Senses of Self
Approaches to Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness

Edited by Marc Borner, Manfred Frank,
and Kenneth Williford

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From Non-Self-Representationalism to the Social Structure of Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness

Kristina Musholt

Abstract
Why should we think that there is such a thing as pre-reflective self-awareness? And how is this kind of self-awareness to be characterized? This paper traces a theoretical and a phenomenological line of argument in favor of the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness and explores how this notion can be further illuminated by appealing to recent work in the analytical philosophy of language and mind. In particular, it argues that the self is not represented in the (nonconceptual) content of experience, but is rather implicit in the mode. Further, it argues that pre-reflective self-consciousness is best understood as a form of knowledge-how. Finally, it will be argued that our sense of self is thoroughly social, even at the basic, pre-reflective level.

1. Arguments for pre-reflective self-consciousness: theoretical and phenomenological

Human beings are self-conscious, that is, we possess the ability to think about ourselves. However, it is contested how this ability is best described and whether there are different levels or aspects to this. While some authors argue that self-consciousness requires the possession of concepts (in particular the possession of the first-person concept), others hold that we already possess an awareness of ourselves at a very basic, minimal, and nonconceptual level. This minimal kind of self-awareness is often dubbed pre-reflective self-consciousness. Why should we think that there is such a thing as pre-reflective self-awareness? And how is this kind of self-awareness to be characterized?

With respect to the first question we can distinguish a theoretical and a phenomenological line of argument in favor of the notion of pre-reflective self-awareness. The theoretical argument has its roots

in German Idealism, specifically in the philosophy of Fichte. More recently, it has been developed by authors such as Dieter Henrich (1967) and Manfred Frank (see, e.g., Frank, this volume). As these authors argue, traditional theories of self-consciousness, which conceive of self-consciousness as a relation between a subject and an object (which happen to be identical) are faced with the problem of circularity. This is because the subject-object model of self-consciousness (the "objectual view" of consciousness, as Frank calls it) assumes that in order to engage in self-conscious thought, the subject has to take herself as an object being represented in thought. That is, she needs to recognize herself (i.e., pick herself out) among a range of other objects. However, the ability to recognize oneself presupposes knowledge of oneself (i.e. knowledge of one's self-identifying properties), so the model presupposes what was to be explained.[1] According to Henrich and Frank, in order to avoid this threat of circularity, we must assume the existence of a more basic, primary form of self-consciousness, which is pre-reflective and which provides the subject with a sense of self-familiarity that can provide the basis for self-reflection.

While I agree with their criticism of the "objectual view" of self-consciousness, I see two problems with the arguments developed by Henrich and Frank. First, one might ask whether their criticism goes far enough. Henrich and Frank reject the subject-object-model as a complete model of self-consciousness and argue that in order for self-reflection to get off the ground, we need to presuppose a non-reflective, "non-objectual" form of self-awareness as the starting point of self-consciousness. Yet, in so doing they seem to buy into the assumption that the subject-object-model is a promising model to begin with. However, it seems to me that a more radical rejection of the subject-object-model is possible, namely one that denies that we should think of self-consciousness in the manner of object awareness at all. The

1   As Frank points out (e.g. this volume), this same kind of criticism also applies to contemporary higher-order theories of consciousness (such as those defended by Rosenthal, Carruthers, or Gennaro) as well as to same-order theories (such as those defended by Williford or Kriegel), for these continue to conceive of self-consciousness as a relation between a subject and an object, that is, they remain wedded to the "objectual view" of consciousness. (Also see Zahavi 2014, who makes the similar claim that both higher-order and same-order theories of consciousness remain committed to the objectifying view of consciousness.)

model of object awareness assumes that when thinking about herself, the subject self-represents in the manner of representing an object. Yet, in contrast to thinking about objects (or other subjects) in the environment, thinking about oneself—at least in the paradigmatic case—does not rely on self-identification or self-recognition, as various authors in the continental as well as the analytical tradition have pointed out (see, e.g., Wittgenstein 1958, Evans 1982, Shoemaker 1984; notice that both Henrich and Frank also agree with this point). I do not need to identify myself in order to be aware that I am currently writing an essay, or feeling thirsty or having a visual experience of my desk. Rather, self-consciousness is unmediated, direct awareness of oneself that does not rely on any knowledge of self-identifying criteria. Thus, models that conceive of self-consciousness as a form of object-awareness misconstrue the structure of experiencing oneself—whether in a nonconceptual or conceptual way. But if this is so, we do not need an explanation as to how the subject comes to possess knowledge of self-identifying criteria in order to account for the possibility of (reflective) self-consciousness. Rather, we need a model of self-consciousness that does not rely on self-consciousness being a relation between a subject and an object to begin with. That is, we should not buy into the self-objectifying notion of reflective self-consciousness at all, no matter whether we are concerned with explicit, conceptual self-consciousness or a more basic, implicit self-awareness.[2]

