial condition to that of a newborn baby; he could see and hear but had no mind, that is, he could see no sense in what he saw and heard.

As memory fragments and some linguistic capacity gradually return he realizes that getting these into some sort of coherent arrangement gives him back his sense of self, although even now it is not always clear. "But once in a while, when I consider what my mind is like now, I wonder: Is this really me?"¹² This may be the question of being the *same* person rather than being *a* person but it indicates the continuity of Zasetzky's self-narrative for he has some sense of what his past life and abilities were. In Chapter Three I pointed out that an individual might feel diminished or changed as a result of losing memory for cognitive, motor and rote skills, but such an individual can retain their sense of self. The loss is merely an experience, albeit, a devastating one.

Zasetzky, persevering with his journal, is trying to find a way to live his story despite a devastating loss which restricts him in a multitude of ways. When he begins to sense his continuity again he finds that nothing stays in his mind and the only way get a coherent story is to write it down for he cannot self-narrate through other activities. Writing is his way of thinking about himself and his life, his key to self-awareness. Of all his deficits he sees the loss of memory and language as the worst and I think his account supports my claims about their necessity. There is also an overwhelming sense that the writer is fully a person despite all his losses and he contrasts starkly with the Korsakoff patient who can be so articulate but unaware of a diminished sense of self, or even, as Sacks suggests, unaware of a loss of self.

¹² Luria, 1972, p 13.

CONCLUSION

I have implied in several places that an individual may be a person to a greater or lesser extent, but it is not a simple matter to say to what degree an individual is a person. Zasetky suggests that he is like a newborn baby, having to learn all over again. Gardner says that the Korsakoff patient would appear normal if tested in the way that we test animals. Here are two suggestions that an individual with brain-damage may fit into one of the developmental models, human growth or evolutionary. Zasetky, however, knew what he was aiming for and Korsakoff patients do have some self-narrative and a good linguistic capacity. I think it would be a mistake, therefore, to try and estimate the degree of personhood on the basis of either of these two models, although we may say that certain features of damage suggest immaturity. I do not think that there can be a systematic way to estimate the degree of personhood even though we can say that someone is diminished as a person.

There is a spectrum in which the duration of experiential memory ranges from momentary to lifelong. Towards one end the condition of personhood is not satisfied and towards the other it is. There are similar spectra for cognitive development and linguistic capacity. An individual like H.M. is low on the first spectrum but high on the others. Every point on each spectrum differs trivially from its neighbour as we move from conditions where the construction of a self-narrative is impossible to conditions where it is virtually automatic. Can we deduce or discover the borderline between persons and non-persons?

Derek Parfit discusses a similar scenario when considering combined physical and psychological continuity as a criterion of personal identity. He points out that it is hard to believe that the trivial difference between any two neighbouring points constitutes the difference between life and death, or that there is a sharp borderline which could be discerned if only we had all the facts. It is perfectly reasonable to suppose, in these circumstances, that there is a range on the spectrum where identity is indeterminate.¹³ This sort of conclusion as regards personhood is not at odds with the aims of my project.

We do not need definite answers to the puzzling cases in order to enrich our philosophical understanding of what it is to be a person. Nor do we need a full account of personhood in order to come to a better understanding of puzzling cases of brain-damage. The social, legal and political implications of any

¹³ Parfit, 1984, p 236-243.

decisions regarding personhood are significant. Therefore, if there is doubt about any individual an understanding of how personhood is diminished or limited is very important.

That is why it is important for philosophy to include consideration of accounts of brain-damage. Like literary narratives, I think that each one can contribute something to our understanding of persons. There are many other cases and not every one would appear to completely support my points. Some global aphasics:

... are often confined to wheelchairs, devoid of functional communication . . . They may still display normal emotional reactions . . . if nonverbal cues are strong; but one cannot escape the conclusion that much of the "whole person" is lost forever.¹⁴

Is there some minimal linguistic capacity supporting the emotions or are emotions less language-dependent than I have claimed? Some severely affected patients only exhibit their symptoms intermittently. Are they like persons who have temporary periods of unconsciousness?

I have concentrated on memory and linguistic capacity but there are cases of brain-damage which point to additional necessary conditions of personhood. Frontal lobe lesions can leave experiential memory and linguistic capacity virtually intact while observations suggest that such individuals are diminished as persons.¹⁵ Despite a spared intellect and reasoning powers:

... the frontal-lobe patient . . . strikes us instantly and intuitively as bereft of a sense of self, unconscious of his life, deprived of a metaphor in which his activities and his worth are recorded, or at least of the ability or the incentive to consult this record.¹⁶

This observation poses a philosophical challenge which should not be ignored. How is the sense of self diminished in these cases? If philosophers seriously attempt to explain this puzzle then philosophy stands to gain.

SUMMARY

My two-part claim is that if an entity has no experiential memory then that entity is not a person, and if an entity lacks linguistic capacity then that entity is not a person. I have presented some reports of actual human beings whose current experiential memories are ephemeral. The testimonies of these

¹⁴ Gardner, 1975, p 83.

¹⁵ Gardner, 1975, p 270-271.

¹⁶ Gardner, 1975, p 455.

individuals, or those close to them, support my claims that experiential memory is necessary by showing that much basic personal functioning is curtailed despite many preserved faculties. If experiential memories are totally and permanently absent in an individual then that individual cannot be a person.

I have described a case where linguistic capacity was lost and a case where it had not developed. The evidence from these cases shows that linguistic capacity is necessary because neither individual could engage in many of the simple social interactions and activities typical of persons. As language returned to Scott Moss and developed in Joseph, these things became possible. If linguistic capacity is permanently absent in an individual then that individual is not a person.

Zasetsky's account highlights how a severely incapacitated individual can develop a sense of self over time if he can just regain some experiential memories and structure them coherently.

My philosophical analysis shows why experiential memory and linguistic capacity are necessary and explains their interdependence. In the light of this account we can see what has gone wrong for the individuals described; it explains why they are limited as persons and it explains how preserved faculties seem characteristic of persons. It also explains how the tension between losses and preservations gives rise to perplexity about status as persons.

Martha Nussbaum argues that "if philosophy is a search for wisdom about ourselves, philosophy needs to turn to literature" because literary narratives "embody forms of human life and desire".¹⁷ I think that this is also true of the sort of material that I have presented in chapter four. The testimonies of brain-damaged patients and sympathetic accounts of their lives can make a significant contribution to our philosophical understanding of personhood. Philosophical accounts of personhood which omit consideration of this material overlook important forms of human life which are relevant to the analysis.

¹⁷ Nussbaum, 1988, p 230.

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