

The classical philosophical problem of other minds has been replaced with the cognitive tasks of mindreading, simulating worlds and minds, and, more particularly, accounting for false belief. More about these latter in the Chapter on Empathy and Analogy devoted to these topics. Less attention has been paid to the contribution of empirical results and methods in addressing other minds, since it is supposed to be a conceptual issue. The philosopher forgets that empirical experience can point to conceptual distinctions that have been overlooked; that the conceptual joints at which experience is carved up by our ways of bringing into language (“linguaging”) shared and vicarious experiences can sometimes highlight or hide particularly relevant conceptual distinctions; and even occasionally where yesterday’s science fiction becomes today’s empirical results, annoyingly impacting the boundary between the imaginable and the actual. For example, advances in biological cloning may present issues of personal identity and Philip K. Dick’s negative fantasy of the future posits that lack of empathy is one way of distinguishing artificial clones from real animate organisms.¹ With that in mind, to the best of my knowledge, little work has been done on empathizing with the skeptic who has doubts about other minds. Yes, that’s right, empathizing with the skeptic. That will be the goal and the argument of this essay.

The classical philosophical problem of other minds resonates between two absurdities. The first that the one individual is so much alike the other that the one *is* the other. This is the thesis of identity, the position that devolves into solipsism, the *solus ipse*, the alone self. No man is an island; but there is only one island, a mystical one. Individuals merge together in the mystical, identical proposition “I am you.” The second absurdity is that one individual is so different from the other that the two individuals have no access to interrelation with one another. Every man (person) is an island, one irretrievably disconnected and the abyssal depths between the two are an unbridgeable ontological distance too far. This is the thesis of difference: “I am I; and you are you” and never the twain shall meet. Ironically this position ends up being solipsistic, too, as no method of access to the other is adequate to the situation.

If one frames the other individual as being so transparently revealed in its original kernel of self-existence that one experiences the world just the same way that the other experiences the world, then the distinction between oneself and the other collapses and the absurdity that the one *is* the other results. If the other is framed as being so inaccessible that one is separated from the other by the abyss of an absolute difference of unrelated distance, the one is condemned to an unintelligible isolation, which ultimately succeeds in annulling one’s own egoistic awareness – the one who says “I” – in so far as one cannot even be oneself unless another is with one. To this degree the problem of one’s relation to the other has the form of what Immanuel Kant called an antinomy – an unavoidable conflict of reason with itself that originates in the structure and application of reason to experience and our lack of experience. In this case, the antinomy is that of identity and difference. The persistence of the problem of other minds suggests that there is a dimension of dialectical illusion to it. The existence of so many solutions, ranging from introspective approaches to behaviorist ones, may be a symptom that the underlying

¹ The movie *Blade Runner* is based on the novella “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep” (1968) in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Philip K. Dick. New York: Ballantine Books, 1969.

problematic has ambiguities that remain unresolved.² Benefits are available in bringing the problem solving power of Kant's transcendental dialectic to bear on one of the recalcitrant conundrums of modern philosophy. The truth of solipsism is that one remains different from the other even as a necessary condition of interacting with the other. One retains a kernel of distinctiveness – individual spontaneity and autonomy – that remains unshareable and conditions the possibility of meaningful exchange between individuals. On the other hand, the poverty of solipsism is to ignore the degree to which all individuals go through experiences that basically belong to the same common (“universal”) types in being born, struggling to grow up, working to survive and bring forth child in a family unit in a community, growing old, and dying. The enormous variety of ways in which these core experiences are storied and given meaning in the context of language communities, cultures, and social organizations is a significant area of study in its own right.

Of course, invoking Kant's skeptical method – to be distinguished from skeptical results – points in the direction of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy as a kind of therapy as well as Heidegger's statement that the scandal is that such questions as the existence of the external world were raised in the first place.³ In the spirit of such methods, three therapeutic approaches to engaging the skeptic's doubts about other minds will be applied.

First, we will try empathizing with the skeptic in the interest of understanding what he really wants. Reiterated doubts will be treated as a symptom of an underlying conflict. If the desire turns out to be something that can be addressed, even if unreasonably, then progress will have been made in identifying the form of therapy required. If the desire turns out to be something that is impossible, then progress will also have been made in mapping the scope of the dis-ease – what makes us uneasy about other minds – from the inside. However, we will have established the hope in the skeptic that we can address his requirement. In other words, a transference – a reenactment in the psychoanalytic sense of the original breakdown – will have been established such that the skeptic's desire can be represented as being fulfilled. The task will then be to interpret the meaning of the

² In the continental tradition, the classical statement of the problem is to be found in E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), tr. D. Cairns, the Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973; also E. Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy* (1917), tr. W. Stein, the Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, (*Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Freiburg, 1917); M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (1922), tr. P. Heath, Hamden, CN: Archon Books, 1979, (*Späte Schriften in Gesammelte Werke*, ed. M. Scheler and M. Frings, Vol. 9, Bern: Franke Publishing, 1976); in the analytic tradition, the exchange between J. Wisdom (“Symposium: Other Minds” (1946) in *Other Minds*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968: 206-229) and J.L. Austin (“Other Minds (1946)” in *Classics in Analytic Philosophy*, ed. R.R. Ammerman, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965: 353-78) defines the terms of the debate, but did not lay it to rest. For example, see D. Davidson, “The Irreducibility of the Concept of Self” (1998) in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: 85-91; T. Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (1986), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986 and J. Searle *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (1983), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

³ L. Wittgenstein, (1945), *Philosophical Investigations*, Tr. G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953: ¶ (paragraph) 133; M. Heidegger, (1927), *Being and Time*, Tr. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962: 249, H205; (Section 43(a)).

transference in such a way to transform the skeptic's position from isolation to interrelation without thereby necessarily fulfilling an inherently unfulfillable desire.

The second response will be to tell a story that incorporates the unfulfilled desire and makes sense out of the skeptic's experience as a fellow in a community of fellow travelers. This will address skeptical doubts that he is in pain and is alone and in pain.

Finally, if story telling does not create a state of calm quiescence, then the heroic alternative is to radicalize the problem. Notwithstanding the Kantian clue that other minds turns on ambiguities of reasoning about other minds, Edmund Husserl tried to solve the problem in the 5th book of his Cartesian Meditations. What has been little noted is that the step-by-step constitution of the other individual out of one's sphere of ownness maps remarkably closely to the recovery of the mind of the autistic individual in milieu therapy. In short, the proposal is to join the skeptic in the extreme situation of his skeptical situation and to model a therapeutic process of recovery on the extreme situation of the autistic individual. The result is to join him in his skeptical hell (or at least so it seems to any normal philosopher if not the skeptic) and to persuade him to climb out together.

The logic is relatively simple though the details are not. The argument of this chapter is that autism as a so-called mental illness is an implementation of skepticism about other minds. Indeed autism radicalizes solipsism in a very specific way, so that the autistic individual becomes the ultimate solipsist to the point of a reduction to absurdity. But the absurdity is not the end, not the refutation. It is just the beginning. Autism stands skepticism on its head, and the solipsist is the ultimate autistic individual.

The absurdity ceases to be a matter of mere logic (though it may be that too). No philosophical solipsist in his right mind attempts to maintain his isolated point of view consistently. He still goes about earning a living by publishing articles in philosophical journals on skepticism about other minds, performing natural bodily functions such as eating and eliminating waste, and participating in professional organizations with like-minded individuals where they together refine their arguments that knowledge of other minds is defective and the existence of other minds dubious. The obvious question is: With the application of empathy to the solipsist, can the solipsist enhance our empathy with the extreme situation of the autistic individual and provide a clue as to how to reintegrate the individual back into the community of mutuality and recognition? If so, solipsism would show value to the skeptical method, though one that had a clinical value as well as an epistemological or ontological one. If the solipsist has no concern to be too consistent about living his skepticism, not so the autistic individual. He or she tries to master a world that is alternately unintelligible, threatening, or just plain confusing. Granted that the autistic individual is often suffering from some form of delusion, he or she is the most philosophical of the so-called mentally ill, responding appropriately to a reality that, from the autistic point of view, is clearly senseless and even hostile. While no one would willingly subject himself to such a condition, given that such conditions occur, the possibility of experimental philosophy shows up. It goes without saying that the

individual with autism is innocently, and intervention that addresses the individual's psychophysical well-being is required.

Before going further, I want to forestall a debate about the specific definition of autism. Kanner's definition emphasized the lack of emotional connection along with mechanical, repetitious "twiddling" behavior. The etiology of the icebox mother (care-taker) as the immediate cause has been overturned – and rightly so – in place of a genetic predisposition that is phenotypically manifest as lack of eye gaze following, defective shared attention, and missing abilities to detect the intention's of others as manifested in their movements. The progress that has occurred since Kanner's initial work has opened the way to early intervention with combinations of practical therapies designed to make a positive difference in integrating the autistic individual into the community. In the rapid pace of these developments, however, something useful has been lost. What has been overlooked is that the icebox mother is the effect rather than the cause of autism. Any would-be care-taker of a neonate destined to become autistic can handle only so many apathetic responses, absences of engagements, and outright rejections a day. An initially liminally unfeeling and unresponsive neonate, in spite of its relative helplessness, can contribute to creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Absent specific interventions, lack of response causes more lack of response. Lack of understanding causes more misunderstandings. Thus the downward spiral into symptoms of severe childhood psychosis including the more narrowly defined autism spectrum disorders.

At the risk of making a bad pun, the poster child for empathy being a mental (emotional) module or independent facility of the intellect *is* precisely autism. This is the diagnostically related set of symptoms that cluster around being unable to appreciate persons as individuals with feelings, beliefs, intentions like oneself. As noted, the behavior associated with autism tends to the performance of mechanistic and repetitive patterns by the autistic individual as a way of mastering or controlling an environment (and other people in it) that seems alien and incomprehensible at best and threatening and dangerous at the worst. The lack of warmth and emotional response from the autistic child or person makes it hard for most caretakers to relate to him or her or at least to do so for the sustained periods that normal childhood dependency require. Both parties end up frustrated and misunderstood with the resulting flourishing of negative, secondary side effects extending from temper tantrum to shouting to further emotional withdrawal and disengagement.

Another tragic dimension of the issue is that severe neglect in early childhood can cause symptoms similar to autism regardless of genetic constitution or formal etiology. After the fall of the former USSR, eastern European orphanages were overwhelmed, leading to warehousing of neonates.⁴ In situations unhappily similar to Harlow's deprivation experiments with Rhesus monkeys, human infants were left alone in cribs for hours on end with a mechanical device to hold the bottle or feeding tube in place. The results were

⁴ M. A. Diego and N. A. Jones, (2007), "Neonatal antecedents for empathy" in *Empathy and Mental Illness*, ed. T. Farrow & P. Woodruff. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007. "For example, severe neglect observed in children raised in Romanian orphanages has been shown to affect brain growth and healthy psychological progression of emotional responsiveness" (2007: 160).

the generation of autistic and psychotic-like symptoms as these otherwise adoptively desirable white males (often Rumanian) were brought home to middle class suburban environment and did not thrive, at least not to the degree expected. The jury is still out on how much of the damage is reversible, and hopefully intensive and focused efforts can have a beneficial effect. However, the latter efforts were not supposed to be needed. The point is that care-taker neglect and out-and-out abuse (documented in other contexts) over a sustained period of time – months or years – results in symptoms as bad or worse than autism, childhood psychosis, and related. It is my intention to include those suffering from both genetic predispositions and the bad behavior of their care-takers and fellow men in the diagnosis of autism as a response to an extreme (negative) situation.