Of course, this is not to deny that we also can—and often do—take ourselves as objects of reflection. That is, we often take a third-person perspective on ourselves, for instance when we are trying to figure out

2   Notice that what I am concerned with here is the epistemological dimension of thinking about oneself. As Reuter (2019) has recently argued, there is a rather innocuous way of talking about self-identity, namely one that refers merely to the numerical identify between the self and the object of her thought in self-consciousness. According to him, we should not make the mistake of conflating the (innocent) ontological relation of self-identity between the subject and her object of thought in self-consciousness with the epistemological challenge of having to identify oneself. As he puts it, when thinking about herself the subject is trivially numerically identical with the object of her thought. But this doesn't imply that in her self-conscious thinking the question of identity ever arises for her. I suspect that the conflation of these two senses of thinking of the relation of self-identity lies at the heart of the dispute between Frank and Williford (see this volume).

why we acted in a certain way in a particular situation, or when we are trying to establish what it is that we really want or value. Indeed, when it comes to substantive self-knowledge (e.g. knowledge about one's character, values, etc.), such acts of objectifying self-reflection arguably play a crucial role, as Cassam (2015) has argued. However, what is at issue in the present context is the question as to whether we should take the subject-object model as our starting point in investigating self-consciousness. My claim is that we should not, and this is true both when we consider implicit, pre-reflective forms of self-awareness and when we consider explicit self-consciousness. So the view proposed here is not committed to the claim that we always have privileged access to ourselves, or that self-consciousness is always immediate and non-objectifying (very often it is not). However, I take it that we do possess such a non-objectifying form of self-awareness—both in a pre-reflective (implicit) and non-conceptual form and in an explicit and conceptual form—and that it is this kind of self-awareness that is at stake in the present context.

Second, Henrich and Frank don't provide us with a positive analysis of pre-reflective self-awareness. It is characterized solely in negative terms. Indeed, at one point, Frank himself suggests that pre-reflective self-awareness cannot be further analyzed and has to be taken as a fundamental 'given': "However, we must also humbly declare that the basic element of our theory, familiarity, cannot be further analyzed." (Frank, 2002, p. 400) However, this is somewhat dissatisfying, and I think that this claim can be challenged. Thus, in the next section I will return to the question of how to analyze the notion of pre-reflective self-awareness by drawing on recent work at the intersection of philosophy of language and philosophy of mind.

Before we turn to this, let us take a look at the phenomenological roots of the notion of pre-reflective self-awareness. As mentioned earlier, we can also find an argument in favor of pre-reflective self-awareness in the phenomenological tradition. For instance, as Zahavi (2005, 2014) has prominently argued (following phenomenologists such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre), every conscious experience is necessarily imbued with a sense of mineness or familiarity. "Experiences necessarily involve an experiential perspective or point of view, they come with perspectival ownership" (Zahavi 2014,

p. 88). So Zahavi claims that in being consciously aware of the world, the subject is also always and necessarily aware of herself. On this view, phenomenal consciousness is also always phenomenal self-consciousness. Importantly, this minimal form of self-awareness is thought to be pre-reflective and non-conceptual and, crucially, it should not be understood in terms of having a specific content. As Zahavi and Kriegel (2016) put it: "Experiential for-me-ness is not a quality or datum of experience on a par with, say, the taste of lemon or the smell of crushed mint leaves. In fact, it is not supposed to be any specific qualitative content at all" (Zahavi and Kriegel, 2016, p. 38). More precisely, according to Zahavi, minimal, pre-reflective self-awareness is not a form of self-representation.[3] Rather, the self is thought to be part of conscious experience in the sense of being a structural aspect, function, or mode of phenomenal consciousness. Thus, on this view, the self does not appear as a represented object in experience; pre-reflective self-consciousness is thoroughly non-observational and non-objectifying (also see Legrand 2007 for a similar claim).

