

III. The Self-Conscious I and the Self.

A problem for the account of the self-conscious I put forward here might be seen in its manifest inability to connect smoothly with some views about the nature of the self. This makes it unavoidable to have a look at what this problem consists in and whether and how it can be solved. The suggestion I am going to propose is a rather radical reductionist one: I will claim that there is no need for a solution because there is no problem, and there is no problem because there is no self over and above the self-conscious I. This way of dissolving the alleged problem seems to be not that convincing as long as one does not know what is meant with talk about the self-conscious I and the self. Concerning the self-conscious I I will stick to the characterization given in the preceding considerations according to which one has to take the self-conscious I to be intimately connected with an activity of a conscious subject that is constitutive of a constellation in which both the self-conscious I and a propositional content is established. This leaves to start with what is meant with talk about the self.

If there is to be a problem with respect to the relation between the self-conscious I and the self one has to think of the self as somehow distinguishable from the propositional activity and its double manifestation, i.e. the propositional content and the self-conscious I, or as something which has a real or imagined existence in its own right. Because history shows that there are many ways to capture this something I will pick as my reference point the most recent contribution to the question of the nature of the self I happen to be aware of. This is Galen Strawson's impressive book *Selves. An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics*¹. According to Strawson, it is the result of human self-experience that one cannot avoid acknowledging the existence of such a phenomenon as the self. Though non-human animals have conscious experiences too, it is a distinctive characteristic of human subjects that in self-experience we experience the self as something real. This something, the self, can be thought to be either identical with the 'embodied human being' or with an 'inner someone'. Because of the fact that there is empirical evidence for the claim that this self cannot be taken to be the 'embodied human being considered as a whole' (the evidence consists in observations based on the meaningfulness of first-person judgments like "I felt completely detached from my body" or "I felt I was floating out of my body, and looking down on it from above" [G. Strawson, 23]) the self we experience in self-experience has to be an 'inner something' which figures "as a (1) subject of experience that is a (2) single, (3) persisting, (4) mental (5) thing ... that is (6) an agent that has a certain (7) personality and is (8) not the same thing as a human being considered as a whole" (G. Strawson, 3). This self I experience is not just something what I can relate to as an object (consciousness of my states) though it might become an object, this self rather is the non-thetic, pre-reflective consciousness of myself which also is present in my awareness of my feelings and moods (Strawson, 24). (Some of) Those who hold this view take self-consciousness to be nothing but an ability "to be expressly aware of one's states or

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parts or features as one's own" (Strawson, 102) or "of grasping itself as itself, when thinking, for example, of itself or one of its parts as having some property, in a way that is fully spelt out or express in something very like the way in which a being's grasp of itself as itself is express when it thinks of itself as itself in a fully comprehending, occurrent, conscious, linguistic form of thought, employing 'I' or 'me' or 'my' or 'mine' or some such term (My hair's wet, I'm hopeful, I'm a great ape, That book is mine)" (105). Thus it seems that within this approach to the self self-consciousness is characterized as the capacity to think of oneself as an object. As such an object, according to this view, it certainly can be experienced as having a specific "cognitive-experiential character" though the cognitive-experiential character of self-consciousness is different from the cognitive-experiential character of self-experience in that "one can apprehend oneself as oneself, or apprehending something as one's own, without in any way apprehending oneself specifically as a self, i.e. without having self-experience: without having a picture of oneself as a special sort of something that is not a human being considered as a whole" (103). This is supposed to mean that self-consciousness, understood as an object, has "a certain phenomenology" which "entails possession of some sense or conception of oneself ... as single just qua mental" (117), i.e. self-consciousness (as an object) somehow contains a conception of the self. All that is needed in order to be self-conscious is that "[1] one must possess the thought-element I or MYSELF or ONESELF, [2] one must possess the thought-element SUBJECT OF EXPERIENCE, and [3] one must have some conception of experience – if only in possessing some grasp of more particular experiential modalities, like thinking, hearing, and so on" (120 f.). Though within this approach there seems to be no need for introducing the idea of a radically subjective self-conscious I (an I which can never become an object) it purports to be able to account for such a phenomenon also in that it claims that there is nothing 'elusive' about the I (as a subject). This is so because "there's another non-thetic form of self-apprehension in which the I or subject ... can be directly or immediately aware of itself in the present moment" (177). This self-awareness "seems to involve a state that has no particular content beyond the content that it has in so far as it's correctly described as awareness or consciousness of the awareness that it itself is, ... but does so without involving anything propositional ... or thetic in the narrow, distance-introducing ... sense. I take it that it is what people have in mind when they speak of 'pure consciousness experience': consciousness that is consciousness of the consciousness that it itself is and that includes consciousness (non-propositional) that it is consciousness of the consciousness that it itself is. It's an early and rather routine step in certain meditative practices, and there's an extremely robust consensus about its reality..." (179 f.).

