Self-Awareness and Self-Understanding

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I critically examine Dan Zahavi's multidimensional account of the self and show

how the distinction he makes among 'pre-reflective minimal', 'interpersonal', and 'normative'

dimensions of selfhood needs to be refined in order to accommodate what I call 'pre-reflective

self-understanding'. The latter is a normative dimension of selfhood manifest not in reflection and

deliberation, but in the habits and style of a person's pre-reflective absorption in the world. After

reviewing Zahavi's multidimensional account and revealing this gap in his explanatory taxonomy,

I draw upon Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Frankfurt in order to sketch an account of pre-

reflective self-understanding. I end by raising an objection to Zahavi's claim for the primitive and

foundational status of pre-reflective self-awareness. To carve off self-awareness from the self's

practical immersion in a situation where things and possibilities already matter and draw one to

act is to distort the phenomena. A more careful phenomenology of pre-reflective action shows

that pre-reflective self-awareness and pre-reflective self-understanding are co-constitutive, both

mutually for each other and jointly for everyday experience.

1.   Introduction

What kind of self-awareness is involved in pre-reflective human action? To explore this question is to problematize Dan Zahavi's (2014) recently re-articulated 'multidimensional' account of selfhood. At issue is the proper understanding of what Zahavi calls 'minimal pre-reflective self-awareness' and the way this is related to the more robust and normatively oriented dimensions of selfhood such as personal commitment. Zahavi develops the notion of pre-reflective self-awareness, which he also refers to as a kind of 'formal', 'minimal', or 'experiential' selfhood, in order to capture the peculiar asymmetrical first-personal nature of phenomenal consciousness. This form of selfhood amounts just to the fact that experience is given as *my* experience. This is why Zahavi refers to it as a merely 'formal' dimension of selfhood. In addition to pre-reflective self-awareness, Zahavi takes into account of two further dimensions of selfhood: the intersubjective or interpersonal dimension as experienced in emotions like empathy and shame and the normatively situated, substantive dimension of selfhood expressed in personal commitments and practical identities. The latter is the dimension of selfhood at stake, variously, in the Delphic Injunction to 'Know Thyself', in work on narrative self-identity (see Rudd 2012 and Schechtman 2011), and in recent work on 'substantial self-knowledge' – knowledge of one's own character and dispositions (see Cassam 2014 and Schwitzgebel 2010, 2014).[1] Zahavi argues that formal pre-reflective self-awareness is the primordial foundation for this substantial dimension of selfhood (Zahavi 2014: 14, 24, 50, 89). As I will show below, Zahavi strongly associates the normatively situated, substantial dimension of selfhood with the activity of reflective self-interpretation, as in thematic, deliberative consideration about one's conflicting motivations or the overall arc and direction of one's life. As such, the claim that an ability to engage in reflective self-interpretation about one's commitments and life trajectory depends upon a first-personal

experiential awareness of oneself can seem rather straightforward and unproblematic, as Zahavi indeed makes it out to be – without experiential self-awareness, how could self-interpretation or deliberation ever take place? However, more careful attention to the phenomenology of action reveals a pre-reflective mode of substantive-normative selfhood that is left out of Zahavi's taxonomy, a mode of selfhood operative in the habits and style of a person's pre-reflective absorption in the world. The pre-reflective mode of substantive-normative selfhood is what I call 'pre-reflective self-understanding', and my account of it will problematize Zahavi's ascription of a foundational status to his conception of pre-reflective self-awareness. To carve off the pre-reflective, asymmetrical givenness of the self to itself from self-understanding, that is, to carve off and formalize self-awareness apart from the self's practical-existential immersion in a situation where things and possibilities already matter and draw one to act is to distort the phenomena. Pre-reflective self-awareness, the first-personal asymmetrical givenness of experiences as mine, is not a primordial foundation for pre-reflective self-understanding because it is also *founded therein*. Self-awareness is awareness of oneself as a world-enmeshed agent. The upshot of this claim is that pre-reflective self-awareness and pre-reflective self-understanding are *co-constitutive*, both mutually for each other and jointly for everyday experience.

In what follows, I first draw out some motifs and tensions in Hubert Dreyfus's work on pre-reflective action in order to provide further systematic framing for the issues at stake (§2). I then review Zahavi's multidimensional account of the self and reveal a gap in his explanatory taxonomy with respect to pre-reflective mode of normative selfhood (§§3-4). Then, working out some themes from Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Harry Frankfurt, I provide an account of pre-reflective self-understanding which, as will emerge in the course of my discussion, is constituted by the following three aspects: (i) a practical self-relation that is bound up with (ii)

an individually inflected suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which (iii) a person is aware of and solicited to act in her current situation (§§5-8). I end by making the case that pre-reflective self-awareness and pre-reflective self-understanding are co-constitutive.[2]

2.   *Dreyfus on Solicitations and Self-Awareness*

By *pre-reflective action* I mean the kind of actions with which Hubert Dreyfus was long concerned, those he referred to under the heading of 'skillful coping' or 'absorbed coping'.[3] Developing descriptions and arguments from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, Dreyfus stresses the significance of action that proceeds not from reflective deliberation but rather, for example, from the exercise of skills (such as skills for using everyday equipment like doors, bicycles, and chopsticks) or the influence of social norms (such as automatically adjusting the volume of one's voice and selection of conversation topics to fit the composed atmosphere of a formal dinner, or stepping back in order to stand at an appropriate distance while having a conversation with a stranger). Such pre-reflective actions are enabled by a suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which we are aware of and solicited to act in our current situation.[4] The label 'pre-reflective' captures here not only the point that the actions in question are not the outcome of a prior episode of reflective deliberation; it also, as Zahavi would point out, characterizes the minimal or non-thetic, non-objectifying kind of self-awareness characteristic of a person engaged in such absorbed coping.[5] This raises the question of what account to give of the pre-reflective self-awareness of an absorbed coper.

Dreyfus himself vacillated on the question of what kind of self-awareness *if any* was involved in absorbed coping. In his debate with John McDowell, Dreyfus pushed for a strong version of the claim that absorbed coping is completely mindless, without any even 'minimal' or

'marginal' self-awareness (see, e.g., Dreyfus 2007, 2013). Yet in the course of his earlier debate with John Searle, Dreyfus (1993: 88) acknowledged that 'skillful coping is a mode of awareness', a claim, I will show below, that he again seems to endorse in passing at a certain juncture in his debate with McDowell. Since the strong version of the mindlessness claim makes it difficult for Dreyfus to distinguish between skillful coping and, in his own words, 'mindless mechanical behavior' (ibid.), and is in tension with the phenomenological interest Dreyfus takes in the way situations *show up* to people so as to elicit certain actions from them (where 'showing up' implies some kind of experiential awareness), in this section I will begin to reconstruct an account of absorbed coping as a mode of everyday experience involving the following features: a pre-reflective (non-observational or non-self-monitoring) self-awareness that is inseparable from an awareness of (or 'openness to') the affordances and solicitations that guide one's action in an unfolding situation. This is my alternative Zahavi's account of pre-reflective self-awareness as being a form of selfhood that can be given and analyzed in abstraction from the self's situational involvement. It is this interpretation of pre-reflective self-awareness that is suggested by the phenomenology of pre-reflective action and that, as I will go on to argue toward the end of this paper, is both foundational for *and* founded in pre-reflective self-understanding.

The notion of a 'solicitation' is Dreyfus's (2013: 37, n.12) companion notion to James J. Gibsons's (1979) conception of an 'affordance'. The latter is meant to capture the ways in which certain features of an animal's environment provide (afford) possibilities for action (as in: a hole in the fence affords escape, a bottle of beer affords grasping and sipping, a postbox affords posting a letter). Dreyfus, referring to unnamed 'Gestaltists' who influenced Gibson's account of affordances, draws a distinction, latent in Gibson's own account, between 'solicitations' and 'affordances'.[6] A solicitation is the attractive or repulsive experiential character, 'the temporary

special attraction', as Gibson (1979: 139) himself puts it, that an affordance can have for an agent in a given situation. As Dreyfus (2013: 37, n.12) explains the distinction in an example: 'For Gibson, an apple affords eating, i.e., is edible whether anyone is hungry or not, but the Gestaltists add that only when one is hungry does an apple *solicit* eating, i.e., look delicious', where looking delicious is charged with practical significance such that one is disposed to grab the apple and bite it. Extending this line of thought, the properties of chopsticks afford them being used by a tourist visiting, say, Japan as a prop in an episode of spontaneous table-side physical comedy or as a stick with which stir a cup of tea, but the chopsticks would only show up as soliciting such an action to someone unfamiliar with the norms and related emotional valences of chopsticks; using the chopsticks in such a flippant manner would typically not occur to those familiar with those norms and receptive to those emotional valences. The claim here is that this difference would be reflected in the way in which the situation is experientially given to the various people, the way in which it shows up to them so as to guide their actions. More needs to be said to make this plausible.

According to Gibson and Dreyfus, our perceptual openness to the world is not limited to awareness of objects and their properties like shape, size, and color. Solicitations and affordances are given directly in everyday experience (Gibson 1979: 127). As phenomenologists like to express the point, affordances and solicitations figure into how things immediately *show up* to someone. We do not need first to recognize something as a particular kind of object with a particular range of properties (an approximate length and shape, for example), and then subsume it under yet another concept of usability, e.g., for manipulating food items, stirring tea, or making a humorous gesture (see Noë 2013). In other words, our perceptual openness to the world is, so to speak, *agential*; it is not a normatively inert openness to facts and states of affairs; it is charged with practical and normative significance, it presents us with things to do or *not* to do.[7] Next, the

affordances and solicitations that are directly given in perception depend upon the agent's dispositional structure and current concerns in such a way as to pre-reflectively guide their response to the situation. As another example of this, Dreyfus (2013: 27) claims that 'a soccer field shows up entirely differently to a skilled player absorbed in the game than it does to an observer no matter how skilled'. For the skilled player involved in the game, but not for the observer, the perception of the soccer field is charged with practical significance such that certain moves like driving the ball downfield between two opponents or shooting for a goal can be given in the experience as 'something for me to do'. (The observer can have observational awareness that certain moves are possible but, not being in the game herself, the situation of play on the field would not show up as soliciting *her* to do anything, except, say, to jeer, cheer, and taunt). In the terminology of Dreyfus and Taylor (2015: 94), the motivational character of an affordance is 'coproduced' by the features of the environment and the agents coping in the environment (given their dispositional structure and current concerns). Dreyfus elsewhere adds that to be aware of solicitations is to be guided by a 'sense of appropriateness' for what a situation calls for (Dreyfus 2001: 162-164).

