

Introduction

There are no safe paths in this part of the world. Remember you are over the edge of the wild now, and in for all sorts of fun wherever you go.
—Gandalf to Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*, by J. R. R. Tolkien

Do you remember?—No, I have deleted it. In this final part of a dialogue I recently had, I was just asked if I remembered a particular event. But I had to acknowledge that I had not only forgotten it by accident, I had really *wanted* to forget it; it was not a pleasant memory. What was really shocking to me was not the resurgence of the memory, but the response of my own, self-imposed oblivion: *No, I have deleted it.*

Is our mind a computer? Do we simply delete events and experiences? In a paper I recently wrote, I denied such a conclusion (Galuschek and Lütjohann 2014). In this paper, I consider our mind as a well, where memories fall in but are not forgotten; rather they are stored in the well's abyss (Galuschek and Lütjohann 2014: 24–25). Memories are in the depth of the well and wait to be set into new contexts (Galuschek and Lütjohann 2014: 25). In fact, memories “wait” to be recounted in presumed “new storylines”—be they diachronic or episodic (Strawson 2004). Every story I compose of my life—even the one in this book—is reconstructed from memories and experiences I’ve already had. Sometimes they seem to be forgotten; actually they are deep in the well’s abyss, and they are sometimes hard to find. So, everything in my mind, all memories, all my experiences, are stored. And I can arrange them freely; I can compose contexts and chronologies that I did not expect when I had these experiences. This means that I in fact store my lifetime as countless possible stories of my lifetime. This realization engendered a picture in my mind: let us take it as an example for being ourselves as persons. The tree’s branches can be imagined as composed of narrative threads, as though every single one were a biography. They merge in the tree’s trunk. The roots are hidden in the ground; they are one with the world. Perceived this way, the roots in the ground have paramount meanings. They can be regarded as the unconscious, which is hidden from the outer world, as well as being perceived as genetic roots that show that we come from the earth. But at the center stage is the symbiosis of being and world that occurs in this picture. This brings forth a picture of myself as a naturally acting human being living and existing in the world.



Fig 0.1. The self as a tree (csuzda, Can Stock Photo, used with permission)

Consider this example of a tree: I breathe the air of the world, I nourish myself from the earth, and I have—some kind of—relationships with “birds,” “butterflies,” “bees,” and other social animals, which symbolize my social being. All these relationships are mirrored in my experiences and memories. Maybe this analogy is a bit too fantastic, but it fits perfectly into the image of *ourselves acting in a social world*: we always experience ourselves as both an individual and unique as well as dividual and socially related at the same time. But what does this folk psychological realization¹ actually mean?

Experiences and memories are captured in narratives; they can be autobiographic or fantastic; episodic, diachronic, or more or less coherent; but they always constitute a story. Narratives do not underlie a necessary condition of consciousness. It is in the nature of narratives that they can be unconscious and thus only occur in a particular situation where they come to mind.

The distinctive thing about these experience-based narratives is that they are *always* related to others, since no experience is made alone. By recounting these narratives, we also capture the experiences and stories of others, since they were part of a particular experience. In turn, we influence the life of others through our presence and our acting and interacting. In doing this, we receive reactions to our actions, which we can evaluate and from which we can learn “about the flow of relationships” (Josephides 2008: 78). Other’s reactions to our actions mirror their evaluation of our acting, so they give us feedback for our acting. From this, we can update our behavior. In addition, through the reactions of others we learn to evaluate ourselves and compose our self-perception. Thus, we live in a steady flow of relationships with others *and* with our self. However, *how does this extreme social anchoring fit in the modern Western pursuit of individuality?*

Individuality and self-perception compose a particular image of our self with particular desires, needs, and expectations. This composition makes us distinctive from others. On the downside, we want to be recognized in our individuality and our self-being by others. In this mutually dependent relationality of our everyday life, three modes of recognition appear: *self-recognition*, *recognition of the other*, and *mutual recognition*.

