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The Community of Solitude

by **Christopher Pulte**

Abstract

This paper re-examines the egos of Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler with reference to Friedrich Nietzsche and the psychologist, James Hillman, and in the process also confronts the ego in other of its many manifestations, misappropriations, and mystifications.

The ego is a multi-headed enigma which defies phenomenological description, and only reaches the status of concept by virtue of the gropings of an epistemology which is not up to the task. The goal of this paper is twofold: firstly, to come to terms with what is commonly spoken of as ego, and secondly, to devise a scheme which does justice to it as phenomenon.

The Community of Solitude
Perhaps the way in which Descartes himself was shaken by the discovery of this ego is significant as an indication to us lesser spirits that something truly great, indeed of the greatest magnitude, is announced in it, something which should one day emerge, through all the errors and confusions, as the "Archimedean point" of any genuine philosophy.
(Husserl, 1954/1970, p. 80)

Introduction

Like many a concept whose charm lies in its very intangibility, the most compelling evidence for the existence of the ego is to be found in language production. An individual consists of any number of different egos, all of which somehow fall under the jurisdiction of the first person singular, "I". And who seriously believes that language guarantees unity across a range of conspicuously distinct entities that happen to share the same word? While it probably is wrong to dismiss the ego as a fiction, it is difficult to imagine how such dissimilar manifestations could be faces of the same ego, even though they may bear some relation to one another.

In a partial list of themes that might fall under the heading of "ego", there are egos of "inner perception", as, for instance, in Husserl's "ego acts" of "striving towards realization" in predication (Husserl, 1939/1973, p. 82) or ego that "holds sway" over the "kinaesthetically functioning living body" (Husserl, 1954/1970, pp. 106-107), and Scheler's "vital feelings", a "lived body ego" not reducible to "sensible feelings", as in emotional as opposed to physical pain (Scheler, 1916/1973a, p. 339). There is a language based ego of consciousness, the "speaking subject"[1] (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 183). And, if the reader will allow, at the root of Heidegger's authenticity, there may even be an ego which makes itself known through anxiety and serves

[1] "What I communicate with primarily is not 'representation' or thought, but a speaking subject, with a certain style of being and with the 'world' at which he directs his aim."

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as a reminder that self is inherently finite and destined to perish. There is something like a corporeal ego in the instinct for self-preservation, which shows itself in the physical response of fear, and something like a social ego which makes itself felt in the blush of self-consciousness. Finally, there is the ego of "egoism", an unconscious comparison and determination of rank in which we weigh ourselves against others.

This manifold thing, "ego", which we think of as singular, traverses mind and body, and body and soul, realms long established as distinct and separate. Yet, as distant as these particular realms, and as dissimilar as these particular egos, are from one another, could it be that they are ultimately one and the same? Or is it more likely that the ego does not exist at all, but rather is an empty construct, and that, if we were to look "beneath the chatter of words" to the "primordial silence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 184), we would find nothing? The Cartesian ego occupies a rather ambiguous place in phenomenology as something from which it has arisen both *from* and *against*. In Husserl, the ego is the mirror by which phenomena are made transparent, while in Heidegger the ego is a non-entity, and transparency an essential property of *Dasein* itself (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 372). What would remain of phenomenology without a doctrine of intersubjectivity, and what is intersubjectivity without a subject? How can we remain true to Merleau-Ponty's stated goal of freeing philosophy from "doctrines" of the "autonomy of consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, pp. 3-4) while retaining the Cartesian ego?

The Thinking Subject and the Speaking Subject

While there are time-honoured intellectual practices that would posit thinker as producer of thought and speaker as producer of speech, phenomenologically speaking, neither of these exists. We can speak with confidence of ego acts and of thought images – mental acts which can never be mistaken for actual acts, and thought images which can never be mistaken for perceived images; nevertheless, these are set in motion by unknown forces and arise from a place that we can name, but never directly apprehend. The thinking and the speaking subject are conceptual shorthand that we employ as a matter of convenience in order to draw a distinction, and as entities should never be mistaken as "proximally given" in the Heideggerian sense (see Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 72). And, since the "thinking subject" and the "speaking subject" are a source of confusion, if not outright disagreement, there it is very good reason to make this distinction as clear as possible.