Given all of this, I can now specify the telling tension in Dreyfus's account. Discussing Merleau-Ponty's (1966) description of the skilled soccer player's ability to respond to a situation of play without the mediation of thematic reflection, Dreyfus (2013) highlights Merleau-Ponty's remark that 'at this moment consciousness is nothing but the dialectic of milieu and action' (Merleau-Ponty 1966: 168-169).[8] In a note to this passage, Dreyfus (2013: 37, n.11) refers to this as Merleau-Ponty's 'minimalist, nonmental gloss on what consciousness is'. 'All consciousness means in this minimum sense', Dreyfus continues, 'is being drawn to act' (ibid.). The force of Dreyfus's qualifier 'nonmental' seems to be a denial that the player's consciousness of being

drawn to act involves any higher-order monitoring awareness of his activity and perception of solicitations. In other words, I suggest we read 'nonmental' here as 'non-thetic' or 'non-self-monitoring'. After all, this acknowledgement of a 'minimalist' or 'nonmental' form of consciousness is offered in the context of Dreyfus's debate with McDowell, where Dreyfus (despite McDowell's objections) associates all notions of 'the mental' and 'mindedness' with detached, higher-order self-monitoring (see, e.g., Dreyfus 2013: 31). If my take on Dreyfus's explanation of Merleau-Ponty's absorbed soccer player is right, he acknowledges that for Merleau-Ponty absorbed coping involves a minimal, non-thetic consciousness that is inseparable from the player's awareness of being so drawn to act in a situation of play.[9] As Zahavi (2013: 327-328) rightly points out, Dreyfus often explicitly denies a role even for a non-thetic, non-self-monitoring form of self-awareness as being involved in how situations show up for an absorbed coper. But this can damage the plausibility of Dreyfus's account because it supports the interpretation that absorbed coping is *not experience at all*, but rather a zombie-like 'nonconscious automaticity' (ibid., 322, 326).[10]

Dreyfus's willingness to allot a role to minimal or 'nonmental' consciousness of being drawn to act by situational solicitations echoes back to a version of his position that he defended in the course of his debate with John Searle. There, Dreyfus explicitly denied that absorbed coping is 'zombie-like' or 'mindless, mechanical behavior' (Dreyfus 1993: 88). Indeed, as quoted above, Dreyfus asserts in this context that '*Skillful coping is a mode of awareness*' (ibid., italics in the original).[11] Referring with approval to Heidegger, Dreyfus adds that the latter 'actually uses the term '*experience*' [*Erfahrung*], but this can be characterized only as openness [to a situation and its possibilities]. It is not a mental, inner, private event (*Erlebnis*, Husserl's term), aware of itself as separate from, and directed toward, things in the world' (Dreyfus 1993: 88, my gloss in the

brackets).[12] On this interpretation, then, 'everyday experience' amounts to a responsiveness to an unfolding field of solicitations that shows up to a person in light of their personally inflected suite of abilities and dispositions. As a way of things 'showing up', everyday experience involves a degree of non-thetic (or pre-reflective) self-awareness on the part of the one *to whom* things show up.[13] In turn, such pre-reflective self-awareness of an absorbed agent is inseparable from the aforementioned responsiveness to the shifting field of solicitations that guide action. The nature of our self-awareness cannot be properly understood unless we take into account our pre-reflective and habitual ways of acting and getting around in the world.

I will return to and develop these claims throughout the rest of the paper. In the meantime, as I turn to examine Zahavi's conception of the self, it will be useful to bear in mind the conception of pre-reflective self-awareness and its relation to pre-reflective action that I have sketched above.

3.   *Zahavi's Multidimensional Account of Selfhood*

'The self', as Zahavi puts it, 'is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon' (Zahavi 2014: 9). As I've briefly noted, Zahavi distinguishes 'experiential' or 'minimal' selfhood (the formal pre-reflective self-awareness of my experiences as mine) from thick, normatively and socially oriented selfhood of practical identity. In his answer to critics that the experiential or minimal self cannot be put into the plural, Zahavi discusses the intersubjective dimension of selfhood that relates to other selves in empathy (Part II of Zahavi 2014) and the interpersonal dimension of selfhood that relates to itself in relating to others in shame (Part III of Zahavi 2014). My focus here is on the first two dimensions (the subject matter of Part I of Zahavi 2014), namely the 'thin-experiential' and the 'substantial' or 'thick-normative' dimensions of selfhood, respectively. Zahavi claims that the former is primitive:

> Self-consciousness is a many-layered phenomenon. It comes in many forms and degrees, and whereas one of the most advanced forms might involve contemplating one's life as a whole and reflecting on the kind of person one is and the values one holds dear, *the most primitive* form of self-consciousness is a question of the ongoing first-personal manifestation of one's own experiential life. (Zahavi 2014: 14, my italics)

A descendent of Husserl's notion of a 'pure ego' or 'sphere of ownness', the minimal-experiential self is a primal 'absolute individuation' of the subject's own consciousness (Zahavi 2015; Husserl 1970a: §§54-54b, 1970b, §56, and 1983: §1). The pre-reflective minimal self, as I've mentioned, is supposed to precede and ground the other more socially and normatively oriented dimensions of the self (cf. Zahavi 2014: 24, 50, and 89). As the primitive foundation for the normatively oriented dimension of selfhood, Zahavi conceives of the experiential self as being itself *normatively inert*. By 'normatively inert' I mean not responsive to or implicated in the normative attractions and repulsions of everyday situations, the way everyday situations already, prior to reflection, show up as calling for or ruling out certain actions (see §2, above).[14]

To frame his notion of the thick-normative dimension of selfhood, Zahavi refers to the discourse on 'practical identity' as expressed in the work of Korsgaard (1996, 2009). On this view, our identities of being a teacher, a musician, a friend, even a mother and a father, are norm-governed forms of practices for which we can be held responsible by others (see Zahavi 2014: 51-52). Whereas minimal selfhood is a matter of the primal and pre-reflective givenness of our experience, Zahavi claims that the thick-normative dimension of selfhood is 'a question of our self-interpretation, of who we take ourselves to be' (Zahavi 2014: 90). Zahavi stays largely non-committal about how exactly to conceive the reflective activity of self-interpretation. His favored 'example of a more normatively oriented account' (Zahavi 2014: 90) is the narrativist approach rooted in the works of MacIntyre (1985) and Ricoeur (1988) and refined more recently by philosophers like Schechtman (1996, 2011) and Rudd (2012).[15] Even so, Zahavi is careful to point

out some of the many questions that circulate in the debate around narrative self-interpretation (Zahavi 2014: 57-62). In the end, questions around the narrativist view do not concern Zahavi very much, as his main objective is to argue that the thick-normative self is grounded in the thin-experiential self. The thick-normative self, he writes, 'cannot stand on its own. It necessarily presupposes the first-personal features that are targeted by the experiential approach' (Zahavi 2014: 89).

Given that Zahavi is not directly concerned with developing a detailed account of the thick-normative self, it is not a surprise that his treatment of this phenomenon has some non-trivial gaps. By examining what Zahavi has left out, I will argue that it is necessary to alter the scope of his multidimensional account of selfhood. In turn, this expanded account of selfhood, while consistent with Zahavi's overarching multidimensional framework, will destabilize his claim for the foundational priority of formal, normatively inert minimal selfhood.

4.   *What Zahavi Overlooks: The Distinction between Self-Understanding and Self-*
      Interpretation

Although Zahavi attempts to stay mostly neutral about the specific constitution of the thick-normative self (being more interested in defending its dependency upon the minimal self), he regularly associates the 'thick' dimension of selfhood with reflective and deliberative activities which result in 'normative commitments and endorsements' (Zahavi 2014: 89). It is here that the task of refining and revising Zahavi's distinction between the pre-reflective and the reflective dimensions of selfhood receives its decisive impetus. Zahavi specifies that the thick-normative self is a matter of 'authorship, commitment, and normativity' and is 'linked to notions such as commitment, decision, responsibility, reflection' (Zahavi 2014: 90). Finally, he notes that the thick-normative self is 'the self that forms plans, makes promises, and accepts responsibilities, [it

is] the self that is defined and shaped by its values, ideals, goals, convictions, and decisions' (Zahavi 2014: 50).[16] The problem is that, by associating the thick-normative self with such reflective activities as authorship, decision, and endorsement, Zahavi overlooks the pervasive *pre-reflective* dimensions of thick-normative selfhood, and thus passes over the distinction between pre-reflective and reflective modes of thick-normative selfhood. Who we are is not just a matter of our reflective endorsements; our thick-normative self is also expressed in how we habitually get around in the world – how situations directly show up to us and draw us to act – prior to our episodes of reflection.

The distinction between pre-reflective and reflective modes of thick-normative selfhood is the distinction between self-understanding and self-interpretation, respectively. With this, I mean to capture the distinction between, on the one hand, the way substantive and normatively structured identities such as being someone's friend shape our abilities and dispositions for acting pre-reflectively (for example, when we unthinkingly rise to the person's defense in a situation of threat or conflict) and, on the other hand, the way such identities figure into episodes of reflective efforts to *make sense* of oneself and the direction of one's life (for example, when we have to balance between competing commitments on our time or come to ask ourselves if maintaining this friendship fits with our shifting aspirations for the kind of life we want to live).

Zahavi is aware of such issues, but he swerves wide around them and leaves them problematically undeveloped. At one point in his earlier discussion of these issues, Zahavi notes that 'Who one is depends on the values, ideals, and goals one has; it is a question of what has significance and meaning for one' (Zahavi 2005: 105). With this he aligns his conception of the thick-normative self with philosophers like Bernard Williams, Charles Taylor, and Harry Frankfurt. Frankfurt argues that it is through caring about things, ideals, and other people that 'our

individual identities are most fully expressed and defined' (Frankfurt 2004: 50). But Frankfurt also rightly notes that someone 'may care about something a great deal without realizing that he cares about it' (Frankfurt 2004: 21, n.6). What has significance for me is not always a function of – and may be beyond the scope of – my thematic awareness and reflective endorsements. Further, when something is of fundamental significance to me (a commitment to my beloved, for example) I experience this as an affective claim upon me, what Frankfurt sometimes calls a 'volitional necessity', rather than as something I myself have authored or decided upon. I find myself with many thick-normative commitments and many of them, to be sure, operate *behind the back* of my reflective self-awareness. Such considerations motivate Hans-Georg Gadamer's apt remark that: 'The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being' (Gadamer 2004: 278).

