

# A New Dynamism for Philosophy.

## Chapter 2.

### Self and Others.

**Key Questions.** *What is the individual self or ego and why does it feature so prominently in Western philosophy? What is the mind? How are mind and body related, and can they interact? Could computers be conscious and possess minds?*

*In what sense are our experiences private and exclusive? How is self-consciousness possible?*

*Wherein lies our uniqueness or individuality? How can diverse experiences form an integrated whole belonging to one individual? Is it possible for the unique experiences of an individual to become the shared experiences necessary for communication? How can the asymmetry formed between the internal view of ourselves and the external views of others be integrated as aspects of one individual person?*

Much of Western thinking since the Renaissance is preoccupied with the individual and its personal salvation. The ego has enjoyed a prominent place in philosophical writing, and is located as the source of all experience, the initiator of action, the origin of decision-making and moral responsibility, and the focus of appeals for liberty. The problems of philosophy have become the problems of the individual: of confronting himself, the world about him, his dealings with other individuals, and the fate of his soul. Descartes' philosophy scrutinised the individual experience as a foundation for knowledge, and Kant's moral imperatives rest upon universalised personal maxims. Enlightenment thinking looked to individual contracts and associations as a foundation for social theory, Romanticism reaffirmed and exalted the individual spirit, and Utilitarianism has individual well being and freedom at its core. Hegel and Marx are philosophers who moved in different directions, but the overwhelming thrust of ideas until the early twentieth century has been in the direction of personal emancipation. Protestantism, free enterprise, a new science of psychology and consumerism are disparate examples of powerful movements and ideas that promote individual values, responsibility and fulfilment.

So what is this individual self or ego and why does it feature so prominently in our lives and thought? The answer will influence our

position on every other philosophical issue, and forms the focus of this chapter. My view is that the importance of the individual person or standpoint has been exaggerated, and that ensuing distortions have seriously obstructed significant progress throughout philosophy. The aim beyond this chapter is to use a reappraisal of the individual to lay the foundation for a more sustainable understanding of human freedom.

Descartes is widely accredited as the first great philosopher of the modern era. Compellingly simple, his conception of the self still enjoys wide acceptance in the Judaeo-Christian world. The fundamental status of the individual is asserted with his best-known words: "Cogito ergo sum." The self is essential for all consciousness and "I think therefore I am" proved the existence of any individual capable of thinking it. Thinking is an activity that I cannot doubt I do, because doubting is itself a form of thinking. All other activities, such as perceiving or action, entail a commitment beyond mere thinking to a reality beyond thought, and become vulnerable to deception and doubt. Descartes inferred that thinking is the quintessential activity of the ego. What I am is a "res cogitans", or "thinking thing." Whilst he acknowledged that we all possess other important faculties such as our senses, these remain non-essential components of the ego. These we may jettison without losing our essential being. This is the human soul whose essence is pure thought.

Descartes' concept of the self was able to reconcile a new scientific understanding of the human body with a Christian orthodoxy that was still very powerful in the seventeenth century. It is compatible with the idea of the existence of an immortal soul in temporary residence on a material Earth, and with an emergent understanding of the body as a perishable quasi-mechanical object. Accordingly Descartes is labelled a "mind-body dualist", believing mind and body to comprise distinct types of substance, the spiritual and the material. These two substances co-exist in the living human being and influence each other in causal relationships. The mind is of course the most important or essential part of the self, could conceivably occupy other bodies, and survive death in a disembodied form.

Descartes theory has always been recognised as problematic, even by devout Christians and within his own lifetime. One area of constant concern has been how and where the interaction between mind and body can take place when they represent fundamentally incompatible substances. I have never seen a decisive objection here, since it is no less mysterious how similar material objects or particles interact with each other when they exert a gravitational or electro- magnetic pull on

each other. The influence is real and undeniable, but the mechanisms of gravity or electro-magnetism themselves remain unexplained. More threatening to the Cartesian position is an individualism that condemns us all to inconsolable isolation. The problem of solipsism. If all I can be certain of are my own experiences, then how is it possible to identify with certainty experiences that are not my own, and so locate other individuals? I cannot have another's experiences, and mere perceptions of another material body and the actions it performs, will not furnish sufficient grounds for the belief that any experiences are occurring inside it. I have no way of telling if other souls have taken up residence inside other bodies. With nothing to count as evidence either way, a determined Cartesian might be given licence to bestow souls upon trees and rocks, and withhold them from women or other lesser life forms, just as the whim takes him. The sovereignty each of us enjoys in relation to our own experiences is also threatened, since any number of disembodied souls might take up residence within our own bodies and, being certain of the occurrence of only our own experiences, we would never be any the wiser.

An individualist assumption is the undoing of Descartes' position and any experience-based philosophy derived from it. The "cogito" fails because it presupposes the existence of the ego in order to prove its existence. Descartes' driving concern was to eliminate all thinking grounded in habit alone, and to rebuild an understanding of ourselves on firm and certain foundations. Yet he failed to eliminate the habitual belief in an ego. The premise of the "cogito", "I think" attributes thoughts to a pre-conceived ego, without considering whether any ego is either desirable or necessary for thoughts to occur. The unassailable insight, that doubting too is a form of thinking, does no more than prove that there is thinking, and therefore that there are thoughts. Of course, if you then yoke the thoughts to a postulated ego from the outset, then the indubitable conclusion, that the ego exists, neatly follows. Expressing the dictum in Latin helps conceal the vacuity of the "cogito" because personal pronouns do not appear in statements of this form.

I am not suggesting that we don't possess individual minds. I am questioning the image of the ego or self as an eternal spring from which all experience flows. The relationship between our individual selves, our experiences, our bodies and other individuals is a complex one. I should like to examine it more closely before attempting a dynamic alternative to the Cartesian model. Clearly central to our understanding of the self is the possession of a mind. Unlike inanimate objects we can have experiences, reflect, form judgements and so on. We also believe that each of us stands in a unique or privileged position in relation to our own

experiences. My experiences are exclusively my own. They are not transferable to others and they are private in the sense that I enjoy sole access to them. The relationship with my experiences, thoughts and feelings is direct. Others have only indirect access to them, by watching my behaviour, for instance, or by observing any disclosures I make. This seems to give each of us an incorrigible knowledge of the contents of our own minds since no one else can be placed so as to know what we ourselves are thinking and feeling. And yet self-knowledge is not without constraints, as most of us accept that we are capable of self-deception on occasions. Such a notion might be self-contradicting, and needs to be explored further. We also accept the concept of the subconscious in our explanations of some conduct, and concede that we may act from motives which we do not fully understand or acknowledge. Further discussion here is also needed.