It was Merleau-Ponty who said, "A thought limited to existing for itself, independently of the constraints of speech and communication, would no sooner appear than it would sink into the unconscious, which means that it would not exist even for itself" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 177). Putting aside any insinuation that language is somehow essential to thought – unconscious thought not only is possible, but is, beyond doubt, the most *common* kind of thought – Merleau-Ponty, in agreement with Nietzsche[2], would seem to endorse the relatively modest claim that consciousness is a by-product of language, and that thoughts, or ego acts, if the reader will allow, are opaque. What this would seem to suggest is that, while it is the thinking subject who *acts*, it is the speaking subject who *makes visible*. In other words, an ego act and the image of it are separable. And this is true not only for thoughts, but for any other act. Perception itself may be considered an act that is made transparent through the power of language.

Consciousness does not occur without a subject who acts with the intention of pointing things out to others. Whether by gesture, words, music, dance, or any other art form, our whole world is gilded, as it were, with a surface meaning ... or rather becomes gilded in the act of turning to it for the purpose of expression. Act and image are forever intertwined, whether it is in ego acts, in physical acts, or in the act of perception. In putting things into words, we are compelled to image them, and this imaging is a withdrawal that produces a dichotomy that exists in whatever is made visible, and in the same manner that dance reaches for expression by means of an inwardness that might be characterized as narcissistic. A pointer to this can be found in Piaget's observation that, up until the age of eight years, a child's speech is "egocentric". Until then, "He talks either for himself or for the pleasure of associating anyone who happens to be there with the activity of the moment" (Piaget, 1923/1926, p. 9). Merleau-Ponty goes as far as to assert that "the same egocentric, autistic, syncretic thinking" can be found in an adult "as soon as his thinking must go beyond the domain of the acquired in order to express new notions" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973, p. 60).

Just as any movement can be transformed into a meaningful gesture, a thing perceived can be pointed out and made visible to others, and this pointing out results in an image. As Heidegger (1927/1962) emphasised, seeing is different from perceiving[3], and all seeing is a being with others. A scene shared with one's beloved is *seen* differently from a scene viewed alone, even though both are *perceived* in exactly the same manner ... the difference being that, in the former, the object perceived

[2] "For the longest time, conscious thought was considered thought itself. Only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our spirit's activity remains unconscious and unfelt." (Nietzsche, 1887/1974, p. 262)

[3] "'Seeing' does not mean just perceiving with the bodily eyes, but neither does it mean pure non-sensory awareness of something present-at-hand. In giving an existential signification to 'sight', we have merely drawn upon the peculiar feature of seeing." (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 187)

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is infused with *an ego presence*. Both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, in as far as they go, are correct. With Merleau-Ponty, we would insist that perception and the lived body are prior and that imagery is simply a resonance that follows thereafter. Along with Heidegger, however, we would claim that it is in this resonance that meaning is discovered. Seeing is not superior to perceiving, and neither is perceiving more vital than imagination. They, simply, are of a different order.

Contrary to Heidegger, seeing – which is to say, consciousness – is not a constant, but rather is limited to communicative acts. We live in a darkened room which only seems lit because we cannot turn to it without first turning on the lights! The contention here is that being with others is not as much something we exist in, but something that we exist towards. Being in the world is to be *alone*, and it is the existential condition of being alone that governs our thoughts, ego movements which labour to overcome this primordial solitude in order to communicate themselves to others. Our relation to things is not primarily one of communication but rather one of perception and motor projects: the taking of things in hand to put them to use, the corporeal connections that constitute things, and a mysterious aptitude for accessing actions relating to them. Lived experience is determined by faculties that operate independent of consciousness, and, in the act of communication, this unspoken world is left behind to be replaced by the world as expressed.