The key here is to take 'prejudice' in the extended sense that Gadamer and Heidegger give to it, i.e., as that which precedes my reflective judgments and endorsements. In this sense, prejudices not only help to constitute a person's 'historical being', as Gadamer puts it, but also his thick-normative selfhood in Zahavi's sense, and overall dispositional structure in Schwitzgebel's (2010) sense. To his credit, Zahavi, as I mentioned, is sensitive to this phenomenon. In noting his reservations about the narrativist conception of the self, Zahavi states in passing that 'we shouldn't overlook the role of passivity and facticity. Who I am isn't exclusively a question of how I understand myself and how this is expressed in the story I tell about myself' (Zahavi 2014: 59). However, Zahavi does not pursue this train of thought any further, using it only as an occasion to restate his point that the 'narrative account also has to be supplemented' by his notion of the thin-experiential self (Zahavi 2014: 59). An additional fleeting acknowledgement of a substantive, pre-

reflective dimension of selfhood appears (in conjunction with an additional emphasis on 'decisions and convictions') in some remarks Zahavi makes and endorses about Husserl's notion of the personal ego. Referring to Husserl's *Ideen II,* Zahavi notes that

> whereas the pure ego possesses a purely formal kind of individuation, a more concrete kind of individuality is constituted in and through my personal history, by *my moral and intellectual decisions and convictions*, and by my identification with and participation in various social groups. I am, in short, not merely a pure and formal subject of experience, but also a person with *abilities, dispositions, habits, interests, character traits, and convictions*. (Zahavi 2014: 83, my italics)

These references to dispositions, habits, and a 'sedimented' personal history (Zahavi 2014:82) hit directly upon the thick dimension of pre-reflective selfhood I'm concerned with, but nevertheless leave it hanging.[17] A full appreciation of this issue, that is, of the role of 'passivity and facticity' and of 'enduring habits' and dispositions in the constitution of the thick-normative self requires a more careful phenomenology of the pre-reflective dimensions of selfhood than Zahavi offers. Accordingly, Zahavi provides an insufficient account of the way a thick-normative dimension of selfhood is also a matter of our pre-reflective involvement in the world.

In distinguishing understanding from interpretation, and in connecting understanding to a practical self-relation and a suite abilities and dispositions in light of which a person is aware of and responsive to situational solicitations, I am drawing on the resonances of certain themes from Heidegger and his interpreters.[18] For Heidegger, the primary meaning of 'understanding' is ability, competence, or know-how, where such ability often exceeds our cognitive or reflective grasp of what it is that we are doing. Heidegger's paradigmatic example is a craftsman who *understands* his workshop where he skillfully knows his way around and thus understands himself as carpenter; but this, like Merleau-Ponty's soccer player, is meant as an example that generalizes across everyday life. In one of Heidegger's more crisp passages dealing with this theme, he writes:

> For, in ordinary language, we also use 'understanding' in another sense when we say 'He understands how to handle men', 'He knows how to talk.' Understanding here means 'knowing how' [*können*], 'being capable of'. (Heidegger 1985: 298 / GA 20: 412; cf. Heidegger 1962: 183/143)

But understanding is bound for friction. Tensions and disharmonies in our own self-understanding will arise: conflicting commitments or a lack of fit between how we habitually act and how we reflectively conceive of ourselves can lead to breakdowns, as will challenges and demands from the others amidst whom we live, those whose lives and well-being are impacted by what we do and say. 'Interpretation' is meant to capture what transpires in the attempt to repair a breakdown in understanding and, according to Heidegger, it involves the development or cultivation [*Ausbildung*], working-out [*Ausarbeitung*], appropriation [*Zueignung*], and making-determinate [*Bestimmen*] (Heidegger 1962: 188/148, 189/148, 203/160, and 89/62, respectively) of the abilities and prejudices that operate and guide us inconspicuously in understanding. On Heidegger's picture, interpretation is the activity in which 'all preparing, putting to rights, repairing, improving, rounding out, are accomplished' (Heidegger 1962: 189/148). As Zahavi puts it, a self-interpreting agent is in a position to 'consider her own aims, ideals, and aspirations *as* her own and tell a story about them' (Zahavi 2005: 129).[19]

With this foregoing provisional account of the distinction between understanding and interpretation on the table, what more can be said about how a person's thick-substantive self is pre-reflectively operative in her everyday absorption in a familiar world? I need to say more about what I have referred to as the suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which a person is aware of and drawn to act by the solicitations of her situation.

5.   *Self-Understanding, Disposedness, and Attunement*

My inclusion of 'dispositions' in my gloss on 'self-understanding' as involving 'a suite of abilities and dispositions' is meant to connect with Heidegger's conception of *Befindlichkeit*, or 'disposedness'.[20] 'Disposedness' and its companion notion, 'attunement' [*Stimmung*], are Heidegger's expressions for how things *matter* or 'get' to a person and thereby orient and guide her pre-reflective behavior. The way situations matter, the way we are pre-disposed to act, is shaped by our cultural upbringing and is individually inflected by our idiosyncratic personal commitments. Harry Frankfurt expresses this point nicely. Frankfurt sees that to care about something is to be meaningfully situated and oriented by it:

> That a person cares about or that he loves something has less to do with how things make him feel, or with his opinions about them, than with the *more or less stable motivational structures that shape his preferences and that guide and limit his conduct.* What a person loves helps him to determine the choices that he makes and the actions he is eager or unwilling to perform. (Frankfurt 1999a: 129, my italics)

In other words, the way things matter for you is reflected in your possibilities of action, the solicitations that guide your action and deliberation. With these phenomena in view, Heidegger writes that Dasein, 'as essentially disposed [*als wesenhaft befindliches*] has already got itself into definite possibilities', and that 'By way of being attuned, Dasein "sees" possibilities, in terms of which it is' (Heidegger 1962 183/144 and 188/148). To have things matter for you is for you to find yourself in a field of possibilities with a certain articulated, foreground-background structure (more on this just below). That people have things matter to them in a particular way is what, in Heidegger's view, makes up the receptive dimension of human agency: things matter *to* or *for* you. For this reason, Heidegger remarks that attunement 'is a primordial kind of being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior to* all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure' (Heidegger 1962: 175/136). Again, this receptivity shapes how situations of action

show up and make sense to me, and that means: how they draw and motivate me to act, how I am solicited to act in them.[21]

In order to spell out a more detailed account of the suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which a person is aware of and drawn to act in a situation, I will continue to explore the phenomenon of an 'attunement to a field of possibilities' by engaging with some themes from Merleau-Ponty and Frankfurt.

6. *Merleau-Ponty and Frankfurt on Solicitations: The Polarization of a Field of Possibilities*

Heidegger says that by being attuned to a situation, we 'see possibilities'. But what does this mean? Above, I relied upon Dreyfus's conception of a solicitation as a way of spelling out what it means to 'see possibilities'. For his part, Merleau-Ponty appeals to Gestalt Psychology's emphasis on the figure-ground structure of the perceptual field. In Merleau-Ponty's terms, to say that an agent sees possibilities is to say that his perceptual field and field of action are 'polarized' into a significant figure-ground structure. For a person's perceptual field to be polarized is for certain things and options already to stand out in the foreground as motivationally salient (attractive or repulsive), while others remain indeterminately in the background or do not show up in experience at all. This is why Merleau-Ponty writes that a person's abilities and projects 'polarize the world, bringing magically to view a host of signs which guide action' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 115; translation slightly modified).

According to Merleau-Ponty, my dispositional structure involves a constellation of motivational factors. Some factors are personal (or 'individual'), and have to do with me in particular, and some are general, or, as Merleau-Ponty also puts it, 'pre-personal' or 'anonymous',

and have to do with the dimensions of human selfhood which do not individuate me at all, but which pertain to me insofar as I am 'one' among many.

6.1   Merleau-Ponty on the General Motivational Factors Involved in Attunement

Merleau-Ponty works with two motivational factors that are *general*. First, the person's body: 'Insofar as I have hands, feet, a body, and a world, I sustain intentions around myself that are not decided upon and that affect my surroundings in a way which I do not choose. *These intentions are general*' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 465, my italics). The kind of things that show up saliently in the foreground of my perceptual field as relevant to my purposes depends on the kind of body I have and the kinds of things I can do with it. In this vein, Merleau-Ponty continues: 'Whether or not I have decided to undertake the climb, these mountains appear large because they outstrip my body's grasp' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 464).[22] The general structure of my body and the range of my bodily abilities mean not only that mountains appear big, but also that doorknobs, chop sticks, drum sticks, and beer bottles immediately show up to me as 'graspable', chairs directly show up to me as places to sit (not obstacles to step over casually), certain gaps between people in an elevator crowd show up to me as places into which I can move myself, etc. Our being embodied decisively contributes to structuring the polarization of our perceptual field and field of action, thereby substantially shaping the habits and style of our pre-reflective absorption in the world.

In the case of our embodiment, we find a curious mixture between the first-person and the third-person perspectives (see Carman 2005). My body is *my* body, my perspectival opening on the world that shapes how my situation immediately shows up to *me* and draws *me* to act. Yet at the same time, the way this body shapes my situation and field of possibilities is not of my own doing, and does not pertain to me as an individual, but as one of a 'we' all of whom have such a

body: 'These intentions [sustained around me by my body] do not belong to me, they come from farther away than myself and I am not surprised to find them in all psycho-physical subjects who have a similar organization to my own' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 465, my gloss in the brackets). Merleau-Ponty accordingly coins the expression, *le corps propre*, literally 'the own body', to capture this intermingling of first- and third-person perspectives.

The first-personal asymmetry I have mentioned here (my body in its general structure is given to me as *my* body, *my* active perspectival opening on the world) connects with what Zahavi has in view with his notion of thin-minimal selfhood. It is important, however, to emphasize here that Merleau-Ponty's rightful insistence that the givenness of my body as *mine* is not merely formal or normatively inert; it is always at the same time a givenness of actions I could *do*. This is why Merleau-Ponty claims that 'Insofar as I have hands, feet, a body, and a world, I *sustain intentions* around myself…that affect my surroundings in ways I do not choose' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 465, my italics); and adds that 'The body is the vehicle of being in the world and, for a living being, having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 84). This connects with the claim I introduced in §2 above, namely, that self-awareness, the givenness of my experiences as *mine*, is intertwined with the givenness of solicitations to act in a situation. To be aware of the wine bottle as soliciting *my* grasp, to be aware of the banister as soliciting *my* lean, to be aware of the door soliciting *my* exit, is to have asymmetrical perspectival awareness of myself as being drawn to act in such a manner.

The second example Merleau-Ponty gives of a general motivational factor in the polarization of a person's field of action is the generalized horizon of cultural meanings into which

a person is socialized and which determines the range of options and practical identities available

and attractive to him at all in the first place:

> We thus recognize, surrounding our initiatives and ourselves taken as this strictly individual project, a zone of *generalized* existence and of projects already formed, significances which trail between ourselves and things and which confer upon us the qualities of 'man', 'bourgeois', or 'worker'. Generality already intervenes, *our presence to ourselves is already mediated by it*. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 476, my italics)[23]

Here Merleau-Ponty clearly means to invoke Heidegger's notion of *das Man*, the One.[24] The point

for my present purposes is that the polarization of my field of possibilities, the kinds of things I

am able to do, the things that I am pre-reflectively attracted to do or repelled from doing, the things

that can *occur to me* to do or to deliberate about doing in the first place, will reflect my having

been socialized into the norms of what 'one' does in this kind of situation.