Arguably, calling this a form of self-consciousness (as Zahavi does) is somewhat misleading, as many philosophers tend to think of consciousness in representational terms. Thus, the notion of *self-*consciousness is often taken to imply some *representation of the self* (though this need not take propositional form). In line with such a representationalist understanding, proponents of theories of non-conceptual self-consciousness in the analytical tradition, such as Bermúdez (1998), argue that perceptual experience, in addition to representing aspects of the environment, always also represents the self. Insofar as one rejects the thought that conscious experience always represents the self (as I do), one might therefore want to refrain from claiming that conscious experience is also always *self-conscious* experience (cf. Musholt 2013).[4] Be that as it may, it is important to

3   In contrast, Kriegel (2009) defends a self-representationalist theory of consciousness.
4   In order to avoid this problem, one could reserve the term self-consciousness for thoughts that explicitly represent the self and use the term self-awareness to describe experiences where the self is not taken to be part of the (nonconceptual) content of experience, but is rather taken to be part of the mode. Indeed, this is how I am trying to employ the terminology in this essay.

be aware that when phenomenologists such as Zahavi use the no-tion of pre-reflective self-consciousness, they are using it in a non-representationalist sense.

2. Relation to current work in the philosophy of language

Interestingly, when looking for a positive account of this non-self-representationalist view, a turn to recent work in the philosophy of mind and language turns out to be useful. One way of spelling out the idea of a non-reflective, non-self-representationalist view of self-awareness is by making use of Perry's (1998) notion of an "unarticu-lated constituent" (cf. Musholt 2013, 2015). As I have just mentioned, some authors (e.g. Bermúdez 1998) argue that the self is part of the content of perception (and proprioception) in the sense that these experiential states (necessarily) contain self-specifying information. For instance, when perceiving an object in the environment, the sub-ject always also receives information about herself in relation to the object, such as her distance from and orientation towards the object, and about the kinds of interactions afforded to her by the object. Ber-múdez concludes from this that the self is part of the representational content of perception.

However, this conclusion does not follow (cf. Musholt 2015). For it is precisely because perception is always perception for a subject, from her specific perspective, that the subject herself does not need to be represented in perception. For a helpful analogy, consider Perry's (1986) case of the Z-landers. These are beings who live on an island completely unaware of the existence of other places. When Z-landers make claims about the weather, for example, they do not need to rep-resent—either in language or in thought—the location they are talk-ing (or thinking) about. Because they are unaware of the existence of other places, the question of where it is raining never arises. Similarly, because I can only ever experience the world from my perspective, the question as to who is doing the experiencing never comes up. Hence, the subject of experience can remain "unarticulated"; it doesn't need

to be part of the content of experience. Thus, although the content of perception is necessarily self-related (i.e. it necessarily *concerns* the self), it does not represent the self. That is, one of the relata of the relational content carried by perception, namely the self, remains un-represented (or "unarticulated").[5] Note that the same is true of bodily experience. Although bodily experience obviously presents me with information concerning myself (i.e., information relating to my body), this information is not presented *as being about* myself (i.e. the sub-ject of experience herself is not explicitly represented).

A related way of spelling out this idea is by appealing to Recanati's treatment of modes of representation. As I have just argued, although the content of perception and bodily experience is self-related (or self-concerning), perception and bodily experience do not represent the self, that is, they do not contain a self-referring component. This is because the information contained in these states is gained in ways that are specific to the self; we cannot gain information about others in the same way. Recanati calls such a self-specific way of gaining information an "internal mode" (Recanati 2007) or an "ego-mode" (Recanati 2012). According to Recanati, the specific relation that the content of states that are experienced in the "ego-mode" (such as perceptual states and bodily experiences) bears to the subject is provided by facts that are *external* to the content of the experience itself, namely by facts about my cognitive architecture. For example, I cannot become aware, from the inside—that is, through bodily ex-perience—that someone else's legs are crossed; information gained by means of bodily experience is necessarily self-related. Because the information that is gained by means of such internal modes of presen-tation is necessarily self-specific, the self does not need to be explicitly represented in the content of the resulting experiential states.

