EDN BNYBSZ

AS MINIMAL AS IT GETS: THE ESSENTIALLY EMBODIED SELF*

ADNAN SIVIĆ

Postgraduate Student.
University of Ljubljana.
1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7131-7118

E-mail: adnan.sivic.ff@gmail.com

Within contemporary phenomenology and philosophy of mind, experiential minimalism is a promising approach to the problem of the self which postulates an intrinsic connection between subjectivity and selfhood. In this paper, I outline two radically different versions of an experiential minimalist account of the self, developed most notably by Galen Strawson and Dan Zahavi, before presenting several important objections to each account. I argue that both views face similar conceptual difficulties — those of ontic depth and diachronic identity — due to their shared commitment to certain additional presuppositions that are not required by the methodological framework of experiential minimalism and which constitute what I term *hyper*minimalism. Finally, I sketch out one non-hyperminimalist approach, drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty and other authors from both phenomenology and the embodied/enacted cognition paradigm, according to which the minimal self must be understood as essentially embodied. This view is still experientially minimalist insofar as the self is necessarily conscious (and states of experience necessarily belong to a self), but it abandons the additional, and unnecessary, presupposition that the self can have no other necessary properties. I argue, in other words, that the embodied self is as minimal as one should go in order to resolve the problems of diachronic identity and ontic depth while maintaining phenomenological rigor and, among other things, relevance of the minimal self for psychopathology and phenomenological psychiatry.

Keywords: minimal self, experiential minimalism, embodiment, psychopathology, enactivism.

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НАСТОЛЬКО МИНИМАЛЬНОЕ, НАСКОЛЬКО ВОЗМОЖНО: СУЩНОСТНО ВОПЛОЩЕННОЕ Я*

АДНАН СИВИЧ

Аспирант.
Университет Любляны.
1000 Любляна, Словения.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7131-7118

E-mail: adnan.sivic.ff@gmail.com

В современной феноменологии и философии сознания экспериментальный минимализм представляет собой многообещающий подход к проблеме Я, который постулирует неразрывную связь между субъективностью и индивидуальностью. В данной статье представлены две радикально отличающиеся версии экспериментального минималистского описания Я, разработанные, в частности, Гэленом Стросоном и Даном Захави, а затем приводится несколько важных возражений против каждой из них. Утверждается, что обе точки зрения сталкиваются с одинаковыми концептуальными трудностями — проблемами онтической глубины и диахронической идентичности — из-за общей для них приверженности ряду сторонних предпосылок, которые выходят за пределы методологической структуры экспериментального минимализма, образуя то, что автор статьи называет *гипер*минимализмом. Статья предлагает набросок одного негиперминималистского подхода, с опорой на работы Мерло-Понти и других авторов как из феноменологии, так и из парадигмы воплощенного/энактивированного познания, согласно которому минимальное Я должно пониматься как по сути воплощенное. Эта точка зрения по-прежнему является экспериментально минималистской в той мере, в какой самость полагается сознательной (а состояния опыта обязательно принадлежат самости), однако она отказывается от дополнительного и излишнего предположения о том, что самость не может иметь других необходимых свойств. Тезис статьи состоит в том, что воплощенная самость является минимальной в той мере, в какой это необходимо для решения проблем диахронической идентичности и онтической глубины при сохранении феноменологической строгости и, среди прочего, релевантности минимального Я для психопатологии и феноменологической психиатрии.

Ключевые слова: минимальное Я, экспериментальный минимализм, воплощенность, психопатология, энактивизм.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of the self is extremely multifaceted. Just within the phenomenological tradition, it covers everything from Husserl's transcendental I to Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* and Henry's autoaffection, not to mention the numerous additional spins it has been given in contemporary philosophy of mind. In order to delimit the discussion to a reasonable scope, this paper will only deal with the experiential self in accordance

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with the methodological framework of *experiential minimalism*, understood as the view according to which "episodes characterized by a subjective what-it-is-likeness are not merely episodes that happen to take place *in* a subject, regardless of whether the subject is aware of them or not. Rather, the what-it-is-likeness of phenomenal states is properly speaking a what-it-is-like-*for-me*-ness. On this view, experiential processes are intrinsically conscious and hence self-revealing" (Zahavi, 2020, 637). To simplify somewhat, experiential minimalism will be defined as the proposition that experiences are necessarily conscious and must belong to a subject, while a subject (or self) is an entity that can only exist as the subject *of* an experience (so that we cannot speak of "non-experiencing subjects").

The relationship between the self and experience posited by this methodological framework implies that the phenomenology of the self must be the starting point for its ontology — experience being, after all, the defining feature of the self. This means that ontological concepts of the self that postulate it as something that can exist in isolation from experience (e. g. Dainton, 2004), as well as those that do not take first-person experience as their starting point (e. g. Blanke & Metzinger, 2009) will not be considered, but, as we shall see, this still leaves us with a wide range of positions on the self. To provide an adequate overview of this broad conceptual terrain, the first two sections of this paper will present the two most prominent accounts of the self that are in many ways diametrically opposed to each other, namely those defended by Galen Strawson (2009b) and Dan Zahavi (2005; 2014; 2020). After a brief overview of their respective positions, the focus will be on the difficulties that each view faces, difficulties that — as I will attempt to show in the third section — stem from certain implicit presuppositions that are shared by *both* approaches. Finally, in the fourth and fifth sections, I will sketch out an alternative account of the self, one which abandons the problematic presuppositions while remaining within the framework of experiential minimalism, drawing mostly on Merleau-Ponty and authors in the embodied/enacted cognition paradigm. Briefly put, my argument will be that the minimal self can most fruitfully be understood as essentially embodied, and that the attempt to unearth a *more* minimal (i. e. disembodied) self is the root cause of some of the thorniest conceptual difficulties in contemporary phenomenology and philosophy of mind.

2. THE OBJECTIVIST APPROACH: THE SELF AS A MENTAL THING

While Strawson's account of the self was developed independently of phenomenology as a school or tradition (which is not to say that it owes nothing to it; see e. g. (Strawson, 2009b, 350)), the role of phenomenology as a discipline in his approach

is nevertheless clear: any account of the self must be grounded in phenomenology, because the fact that we have "SELF-experience" is the only reason why there is such a thing as the 'problem of the self' in the first place (Strawson, 2009b, 2)[1]. In order to understand what the self could be, we must therefore start with an analysis of self-consciousness, which proceeds in two steps. First, we need to ask what sort of thing is figured in ordinary human self-consciousness, which is the *local* phenomenological question (Strawson, 2009b, 33). The answer to this question is that "in the ordinary human case the self is figured as a *subject of experience*, a *persisting single mental thing* that is an *agent* and is *distinct* from (non-identical with) the whole human being, and also, perhaps, has a certain *personality*" (Strawson, 2009b, 95). If we want to talk about self-consciousness *as such*, however, then we need to narrow this list of properties down by excluding everything that is not a *necessary* feature of the self, which leads us to the *general* phenomenological question.