At the lowest level, autism shows up as lack of joint attention to objects of mutual interest such as toys shared between the child and caretaker. In particular, normal children track, follow, attend to the visual gaze of the caretaker as he or she goes about talking about and referring to objects of interest. In the case of the autistic subject, the tracking is missing. Whether as a result of insufficient shared intentionality or other reasons, language gets used idiosyncratically and in a way meaningful to the autistic individual alone (“privately”). Miscommunications, miscues, and simple disconnects are common, and, in some cases, occur in abundance. Much play acting that occurs between non-autistic individuals is characterized by shared intentionality. The child demonstrated competence and mastery in the game by acting on the shared intentionality. For example, when Dad gets home, they play a game in which they go to the store to buy cookies, getting some out of the cupboard. They eat the cookies together while going over the A, B, C book and reciting the contents to the delight of both participants. In autism the shared intentionality is often missing, resulting in mutual frustration, and behaviors that are as much an artifact of the follow-on breakdowns in communication as of the initial dysfunction caused by the disease. So while the icebox mother (care-taker) is no longer credibly cited as a *cause* of autism, it remains an artifact in the interpersonal field that is usefully distinguished as a pitfall to be avoided and an effect to be ameliorated. In short, excluding those documented examples where the so-called icebox care-taker actually did engage in abusive behavior (and there are some), the emotional deep freeze into which the care-taker was thrust is the effect of a downward spiral beginning with a barely perceptible lack of responsiveness on the part of the infant. This is where early intervention can make a tremendous difference in short circuiting the vicious cycle.

The skeptic’s position is like that of the autistic individual even under the definition that autism includes damage to neurological modules that interfere with eye gaze following, joint attention, and trust in the beliefs and desires of others. The skeptic properly concludes that since my senses have once deceived me, they cannot be trusted. Therefore, the information provided by them is highly dubitable. Therefore, the world is likely to be much more surprising and dangerous than for someone who can rely on the senses. The skeptic is not wrong – his conclusions are accurate, though perhaps under a narrower set of circumstances than those to which standard behavior is accustomed.

We have now cycled through a wide variety of symptoms extending from autism to paranoia as part of the diagnosis of skepticism. However, one more is needed as a clue to

get us started. Comparisons have been made to the reiterated doubt of the skeptic as a kind of obsessive compulsion. However, this comparison remains undeveloped either in terms of the meaning of obsession or in terms of what hidden something = x is being avoided or denied by skepticism. Of course, these comparisons are based on the therapeutic task of philosophy; but what is being suggested is that up until now the therapy has not been sufficiently deep or effective. Thus, doubts that we really do understand others and arguments from analogy tend to erupt in the course of debates between simulation theory and its mindreading alternatives, granted without anyone daring to call out the term “other minds.” In particular, the therapy has missed the important role of empathy in restoring the integrity of the skeptic to a comfortable quiescence (silence).

Therefore, let us cut to the chase and proceed to the interpretation of the repetition compulsion. In the case of the skeptic, the unexpressed desire to which the symptomatic repetition is a reaction formation is not a physical one, but an intellectual one - the desire to know. But it is not some ordinary, everyday item of knowledge that is desired. It is absolute, unconditional knowledge that is sought by the skeptic. The strength of the desire for a God’s eye view is a function of a totalizing desire that wants to control, dominate, and manipulate the other.⁵ This is primarily a matter of power and control and domination, and only secondarily sexual. Still, it has the nature of a primal scene in which what is absolutely other is possessed without condition or qualification.

The classic sexual neuroses, hysteria and obsessive compulsive disorder, are relevant in terms of explanatory power. A repressed desire is converted in a physical symptom and a persisting idea, respectively. Hysteria – which no longer exists as a complaint brought by patients to their doctors today (2008) – transforms the (sexual) desire into a symbol using the physical body as a means of representation. For example, instead of stiffening one’s back in sexual intercourse or childbirth, the unacceptable wish was displayed in a dramatic seizure in which an arching of the back is accompanied by loss of consciousness or state of active imagination. In the case of obsessive compulsion, the unacceptable desire – say anal intercourse or rough (sadistic) sex – is kept at bay at the cost of a fixed idea and a related ritual that must be performed to prevent debilitating anxiety. There is an unexpressed commitment of which the obsessive individual is unaware. Furthermore, since the commitment is intellectually or morally unacceptable according to the individual’s most cherished ideal, the compulsive tends to not acknowledge or recognize it. It is dynamically unconscious. There is resistance to recognizing it, resistance that has to be identified and worked through in order to recover and disappear (“abreact” or “discharge”) the unacceptable commitment. Freud’s famous Rat Man was incapacitated by the thought of a particularly sadistic torture to the human buttocks using rats and their notorious ability to gnaw through things, which kept out of consciousness the even more fearful impulse of homosexual desire for the father. Lady Macbeth’s ritual hand washing is a reaction formation to keep at bay the bloody murder of her house guest in sadistic circumstances. In any case, disentangling the underlying impulse from the overt symptom requires a kind of psychoanalytic jeopardy. Here is the answer – reiterated doubt – what is the question? The proposal here is that the reiterated doubt of the skeptic keeps at bay

⁵ H. Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, (1981). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981:

the underlying desire for absolute knowledge. For philosophers whose ideal type is the Socratic wisdom that “I know that I do not know” such a desire is an example of unacceptable, unseemingly pride. For philosophers whose ideal type is the Aristotelian desire to understand, such an absolute knowledge is an example of a character defect leading one to look for the easy way out instead of the difficult empirical work of human interrelation and encounter. For philosophers of a Christian persuasion, it is an example of the pride that goes before the fall.

The initial desire for absolute knowledge sets in train a series of reaction formations. In comparison to absolute knowledge, all finite knowledge is second best. All knowledge subject to revision and empirical progress is inferior by comparison. All of my phenomenal experience is but a dream. Life is but a dream. That dreams lack connectedness to context, a coherent first person perspective, or introspection that includes metacognition, is irrelevant to the skeptic. The skeptic finds evidence to support his doubt in the rare dreams in which it is a part of the dream that the dreamer wonders “Could this be a dream?” And then one wakes up. It is always in principle possible, no matter how unlikely, that I am about to wake up and say “Wow, that was quite a dream!” There are lucid dreams in which the first person perspective, metacognition, and coherent self are maintained. These are powerful streams of eidetic images that occur as a result of meditation or occasionally in transient states prior to falling asleep. What *never* occurs to the dreams is to say “This is not a dream!” and then he wakes up. When one is being chased by robbers and one’s feet are sinking in sand, it never occurs to one to say “This is not a dream!” Rather one just wants to escape and is impelled by fear (and other mixed feelings) to elude the robbers. It is precisely the loss of reflective, first person functionality that plays into the skeptic’s hand being disabling the ability to distinguish waking and dreaming when one is in a reduced state of consciousness, dreaming. In short, the only way to get outside the dream with the distinction awake/dreaming is by ascending to a God’s eye point of view. It is another form of the request – albeit a disguised one - for absolute knowledge.

Thus we begin by immersing oneself in this doubt, identifying with the skeptic empathically. Then one does get a sense of what would satisfy the skeptic, though it is nothing available to us as finite human beings. Behind the skeptic’s reiterated, endless doubt lies an equally limitless demand for absolute knowledge. Absolute knowledge is all that would every satisfy the skeptic committed to reiterated doubt. But as none of humans possesses such knowledge we are seemingly condemned to failure if we try and satisfy him. Merely surfacing such an unexpressed commitment may be sufficient for some skeptics to acknowledge it and give it up.

But suppose the skeptic’s unexpressed commitment is a strong one. Is there any alternative to mutual silence? The alternative is to address the skeptic, but not do so in purely conceptual terms. In short, we must address him with a narrative of humanity’s finitude. This leads to the second form of therapy – story telling.

As a result of a diagnosis of the seemingly compulsive iteration of doubt, our diagnosis is that the skeptic’s unexpressed commitment is to absolute knowledge. This is particularly

unacceptable to the philosophical frame of mind where Socratic ignorance or good solid empirical research are the norm. In reaction to this unacceptable desire of reason and to keep it at bay, the skeptic iteratively doubts any and every link in the chain of experiences and inferences that form empirical knowledge. This does not solve the problem, but it at least keeps at bay the anxiety that would be occasioned by acknowledging an intellectual pride worthy of a punishment – the pride that goes before the fall).

In sharing with the skeptic the myth of the fall from book three of Genesis we demonstrate our respect for him and acknowledge our common humanity. But, more importantly, we also initiate a process of transformation. It is this lesson of finitude that the skeptic has failed to learn. It is a negative lesson and result. Absolute knowledge is as inaccessible to us as is the Garden of Eden. In this encounter with finitude the inherent fallibility of human knowledge and understanding is manifest including our interhuman knowledge of one another as individuals in a community. The unhappy oscillation between absolute knowledge and equally absolute, global doubt is set in play. But the apparent choice between the two – the one leading to skepticism, the other to a nonexistent absolute knowledge – is declined. Instead, we confront local doubt about the credibility or sincerity of some particular expression of feeling that can be engaged with the tools provided by interhuman understanding, including empathy.

A couple of nice points from the narrative in chapter three of the Book of Genesis are worth noting. The snake in the Garden of Eden talks, offering Eve the fruit, telling her (what is in fact the case) that she will gain a measure of divinity if she eat it and that is why the Lord has put in place an injunction against eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. In short, Eve and Adam eat of the fruit of the former Tree. The violation of the injunction leads to certain complications involving a under kind of understanding – of good and evil – and corresponding disadvantages. The pair are expelled from the Garden – perhaps to prevent them from eating of the second tree and really becoming full-fledged Gods immune to death. This is the point at which human history begins. Leading to the situation of present-day humanity. Due to the disobedience of our mythical ancestors we do indeed have knowledge of good and evil. But we are also cursed with pain (one of the paradigms of which is childbirth), earning our bread by the sweat of our brows in hard work (more pain), and the inevitable uncertainty of the time of death (even more pain). The curses of pain, work, and death – i.e., pain, pain, and more pain – are something that all human beings share. In short, these consequences are definitive of the human predicament, and they include death, work, and pain. It is worth noting that the paradigm of the latter is childbirth. Woman along with her offspring must endure the pain of childbirth: “. . . I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and they conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (Genesis 3: 16). The idea of childbirth without pain is certainly an attractive one; and modern medicine can certainly do much to alleviate the suffering and mortal danger involved. One aspect of the attractiveness of this idea may be the prospect of reversing one of the consequences of the fall from paradise. But however much one can do to reduce the trauma of birth for the newborn there is bound to be a substantial amount of suffering involved for both mother and child. So the goal of childbirth without pain remains something of an idea, having the

character of an infinite task on the horizon of progress.) The obvious follow up for the skeptical thinker is not the matter about good and evil (which is peripheral from an epistemological or ontological perspective), but rather what is so deeply engaging about the paradigm of pain?

The fact that much of the discussion about the scope of nature of one's understanding of other minds has focused on the paradigm case of the experience of pain is not accident. Though one may dismiss it as a contingent choice (perhaps motivated by Wittgenstein's allegory of the beetle in the box, the beetle being my private sense datum, "pain"), still this paradigm choice goes very deep and arouses responses which may be only dimly sensed by the participants in the debate. So far everyone has failed to call attention to something that, in its own way, may be a typically Wittgensteinian point.

First, labor is inflected on humanity in a double sense. As we have seen, woman must endure the pain of childbirth along with her offspring. (And there is a difference quality to the two kinds of pains, The woman's was once described to me as being "torn apart"; while the child's is probably more like being squeezed through a narrow space in which one has great trouble breathing and a feeling of suffocating.) But labor is also inflicted on man in that he must win the food he needs to live by work, and that is no easy task. God tells Adam: "... Cursed is the ground for they sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3: 17).