Interestingly, these analyses fit rather well with the phenomenologi-cal claim that in pre-reflective self-awareness the self is not given as an object of experience, but is present 'as subject', that is, in a non-representational way.[6] On the view proposed here, judgments that are

5   As Frank (this volume) puts it, with reference to Henrich, "if self-consciousness is a relation at all, it is not a binary, but a 'unary' one".
6   Though notice that the view presented here does not commit me to anti-represen-tationalism *tout court*. While I endorse anti-representationalism with respect to

made based on internal modes of experience take the self 'as subject' precisely because they are not based on content that represents the self. Given that the self is not represented as an object in the content of experience—for it is implicit in the mode—the only way in which it can be conceived in a judgment that is based on such a non-self-representational content is as the *subject* of experience (cf. Recanati 2007, 194). Importantly, on this view it is not necessary to postulate a sense of 'mineness' above and beyond the content and mode of experience. That is to say, the non-self-representationalist view provides us with what might be called a deflationary account of the sense of mineness. In this account, the subjectivity of experience, or the sense of 'mineness', is to be seen as a result of the combination of the non-conceptual representational content of experience, which presents us with intentional objects relative to our possibilities of interacting with them, and the mode of experience, which is specific to the self (i.e., perspectival and self-related). Experience is necessarily subjective, in the sense of being *for* a subject, due to the fact that it is given in a mode that is specific to the experiencing subject—nothing else is required.

Notice that on the view presented here, the non-objectifying character of self-consciousness applies not just to primitive, non-conceptual forms of experience. For when I form an 'I'-thought on the basis of perception or bodily experience (as in the thought "I am seeing a computer screen in front of me"), the self-related character of my perceptual state is made explicit. However, in order to be able to self-ascribe (and be justified in self-ascribing) her perceptual state, the subject need only be in the possession of the self-concept; her judgment does not require any additional inference, evidence, or identity premise. No further justification or evidence is required for her to form this 'I'-thought because the judgment only makes explicit what was already implicit in the experiential state based upon which the judgment is made. This means that we do not need to construe explicit self-consciousness on the subject-model (i.e. as reflective self-consciousness in Zahavi's sense). It is not just that pre-reflective self-awareness, as a form of non-objectifying self-awareness, provides the basis for reflective self-consciousness, in which the subject takes

the self in nonconceptual, conscious experience, I do not endorse anti-representationalism about consciousness *per se*.

herself as an object of representation, by providing her with a sense of self-familiarity that enables her to recognize the object of reflection as herself. Rather, explicit self-consciousness—which is paradigmatically expressed by means of the first-person pronoun—retains the non-objectifying character of its pre-reflective basis. That is to say, we can avoid the subject-object model of self-consciousness (in its problematic, i.e. epistemological, interpretation) altogether.[7] The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is that, if we are to avoid falling back into the problematic subject-object model of self-consciousness while at the same time doing justice to the phenomenology of pre-reflective self-awareness, we should conceive of the latter in terms of non-self-representational, nonconceptual content.

Importantly, this also provides us with a notion of self-awareness in which the self—although not represented as an object in experience—is experienced as a spatially located, bodily self.[8] As we saw earlier, experience contains self-related information regarding the subject's position relative to, orientation towards, and possibilities for interacting with the objects surrounding her. Put differently, the self is implicit in the ego-mode of presentation, that is the mode of presentation that is necessarily relative to the experiencing subject. Now, insofar as the self is made explicit in a first-personal self-ascription, the only way in which it can be conceived in such a judgment is as a subject of experience that is located in a spatio-temporal environment. Thus, conceiving of pre-reflective self-awareness in the way in which I have proposed here not only prevents us from falling back into the problematic subject-object model, but also provides us with an antidote to the Cartesian conception of the self, that is, a self which is essentially disembodied.

7　Again, this is not to deny that we can also self-reflect in an objectifying sense.
8　Peacocke (2014) argues that at a very minimal level, a being might possess spatial self-awareness without possessing bodily self-awareness. I will not consider this question here.

3. Pre-reflective self-consciousness as a form of knowledge-how

Is there more to be said about the character of pre-reflective self-awareness than was explored so far? Put differently, what exactly does it mean for the self to be implicit in the mode of experience? I think it might be worth taking a closer look at the structure of the non-conceptual experience that is at issue here in order to answer this question. Specifically, I want to explore the idea that what we are dealing with here is a form of knowledge-how (cf. Musholt 2015, chapter 2).