In answering the general question, Strawson employs a "whittling argument", stripping away unnecessary features to define the properties of the self as it is necessarily figured in the *minimal form* of self-consciousness. This, however, raises an interesting methodological problem: if phenomenology (as a systematic description of first-person experience) is supposed to ground the ontology of the self, then how can we describe the minimal form of self-consciousness that is necessarily present in all conscious beings, including, given Strawson's panpsychism, even elementary particles (Strawson, 2009a, 63)? It seems questionable to suppose that we can talk about the experience of a quark from the first-person point of view — and a phenomenological interview would be somewhat impractical, making a second-person description likewise hard to come by — so does this not bring us back to our own metaphysical presuppositions, the sort that should be left out of the equation in phenomenology? Strawson himself is, of course, aware of this difficulty, but he claims that we can understand almost all the properties of the minimal form of self-consciousness solely by relating them to (normal as well as pathological) forms of actual human experience (Strawson, 2009b, 163). In other words, the argument should be "independent of any *specifically theoretical* (philosophical) metaphysical views about the self", drawing only on the "metaphysical bone-structure of ordinary everyday thought" (Strawson, 2009b,

[1] Strawson uses the term SELF, written in small capitals, to designate the self as an "experience-determining mental element" — a term that includes such entities as concepts, moods, and emotions (Strawson, 2009b, 2). Given that "SELF-experience" is functionally identical with what Zahavi terms "self-consciousness", the latter term will be used throughout this paper, interchangeably with the word "consciousness" (insofar as the self-consciousness at stake here is, unless otherwise specified, the sort of implicit self-consciousness that is a necessary feature of consciousness itself in the experiential minimalist view).

163). Whether or not this is the case (or, put differently, whether this bone-structure has more meat on it than it would seem) will be discussed later, but for now, we will first take a closer look at these necessary qualities of the self.

In the minimal form of self-consciousness, the self is figured as a "SUBJECT OF EXPERIENCE-AS-SINGLE-MENTAL-THING or SESMET for short" (Strawson, 2009b, 206). Two of these characteristics, namely "subject of experience" and "mental", are uncontroversial to say the least (especially because "mental" does not imply any kind of a distinction between the physical and mental on his view), but the other two, "single" and "thing", require some clarification.

The unity of the self, i. e. the property "single", can be understood as either synchronic or diachronic, and it is worth noting that Strawson ascribes only synchronic unity to the self. This kind of unity is likewise uncontroversial: as synchronic unity is nothing but the fact that all experiences that belong to a specific subject at a given time are necessarily joined together into a single experience, and that the subject is likewise a single entity, this follows from any reasonable (experientially minimalist) definition of the subject. Diachronic unity or diachronic identity is, on the other hand, much less of a trivial matter[2]. Unlike synchronic unity, which is clearly a binary term — something either *is* or *is not* a single thing at a given time — diachronic identity admits of degrees based on its temporal extent; in other words, it is not the same to claim that a subject remains numerically the same for one millisecond or for an entire lifespan. Fortunately, these degrees can be grouped into two basic types of diachronic identity: *weak* diachronic identity, which comprises one unbroken episode of experience or one act of consciousness, and *strong* diachronic identity, which spans different episodes or acts[3].

Since experience necessarily has a certain duration, the same must apply to the subject of experience; thus, weak diachronic identity is implied in synchronic unity (Strawson, 2009b, 75). As for strong diachronic identity (this is what is typically meant by diachronic identity without any additional qualifications), Strawson claims that it is an illusion, brought about by the relative constancy of certain *objects* of experience on the one hand, primarily the subject's own body, as well as *memory* on the other, which ties different experiences together into an apparently unified stream of consciousness (Strawson, 2009b, 245). This unity, however, is merely illusory: human ex-

[2] Diachronic unity is typically taken to be the subject's *experience* of a unified stream of consciousness (which could be the case even if this stream were made up of numerically distinct selves), while diachronic *identity* refers to the numerical identity of the subject in an ontological sense. From a purely phenomenological perspective, diachronic unity and identity are equivalent.

[3] More will be said on this distinction in the following sections; see also (Sivić, 2018).

perience is, on the contrary, made up of a series of interchanging selves, each of which lasts only a few seconds, interrupted by numerous gaps, i. e. periods in which we are not conscious, while the apparent "smoothness" and unity of this flow are the work of short-term memory (Strawson, 2009b, 245–249). The phenomenological difficulties inherent in this view will be discussed in the following section, as their counter-intuitiveness is overshadowed by that of the next relevant property of the self, namely the view that it is a *thing* or *object*.

Although the temporal extension of the self in Strawson's approach is fairly minimal, its ontological status is surprisingly robust: the self is a *thing* or *object*, with these two terms understood as synonyms (Strawson, 2009b, 297, 420). Strawson is well aware that this thesis is likely to raise quite a few eyebrows (especially among the more phenomenologically inclined), which is why he adds that this does not at all imply that the self is given in experience in the same way as, for instance, a rock or a chair (Strawson, 2009b, 65). In other words, the term "object" is not understood in accordance with its phenomenological meaning — as *ob-jectus*[4], something that is "thrown against" the subject — but simply as a certain "strong unity", which is not a process or a property of something else (Strawson, 2009b, 65). With that in mind, Strawson holds that there is nothing in his view that would be objectionable from the point of view of phenomenology, which highlights that the self cannot be an "object among objects" and that our experience of the self is unique with respect to our experience of worldly objects. Nevertheless, he maintains that, while our *experience* of the self is *sui generis*, the self is, metaphysically speaking, a perfectly ordinary thing, differing in no essential respect from any other object (Strawson, 2009b, 174).

If we take this to be a merely metaphysical (rather than phenomenological) claim, then it would be irrelevant for my purposes, but the issue is with the fact that the metaphysics of the self should be grounded in (and shaped by) phenomenology, rather than *vice versa*. Regardless of whether or not one belongs to the Husserlian tradition, the phenomenological method itself should strive to meet the demands of Husserl's "presuppositionlessness" (*Vorurteilslosigkeit*) (Husserl, 2012, 145), lest it become nothing more than methodologically questionable introspectionism. It is in this respect that identifying the self with an object is problematic, as it glosses over the radical difference in the *givenness* of the self on the one hand and worldly objects on the other, which is portrayed perhaps most precisely in Husserl's analysis of the adumbrational character of perception. To summarize his argument: perceived objects are

[4] The same holds for the German *Gegen-stand* (literally, "standing against") or the Slavic *pred-met* ("thrown in front of").

not given to me as three-dimensional wholes all at once, but only through their different *profiles* (taken in the literal sense for visual objects, but something similar holds for auditory objects with respect to temporal rather than spatial relations), which I can only perceive one by one. What allows these profiles (*Abschattungen*) to form a single perceived object, is a specific relation that must obtain between kinaesthesis and the object: if I move my body in a certain way, I will be presented with a correspondingly different profile of the perceived thing, and it is precisely this relation that allows me to see something *as* a thing (Husserl, 2012, 112–115, 174–175)[5]. The self, on the other hand, is experientially present in a radically different way, namely as this "holding-sway" (*Walten*) in the process of perception (Husserl, 2012, 115) or, in Hiedegger's words, as a *being-in-the-world* and not something that can possibly be encountered as an object.