There may come a point at which a distinction between "pain" and "sorrow" may have to be introduced. Such a distinctive would correspond to that between "pleasure" and "happiness" advocated by Aristotle.⁶ But for our present purposes the sorrows under treatment are of such an immediate, overwhelming physical kind that this distinction tends to be minimized. Nevertheless, even in the biblical account we can see that childbirth stands out as the paradigm of somatic suffering (i.e., pain) amidst a field of sorrows. (The death of a loved one does not damage to the integrity of my organism, yet, causes a great deal of sorrow. And there too it would be natural to speak of pain, plain and simple.) It is due to this ambiguity of the biblical account—physical pain among many other kinds of sorrow—that it is broader than any debate about other minds that only treats of the sensation of pain. In this sense the biblical account with its sorrows is richer than the accounts of the other minds debate that deal with pain. And it is in virtue of these extra riches that the other minds debate can evoke the biblical account as an echo and response without thereby exhausting it. With the qualification in mind, we proceed to the second remark.

These three kinds of experiences—the pain of childbirth, earning bread by the "sweat of they fact," and death—are instances of the most isolating, solitary, and lonely that mankind ever faces. We confront an apparent impossibility of substituting our experience for the other. No one can die, sweat, be born, or (if I am a woman) give birth for me. The list seems endless. No one can cry for me, eat for me, sleep, urinate, copulate, or laugh for me. It is worth dwelling on this sense of isolation. For it is very possibly the basis of

⁶ E.g., *Nichomachean Ethics*, X, 1175a, 15; 1176b, 4.

doubt which, when it is detached from its interhuman context, can become so crippling in the case of understanding other minds.

What we encounter is the experience of finitude. The list of what makes the human being a finite creature includes birth, pain, and death. It is not accident that mankind shares these things with many other species of animal. There is nothing species specific about these limitations on life. So mankind cannot swell with pride over the possession of what makes us human, all-too-human. In short, “human” is more closely related to the Latin “*humus*” (earth, soil) than to “*hu-man*.” So to be blunt, there is considerable overlap between the sexes in that we may truly characterize both in the words of Genesis 3: 19: “. . . dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thus return.”

Humanity suffers both pain and sorrow. Someone has ironically suggested that the combination leaves the animals better off than the humans. Even if one doesn’t go that far, the distinction between pain and sorrow is subsumed under *finitude*. What the animal does not experience is the opportunity to show that pain and sorrow, birth and death, and many other everyday human experiences have a finitude embedded within them that is one source of interhuman understanding. Even in the simplest, most primitive sophomoric example of “an other’s feeling of pain” I can discover the finite limits of experience as well as the experience of community. The universality of the experience of pain is humanized in the myth of Genesis. That is why this story can serve as a powerful antidote to philosophical doubt that may otherwise be infectious.

The first step in interpreting the transference is to allow that it is not the skeptic’s fault. Whose fault is it then? Well, our mythical ancestors were tricked by the snake. As a result, we are all held accountable. This is the paradoxical state of humanity, according to which we are held responsible for Adam’s sin without having individually committed it. The individual is thrown into a world in which there is already pain, suffering, evil. This is our contingency, our facticity, our finitude. As a species man is represented as bringing pain upon himself; but as an individual he is neither innately evil, nor innocent. The message to the skeptic is that you know you are experiencing pain and others are experiencing pain too is that it is punishment for your desires to be God-like and attain absolute knowledge. The skeptic then replies, “But I didn’t do it – Adam and Eve did it. The snake tricked them!” The answer, “Well and good. But as long as you continue to share such an unacceptable desire, the pain will be inevitable. If you give it up, then there is a chance – no guarantees, no absolute knowledge – a chance that we can work together to create a new possibility and reduce the pain.

The skeptic’s reiterated doubts are so frustrating to everyday persons because the skeptic fails to indicate what would satisfy him. As a general rule, when a speaking keeps repeating the same statement to you, albeit in diverse forms, it is because the individual does not experience – does not perceive, believe, or feel – that he has been heard. The repetition will occur and keep occurring until the person feels that he has been heard and understood. At that point, the listening in which the person is heard and understood, the conversation is complete, and that allows it to be reduced to nothingness and to fall out of the dialogue, to fall off the radar. Only listening has the power of reducing something to

nothing and thus producing a healing of the skeptical wound, doubt. Speaking does not have that power of healing. Speaking has the power to seek mastery through repetition; but only listening has the power to complete repetition through silent receptivity. In short, for all these centuries, the skeptic has not been heard. That will happen for the first time in this paper. The question here is how do we demonstrate to the skeptic that he has been heard? This must be done without putting him down. The skeptic must be left whole and complete as a person, even if less skeptical. Even if his statement is self-refuting, we must not call attention to that, at least not initially. Rather we must try to understand why absolute knowledge is so enticing. It is not like the skeptic is the only one who ever conceived such a wish or tried to implement it. Our narrative of the fall indicates why absolute knowledge is so enticing – it is a forbidden fruit. It represents a totalizing impulse in human nature to make a whole out of the series of contingent causal connections that go back in time to the beginning of history.

If the skeptic is acknowledge in his or her humanity and addressed with this narrative of finitude, the skeptic may “get it.” It is not his fault that he is asking for the impossible – absolute knowledge – and he should not feel ashamed at doing so, since even non philosophers are eager to know and understand. However, he should give it up and satisfy his epistemological impulses with a more modest agenda of empirical research.

Of course, there is no guarantee that the skeptic will listen to our narration of the myth of the fall or that, if he listens, he will hear. But if he fails to heed the narrative of finitude, then the burden of misunderstanding is shifted onto his shoulders. The myth of the fall presents a narrative of finitude that can be an antidote to what might otherwise be contagious doubt. That is, the skeptic’s siren song no longer holds the same fascination for those who have admitted the inaccessibility of absolute knowledge. Instead of the intoxication of reiterated doubt and the subsequent ship wreck of human understanding, we are faced with the task of showing the way that speech captures our receptivity to others. This is the next step of a hermeneutic of empathic receptivity. This solves the problem from our point of view, but not necessarily from the skeptic’s. Recall that our commitment was to leave the skeptic with his integrity intact and complete.

In the best case scenario. Let us suppose that the skeptic accepts our narrative. We are done. However, let us instead imagine the worst case scenario. The skeptic’s dream becomes a nightmare – he is actually a brain in vat. This leads to the third form of therapy. The skeptical solipsism runs parallel to autism in many details. Just as one must provisionally and selectively join the autistic individual in her or his personal hell in order to coax the individual to break free of it and rejoin the community of human beings, so too a step-by-step recovery the relationship with the other out of the realm of one’s own individual experience is the heroic effort offered by the empathic philosopher to the skeptic. This is a “heroic” undertaking because it requires solving the problem of solipsism, not refuting it. This was undertaken by Husserl in his 5th chapter of the *Cartesian Meditations*. What is amazing is to see the point-by-point parallelism between the recovery of the autistic individual’s humanity and the steps in Husserl’s argument.

We have spoken of the skeptic's – or the sleeping person's – inability to distinguish waking and dreaming. It simply cannot be done from the disabled, reduced state of consciousness that is constituted by the dreams of people who are asleep. It requires the ascent to a God's eye point of view to make the distinction between consciousness of a person who is awake and the dreaming consciousness of a person who is otherwise asleep (engaged above). But what if the skeptic's dream does not remain a dream? What it becomes a nightmare? This opens a different scenario. The skeptic's ultimate thought with which we must join him and from which we must wean him is that he is a brain in a vat. This is distinct from – but engagingly parallel to – the delusional fantasy's of autistic individual's that they are being controlled by machines or impersonal forces beyond their control. For example, one autistic individual drew a picture of the “blinderator,” a mechanism that closely resembled the transmission of a car, which, as he said, “prevented seeing and understanding.”⁷

The realist (“externalist”) needs a God's eye view to handle the appearance/reality distinction. The skeptic's experience is that he seems to be at a summer picnic like Sereut's famous painting, but he is actually a brain in a vat hooked up to a fast computer that simulates all these experiences as neural inputs. This sends us back to the above-cited need for a G's eye perspective and the response by way of a diagnosis and narrative of finitude. The non realist (“internalist”) acknowledges that mental states do not fix reference and so brains in a vat could not succeed in referring to the difference between appearance and reality so they could not say or think they are brains in a vat (Putnam 1981: 25). Such mental states as believing presuppose the ability to refer (Putnam 1981: 43). Meaning is not something created by an intention (contra Husserl). Our operational and theoretic constraints – but not our mental representations or intentions – are what fix the reference. One might make use of a conceptual scheme to bootstrap oneself out of the vat by translating between the meaning of “vat” in the hallucinatory experiences of the vat-dwellers – those living the illusion – and the meaning of the “vat” in which they are dwelling and which they never perceive. Putnam does not try to do this because (perhaps) he already knows that it will not work, though his piece was written well before Davidson's “The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” made the point about being unable to distinguish same or different schemes.

Brains in vats – or a philosopher imaging he is such a brain – brains that are entertaining false beliefs created by inputs from a matrix-like computer network – that they are enjoying a picnic in the park – are not a pretty philosophical picture. Similarly, one who is maintaining the self-refuting proposition “I am a brain in a vat” is struggling to find meaning independently of mental states or a problematic conceptual paradigm that is a tad too constraining referentially. None of these is a good thing, and, in general, philosophical embarrassment is a bad thing.

But the problem is more radical than that. The skeptic's nightmare is that he is a brain in a vat and does not know it, cannot express it; and if the skeptic does try to express it, then

⁷ B. Bettelheim, (1967), *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self*. New York: Macmillan/The Free Press, 1967: 305, Figure 22.

no one believes what he is saying. No one listens. Philosophers tell the skeptic, “Look it - your statement is self-refuting. You are contradicting yourself.” But for the skeptic it is rather like being buried alive - philosophically – the ultimate terror.

All of these pale in comparison to being a brain in a vat as the result of a medical procedure gone bad. All of these pale in comparison to locked in syndrome where the individual retains substantial consciousness and is unable to move physically. All of these pale in comparison to clinical insanity – whether autism, schizophrenia, paranoia, or a mixture - where the individual imagines one’s body is being controlled by alien forces; where the main experiences are the emotions of fear, unhappiness and a teasing sense of hope that somehow one can find one’s way out of the labyrinth before the minotaur of insanity devours one; where the individual struggles to maintain the sense of unity that even the most raving solipsist takes for granted. Here autism stands solipsism on its head, and asks for a solution to the problem of establishing connections with other individuals, having lost it for whatever reason.

This represents the heroic path then of tracing the parallels and overlap between the autistic symptoms caused by extreme situations and the overcoming of solipsism as worked out in Husserl’s 5th Cartesian Meditation. The power of this approach is to assimilate the solipsist to the autistic perspective. This is arguably what would happen if a solipsist tried to live consistently as one. By empathizing with this individual we can enable him to climb down off the limb he is on or varying the metaphor to climb out of the hole into which he has dug himself.

The first stage of charting a way out of the impasse between the absolute poles of identity and difference of individual egos (“I”s) will involve Husserl’s introducing the mediating term of the body as my own or the other’s, in which individuals are first manifested to one another.

The first stage of overcoming solipsism and unfolding the meaning of the other ego from within the context of the “owned” ego will focus on the evidence that the first awareness of others is mediated by the awareness of the body of the other. This awareness of the other’s body is itself a function of the autonomy (i.e., self-rule) within my own body and the way it maps to my awareness of being situated in space. The unity of the body across such functions as eating and eliminating is itself an accomplishment.

The first stage of overcoming solipsism will disclose a striking parallel between phenomenology’s (logical) abstractive reduction to the sphere of the owned body and the actual situation reported in case histories in milieu therapy in which individuals struggle against the extreme situation of autism and related anorexia. At another level, the reduction to the “founding stratum” of the owned body, which is phenomenology’s chosen starting point in the face of solipsism, becomes an enigma in the light of the data of autism. The phenomenological reduction to the sphere of ownness undergoes a radicalization in the sense that it will be necessary to ask about the constitution of the founding sphere of the owned body. That is, the unity of the owned body becomes an

explicit theme, its integration, and meaning as a necessary condition of the unity of the self.