The scenario that emerges seems to be the following: (1) Within the vast non-propositional surroundings that make up the immediate conscious environment of a subject, encompassing everything a subject, whether non-human (animal) or human, can be immediately aware of, this said subject, if it is a human being, is present to itself in such a way that it experiences itself as a self. (2) Not that it experiences itself as a peculiar object among other objects, it rather is present to itself as an 'inner someone' or a self in an immediate mode of awareness. (3) Though some sort of immediate self-awareness is meant to be common to all conscious creatures, not just to human beings, it is a prerogative of human

beings to have this immediate awareness of themselves as selves. (4) If these human beings are equipped with the right means (i.e. possessing the 'thought-elements' 'I' and 'subject of experience') this immediate awareness of themselves as selves might go together with a non-thetic apprehension of oneself as oneself or with self-consciousness.

This scenario is puzzling both for descriptive and phenomenological reasons especially when it comes to human beings. If one is not of the opinion that all non-propositional states of humans involve immediate awareness of the self and hence agrees that humans can be immediately aware of some content or other without at the same time being immediately aware of the self then one would like to know with respect to (1) things like the following: how is one to distinguish within the vast non-propositional surroundings between what is immediately (non-propositionally) present without the immediate presence of the self and what is present in such a way that it involves immediate presence of the subject's self-experience (as a self). Are we to introduce two modes of immediate awareness of our conscious environment: one which is immediately aware of non-selfish non-propositional content, the other of selfish non-propositional content? However, then again how am I to distinguish between these contents in immediate awareness? Do they just feel differently? But in feeling as a state of immediate awareness presumably a subject is involved, at least as selfish non-propositional content. If this is so then the very concept of a non-selfish non-propositional content as distinguished and independent from selfish non-propositional content becomes a problem because now it seems that there is no non-selfish non-propositional content around anymore if feeling has to play a role in its description. This suggests to distrust the distinction between selfish and non-selfish non-propositional content as somehow independent and unaffiliated elements of what a (human) subject can be immediately aware of. But if one is to give up this distinction then one is thrown back to either of two claims both of which are incompatible with (1) and both of which are disputed (at least by Strawson). The first is the claim that all non-propositional content is selfish, i.e. involves an immediate awareness of the self. This is not very convincing because of phenomenological considerations. It seems to be possible to be immediately aware of a lot of things without being at the same time immediately aware of oneself as a self: In crossing a street there is a lot immediately present to me, but why should this imply that I also have to be immediately present to myself as a self? It always needs some special activity to bring the self into the picture. The second option is the claim that all non-propositional content a subject is immediately aware of is non-selfish. I am inclined to endorse this view even it has the consequence that one has to deny the possibility of an immediate awareness of oneself as a self (inner something). This is so because there is no real alternative: if it is indeed the case that there is no way to distinguish between selfish and non-selfish non-propositional content in immediate experience, and if it is the case that there definitely is non-selfish non-propositional content, then all non-propositional content of immediate experience must be non-selfish. Thus (1), the basic assumption of the scenario, seems to be not that convincing because of its patent incoherence.

The second element (2) in the scenario pointed out before is also somewhat confusing. In order to be experienced not as an object in an immediate mode of awareness one has to take what is experienced in this mode to be non-propositional content because propositional content is always content which is constituted by being about something, i.e. an object. However, to be immediately aware of non-propositional content as my self or as 'inner someone' presupposes again that one is in the position to distinguish between what one is immediately experiencing as my 'inner someone' and what not. This has been shown in the preceding paragraph to be not possible. Thus one faces a dilemma: Either one clings to the claim that the immediate experience of the self as an 'inner someone' is not the experience of an object but the experience of a non-propositional content – then one has to give up the 'as inner someone' qualification. Or one adheres to this qualification – then the content of this immediate experience can no longer be regarded as non-propositional content. All this means that the descriptive value of (2) too is somehow difficult to assess.