The issue with this approach is thus not just terminological; what matters is not whether we understand the self as a thing or as something else (say, a process), but rather whether or not we take into account the experiential grounding of what an object is[6]. If our purpose is to develop a phenomenological account of the self, then it is far from clear that the best way to do so would be to presuppose an objectivist view with all the epistemological and (meta)ontological assumption that it entails, rather than starting from the structure of experience itself to understand what we mean by "an object" and *only then* considering whether this category could be applied to the experiential self. In other words, Strawson's account of the self is perfectly coherent as a panpsychist ontology, but it fails to take into account the difference between objectivistically understood things *qua* ideal mathematical entities and perceived things, which are affective entities *prior to* being given as objects in space and time (Husserl, 2012, 23–38; Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 54–57). With this in mind, it seems that the aforementioned "metaphysical bone-structure of everyday thought" includes very specific (meta)ontological and epistemological presuppositions, which are far from self-evident in the context of a phenomenological account of the self.

As one might suspect, identifying the self with a very minimalistic sort of object has some important phenomenological implications, most importantly the problem of *ontic depth* (Strawson, 2009b, 344–345): whatever sort of entity I am, *qua* subject of experience, I must in any case be the sort of thing that can be said to *speak* English,

[5] To be more specific, it is *intentionality* that enables the perception of an object as a single entity, but the interplay between kinaesthesis and profiles forms a necessary part of this process in the perception of physical objects.

[6] Failing to do this is essentially to commit the "experience error" that Merleau-Ponty talks about (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 5).

love a particular person etc., but it is hard to see how this is possible for a minimal self that arises and disappears in a single second. Crucially, this is not only a lack of diachronic "depth", but primarily an issue from the *synchronic* perspective: if the self is merely a single mental thing, not essentially different from an elementary physical particle (which is likewise a self!), then it cannot possibly include all the simultaneous dispositions, beliefs, abilities, habits, explicit and implicit desires etc., which form the complex world of human mentality at each moment. Strawson's solution to this problem is, once more, fascinatingly unique: "Perhaps one can hold that although all mental process is necessarily conscious (and therefore subject-involving), there is mental process which is part of what constitutes one's mind, and constitutes in particular its needed ontic depth, although — how to put it? — the conscious subject that one experiences oneself to be, and experiences as having the experiences one has, isn't conscious of it" (Strawson, 2009b, 348). One's experience would thus consist of multiple loci of awareness, while the specific locus of awareness that one experiences oneself as being in a particular moment is termed the "top subject" (Strawson, 2009b, 348). This solution is metaphysically convincing — given a panpsychist ontology, of course — but it seems hard to support it from the phenomenological side. Obviously, it is just as phenomenologically unverifiable as postulating an elaborate mechanism of subconscious representations, although the latter account seems to be far less at odds with our experience of time and diachronic identity. The temporality of experience is a question to which we will return in the following sections, but for now suffice it to say that the main problem of Strawson's account, as a phenomenological description of the self, is that the stream of consciousness would consist of a cascade of different selves, with many such selves existing at the same time and competing to be the "top subject" (although each exists only for a few seconds at most), somewhat resembling a rather exciting amusement park ride. Crucially, as noted by Zahavi, "metaphysically speaking, we are dealing with selves that, although they might stand in a unique causal relationship to one another, are still as different from each other as I am from you. And I must admit that I find that proposal absurd" (Zahavi, 2014, 74).

To conclude, it should be clear by now that the problematic aspect of Strawson's account of the self (and any other account which starts from the same presuppositions) is its commitment to a particular ontology while purportedly seeking an unprejudiced phenomenological account of self-experience[7]. While his approach certainly does pres-

[7] For example, to start one's phenomenological investigation into the synchronic unity of the self with the idea that "a self is figured as something that has the kind of unity of *internal causal connectedness* that a *single marble* has" (Strawson, 2009b, 72; my emphasis) is to beg the metaphysical question at the very outset.

ent a coherent and extremely intriguing version of panpsychism, its phenomenological aspect lacks the kind of radical freedom from prejudice which would make it (not necessarily Husserlian) phenomenology rather than simple introspection. This is not to criticize his whole project, but simply to say that if we want a phenomenological account of the self, one which would be committed to the experiential minimalist link between the self and self-experience, then there is no reason for that account to be intrinsically linked to and motivated by a particular metaphysical thesis (namely placing selves in the same class of objects as quarks, for instance). More on the relationship between phenomenological and empirical investigations of consciousness will be said later, but first we will see how certain difficulties of Strawson's approach are dealt with in a diametrically opposed experiential minimalist account of the self, coming from the phenomenological tradition and defended most notably by Dan Zahavi.

3. STRUCTURES AND FORMAL PROPERTIES: THE TRANSCENDENTALIST APPROACH

Zahavi presents his account of the minimal self on a radically different and more (classically) phenomenological footing, by equating it with the very first-personal givenness or *mineness* of experience. Since the what-it-is-likeness of experience is necessarily a what-it-is-like-*for-me*-ness, as mentioned in the introduction, Zahavi takes precisely this *for-me-ness* or *mineness* to constitute a *minimal*, or *core* sense of self (Zahavi, 2005, 125)[8]. This is radically different from Strawson's approach, as it starts from a property of consciousness which is completely neutral with regard to its metaphysical substrate (Zahavi, 2014, 73). The self *qua* first-personal givenness is thus neither a separate entity, which would be distinct from the stream of consciousness, nor a Kantian identity pole, resulting from a synthesis accomplished by reason (see Kant, 1956, B 133), but rather a necessary feature of experience as such, since an experience without first-person givenness would not be an experience in the first place. Considering this, Zahavi claims (*pace* Strawson), that, instead of the term *subject* of experience, we can just as well talk about the "*subjectivity* of experience" (Zahavi, 2005, 125–126).[9]

[8] Although some authors differentiate between for-me-ness (understood as a pre-reflective self-awareness) and mineness (usually understood as a thetic awareness of the self), I will follow Zahavi (2020) in using both terms interchangeably to refer to the former, pre-reflective self-awareness.