However viewed, the self is persistent. Although our mortal lifespan is limited by our ability to maintain a healthy functioning body, our self or ego enjoys an uninterrupted existence within it. The flow of our experiences is broken by sleep, occasional unconsciousness and sporadic mindlessness, but the persistence of the self remains untroubled. In extreme cases it survives bouts of amnesia, sudden and total changes of personality, and mental disorders producing wild delusions about personal identity. It hasn't always been acknowledged but, when such afflictions occur, it is no longer doubted that they are events in the life of one and the same continuously existing person. In seeking to explain the unity and continuity of the self therefore, neither the flow of our experiences, nor a feeling of unity, nor the reliance upon the memory can offer straightforward answers.

Of equal importance to the self is the possession of a body. Our relationship with our bodies is close and lifelong. The body isn't some sort of disposable shell that accompanies us on life's spiritual quest. Equally important for the body as for the mind, ownership is also central to the operations of the self. The self isn't just a contiguous mind and body, but something that takes possession of both.

The body features prominently on several counts. Birth and death are defined in bodily terms. All normal experiences take place within the body and all experience of the world is made possible by the possession of bodily sense organs. The content and interpretation of these experiences will be determined by bodily position, condition, health and so on. We assert and express ourselves through our bodies, and our knowledge of others is dependent upon what we can observe of their bodily disposition in turn. Whatever its impact on our understanding of

the self, the body and the self are inseparable. Strong causal connections also link mind and body. What goes on in our bodies prompts emotional responses, for example, and the countless daily decisions we make incessantly spur the body to action.

In adopting a materialist position, and identifying the self with a particular human body, we can remove the problem of explaining the continuity of the self. Whatever our state of consciousness, the living body is a continuous lifelong material presence.

Materialism can also conserve comfortably the uniqueness of the self in the face of advances made in genetic engineering. It is sometimes thought that the development of human clones may lead to the regimentation of society and jeopardise the unique personal identity of each of us. Yet twins conceived naturally may be genetically identical and this has never seriously threatened their personal individuality or uniqueness. However conceived, each human develops an individual personality by virtue of possessing a unique bodily history. No two humans can undergo the same experiences in the same place at the same time. Even for twins the process of separation begins before the moment of birth. The position we occupy at any given time gives us a unique viewpoint on to the world around us, and contributes to the unique development of our individual personalities. The idea of any two things being both identical and unique is not problematic in any event. Each of the identical chairs from a set is also unique, for instance. All are made from different pieces of wood, and each will have a slightly different history by virtue of its unique position in space at every moment of its existence. Having one chair closer to the window, or another angled towards the fire will produce a subtly different pattern of fading on the surface or opening of the grain.

The Cartesian preoccupation with first person experience has shown it is necessary to emphasise that an adequate understanding of the self must embrace a world shared with others. There is nothing special or privileged about existence in the first person, since billions of us are capable of it. We may enjoy exclusive access to our own experiences, but concepts such as the mind and experience have a universal application. Recognising this again poses no difficulties for a materialist theory of the self, because each of us is a body and separate biological organism.

Assimilating the self with the body is not a straightforward matter however. We obtain direct knowledge of our own minds without observing the behaviour or condition of our own bodies. Whatever the

causes of our experiences, our own minds are accessible without the mediation of bodily observation. So there is an asymmetry in the ways we attribute experiences to ourselves and to others. Knowing our own minds requires no special observational skills. We are all capable of error and confusion, mistaking an imagined re-enactment for a memory, for example, but for most of the time the majority of us have no trouble knowing the contents of our own minds. We never need to stop and consider whether a thought is our own, or maybe belongs to someone else. Nor is the certainty we feel about our minds and their contents the product of investigation and close questioning. And yet, if we are to know others at all well, such procedures are essential. Establishing who these others are is an important preliminary to making any attributions to them, but there is no parallel step when making similar attributions to oneself.

The asymmetry of the self and others is often expressed in the notion of the “elusiveness” of the self. Whilst we seem able to perceive others directly, no corresponding experience seems to encapsulate our own selves in the same way. We can all perceive parts of ourselves, or simulate experiences of ourselves resembling those that others have of us. Looking in a mirror is one such. Yet no experience, it is suggested, can contain my entire self as its object, because I need to remain a subject having the experience of myself as object. I need simultaneously to be outside having the experience and inside it as its object. This leads some to conclude that the self harbours an essential ambivalence at its core. Sartre for instance maintained that repeated efforts to capture the self having an experience of itself produces only a pile of experiences: of the self having an experience, of the self having an experience of the self having an experience, and so on, et Sartre, et Sartre.

There is an important point being made here, but I am not so sure that the self is such a paradoxical creature. Reflexive relationships abound elsewhere and do not generate contradictions. Giving oneself a good scrub down has yet to erode the subject-object distinction. Nor are such relationships confined to conscious creatures. After a dusty session in the workshop, I may use the vacuum hose to clean the dust off the cylinder. The Hoover cleaning itself, so to speak. The roles of subject and object are still there, one active and the other the recipient, but in this case the same vacuum cleaner performs both. There is nothing paradoxical here. The roles are defined dynamically with reference to the direction of the activity. Even so we perhaps sense a possible paradox, for there does seem to be a requirement for reflexive relationships to operate between parts of an object: one part of the Hoover cleaning

another, and so on. So Sartre is probably right in suggesting that the encapsulation of the whole self in an act of self-consciousness does elude us. But it is not enough to give the individual prominence in his self-driven philosophy. The aspect of the reflexive it depends upon is by no means unique to consciousness.

Even if this supposed elusiveness of the self remains somewhat elusive in itself, the asymmetry of the self and others is still an important feature of our shared lives. Any satisfactory theory must accommodate the double faceted nature of the self as the object of both first person and third person perspectives, whilst ensuring they remain integrated in a single conception. Each is an aspect of the same person, and both a feature common to everyone. Experience-based theories commit the same error as Descartes in relying too heavily upon the first person perspective to define the self. Materialist theories avoid the error and locate the body as the source of personal identity, but are either unable or unwilling to recognise the internal first person dimension to our conscious lives. That is the inside view of our lives. Materialism relies upon biology and neural science to explain the workings of the mind exclusively in third person terms. Some critics have unkindly suggested that materialists lack a conscious inner life, for they do sometimes seem unwilling or unable to acknowledge or address the first person experience of having a mind, and all this entails. A failure to do so is a major failing for materialist theories. As I have already suggested, it implies a determinism that is quite at odds with unavoidable assumptions that underpin every aspect of our lives.

Concept-based theories try to avoid the two worlds scenario implicit in the work of Descartes, but without success. Starting out with an individual, active and conceptualising mind, as Kant and the existentialists have done for instance, seems to offer a more promising start. It seems feasible to attempt to distil first and third person viewpoints from a consciousness defined in terms of active engagement, and possible too to conceive the resulting encounters asymmetrically. But an integrated approach, where mind and body are conceived as different aspects of one person, begins to make the recognition of an independent mind and body more problematic. A degree of separation is necessary if interaction is to be possible. Mind and body are inseparably bonded, and yet capable of influencing one another. Indispensable ingredients of the self can be found in both, so neither can claim a monopoly on personal identity. Control or influence might be an alternative line of enquiry that is worth exploring, in the effort to delineate the self. But the picture is complicated by the fact that both mind and

body are capable of both active and passive attitudes, so neither activity nor passivity alone will unlock the secrets of the self.