Things are similar in the case of (3). Here too the question is not that easy to decide what one is asked to agree or to object to. Already the distinction between different sorts of immediate self-awareness among conscious creatures has its problems. At least two readings of this distinction seem to be possible. The first suggests that though it is a common feature of all conscious creatures to be immediately self-aware this self-awareness is exemplified in different creatures differently, and it is just in human beings that it shows as immediate awareness of themselves as selves. If this is the correct reading then one would like to know what it could possibly be non-human creatures are immediately self-aware of if not their selves. Whatever else is proposed has to be such that it can rightfully count as a case of self-awareness. If what in immediate self-awareness is experienced is not oneself then there is no reason to think that what is experienced has anything to do with self-awareness. If, however, what is experienced is indeed oneself then the self belongs to the very content of this experience which means that the experience becomes an immediate awareness of oneself as a self. Thus it is hard to see how to make sense of a conception of self-awareness which does not involve awareness of oneself as self. This again indicates that if there is a difference in the way conscious non-human and human beings are self-aware this difference must be rooted in something else than in what is specific for self-awareness: to be aware of oneself as a self. The second reading is not that promising either. According to this reading all conscious creatures, whether human or non-human, have in common a basic form of self-awareness which just goes together with or might even be a necessary element of being conscious. To this basic form is somehow added in the case of human beings an awareness of oneself as a self. In this picture a human being would have been endowed with either one faculty of double self-awareness or two faculties of self-awareness, one in which it is immediately aware of itself in the general conscious creature way and another in which it is immediately aware of itself in a human being way, i.e. as a self. Such a picture is puzzling. Even if one does not take offense at the introduction of this model of split self-awareness as phenomenologically ungrounded one cannot help asking how it is supposed to work. How does creatural self-awareness relate to human self-awareness? Can a conscious human being, being itself a conscious creature, be aware of itself only in a way which is incompatible with

the way other conscious creatures are aware of themselves? If so, why should we take these incompatible ways to be ways of self-awareness? The fact that there are widely different readings of (3) possible indicates that (3) also seems to be either rather unclear or very implausible.

Step (4) in the scenario sketched above of how to think of the self is of special interest because it tries to integrate self-consciousness into a view of the self which wants to distinguish between self-consciousness and the self. The suggestion is that though the immediate awareness of the self as an 'inner something' is not identical with the immediate awareness of oneself as an I because the self is not the I, the immediate awareness of oneself as a self might under certain conditions as well be the same as or indistinguishable from the experience of non-thetic (non-propositional) apprehension of oneself as oneself or as an I. As will be shown this proposal again is quite ambiguous and allows for at least two different interpretations none of which is really that convincing. But first of all one has to ask: how does it come that the immediate awareness of the self as self or 'inner something' can be transformed or can change into an immediate awareness of the self as I? According to the model under discussion here this transformation or this change depends on the availability of so-called "thought-elements" like 'I' and/or 'subject of experience'. The idea seems to be that as soon as a conscious creature is in the possession of certain conceptual resources, the so-called "thought-elements", the immediate awareness of the self as an 'inner something' has to become or at least can become an immediate awareness of a conceptual interpretation of the 'inner something' such that what is immediately experienced is no longer just the self as self but the very same self as 'I' or as 'subject of experience'. This transformation, however, is not meant to have an effect on the immediate experience: the immediate awareness of the self is supposed to be the same as or indistinguishable from the immediate experience of the I. If this is the model then what the proposal amounts to depends on whether one declares sameness or whether one takes indistinguishability to be the distinguishing mark of the immediate awareness of the self as well as of the I. One has to differentiate between sameness and indistinguishability in this context because whereas sameness of two cases of immediate awareness implies their indistinguishability, indistinguishability of two cases of immediate awareness might not necessarily imply their being the same.