As individuals who move within social communities, we are related to others. We evaluate others and respectively we are evaluated by others. Thus, we are recognized and recognize others in their actions by applying values and norms we appreciate in ourselves. In this sense, recognition becomes an important foundation for our social wellbeing because recognition of others provides a “social feedback” for our action respective to another’s expectations. Through our own expectations, self-recognition forms our values and norms for the recognition and appreciation of others. To investigate how these modes of recognition conduct themselves in the relational realm of selfhood is the objective of this work. In consequence, in the connection between relationality and selfhood, recognition is the crux of the matter.

However, this outer dichotomy of self and other might not be the only problem in the structure of recognition. Given that every one of us is striving for recognition of our own individuality, characteristics, abilities, and traits, the truth is that most of us have had mixed experiences with this recognition. Although most of the time we have an assumed complete image of our self-perception, we naturally fail to disclose our full individuality to others, since we always only have a particular personal habitus in a particular social field (Bourdieu 1984). This means we are only able to disclose parts of our individuality. Therefore, our full individuality is never recognized; it is always subject to restrictions placed by the social field. Due to this particular action in a social field, we are sometimes recognized as another, since others fail to recognize other essential parts of our individuality. It seems as though we have

to act as another to reach particular *individual* goals. Regularly, such acting does not have a significant effect on our self-perception, since we still know who we are. But how does this inner dichotomy of being oneself and being another work?

In academia, it is commonly understood that increasing individuality causes an increasing claim to recognition, especially since Honneth's revival and updating of Hegel's concept of recognition. It is also Honneth who is actually inseparably linked with the recent philosophical discussion about recognition. We are recognized, and we recognize others, both on a personal as well as on a social level. The leading question, still unsolved and at the same time insolvably linked with the relationship of individual and society, is *why do we rely on recognition?* In other words, *what does it mean to recognize me, my self, and the other?*

To show these connections between the relationality of our and another selfhood in our everyday life, and the dependence of identity and personhood, I follow Laitinen (2010: 321–22) who points out “five further (related) ways in which getting recognition matters.” First, “recognition is *directly desirable* in itself.”² Such a desire makes recognition an “intelligent, independent motivational force.” Second, “recognizing and getting recognition are constitutive of nonalienated horizontal *relationships of unity*, of different kinds (for example, mutual respect, mutual care),” and they are “constitutive also of nonalienated *vertical* relationships of unity, of different kinds (for example, living under just, legitimate, self-governed institutions, living under institutions whose goals and principles one can identify with).” Third, “via affecting self-relations of the relevant parties, getting recognition is a *precondition of agency*.” Fourth, “recognizing and getting recognition is arguably in different ways a precondition of identity formation, self-realization, good life and positive freedom.” Fifth, recognition has a “possible ontological relevance for the very existence of groups, institutions, states, even persons.” With these five basic definitions Laitinen shows where recognition is doubtlessly virulent. To reach a level of mutual recognition within which we are adequately recognized in our relationality to and our self-being from others, the basis of the concept of recognition introduced so far in scientific discourse has to be reconsidered, renewed, and reordered.

Even contemporary approaches to the self remain in the tradition of the epistemological subject (e.g., Gallagher and Zahavi 2012; Henry and Thompson 2011; Legrand 2011). Nevertheless, these approaches attempt to investigate accounts of an embodied perception of the self as a person. This includes a sensual and *enworlded* perception of our self-being and the life-world. These assumptions require that our self be related to experiences, individuality, personality, sociality, otherness, agency, and feelings—to mention a few. There-

fore, it is fruitful to follow these approaches, despite their being anchored in the obsolete tradition of the philosophical subject.