Philosophers have often found it helpful to invoke the memory in order to unite our experiences and supply the sense of continuity needed for a concept of the self. This is especially true of those promoting an experience-based theory. Clearly the memory is important since, should we lose our memories, we have no idea who we are. One view that draws upon the memory resorts to that unique personal history where the materialists found their own guarantee of personal identity. As individuals, we are each able to draw upon a series of experiences representative of our unique psychological profile. These may include memory experiences, as well as the exercise of the memory faculty to integrate them into the life experience of a continuous and unique self. Despite its appeal to common ground shared with the materialists, this experience-based view has been widely challenged. It is objected that the exercise of the memory already presumes a knowledge of personal identity. Memory experiences are no different from perceptions or other experiences in the quest to locate the self. In carving out its individuality, the self will need to retrieve its own memories from the metaphorical bank where everybody's are stored. Theories of personal identity based on memory experiences beg the question, it is objected, because no one's memories have nametags attached. If the imprint of the memory supplies the hallmark of personal identity, then a means of deciding which memories belong to whom has to be devised. And this takes us back to the start.

Implicit in the challenge is the assertion that no knowledge-bearing experiences can be reduced to simple internalised events. Memories, like perceptions, must correspond or link in some way with a world beyond experience if they are to be free from error. If there is a disagreement over who rightly remembers performing a brave deed, for example, then we need to settle the issue by appeal to other evidence. Witnesses can supply decisive testimony but, in determining whose actions they saw, they rely on external characteristics and employ a body-based criterion of identity. Private judgements of memory or perception require us to venture out from internalised experiences because they are subject to arbitration in the public domain. Where personal identity is an issue, memory judgements are subordinated to established facts.

This argument strengthens a materialist position already emboldened by its success in accounting for the uniqueness, unity and continuity of an embodied self. Nonetheless it is less confident about explaining the

self's ownership of a particular body. It is not true that each of us selects one body and claims it as our own. It is not true that we discover that **ours** is the body that accompanies us wherever we venture. Nor is it true that scrupulous investigation has exposed our own body to be the source of the sense organs that make the world accessible to experience and, incidentally, the very same one that carries out our decisions and suffers the consequences of our actions. An exhaustive description will uncover innumerable connections between mind and body, but the challenge for materialism here is to explain how **I own my** body as you do yours, and why anybody should own any body at all. I do not discover the ownership of my body through the discovery of its material properties. Ownership does not reside there. A description of these properties does not amount to an inventory of the self. A self is already up and running, and is well aware of its operations when it begins to discover the material properties of its own body. It has a well developed inside view of itself. Only a self that is becoming fully fledged can recognise its own body as the source, accompaniment or instrument of its actions and experiences. We can be sure that the body does not conceal a possessive Cartesian ego, but we can also feel confident that the incorrigibility of self-knowledge, our asymmetrical relationship with others, and the unhesitating presumption of ownership point to a more enigmatic self that biology alone will not quite encompass.

The ownership of both mind and body clearly causes difficulties for the mind-based and body-based theories of the self. Theories that focus on the mind are unable to moderate the impulse to lay claim to everything within the orbit of the self, whilst ownership in any form eludes the efforts of the body-based theorists. For a dynamic theory, ownership is crucially important in defining the self, and so it is here that I shall begin. I have already characterised our experiences and actions in terms of deploying the powers of mind and body in pursuit of an agenda. I chose the word "agenda" in preference to objective or aim because an agenda can contain a number of interrelated objectives and include an appraisal of means to secure them. The self is principally an organising and appropriating presence seeking to impose its agenda upon reality. It strives to shape the course of events in the direction of its own objectives or priorities.

There is nothing mysterious about the self and its "presence." There is no ethereal soul ensconced inside the body, nor a supernatural life force that animates its working parts. The self is an embodied form in the sense that biology understands the body, but conceived dynamically, the living self continually affirms an agenda through actively engaging its surroundings. The embodied self isn't just an organism that represents

the focus of the appropriating activity of a self. Nor is it simply the tool that is deployed in appropriating the environment in which a self operates. Living existence consists in the appropriating activity itself. Every lungful of air that I breathe results from an appropriating action that harnesses the body and the air it inhales to a life affirming objective. Within this dynamic relationship we will find ourselves, our minds, bodies and other selves. The full complexity of the self resides here. Nor is there the suspicion of circularity that the question “Whose self?” might arouse. The appropriating body does not presume the existence of a pre-existing self that is doing all the appropriation. The self carves out an existence through the exclusive appropriating activity itself.

Our earliest encounters with reality introduce us to our general subjectivity. This I discussed briefly in Chapter One. In following the agenda of our most primitive and instinctive urges towards warmth, succour and so on, we are impelled into an engagement with reality. We soon discover the indifference of the material world in response to the demands we make upon it. Things just don't behave the way we would like them to. Our agenda represents a partiality towards a reality whose response is largely neutral with regard to its implementation. Just forget parental intervention for the moment! At this level resistance, failure and disappointment are probably necessary for the appreciation of satisfaction or fulfilment. They provide a context or background against which success becomes noticeable or appreciable.

The recognition of a resistance, the result of a *pressure* we exert on reality, is the simplest and earliest experience of the self. On this we build our internal view of our experiences and ourselves that places a dynamic position at odds with every version of materialism. In line with the general subjectivity that produces it, dynamism suggests this is the recognition of a **general** self. It is the body operating according to an agenda independent of any concept of our own or other **individual** selves. So we can already avoid one of the problems that plague an experience-based theory of the self. We can grasp our own subjectivity without having simultaneously to concede the subjectivity of others. We have a platform on which we can later build an understanding of our individual selves in contrast to others. Dynamism gains a crucial advantage over all other theories at this point. It offers us a simple, general concept of the self. Areas where it is applicable are distinguishable from areas where it is not, simply through the pressure of aspirations upon an environment where they are not immediately and fully gratified.

Of course our earliest excursions into reality reveal more than just the indifference of floors and furniture. Reality is not an entirely neutral arena, because it contains other life forms. They exert their own influence upon reality, and pursue their own objectives there. Recognising other people will be more immediate when the contact with them is direct. From the moment we are born we are in contact with the endeavours of others pursuing an agenda of their own. Our encounters with them will produce results that will be shaped by the pressure of their own priorities.