First then let us have a look at the claim that the immediate awareness is in both cases the same. The question here is: can an immediate experience of the self as self be the same as an immediate experience of the self as I? Because the immediate experience of the self as self is taken to be an experience of a non-conceptual content while the immediate awareness of the self as I has to be the experience of a conceptual one – after all, the I is a thought-element – the question, more general, is: can the immediate awareness of something non-conceptual be the same as the experience of something conceptual? It might be an interesting question in its own right whether it makes sense to talk about an immediate awareness or experience of concepts. Do concepts make themselves immediately felt in a special way? However this may be, even if they feel in a special way it is hard to believe that they immediately feel the same way as non-conceptual elements of immediate awareness feel because otherwise the whole

distinction between non-conceptual and conceptual or “thought”-elements in immediate awareness breaks down. Now, if the (concept of the) I is a thought-element and if the self, the ‘inner something’, is not a thought element then it is rather unlikely that the self as I is immediately experienced the same way as the self as self. Thus even if the immediate awareness of the self as self can happen to change into or be replaced by the immediate awareness of the self as I it is by no means evident that the way one is immediately aware of either the self or the I is the same. On the contrary, it is fairly obvious that the immediate awareness is different – if there is an inner awareness in a non-propositional mode possible at all of something conceptual like the I. Therefore, if the proposal under discussion is understood as based on the assumption of sameness of immediate awareness in both cases then it seems to be an empty claim.

The other possibility to understand the proposal is that it does not insist on sameness but instead on indistinguishability of the immediate awareness of the self as self from the immediate awareness of the self as I. The reasoning here could follow these lines: though the self is not identical with the I and though the immediate awareness of the self might have to be different from the immediate awareness of the I the way the self is immediately experienced is indistinguishable from the way the I is immediately experienced. The situation, so this reasoning, is very much like in cases of self-deception: The immediate awareness of a sound I mean to hear in dreaming, the way the sound feels to me while I am dreaming, presumably has to be different from my immediate awareness of a (very similar) sound I actually hear while being awake. Nevertheless, both cases of immediate awareness might be such that I cannot tell any difference, that what I experience in the one case is indistinguishable for me from what I experience in the other. Even if this analogy between self-awareness and sound-awareness is not disputed and even if it is conceded that it is legitimate to think of two different cases of immediate awareness as indistinguishable there still remains a puzzle when it comes to the immediate awareness of the self and the I. This puzzle has to do with the following: granted that the immediate awareness of the I is indistinguishable and at the same time different from the immediate awareness of the self. How can I find out whether it is the I or the self I am immediately aware of? If there is no difference in ‘how it feels’ involved in both cases it could as well be that whenever I am immediately aware of the I I am instead immediately aware of the self and the other way round. Each of these cases could be seen analogous to a case of self-deception. But whereas in the case of ‘real’ self-deception, e.g. with respect to sounds, there are always ways to find out as to what I am deceived, this is not so in the case of the I and the self because their difference is meant to be only a conceptual, not a ‘real’ difference. So the result is: if the self and the I have to be distinguished then their immediate experience has to be distinguished too, and if their immediate awareness cannot be distinguished then there is nothing which can support the claim that one has to distinguish between the I and the self. Thus the whole distinction between the immediate awareness of the I and of the self seems to be experientially unfounded and conceptually unclear which leads to the suspicion that the distinction between the I and the self on the level of immediate, i.e. non-propositional awareness or experience is somewhat unintelligible within an approach which insists on the authenticity of the self over

and against the I. One cannot resist the impression that ultimately within such an approach the self is vanishing and the I has no phenomenal space.

The foregoing remarks on just one representative example of positions which take the self to be a phenomenon sui generis and tend to endorse to some extent either all or some of the claims (1) to (4) are not meant to be damaging to or to aim at some sort of refutation of these positions. On the contrary, they are intended to hint at a dilemma: on the one side, we find the conviction, deeply embedded in our experience and in our conception of ourselves, that there indeed corresponds something to what we call 'self', or else, it seems, a large part of our whole personal vocabulary would be pointless. To talk about self-awareness, self-experience, self-reliance, even talk about self-justice, self-deception and the like is for us indeed talk about something and not just a way of speech. On the other side, when it comes to an explanation of what we mean by the term 'self' when talking about self-involving phenomena all attempts to clarify the meaning of this term end in obscurity and give rise to the disturbing impression that there are no adequate means available to solve the task.