Of course, Husserl takes as his “leading thread” the basic position that all meaning that the subject discovers in the world, the subject itself has instituted and is the original source of. intelligibility. Meaning is derivable from intentional acts of the subject. “Intentionality” is a primitive concept, which may not be derived from other concepts, but which may be tautologically defined as the spontaneous capacity of the subject to institute meaningful relations of identification, differentiation, recognition, and reidentification between contents of perception, emotion, and volition. The genesis is that of sense or meaning [*Sinn*], not of being:

Imperturbably I must hold fast to the insight that every sense [*Sinn*] that any existent whatever has or can have for me – in respect of its “what” and its “it exists and actually is” – is a sense in and arising from my intentional life . . . ⁸

Thus, grasping the intelligible kernel of meaning of the existing world, the individual is referred to the performances of the acts of his own *cogito*. The intentionality of the individual’s “I think” pre-delineates, sketches out ahead of time, the frame of reference within which distinctions of internal from external experience become significant in the first place. It is within this context that the phenomenological reduction becomes intelligible. By “bracketing” the *being* of the world, the phenomenologist wins access to the meaning of the world in so far as the activity of his own subjectivity institutes the meaning. This may commit phenomenology to idealism, but not to relativism. The world does not mean whatever the intending subject arbitrarily wants it to mean.

Phenomenology is committed to uncovering meanings already there by means of constitutional analysis. We may consider this latter difficult notion of “constitution” as further defining our basic primitive concept of intentionality as follows. The multiplicity of synthetic performances of intentionality (in the form “I can” and “I connect”) are united by the explicative activity of the constitutional analyses. In this way, constitutional analyses and intentional syntheses mutually condition one another in relation of the many to the one in their primary orientation towards essential conditions of the possibility of differentiations of meaning. From this level the conditions of meaningful change become intelligible within the framework of reciprocal constitutional and intentional performances. In addition, the structure of intentionality belongs not only to cognitions, but even more importantly to feelings and desires. Feelings are feelings about some state of affairs in the world. Desires are capable of being analyzed into their subjective (noetic) pole of need with the correlative objective (noematic) pole of the object that would satisfy the need (food, water, shelter, sex, etc.).

And so for someone engaging solipsism it is necessary for each one to begin from his own subjectivity in thinking himself into the solipsistic world view where everything is a question mark except perhaps the activity of questioning itself. Everything that is other is

⁸ E. Husserl, (1929/31), *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Tr. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970: 91.

bracketed and put out of action as soon as it presses itself forward. Other people, animals, plants, the landscape, the world as a common space where art and science are cultural objectivities, all these and more are abstractively reduced. Husserl proposes to abstract from everything by way of a special abstractive reduction in the hope of disclosing something so essentially his own that it presses itself forward in indubitable apodictic self-evidence. Whatever is left over after this reduction has the sense “sphere of ownness.” The phenomenologist tries to exclude what is other, but it survives the attempt at exclusion. But it is not an other individual person. It is just an undifferentiated something other = x. It is a “founding stratum,” so-called because the individual is committed to rebuild the entire objective world from it as well as wrest the sense “other” from it:

As Ego in the transcendental attitude I attempt first of all to delimit, within my horizon of transcendental experience *what is peculiarly my own*. First I say that it is *non-alien* [*Nicht-Fremdes*]. I begin by freeing that horizon abstractively from everything that is at all alien Thus we abstract first of all from what gives men and brutes their specific sense [*Sinn*] as so to speak, Ego-like living beings and consequently from all determination of the phenomenal world that refer by their sense to “others” as Ego-subjects and, accordingly, presupposes these. For example, all cultural predicates. . . .

In this connexion we note something important. When we thus abstract, *we retain a unitarily coherent stratum of the phenomenon world*, a stratum of the phenomenon that is the correlate of continuously harmonious, continuing world-experience. Despite our abstraction, we can *go on continuously in our experiencing intuition*, while remaining exclusively in the aforesaid stratum. This unitary stratum, furthermore, is distinguished by being essentially the *founding stratum* – that is to say: I obviously cannot have the “alien” or “other” as experience, and therefore cannot have the sense “objective world” as an experiential sense, without having this stratum in actual experience; whereas the reverse is not the case

. . . . Thus there is included in my ownness, as purified from every sense pertaining to other subjectivity, *a sense, mere nature*, that has lost precisely that “by everyone” and therefore must not by any means be taken for an abstract stratum of the world or of the world’s sense. Among the bodies belonging to this “Nature” and included in my peculiar ownness, I then find my *animate organism* as *uniquely* singled out – namely as the only one of them that is not just a body but precisely an animate organism: the sole object within my abstract world-stratum to which, in accordance with experience, I ascribe *fields of sensation* . . . the only object “in” which I “rule and govern” immediately, governing particularly in each of its “organs” (Husserl 1929/31: 95, 96-7).

By renouncing the world as a superabundant arena of densest being, the phenomenologist discovers the world as a phenomena appearing within the limits of his immanent subjectivity. By considering the world not as it is in itself but as it appears, the phenomenologist wins access to a “founding stratum.” Husserl maintains that this experiential disclosure of the world is prior to the objective [*objektiv*] being of the world.

Without having this stratum available to attentional awareness in actual experience, an intelligible and coherent objective world is inconceivable. Nevertheless there is a unity and harmonious coherence to this stratum that indicates that it, too, has its presuppositions. The unity that is immediately available in the founding stratum, far from being the product of a transcendent reality, is an order and harmony that the rule of my own intentional activity first introduces and establishes. The concrete character of the founding stratum is immediately evident when Husserl associates it with “my animate organism.” The fields of perceptual and kinesthetic sensations to which I win access as the body navigates its environment are dependent on that body being an entity in which I “rule and govern” immediately.

In terms of the interaction of autism and solipsism at the level of a case history (“clinical vignette”) what does the profound self-alienation of autism have to teach phenomenology about its reduction to the sphere of the owned body? What does the lack of integration of the autistic body have to teach to the first stage of the overcoming of solipsism (and the above reduction to the founding stratum and sphere of ownness)?

A striking parallel exists between solipsism and autism at this stage – both focus on the physical presence of the psyche in the owned body as a necessary condition of the emergence of the individual ego and other ego – but autism is more radical than solipsism. Consider the case of Laurie, a mute autistic girl who came to the Orthogenic School at age 7:

During her first days with us she remained extremely dehydrated. She ate and drank almost nothing, though she vomited frequently. As a matter of fact, the only time she showed signs of life were the moments when she was nauseated and vomited. It was as if all she could do was to give up, or out. But even then she passively allowed her vomit to run all over her face, hair, and clothes, as she lay without moving or any other reaction.

For months Laurie’s mouth remained slightly open, her teeth and parched lips apart. . .

At first we thought this mouth behavior went with the dehydration, but it did not change after she was drinking enough . . . and the way she reacted to our manipulation, gave the impression that her mouth was in some way a nonreacting part of her, or one hardly linked to other parts of her body. Her tongue, too, seemed unrelated to the rest of her person or even to the rest of her mouth.

But her mouth was not the only part of her that seemed disconnected from the rest. As a matter of act, to speak of “the rest of her body” gives an erroneous impression. There was no integrated body to Laurie, only an aggregate of separate parts that seemed to have nothing in common, not to belong together.

When we dressed her, undressed her, or touched her, she not only felt limp, but as though her hands, arms, and legs were disconnected from her and her consciousness. Each part of her body seemed an object apart from the others, and

the various parts of her unrelated to each other because they did not function as a unit.⁹

Of course, the technical name for the symptoms for Laurie's inactivity around the vital processes of eating and drinking is "anorexia." There was genuine danger of her starving to death amidst plenty because those who provided this plenty were not perceived as trustworthy individuals and because what was offered obviously had too many strings attached. As a result of her anorexia, Laurie was placed in a state hospital for a period shortly before she arrived at the Orthogenic School.

Obviously such a situation is a challenge to the care-taker's empathy at many levels. The first level is survival of the organism itself. In terms of the tactics of treatment – milieu therapy at the Orthogenic school presented 7 x 24 psychoanalytically-oriented care – such a child must be persuaded, perhaps even seduced in a professional sense of the word – into eating by plentiful availability of good tasting (as well as nourishing things) to eat. At meals Laurie was hand-fed by her counselor as spoon-feeding seemed to mechanistic a means for awakening feelings of personhood in her. After about five days at the School, a social game developed around eating between Laurie and her counselor. Her counselor spread raisins on her bed sheet before going to sleep and Laurie liked to pick them up, one or two at a time, and eat them. This was a favorite game for weeks. After about a month at the School, she ate her first full meal" three bowls of spaghetti that were slowly fed to her (Bettelheim 1967: 101-2).

It remains a question who if anyone owns Laurie's body. Perhaps her ability to rule and govern autonomously in her own body was usurped by a mechanical and dehumanizing environment from early on. The situation is the truly absurd predicament of "the ghost in the machine" first elaborated in a different context by Gilbert Ryle. Because Laurie's body was treated as if it were a machine, whose major tasks were to run efficiently and stay free of dirt, the prerequisite for the integration of body and ego – self in the everyday sense of who lives here - were missing. Or perhaps the interaction of a fragile, emerging self with a marginally mechanistic and unresponsive environment caused a traumatic breakdown that would not otherwise be an issue for a more robust individual. We will never know for sure. By the time she arrived at the Orthogenic School, the damage was done. Laurie (and her body) were at war and reacting to the perceived threat of being treated as if it were a machine whose major tasks were to run efficiently and stay free of dirt. Bodily integration was lacking. And without a unified, integrated body, a unified center of individual spontaneity – ego and self are not necessarily distinct at this point – could not get a foothold. Laurie was truly condemned to remain a ghost in a machine.

It is speculation, but one founded in the case report, that Laurie was subjected to stimulus-response training around elimination and related behavior by a hired nurse-maid (shades of the icebox mother!), who had no authentic emotional investment in her, that her body remained a machine and her ego never developed more than a ghostlike presence in it (Bettelheim 1967: 188-124). So far from ruling and governing immediately

⁹ B. Bettelheim, (1967), *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self*. New York: Macmillan/The Free Press, 1967: 100, 101.

in her own animate organism, in Laurie's case, precisely the opposite was the situation. It is the body that rules and governs her. Not autonomy, but an overwhelming influx of incoherent, unintelligible sensory stimulations occurs. Retreat in the face of over-stimulation intensifies a perhaps already existing tendency to withdraw. But if there are grounds for saying that in this particular case the individual has failed to attain to the level of the phenomenological founding stratum, then we also have grounds for saying that the founding stratum is itself constituted in its unity and meaning. That is, the founding stratum of the owned body is a presupposition in the context of the 5th Cartesian Meditation and must itself be made the subject of an explication of meaning, must be radicalized.

Let us be clear about what the problem is then. The phenomenological problem of the constitution of the sphere of ownness orients itself towards explicating the meaning of the unity, coherence, and harmonious continuity that is delivered in the founding stratum of the owned body. The task is to make this continuity into the intentional object of a unifying synthesis, which confers meaning on it in the first place.

Solving the problem of the constitution of the sphere of ownness within the framework of phenomenology by ascribing the unity and coherence of this sphere to a passive genesis of association and as the temporal aspect of the logical principle of passive genesis (Husserl 1929/31: paragraph 39 / 4th Meditation). Husserl distinguished active from passive genesis in paragraph 38 of the *Cartesian Meditation*. Active genesis (as constitutional) and the correlative performance of active synthesis (as intentional) produce new objects originally as products. Passive genesis and synthesis work from the bottom up:

However, as regards the lowest levels, such as experiential grasping, explicating the experience in respect of its parts, taking together, relating, and the like, the situation may well be different. In any case, anything built by activity necessarily presupposes, as the lowest level, a passivity that gives something beforehand; and, when we trace anything built actively, we run into constitution by passive generation. The "ready-made" object that confronts us in life as an existent mere physical thing . . . is given, with the originality of the "it itself," in the synthesis of a passive experience" (Husserl 1929/31: 78).