It simply does not occur to me, for example, to answer my cell phone while in the middle

of teaching a class, for, as a responsible teacher, that is not what one does. While seated at a dinner

table with guests, I 'instinctively' suppress my belch, because, in our culture, belching is not

something a polite person does at the dinner table. Furthermore, although Merleau-Ponty did not

himself explore the connection between these general or impersonal factors (embodiment, on the

one hand, and general cultural norms for 'one', on the other) feminist interpreters of Merleau-

Ponty's philosophy such as Iris Marion Young have shown that they are interrelated. In particular,

Young has argued in her important essay 'Throwing Like a Girl' that culturally constructed and

taken-for-granted gender stereotypes of femininity structure and constrain the way women have

their bodies at their disposal for the execution of purposive actions. Women in our culture, from

their earliest upbringing, are socialized into a restrained comportment that draws on less of their

body's strength. 'The girl learns actively to hamper her movements ... The more a girl assumes

her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile, and the more she

enacts her own bodily inhibition' (Young 2005: 43-44). Thus, a woman's 'knowing how' to be properly feminine, at least according to the oppressive gender norms in a patriarchal culture, means that certain minor obstacles show up in her path in the nature walk as treacherous or dangerous, that she smiles when spoken to, and that she quietly accepts the unsolicited advice and the glares and commentary upon her appearance by the men in her social milieu.[25]

Such examples show how our orientation in and pre-reflective responsiveness to a field of possibilities is partially constituted by our having been socialized into the way *one* (in the above cases, one of such a gender) is supposed to behave. The way a situation speaks to me as calling for a certain course of action and elicits a response from me manifests my being guided by the relevant norms, my familiarity with and understanding of the commonsense thing for *one* to do.

It is notable, though, that here again we have to do with a curious mixture of the first and third-person perspectives. Although these are norms that provide guidance for *one*, I experience them not only in this third-personal way, but as guiding, binding, and orienting *me.* I relate to and am aware of myself by relating to my situation from the generalized normative perspective of what *one* does. When I walk into the bakery, given my culture's norms for how one navigates such public spaces, *I* am drawn to stand in line behind the person already there in front me (I am aware of this space behind them as the place where *I* should stand, whether or not they themselves are actually in an 'official' line), rather than being drawn to push past them and proceed directly to counter to place my order. Such considerations are why Heidegger describes the everyday givenness of the self to itself in terms of such a pre-reflective normative orientation: 'In terms of the One and as the One, I am 'given' proximally to 'myself' [*mir "selbst"*]' (Heidegger 1962: 167/129). As before, this givenness of the self to itself as *one* is not a normatively inert form of self-awareness like Zahavi's thin-minimal self; it is a way of being engaged in a normatively

charged situation such that certain actions are immediately attractive as what *I* (as *one*) am drawn to do.

6.2   Frankfurt on the Personal Motivational Factors Involved in Attunement

But what about my claim that the suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which a person is aware of and drawn to act in her situation is *personally inflected*? That is, what about the personal or individualized factors that are involved in a person's attunement to her possibilities of action? Merleau-Ponty, like Heidegger before him and Dreyfus after him, focuses most of his efforts on describing the role of the shared, general aspects of the motivational constellation. Merleau-Ponty argues that both the pre-personal and the personal aspects of human selfhood are 'two moments of a single structure that is the concrete subject' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 477). Additionally, on this point he writes: 'There is an exchange between generalized existence and individual existence; both receive and both give' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 475-476). But what does this amount to?

In order to explain the way in which individualized factors contribute to a person's self-understanding and pre-reflective orientation in a field of solicitations and possible actions, I will turn now to Harry Frankfurt. Frankfurt's description of the role that caring plays in human agency harmonizes with Merleau-Ponty's notion of an agent's polarization of the field of possible actions and is useful for reconstructing an account of what Merleau-Ponty left underdeveloped in his explanation of the personal motivational factors. According to Frankfurt, 'The importance that our caring creates for us defines the framework of standards and aims in terms of which we endeavor to conduct our lives. A person who cares about something *is guided*, as his attitudes and *his actions are shaped*, by his continuing interest in it' (Frankfurt 2004: 23, my italics). As I quoted above, a

person's caring according to Frankfurt creates 'motivational structures that shape his preferences and that *guide and limit his conduct*' (Frankfurt 1999a: 129).

Against views like Christine Korsgaard's that prioritize reflective endorsement of desires and insist upon the mediation of reflective self-consciousness in accounts of human action (see Korsgaard 1996 and 2009), Frankfurt insists upon the '*immediacy* of the linkage between loving and what counts as a reason for doing things' (Frankfurt 1999b: 176). In other words, the lover's 'taking it as a reason for performing the action is not the outcome of an inference' (Frankfurt 1999b: 176; cf., Frankfurt 2004: 37). This point is driven home by Frankfurt's response to a well-known remark made by Bernard Williams. Williams considers a person who sees two people drowning, one is his beloved, the other a total stranger. The point is that if the person, before jumping in to save his beloved, engages in a process of deliberation whereby he combines the observation that 'my beloved is drowning' with the general rule that 'in situations like these it is permissible to save one's beloved' instead of the stranger (Frankfurt 2004: 37), then this person has entertained 'one thought too many' (Williams 1981: 18). In a footnote, Frankfurt amends Williams on what is in the present context an important detail: 'It seems to me that the strictly correct number of thoughts for this man is zero. Surely the normal thing is that he sees what's happening in the water, and he jumps in to save his wife. *Without thinking at all*' (Frankfurt 2004: 36 n.2, my emphasis).[26] In Merleau-Ponty's terms, seeing his beloved in the water immediately polarizes the person's perceptual field and field of possible actions, drawing him pre-reflectively and directly into action, 'by a sort of distant attraction' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 109). In this dramatized case it is plain to see that the personal factor contributing to the articulation of the structure of polarizations has to do with what and whom the person cares about. To have

Frankfurtian immediate reasons to act is for the situation to show up to the person as calling for or soliciting the worthwhile action without having to stop and think.[27]

On this account, my personal commitments and normative identity are not first of all in my mind or discursively articulated in a narrative I tell about myself; they are, so to speak, *out there* in the polarization of my perceptual field and field of possible actions. The motivational efficacy of personal commitment (the dimension of selfhood that Zahavi construes as thick-normative) is not restricted to the domain of explicit reflection. Personal commitments bind us and motivate us pre-reflectively.[28] When something matters to me, it plays a role in my pre-reflective self-understanding, and this means that the commitment in question is manifest in the structure of solicitations in my situation, in the polarization of my field of perception and action. Someone's caring about the well-being of marine life is manifested by the fact that it does not occur to her to throw garbage out of the car window while traversing a bridge. Someone's commitment to being beneficent can make a beggar on the street show up as a person to whom to offer assistance rather than as an obstacle in the path to be avoided. The way we are guided by such a tacit and invidualized normative orientation is analogous to the way in which we talk about having a 'sense of direction' in a city, even though we might not be able to draw a detailed representation or map.[29] I've got a sense – an *understanding* – of myself, and this is reflected in the polarization of my field of perception and action, which already offers some actions as worthwhile or appropriate, others as unworthy or inappropriate, and keeps others completely hidden off the horizon. What I am *able* to do, what occurs to me to do at all, what I can or could do has this personal dimension, as is captured linguistically in the reproach 'How *could you* do that?!'.

7.   Self-Understanding and Self-Interpretation

Before concluding, it is worth briefly remarking upon the relationship between pre-reflective self-understanding and reflective self-interpretation. I will briefly touch upon three points: (a) a working definition of reflective self-interpretation; (b) the provisional priority of pre-reflective self-understanding over reflective self-interpretation; and (c) the interrelation between the two.

(a) 'Reflective self-interpretation' names both an activity and its results. In the sense of being a result, a reflective self-interpretation is an articulation of your own character, defining commitments, or sense of your life's narrative trajectory that you would offer to someone else who poses sweeping questions about *who* you are.[30] In the sense of being an activity, self-interpretation is the reflective complement to pre-reflective self-understanding; it is a way of *making sense* of oneself, that is, making sense of one's own character and dispositional structure and taking a stand on which aspects of it to accept, to reject, and to seek to shift. Such an effort to make sense of oneself can arise spontaneously when one falls into a mood of disquieted self-reflection, or in response to some particular breakdown (such as getting evicted from one's home or being fired from one's job), conflicting commitments (such as the demands of career, the demands of family, and the demands of artistic endeavor), or a call for answerability from a second-person (it is usually other people to whom the extent of our own self-knowledge and the clarity of our self-interpretation matters most). Making sense of one's self in an effort at reflective self-interpretation has both a retrospective component (stepping back and making into an object of reflection one's patterns of past and habitual behavior as well as one's motivational propensities and dispositional structure – e.g., the norms, affects, and commitments that guide one in everyday life), and a practical-agentive, prospective component (a defeasible avowing or

projecting oneself into the future in the manner appropriate to how one interprets oneself; e.g., living up to the demands of being someone's lover, being an artist, or being a political activist, rather than living up to the demands of being successful at one's career or being a law-abiding citizen).

(b) Pre-reflective self-understanding genetically precedes reflective self-interpretation (our basic suite of abilities and dispositions is shaped for us by our upbringing before we reach the age at which we seek to make sense of ourselves by explicitly posing self-interpretive questions) and constitutively enables it (in that pre-reflective self-understanding provides the basic orientation from within which reflective self-interpretation can take place). I already have to find myself moved and bound by certain ideals and identities in order to meaningfully bring them into the scope of my reflective self-interpretation. For a carpenter in Heidegger's workshop who, finding himself pulled in different directions by competing commitments, takes an interpretive stand on being a consummately dependable friend rather being an unbendingly impeccable vendor and thus abandons finishing the fabrication of a banister on time so that he can go help a friend in need, the relationship and person in question must already matter in such a way that taking such a risk shows up as relevant, worthy, and attractive in the scheme of possibilities. The background of shared social norms that sketch out in advance the range of possible worthwhile identities, the nature and development of which are linked to historical shifts in technology and politics, obviously also plays a role in shaping the ways in which one can meaningfully interpret oneself. A carpenter from Germany in the 1970s who is fired from his job for leaving mid-day to help a friend will not be able to be motivated in the wake of this event to reinterpret himself as a person whose real calling is to combat the spread of addictive design practices in mobile social media applications. Indeed, the domain of personal friendship as

providing a privileged relationship which can be defining moment of individual identity and motivation is itself a historically inflected phenomenon (see Honneth 2014: §6.1).