Let us stay on that terminological level and consider introductorily the distinction between the terms “person” and “self.” This is not easy to formulate. A logical and easy way to define personhood could be: “‘Person’ is an entity denominated from the outside; from the inside, each of us thinks of her or his self. The term ‘self,’ then, has an intimate character that more easily spans the insider and outsider perspective” (Josephides 2008: 23). It is true that the person has a social character; the self makes rather more problems. It refers to the “I” as oneself as well as possessing a relational, self-reflexive dimension, which makes it necessarily social. Continental discourse has been struggling with the question of individuality, sociality, and recognition as individual and social good for decades. Apparently, it seems that continental accounts are not able to deliver a sufficient answer to this question, since subject³ philosophy here has reached its limits. In Nietzsche’s (2003: 7 [60]) words, “‘Everything is subjective,’ you say: but that itself is an *interpretation*, for the ‘subject’ is not something given but a fiction added on, tucked behind—Is it even necessary to posit the interpreter behind the interpretation? Even that is fiction, hypothesis.” What Nietzsche means here is if subjectivity means that something is perceived in relation to oneself, it is already an interpretation of the true being of that same something. Thus, an objective stance never can be reached. I suggest, therefore, a rethinking of the concept of the self and go beyond its subject-philosophical foundation. In doing so, other accounts have to be considered.

Therefore, the central part of this work is the idea of bringing together research from two scientific disciplines which do not “talk” that much with each other. “The relationship between anthropology and philosophy is characterized by a complex history that includes mutual attraction as well as mutual mistrust” (Duranti 2008: 490). Both disciplines have one outstanding subject in common: they deal with the human being, her or his emotions, rationality, and performance; but they differ in their approach. Philosophy approaches the human from the rational and transcendental direction, whereas cultural and social anthropology addresses the human being’s everyday life; moreover, “The objective of anthropology ... is to seek a generous, comparative but nevertheless critical understanding of human being and knowing in the one world we all inhabit” (Ingold 2011: 229). Philosophy helps to give sense to the doings of everyday life, which is only observable from the anthropological point of view. Thus, taking both disciplines together means receiving an image of the human in her or his *recognition of relational selfhood* as both a transcendental view and as performance in everyday life. The connection of philosophical and anthropological approaches to identity, personhood, and

self-recognition seems to be very fruitful in developing a holistic approach to mutual recognition.

I connect continental approaches in phenomenological and hermeneutical considerations to recognition, personhood, and selfhood as well as narrativity and human biography (such as the perception of the life-world⁴ as a surrounding environment) and noncontinental approaches (such as personhood as a life-worldly relational dividual) to emphasize the “docking stations” of both approaches. In consequence, the Cartesian ego is rejected in favor of an anthropological model of personhood which is decentralized, cosmomorphic, and sociocentric and thus merges with its surrounding. Hence, the surrounding world does not appear as an object anymore; rather it is considered as *us: person and life-world form a unity*. Finally, the center of our world is empty. In such an approach sociality is no longer an “add-on” that has to be attached on a solipsistic subject by nature; rather, it is inherent. This anthropological approach is merged with a narrative concept of identity to emphasize the self-reflexive way of personal identity. It has a direct effect on classical, continental notions of personhood.

Methodologically, the phenomenologist’s approach constitutes the first step of the approach to a recognizing, relational self. By this means, our self is explained within the traditional first-person account. “That is, the phenomenologist is concerned to understand the perception in terms of the meaning it has for the subject” (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 7). Perception and related experiences do not happen only in the brain; they are not only cognitive processes. “The typical cognitive scientist ... takes a third-person approach, that is, an approach from the perspective of the scientist as external observer rather than from the perspective of the experiencing subject” (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 7). In the cognitivist case, the perspective is objective, and the purpose of investigation represents only “for example certain objective (and usually sub-personal) processes like brain states or functional mechanisms” (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 7). In relation to that, I follow an intrinsic actionism because recognition begins on the level of the single human being. But also, on other levels of mutual recognition, there is an extrinsic actionism that mirrors our perception and acting in every aspect of our life-world.

In a second methodological step, I apply hermeneutics as a “philosophy of detour” (Reagan 2002: 5); thus this hermeneutical investigation of the self in relation to mutual recognition has to start at the current state of the recognition debate and take a detour to the anthropological state of the personhood and the self debate. Since “The self is not a monolith” (Cohen 1994: 2), this scientific, multifaceted way through various anthropological concepts has to be made.