[9] Strawson makes this concession as well, but only on condition that the notion of subject as a single mental thing is implied in the term "subjectivity" (Strawson, 2009b, 74), a qualification that Zahavi would surely reject.

To say that we can speak of the self as a subjectivity rather than a subject of experience is not to say that the self in question is not act-transcendent, since, when one considers a plurality of experiences, one can be aware of oneself as the common subject of these different experiences (whether they are simultaneous or temporally distant). The self therefore possesses a certain transcendence, which Zahavi, using Husserl's famous phrase, terms a *transcendence in the immanence*, because, while the self must be distinguished from the changing experiences, it cannot exist independently of them (Zahavi, 2005, 131). Against Strawson's proposal, according to which the stream of consciousness is in fact a series of isolated short-lived experiential episodes (so much so that Strawson considers the metaphor of the "stream" of experience deeply misleading; see Strawson, 2009b, 234), Zahavi presents two main arguments: first, it is unclear how one could be aware of the states of complete unconsciousness that are supposed to repeatedly interrupt our stream of experience, as these are by definition inaccessible; and second, although our thoughts themselves may be fragmentary, they occur against a relatively constant phenomenal background characterized by an invariant quality of mineness (Zahavi, 2005, 234–235). This, coupled with the problematic implication of Strawson's view, namely that my current minimal self is, metaphysically speaking, absolutely distinct from my previous minimal self — indeed no less so than from the current minimal self of someone else (Zahavi, 2014, 74) — is why Zahavi argues for *strong* diachronic identity of the self, which holds across different acts of consciousness or experiential episodes, rather than merely the *weak* diachronic identity, which holds in a single experiential episode and which Strawson accepts.

Crucially, even if we were to accept Strawson's claim that the stream of consciousness is repeatedly interrupted by periods of unconsciousness — as indeed it is at least occasionally, (probably) in dreamless sleep and (almost certainly) in comatose states — this would not suffice to deny the diachronic identity of the minimal self on Zahavi's terms.[10] This sort of reasoning would consider the "stream of consciousness in analogy with a cord, and compare the dreamless sleep with a cutting of the cord" (Zahavi, 2014, 72), which is to consider the stream of consciousness from the third person perspective. On Zahavi's view, however, the identity in question is precisely first-personal *experiential* identity, which cannot be broken by periods of unconsciousness, because such periods are, by definition, experientially unavailable, i. e., there is "no first-personal absence of a first-person perspective" (Zahavi,

[10] For an interesting reflection on the classical Indian debate on whether there is a basic form of consciousness present in dreamless sleep and its relevance for contemporary research, see (Thompson, 2015).

2014, 73). The reality of the minimal self is an *experiential* reality, which is also why it is independent from the existence of a persisting non-experiential neural substrate of the self.

Zahavi's notion of the minimal self thus overcomes the (phenomenological) difficulties inherent in Strawson's view, since it remains committed to a purely first-person approach and does not force us to accept the overwhelming multiplicity of selves, both synchronically and diachronically, which results from Strawson's understanding of the self as an object (however loosely defined). When one tries to pin down Zahavi's own position on the diachronic identity of the self, however, things become somewhat less clear. Because he understands the reality of the self as an experiential reality, he does not accept the distinction between diachronic *unity* (i.e. the unity of experience in time through memory) and diachronic *identity* (i. e. the identity of the self, considered diachronically). Therefore, just as the experience of pain is sufficient for the reality of pain, so too is "our experience of the temporally extended and unified stream of consciousness <…> *eo ipso* an experience of the real (and not merely illusory) diachronicity of the experiential self" (Zahavi, 2014, 74).

This argument, however, is problematic, because it is not clear whether it refers to *weak* or *strong* diachronic identity. If it refers to weak diachronic identity, then Strawson would have no trouble agreeing that the direct experience of diachronicity is sufficient for the diachronicity of the self *within one unbroken episode of experience*. Because this is not a point of contention between their views (and since Zahavi presents this argument in a section in which he is arguing against Strawson's view), we can assume that he has strong diachronic identity in mind. But, on this interpretation, it is not at all clear that we *have* such an experience, as Zahavi himself concedes that strong diachronic identity involves a *synthesis*, because "the self cannot be given as an act-transcendent identity in a *single* experience. It is only by *comparing* several experiences that we can encounter something that retains its identity through changing experiences" (Zahavi, 2005, 131, my emphasis). To compare the result of a synthesis, "which entails a difference or distance that is bridged" (Zahavi, 2005, 131), with the immediate and completely pre-reflective experience of pain would thus be misleading.

There are three possible replies to this objection, the first two of which have to do with Husserl's analysis of the structure of time-consciousness, which is probably the most widely accepted and the most influential of his contributions to phenomenology. Briefly put, Husserl argues that, in order for the perception of temporally extended objects to be possible, we have to acknowledge a certain *width of presence* in the consciousness of the present, which includes both the near present and the near

future. For our present purposes, it will suffice to quote Zahavi's brief explanation of this structure:

> There is (1) a "primal impression" narrowly directed towards the strictly circumscribed now-slice of the object. The primal impression never appears in isolation and is an abstract component that by itself cannot provide us with a perception of a temporal object. The primal impression is accompanied by (2) a "retention", or retentional aspect, which provides us with a consciousness of the just-elapsed slice of the object, thereby furnishing the primal impression with a past-directed temporal context, and by (3) a "protention", or protentional aspect, which in a more or less indefinite way intends the slice of the object about to occur, thereby providing a future-oriented temporal context for the primal impression. According to Husserl, the concrete and full structure of all lived experience is consequently *protention — primal impression — retention* (Zahavi, 2014, 64).

The first of the two possible solutions to the aforementioned objection would be to identify the minimal self with the givenness of present experience *understood as this structure of temporality*, which Zahavi does when states that, although my experiences constantly change, "the very field of experiencing, with its threefold structure of protention — primal impression — retention that allows for experiential presence, cannot itself become past and absent *for me*" (Zahavi, 2014, 66). This would be to pin the identity conditions of the minimal self to the identity conditions of the structure of temporality. While this certainly does provide a case for the strongest possible form of diachronic identity, it does so at the cost of identifying the self with a purely formal structure. In other words, while it is certainly the case that this structure can never change or become absent *for me* (and thus must be identical throughout my life), it is also the case that, *qua* structure, it is necessarily identical for *all* human subjects, and presumably for all beings with any kind of consciousness conceivable by us. There is nothing *individual* in this structure, nothing that would make it *me* rather than some other subject, and to call it a self would be tantamount to denying the existence of the self, since we could indeed replace the expression "*my* experience" with "*this* experience", as suggested by Parfit (1984, 517–518; see also Clowes & Gärtner, 2020)[11].