Our pre-reflective sense of self will always exceed the grasp and articulation of our reflective self-interpretation. Who we are as revealed in the patterns of our everyday pre-reflective actions is not reliably penetrated by how we think of ourselves. Pre-reflective self-understanding and reflective self-interpretation are intrinsically susceptible to come into conflict with each other. For example, in my self-interpretation, I might think of myself as a maximally laid back and straightforward person, but in my actual pre-reflective dealings with others, I am a high-strung, stressed-out, manipulative burden. Or, I may think of myself as a staunch feminist, and even be often drawn to offer articulate intellectual defense of feminist critique of patriarchal social norms, but in my everyday habits of social interaction, I consistently interrupt and talk over women, explain trivial things to them, and vote in favor of men when it comes time to decide promotions in the workplace (see Schwitzgebel 2010, 2014).[31] The fact that self-interpretations have a tendency to be partial and even distorted articulations of one's effective motivational propensities is, on the account I am developing, not simply a psychological weakness or moral failure that can be corrected for with enough consciousness-raising and reflective effort; it is part of our ontological condition, our being finite self-interpreting animals. The intelligibility in which we live, the suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which our world shows up and makes sense to us, exceeds our powers of reflection. The project of being a self-interpreting being is thus always outstanding, never complete. This is one of the lasting lessons of Heidegger's *Being and Time* and it is one thing that Heidegger means to articulate with his assertion that Dasein 'never comes back behind its thrownness' and so will '*never* have power over [its] ownmost being from the ground up' (Heidegger 1962: 330/284).

(c) However, self-understanding and self-interpretation are clearly bound up in a circular inter-relationship. Explicit self-interpretive stances on, for instance, which conflicting personal commitments we will prioritize (e.g., work, friendship, or artistic endeavor) or what shared social norms we no longer accept being bound and guided by (e.g., once our routines get illuminated by a feminist critique), can get adopted back into the background of our pre-reflective self-understanding and then contribute to a reshaping of our pre-reflective practical orientation in the world, the polarization of our field of possibilities (even though, per above, there is no guarantee that shifts in our reflective self-interpretations will effectively modify our habitual way of going on). As Gadamer said: 'It is the untiring power of *experience* [*Erfahrung*], that in the process of being instructed, man is ceaselessly forming a new pre-understanding' (Gadamer 1976: 38). There is much more to say about self-interpretation and its relation to self-understanding and I add a little more about this in the next section since it relates to my critique of Zahavi's argument that pre-reflective self-awareness is the primordial foundation for the other dimensions of selfhood. However, a more detailed account of self-interpretation in light of what I have developed here will have to await treatment in a different work.

Using Zahavi's analytical categories, the foregoing reflections reveal the contours of a dimension of selfhood that is pre-reflective while being 'thick' and normative, i.e., a pre-reflective dimension of selfhood that is not reducible to Zahavi's notion of the minimal or experiential self. Zahavi's taxonomy of dimensions of selfhood needs to be expanded to account for this realm of phenomena. But what, then, becomes of Zahavi's claim that minimal-experiential selfhood is the formal, primitive foundation for the thick-normative dimensions of selfhood?

8.   Against Zahavi's Foundational Claim
8.1   The Practical Self-Relation

To review, according to Zahavi, the minimal self 'can be identified with the ubiquitous first-personal character of the experiential phenomena' (Zahavi 2014: 18). By 'first-personal character', Zahavi means the asymmetrical givenness of phenomenal consciousness: my conscious experiences are given to me as *my* experiences (not your experiences). In other words, 'the first-personal character of experiences ... amounts to a distinct but formal kind of experiential individuation' (Zahavi 2014: 23). Zahavi emphasizes that this is a difference in the form or the 'how' of experience, not its content: 'what most fundamentally distinguishes my experiential life from the experiential life of others is not the specific content of experience, but rather the for-me-ness, or how, of experiencing' (Zahavi 2014: 23, 62). This formal for-me-ness is, for Zahavi, sui generis and primordially foundational with respect to the other dimensions of the self. Hence, 'At its most primitive, self-experience is simply a question of being pre-reflectively aware of one's own consciousness' (Zahavi 2014: 24).

The phenomenology of pre-reflective self-understanding that I sketched above problematizes these claims. That is, my account so far has cast doubt upon both the claim that pre-reflective self-awareness is a formal feature indifferent to the normatively oriented dimensions of selfhood and the claim that pre-reflective self-awareness as defined by Zahavi is the 'most primitive' dimension of selfhood that is a 'primal' foundation for the other dimensions in a one-way founding-founded relation. The characteristic of asymmetrical givenness of my experiences *as mine* is part and parcel of my pre-reflective attunement to my situations of action, the way situations show up to *me* as 'polarized' (in Merleau-Ponty's sense) and with certain solicitations that draw me *to act* (in Dreyfus's sense). Because I am 'attuned' to the solicitations in my current situation through an individually inflected suite of abilities and dispositions (through embodiment,

social norms, and personal commitment), I am pre-reflectively aware of my situation soliciting *me* (rather than you) to respond and act in a certain distinctive way. This already shows that the asymmetry of practical self-awareness is not merely formal and normatively indifferent; rather, it is practical in nature, having to do with our being situated in and responsive to the solicitations in our situation. In order to spell out in more detail my argument against Zahavi's foundational claim and for my claim that pre-reflective self-awareness and pre-reflective self-understanding are co-constitutive, it will help to explore the practical dimension of seflhood some more detail.

The phenomenology of pre-reflective action reveals that the asymmetrical givenness of the first-person perspective involves a practical dimension; it is not only a matter of pure awareness or merely formal givenness, as Zahavi makes it out to be. The experiential self is shaped by the practical self-relation. With this, we have arrived at a consideration of the first part of my gloss on pre-reflective self-understanding as involving such a 'practical self-relation'.[32] A practical self-relation, in the way I am using the phrase, contrasts with a theoretical self-relation in that it has *not* just to do with issues of epistemic access to or awareness of my own experience or 'states'; but rather, has to do with the fact that I am given and relate to myself as something that *I have got to do*. In Heidegger's formulation, I relate to my life or my own being as something that is on-goingly *at issue* or *at stake* for me, as something to which I comport myself [*sich verhalten*] in such a way that I always have my own future being 'to be' [*Zu-sein*] (Heidegger 1967: 67/42). Herein lies the asymmetry: I have *my own* (not your) being 'to be'. I may be concerned with the way in which you and others are carrying on, but I am not, ontologically speaking, in position *to be* anyone for you or them. This, the ontological structure of the first-person perspective, is what Heidegger refers to as the 'mineness' [*Jemeinigkeit*] of human existence (see Carman 2005: 285).[33] With this in view, Heidegger writes that 'Only *the particular Dasein* decides its existence, whether

it does so by taking hold [*Ergreifens*] or neglecting [*Versäumens*]…The question of existence is one of Dasein's ontical "affairs"' (Heidegger 1962: 33/12, my italics). Tugendhat's way of making this point is useful:

> [T]he existence that impends at any given time is of such a kind that I have it to be, that is, I have to carry it out in one way or another, or I must decide no longer to go on with it. The relation that I have to my existence as it impends is different from the relation that someone else can have to it. Someone else can only relate to it theoretically, prognostically, and I can do this as well, but I cannot thereby avoid practically relating to my existence as it impends at any given time. (Tugendhat 1986: 157)

This asymmetrical relation to my own impending future is something with which I explicitly reckon in moments of reflective self-interpretation; yet, the asymmetrical practical self-relation does not first emerge in such reflective moments; it is also exhibited in the habits and style of my pre-reflective absorption in the world, in the very structure of the first-personal givenness of everyday situations of action. There are two ways in which this is so.

(a) As discussed above, my involvement in a situation is such that, like Merleau-Ponty's soccer player driving the ball downfield through an opening that has emerged between two opponents, I pre-reflectively experience *myself* as being the one who is drawn to respond appropriately, as being the one who has to respond in some exemplary manner or other in order to contribute to my team's victory in the game. In being aware of and responsive to solicitations, I am asymmetrically and non-observationally aware of myself as being so drawn to act by them. In many, or indeed most situations I will also be aware that other people are being drawn to act according to a situational solicitation, especially insofar as my own responsiveness to a situation involves taking account of how other people are conducting themselves in it (when my soccer opponent zigs, I zag). But my awareness of how others are acting is observational awareness, not first-personal practical awareness that *I* am being drawn to respond.

It is illuminating in this context to point out that my Tugendhat-influenced account largely

accords with John McDowell's Anscombe-influenced account of the role of practical self-

awareness in pre-reflective action. McDowell (2007: 367) writes:

> Self-awareness in action is practical, not theoretical. It is a matter of an 'I do' rather than
> an 'I think'. And the 'I do' is not a representation added to representations, as Kant's 'I
> think' is. Conceiving action in terms of the 'I do' is a way of registering the essentially
> first-person character of the realization of practical rational capacities that acting is.

As Dreyfus (2005, 2007, 2013) argued, there are good grounds for being cautious about using the

notion of 'realizing rational capacities' for explaining pre-reflective action. But in Matthew

Boyle's (2015, 2016) explanation of this position, the talk of 'realizing practical rational

capacities' might not be as worrisome to a phenomenologist as Dreyfus makes it out to be.

Acknowledging the divergence in terminological provenance (Aristotlean/Hegelian vs. Merleau-

Pontian/Gibsonian), speaking of 'realizing a rational capacity in action' appears to target the same

range of phenomena as 'skillfully responding to the solicitations in a situation', at least if we

conceive of a solicitation as a possible action that shows up as the appropriate or worthwhile thing

to do given my embodied skills, socialization into a shared way of doing things, and

individualizing personal commitments. The force of the phrase 'realizing a rational capacity', in

the relatively deflationary way that Boyle (2016: 539-541) explains it, is the following: to perceive

a situation as 'calling for' or soliciting a certain action as appropriate or worthwhile is to perceive

the situation as defeasibly 'meriting' this action rather than the circumstances automatically

forcing it out of me. On this account, responding to a solicitation as something appropriate to do

or worth doing amounts to responding to 'an ostensible reason' for acting, even if the action itself

does not proceed from any deliberate consideration of reasons (Boyle 2016: 540). The fact that a

person could come to see his pre-reflective action as being inappropriate or unacceptable means

that the solicitation did not live up to the 'prima facie endorsement of rational reflection' (Boyle

2016: 541) that it enjoyed in the moment when it drew him into action as the thing to do. As I understand it, 'endorsement of rational reflection' does not mean here reflection in accordance with normative principles of theoretical or practical reason that one may learn by reading philosophy books; it means rather evaluative reflection on the appropriateness or worthiness of the action, reflection the outcome of which can make a difference to the person's motivational propensities and the way he subsequently allows himself to be drawn to act.[34]