The simple dynamic idea of conscious activity, requiring the direct imposition of an agenda upon reality, can now help us understand how we identify people or other living creatures there. On this view consciousness consists neither of contemplation detached from reality, nor of material events simply occurring there. The dynamic consciousness directs material events towards a purpose. The mere presence of living creatures thus sets up an opposition between events that are so directed and those that are not. Locating others out there in the world is accordingly straightforward. Even as young children we can appreciate the difference between, for example, a locked door which bars our entry into a room, and the actions of a mischievous elder brother standing in the doorway, intent on teasing us and determined to prevent our entry. The locked door resists our efforts evenly and indifferently, but an elder brother represents a different kind of barrier. His actions are systematically organised towards fulfilling his own objective of deriving amusement from undermining ours. Just as I suggested we might get to know the flow of a river dynamically by engaging with the current, by stepping into the water perhaps, or holding a stick against the flow, so we can get to know others through a comparable process of engagement. This time however we encounter a different kind of impetus with its own agenda, and which may assist, oppose or outwit our own. Special skills will be needed to negotiate our own path through an environment peopled by others. And yet it is only through finding others as potential challengers to our plans that we really get to know of their existence at all.

There is no need to speculate about the existence of others behind their bodily performances, because we can engage them directly and might know them as well as we know ourselves. Locating them is not a matter of projecting or extending a version of our own selves on to some organism or mechanism that might house them. Nor can we confuse our own self with them, because the recognition of others, and the agenda they pursue, is only possible within a framework established by our own agenda. The problem of solipsism only arises because

experience-based theories remove and isolate the self from our shared environment. Dynamism locates the source of self-discovery here, so the separation never occurs.

A dynamic theory can succeed where others fail because it makes a distinction between the identity of a self and its individuation. Our self-identity or general subjectivity is discovered through pressing an agenda upon reality. Operating at this level we are able to comprehend both need and desire, and can even recognise means of satisfying both. With self-identity assured we can move on to the secondary stage of individuating our self from other individual selves. Now we recognise that there can be other selves comparable to our own, and distinguishable by the alternative agendas they pursue. We do have a concept of our self before we reach this stage, but will universalise all our thoughts, feelings, and other experiences or dispositions until the existence of others is acknowledged. For instance, a new-born baby has no alternative but to regard a feeling of hunger as a universal feeling, until such time as it is able to individuate others as other possible sources of hunger. In its pre-individuated state, the baby's feelings, wishes and needs stand for all feelings, all thoughts and all needs. It has yet to acquire a sense of itself as an individual.

We therefore find a dynamic self operating at two levels. At a primary level we discover our existence as a conscious self, and at the secondary we recognise our individual identity. The general and the particular selves they represent are not separate worlds or existences for the self however. We discover our personal identity as we operate within and through our general conscious identity. The recognition of our own and others' individual selves acts as a constricting influence upon the conscious self, because it requires us to acknowledge limits to its attributes and scope for action. In individuating our personal selves we have to accept we are operating in a greatly reduced territory largely dominated by others.

Operating at two levels helps us to understand two important features of the self. The first is an asymmetry in the acquisition of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others. The scope for self-knowledge has to be the broader, because it embraces the self at both levels. So it includes the sensations we feel and the observations we make, for instance. These can remain at the primary level and need not feature in any engagement with others. In order to obtain any knowledge, we need to engage our bodies and our surroundings, but much can be picked up independently. We don't need others to supply us with that knowledge, and they don't have to be privy to it. Knowledge of each other only

becomes available where individuals operate and interact at the secondary level. We now observe each other, share and discover those same perceptions and feelings. Others are able to engage with us, and we with them and we pick up knowledge of those same observations and feelings by way of the accessibility that is extended to them.

The second of these features is that elusive, direct and subjective quality characterising first person experience, and missing from our third person attributions. Even though your experiences and mine may be very similar, my experience of them will be quite unlike my perception of yours. It is hard to explain, but that is just a part of what me being me, and of you not being me, consists in. Perhaps a dynamic theory of the self makes this feature somewhat easier to explain. From my point of view I, the first person, operates at both primary and secondary levels, whilst you and he, the second and third person, operate only at the secondary level. The asymmetry of self-knowledge and shared knowledge corresponds to the different routes by which we gather knowledge at each level. Direct experience furnishes us with the knowledge at the primary level, whereas we need to secure access to the operations of others at the secondary. The special quality attaching to first person experience starts out simply as the self at the primary level of operation. This carries into the secondary level as we discover and operate within the confines of our individual selves. It is not a quality that is transferable between selves, because the scope to recognise others at the secondary level only occurs as a constraint on and within the operation of the self at the primary level. It has to be exclusive and inalienable, and understood in terms of concepts that lie beyond the scope of a materialist level of explanation. Being a quality that is not transferable, we have also to accept that we are stuck with it for life!

So what of that uniquely personal first person quality that attaches itself to every experience and which is the chronic source of so much philosophical bafflement? What has Dynamism to say about this? First its importance has been exaggerated. That first person quality is not an essential component of the experience since two people can share the same thought or have the same experience, and it can be discussed in third person terms. It becomes unique and personal only by virtue of a unique occurrence in time or space, or by dint of some individuating characteristics that remove it from a shared arena. Second the experiences themselves are not objects in the cast of the material things that typically clutter philosophical discourse. For Dynamism everything that can be perceived or sensed is knowable through a dynamic engagement, and it is the type of engagement that characterises the

nature of the thing perceived or sensed. The personal thought or feeling engages the imagination or senses in its own particular way that circumstances shape.

So a dynamic theory can accommodate our personally weighted understanding of what we are and remedy two of the major failings of materialist theories here. It tells us something about the unique experience of being ourselves, and the exclusive manner in which we can gain self-knowledge. The exposition may sound complicated, but the basic idea is simple. We need an understanding of ourselves in order that we can venture into the world and recognise other similar creatures there. If such an understanding were based exclusively upon self-examination, we would fail to recognise anything other than ourselves. If we had no preconceptions and no such understanding, we would have no guidance as to what we were looking for. Dynamism can offer us the necessary understanding here. All that is needed to define our conscious selves is to harness the powers of a body in the pursuit of an agenda. An inalienable claim is staked that underpins an asymmetry in the self and will sustain the subjectivity of self-knowledge.

The unity of a continuous self also becomes clearer in a dynamic model. A cursory inside view of our conscious lives presents a disjointed appearance rather at odds with an understanding of the self as a continuous and unchallenged occupant of the body. Thoughts, mental images, memories, dreams, decisions and actions spring up irregularly without any obvious common thread or shared property suggesting a single source in a unified self. Hume sought some unifying principle that he felt was needed to substantiate a notional idea of a self, and gave up. Experiences do not present themselves to Empiricists complete with name tags. This is not a problem for Materialist theories, as we have seen, since the diversity of experience can be traced to the operations of a continuously functioning human organism. Nor is it a problem for dynamism that similarly locates human life where a body pursues a living agenda. But Materialism is deficient in other areas, and its understanding of the unity is flawed. We do not discover that our experiences emanate from a common source as a conclusion reached from a thorough exploration of our bodies. We are confidently in possession of this knowledge, and of its inalienability, well before any such investigation gets underway.