Krueger (2011, 48–52) makes a similar argument in distinguishing between the minimal self as a (formal and non-individual) *structure* and the minimal self as a *stream*, which would have to be every bit as impermanent and changing as the contents of the stream. I am sympathetic to Krueger's arguments against the self as a structure, but, rather than taking the self as a stream to be the only alternative, and

[11] The difficulty here is the same as that with transcendentalism, which leaves us with nothing but an "absolutely universal ipseity which I share as well with every 'other' of whom I can form a concept" (Merleau-Ponty, 2010, 76).

thus radically denying it any form of diachronic identity, perhaps it is worthwhile to give Zahavi a more charitable reading and to allow for the possibility of mineness being an experiential property (not necessarily identical with the changing experiences), but one which is not a purely formal structure and which would have to be shown to have diachronic identity on independent terms. In other words, it could still be the case that mineness is an essential property of experiences, which always necessarily unfold according to the tripartite structure of temporality, without equating it either with this structure or with the changing experiences.

This brings us to the second possible reply: the three different profiles of temporality overlap and form a *chain of retentions*, so that the current primal impression becomes a retention in the following moment, while the previous retention remains on the horizon of the present as a retention of the previous retention, and so on, and this overlapping chain of retentions could provide the basis for diachronic identity of the self beyond the confines of a single act of consciousness. However, while the chain of retentions certainly is an essential feature of consciousness which accounts for the continuity of the passage of time (e. g. Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 441), and thus justifies expanding weak diachronic identity *to a certain extent*, there is nevertheless a point at which a retention ceases to be an integral part of the present and recedes into memory. Although it would be very difficult to find the exact point at which a retention becomes a memory, particularly because the length of the chain of retentions present at a certain time varies with attention, it is still the case that retention and memory are essentially different faculties, since memory lacks the pre-reflective immediacy and presence of retention. Varela sums up the phenomenological difference in the following way: "In the present I 'see' what just passed; in memory I can only hold it in a representation as if through a veil. Thus memory and evocation have a mode of appearance that is qualitatively different from nowness" (Varela, 1999, 279)[12].

The only remaining option, if one wishes to justify the diachronic identity of the self beyond the chain of retentions which constitutes the "nowness" of any given moment, would be to appeal to memory, which, although certainly not infallible, is nevertheless immune to the error of misidentification: while I can be completely wrong about the specific contents of a particular memory, it is in any case true that I must have existed at the time that I acquired the memory, since I cannot confuse my memory with the memory of someone else (Zahavi, 2014, 75; 2005, 132). To illustrate,

[12] This isn't to say that nothing beyond the chain of retentions can be given immediately in experience (more on this will be said in the following sections), but rather simply that past episodes of experience, which Zahavi uses to ground diachronic identity, can't be given in an equally immediate manner.

Zahavi uses the example of a person that believes that he is Napoleon and vividly remembers the battle of Waterloo: although the contents of the memory in question are delusional, it must still be the case that the person existed at the time he acquired it, even though that must have been much later than 1815 (Zahavi, 2014, 75). But there is a counterexample to this proposal, one that might not be as far-fetched as it seems: suppose that you acquire a delusional memory (say, of the battle of Waterloo) while in deep sleep or in a drug-induced unconscious state (while being operated on by some extremely advanced brain surgeon, for instance). On Zahavi's terms, you (*qua* essentially conscious minimal self) would not have existed at the time you acquired the memory, since you were not conscious at all. Or, more realistically, suppose that you acquire a delusional memory over the course of multiple periods of waking consciousness (and much of what is widely known on the phenomenon of memory confabulation would seem to allow this), such that there is no single instant at which you acquired the memory. Again, there would be no single moment which could serve as the anchoring point for diachronic identity.

Thus, it seems that the kind of diachronic identity grounded in episodic memory can in fact be illusory, unlike the short-term identity grounded in retention (since the latter is precisely as certain as the consciousness of the present moment). Of course, episodic memory is *usually* reliable, but it still seems necessary to draw an important distinction between the indubitable diachronic identity within the chain of retentions on the one hand and the longer-term identity grounded in memory on the other: just as retention and memory are qualitatively different faculties, so too must the kinds of identity provided be qualitatively distinct (as would be the case even if one were to reject the possibility that one could acquire a memory in the abnormal ways mentioned above), at least with respect to their certainty. This is particularly clear if we consider how *gappy* the kind of identity provided by memory would have to be. If diachronic identity can only be established with episodes that are experientially available to me in episodic memory, then I have no way of being certain of my identity throughout everyday life, because most of my everyday activities are not present to me in explicit memory; rather, they are only given as bodily familiarities, more akin to skills and dispositions rather than explicit memories (Fuchs, 2017, 306; Sivić, 2018, 111). However, recourse to this *implicit or body memory* is not available if we ground identity on explicit experiential givenness of past episodes, as Zahavi seems to do (Zahavi, 2014, 76)[13].

[13] For obvious reasons, this form of memory would also require incomparably more ontic depth than what can be provided by a short-lived sesmet.

To conclude: the main difficulty inherent in Zahavi's view of diachronic identity is that it is not at all clear *what* exactly would remain identical. If it were just a completely formal structure, then diachronic identity would be trivial, as the self would lose its individuality, bringing us right back into the problem of the relationship between the transcendental and the empirical subject (see Kant, 1956). Even Strawson's multiple-selves model is nearer to concrete individuality in this sense, as the self *qua* mental thing is doubtless a specific individual, albeit an object. If, on the other hand, we take the self to be something *within* experience, rather than its formal structure, then diachronic identity would stretch only as far back as the chain of retentions.

4. MINIMALISM AND HYPERMINIMALISM

By this point it should be clear that Strawson and Zahavi occupy diametrically opposed positions within experiential minimalism — it might even seem that they present the only two possible experientially minimalist ways of conceptualizing the self — but it should also be clear that both positions suffer from certain drawbacks. While the sesmet view runs into serious phenomenological difficulties due to its commitment to a certain metaphysical framework, i. e. its *naturalism*, Zahavi's view has a hard time dealing with diachronic identity because of the overly formal way it conceives of the self, which we can call its *transcendentalism*. Furthermore, *both* views run into the problem of ontic depth (precisely because both are *too minimal*), although only Strawson mentions this explicitly.