Nevertheless, there has to be more to say about the self and the self-conscious I, especially if one does not like this distinction. The task then is to explore whether and, if so, in what contexts this distinction is really needed. From a phenomenological point of view the most likely candidates in favor of the necessity of some such distinction are thoughts, feelings and moods because these are the mental states which somehow seem to presuppose an immediate awareness of myself as the bearer of these states. Of these states thoughts are not of primary importance here because one does not need any such distinction in order to account for a thought as an item immediate awareness of which goes necessarily together with immediate awareness of the I. Having a thought just entails to be conscious of oneself in a radically subjective way and there is no thought without an accompanying self-conscious I – this at least is suggested by the position presented here. This self-conscious I might be taken to be identical with what one calls 'self', but in doing so one is designating the very same phenomenon with two different terms. In connection with thoughts there is no reason to think of the self-conscious I as being either a manifestation or a special transformation of something different, of a 'self' that has an existence over and above the self-conscious I. This is so because thoughts are propositional states, i.e. states with a propositional content, and those states are not possible without the immediate or radically subjective awareness of the self-conscious I. The self-conscious I, the subject I am immediately aware of in thinking a thought, is established in the act of thinking. It is not a special way in which an otherwise mysterious 'self' is immediately present.

This leaves feelings and moods. They are supposed to be non-propositional states a person is immediately aware of as its own states in a non-thetic way. If it were the case that the self-conscious I can only occur in propositional contexts and if there were no feelings and moods, i.e. non-propositional states, without immediate non-thetic self-awareness then indeed one had to introduce a self which is different from the self-conscious I in order to have something a person can be immediately aware of as the subject of such a non-propositional state. However, as yet both these assumptions are unwarranted. Because it is the second

assumption – that feelings and moods always involve non-thetic self-awareness – which leads to the supposition of the self as distinguished from the self-conscious I, one first has to find out whether this assumption really is unavoidable. Standard examples of feelings and moods are pain, hunger, love, sadness, joy etc. Awareness of items like these are said to be necessarily connected with an immediate (non-thetic) awareness of oneself.

In order to pursue this topic one first has to spell out what exactly the claim is supposed to mean that feelings and moods always involve immediate awareness of a self that is distinct from the self-conscious I. At least two options seem to be available, a propositional and a non-propositional one. What could be meant is, first of all, that in (consciously) realizing or experiencing e.g. that I am hungry I am immediately aware of such a self. According to this interpretation realizing or experiencing that I am hungry presupposes (1) that there is someone who is hungry, (2) that this someone has to be myself and (3) that I am immediately aware of this someone as myself. These presuppositions suggest that there is a self which is a subject of immediate awareness in feelings and moods and which cannot be taken to be identical with the radically subjective self-conscious I of propositional states because it can be made an object of my immediate awareness. However, this option misses the point on two counts. The first is that it establishes the self as an object of immediate awareness which is violating the condition fixed at the outset that in feelings and moods I am immediately aware of myself in a non-thetic, non-objective manner. The second stumbling block for this option is that it treats feelings and moods as propositional states. This is so because (consciously) realizing that I am hungry means to be in a state which could as well be described as realizing the thought or as thinking that I am hungry. Such a reading once more goes against the initial assumption that feelings and moods are non-propositional states. A propositional interpretation of feelings and moods leads nowhere in the attempt to find room for a self that is distinct from the self-conscious I – when it comes to propositional states there is no need for such a self in order to think of them as my states. This is not to say, by the way, that feelings and moods cannot become the content of propositional states. Obviously I can reflect on my feelings and moods and thereby make them the content of mental states of mine. But then they are subject to the conditions of all propositional states, and these conditions do not include a distinct self I am immediately and non-thetically aware of.

The second reading of the claim that feelings and moods always involve immediate awareness of a self that is distinct from the self-conscious I alludes to the immediacy of feeling and suggests that this immediacy points to a distinct self. The reasoning behind this suggestion is roughly the following: Whenever I am aware of a feeling like hunger I am immediately aware that it is me who has that feeling. Feeling hungry just is me feeling hungry, a feeling of myself is an essential part of me feeling hungry. It is constitutive of the very phenomenon of a conscious feeling or a mood I am in that a me-element is integrated – if I were not immediately aware of myself in feeling hungry I would not have that feeling at all. And because feelings and moods are non-propositional states the I I am immediately aware of in these states cannot be the same as the I I am immediately conscious of in propositional states if it is true that this latter I is constituted by an activity which is in charge of bringing

about propositional states exclusively. So it must be another I which I am immediately aware of in feelings and moods, and this I is the self. Thus the assumption of the self (as distinct from the self-conscious I) is as necessary in order to account for feelings and moods (non-propositional states) as is the self-conscious I in order to do justice to thoughts (propositional states).