Dynamism therefore offers us an integrated self. It is an embodied, appropriating being, defined by the capacity for both experience and action. So what is the relationship of this self to both mind and body in its possession, and how are mind and body themselves related? Being

capable of consciousness, we have minds. But a mind is not some special form or entity that occupies the body. No special stuff or spiritual matter sustains its operations. It has been demonstrated that the operations of the mind and the brain are closely related, and yet it is wrong to draw a materialist conclusion that mind and brain are identical. Indeed many materialists themselves regard the assimilation as too simplistic, and point to the complexity of the entire nervous system that connects to the brain, spreading throughout the body and intimately associated with conscious events at every level. A dynamic theory recognises this, but still insists that no assimilation of the mental and physical is sustainable. Living organisms cannot be simplified below a level where an agenda is imposed on these material processes and vital relationships created.

Nor can life and consciousness be equated. Consciousness is a sophisticated activity found only in some living things. Whereas living things possess the power to impose an agenda on their surroundings, conscious creatures are capable of a greater resourcefulness. They can adapt and devise new ways and discover new routes to achieve success. These might include approaching an obstacle from a new angle, or delaying the approach until advantageous conditions prevail.

Drawing a line between conscious and non-conscious life forms is not easy. Few distinctions of degree are. However I suggest that consciousness is a requirement for creatures capable of movement. In other words fauna are conscious, whereas flora are not. Movement requires the co-ordinated use of senses and the control of a central nervous system. These enable the sustained application of the investigative powers necessary for perception and sensation. Slugs are conscious on this definition, but plants are not. Plants are certainly sensitive to their environment and can, through growth, negotiate their way around obstacles in order, for example, to reach towards the light. Indeed I would say that a plant, along with all life forms possesses certain concepts such as light and dark. But it is not conscious of them to the extent that it can adapt its orientation and devise new strategies in order to secure its objectives. Plants have been left behind by a process of evolution that took hundreds of millions of years to produce even the simplest conscious organisms.

So what then of the mind? On a dynamic view it simply comprises the conscious operations of the self. Where is it? It forms a part of the embodied self who owns and controls it. Not a physical part, but rather a faculty or capacity for a higher level of activity. Probably this is too

broad for a definition, since we often denigrate mindless acts that are clearly performed consciously. Most of us prefer to confine the operations of the mind to activities requiring reflection or premeditation. That seems fine. Isolating these more complex or higher order conscious activities leaves them almost exclusively in the possession of human beings. We may continue debating whether chimpanzees or dolphins share minds with us in consequence, but slugs, although conscious, are completely out of the running.

Were we to create a robot capable of these same higher order activities, would it have a mind? In order to do so the creature would need to have a control mechanism every bit as complex as the human brain. So yes. No doubt about it. We would have created life artificially and it would have a mind able to think, feel and imagine. It would be capable of the full range of the enormous number of responses and initiatives found in the fully developed human. But this is probably not the question in the minds of most people who pose it. They are perhaps concerned with a more feasible extension of a computer technology that has so far produced machines able to play chess, effect prodigious calculations, and process information well beyond the levels once thought to be the reserve of our sharpest brains.

It is certainly humbling to find computers encroaching on areas in which we once invested much of our sense of supremacy. But I don't think that we should feel threatened and start surrendering our minds to flakes of silicon just yet. On a dynamic view at least, it is not just the complexity of our operations that marks us out as conscious beings. We invest these with a purpose that is entirely absent from the operations of computers. Human beings are creatively impelled towards or away from endeavour by motives such as ambition, love, boredom and envy. The creative output our motives produce will remain beyond the reach of a computer, so long as it is unable to produce these. A computer can play chess and its operations will be programmed towards the conclusion of a winning position. However it lacks a resourcefulness to devise, except by random generation or exhaustive search, any new strategy or operations beyond those it has been programmed systematically to carry out.

It may become possible to programme a computer to pursue a set of objectives similar to those of living things, to renew and replicate its working parts, to show possessiveness and make synthetic displays of emotion. But this is not conscious activity so long as it remains subordinate to the programmed set of instructions that a conscious being or programmer has provided. It remains a simulation. Only if it

becomes possible to devise a computer capable of acting autonomously should we become concerned. For then we would have created another conscious life form. We should not worry too much that computers appear to be taking over the World. Rather it is when they want to take over that we should become worried.

It might seem that our emotional impulses stand between us and the achievement of our objectives. Maybe so, but it is something we cannot avoid. We are all human beings, unable or unwilling to sidestep the pleasures and the pains of engaging with each other at an emotional level. And yet it is precisely that emotional engagement that lends a uniquely human direction to our inventiveness in art, technology and other fields. When computers create their own ways of solving problems, start resisting our efforts to programme them and strive to impose their own agenda upon their operations, then we may justifiably become concerned. A computer that cheats at chess, without having been programmed to do so, is far closer to consciousness than one that is unbeatable. Independence and even defiance are actually qualities more closely associated with a developing consciousness than conformity. Perhaps that is why we do not always discourage their appearance in children. A child learns to say "No!" before it says "Yes!" and, in so doing, is developing the consciousness necessary for realising an autonomous individual identity. Feelings and aspirations will always prevent us from becoming as efficient as computers in the activities where computers excel. But as a member of the human race, and one that has played the odd game of chess, my considered view is that it is the computers that are missing out.

We now turn from the mind to the body. Its boundaries are clearly defined and, ethical considerations apart, it submits to the scrutiny of scientific investigation as readily as any other material object. It causes headaches for experience-based theories, but only because the existence of material objects generally is problematic. Materialist theories encounter rather fewer problems, of course, because the body represents an integrated system and the starting point for its dissection of the self. Concept-based theories on the other hand afford the body an ambivalent position. On the one side they acknowledge its organic form, but on the other recognise its special relationship in our lives as the instrument for the realisation of our goals, and the condition for making reality accessible to us. These dual aspects of the self, both passive and active, both subjective and objective, can be difficult to reconcile and accommodate compatibly within a single concept. How does the inside view that each of us finds in our own bodies tie up with the outside view described in the biological textbooks, for instance? I have developed a

dynamic view that recognises the material form of the body, and its instrumental role in imposing an agenda upon its actions and operations. It differs from the concept-based alternatives in placing the body under continuous and exclusive ownership, and integrating subjective and objective within the operations of this embodied self. Inner and outer views are located as the self operating at two levels of subjectivity.

The dynamic view needs to be developed and address some of the implications of an integrated approach. One is to clarify the limits of the body when the instrumental and the biological don't coincide, and another must be to allow both mind and body some flexibility and independence, and to explain how one can influence the other.

An instrumental view of the body encounters problems as soon as the body picks up tools or instruments of its own. I have canvassed the view that perception proceeds by using the body and its senses to effect a controlled exploration of reality. If I pick up a stick in order to prod and tap a stone, the investigation follows similar lines. The probing and tentative exploration of the stone produces subtle variations in the resistance the stick meets, and these are sensed in the fingers holding it. In effect I feel the stones through the stick, and yet it is not a part of my body. Should we consider that it is so?