The notion of a passive synthesis implies many paradoxes. The passive synthesis organizes a world for my experience receptively even while it remains true that I organize the world. Of course, passive synthesis is essentially a synthesis outside the scope of attentional awareness, "unconscious" is the descriptive (not dynamical) sense. A passive synthesis is one that I am unaware of, a synthesis that is implicit. Passive synthesis is an indirect performance, rather like a passive overcoming. Trying to fall asleep makes insomnia worse - letting go can be tricky. Finally, if we admit the Kantian distinction between sensibility (receptivity) and understanding (spontaneity), then it is possible to describe passive synthesis as what Kant calls "synopsis" of the manifold of intuition and active synthesis as that unity that occurs in a concept. Passive synthesis is responsible for

the coherence which even my (receptive) intuitions must manifest if they are to be material for further mental activity.

Thus according to this interpretation there are grounds for saying that the unity of the owned body is subject to the principle of passive genesis. Then unity of the owned body becomes intelligible as the associative product and interconnection of bodily functions such as eating, eliminating, dressing, bathing, etc. Although at any given stage of development, one or another function may be the zone of proximal development – where new tasks are being mastered – the functioning of the whole necessitates the participation of all the other zones, at least in an auxiliary manner. The fact that most children are able to achieve an integration of bodily functions automatically supports the interpretation that there is an implicit performance of passive synthesis at work. The sphere of the owned body, from this perspective, is clearly no longer a hidden presupposition of the 5th of the *Cartesian Meditation*. The owned body is conceived as the unified product of a passive synthesis of integrative association.

So far we have indicated how Laurie's situation presented a case of a mechanical heap where there should have been integration. Her bodily functions and parts – mouth, eating, eliminating, dressing, moving – functioned as isolated piece-parts, not as a simple, organic whole. Working from the inside out we have seen how the performative function of passive genesis is necessary for the unity of the owned body to be experienced as such. Working from the outside in another necessary condition is:

Perhaps it is the inner cohesiveness of the parents' emotional investment in these zonal functionings that binds them together into the unity that alone makes for a full human personality. That the parents react with positive feeling to some aspect of these zones and modes and negatively to others, still ties them into a unit via emotions. (Bettelheim 1967: 283).

This reintroduces the integrative function of emotion, though from the external perspective of the care-taker's behavior towards the child. It is a necessary condition of the child's feelings about the body "hanging together" that the child's care-takers have an empathic approach towards the child's body. Negative emotions are sometimes better than no emotions at all. Disinterest is a consistent attitude, but it does not permit the unification and fusion needed to grow. In the case of the autistic child, the decline from organic integration to mechanistic operation is accomplished because the environment is perceived (and perhaps actually is) threatening to the integrity of the body. This requires the autistic individual to engage actively in the task of holding the body together. Anxiety leads to interfering consciously with the workings of his body instead of "letting things be." The great wisdom of the body (Nietzsche) is overthrown in favor of a more conscious and at the same time less effective principle of synthesis. But if one must consciously be at pains to make sure one's body does not fall apart, then one barely has time to eat, sleep, or play. Lacking the integrative function of empathy to secure unity to the organism, the case of Joey illustrates the attempt to apply another principle of unity, that of the machine, to the body:

Two functions at least were already tied together for Joey when he came to us—eating and eliminating. But they were linked in a way that did not help us. They were not two functions bound together by serving the needs of a human being; on the contrary, they served only themselves and each other. Eating existed simply for elimination, as a machine is fed gasoline to make it run, though the car is only a vehicle for our use. Joey's eating had no use except to power elimination. It was all one big mechanical totality, powered by the same mechanical process

All his preventions safeguarding intake were connected to, and dependent on, his anxiety about output – and both were based on the conviction that his metabolic processes were run by mechanics. However complex his symptomatic behavior around eating, even this had no independence. The need to “insulate” his body with paper (so that the electricity that powered his digestion would not be lost nor his clothing get dirty) and to press close against the table, were reduced duplications of the need to undress entirely when eliminating and to hold on to the walls at the same time. The inability to suck liquids except through a network that continued down his esophagus to the combustion chamber (Bettelheim 1967: 184-285).

In this case, the individual mythology centered around delusions represented by machine metaphors, corresponding to Joey's experience of the world as a mechanical place where humans are evaluated according to criterion of efficiency, cleanliness, and smooth functioning. If machines seemed superior to humans for Joey it was because machines lacked the empathy that made them vulnerable to emotional disappoint and hurt. The decline from organic to mechanical unity was occasioned by the absence of empathy between Joey and his parents. Joey's rebirth into an emotionally viable human being was contingent on the reintroduction of feelings into his life (Bettelheim 1967: 239-40, 327).¹⁰

¹⁰ It is interesting to note these observations were made some twenty eight years prior to Simon Baron-Cohen's hypothesizing of a Theory of Mind Module (ToMM) or Peter Hobson's 1993 characterization of autism as a disorder of empathic relatedness. S. Baron-Cohen, (1995), *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind*. Cambridge, MD: MIT Press, 1995. P. Hobson, (2007), “Empathy and autism” in T. Farrow and P. Woodruff, *Empathy in Mental Illness*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 126f. Bruno Bettelheim has gone from being a controversial figure during his lifetime to one with feet of clay now that he is no longer around to mount a defense. Having reviewed the three relevant biographies, and not pretending to solve the problem in a single footnote, it is relatively clear that his Ph.D. dissertation in philosophical aesthetics, *Das Problem des Naturschönen und die moderne Ästhetik*, was an unconditional advantage in a world where empathy (*Einfühlung*) was initially understood as an aesthetic function. That recognition of the dissertation was cancelled by the Nazis *aus rassistischen Gründen* (on racial grounds, i.e., he was Jewish) in 1941/5/8 and restored by the Senate of the University of Vienna on April 10, 2003 needs to be known. Anyone checking for a dissertation between 1941 and 2003 would not have found one – the Nazis were aiming to erase ALL the records. The one criticism for an omission that has some merit is that Gina, Bettelheim's first wife, seems not to have been sufficiently acknowledged for all the work she did as therapist, care-taker, counselor, etc. for the autistic girl that the Bettelheims' took into their home prior to WW II. If he made it sound like he was the only therapist, that was evidently not so and an integrity outrage. However, one should take a moment and reflect on just what it means to provide a 7 x 24 therapeutic milieu in one's home for a seriously disturbed child. Everyone is involved – how could you not be and still live there - and he was evidently heavily engaged in the effort, one of the environment's in which “milieu therapy” was created. If there was a division of roles in the household based on gender stereotypes - I do not “know” the latter to be so –that is not an excuse but a complication. The thing that sets Bettelheim above the crowd is the way he used the dehumanizing experiences of his experiences in the

So far I have considered the first stage of phenomenology's attack on the problem of solipsism the constitution of the sphere of ownness and its autistic counterpart, the problem of the integration of diverse bodily functions. Now before proceeding to the second and third stages of the overcoming of autism – the winning of the body of the other through mutual (analogical) appresentation and the primal pairing of the ego and alter ego – I wish to insert a brief excursus into the question of a phenomenological definition of autism.

Bettelheim has been rightly criticized for relying on a definition of autism in which the so-called icebox mother (care-taker) is featured prominently. The understandable and arguably justified reaction from parents of both genders who believe this etiology adds insult to existing injuries is well known. The controversies have unfortunately obscured a genuine contribution to bringing empathy to the seriously distributed (autistic) child's experience of the world. The more fundamental definition involves a response to a situation that, given the delusional framework of the autistic individual, experiences the world as an extreme situation, a situation in which death is an immanent and immediate possibility. Autism is at one and the same time a protest and a defense against overwhelming danger. One of the most original contributions of Dr. Bettelheim has been to note the parallels in the behavior of autistic children with the inmates of the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau during 1938-39. The paradigm case of an extreme situation is that of the concentration camps and the insidious attempt to obliterate individuality and manipulate personality that the camps represented. Even before the camps became death factories, they were killing grounds where very high rates of mortality on the order of 30% were incurred by suddenly and traumatically putting middle class citizens in them among criminals and other marginalized social groups. There is, of course, an essential difference between the situation of the autistic child and that of the prisoner: what was an external reality for the prisoner is for the autistic child a reality lived in thought and emotion, an inner reality. Nevertheless, each one ends up with a parallel experience of the world. This difficult, yet fruitful parallel, in which Bettelheim recovered his own humanity in using the awful experiences to which he was subjected to benefit others is described:

Here I wish to stress again the essential difference between the plight of these prisoners and the conditions that lead to autism and schizophrenia in children: namely that the child never had a chance to develop much of a personality. Entailed therefore are all the differences of intellectual maturity. Thus to develop childhood schizophrenia it is enough that the infant be convinced that his life is run by insensitive, irrational powers who have absolute control of his life and death. For the normal adult to suddenly develop schizophrenic-like reactions [as those in the camps did], this must actually be true, as it was in the camps.

concentration camps to inform the treatment of emotionally disturbed children, transforming something negative to good. (Regarding the dissertation see http://www.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/forum-geschichte/Texte/Bettelheim_Bruno.pdf verified on 2008/09/19.)

The view is therefore proposed that infantile autism is a state of mind that develops in reaction to feeling oneself in an extreme situation, entirely without hope (Bettelheim 1967: 68).

The next step is to compare the behavior of the autistic child with that of the prisoners that, in the camps themselves, were designated by the term “moslem” (because of their resignation in the face of “certain” death). The moslems interiorized the SS guards to such a degree that they lost all self-respect and feeling of being a person. This was the start of emotional decline leading to the extinction of all feelings, all interest in family or affairs outside of the camp, and, finally, to the death of all hope that thing would ever improve. But with the death of hope, physical death was immanent. Three broad parallels are drawn between moslem and autistic behavior: (1) both have the capacity to see and hear, nevertheless they neither look nor do they listen (2) there is a bodily stiffness: the feet are not raised off the ground, but only shuffled; the impression is that of great weariness or old age (3) the prisoner’s withdraw into fantasy and the autistic child twiddles – the purpose in each case is to blot out recognition of an immediate and oppressive reality (Bettelheim 1967: 66-7).

From a phenomenological perspective, autism maps to the above definition of behavior in an extreme situation as the intending of absurd meanings, the null set is the solution set, or, what is the same thing, the nihilistic intending of no meaning at all.

This corresponds to Joey’s manner of talking in opposites with multiple overlapping private allusions: “Circles are straight. They are a straight line,” he said. Note this is the same, though more obvious, as the solipsist’s self refuting assertion that we might as well be brains in a vat.

In the case of the autistic individual, this expresses a desire for mutuality – and the empathy of mutual feelings – that seemed forever out of reach. The ideal perfection of the autistic world, of which the autistic individual is the sole inhabitant and ruler, is, at the same, time an empty perfection. The autistic individual turns in a perfect but empty circle without being able to make the progress that boring, imperfect linear advancement suggests. “Imperfect” because the line is really a “line segment” with a specific finite beginning and end point. We can grasp a complete circle, but not a complete line. In addition, the perfect and invariant unity of the “straight circle” represents an aspect of the “job of serious, solemn, sacerdotal enforcement of the maintenance of sameness, of absolute identity,” which Kanner described in his classic definition of autism (Bettelheim 1967: 387).¹¹

In theory, autism is a situation laden with contradictions and inner tensions. It must be possible to tap some of these tangled and fixated energies and use them for personality change. But in practice no one can deny that it takes perseverance and monumental stubbornness on the part of the child’s most devoted care-takers – a stubbornness that is directed as intensely in the direction of relatedness as the child’s own stubbornness is

¹¹ L. Kanner, (1943), “Autistic disturbances of affective contact,” *Nervous Child* 2: 217-50 cited in P. Hobson (2007): 127.

directed toward non-relatedness) in order to wrest manifold multiplicity in unity from the emptiness of undifferentiated sameness.