To begin with, it is important to be clear that the notion of nonconceptual content that is at issue is a personal level notion, that is, it is intended to capture what experience is like for the subject. In particular, it aims at specifying a way in which the subject experiences the world that is unlike conceptual, propositional thought. Although there is no generally agreed upon theory of concepts in philosophy, it is generally accepted that conceptual content, at the very least, consists of several components that can be systematically decomposed and recombined. In other words, conceptual content is generally considered to meet Evans' (1982) Generality Constraint. The basic idea behind this constraint is that the possession of concepts enables a thinker to generate a potentially indefinite number of thoughts via the variable combination of concepts that they possess. Arguably, many creatures, such as most animals and infants, cannot be attributed with these abilities. Nevertheless, there are instances in which we have to attribute representational content to these creatures in order to explain their behavior—namely those instances in which we cannot appeal to a simple stimulus-response interpretation of their behavior, that is to say in cases of intentional behavior. In order to account for such intentional behavior in the absence of concept possession, we need to attribute nonconceptual content to such creatures. Accordingly, in contrast to conceptual content, nonconceptual content, while being representational, does not consist of components that can be systematically decomposed and recombined. Rather, it is situation-specific, and it is often restricted to a particular cognitive domain.

Now, as I just pointed out, the aim is to explain how experience presents the world as being to an organism, such that we can under-

stand the organism's interactions with the world. And the thought is that in order to do so it is sometimes necessary to appeal to the notion of nonconceptual content. Thus, in order to provide a positive characterization of this content, we need to take into consideration the organism's capacities for interacting with the environment. In line with this, Cussins (1990) has argued that nonconceptual content presents the world not in terms of truth-conditions—as conceptual content would do—, but in terms of the affordances provided by the environment.[9] On this view, to experience a sound as coming from behind, for example, is to take oneself to be in a particular position to locate its origin, and to perceive a cup as being at a particular distance is to take oneself to be able (or unable, as the case might be) to grasp it. Similarly, we might explain the differences between infant and adult perception by reference to the infants' abilities to interact with their environment, such as their ability to track the movement of objects, which change over the course of development, thus leading to changes in their perceptual content. This can also be expressed by saying that nonconceptual representations should be understood in terms of knowledge-how, or procedural knowledge, rather than knowledge-that.[10]

Such knowledge-how links directly to action without any need for inference. At the same time, it is situation- and domain-specific and cannot provide the kind of generality and flexibility characteristic of conceptual representations. Conceptual and nonconceptual content are irreducible to each other[11] and, indeed, can sometimes be in ten-

9   Also see Dreyfus (2005) on "nonconceptual coping" for a related view.
10   The introduction of the distinction between knowledge-how and knowledge-that can be traced back to Ryle (1946, 1949), according to whom knowledge-how is an ability, which is in turn a set of dispositions. In contrast, knowledge-that is a relation between a thinker and a proposition.
11   Stanley and Williamson (2001) claim that nonconceptual content can be reduced to propositional content. For convincing rebuttals of this claim, see, for instance, Rosefeldt (2004), Noe (2005), or Fridland (2012). For a recent detailed and illuminating analysis of knowledge-how as a non-propositional, normatively guided activity, which also argues in favor of a mutual irreducibility between the two, see Löwenstein (2017). It remains a question for further investigation whether the normative account developed by Löwenstein is compatible with the analysis of nonconceptual content in terms of knowing-how that I propose here, or whether it is rather more demanding. I believe that Löwenstein's approach is compatible with mine, but I won't explore this question here.

sion with each other. For instance, consider a skilled football player. Such a player does not have to pay attention to their every move—rather, the necessary movements come effortlessly and automatically, in contrast to those of a football novice. In fact, were such a skilled player to pay conscious attention to their moves in order to try to adjust them according to certain rules that are available to them in the form of propositions, their play would be interrupted and they would most certainly make more mistakes and play less skillfully. At the same time, an avid reader of football instruction books may well have all the conceptual knowledge that there is to be had about playing football, they may have memorized all the rules of the game and all the different movements and actions required to become a skilled player, but they will nevertheless be unable to play, for they lack the procedural, experiential knowledge required to be a skilled player.