Ego as Selfhood

Philosophical tradition, from Plato and Aristotle to the present day, has always conflated the speaking with the thinking subject, transparency with thought, logic with dialectics; but even those who would not draw such a distinction should clearly recognize that the egos of epistemology are distinct from and peripheral to the ego of selfhood. Although "mental" is still presumed to mean "psychic", and consciousness still has a seat as pilot and navigator, selfhood is regarded as involving more than thought. While epistemic egos may have some connection to the ego of selfhood, there being no *there* in selfhood in which to form an identity around, the exercise becomes one not of locating an apodictically given self, but of ascertaining the manner in which selfhood is arrived at. A dubious enterprise, to be sure, and one which this paper would not even attempt if one of the founders of the phenomenological movement, Max Scheler, had not made a start of it (and which, in fact, seems quite central to his philosophy of a non-formal ethics). And, even though there is much in it that does not seem to belong in phenomenology, he calls attention to themes which are in need of clarification.

For Scheler, we come by self "in the *actus re-flexivus* in which knowledge of the knowledge of things is added to the knowledge of things" (Scheler, 1973b p. 295). He rejects the idea that consciousness is a "primal fact", and speaks of the reflective act as something that "grows out of conspicuous resistances, clashes, and oppositions – in sum, out of pronounced suffering" (pp. 294-295). There are numerous objections to this claim that can and ought to be raised. It appears that "the act of being thrown back on the self" is something "probably only possible for men" (p. 294) and beyond the capacity of animals, children, and primitives. In addition, pre-reflective "purely ecstatic [*ekstatische*] knowledge" is "difficult to reproduce" in "mature, civilized men, whether in memory, reverie, perception, thought, or empathetic identification" (p. 294). Furthermore, this same self, which is to say the subject, also constitutes the object. "Whenever self-consciousness and consciousness of an object arise, they do so simultaneously and through the same process" (p. 298).

Self as "knowledge of knowledge", a reflective act which constitutes the object, and one which cuts us off from the primal grounds through which objects become objectified: none of this seems particularly phenomenological. Surely it is premature to identify the ego of selfhood with the ego of epistemology, and surely an object remains an object regardless of whether one is in possession of the "knowledge of the knowledge of things". But, above all, to follow in the footsteps of Merleau-Ponty, it must be maintained that perception is primordial, and remains primordially accessible regardless of a developed sense of self. The limits of self are discovered in much the way that the boundaries of our world are discovered through the body, and psychic pain might apply in the way a bump on the head is a serviceable reminder of a low doorway, and a burned finger a lesson for a child ignorant of the dangers of an open flame. But the resistance we meet in our dealings with others has no obvious bearing on philosophical reflection, and surely is met as equally by women as it is by men, even though knowledge of life's parameters is certainly less developed in children.

Self as the sum total of a history of involvements with others makes some sense, and such a process would most certainly involve pain, which is to say the psychic pain that is experienced in conflict with others. A sense of self would develop out of a history of painful experiences which inform us of our standing in the world. As we take the estimations of others to heart even when mind rebels, what we are speaking of here are two very clearly distinct egos, one of the heart and the other of the mind. Further, we would like to put forward the proposition that psychic pain not only is distinct from physical pain, but is derived from it, in that psychic pain is physical pain that has been taken to heart. In other words, in keeping with Merleau-Ponty, "The perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 13). Thus, we would maintain that the contents of both heart *and* mind have the same source, namely, the body.

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Scheler did *not* have this in mind when he spoke of "passionate love" as being "completely different from sensible feeling" (Scheler, 1916/1973a, p. 340). Consider romantic love, however. How is it possible to account for the manner in which an appetite sublimates into passion and physical desire is displaced by regard for another's selfhood? And there is no question that love derives from sexuality and that sexuality is the element that distinguishes it from mere friendship. Given that love is constituted differently from sexuality, what is it that precipitates it? Not any need to be with others in what Nietzsche derogatorily calls "herd instinct", this kind of attraction not being felt for just anybody. It cannot be merely sexual: a short-lived desire which focuses on the attractions of the body. Passionate love involves a regard for excellence and the need to be in a particular ego presence. Does it not seem that body crosses over into heart in the same way that it crosses over into mind, and may not mind and heart somehow be of the same substance? Mind as it pertains to things, and heart as it pertains to others?