The “nihilistic intending of no meanings at all takes a clue from Nietzsche who first defined nihilism as the will to nothingness. From reading the case histories one cannot help but get the feeling that these children resonate between a desire to blot out unpleasant stimuli through self-negation and an opposite pole of attempting to negate the external world. This leads to the compromise formation (behavior) of attempting to blot out oneself and the world at one and the same time by means of such nihilistic behavior as plugging up all bodily openings (mouth, ears, nose). This has the double purpose of blotting out unwanted stimuli and preserving the integrity of oneself and its fragile unity from further violation. For Marcia, these “violations” were frequent and unpleasant enemas, administered by her mother (also a nurse), in order to force her to eliminate. The plugging up behavior was arguably appropriate given Marcia’s experience and history. The following is quotes at some length because it provides a marvelous and self-contained sample of empathically feeling and thinking oneself into the life-world of the autistic individual:

Marcia, in her first days with us, ate no regular meals but restricted her intake to candy. More specifically, she could not eat at the table because her forefingers were plugging up her ears, and her little fingers were plugging up her nostrils. She had no way to get food from her plate to her mouth. To say to such a child something like “It’s O.K. to unplug your ears and nose,” falls woefully short. It tells her we do not understand that it certainly is not “O.K.” to unplug her ears and nose, because if it were O.K. she would unplug them herself.

Similarly, to offer to feed her or actually do so will not convince her that we understand her plight, because if she could trust anyone to feed her, she would hardly need to plug herself up. Our solution was to offer to plug the ears for her; then she could have some fingers free to eat with. Hearing our offer, Marcia promptly plugged her nose with her forefingers and with her other fingers brought food to her mouth by bending as close to the plate as she could – a performance that astonished both the other children and all adults present. Thereafter she ate at meals with our help in the plugging, until she no longer needed to shut out the world to that extent.

Why, one may ask, did this work when other procedures either had no effect or increased her withdrawal? Firstly, we think, because the offer to help with the plugging recognized and gave credit for her having some very important reason to hold back from the world. Secondly, it recognized that while she wished to remain plugged up, she may also have wished to eat. That is, she may have been in conflict. Our offer showed that we recognized her dilemma, and wanted to help her satisfy both needs without her having to give something up. This, we felt, was crucial for a child who had repeatedly been made to give up what she wanted to hold on to (Bettelheim 1967: 169-70).

As indicated, this is a wonderfully explicit sample of feeling and thinking oneself into the world of the autistic child. This is a necessary presupposition for taking action designed

to persuade the other individual that returning to the company of her fellows is preferable to empty isolation and nothingness. Further forms of behavior designed to negate actively the existence of the external world include twiddling and rocking. Twiddling is individual in every case (and highly over-determined at that). In general, it involves a rapid shaking or twirling of fingers on or near the face as a kind of self-stimulation including self-hypnosis that, at the same time, obliterates everything beyond it. However stereotyped and repetitious these activities are, they, nevertheless, represent spontaneous accomplishment on the part of the child. They involve activity. Therefore, they must not be arbitrarily suppressed, but either replaced by more enjoyable and purposeful doings or perhaps themselves be made to unfold and develop into meaningful activity.

The parallel between the conflict exhibited by Marcia, who wanted both to stop the external world from impacting her but still intake food, and the solipsist is evident. In other words, the skeptic's reiterated expression of doubt was implicitly treated as a disguised expression of some desire. In this case the "desire" was an epistemological one. The doubt that any knowledge of another's mind is possible is overcompensation for the unexpressed desire for absolute knowledge. This is the conflict in which the skeptic was enmeshed: the conflict between absolute doubt and knowledge. The wish for the latter gives way to the fear of the former. Paralysis is the result of resonating between these two extremes.

It is hoped that the idea of autism as "nihilistic intending of no meaning at all" will permit a greater appreciation of this disease as a radical crisis of meaning. In treating such a child there is an ever present danger of becoming lost in the all-consuming undifferentiated absence of concrete symptoms and doing. But even this non-doing has meaning: the intention is to negate a world that has been experienced as hostile and absurd. Only if we grasp how the individual is a spontaneous center of activity, even in the lack of activity, can we empathize with sufficient originality and clarity to provoke or incite meaning and sense in what is otherwise a landscape of nothingness.

The remarkable coincidence between the 5th of the *Cartesian Meditations* and the recovery from autism continues with the unfolding of mutuality at the level of the body – what Husserl will designate as making co-present of the other in the appresentation (analogical apperception) of the body (Husserl 1929/31: 108 (paragraph 50)). The case of Laurie provides a clinical vignette that her first awareness of others was mediated by an encounter with their bodies. There was an affinity between Laurie's progress in relating to their own body and her enjoyment of contact with the bodies of her counselors and other care-takers. She developed several games that permitted her to make contact with the bodies of her counselors:

It began with Laurie coming up to her counselor from behind, to per her on the buttocks. Pretty soon whenever her counselor was standing up, Laurie was tiptoeing up from the rear to pat her counselor's behind, and later running up to do it. Eventually it become much more strenuous as Laurie patted harder and harder. For a time she seemed to be constantly focused on the backsides of a few favorite caretakers, playing on their buttocks with both hands, patting, sometimes pushing

so hard they found it difficult to keep their balance. When the counselor accepted this with pleasure and responded by reaching behind and gently patting Laurie on the back, Laurie broke into genuine laughter.

There were weeks of this play, the meaning of which we did not then understand but which made us happy because Laurie did it on her own. Then she began to repeat the behavior with the head, not her hands, turning her head back and forth on her counselor's behind. It seems that her earlier hand tapping was meant to test out how safe the approach was before risking exposure of the so much more vulnerable face and mouth. Again, as Laurie rolled her head back and forth, from ear to ear, and from buttock to buttock, it reminded us of an infant trying to nurse. At other times it seemed more as if she were trying to crawl into her counselor. She had learned only so recently that she could make something come out of her body at this place. Perhaps show was exploring to see if she could enter the body there too (Bettelheim 1967: 114-15).

Although she was no phenomenologist, Laurie provides an example of an “assimilative apperception . . . by which the external body . . . receives analogically from mine the sense, animate organism” (Husserl 1929/31: 118). “Analogical apperception” is used in parenthesis as being synonymous with “appresentation” in the title of paragraph 50 (Husserl 1929/31: 108). Husserl is at some pains to indicate that the analogical transfer of meaning does not require or involve an inference from analogy. What we have is rather a “primal instituting” of the meaning “other body” by means of the application of a familiar scheme (my own animate body) to a new situation, the appresentation of the body of the other. First comes the awareness of the other body. Next one's own organism can serve as a basis for a transfer of meaning from my own organism to that one over there. The derivation of the meaning belonging to the animate organism of the other requires the appresentation of the other organism and an analogical apperception, a transfer of meaning from my own animate organism to the other's animate organism. However, if this co-presenting and appresentation is not an analogical inference, it is hard to say what kind of perception or experience or form of understanding it really is supposed to be. The suggestion is that it is an immediate resonance at the level of the two organisms as provided by empathic receptivity. Unfortunately, because the use of the term “empathy” (“*Einfühlung*”) was dominated by Lipps's projective theory of beauty, Husserl could not use the word in the unrestricted and enlarged sense it is used today. It is perhaps a blessing in disguise that he had to take a longish detour, since in doing so, he unpacks much of the logical infrastructure of empathy in the modern sense of the word.

Now it is time to return to the overall scheme of the 5th of the *Cartesian Meditations* as a frame for unfolding the parallel developments of the solutions to the correlative problems of solipsism and autism. So far we have engaged problems of the individual's relation to her own body. The reduction to the sphere of the owned body underwent a radicalization through a confrontation with the case histories of autism and became the constitution of the sphere of the owned body by means of integration as passive synthesis. There is not yet any authentic awareness of the other. If an other exists at this state, it is only as an appendage of myself. By declining to accommodate myself to the being of the world, the phenomenologist keeps alive the hope of assimilating it as meaning and phenomena. It is

not accident that Husserl chooses to designate the ego taken in its full concreteness – that is, the ego with the self as background – by the Leibnizian term “monad.” The monad incorporates the entire universe into itself and marks the triumph of the inside over the outside in the attempt to assimilate all that is given by means of a progressive extension of the self as the foundation for all meaning. It remains a further question what form of payback the given will eventually extract when it demands accommodation as compensation. Now, however, the individual’s first awareness of others enters the sphere of ownness by the presentation of the body of the other. This presentation of the body of the other is called “analogical apperception (appresentation).” The animate organism of the other individual is rendered intelligible by a transference of meaning [*Sinn*] from my own animate organism to the other’s. There is a mutuality between my body and the other body, though there is not yet a full appreciation of the other as an ego like myself. In a way, my sphere of ownness is extended in order to make a (logical) space for the presentation of the meaning “other organism.”

Husserl widens the sphere of givennes (of that which is my own) to include the presentation of another animate organism. At first this presentation is unintelligible and its presence is not to be distinguished from a mere extension of my own reduced sphere of ownness. At this stage the other has not yet acquired a sense of being a center of intentional projects essentially different from my own. Husserl understands the antinomic structure of the problem and posits a “certain mediacy of intentionality” (Husserl 1929/31: 109) in order to introduce a difference of meaning into the two organisms:

. . . If what belongs to the other’s own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same. The situation would be similar as regards his animate organism, if the latter were nothing else but the “body” that is a unity constituted purely in my actual and possible experiences, a unity belonging – as a product of my “sensuousness” exclusively – in my primordial sphere. *A certain mediacy of intentionality* must be present here, going out from the substratum, “primordial world,” (which in any case is the incessantly underlying basis) and making present to consciousness a “there too,” which is nevertheless not itself there and can never become an “itself there.” We have here, accordingly, a kind of *making “co-present,”* a kind of “*appresentation*” (Husserl 1929/31: 109)

The dual requirements of the other being present as other within the sphere of my ownness without at the same time ceasing to be other and becoming me leads Husserl to introduce the function of “mediate” intentionality. This arises out of the sphere of ownness (and is “mine”) but nevertheless is directed to the intentionality of the other. Just as I perceive the front side of a tree in the garden and am also appresented with the backside of the tree that just happens not to be visible to me from my desk, so too the other is appresented in a similar mode of givenness – the other is co-presented as there but contingently not visible to me right now. Instead of being able to walk around and see the backside of the tree, in the case of the intentionality of the other person, the one individual would have to access the underlying stratum of the other on the basis of which

the mediate intentionality is based. The making co-present of the other's body is a kind of "appresentation."

The next major step in phenomenology's engagement of the problem of solipsism is the phase of the associative pairing of the ego with the alter ego. What is accomplished by the transference of meaning through analogical apperception at the level of the body of the other must now be repeated by pairing at the level of the ego's relation to the other (alter) ego: "*Ego and alter ego are always and necessarily given in an original 'pairing'*" (Husserl 1929/31: 112). Pairing is an extension to the sphere of intentionality of the analogical apperception from the sphere of the owned body as it confronts – one might say "faces" – the other animate organism. Pairing is a form of passive synthesis of association whereby first a pair, then a group, the ever larger pluralities of individuals, are constituted in the context of a mutual overreaching and overlaying of meaning. The objective (public) world comes to be as represented as a complex network of interrelated meanings established by overlapping centers of intentionality.