This second interpretation obviously is not subject to the line of criticism which can be put forward against the first reading. However, is the phenomenological basis of this understanding of feelings and moods really that convincing? Is it really the case that conscious feelings and moods are non-propositional me-episodes, i.e. conscious states whose content is non-propositional and nevertheless involve the immediate awareness of me as their subject? I believe that a closer analysis cannot support this view because of several problems connected with it. First it has to be noticed that there is an ambiguity connected with the term 'conscious state' which gives it a narrow and a broad sense. (a) In the narrow sense it can mean a state I am in *of* which I am conscious, (b) in the broad sense it can mean a state I am in *while* conscious (i.e. not unconscious). When talking about conscious states in the first, i.e. the narrow sense, one is referring to propositional states someone is in, because being conscious of a state I am in just means *that* I am conscious of that state or that it is a 'that'-state. Thus being consciously aware of my feeling bad just means that I am consciously aware that I feel bad, and this means that I am consciously aware of the proposition 'I feel bad'. However, when talking of conscious states in the second or in the broad sense I not necessarily refer to states I am conscious of. Whereas all my states I am conscious of are states I am in, not every state I am in when conscious (not unconscious) is a state I am conscious of. While conscious I have a manifold of all sorts of visual, tactile and acoustical impressions (like shades of light, grades of material resistance, background noises,) I have all sorts of bodily and emotional feelings of the condition I am in (like feeling hot or cold, being in an upright or seating position), I am in a certain set of mind (like being well tempered or ill-tempered) and I am guided in whatever I do by expectations which govern my behavior (like that there is not all of a sudden a hole in front of me in which I am bound to fall if moving forward, or that everything I am about to encounter is roughly the way it is under normal circumstances). States like these are definitely states I am in when conscious albeit they do not have to be states I am conscious of. Thus they are non-propositional conscious states. They are the states which for the most part determine my general constitution at any given moment in my conscious life without my being conscious of them. This is not to say that I cannot become conscious of (many of) these states, it just means that there are indeed non-propositional conscious states, i.e. states I am in while conscious but of which I am not conscious.

Now, if feelings and moods are supposed to be non-propositional conscious states then one must think of them as conscious states understood in the broad sense. This is so because there are no non-propositional conscious states at all if 'conscious state' is understood in the narrow sense. In this latter sense conscious states are exclusively those states I am conscious of, and these are propositional or 'that'-states. The problem then as to the immediate

awareness of the subject of feelings and moods boils down to the question whether non-propositional conscious states, i.e. states I am not conscious of while conscious do indeed involve a subject I am immediately aware of, i.e. do indeed need a self.

As is easy to expect, I want to answer this question in the negative. This is so mainly for reasons that have to do with the phenomenology of these states. It is highly implausible to believe that states like those mentioned above are states of immediate awareness be it only for the reason that most of them are states a subject is in simultaneously while conscious. And to be hungry, to hear noises, to feel cold and to expect the traffic to move on in a certain way in a non-propositional mode all at the same time is by no means easy to reconcile with the idea of immediate awareness of each of these states at this time. Also it seems to be a bit problematic to connect these states with the immediate radically subjective awareness of a self (as distinguished from both the self-conscious I and the body) because of the consequences of such a connection. Among these consequences the most arduous could be that one has to attribute a self and its immediate radically subjective awareness to quite a number of animals other than humans too. After all, we think of these animals as having conscious non-propositional states or feelings like hunger, pain and expectations in somehow the same way we have them. And if one agrees that having those feelings implies the immediate radically subjective awareness of a self then one cannot but grant such a self to many of non-human animals either. Another somewhat unwanted implication of the view under discussion might be that there could be as many selves of one and the same subject as there are conscious non-propositional states of that subject. If one is going to allow for many of these states to take place simultaneously then, it seems, one also has to accept a multitude of selves not only of the same subject but also at the same time. Or if, in order to avoid confusion with these many selves, one is to settle for just one self for all of these states then the question is why the states should be different. It seems to me that in order to cope with these states (many involve states of my body directly) and their subject one is well advised to take refuge to much more fundamental conditions of conscious states in general in the line envisioned by i.e. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty whose conceptions of a subject as 'In der Welt Sein' or 'Être au monde' might turn out to be helpful in this respect.