So on the view proposed here, which goes back to Cussins, but which in similar form is also supported by other recent accounts (e.g., Hurley 1998; O'Regan & A. Noë 2002; Pettit 2003; Ward, Roberts, & Clark 2010; Hopp 2011), there is a conceptual connection between the content of experience and an organism's abilities for intentional action—where these include so-called 'epistemic actions', such as grouping, sorting and tracking objects or states of affairs. The basic point that is common to all of these proposals is that the content of a given perceptual experience and its cognitive significance can only be fully captured by means of referring to the organism's abilities. This means that nonconceptual content should be understood as a form of procedural representation or knowledge-how. For instance, Hopp (2011) has recently argued—with reference to Husserl's notion of an "horizon"—that the nonconceptual content of perception is at least partly determined by the subject's "empty intentions" towards presently unseen parts or aspects of an object. These "empty intentions" can be interpreted as a form of sensorimotor knowledge about the ways in which presently unseen parts and aspects of an object would appear were the subject to change their position in relation to the object (cf. O'Regan & Noë 2002). Similarly, Pettit (2003) suggests that an object looks red insofar as "it manifestly enables you to sift and sort and track it in the red-appropriate manner" and the "ball that someone throws looks to be going fast so far as it manifestly elicits

reaching *there* if I am to catch it, or ducking *now* if I am to avoid it" (p. 230). Likewise, according to Ward et al. (2010), it is the implicit knowledge of how to pursue and accomplish one's goals and intentions with regard to certain objects in one's environment that determines the content of one's perceptual experience for that environment. For instance, my experience of the mug in front of me can be captured by referring to my abilities to grasp the mug, to track it through space and time, and to my sensitivities towards changes in the mug's features. Likewise, my perceptual sensitivity towards a chair can be accounted for by my (implicit) grasping that the chair affords seating. On this view, a nonconceptual perceptual representation is accurate when the agent manages to engage appropriately with the world relative to their goals (i.e., when the world satisfies the agent's expectations regarding the possible actions they take themselves to be able to perform), while misrepresentations, such as illusions, occur when the world does not satisfy the agent's implicit expectations, and they don't manage to engage appropriately with the world (cf. Ward et al. 2010).

  Now, the self is implicit in this mode of experience precisely insofar as the world is presented relative to her possibilities for interacting with it. This is compatible with O'Brien's (2007) analysis of self-consciousness in terms of agent's awareness. In line with the view proposed here, O'Brien also argues that "the relevant mode of occurrence, which warrants the immediate self-ascription of the thought in question, should be understood in terms of agent's awareness" (O'Brien 2007, p. 115). She further argues that "agent's awareness is the result of acting on the basis of an assessment of possibilities for acting" (ibid). The basic thought here is that insofar as an agent is acting on the basis of assessing possibilities for action, these are necessarily possibilities *for her*. Hence, insofar as the subject is in possession of the first-person concept, they immediately warrant self-ascription, without the need for observation, reflection, or self-representation (see O'Brien 2007, 183–184).[12] So the self is implicit in the mode of experience insofar as this experience presents the world in terms of

12 Though notice that O'Brien distinguishes between bodily awareness and agent's awareness, claiming that only the latter warrants immediate self-ascription. I take this distinction to be problematic, for reasons I have outlined in Musholt (2015), chapter 5.

the subject's possibilities for interaction. Thus, in addition to being embodied and spatially located, the self that is implicit in the mode of experience is an agentive self.

4. Self and others in pre-reflective and reflective self-consciousness

Finally, what about the relation between self and others in pre-reflective self-awareness? Based on what was claimed in Section 2, it seems fairly obvious that others play a crucial role in the transition from non-conceptual, implicitly self-related experience to the explicit consciousness of oneself. As we have seen, while the self does not need to be represented in conscious experience (for it is necessarily implicit in the mode of experience), the picture changes when the perspectives of other subjects come into play. Once the subject realizes that there are others, who possess their own perspectives on the world, there will be situations which require an explicit distinction between her own perspective and that of another. As I have argued in detail elsewhere, developmentally speaking, this realization occurs in different steps, with corresponding levels of self-other-awareness (Musholt 2012, 2015, 2018).

This suggests that at the pre-reflective level, other subjects do not play a significant role and hence need not enter our analysis of the structure of conscious experience. Indeed, insofar as it is claimed that pre-reflective self-awareness is a basic, structural feature of all conscious experience, it would seem that pre-reflective self-awareness does not depend on an experience of others. Moreover, it is often claimed that pre-reflective self-awareness is a form of self-awareness that is shared between humans and non-human animals (e.g., Bermúdez 1998). As many of these non-human animals are not social in the way humans are, this seems to suggest that pre-reflective self-awareness does not depend on social interaction. Further, considering again arguments from phenomenology, Zahavi (2014) has recently made it clear that he denies "that the very mineness or for-me-ness of experience is constitutively dependent upon social interaction" (p.