(b) This brings me to the second, related, way in which a practical self-relation figures into and contributes to the structure of a person's openness to everyday situation of action. When I characterize pre-reflective self-understanding as involving a practical self-relation that is 'bound up with' a suite of abilities and dispositions, the following is what I have in mind. As I have been arguing, the layout of solicitations that guides someone's everyday action reflects their pre-reflective self-understanding (the abilities, dispositions, and commitments in light of which their situations show up). Above I pointed out that someone's self-understanding is susceptible to defeasible or controvertible shifts because of shifts in their self-interpretation, as when, for example, a reflective effort to interpret and to avow oneself as a feminist and to adjust one's habits of social interaction in light of feminist critique results in a shift in everyday habits such that others perceived as feminine no longer show up, for example, as opportunities to offer unsolicited advice or as the fitting recipient of sexualized sartorial commentary. One's self-interpretation can make a difference in one's self-understanding. Such shifts are possible (though not guaranteed) insofar as I am not mere theoretical or spectatorial observer of my self-understanding, but an active participant in projecting and sustaining it over time; that is, insofar as I relate to my existence practically, as something *I myself* have to carry out in accordance with my provisional and developing sense of what is appropriate or worthwhile. Again, a more detailed defense of this

position would require a more fully worked account of reflective self-interpretation than I can provide here.[35]

8.2   *The Relation Between Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness and Pre-Reflective Self-Understanding*

I am now in position to state more clearly my grounds for claiming that pre-reflective self-awareness and pre-reflective self-understanding are co-constitutive, both mutually for each other and, jointly, for everyday experience. Spelling this out will problematize Zahavi's claim that the former is the 'primal foundation' for the latter. In order to do so, let me return to and unpack Dreyfus's claim that 'skillful coping is a mode of awareness', which he elaborates by reference to Heidegger's deployment of the term '*experience*' [*Erfahrung*] where this is 'characterized only as openness' rather than as 'a mental, inner, private event (*Erlebnis*, Husserl's term), aware of itself as separate from, and directed toward, things in the world' (Dreyfus 1993: 88). When I quoted this passage above, I glossed Dreyfus's term 'openness' as being 'openness to a situation and its solicitations', an openness which, I have argued, is an exhibition or manifestation of the person's pre-reflective self-understanding. Insofar as the pre-reflectively absorbed coper's openness to solicitations is *not*, as Dreyfus himself once observed, a kind of blanked-out zombie-like automaticity, it requires some degree of pre-reflective self-awareness. With this, we see that *pre-reflective self-understanding depends upon pre-reflective self-awareness*.

This dependency comes with a caveat, though, which is that the phenomenology of pre-reflective action shows that pre-reflective self-awareness is not indifferent to one's practical-existential immersion in a situation where, in light of one's pre-reflective self-understanding, things and possibilities already matter and solicit one to act. For an absorbed coper, to be aware of oneself is to be aware of possibilities in one's situation. The pre-reflective self-awareness of

someone understandingly engaged in their world is intertwined with their awareness of the affordances and solicitations available in their situation given their personally inflected suite of abilities and dispositions (their self-understanding). The characteristic symmetrical givenness of my experiences *as mine* is part and parcel of my pre-reflective attunement to my situations of action, the way situations show up to me as 'polarized' (in Merleau-Ponty's sense) and with certain solicitations that draw me to act (in Dreyfus's sense). Insofar as pre-reflective self-awareness involves awareness of affordances and solicitations, and insofar as awareness of affordances and solicitations depends upon pre-reflective self-understanding, *pre-reflective self-awareness depends upon pre-reflective self-understanding*.

Thus, pre-reflective self-awareness and pre-reflective self-understanding are mutually co-constituting, and they are jointly co-constitutive for everyday experience, insofar as everyday experience involves experience of and responsiveness to solicitations that draw one to act in some particular way.

8.3   *A Lingering Worry*

There is a lingering worry I need to address. I argue that pre-reflective self-awareness is dependent upon pre-reflective self-understanding because it is in virtue of the latter that one is aware of and responsive to the solicitations that a situation has for one, and it is through being responsive to solicitations that one is pre-reflectively aware of oneself (aware of oneself in being so drawn to act). But this argument seems only to account for the self-awareness of people actually in the midst of pre-reflective action. As a possible worry about the view I have presented here, this train of thought loses urgency when it is appreciated that being aware of and responsive to affordances by dealing with things and other people is not a merely occasional or episodic

phenomenon; it is the ongoing, pervasive condition of our being in the world, even if it is susceptible to privative modes in which pre-reflective self-awareness seems to unhinge in various ways from awareness of our situation, as when engaging in meditation and undergoing Heideggerian moods such as anxiety or boredom (see Heidegger 1995/GA 29/30), or being subject to pathological 'self-disturbances' such as schizophrenia (see Zahavi 2005: 133-138; but see also Ratcliffe 2017).[36] The question becomes, then, whether the possibility of such privative and pathological cases can be taken as evidence establishing that pre-reflective self-awareness is in fact a separable form of experience (separable from our immersion in a situation and amidst others) or if these are derivative cases that should be conceived as *modifications* of our abiding background condition which is to be active, embodied beings understandingly at grips with a world that shows up to us and solicits us to act in light of our self-understanding.[37] These issues are delicate, and I recognize that how one responds to the question just posed will depend in part upon one's prior philosophical prejudices. Acknowledging the room for further argumentation and exploration, I will end by re-stating the position I have been defending.

If the practical self-relation conditions our basic, asymmetrically first-person experiential openness to the world (which it does, insofar as this experiential openness is openness to affordances and solicitations), then it conditions our pre-reflective self-awareness. In short, our basic everyday experience of (our openness to, or phenomenal consciousness of) the world is imbued with practical significance. And to experience practical significance is to perceive a situation in light of the abilities, commitments, and dispositions that constitute pre-reflective self-understanding. The upshot of these considerations is that everyday experience demands a conception of pre-reflective self-awareness on which the phenomenon is not construed as separable, formal, and normatively inert, but as being part and parcel of an openness to a situation

where things and possibilities already matter and draw one to act. Pre-reflective self-awareness is the self-awareness of a world-enmeshed agent; we should resist the temptation to carve it off and formalize it.

9.   *Conclusion*

I have been exploring an account of pre-reflective self-understanding, a dimension of selfhood operative in the habits and style of a person's pre-reflective absorption in the world and yet left out of Zahavi's 'multidimensional' taxonomy of selfhood. Pre-reflective self-understanding involves the following three aspects: (i) a practical self-relation that is bound up with (ii) an individually inflected suite of abilities and dispositions in light of which (iii) a person is aware of and solicited to act in her current situation. Spelling out these claims lead me to call into question Zahavi's portrayal of pre-reflective self-awareness as a purely formal feature of the self that is indifferent to the self's involvement in normatively charged situations of action. I offer the above in the spirit of an emendation and elaboration upon Zahavi's synthetic, multidimensional account of selfhood. If my reflections point in the right direction, Zahavi's account loses the right to claim a primal foundational status for the experiential self, but it gains a more expansive taxonomy and phenomenology of the pre-reflective modes of human agency and selfhood. Here I have taken my fundamental bearings from early Heidegger's rejection of the Husserlian pure ego as something that can be carved off from or formalized away from our direct immersion in the world. I have begun to work out some of the implications of this intuition by sketching an account of pre-reflective self-understanding. I also hope to have established the importance of further reflection upon pre-reflective self-understanding and its relation to reflective self-interpretation.[38]

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[1] My use of the qualifications 'substantive' or 'substantial' here aims to capture the contrast to 'minimal', 'thin', and 'formal' (Zahavi's characterizations of pre-reflective self-awareness), and to connect with the recent discussions that I've referred to about the differences between 'substantial' and 'trivial' self-knowledge (knowledge of one's own character and dispositions as opposed to knowledge of one's own doxastic states, see Cassam 2014, Schwitzgebel 2010, 2014). As characterizations of selfhood, I will use 'substantial' and 'substantive' interchangeably with 'normative' or 'thick-normative' (as a contrast with 'thin-formal' characterization Zahavi gives to pre-reflective minimal selfhood). The substantive dimensions of the self are those that are bound by the normativity of social roles and personal commitments (e.g., to be someone's friend is to have to live up to the demands and normative expectations for a successful friendship in one's culture). Such explanations aside, this terminological array is admittedly flawed since 'substantive' and 'substantial' risk giving the impression that the self in view here is an underlying substance, and 'thick-normative' suffers from a palpable euphony deficit.

[2] 'Practical self-relation' is a term I have adopted from Tugendhat (1986, 2016) and that I define and discuss in §8 and in n.32. I define some of the other technical terms I have so far introduced – 'pre-reflective action', 'solicitation', and 'everyday experience' – in §2 just below.

[3] Accordingly, I use expressions such as 'absorbed coping', 'skillful coping', 'pre-reflective absorption', and 'pre-reflective action' interchangeably.

[4] With the mention here of *abilities*, I mean to draw not only upon Dreyfus's emphasis on skills and social norms, but also Heidegger's guiding idea that human agency involves the deployment of abilities for getting around in everyday situations and is thus ontologically characterized as an 'ability-to-be' [*Seinkönnen*] (see Blattner 1998: 33-37). By bringing in the notion of *dispositions*, I mean to draw upon Heidegger's conception of 'disposedness' [*Befindlichkeit*], his name for the way situations matter to us and draw us to act. As insightfully explored by Schwitzgebel (2010 and 2014), a person's 'dispositional structure', or the motivational propensities manifest in the habits and style of their pre-reflective absorption in the world, can operate with independence from, and are often not reliably penetrated by, their reflective judgement/interpretation (or occurrent belief) about themselves. Thus, to take one of Schwitzgebel's own examples, a person may reflectively conceive of himself as a feminist but nevertheless consistently manifest condescending or patronizing attitudes towards people perceived as being feminine. Unlike the disposition of iron filings to rust or of skin to perspire in the right conditions, the kind of disposition in question here is an agential disposition that is shaped by social norms and is defeasibly susceptible to shift along with shifts in the person's own self-interpretation. I have a lot more to say about all of this below in §§4-7.

[5] 'Non-thetic' is a term used by Sartre (1954), who also employs the Husserlian term 'non-positional' to describe this kind of non-monitoring, non-focal, or non-objectifying self-consciousness or self-awareness. This is the general phenomenon Zahavi targets with his notion of minimal pre-reflective self-awareness and, bracketing certain subtle differences, that Uriah Kriegel (2009) has in view with his notion of 'peripheral' self-awareness, and that Michelle Montague (2016, 2017) targets with her conception of a 'same-order view' of self-awareness, whereby an experience of an object or a situation and an *awareness* of the experience (or an 'awareness of awareness') are given as a single, unitary phenomenon; that is, no higher-order

reflective mental or intentional act is required to bend back upon or monitor a lower-order experience in order to constitute it as an experience for the person, as opposed to an unconscious episode. Thomasson (2000) discusses how Franz Brentano (1995) is a major historical source for this notion of pre-reflective self-awareness which has also been productively taken up by thinkers such as Thomas Fuchs (2018, Chapter 4) and Matthew Ratcliffe (2017). While the more specific proposals of these figures regarding the nature of pre-reflective self-awareness are worth taking seriously, I will not be engaging with them in any further detail for my present purposes.