In Zahavi's account, the problem of ontic depth can be best seen in his work on psychopathology. Together with Sass and Parnas, Zahavi developed an extremely promising phenomenological approach to schizophrenia spectrum disorders, the "ipseity-hyperreflexivity model", which claims that "instability of pre-reflective self-awareness", i. e., a disorder of the minimal self, is a core feature of schizophrenia (Sass, Parnas & Zahavi, 2011, 7). Simply put, the patient loses the pre-reflective grasp on the environment as well as the stream of consciousness itself, which is why certain aspects of experience, which normally form the background of consciousness (one's relation to the world, temporality etc.), become objects of (hyper)reflexive thought (Sass, Parnas & Zahavi, 2011, 7–9). Crucially, while schizophrenia does not entail the absence of mineness, Zahavi nevertheless maintains that mineness cannot remain unaltered either (Henriksen, Parnas & Zahavi, 2019, 7) — which is only to be expected, insofar as schizophrenia is a disorder of the self. But if mineness is understood in a completely *formal* way, as Zahavi seems to present it (e. g. Zahavi, 2014, 66), then the minimal self is simply *too minimal* to be affected in schizophrenia. In other words:

if the self is an entity that *necessarily* has strong diachronic identity — whether it is a necessary *structure* of experience or an *unchanging* experiential *property* — then it is simply not possible to speak of disorders of the minimal self. A self that is *always identical* by necessity cannot be *pathological* or *altered* in any way whatsoever (e. g. Zahavi, 2005, 144; see also Clowes & Gärtner, 2020, 632; Krueger, 2020, 605). This is not to criticize Zahavi's clinically relevant work in psychopathology (see e. g. Parnas, Moeller, Kircher, Thalbitzer, Jansson, Handest & Zahavi, 2005), but simply to point out the conceptual tension between the self as it is understood in his strictly phenomenological work on the one hand and his work on psychopathology on the other. The experiential self that is affected in schizophrenia must be *less minimal* than the experiential self that he defends elsewhere.

It may seem that Strawson's and Zahavi's views are so diametrically opposed to one another — methodologically as well as conceptually — that they have nothing in common save their commitment to experiential minimalism. This would also lead us to conclude that the problem of ontic depth is probably inherent to experiential minimalism as such, quite the dim prospect for this methodological framework. Fortunately, we can find in both accounts of the self two presuppositions that are not implied in experiential minimalism as such, and which constitute what I will call *hyper*-minimalism: first, that the experiential self is minimal and *simple*, meaning that it is understood either as a mental *object* or a completely formal *property* of experience[14], and, second, that questions of diachronic identity (understood as the numerical identity of a mental object or experiential property) can only be answered by reference to episodic memory or an unbroken chain of retentions. These two propositions go beyond experiential minimalism, which we can formally define simply as an equivalence or mutual implication between the self and experience, i. e., the thesis that the self cannot exist in the absence of experience, and experience cannot exist in the absence of a self to which it belongs.

Given that hyperminimalism is not implied in experiential minimalism, it should be possible to develop a non-hyperminimalist, but still experientially minimalist account of the self, and this is what I will attempt to tentatively sketch out in the following two sections. The importance of such an account stems from the fact that the two difficulties mentioned above, namely those relating to diachronic identity and ontic depth, are inherent to *all* (not just Strawson's and Zahavi's) types of hypermini-

[14] In either case, the self is something that has *no other necessary property* except for the fact that it is entailed in experience. Note that this goes beyond experiential minimalism; the latter merely states that the self must be entailed in experience, not that it can have no other essential property apart from this.

malism, i. e., all approaches that are committed to the aforementioned two presuppositions. The ontic depth problem is hardly more than a slightly different restatement of the first presupposition of hyperminimalism, while the issues with diachronic identity follow (in view of the arguments above) from the second.

5. THE EMBODIED SELF

Any account of the self that would avoid the difficulties mentioned above would have to be *somewhat less minimal*, without thereby slipping into a naturalistic view and abandoning the methodological primacy of phenomenology (if, that is, it is to remain a phenomenological and experiential minimalist approach). One promising way to do this would be to understand the self as *essentially embodied,* which I will argue for in the following. Crucially, the embodiment that is relevant here is not a spatiotemporal "situatedness" in a naturalist sense, but rather an experiential situatedness in (or, more precisely, *as*) the lived body — something that was present already in Husserl's work and was later developed in very fruitful ways by Merleau-Ponty and the embodied/enacted cognition paradigm. In speaking of the body, I will thus have in mind the *lived body* (*Leib*) as the ever-present *holding-sway* (*Walten*) that subtends perception as well as any notion of the body as object (*Körper*) (Husserl, 2012, 115). To quote Zahavi, from one of his earlier publications:

> The body only appears to itself when it relates to something else. This is not to say that original bodily self-awareness should be taken as an object-intentionality, but merely that it is an intentional consciousness which is self-aware. The body is not *first* given for us and *subsequently* used to investigate the world. The world is given to us *as bodily investigated*, and the body is revealed to us in its exploration of the world (Zahavi, 1998, 218, my emphasis).

Here, Zahavi's account of pre-reflective self-awareness, which he takes to be "both temporal and *embodied*" (Zahavi, 1998, 220, my emphasis), differs significantly from his hyperminimalist view of the self that has been presented in the preceding section. In his later work on the topic, Zahavi seems to have taken a different theoretical path, one that avoids any commitment to the necessary embodiment of the self in favor of a more neutral approach which could maintain compatibility with neurocentric internalist frameworks in cognitive science (Zahavi, 2014, 96).

If it were the case that internalist approaches were rapidly gaining support in cognitive science and related disciplines, then such a shift would at least be justified from an empirical perspective, its phenomenological questionability notwithstand-

ing. It seems, however, that precisely the opposite is the case, as the so-called *embodied/enacted cognition* paradigm is attracting more and more theoretical as well as empirical support (e. g. Fuchs, 2017; 2018; Krueger, 2020; Petitot, Varela, Pachoud & Roy, 1999; Stewart, Gapenne & Di Paolo, 2010; Vörös, 2014; 2020; Wehrle, 2020; 2021). An important phenomenological contribution to this stream of thought has recently been made by Maren Wehrle (2020, 503–506), with a remarkably simple argument in favor of the embodied self, which can be summed up as follows[15]:

M. The self presupposes pre-reflective self-consciousness (experiential minimalism)

1. Self-consciousness is necessarily temporal.
2. Temporality presupposes *affection* (affectivity and sense perception)[16].
3. Affection presupposes the lived body[17].
4. Therefore, the self presupposes the lived body.

Note that this argument might still be accepted by proponents of a hyperminimalist approach on one condition, namely if it is understood as the claim that the *existence* of the self presupposes the lived body. What is needed is a stronger thesis, i. e., the *embodied self view,* according to which the minimal self is necessarily *given* in experience *as* the lived body or, what amounts to the same proposition on an experientially minimalist view, that the minimal self *is* the lived body.