The other (alter) ego becomes a center of intentionality and a bestower of meaning like myself. The other is no longer dependent on the activity of my intentional subjectivity for her or his meaning as other. Just as I bestow meaning on him, so too he bestows meaning on me. There is a mutual transference of meaning in a context of spontaneous intentionality, which intentions overreach one another and are overlaid in their activity. This occurs within the frame of "pairing":

. . . We find essentially present here [in the notion of "pairing"] an intentional overreaching, coming about genetically (and by essential necessity) as soon as the data that undergo pairing have become prominent and simultaneously intended; we find, more particularly, a living mutual awakening and an overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other. This overlaying can bring a total or a partial coincidence, which in any particular instance has its degree, the limiting case being that of complete "likeness." As the result of this overlaying, there takes place in the paired data a mutual transfer of sense – that is to say: an apperception of each according to the sense of the other, so far as moments of sense actualized in what is experienced do not annul this transfer, with the consciousness of "different" (Husserl 1929/31: 112-13).

This is perhaps the most enigmatic paragraph in the 5th Meditation. As soon as the one succeeds in constituting the meaning "other" as an independent center of intentionality, the other escapes from the one and arrogantly proceeds to make the one dependent on the activity of the other's own intentionality of the one's own meaning. But in another way, this is the insight of the 5th Meditation: that one alone is incapable of unfolding the meaning of objectivity solely from within the limits of one's ownness – the one needs the other for whom the one is an object, for whom the one is another, in order to achieve the status of an objective being. This is admittedly an interpretation. But it is clear that Husserl is already reaching in the direction necessary to make the constitution of intersubjectivity intelligible by proposing "an intentional overreaching." It is evident that the objectivity of the one and the other emerge simultaneously in "a living mutual

awakening” in which an overlaying of intentional layers is the foundation for “the objective sense of the other.” In addition, it is worth noting that this intentional overlaying discovers something of the inner character of the other ego. It discovers that the other intention is either like itself or different. Thus, the two limiting cases of paired data – likeness and difference.

However, a possible objection to the entire theme of pairing presents itself from another direction. It remains a question whether the necessity of a “mutual transfer of sense” between the paired egos does not explode the very structure of the entire 5th Meditation. The latter explicitly promised to show how the “sense of every existent is in and arises from my own intentional life” (Husserl 1929/31: 91). Far from staying with the reduced realm of ownness, we now encounter “a living mutual awakening and an overlaying of each with the objective sense of the other.”

Husserl proposes two ways of verifying the presence of the other ego. The first – and ultimately unsatisfactory – method is through observing the harmonious behavior of the other’s animate organism. The austerity of this manner of verification of the givenness of the other is convincing in that the other is accessible through his overt behavior:

The experienced animate organism of another continues to prove itself as actually an animate organism, solely in its changing but incessantly *harmonious* “behavior.” Such *harmonious* behavior (as having a physical side that indicates something psychic appresentatively) must present itself fulfilling in original experience, and do so throughout the continuous change in behavior from phase to phase. The organism becomes experienced as a pseudo-organism, precisely if there is something discordant about its behavior (Husserl 1929/31: 114).

Here the psychic is represented by its physical side. Like the backside of the tree in the garden visible from the window by my desk, the psychic is given appresentatively – co-given along with the harmonious and intelligible behavior of the other individual. Unfortunately, while I can get up from my desk and walk around the tree, generating further evidence, I do not get further evidence by walking around the other psychic. All the paradoxes of not being able actually to go inside the door of the closed house in which the other lives, not being able to see over the horizon by following the converging rail road tracks, or checking on the future by waiting for tomorrow to arrive, do not go away. If harmonious behavior is the best we can do, then the result is bound to sound a tad disappointing to those who signed up for a solution to the problem of solipsism.

If this first austere manner of verifying the presence of the other is free of the paradox of how my own intentional activity can constitute the intentional activity of an alter ego (who, in turn, constitutes me), then it is equally clear that this way fails to do justice to the richness of my concrete experience of the other person. The phenomenon of empathy, sharing, and communication, in which the one begins to know oneself in interrelating with others needs to be brought into focus. The Husserl of the 5th of the *Cartesian Meditations* finally arrives at the phenomenon of empathy as the last stage of his verification of the presence of the other ego. Empathy is a possibility that arises on the

basis of shared psychic contents, and is in part founded on the notion of the application of a familiar schema to a new situation:

It is quite comprehensible that, *as a further consequence*, an “empathizing” of definite contents belonging to the “*higher psychic sphere*” arises. Such contents too are indicated somatically and in the conduct of the organism towards the outside world – for example: as the outward conduct of someone who is angry or cheerful, which I easily understand from my own conduct under similar circumstances (Husserl 1929/31: 120).

Husserl assigns “empathy” to the first story above his transcendental aesthetic- the usage is Husserl’s (Husserl 1929/31: 146) - in his published statements. What is less well known is that Husserl produced three large volumes that are a sustained engagement with the contribution of *Einfühlung* to the phenomenology of intersubjectivity.¹² The material for his never completed *Systematic Work* is rich in references to empathy in both the foundation and superstructure (XV: 79f.) of intersubjectivity. Since this was a work in progress that spanned his major publications from 1905 to 1935, it is impossible to say that Husserl would have changed his published position, that empathy was a part of the superstructure not the foundation. Empathy was never made the basis of intersubjectivity. What can be said is that the sheer volume of material, containing many gems to be mined on empathy, points to the advance of his thinking in the direction that empathy was the foundation of intersubjectivity as well as the many challenges faced by such a view. The suggestion is that by the early 1930s the works of Heidegger, Scheler, and Edith Stein, especially the latter, had cleared away Lipps’ conflicting thicket of misunderstandings in “projective empathy” and provided a point for reengaging the task of overcoming solipsism through empathy. However, it remains a fact that in his published statements “empathy” was nearly always cited in scare quotes in order to avoid being misunderstood as following Lipps.

This is admittedly an interpretation. But Husserl is already reaching in this direction in order to make the constitution of intersubjectivity intelligible by proposing “an intentional overreaching.” The ego and alter ego emerge simultaneously in “a living mutual awakening” where an overlying of intentional layers is the foundation for “the objective sense of the other.” It remains a serious question whether the necessity of a “mutual transfer of sense” between the paired egos does not explode the very structure of the entire fifth *Meditation*, which explicitly promised to show how the “sense of every existent is in and arises from my own intentional life” (Husserl 1929/31: 91).

It is an additional obstacle that I can never get behind the spontaneous “sense giving” of the other, who is constituting me even as I constitute the other individual. Indeed if I were

¹² E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjectivität: Texte aus dem Nachlass: Erster Teil: 1905-1920; Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjectivität: Texte aus dem Nachlass Zweiter Teil: 1921-1928; Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjectivität: Texte aus dem Nachlass Dritter Teil: 1929-1935*. ed. I. Kern. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973. These volumes will be referred to as XIII, XIV, and XV, respectively. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter n on the ontological destruction of the history of empathy.

to succeed in completely constituting the other, the result would be absurd, since I would have succeeded in creating a solipsistic world in which I was the only center of spontaneity, meaning giving (*Sinngebung*). The other is given but not his perspective on things in so far as its synthetic unification is a function of his original experience (XV: 12). The other ego's sphere of ownness is by definition not originally given to me. The irreducible otherness of the other, the what its like to be the other as other, and the way his perspective is given in his sphere of ownness, are not directly experienced by me. Therefore, if it were given to me, then it would become a moment of myself and the other would no longer be other (XV: 12). Is there then no form of experience weaker than original, direct perception in the sphere of ownness, yet stronger than analogizing appresentation?

In the *Nachlass*, Husserl proposes an answer:

They [psyches] are also essentially, actually or potentially in *community*, in actual and potential connection, in commerce.... Psyches are not only for themselves, but they access one another [*geht...an*]....

The original form of this *access* is *empathy* [*Der Urmodus des Angehens ist die Einfühlung*]. In self-perception, in the original being present to myself, is the original presentational ego in my own life. The aspect of life of empathy belongs to this original being present to myself [*dazu*]. Through it [empathy] I relate to a second ego and its life; through it, the other ego is there for me immediately as other and interacts with me...living with, perceiving with, believing with, judging with—agreeing, denying, doubting, being joyful with, fearing with, etc. All the modes of this “with” are modes of an original forming of a community (“communalization”), in which I *live* primordially and originally and simultaneously *with* the other life that is co-existing with me empathically, a unity of life that is produced and an I-thou-oneness of the ego pole through the medium of empathy [*durch das Medium der Einfühlung*] (XV: 342).¹³

Through empathy, diverse forms of being *with* others occur—some cognitive, some affective. These are modes of forming a community or communalization--*Vergemeinschaftende*.. An entire field of quasi-perceptions (XV: 360 “*quasi-Wahrnehmungsfeld*”) opens up here. In German “*quasi*” means *gewissermassen, gleichsam*—“to a certain extent,” “as it were,” “in a way.” It does *not* literally mean “as if,” which would be “*als ob*.” Still, it comes close. In living empathically with the other, we live through an “as it were life” and “as it were reflection” in which the subjectivity of

¹³ *Sie sind auch, und wesensmässig, in aktueller oder potentieller **Gemeinschaft**, in aktuellem und potentielltem Konnex, wovon das Kommerzium....Der Urmodus des **Angehens** ist die **Einfühlung**. In der Selbstwahrnehmung, im original für mich selbst Gegenwärtigsein, ist das original Gegenwärtige Ich in meinem eigenen Leben. Dazu gehört auch das Lebensmoment der Einfühlungmitlebe, mitwahrnehmend, mitgläubend, miturteilend—zustimmend, ablehnend, zweifelnd, mich mitfreuend, mitfürchtend usw. Alle Modi dieses Mit sind Modi einer Urvergemeinschaftung, in der ich in meinem (primordialen, uroriginalen) Leben lebend zugleich doch **mitlebe** mit dem für mich einfühlungsmässig mitdaseienden anderen Leben, eine Lebenseinheit also hergestellt <ist> und eine Ich-Du-Einigkeit der Ichpole durch das Medium der Einfühlung hindurch*

the other is explicitly investigated (XV: 427; see also 434, 462, 464, 476; e.g., *quasi-Leben*). In English, one way of expressing such a dimension of experience is as a “vicarious perception.” This provides content to the “as if” displacement in space.

Vicarious experience is different from shared feeling. Look and see what is there. In vicarious feeling, I do experience in a qualitatively similar and numerically different feeling, what the other is feeling. I do not just know the answer to the question, “What is the other feeling?” or assert that the other has a feeling (though these latter may be true). Nor is a vicarious feeling the same as going through the experience itself. There is no way for the novelist or historian to share the feelings of the people about whom he is writing in the sense of being there with them. In the case of Tolstoy, he would have had to live during the Napoleonic Wars. He would have had to go through the experiences of the Battle of Borodino about which he writes so compellingly in *War and Peace*. He does not share the experience of the participants in this battle, though he conveys and expresses in his narrative a sense of the confusion, chaos, heroism, and fear that unfolded at the front line as Prince Andre directed unhitching the artillery, sitting high in the saddle, and under direct enemy fire. The reader also gets Andre’s sense of calmness under fire—it is a vicarious sense.

Vicarious feeling does not affect my actions directly. I am open to the feeling, and repeat it in a fundamental sense of retrieving it as a possibility. There is a repetition of the feeling, a copying of the feeling, which is prior to any cognitive significance and does not influence me to act, to get involved, participate. I am disinterested. On the other hand, in shared feeling, I recognize that the situation requires something more than mere receptivity. I participate, am interested, and I become involved. For example, I see that the man crouching behind the box seat in which President Lincoln is sitting is not a part of the play *Julius Caesar*, but an actual assassin, and I leap up from my seat to stop the bullet by interposing my own body (which, of course, never happened, so Lincoln died).