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) suggests that an inherent "genius for ambiguity" is definitive of human being:

> Everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were, in the sense that there is not a word, not a form of behaviour which does not owe something to purely biological being – and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life, and causes forms of vital behaviour to deviate from their pre-ordained direction, through some sort of leakage and through a genius for ambiguity which might serve to define man. (p. 189)

What is this "genius" if not the same faculty that grants us the power to love? And might not such a transmutation be similar if not identical to the way that motility is appropriated into the ego movements of thought? All thought is directed at acts to be taken in the world, and its ego movements are modelled on acts performed by the body. Given that an ego movement, an image held in the mind of an action to be taken, is not the same as the act itself, then it must exist on a separate plane from the physical; and since love clearly is distinct from the carnality of the body, could it be that somehow heart shares the same point of convergence as mind?

Ego as Social

Scheler distinguishes the "stratum of vital feelings" from "psychic feelings" by their ego connectedness. "A psychic feeling does not become a state or function of the ego by virtue of my going through the givenness of my lived body and comprehending my lived body as 'my own' ..." (1916/1973a, p. 342). He posits that, in vital feelings, there is an ego identity that is maintained across psychic states, and when this identity is sound, we have feelings of "well-being", but when this identity is compromised we have feelings of depression. In vital feelings "we feel our life itself, its 'growth', its 'decline', its 'illness', its 'health', and its 'future' ..." (p. 340). Vital feelings are "*owned*" and *ownership is communal* in that something is my very own by distinction of *not* being shared with others. Psychic *suffering* is felt when this ownership is violated. The body can be wracked by illness, but the ego of vital feelings can remain intact, or even flourish. "Purely psychic feelings", on the other hand, "are subject to their own laws of oscillation" and have a "pathological 'capriciousness' ..." (p. 342). In Scheler's distinction, psychic feeling are those without the "connections of understanding" of vital feelings, and a person whose "continuity of feeling continually breaks away from changing emotional states of the lived body is as incomprehensible as someone who is severely disturbed mentally" (p. 342).

Scheler certainly is correct in dismissing pathology as "incomprehensible", but in this he remains far too Cartesian, in that he accepts that our waking states are, for the most part, a "continuity of feelings". Scheler would be among the last to recognize that this forging of an identity across every transition, every boundary, and every contradiction is a moral burden. And, to be sure, ego identity can be quite malleable and potent. But, regardless, such ownership is secured in a different manner from the sense of self that is bestowed on us in our dealings with others. It is one of many illusions that govern modern life, and one which has significant consequences in our dealings with others; for, despite all attempts at integration, we are not a single ego, but are, in fact, multiple egos, each of which has its own moral tenor.

When speaking of an egoist, what is commonly meant is a person whose self-estimation runs contrary to others' estimation of him or her. The "good" man of Aristotle is the golden mean between two extremes, one being the man "who thinks himself worthy of great things, being unworthy of them" and the other being "the man who thinks himself worthy of less than he is really worthy of" (Aristotle, pp. 89-90). Namely, a man is good by virtue of having a high opinion of himself which he deserves. An ego is egotistical only when it demands what others are unwilling to pay. One can either under-estimate or overestimate self-worth; but, in either case, an ego which exists in defiance of the estimation of others is Cartesian in its insularity. An ideology which gives license to private evaluation over the evaluation of others is most certainly disruptive of social cohesion, and an ego that is so encapsulated in solitude that it neglects to actively carve out a place for itself in the world among others can hardly be a picture of health.

The question is whether solitude is separable from the ego, or whether perhaps the unnatural growth of the ego is due to some other contributing factor. The isolation of

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individualism is a well enough recognized component of modern society that it may not be necessary to labour the point that solitude did not exist in ancient and, more certainly, prehistoric times to the same extent that it does now. And it is not at all difficult to imagine a society where the ties of community are so strong that a private intellectual life is neglected or driven underground to the point where it has no function. In fact, this is the state of affairs in societies in most parts of the world even today, even in societies where outward respect is paid to the individual. The question is whether an ego that acts without self-awareness or artifice is an ego, or whether without an element of insularity we would speak of egoism at all; that, if fully integrated into society, an ego would be characterized as something quite different.