[6] I take it the Gestalt Psychologists whom Dreyfus has in mind are Kurt Koffka and Kurt Levin, whose notion of the *Aufforderungscharakter* of perceptual objects is briefly discussed by Gibson (1979: 138-140) as a predecessor and influence for his conception of an affordance. In many contexts, 'affordance' and 'solicitation' can be used interchangeably, and I will sometimes do so. Dreyfus, in his book with Charles Taylor (Dreyfus and Taylor 2015), favors 'affordance' over 'solicitation'.

[7] Normatively inert' is a phrase I picked up from John McDowell's (2013: 52) debate with Dreyfus. McDowell uses the phrase to characterize a conception of the world with which he claims Dreyfus wrongly saddles him, namely as being a realm of facts devoid of solicitations and practical significance available through perceptual experience (see also McDowell 2007).

[8] Merleau-Ponty's claim that 'consciousness is nothing but the dialectic of milieu and action' means in this context that the player's pre-reflective self-awareness is intertwined with her awareness of the plays she is drawn to make, and the ways in which making these plays in turn reconfigures the unfolding of the situation and the subsequent array of moves and plays available to her. For example, driving the ball downfield between two opponents generates a new layout of possible moves whereby the player is solicited to shoot for a goal or to pass to a teammate.

[9] Romdenh-Romluc (2011: 171, 210-211) also reads Merleau-Ponty as holding that everyday experience involves such non-observational, non-objectifying or 'adverbial' self-awareness. One of Merleau-Ponty's own most direct formulations of this theme is when he writes that his arguments have 'connected self-presence to presence in the world and identified the *cogito* with engagement in the world' (2012: 457).

[10] On different but related grounds (pertaining not to experiential awareness *per se* but to the operation of 'rational capacities'), Robert Pippin (2013: 94), objects to what he characterizes as Dreyfus's 'deceptive' picture of skillful coping (in this case, of a chess grandmaster) as a matter of 'playing on dumb instinct'. A more developed account of the general worry about Dreyfus's strong dichotomy between mindlessness and mindedness is offered by Sutton, et. al. (2014). I return briefly to the issue of 'rational capacities' in §8.

[11] Zahavi (2013: 323) is thus correct in his observation that, 'Dreyfus, in some places, at least, allows for an experiential dimension to some forms of mindless coping'. An example of such an experiential dimension can be found in Dreyfus's comment about the apple *looking* delicious being part of what it is to be solicited to grab and eat it, as well as the remark by Dreyfus and Taylor (2015: 81) about someone who mindlessly steps back from an interlocutor in order to

stand at the appropriate distance for a conversation: 'Minimally, *he felt* some discomfort and he stepped back to relieve that' (my italics).

[12] As Jay (2006: 97) and Inwood (1999: 62-64, cited by Jay 2006) show, though, Heidegger also displays a fair degree of ambivalence about the concept of *Erfahrung*, which has a strong association with empirical, observational science (*Erfahrungswissenschaft*).

[13] Following Dreyfus and Heidegger, I frame my inquiry in terms of how things 'show up' to someone in 'everyday experience' rather than in term of the nature of 'phenomenal consciousness', the more common contemporary term sometimes used by Zahavi for those states there is 'something it is like' to be in. According to Zahavi (2005: 16), to be phenomenally conscious is also to have pre-reflective self-awareness of oneself; the latter is supposed to be what constitutes the former *as* an experience *for* the experiencer (the 'for-me-ness' of the experience). It is true that the notion of '*showing up* in everyday experience' overlaps to a considerable extent with what is targeted by the notion of 'phenomenal consciousness' and raises a range of similar questions about the perspective and awareness of the one *to whom* things show up (see Siewert 2006). As I will discuss further throughout the paper, given the appropriate qualifications, I agree with Zahavi's claim that for things to 'show up' in a certain way to someone means that experience is characterized by pre-reflective self-awareness; otherwise such 'showing up' would not register as an experience for the person at all. Nevertheless, it has become common for philosophers influenced by Heidegger, to deploy the notion of 'showing up' rather than 'phenomenal consciousness', in part because 'showing up' connects with the project of doing *phenomenology* and in part because of the traditional baggage clinging to the term 'consciousness' an emphasis on which can suggest a distorted picture on which there is an ontological divide between an 'inner' realm of consciousness and the 'outer' realm of the 'external world' (see Dreyfus and Taylor 2015, Chapter 1).

[14] Here, I am using the phrase 'normatively inert' in a related but different sense to McDowell's (2007, 2013) use of the term (see n.7 above) to point out that pre-reflective self-awareness on Zahavi's account is a kind of awareness that is indifferent or neutral with respect to the practical significance and situational solicitations given in experience. Although 'normatively inert' and 'normatively indifferent' are not phrases used by Zahavi himself to characterize the thin-minimal self, they are consistent with everything else he says about it and will become useful below when I raise doubts about Zahavi's claim that minimal selfhood is primal and foundational for the normative dimensions of selfhood. An echo of the idea that everyday experience and openness to the world, rather than being a form of normatively inert awareness, is intrinsically imbued with and conditioned by practical and normative significance can be heard in Hegel's (1977: §167) remark that 'self-consciousness is desire itself [*Begierde überhaupt*]' (see Pippin 2011 for relevant discussion). The basic idea can also arguably be discerned in Aristotle's (2002: 1142a23-30, 1143a5-b5) conception of phronesis as a perceptual capacity (see McDowell 1998 and Dreyfus 2005 for relevant discussions).

[15] This represents a slight modification from Zahavi (2005), where he was readier to throw in with the narrativist view for an interpretation of thick-normative selfhood.

[16] The emphatic association of this thick-normative dimension of selfhood with reflective activity is even more pronounced in *Subjectivity and Selfhood* (Zahavi 2005: 105, 108, 113, 129).

[17] Zahavi's treatment of shame and 'the interpersonal self' in Chapter 14 of *Self and Other* also acknowledges a dimension of the self that is 'thicker' than the minimal self and still prior to reflective self-interpretation. Hence, one can find here too something in Zahavi's account that points in the general direction of a 'thick' dimension of pre-reflective selfhood (even though, again, an adequate explanation of the point is left wanting). Zahavi notes that the minimal-experiential self and the thick-narrative self are 'two notions placed at each end of the scale' (Zahavi 2014: 237). He goes on to offer the interpersonal dimension of the self as revealed in the phenomenon of shame as a bridge between the thin-minimal and the thick-narrative self: 'We come to be the social selves we are, not only by experiencing ourselves in our interaction with and emotional response to others, but also by experiencing and internalizing the other's perspective on ourselves. This interpersonal self will feed into and is an important pre-cursor to the subsequent development of a more normatively enriched and diachronically extended narrative self and can thereby serve as an important bridge between [these] two previously discussed dimensions of the self' (Zahavi 2014: 238). I cannot here speculate on what would be produced by working out the implications of 'pre-reflective shame' for inclusion in an account of 'thick' pre-reflective selfhood, though I recognize this as a worthwhile project.

[18] In Wrathall's (2013) terminology, I am here drawing on a 'vertical' interpretation of Heidegger's distinction between understanding and interpretation as found, for example, in the writings of Dreyfus (1991) and Blattner (2006), rather than the 'horizontal' interpretation that Wrathall (2013) lays out and defends. Wrathall's reading of Heidegger on this point is worth taking seriously. However, the vertical interpretation – appropriately modified to capture the reciprocal interrelation between the 'lower' level of understanding and the 'upper' level of interpretation – works better for capturing the phenomena I am concerned with here.

[19] I will have a little more to say about reflective self-interpretation in §7 and §8.1 below.

[20] As Heidegger's English-language commentators are often obliged to report, the notion of 'how things are going' is the colloquial meaning of the phrase from which Heidegger constructs the neologism I've translated as 'disposedness', *Befindlichkeit*. In German you can ask someone how she is doing by asking her, *Wie befinden Sie sich*? Literally, 'How do you find yourself?' The word I am translating as 'attunement', *Stimmung*, can also mean 'mood' (and that is how Macquarrie and Robinson translate it), though this translation loses the overtones of 'tuning' into the possibilities of a situation. Macquarrie and Robinson translate *Befindlichkeit* as 'state-of-mind', but as several commentators have since pointed out, this is unfortunate because the phenomenon at issue is not simply an inner mental state, but a way of relating to a situation. As Dreyfus (1991: 168) puts it, 'What one needs is an English word that conveys being found in a situation where things and options already matter'. Dreyfus opts for 'affectedness', but following Blattner (2006: 79), I prefer 'disposedness' because it better summons the phenomenon of being pre-disposed to a certain range of possibilities for action. Technically, for Heidegger, *Befindlichkeit*, along with *Verstehen* ('understanding'), and *Rede* ('discourse') are the three co-constitutive moments of our familiarity with and ability to get around our everyday world. I will

not be exploring such details here. For more on Heidegger's conception of agency and selfhood, see Rousse 2016a.

[21] This begins to show that Zahavi's (2005, 2013) attempt to recruit Heidegger as a spokesperson for his notion of normatively inert pre-reflective self-awareness is based on a misreading of Heidegger's discussion of *Befindlichkeit*, which Zahavi (2005: 84) wrongly interprets as a version of minimal self-awareness. For Heidegger, *Befindlichkeit* names the way a person is affectively related to his situation such that he is revealed to himself therein as having something *to do*. We 'find' ourselves as having *to do* something with ourselves in our situations. Heidegger thus writes that, in its *Befindlichkeit*, 'Dasein is always disclosed moodwise as that entity to which it has been delivered over in its being; and in this way it has been delivered over to the being which, in existing, *it has to be*' (Heidegger 1962: 173/134, my italics). Being 'delivered over' to my being as *having it to be* is not appropriately construed as a merely formal and normatively inert givenness of experience. For more on Heidegger's account of this practical dimension of our 'finding ourselves' and how it clashes with Zahavi's portrayals of Heidegger's position, see §8 below, especially n.33.

[22] This business about climbing mountains has to do with Merleau-Ponty's constant arguments against the account of freedom given by Sartre (1956). For Sartre's take on the mountains, see *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre 1956: 627-628). Sartre claims that all aspects of the way the world shows up and is relevant to me can be traced back to my own personal spontaneous decisions (e.g., in this case, my decision to climb the mountain).