This is not too difficult a problem from a dynamic point of view. The stick is not a part of a body because it is easily detachable, and can be appropriated by others. An essential component of body ownership is that it is not transferable. A stick may cause sensations to be felt in the body but we cannot feel sensations in the stick. Perhaps it is puzzling that the example should pose a problem at all, but such is our dexterity on occasions that tools or instruments seem to cease to become objects, and become extensions of our subjective selves. For concept-based philosophies who locate the self in that instrumentality, preventing it from extending literally into paintbrushes or ivory keys will be problematic.

An unusual and much discussed surgical case is that of the "phantom limb" experienced by amputees who report sensations apparently emanating from the area of a limb that has been removed. There is no doubt that these are genuine sensations. On an instrumental interpretation, the body appears to persist as an extension of some "body image" and there is a problem of explaining its presence in a non-physical form. Representing the limit of sensation in bodily terms might also pose difficulties, but I have not tried to define the body in terms of sensation. If anything it has been the other way about. An essential

feature of sensation is that it lacks the complexity that mobility lends to the perception. So there is no suggestion that the experience of the phantom limb is a perception, and little investigation is needed to establish that the sensations felt by an amputee do not proceed from outside his or her body. Poking at the vacated area when the patient is unaware of it produces no response, for instance. The best explanation will look for a cause, and refers to the confused signals sent by damaged nerve endings to a brain that is able, in time, to make readjustments.

An independence of mind and body is necessary if both are going to influence each other. The Cartesian solution encounters problems trying to explain how fundamentally different substances can interact, and in locating the point of interaction. That there is interaction is undeniable from a common sense point of view. To demonstrate the power of mind over matter, I need only voluntarily to raise my arm, whilst injury and illness are palpable causes of pain and malaise and demonstrate the reverse. Materialist and concept-led theories aim at a much closer integration of mental and physical processes, and so encounter problems explaining the independence of the mind to act freely and oppose the disposition of the body. A dynamic solution integrates mind and body as aspects of the living embodied self. I have suggested that the mind represents the higher order operations of a conscious being, such as those requiring thought and judgement. Within the context of this question however, I suspect most are interested in a broader range of conscious operations and their relationship with the body, such as the capacity for experience and decision-making. These activities are all intimately related to the physical operation of sense organs, brain and other processes. Separating them from the non-conscious operations, such as cell renewal and breathing, is the direction we are able to give them by the exertion of our mental powers. Our minds don't lurk behind the purposes with which we act, but consist in the power to give direction and purpose to the operations of our bodies.

An opposition of mind and body is consequently built into the fabric of the self. This is not an opposition that is fixed or restricted to zones of the body. Consciousness isn't confined to the brain for instance. Depending upon what we are doing and the circumstances of our actions, the body as a whole may be an instrument of consciousness, or particular lines of communication between brain and specific organs become, metaphorically speaking, the conduit for conscious activity. There is a difference between lightly touching the planed surface of a plank and examining the same fingers to look for a splinter. In the second example the eyes and their routes to the brain assume the

greater part of consciousness, and the fingers are relegated towards passivity as the objects of perception. This facility for consciousness to divert attention from one part of the body's operations to another will help explain the full scope of consciousness in future chapters.

Even materialists deny that consciousness can be exclusively assimilated with brain activity, since they recognise the complexity of the entire nervous system and the contribution that changes there make to the quality of conscious experience. Yet dynamism rejects the notion that conscious operations can be identified with any operations of the body, however activated and routed through the nervous system. The identification is too simple insofar as it ignores the way our bodily resources are harnessed to a living agenda, and leaves questions such as personal identity, and human freedom unanswered.

Dynamism also rejects the associated idea that exclusively causal explanations will suffice to explain the passage of conscious events. Neural and connected events are certainly essential for consciousness, and causal explanations are often pertinent to our understanding of how conscious processes work. But they do not give us the complete picture. Causal explanations are very useful when we need to explain a breakdown in the normal channels of perception. Cataracts disturb the vision, and certain drugs impair coordination. As in many other spheres of human activity, we look for causes when things malfunction, and they guide us towards areas where remedial action is required. They are also useful when we try to explain how, in a general way, faculties such as sight or hearing work. Both are very valuable and interesting, but they do not cover the full range of explanations we seek. It is not a discourse upon the workings of the internal combustion engine that I necessarily seek when I wonder why a car has sped past the house. It would also sound rather fatuous to locate the tree in my garden as the cause of my seeing it, and often irrelevant to cite the influence of photons hitting the retina, and the production of tiny electronic emissions to the brain, as an explanation of the experience I am having. These can be assumed in normal circumstances. The reason I am looking at the tree is that it has just come into full blossom and looks particularly attractive this year. This type of explanation guides us towards an objective or purpose, rather than looking back for an antecedent cause.

Exclusively causal explanations are often inadequate, because perception represents more than causally linked sequences of biological events. A person needs to be attentive and receptive in order to perceive, and a certain interest in one's surroundings, such as an objective or purpose, supplies a context in which particular objects or

features become noticeable. Causal explanations take this guiding interest for granted when often it supplies the key to understanding the nature of an experience, and why it occurred. There is an important place for causal explanations, but perception is an action that harnesses the body towards goals within an environment far broader than biological explanations alone can embrace. Materialism of course goes further than our everyday inquiries, and pursues causal explanations back beyond the guiding interests within which they are normally seen to operate. The final chapter will tackle the issue of causality and determinism more fully at this level.

Causal explanations of a different kind can shed light upon the relationship between mind and body however. Conscious events may themselves be causes. Their relevance and value is recognised because they are representative of an agenda that makes them comparable to the events they seek to explain. A sudden thought makes me turn back for the file I have left at home, whilst the memory of an earlier absent-minded episode causes me to blush. The actions cohere as part of the life of a continuous self striving to implement something of a plan that renders individual actions significant and understandable. Causal explanations can then proceed without recourse to too much context setting.

A dynamic understanding of the mind-body relationship allows ample scope for causal explanations in an area where we seek to promote our aspirations, but often find ourselves thwarted by adversity, miscalculation or other impediments. Usually there is also a place for alternative types of explanation to have simultaneous applications to one event. Those we produce will again depend upon circumstances and the type of understanding we seek. An attractive feature of the dynamic approach is that it does not have to be dogmatic over what is an admissible explanation. It is not constricted to the exclusively causal or non-causal categories of explanation that are allowed to emerge from narrow definitions of experience, matter or concepts.

Throughout this chapter I have resisted the Cartesian view that locates the self in a privileged access to an exclusively private flow of consciousness. Nonetheless experiences can remain private, so it should be possible to explain how this is so without slipping back into a solipsist abyss. After all, being secretive about our thoughts and feelings is not a sophisticated accomplishment. Since we often make it a matter of policy to keep some of them that way, then further explanation is needed.