In short, when it comes to feelings and moods as states of a subject, instead of thinking of them as 'selfish' states, i.e. as states intimately connected with an immediate radically subjective awareness of a self, I am much more inclined to follow an assessment of these states which can be attributed to such diverse a group of philosophers as the early Husserl², Sartre³, and more recently D. Henrich⁴, U. Pothast⁵ and K. Cramer⁶ and which are discussed

2) *Logische Untersuchungen*, cf. part 1 of this text.

3) *La Transcendance de l'ego*, cf. also part 1.

4) *Selbstbewusstsein. Kritische Einleitung in eine Theorie*. – In: R. Bubner, K. Cramer, R. Wiehl (Eds): *Hermeneutik und Dialektik*. Tübingen 1970, 257 – 284.

5) *Über einige Fragen der Selbstbeziehung*. Frankfurt 1971.

under names like the ‘non-ownership view’ (P. Strawson)⁷ or the ‘non-egological view’ (Gurwitsch)⁸. According to the proponents of these views non-propositional conscious states like feelings and moods are anonymous or impersonal states in the sense that though they are states a conscious subject is in it has not to be aware of them as its own states. If these views are right then one might have different guesses as to the ontological status of non-propositional feelings and moods. The most common-sensical assumption would be to think of them just as bodily states or at least as based in bodily states. In a more speculative frame of mind in which one is inclined to allow for non-bodily mental states one might ruminate that some of these states are just the way a subject participates in objective world-states: as there is air-pressure and humidity out there in the world in varying degrees which is of decisive influence on the general condition of our lives without us consciously noticing them so there might be feelings and moods around as items of the objective world which vary in degrees and in which we participate without explicitly noticing. Thus my feeling good or bad might just indicate that I have encountered a world region in which there happens to hold sway a high or low mood-feeling (Stimmungsgefühl), and my becoming aware of this non-propositional feeling as the state I am in is nothing else but the result of directing my propositional activity to this feeling thus transforming it into a propositional state of which I am conscious in much the same way in which I might become conscious of my feeling hot or cold in dependency of the air temperature. Whichever model one is inclined to favor, what is of importance here is that in order to account for conscious non-propositional states like feelings and moods not only is it not required to resort to a self which in contradistinction to the self-conscious I is supposed to ground these states it is over and above not even helpful.

Against the non-egological view a number of objections have been raised. They have been forcefully put forward by a number of people in recent years and are very cogently expounded by D. Zahavi in different writings.⁹ All these objections circle around the phenomenon of what is called alternatively ‘subjectivity’, ‘ipseity’ or ‘egocentricity’ of

6) ‚Erlebnis‘. *Thesen zu Hegels Theorie des Selbstbewusstseins mit Rücksicht auf die Aporien eines Grundbegriffs nachhegelscher Philosophie*. – In: H.G. Gadamer (Ed.): *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage 1970*. Hegel-Studien. Beiheft 11. Bonn 1974, 537 – 603.

7) *Individuals*. London 1959, 95.

8) *A Non-egological Conception of Consciousness*. – In: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1, 1941, 325 – 338.

9) In what follows I will rely mainly on his *Self and Consciousness*. – In: D. Zahavi (Ed.): *Exploring the Self. Philosophical and Psychopathological Perspectives on Self-Experience*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2000. 55 – 74. A more detailed exposition of the relevant material is to be found in D. Zahavi: *Subjectivity and Selfhood. Investigating the First-Person Perspective*. Cambridge, Mass. 2006. Chapter 5.

experience. What is meant seems to be the following: In order to count as a conscious non-propositional state of a subject this state has to be experienced as *my* experience “in a first-personal mode of presentation” (60). This mode of presentation which brings to our attention the egocentric, subjective dimension of experience is not to be identified with any explicit I-consciousness. It rather highlights “a certain basic sense of egocentricity or ipseity” (61). Though this basic sense of subjectivity is not sufficient to postulate something like a self as an item in its own right distinguished both from an experience and from an explicit I-consciousness, i.e. as an ontologically independent entity, the assumption of a self as something that has genuine and independent reality becomes necessary if one takes into account the sameness of the original experience of *my*ness in the course of different non-propositional experiences. Thus in order to do justice to the experienced identity of the subject of conscious non-propositional states one has to accept the reality of a self.