[23] The reference to 'man, bourgeois, or worker' also has to do with Merleau-Ponty's polemic in this context against Sartre's voluntarist views regarding responsibility, personal conversion, and the emergence of revolutionary class consciousness in the self-understanding of the worker at a particular historical moment. See also Merleau-Ponty (2012: 468-471) and Sartre (1956: 560ff). Sartre characteristically sees these as a matter of an individual's spontaneous choice. According to Merleau-Ponty, though, such a shift in self-interpretation is 'elaborated within social coexistence and in the one [*l'On*] prior to every personal decision' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 475). All spontaneity must be seen as 'geared into' the prior partial determination by what it makes sense for *one* to do, that is, by the 'generalized existence that turned each into a historical subject' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 475).

[24] Merleau-Ponty uses the French equivalent of *das Man*, *l'On*.

[25] According to Frantz Fanon, social norms and practices surrounding race play an analogous role in structuring the self-awareness and the polarization of a field of possibilities of a person of color in a white-dominated society. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon provides a searing phenomenology of the fragmented and objectified self-understanding of those who are the object of racist attitudes and treatment, those who figure as inferior, threatening objects in the polarization of the field of perception and action of the ones who constitute the mainstream white (and in Fanon's case, colonialist) society: 'I am given no chance. I am over-determined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance. I move slowly in the world, accustomed to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*' (Fanon 1967:

116). In a similar vein, Charles Mills refers to 'somatic alienation' and comments: 'Because of the deviant standing of the flesh of the non-white body, the body is experienced as a burden, as the lived weight of subordination' (Mills 1998: 112). This is in line with Mills's definition of race as being 'an assigned category that influences the socialization one receives, the life-world in which one moves, the experiences one has, the worldview one develops —in short, … one's *being and <u>consciousness</u>*' (Mills 1998: xv, italics in the original; my underlining; see also p. 98).

[26] In a move Heidegger would reject, Frankfurt in his later writings ends up conceiving of the immediate efficacy of reasons of love naturalistically on the model of biologically embedded instinct, such as the instinct for self-preservation and a parent's instinct to protect her children. See Frankfurt (2004: 29, 30, 48); see Frankfurt (2006: 26, 37-38, and 60). For more on the similarities and differences between Heidegger and Frankfurt, see Rousse 2016b.

[27] In his intriguing but compressed discussion of romantic love, Merleau-Ponty (2012: 399-400) describes it in line with my discussion as a way of the lover's thoughts and actions being 'polarized'.

[28] Again, all of this illuminates my characterization of self-understanding as involving an *individually inflected* suite of abilities and dispositions manifest in the habits and style of a person's pre-reflective absorption in the world. As mentioned, this is a correction of a tendency in Dreyfus's approach. Dreyfus's appeal to anonymous social norms and bodily skills fails to adequately provide for the individualized dimensions of agency, the way personal commitments – like someone's love for a particular person, for example – structure and guide her absorbed coping. Wrathall (2015) compellingly explores a connection between Heidegger's conception of the self and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the polarization of a field of possibilities. But Wrathall retains Dreyfus's restricted focus on impersonal skills, such as skills for going out of doors, walking down sidewalks and into restaurants (see Wrathall 2015: 210-211). This pre-occupation with impersonal skills obscures the way substantive personal commitments like loving a particular individual play a part in constituting a person's dispositional structure and thus help to generate the solicitations that guide pre-reflective action.

[29] I've borrowed the map and sense of direction imagery from Taylor (1995). Taylor himself adopts it from Merleau-Ponty: 'every scientific determination is abstract, signitive, and dependent just like geography in relation to the landscape where we first learned what a forest, a meadow, or a river is' (Merleau-Ponty 2012: ixxii).

[30] In employing the notion of 'articulation', I mean to draw on the resonances given this term by Charles Taylor (1977a, 1977b, 1989) in connection with the phenomenon of what Taylor calls 'strong evaluations', those more or less inchoate interpretive stances on basic questions of what *kind* of person one aspires to be, what draws one as making life worth living. In this regard, a reflective self-interpretation is a mode of what Cassam (2014) refers to as 'substantial self-knowledge' as opposed to 'trivial self-knowledge' of one's own doxastic states. There is no space to develop this here, but the account I am offering of reflective self-interpretation intersects and clashes in various ways with Cassam's analysis of substantial self-knowledge (and his overly theoretical or 'epistemologized' conception of the self's relation to itself) as being a matter of 'theory-mediated inferences' about oneself based on observations of one's 'internal

promptings' (such as desires). Instead of 'theory mediation', my account stresses the mediation of a largely tacit socially shared background understanding (of what 'one' should do) that guides our interpretations of ourselves; and instead of 'inferences' about oneself, my account, as just mentioned, draws on Taylor's conception of 'articulation' according to which the commitments that partially constitute our identity can be shaped by the interpretive characterizations of them that we come to accept as fitting (and so are not properly be conceived of as something we observe and make inferences about from the outside, as it were). I thus accept Boyle's (2015) argument that Cassam's account of the observational and inferential stance toward oneself can explain only alienated forms of self-knowledge and does not take proper account of the practical-participant dimensions of substantial self-knowledge and reflective self-interpretation.

[31] As mentioned above in n.4, the example of the self-ignorant feminist is from Schwitzgebel who provides an engaging account such cases which are more pervasive than we sometimes like to think, especially for the dimensions of our identity that most matter to us – strongly evaluative dimensions of identity, in Taylor's (1977a) term. Schwitzgebel's dispositional account of belief accords in many respects with the account I have been developing here of the ways in which the pre-reflective and reflective dimensions of human agency can conflict with each other, but this is not the occasion to pursue these comparisons in detail.

[32] This phrase 'practical self-relation' as I am using it was introduced by Tugendhat (1986) in his interpretation of Heidegger and it has since become a pivotal point of departure for discussions of selfhood in the tradition of German critical theory (see Habermas 1992, Honneth 1995, and Jaeggi 2014). The point, for my purposes, is to capture Heidegger's formulation of a non-theoretical, first-personal self-relation in his characterization of Dasein's relating to itself [*sich verhalten*] by relating to its own future; a self-relation that is shaped and guided by the person's socially-culturally inherited patterns of interpretation. In brief, a practical self-relation [*praktische Selbstverhältnis*] should be distinguished from what Tugendhat calls 'epistemic self-consciousness' [*epistemische Selbstbewusstein*] or what Habermas and Honneth label the 'epistemic self-relation' [*epistemische Selbstbeziehung*]. These latter terms focus on the kind of quasi-observational access a person has to her own mental and experiential states, rather than on the person's relation to her own future course of action. Note that 'self-relation' can be used to translate all of the following: (a) *Selbstverhältnis* (which translators have typically rendered as 'relation-to-self'), as well as both (b) Tugendhat's more complex constructions *Sich-Verhalten-zu-sich* (see Tugendhat 2016) and *Sichzusichverhalten* (which is rendered as 'relation of oneself to oneself' by Tugendhat's [1986] translator) and (c) Habermas's contrasting term *Selbstbeziehung* (for which other translators have reserved 'self-relation'; see Habermas 1992: 202, n.49 and Honneth 1995: 76). I prefer 'self-relation' for my purposes here because it resonates with 'self-awareness', but in doing so I am papering over some terminological and philosophical distinctions that are made in German.

[33] Mineness is another theme with respect to which Zahavi (2005: 81) mistakenly attempts to present Heidegger as an advocate of formal pre-reflective self-awareness. 'Mineness' for Heidegger is not a name for asymmetrical, normatively inert self-awareness as Zahavi claims; it is a name for asymmetrical practical task to carry out *my* own existence. A similar distinction between a theoretical or 'spectator' view and a first-person agential or practical relation that people have to certain of their own beliefs and desires (those about which they can be said to

'make up their own mind') is explored by Richard Moran (2001: 32), who writes of the 'special responsibilities the person has in virtue of the mental life in question being *his own*'. With a shift in emphasis (from 'mental life' to 'existence' in the Heideggerian sense), we have a good gloss on what is at stake for Heidegger in his notion of the practical self-relation in its 'mineness'. For more on this approach to Heidegger's conception of mineness see Carman (2005).

[34] Whether or not this amounts to a 'trivialization of rationality', as Dreyfus (2013) might have it, is not a question I will weigh in on, though it seems to me that there is more common ground here than Dreyfus acknowledges. A Merleau-Pontian account of why reasons are an inappropriate unit of phenomenological analysis for pre-reflective action is given by Wrathall (2005). For more on these issues, see n.35 just below.

[35] Here, again, I have been channeling features of Taylor's account of self-interpretation. Taylor (1977a: 37) observes that 'our self-interpretations are partly constitutive of our experience. For an altered description of our motivations can be inseparable from a change in this motivation'. Moran's (2001) account of the practical, or what he prefers to call 'deliberative', nature of self-knowledge also supplies a constructive point of comparison. Following Taylor (who is following Heidegger on this), I choose to frame these issues in terms of the *interpretive* (rather than *rational*) nature of self-knowledge, but Moran (who influenced Boyle's account that I discussed just above) identifies the capacity we have to play an active role in shaping our own motivations (or 'attitudes' such as desires and beliefs) as a feature of rational agency: 'The fact that we do have this capacity … amounts to the idea that part of what it is to be a rational agent is to be able to subject one's attitudes to review in a way that makes a difference to what one's attitude is' (Moran 2001: 64). I have to offer this here without further commentary and without pausing to sort out what is at stake between seeing this as a matter of our being *self-interpreting* as opposed to *rational* animals.

[36] Ratcliffe's (2017) conception of the minimal self as being constitutively dependent on social relations – and his corresponding critique of Zahavi's claim that the minimal self is a separable 'underlying core' of experience (p.34) – is complementary with the account that I have given here.

[37] There are certain pathological conditions that on first glance seem to show that a basic self-awareness can obtain independently of self-understanding in my sense. In discussing a condition called hydranenchephaly in which a child is born without a cerebrum (cerebral cortex, thalamus, basal ganglia), Fuchs (2018: 113-114) observes that, although lacking in any robust sense of self, the child still displays a basic form of core sentience or 'basal affective consciousness' and corresponding behaviors, such as basking in the sun, displaying fear of strangers and joy at being touched and tickled (see Damasio 2010: 80-83, cited by Fuchs 2018: 114). However, Fuchs's interpretation of the significance of this condition is consistent with the overall account I have been defending according to which self-awareness is intertwined with and dependent upon an awareness of and responsiveness to one's situation. Fuchs observes that the basic self-awareness and behaviors displayed by a child with this condition are shaped by an affective readiness to respond to its situation in accordance with a basic suite of affective dispositions or 'motivational affects' (seeking, rage, fear panic, lust, care and play) as described by Panksepp (1998) and Panksepp and Biven (2012). In this case, these basic motivational affects play the role I attribute to self-understanding in fully developed and socialized adults (they are that in light of which one

is aware of and responsive to one's situation). I cannot speculate here on the relation between such basic affective dispositions and the suite of abilities and dispositions I associate with pre-reflective self-understanding.

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