This continental, philosophical-anthropological approach enables investigations in empathy and care by examining the motivation of recognition. I show how biographies as narratives can help to understand the other within

her or his very own life-world, even if the life-world is actually part of the human's personality as a dividual. The continental approach to personhood provides foundations for a new concept of personhood that is understood as a category of the human being, with a stronger focus on culturally and historically founded dividuality instead of a mere individuality. Understood in such a way, the act of recognition nourishes itself from the motivation⁵ of acting and performance within the life-world.

In summary, on the sketched basis of philosophical and anthropological approaches, the purpose of this work is to draw a concept of a recognizing relational self that includes all stages of mutual recognition: recognition of its own identity, recognition of its own acting, recognition of others, and evaluative recognition. I begin this journey with preliminary remarks on recognition, person, and self by elaborating the state of the art in philosophy and anthropology. In the second part of my work, I show how these approaches compose a model of mutual recognition based on a relational self.

Notes

1. Without a doubt, nowadays folk psychological realizations and investigations are used to build entire scientific constructs, like theories of mind, behavior theories, agency theories, and belief-desire theories, to mention a few (Hutto 2007).
2. If it is not marked otherwise [my emphasis], emphases are left as used in the original source.
3. In German, three meanings of the subject can be distinguished: (1) an ontological one as carrier of accidents, qualities, and actions; (2) a logical one as part of a sentence; and (3) as a matter of scientific research (Kible 1998: 374). The meaning of subject I refer to is the first one. This is the sense in which Descartes, the founder of modern subject theory, used the term 'subject.' For him, the subject is the carrier of cognitive attributes through which the subject recognizes the outer world. From this perception of the metaphysical, ontological subject, it is only a small step to the epistemic subject, understood as the 'recognizing ego.' It gains this meaning through German idealism, which also includes Hegel's thinking on the Absolute Spirit. Today, the concept of the subject has an epistemic meaning with all cognitive capacities and imagination. This makes the subject the recognizing figure in philosophical interpretation (Stolzenberger 1998: 383), regarded as comprising unique experience and unique consciousness and understood as an observer, in contrast to the passive and observable object.
4. Life-world is a phenomenological term, taken from Husserl, that refers to the world where things appear as entities in their suchness: "the 'merely subjective-relative' intuitive of prescientific world-life" (Husserl 1970: 125). Every scientific insight is founded on practical and sensual perception. Thus, the life-world is in opposition to "the 'objective,' 'the true' world" of sciences (Husserl 1970: 127). Furthermore, life-world enables objectivism and focusing on facts, and thus builds a "forgotten meaning-fundament" (Husserl 1970: 48). The working scientist assumes "the one world of experience, ... [which] every other researcher knows he is in as a human being, even throughout all his activity of research" (Husserl 1970: 126). That makes life-world a

“prescientific, intuitively given surrounding world” (Husserl 1970: 27) that consists of personal relations to this world. It is not my intention to use the term in this strict classical phenomenological way. Rather it is used to describe the surroundings or environment in which we live—our everyday world. For this reason, life-world has a performative character (Galuschek 2014: 347). It is the world within which we act and perform. It creates the room for social interaction and culture. Even in the eyes of Husserl, life-world and scientific world are interdependent, since scientific insight itself for its part becomes a cultural product, and thus part of the life-world (Husserl 1970: 128). In this work, it is shown how life-world is a world where things are animated by human custom and arranged as a mirror of our self. This perception of the self demands self-reflectivity and, therefore, the self is considered narratively.

5. In a classical sense, “Motivation is ... conceived as representing those forces that arouse organisms to action towards a desired goal and provide the reason and purpose for behavior” (Kreitler 2013: 2). Not surprisingly, due to its continental roots, this definition highlights the intentional character of motivation. For the purpose of this work, however, intentionality is not relevant, since action intentionality is a sufficient condition for action, but not a necessary one. Many concepts of personhood and action motivation exist, all of which state that people act, but differ in their definitions of the purpose of action (LiPuma 2000: 136–38). Therefore, I would rather suggest taking ‘motivation’ alone as the action force, without including the necessity for action intention.