However, this consideration seems to be problematic on several counts. I will mention three of them. First, it rests on the assumption that every non-propositional state a subject is in while conscious must be a state the subject experiences in some unclear first-personal way as its own state. I do not believe that there is a good reason for such an assumption. As was pointed out before I can while conscious very well be in the state of being hungry or sleepy, even in the state of feeling pain, without experiencing these states as mine at all. All these states in virtue of their being states surely enough have to have a subject and that subject might even be myself but this does not mean that in order for them to be my states I have to experience them as mine. For to experience them as mine presupposes to be consciously aware of them, i.e. to be in a propositional state with a specific content. And here the subject is the self-conscious I (according to the model endorsed here). Actually, the whole reasoning in favor of a genuine self based on the observation of egocentricity or ipseity seems to rest again on the conflation of the two senses of the term ‘conscious state’ pointed out above. It begins with using this term in the wider sense and then goes on to employ it in the narrow sense without realizing that moving from the one sense to the other one is no longer discussing the way non-propositional states are experienced (maybe as states of ‘being in the world’ or of ‘being directed towards the world’, at any rate as states which involve a bodily element) but is giving a rather trifling description of how propositional states are experienced. Second, the argument from ipseity sketched above has no means to exclude the possibility that instead of introducing a self as the subject of immediate conscious states one could as well think of the body as this subject. If all what is asked for is a subject of non-propositional states and if it is agreed that these states are those a subject is not conscious of though they are states of an embodied subject why not take the body to be the subject? In many cases like those of hunger or sleepiness and even of pain this seems the most natural thing to do, and it corresponds to our normal practices to attribute those states as long as we are not conscious of them to our body. The same can be said of non-propositional emotions and moods as well: as long as they are not conscious and thus cease to be non-propositional states one better takes them to be states of the body. After all the body is not just a bunch of matter but is in itself a sentient being, and if there is something to ipseity at all then there should be compelling reasons to deny the sentient body the specific *me*-experience (wrongly) claimed to be

characteristic for the subject of all non-propositional states.¹⁰ As far as I can see these reasons are yet missing. The third problem with ipseity as an argument in favor of the self is not just a problem for the ipseity-argument but for all attempts to introduce the self as an ontologically independent item in addition to the self-conscious I and the body. It could be called the problem of the vanishing self. It arises out of the following question: If indeed we have to accept the idea of an independent self without which there would be no subject of non-propositional states what is going to happen to this self when a non-propositional state ends? When I stop to be in the non-propositional state of being hungry or feeling sorry because things have changed without my consciously noticing it, does the self which is supposed to be connected with the original state in the mode of immediate (non-propositional) awareness just vanish in order to make place to another self? Whatever one is going to answer to these questions one will run into a lot of quandaries ranging from ontological perplexities to epistemological and psychological puzzles.

Thus there is not much to be said in favor of a self that is distinct both from the body and the self-conscious I. Especially when it comes to the subject of non-propositional states, among them moods and feelings I am not conscious of, the self is not the most promising candidate for occupying the status of the subject. On the contrary, when focusing on non-propositional states a different picture emerges in which the self plays no role as a subject at all. According to this picture the situation is somehow the following: When conscious I am in a lot of states most of which are non-propositional. The subject of these states is me as a sentient (with respect to non-propositional bodily states) and ‘situated’¹¹ (with respect to states of feeling and of emotions) body. However, as long as all these states are non-propositional there is no me-experience and hence no self involved.¹² A selfish element enters the scene as soon as and insofar propositional states come into sight. In propositional contexts this selfish elements occurs in the form of the irreducibly subjective self-conscious I.

10) This goes in the direction of what F. Dretske is arguing for. S. his *The Mind's Awareness of Itself* (in: F. Dretske: *Perception, Knowledge and Belief*, Cambridge 2000, 158 – 177).

11) The term ‘situated’ is used here as an abbreviation for the condition I am in by just ‘being in the world’ or ‘being directed towards the world’ in the Heideggerian resp. Merleau-Pontyan sense.

12) Somewhat surprisingly, this result comes close to what is argued for from a thoroughly materialistic point of view by T. Metzinger: *The Ego Tunnel. The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self*, New York 2009. However, his attempt to explain all ‘selfish’ phenomena by means of brain activities and neural processes seems to me to put much too heavy a burden on our poor brain though I am very much in sympathy with the dynamic model of the mind underlying his approach to mental events.