95). While he does not deny that minimal selfhood and intersubjectivity do *de facto* coexist, he does deny that they constitutively depend on one another.[13] That is, he explicitly defends the existence of a pre-social form of self-experience.[14]

However, at least for human conscious experience, it would be a mistake to neglect the crucial role that others play in shaping our conscious experience right from the start. As humans, we are inherently social beings, from right after birth (and before). Not only are we thoroughly dependent on others for our survival, but our experience of the world and of ourselves is thoroughly shaped by our interactions with others. This is not to deny that conscious experience is logically possible in the absence of social interaction. That is to say, I do not want to claim that animals who are not social in the way we are therefore lack consciousness. Nor do I claim that if a human being were to grow (and survive) while being completely deprived of social interaction it would turn into a "zombie" devoid of phenomenal awareness altogether. Yet, in order to get a better understanding of actual human experience, it is important to take into consideration the intimate links between self- and other-experience.

In contrast to previous work of mine, the focus of my remarks here will not be primarily on the question of how we come to understand others and, in doing so, acquire explicit self-consciousness (i.e., on the question of how we acquire a theory of mind). Rather, I am here interested in pointing out how even our very basic forms of self- and world-experience are intimately shaped by our being with others.

For instance, recent research emphasizes that even at a very basic, bodily level, our self-awareness is always mediated through our interactions with others (e.g. Greenwood 2015). The infant is born depending on others for her survival and homeostatic regulation. Her

13   Though notice that he does not claim that there aren't also interesting relations between subjectivity and intersubjectivity; indeed, he spends the second and third parts of this book exploring these very relations.

14   In stark contrast to this, Prinz (2012) has recently put forward a social theory of consciousness rooted in cognitive neuroscience, that construes every conscious experience as ultimately socially constructed. However, notice that Prinz, in contrast to both Zahavi and to the view put forward here, defends a higher-order theory of consciousness, that is he remains wedded to subject-object model of awareness.

caregivers engage in a variety of embodied interactions with her, including hugging, holding, rocking, stroking, breastfeeding, washing, body-to-body temperature regulation and more, which have a direct effect on the infant's physiological states and sensations, influencing her arousal, temperature, posture, glucose levels and even pain sensations. Thus, the way in which the infant experiences herself is crucially dependent on others. Indeed, as Fotopoulo & Tsakiris (2017) have recently argued, one's sense of bodily self is shaped in important ways by these early embodied social interactions.

What's more, the infant also relies on social scaffolding for her understanding both of the world around her and of her possibilities for interacting with the world. That is, her sense of herself as an intentional agent—even at the implicit level—is constituted by her interactions with others. As McGeer (2001) points out, children come equipped with certain capacities and motivations that enable them to be initiated into our normatively structured (social) world, such as their innate interest in and sensitivity to social stimuli and their abilities for proprioceptive-perceptual matching, shared attention or social referencing. These provide the basis for an initiation into the world that is, at least initially, carefully guided by the infant's caregivers. This is also sometimes put as the adult providing scaffolding for the development of the child's understanding (Bruner 1990). In particular, "parents treat their children as intentional in practices that initially extend beyond their intentional competence, leaving the parents to maintain, and even exaggerate, the formal structure and affective import of such interactions for both" (McGeer 2001, p. 122), thereby lending a sense-making structure to these interactions. As Greenwood (2015) emphasizes, right from the start, the interactions between child and caregiver are characterized by turn-taking activities, which provide essential opportunities for learning. Within the context of such turn-taking activities, children are interpreted as initiating meaningful interactions in the course of which the adults they interact with emphasize the meaningful elements of their own behavior while at the same time encouraging the child to provide responses that conform to the norms guiding the practices of their social group (and ignoring elements of the child's behavior that do not fit into a meaningful pattern). For example, an initially unintentional

arm movement performed by the child might be interpreted as the attempt to grasp an object by its caregiver. The caregiver will respond to this by handing the object to the child, expecting her to take it and respond in return. This expectation might be communicated by certain gestures, encouraging sounds, etc. The child might in turn conform to this expectation by holding the object and looking at it, shaking it, etc. This, in turn, confirms the adult's interpretation of its initial behavior and will make it more likely that a similar movement will in the future be interpreted in the same way. Over the course of multiple such interactions, the child will thus come to understand her own movement as an attempt to grasp and will come to expect an adult to assist her in this attempt. Thus, the child not only learns to make sense of those around her, but at the same time comes to experience and regulate her own experiences and actions according to the intersubjective norms governing her group's practices (McGeer 2001). Thus, our willingness to treat infants and children as persons that are, in principle, capable of intentional behavior is a prerequisite for their development as intentional agents and will shape the way in which they come to experience and understand themselves. Hence, our understanding of self (and others) is the result of a practice enabling us to navigate and feel at home in the normatively structured social world (cf. McGeer 2001, 2007; Zawidzki 2013, Andrews 2015).