This goes a long way to clarifying what has been dimly recognized but not well articulated about the relationship between aesthetic appreciation and human empathy; on the one hand, and altruistic (“prosocial”) impulses and human empathy, on the other hand. All of these trajectories interact, converge and sometimes diverge, and this is a part of the philosophical significance of empathy in the modern sense of the word. The cultivation of an appreciation of beauty—whether as music, painting, or performance—enhances an individual’s empathy. The development of moral sensibility—whether as benevolence, respect for the other as other, or an ideal observer—enhances an individual’s empathy. The aesthetic dimension contributes to empathic receptivity; the appreciation of the other as a moral agent like myself contributes to empathic understanding. Many consider the work of Lipps to have been an aberration that caused empathy to be untrue to its essential dimension of human interrelations, the essential dimension of empathy that made it suitable for an aesthetic work out was the openness to the affectivity of beautiful form. This is a basic insight regardless of our disagreement with the details of Lipps’s works. It is not until Max Scheler and Edith Stein have driven empathy back from the brink of an exclusive application in the philosophy of beauty that Husserl is able to appropriate it as a part of a foundation of intersubjectivity. Empathy in

turn gets driven back behind both of these as a part of the constitution of our being with other human beings.

Being blocked by historical contingencies of which Husserl was himself barely aware, he made a move that includes within “pairing” the conceptual and cognitive dimensions to which empathy in the contemporary sense attains. The phenomenon of pairing only becomes fully intelligible to us within the schema that gets labeled “here-there”:

But since the other body there enters into a pairing association with my body here and, being given perceptually, becomes the core of an appresentation, the core of my experience of a coexisting ego, that ego, according to the whole sense-giving course of the association, must be appresented *as an ego now coexisting in the mode There*, “such as I should be if I were there.” My own ego however, the ego given in constant self-apperception, is actual now with content belonging to his Here. Therefore an ego is *appresented*, as *other* than mine (Husserl 1929/31: 119).

My own body is a center of experience, Here. But I may convert any Here into a There by locomotion as well as in free fancy by imagining what things would look like from over There. Free modification in imaginative variation of my position allows me to grasp a variety of centers of experience in succession. In variations based on my own ego, the other is imaginatively spun off by way of the fundamental phenomenological method of eidetic variations. The dialectic is indeed limited by the fact that I cannot be both Here and There simultaneously. Nevertheless a system of interlaced internationalities becomes conceivable as an associative overlapping of spatial places. Thus the explication of the appresentation of the alter ego in relation to my own ego is verified within the index Here-There. This makes the assimilation of the other to my own frame of reference possible and at the same time permits me to accommodate myself to the other’s frame of reference without sacrificing any of my own independence. The complete symmetry of the schema Here-There permits a system of associated mutual intentions to be coordinated.

I find myself asking: “How would I feel if I were in his position “over there”? I operate within the scheme of the “as if.” This is fine as long as I am imaging a simple spatial transposition and taking over the visual field – I could see the backside of the tree if I were over there opposite where I am standing. But far from taking over the feelings and experiences of the other in an act of communication that unites two individuals, I only succeed in dreaming up a feeling of my own by means of the scheme “as if>” This results in a sympathetic feeling of mine that may indeed coincide with what the other happens to be feeling. But this “coincidence” only induces me to leap in and in a mistaken solicitude take the other’s feeling away from him, thus in effect driving us apart or at least leaving our relatedness an enigma. To get from the sympathetic transposition of perspectives to

Pairing thus supersedes the isolated intentionality of the *solus ipse* that has to derive all sense from my own intentional life and includes within it the distinction Here-There. This in turn maps directly to the distinction ego (oneself) and other. The explosion of the

framework of the 5th Cartesian Meditation is inevitable as other escapes my own intentionality and constitute me in turn.

Once again the evidence of overcoming autism in the context of milieu therapy provides a witness to the process of pairing so relevant to Husserl's account of overcoming solipsism. For Marcia, the pair she formed with her counselor, Karen, came to take on the significance of a primary totality that preceded the differentiation of two individuals. The recognition of the other was accompanied by an assimilation of this other into an extended sense of the ego that reached back into a self greater than the individual designed by the pronoun "I" (which, of course, is "ego" in Latin). For Marcia, the emergence of an individual with a proper name among others who also had proper names was foreshadowed by a lengthy period in which she paired herself symbiotically with her favorite counselor, Karen:

It was while hugging Karen one day that Marcia addressed her for the first time by name. Soon she began using both names, Karen and Marcia, but refused to differentiate between them. Both of them were either Karen or Marcia. In merging the two into one, she used the pronoun "us" for the first time when referring to the unit

Marcia was not ready to face the world, but she took more of it into herself. With objects she had done this before What was new was that she now accepted a person into her self, and that she knew that her self now included both Karen and Marcia. Hers was not yet an independent self that could relate to a nonself; but as a more extended self it contained clear elements of a person nature. Once she was no longer alone in the world she no longer needed to keep its messages from reaching her. The stopping up of her ears became rare, and in a few months disappeared altogether (Bettelheim 1967: 189-90).

Marcia's individuality still had so little definition and boundary that when Karen was present it simply expanded to include them both. However, this is manifestly an indication of interest in the world apart from her stopped up ears. Thus, extending the individuality by means of the pairing of the two involved Marcia in a process of unfolding the meaning of herself even as she struggled to recognize the existence of the other.

Marcia did not acquire a sense of distinct individuality until she achieved further understanding of the relation between intake (eating) and eliminating (defecating). Marcia's frequent traumas at the hands of her care-taker(s) by means of force elimination through enemas has been noted previously. A profound confusion about which end served which purpose combined with resentment and anger to block all ability to do. In the context of her relationship with Karen, Marcia was finally able to gain some control over her elimination and recover the ability to enjoy taking in. This later activity was facilitated by her discovery of honey, which came in a contained shaped like a bear. The following summarizes Marcia's final approach to the act of saying "I":

It then became clearer what Marcia's predicament had been. Feeding and enemas had become so unified an experience in her mind that it blocked any ability to do or be. Feeding, enemas, and the mother had all been the same. Things were poured into her only to be extracted out of her. Liquids were either poured into her mouth, or forced into her rectum. So what was mouth, and what anus? What served which function? . . .

In direct consequence of her relation to Karen and some first understanding of intake and elimination, she felt herself to be a person. The concept of an "I" became fully developed, though not taken for granted for some time (Bettelheim 1967: 208-9).

Marcia had been forced into the extreme situation of having to defecate when and how her care-taker wished, and she had lost the interest (or ability) to do so on her own. It is part of the special logic of this particular case that feces had become identified with words. If words are feces, then talking is defecating, and being dirty with feces. Thus Marcia refused to talk. Only after Marcia had finally gained command of some of the tools of communication, she told her counselor: "Words go down the drain." And once, with respect to her constipation, she also said: "I do not talk" (Bettelheim 1967: 218). Words were feces, and feces were words. In the case of Marcia it was necessary for her to be able to accept her shit as such and with pleasure or she would never have succeeded in either toilet training herself or learning how to talk. The luxury of sublimated Freudian terms such as "anality" and "feces" have to be sacrificed to the practical considerations of promoting the emergence of autonomy.

Given Marcia's personal history, such a view of talking as something dirty and to be avoided is entirely intelligible. Though ultimately self-defeating and "insane" from the perspective of standard behavior, over the short term it was entirely sensible given the extreme situation into which Marcia had been thrust. This is an approach at odds with the basic methods of most institutional approaches where patients are encouraged to see things from the point of view of the operators of the asylum. That is not to say those suffering from delusions should be put in charge; but if they are to be encouraged to come down off the limb into which they have been forced by disease and circumstances, then they must be given credit for making tough decisions and understood according to principles of interpretation that allow charity and empathy. And that is a point worth emphasizing at some length:

In most institutions I know of the basic approach, even to the psychotic child, is to encourage him to see the world as it really is, which is exactly what the psychotic child cannot do. Instead, our task as we see it is to create for him a world that is totally different from the one he abandoned in despair, and moreover a world he can enter right now, as he is. This means, above all, that he must feel we are with him in his private world and not that he is once more repeating the experience that "everyone wants me to come out of my world and enter his." How then is this done?

I speak here of the child's private world, and my former student speaks of "direct confrontation." Each of us is implying in his way that one cannot help

another in his ascent from hell unless one has first joined him there, to whatever degree. There is no “direct confrontation” available to the sick child unless somebody offers himself for the confrontation. This will always, to some degree, mean a descent to one’s own hell, however far behind one has left it. It will also, to some degree, become a self-confrontation as one offers oneself to the other. At the same time there is no purpose to such a venture if all that happens is our offering to accept the child in his desolation. What we also have to demonstrate is that together we can make a go of it, even down there – something that he alone at this point cannot do (Bettelheim 1967: 10-11).

In empathizing with the solipsist – the skeptic – the philosopher is offering a direct confrontation. If the skeptic accepts the offer of confrontation, then the problem of solipsism is resolved for the act of recognizing the other is what was missing up until this point. If the skeptic rejects the offer of confrontation, then the problem is also solved, for even rejection is a privative mode of recognition. The third alternative is that the solipsist continues to stare off into space while uttering his skeptical mantra “I doubt . . . I doubt . . . I doubt . . .” As in the case of Marcia’s counselor offering to plug up her ears for her so that she could eat, we offer to utter the skeptical mantra for the solipsist so that he can (say) interrupt the monotony of his day with some solid empirical research. If he accepts our offer, then the problem is solved for another has been recognized. If he just continues the repetition, then we have to recognize our finitude and the possibility that not everyone can be recovered. Here is a case in which we have been unable to undo the consequences of the fall.

The introduction of the story of the fall gave us a way of stating what—although perhaps ultimately impossible—would satisfy the skeptic. In symbolic terms, he would be satisfied with undoing the consequence of the fall from paradise, consequences that we summarized under the rubric “finitude.” In epistemological terms this narrative of finitude helped us to shift in the direction of interhuman relations the critique of knowledge and understanding first worked out by Kant for our theoretic approach to nature. In short, this narrative was told as an antidote to philosophic skepticism. This was the lesson that the skeptic needed to hear in the story of the fall: that humanity was imperfect, that humanity’s knowledge was not infallible but rather subject to error and revision. To hear the narrative of finitude is to renounce infallibility and to resign oneself to the implicit imperative of openness to the corrective measure of experience. The hope we derived from this hermeneutic excursion into philosophical anthropology was that, even if the skeptic could not be persuaded to change his tune, still at least we need no longer be fascinated by his siren song.

In the place of the absolute, global doubts of the skeptic we encountered the occurrence of local do butts about the credibility of another’s expression of feeling or about the meaning of another’s behavior. So one may doubt that in this particular interhuman context his friend’s expression of gratitude or display of regret are sincere. Or one may wonder why this woman should break out crying in the middle of an account of her experiences at a cocktail party. One person is inclined to conceal his anger, while another one lacks controls and tends to lose his temper. Instead of pervasive doubt that everyone

is shamming, particular instances of anomalous expressions and behavior patterns arouse one's suspicions.

At the same time that the unhappy choice between absolute doubt and absolute knowledge was declined, we entered an intermediate domain of interhuman experiences in which openness to feelings was possible. Vicarious and shared feelings marked the place in experience where everyday speech provided terms with which to describe the communication of feelings. But our trust and openness admittedly needed to be tempered with a certain interpretative suspicion. That was why we merely limited skepticism and did not dispense with it entirely. Our receptivity to interhuman experience needed to be limited in its own turn by the capacity for selective suspicion. But once it was granted that our understanding was limited to relevant forms of interhuman experience we could reintroduce local doubts without fear that they would become pervasive.