A dynamic approach to privacy makes the concealment of sensations thoughts and feelings a secondary concern. Often there is a palpable cause for the occurrence of an experience such as pain or pleasure, and concealing this from others may not be possible. Whether hidden or not however, the experience itself exists as the product of a relationship between a self and the body it operates. Some bodily occurrences characteristic of the experience, located in the brain, nervous system and elsewhere, will always be taking place. They are not always evident, but may be closely linked to behaviour and symptoms that are very much so. More obvious shows include blushing or agitation, and may be hard to suppress. As technology progresses the scrutiny of scanners and other sophisticated detectors will make life more difficult for those wishing to conserve their privacy. For the most part, however, it is amply sufficient that we guard against any tendency to betray our private thoughts in words or deeds or by some other giveaway. Keeping silent or failing to produce an appropriate reaction may also arouse suspicion though, so none would dispute that a successful policy of concealment requires considerable skill. Dynamism simply follows common sense on the matter. Keeping a thought to oneself is not unlike keeping a secret diary. A number of precautions will be necessary, and the best policy may be never to inform anyone of its existence. More extreme emotional states cannot conform to this pattern, since they require a minimum by way of public display that defies any effort to control them. An impassive countenance cannot seriously be supposed to be seething with anger for instance. But more on emotions in a later chapter.

Dynamism supplies a definition of consciousness that is rooted in our facility to control our bodies, so the issue of privacy tends to raise practical rather than philosophical questions. All that is needed to protect our privacy is an ability to conceal our conscious operations from public scrutiny. Simply removing ourselves from public scrutiny will often suffice. The Cartesian consciousness relies upon an impenetrable privacy to define the self, but for dynamism the self derives substance from an inalienable ownership of a body, provided with and acquiring the skills to manage its affairs and control the extent of its disclosures.

Recognising experiences in others is a more sophisticated achievement than either recognising others per se, or recognising experiences in ourselves. I suspect that it comes as something of a shock to most of us when, at the age of about three, we discover that others are able to feel pain as well as ourselves. This is partly because it takes us that long to move from recognising ourselves operating at the primary level to operating at the secondary. Yet it takes us longer to grasp the

relationship of cause to effect between the circumstances or conditions for pain and the occurrence of the sensation. Recognising sensations in ourselves precedes recognition of them in others, but this should not create problems over whether you and I can ever have the same pains, or whether I can ever know your sensations with the same certainty that I know my own. The issue never becomes one of having to compare private experiences.

Pain interferes with the conduct of our lives and the personal understanding we all acquire of it converges here: upon its debilitating consequences for effective action. Experiences are inextricably linked to the ways in which we operate that can be equally appreciated at first, second and third person levels. There is no scope for people's different experiences of pain to become separated unless new conditions are introduced or discovered that distinguish them. We are all unique individuals, but it is quite normal to say of, for instance, two men suffering from sciatica, that they are getting the same pain. Until that is we begin to locate individual differences in the conditions that represent or influence the experience. One might be taking painkillers, or the inflexibility of the other's spine may be more extensive. What we look for in order to define and distinguish the quality of a pain experience are discernible conditions that influence the relationship of the patient with his own body. Experience-based theories look in vain for conditions under which our individual experiences converge. Dynamism seeks and finds ample evidence for our individuality in the ways those same experiences diverge.

Arriving at accurate appraisals of each other's mental states is never that simple of course. As with many scientific investigations we may be working with two or more inextricable variables, and uncertain how much weight to give to each. People can react very differently to similar conditions, such as the stifling heat in a crowded room. Is the one who protests the loudest the one suffering the most, or is he simply making an inordinate fuss about a level of discomfort no different from his more stoical colleagues? Some people are simply better at coping with discomfort and stress than others. So this is not the sort of question that can be settled simply by examining a single instance. Other situations need to be examined and variables changed, so that the influence of each can be ascertained with more accuracy. The aim of the protest may be to make quite a different point, and if this is resolved all expostulations may subside. Similarly, children rather more blatantly look to their surroundings for explanations of their inner feelings. Usually far less effective than adults at coping with conflicting pressures and managing a situation, the operations of a child's mind are more transparent. An ability to separate, diagnose and weigh the influences is

a requirement of good parenthood, and can only be gained through getting to know the strength of each influence, by seeing it work in a variety of contexts. Happily dynamism is well placed to accommodate these simple observations on human psychology, because the dynamics of the human mind, the competing variables that underpin our actions, are best understood in terms of the dual relationship between ourselves and the conditions under which we operate. Our ability to manage discomfort and pain actually influences the quality of the sensation itself. Experience-based theories seem to be much more stoical. They just don't seem to allow themselves any such latitude.

As we reach the conclusion of this chapter, a picture of the self is emerging that is both widely diverse in its attributes and yet firmly integrated into a whole. The approach I advocate doesn't look for a unified self in the diversity of attributes, nor does it seek to designate any one of them as a central unifying principal. The unity of the self is found in the exclusive claims made upon the operations of a body. With selfhood embedded not just in a material form, but also in its ownership and appropriation, some of the more puzzling attributes of the self become explicable. One of the more baffling features of the human mind for instance is its capacity for levels of consciousness. Those theories that root selfhood in consciousness have trouble finding a place for subconscious levels of experience, or for those periods of consciousness where we routinely appear to be aware of our surroundings, and capable of operating in them and yet appear unable to retain any recollection of them. Excessively long spells of motorway driving can induce "auto-pilot" syndrome, for example, where drivers find themselves operating at a low level of consciousness. Brain scientists document more extreme examples of this kind, where localised brain damage has produced bizarre examples of patients who are on the one hand conscious of their surroundings, and able to locate things there, but on the other, completely unaware that they have done so. Their consciousness not only produces no recollections, but vehement denials quite at odds with their actions. These are not mere lapses of memory, but chronic incapacities occasioned by a loss of communication between different parts of the brain.

Such examples pose difficulties for experience-based theories of the self, because for them the essence of consciousness is a continuous awareness. This needs to be a form of self-consciousness for Cartesian theories, and for others such as existential phenomenology, an awareness of our surroundings or situation. An experience of which we have no consciousness appears self-contradictory and threatens to sever the bonds that bind the self.

The idea of a subconscious self or experience is a controversial one, but dynamism can offer it provisional accommodation. The self embodies all the body's operations, and many of these have no conscious component at all. The actions of a self are simply representative of a living agenda. Respiration and circulation may be influenced by our perceptions and emotional states, but they are not dependent upon conscious operations for their regulation. We would probably forget about them and perish if they were. Indeed few of our activities are conscious in the sense that we are fully alert and attentive to their every nuance. The supposition that we may be subject to the internal influence of forces of which we are not fully conscious is feasible and warrants investigation. The suggestion does nothing to undermine a dynamic conception of the self. Whether or not the extent of this influence assumes Freudian proportions has long been thought more doubtful however.