Thus, our sense of self—even at the basic, pre-reflective, implicit level—is always shaped through social interactions, which, in turn, are embedded within a larger and normatively structured social context. It is important to be aware of this both in the interest of providing an adequate account of human experience, but also because it emphasizes the impact of cultural and social norms right from the start. For instance, it is easy to see based on these considerations how differences in the interaction between caregivers and male as compared to female infants (which might be very subtle and unconscious) might lead to self-reinforcing behavioral differences, different patterns of self-regulation and differences in self-understanding later on. While many philosophers have explored the importance of others for our ability to take an external perspective onto ourselves for the purpose of self-reflection (which can, in turn, be internalized so as to become part of our self-concept), the way in which social interaction

informs our most basic, nonconceptual sense self has so far not been adequately studied and remains an important task for future work.[15]

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to show that if we are to avoid the problematic subject-object model of self-consciousness, pre-reflective self-awareness is best understood in a non-representationalist sense. That is, the self is not part of the representational content of experience, but is rather implicit in the mode of experience. Specifically, it is implicit in the mode in the sense that experience presents the subject with possibilities for interaction with the world (which are necessarily self-related). This analysis is compatible with phenomenological analyses of pre-reflective self-awareness. First-personal judgments that are made based on conscious experience only make explicit what was already implicit in the mode; hence explicit self-consciousness doesn't require self-identification (and therefore no knowledge of self-identifying criteria is required, either). Thus, the subject-object model of self-consciousness can be avoided. Moreover, it was shown that our sense of self—even at the basic, nonconceptual level—is always shaped through social interactions, which, in turn, are embedded within a larger and normatively structured social context.[16]

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15   Though see Kyselo (2014) for a recent enactive and social account of the minimal self.

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Contributors

Marc Borner, Dr., Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at the Charité Campus Mitte, Charité Universitätsmedizin, Berlin, Berlin, Germany.

Matthew C. Eshleman, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of North Carol, Wilmington NC. United States of America.

Manfred Frank, Professor of Philosophy, Emerit., Dr. Dres. h.c. Professor of Philosophy, Eberhard Karls Universität, Tübingen, Germany.

Shaun Gallagher, Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Sciences, Institute of Simulation and Training, University of Central Florida, Orlando, United States of America.

Anna Giustina. Dr. phil., Institut Jean Nicod/École Normale Supérieure/PSL Research University, Paris, France.

James G. Hart, Professor of Philosophy Emerit., Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, United States of America.

Andreas Heinz, Professor of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Medical Centre of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Charité— University Medical Department Berlin, Campus Charité-Mitte, Berlin, Germany.

Dieter Henrich, Professor of Philosophy, Dr. phil. Emerit., Philosophy, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, München, Germany.

Terence Horgan, Professor of Philosophy, University of Arizona, United States of America.

Robert J. Howell, Dedman Family Distinguished Professor, Dedman College of Humanities & Sciences, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, United States of America.

Tomis Kapitan (1949–2016†), Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Northern Illinois University, DeKap, United States of America.

Chad Kidd, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, City College of New York, CUNY University, New York, United States of America.

Stefan Lang, Dr. habil., Privat Lecturer, Institute of Philosophy, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany.

Kristina Musholt, Professor of Cognitive Anthropology, Institute of Philosophy, University of Leipzig, Germany.

Gerhard Preyer, Professor of Sociology, Institute of Sociology, Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurt a. M., Germany.

Luis Roniger, Reynolds Professor of Latin American Studies, Wake Forrest University, Winston-Salem, NC, United States of America.

Miguel Ángel Sebastián, Dr., Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas, UNAM, Ciudad Universitaria, México D.F., México.

Gerhard Seel, Professor of Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy, University Bern, Bern, Switzerland.

Leonardo Senkman, Dr., Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel.

Josh Weisberg, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of Houston, Houston, United States of America.

Kenneth Williford, Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, UT Arlington, Arlington, United States of America.

Dan Zahavi, Professor of Philosophy, Director of Centre for Subjectivity Research (CFS), University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark.

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