This is far more radical, since it implies that the embodied self is also *minimal*, meaning that we cannot get to any "more minimal" self that would be independent of the lived body. In other words: if the self is necessarily embodied, then there can be no experience in which it would not be given as the lived body. This view will have an advantage over hyperminimalist views in terms of explanatory value if it can be shown that (1) we can ground ontic depth, along with a more adequate account of diachronic identity, in the embodied self, and that (2) the self is necessarily *experienced as* embodied. The first requirement will be treated in its own section, while the second will be taken up here.

There are two possible strategies in arguing for this second requirement. The first would be a negative argument, i. e., the claim that there are no forms of self-awareness that completely lack an embodied character, which would hinge on the impossibility of finding a phenomenologically plausible counterexample to the neg-

[15] Wehrle only argues explicitly for propositions 1–3, but proposition 4 follows on condition of M. A similar claim can be found in (Kreuch, 2019, 123).

[16] For a detailed argument for and exploration of this proposition, see (Varela & Depraz, 2005).

[17] For a response to some of the key objections that have been raised against this proposition, see (Cosmelli & Thompson, 2010).

ative claim. How would one go about finding such a counterexample? In the case of perception, I will take its embodied character for granted, since it has been elaborated more than sufficiently in the phenomenological tradition (see e. g. Fuchs, 2012, 152; Merleau-Ponty, 2012; Wehrle, 2020). A more promising example of putatively disembodied experience would be something like abstract geometrical reasoning, for instance. Take a person floating in a sensory deprivation chamber, with her mind fixed on a specific geometric construction. For the sake of argument, we can also abstract away any necessary reference to embodiment inherent in background self-consciousness and consider just this person's thought process in the geometric construction of, say, a triangle. This is, of course, granting quite a bit, and if there is such a thing as disembodied thought, this would have to be it.

In the mental construction of a triangle, our sensorily deprived thinker would obviously not be thinking of the specific properties of any physically real triangular object — this would be merely a surreptitious way to reintroduce perception — but rather of an *ideal* triangle, for which certain geometric laws hold apodictically (which is not the case for any empirical approximation). So far, embodiment seems to be completely out of the picture, but this is only true until we consider one crucial aspect: no matter how one imagines a triangle — or any geometrical figure, for that matter — one can only intuit it in a specific *orientation* and with certain *spatial relations*: the vertex C is pointed *up*, for instance, it is located *above* the line AB etc. These spatial relations, however, can only exist in relation to an orienting *lived body* that is *situated* in a specific perceptual field. In Merleau-Ponty's words:

> If the words "on", "by", etc., maintain a sense, this is because I am working on a sensible or imaginary triangle, which is to say, one that is at least *virtually situated in my perceptual field*, oriented according to "up" and "down", "right" and "left", or again, as we have shown above, one that is implicated in my *general hold upon the world*. <…> I "examine" the triangle, it exists for me as a system of oriented lines, and if words like "angle" or "direction" have a sense for me, this is insofar as I situate myself at one point and from there tend toward another point, insofar as the system of spatial positions is for me a *field of possible movements* (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 405–406, my emphasis).

In brief: geometrical intuition — without which geometrical proofs would become mere empty symbols, stripped of their intuitive evidentiality — is only possible for us insofar as we have (or, rather, *are*) a lived body[18]. Thus, if even the subject of

[18] Compare the intuitive character of two- or three-dimensional Euclidean geometry with a geometrical proof in, say, twelve-dimensional non-Euclidean space: while the latter is mathematically just as true as the former, it has none of the intuitive obviousness of the former (in other words, Meno's slave would have a *much* harder time pulling it off, to say the least). Even if it is possible to achieve

geometric thought is necessarily an embodied *motor subject* (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 405–406), then this holds *a fortiori* for other, more obviously embodied forms of experience. In fact, much of Merleau-Ponty's opus deals (among many other things) with making this case for different forms of experience, from perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2012), to language (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; 1973), social phenomena (Merleau-Ponty, 2010), and even philosophical reflection itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

One might still object to this negative argument, however, and with good reason, since one can never be certain that no plausible counterexample will be found[19]. To outline a different, independent strategy, we can start by revisiting Wehrle's argument above: if we accept that the self *presupposes* the lived body insofar as it presupposes temporality and hence affectivity, what precisely does this claim mean, i. e., would it even be plausible to take it as a purely *ontological* claim, with no bearing on the phenomenology of the self? Can we claim that the self merely *implies the existence* of temporality, which in turn implies the existence of affectivity and, through the latter, the lived body? Such would be the case only if we were dealing with discrete entities, standing in a causal relationship with one another, while remaining essentially independent. This, however, is precisely *not* what we have (or, rather, what we *are*) when dealing with the self: it is not as though affectivity were something that could obtain either with or without temporality, within or outside of time, while merely providing a formal condition for the appearance of the latter. Instead, "affect implicates as its very nature the tendency, a 'pulsion' and a motion that, as such, can *only* deploy itself in time and thus *as* time" (Varela & Depraz, 2005, 69)[20].

Likewise, the relationship between the self and temporality is not one of a mere logical condition. The self does not just *require* time in order to exist, in the same way that a chemical reagent requires a specific temperature in order to turn a particular color, for example (barring which it would still very much continue being the same chemical reagent). Rather, it is essentially *in* time, essentially *temporal*, just as the lived

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a similar intuitive grasp of arbitrary n-dimensional space, one could only do this by somehow intuiting spatial relations through imagined *movement* in that space, something that, once again, requires a motor subject (along with a highly developed capacity for geometric abstraction). For a similar argument regarding other forms of mathematical thought, see (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, 105, 122–129).

[19] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for a number of very pertinent comments which were particularly helpful in this section of the paper.

[20] Cf. Heidegger's arguments against understanding being-in-the-world as a mere juxtaposition of two beings, or of being-in as a mere "property" of Dasein, in § 12 of *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1967, 52–59).

body *qua* "my general power of inhabiting all of the world's milieus" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 325) is essentially the "pulsion" and movement towards certain things and away from others that is the perpetually beating heart of affectivity — the power that gives me the world not by showing a view from nowhere to a disinterested subject, but by *moving* me to different ways of *grappling* with valences and use-objects that precede any notion of mathematized space and time. As Wehrle puts it, "it is not a formal or bodyless inner time consciousness, but a *concrete bodily subjectivity* that constitutes time" (Wehrle, 2020, 508, my emphasis).

The self, temporality, affection and the lived body are thus tightly interwoven, and the self is essentially embodied no less than it is essentially temporal. Any separation between these interrelated aspects of subjectivity can only be a theoretical abstraction — doubtless a useful one, but an abstraction nonetheless — which can all too easily make us fall prey to treating as independent what are merely different ways of describing the same living unity, the self *qua* lived body.