With the importance of self consciousness removed from the central position it occupied in Cartesian philosophy, it nonetheless remains an intriguing phenomenon for us to understand. That quintessence of consciousness is often referred to as the seat of the soul, the source of our spirituality and a meta-experience elevated beyond the reach of materialism. It is one thing simply to be staring at a tree, but quite another to be conscious of doing so, or so it is supposed. That the two experiences are different is not worth disputing, but I think we perhaps invest too heavily in the extent of the gulf between them. To be conscious of one's self, or to be conscious that one is experiencing something appears to me to be an awareness of the individuality of the experience. This is the individuality it has because of the particular person having it, the specific conditions under which it is experienced, and the thoughts, feelings and so on that contribute to its complexion. The faculty for self-consciousness is a sophisticated one, and we find a wide scope for its application throughout our lives. In dynamic terms however it is no more than the self operating at the secondary level of individuation, albeit at an advanced level of discrimination. To be self conscious, when it is not that uncomfortable experience of finding oneself the object of the scrutiny of others, is to be acutely conscious of one's individual selfhood and the unique quality of the life and experiences it produces. This is certainly a sophisticated accomplishment which raises our consciousness above that of other animals, but not sufficient, I fear, to secure us a place beside the gods.

With an understanding of consciousness that has neither a void nor omniscient spirit at its core, it may be possible to make more sense of the idea of self-deception. I waver on this problem and wonder whether

such a phenomenon is possible. There does appear to be a contradiction involved in knowingly setting out to deceive oneself. One and the same person cannot simultaneously be both deceiver and deceived. Yet we readily admit the concept into our understanding of each other, and we are all perhaps guilty of some self-deception. The chronic nicotine addict who sincerely professes that the next cigarette out of the packet will be his last is surely a clear and extreme case of self-deception. All the evidence of past failed attempts points to this. But how so when the smoker is as aware of the evidence as any of us? Clearly there is an element of blindness here, or a refusal to face the truth. Somebody who is self-deceived will not acknowledge nor accept the implications of the available evidence and will go to some lengths to prevent or avoid detection. Self-esteem is a common motive, and sympathy, respect or admiration often sought from a target audience. All of us are vulnerable to self-deception because maintaining a belief in ourselves is so important to help us to manage our lives effectively. Even others may flatter us with lies when we are depressed, simply to help restore our confidence, and self-deception may be a similar exercise in encouragement. It is likely to flourish where the path that leads to exposure or discovery can be concealed or obstructed. Until that path is taken, the self-deceived might still suppose that it will vindicate his cherished beliefs.

The possibility of self-deception is allowed for in a dynamic theory where purposeful activities may have little or no conscious component at a primary level of subjectivity. The self-deceived is able to suppress any self-examination without making a conscious decision to do so. Other more basic impulses have ensured this. Nonetheless the concept is a tricky one, not least because the behaviour of the self-deceived is so often indistinguishable from the manipulative confidence trickster. The main difference seems to be that the discovery of the rogue usually ensures a swift end to his activities, whereas we are far more likely to tolerate or protect the self-deceived. We care for their feelings, find them amusing, or perhaps recognise an impulse in them we struggle with inside ourselves.

I have covered many questions and suggested a few answers in this investigation into the soul of the self. At first glance it resembles a materialist theory, with its constant Cartesian bashing, and with the possession of a body emphatically at its heart. But this is not another detached and third person rendition of our inner lives. Our possession of a body and our sensitivity to and control of its enormously complex operations gives us the director's chair from which our mature first person perspective can develop. The leap from the objective

examination of a body to the subjective appropriation of its operations is not an easy one to make, and it has taken me some time to get used to it myself. A part of the difficulty is that we still search for an experience somehow interposed between our minds and the world it represents. It might help to regard experience far less as a flickering two-dimensional film or fuzzy soundtrack of reality, somewhat blurred at the edges, gazed at and scrutinised from out of the inner darkness of our minds. All our senses establish direct links with their objects and are variations of the faculty of touch. This is not to say that every perceptible object spreads tentacles over the perceivable distance to the sense organs that detect them. All that I suggest is that our sense organs offer us unimpeded access to the world around us. The signals we pick up are a direct source of information, so long as we can read it. Our understanding of reality is greatly complicated when we discover the number and range of conditions that influence our sense experience. If our lives are to become effective, we need to make sense of the pulsating stream of data that confronts us from birth. We must get a grip upon reality. We have to locate our surroundings as a field for our endeavours, get our bearings, then devise and negotiate a course through them. It's what life is all about really!

**Summary of Conclusions.** The key to understanding ourselves lies in ownership. Each of us is an organising and appropriating being that seeks to impose an agenda upon reality. The self operates at two levels within this relationship: those of the general and the individual self. Our general self manifests itself in all conscious activity, and can proceed without the recognition of others. At this fundamental level our general subjectivity supplies the platform upon which our individual subjectivity is built. The individual self operates within constraints on the operation of the general self in its encounters with those pursuing alternative agendas. The individual self is a general self that is active under social conditions.

An important consequence of operating at two levels is an asymmetry between the first person witness of our own personal experiences and the third person witness of the lives of others. Dynamism reconciles the first person and third person perspectives, peculiar to experience-based and materialist theories respectively, by making both depend upon second person engagement. Our own operations are experienced at both general and individual levels, but any interaction with others takes place only at the individual level. The individual ownership of mind and body can only be claimed through or within the operations of the general self. So the asymmetry demarcates a general ownership of ourselves that is non-transferable.

The unity and the continuity of the self are assured within this framework. Consciousness represents a flexibility and adaptability in pursuing an agenda that is possible for creatures possessing the central nervous system capable of coordinated movement. The self possesses a mind by dint of its capacity for consciousness. This is missing from computers and other inanimate forms.

**Although capable of prodigious feats, computers lack the emotional life necessary for the creativity and flexibility that generate the impetus and concepts characteristic of conscious beings.**

**The body is the non-transferable instrument of a living agenda and features in experiences of the self at both general and individual levels. Mind and body enjoy a degree of independence represented by the extent to which the self is able to control the body and invest its operations with purpose. There is scope for different types of causal explanations to complement our understanding of the mind and body, but we cannot rely exclusively upon explanations of this type.**

**Privacy attaches to experiences to the extent that we are able to conceal their manifestations. It is not an essential feature that we need appeal to in order to explain their non-transferability. The exclusive control of a mind and body provides this explanation.**

**Dynamism does not need to seek a convergence of individual perspectives in order that shared experiences and a language describing them can develop. Individuality characterises a divergence of perspectives that differences in personal circumstances or other conditions can locate. Self-consciousness represents a consciousness of the self operating at the individual level of consciousness. Consciousness is the possession of a capacity for the adaptable approach to a living agenda. To be self-conscious is to be aware of the individuality of one's own approach to tackling that agenda and adapting it.**

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