6. ONTIC DEPTH AND DIACHRONIC IDENTITY IN THE FLESH

If we identify the self with the lived body, i. e., "a certain hold upon the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 370), then the problem of ontic depth is resolved in a way that is comfortably close to triviality. The lived body *qua* "the power for certain behaviors and for a certain world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 370) is *exactly* the kind of entity that can be said to speak English, love a certain person etc., as these dispositions and capabilities are elements of the structure of the lived body and, correlatively, of different ways that the world can be given to it (see e. g. Dreyfus, 2002). The same point holds for psychopathology: the self as the lived body can be altered in a pathological way precisely because it — unlike the hyperminimal self — is "an ongoing *process* that must exist and constantly reconstitute itself in time" (Sass, Parnas & Zahavi, 2011, 11), one which has the requisite *structure* that can be subject to alteration (see Krueger, 2020)[21].

In order to account for diachronic identity of the lived body — not of the body as a physical entity, as this would lead us out of phenomenology and into a host of unnecessary Thesean twists and turns — we must look to this *structure* that includes acquired habits, abilities etc., which form a constitutive part of the lived body and

[21] Krueger (2020, 598) introduced the extremely helpful notion of the *scaffolded self* to highlight the "thicker" structure that is altered in schizophrenia; this notion does, however, seem to imply that there is an unchanging core (perhaps hyperminimal) self which is independent of its "scaffold" — a claim that I find not too plausible for the reasons discussed above.

its lifeworld. Crucially, we are no longer forced to rely on episodic memory as the explicit givenness of past experiential episodes, but we can rather operate with a different and more fundamental type of memory, one which Fuchs termed *implicit* or *body memory* (Fuchs, 2017, 306). This type of memory contains our dispositions and abilities (such as playing the guitar, for instance), which co-determine the way that we perceive objects (say, a musical instrument or sheet music). Most importantly, body memory does not require — and indeed often *excludes* —episodic memory: for example, my ability to play the guitar is literally "in the fingers" of my lived body, the *same* body that acquired that skill in the distant past, of which I scarcely have any explicit memory at all (let alone any representations of the specific motions required; see e. g. Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 145). We can thus say that, rather than *re-presenting* the past, body memory *enacts* and thus *presents* it directly in our present experience (Fuchs, 2017, 306).

While the textbook examples of body memory tend to refer to relatively complex and discrete skills, we should keep in mind that it includes much more elementary aspects of experience, such as posture, gait, the style of one's speech and even one's *thought* (see Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 184–187), that shape the affective style of my being-in-the-world (along with all the actions that I am able to perform). It thus furnishes us with a *bodily personality structure* (Fuchs, 2017, 307) of the abilities, habits and dispositions that are always co-given on the horizon of experience as potentialities of the *habitual body* (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 84, 145), just as the currently invisible aspects of a perceived object are inherently co-given as potential profiles, rather than being postulated by means of an intellectual synthesis. The type of identity that this provides is thus qualitative as well *concrete*. While the diachronic identity of the hyperminimal self *qua* formal structure is precisely that — *formal* to the point that there is nothing that would make a specific self *my* self — every element of the lived body is thoroughly *individual* or, simply, *my own*. Furthermore, different abilities or dispositions are not isolated "building blocks" of the lived body, but rather elements that can be isolated only in reflection and that are bound together — from my anatomy to the way I engage in abstract thought — in a single *style* of being (see Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 455–456)[22].

In Merleau-Ponty's words: I am "not a series of psychical acts, nor for that matter a central I who gathers them together in a synthetic unity, but rather a single expe-

[22] "In other words, if I examine my experience without objectivist presuppositions, I will discover that the meaning of, and role played by, each part is (co)determined and (co)constituted by the meaning and role of all the other parts as well as by the constellation of the field as a whole" (Vörös, 2019, 78–79).

rience that is inseparable from itself, a single 'cohesion of life', a single temporality that unfolds itself from its birth and confirms this birth in each present" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 430). This means that the lived body cannot have the same kind of identity as a formal property of experience, insofar as its structure is constantly changing with newly acquired habits, physiological changes etc. The identity of the lived body is rather that of a *process*, whose past is co-given in the present as the horizon of occurrent experience. The past is *constitutive* of the lived body's present; not in the causal sense, but rather in the sense that the co-givenness of the past forms a necessary horizon of the present.

I will gladly admit that this kind of diachronic identity can seem rather odd when compared to the static sort of numerical identity that we ascribe to presumably unchanging entities, but I see no fault in taking it to be irreducible and, in fact, *fundamental,* insofar as it is the precondition for the identity of objects in experience and, thus, the foundation for any notion of identity as such. Furthermore, this kind of identity is paralleled in the identity of the *organism*, for whom past interactions with the environment are likewise constitutive, namely not as mere causes, but as (co)determining elements in the structure of the organism and its lifeworld (Varela, 1997, 74). Although this parallel is not the main motivation for the account presented here — otherwise it would be a case of letting one's metaphysical commitments influence one's phenomenology — it is nevertheless an important advantage, especially if we have an issue as thorny as that of the relation between first-person and third-person approaches in view.

The fact that the identity of the hyperminimal self cannot be fruitfully linked with that of the organism is arguably one of the greatest shortcomings of that view (at least if the classical problems of diachronic identity are something we would like to be able to address). If, on the other hand, we understand the structure of experience in a parallel way to the structure of *life* — if, that is, there is indeed a fundamental *continuity between life and mind* — then it may well turn out that these apparently incommensurable kinds of identity are merely two sides of the same coin (see e. g. Varela, 1991; 1996). It is impossible to go into the plethora of fascinating questions that would be opened up by this, but it is my intention merely to point out that such a direction is, in fact, very much coherent. It is a direction, I would argue, for which much of the phenomenological groundwork has already been laid down in the 20th century. "Not too much, but *too little* is 'presupposed' for the ontology of Dasein," writes Heidegger, "if we start out from a worldless I, in order to then provide it with an object and an ontologically groundless relationship to it" (Heidegger, 1967, 315–316). If we abandon this worldless hyperminimal I in favor of an embodied self, one that is as mini-

mal as it makes sense to go, we can maintain the conceptual elegance of experiential minimalism while disentangling the theoretical knots of ontic depth and diachronic identity.

7. CONCLUSION

The notion of the essentially embodied self is, of course, far from novel or unusual in phenomenology. What is more conspicuous is its absence in specific contemporary debates within the framework of experiential minimalism. This absence, I have argued, is not justified by this methodological framework as such: nothing prevents a self that is necessarily conscious (and that no state of consciousness can lack) from *also* being necessarily embodied. If this embodiment is taken into account — if the self is understood *as* the lived body — then the seemingly indissoluble aporias of ontic depth and diachronic identity are resolved. Most importantly, this conceptual move does not take us *out* of phenomenology, but rather opens onto the whole breadth of phenomenological analyses of (inter)corporeality and, through them, connects the problem of the minimal self with some of the most fruitful trends in cognitive science.

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