It is not too difficult to see how a certain good-natured modesty would accept the estimation of others at face value, whether for good or for ill, and that personhood, even in the most individualistic of societies, is not self-determined, but acquired from something like an ego response to the estimation of others; that the creation of a selfhood separate from this public ego is as tenuous as it is rare. What is not rare, however, is the ego which chafes under the opinion of others with whom it comes into contact. And all too tangible is the simmering resentment of those who are dissatisfied with their station in life. This is generally spoken of as being ego driven, and such resentment is all too easy to associate with Nietzsche's will to power, even though such an ego clearly is a drive in its unfulfilled form and which of itself may be not only benign, but life promoting.

The question, thus, is whether the ego of egoism is an irreducible given or a blend of primal elements. While it seems true enough that "One furthers one's ego always at the expense of others", does it necessarily follow from this that, as Nietzsche (1901/1967) maintained, "Life always lives at the expense of other life" (p. 194)? Is it indeed possible to conceive of excellence that does not excel over others? Goodness that does not put others to shame? Achievements that do not make others' pale by comparison? Certainly the weighing of egos in something like a test of strength is an undeniable component of social intercourse, even though the implications of dominance, subordination, and the bickering involved in their determination, seem more like an argument against life than the affirmation of it. And is power really the essence of life? Or, rather, is it not more like something expended in the pursuit of it?

Other than euphemism and dysphemism, little in fact distinguishes Scheler's vital feelings from Nietzsche's will to power. To be sure, vital feelings do not come at the expense of others and they "can contribute to the foundation of a consciousness of community" (Scheler, 1916/1973a, p. 340). Still, as forged in "pain", one has to wonder how self can possibly be "thrown back on itself" without the "opposition" of other selves pursuing dominance over it. As a primordial drive, Nietzsche's will to power is no more bound to materialism than are vital feelings. People can possess "health, food, a place to live, entertainment", and yet "remain unhappy and low spirited". Take everything from them, however, but satisfy the "demon of power", and they will be "almost happy" (Nietzsche, 1881/1997, p. 146). In Scheler's vital feelings, "we can feel an increase in vitality" even "during a long and painful illness" (Scheler, 1916/1973a, p. 340). But such "health" surely is determined by one's standing with others in community; and whether standing as such is "demon" or angel would depend only on whether it is forcibly taken or whether it is *freely given*.

Scheler hardly does Nietzsche justice when he accuses him of committing the same "errors of a false and one-sided biology and psychology" as Darwin and Spencer, even though it is understandable how he came to this conclusion (Scheler, 1916/1973a, p. 278). His disdain might be justified if the will to power were intended as a political doctrine rather than a psychological principle. There is nothing fatal to Nietzsche in Scheler's belief that "the correct conception of life as a tendency to 'power' does not preclude the possibility that participation in and sympathy with other life-processes also belong to the *original* tendencies of life", nor in his claim that "communities become diseased or senile to the degree that egoism becomes their ruling principle" (p. 279). And it is almost a Nietzscheism for Scheler to assert that "certain experiences – e.g., *disappointment* in an original trust, the experience of illness which directs all attention to one's own body, etc. – and the simultaneous *rationalization* of certain vital experiences ... lead to the phenomenon of 'egoism'" (p. 279).

The ego, even at its darkest and most solitary, is – paradoxically – social and seeks the light. A healthy ego is one fully integrated into society, and what makes an ego dark, and, for that reason, sick, is being at odds with the environment in which it lives. Thus, the element which contributes the most to the ego of egoism is the intervention of "rationalization", an innovation which throws this primordial polarity out of balance. In Roman legions, the Greek phalanx, the device which set them apart from the barbarians was discipline, obedience and collaboration around rationalized procedures, and to this day the consolidation of units of power remains the very foundation of civilization as we know it. Power and intellect are in uneasy alliance, power being ineffectual without the assistance of intellect, and intellect forever frustrated by a blind instinct which fulfils its drive in a condition, obedience, which demands the suspension of thought.

The will to power as a biological urge is only a problem when it is understood in the terms of natural science, and as such is closer to the scepticism of Hume than it is to the iconoclasticism of Nietzsche. Nietzsche might have chosen less provocative terms in speaking of a drive that

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manifests itself in ways both approved and condemned by society, but even if Nietzsche was guilty of a crude reduction, and in endorsing a value system based on a distorted view of human nature, this would not mean that there is nothing behind it. And the egoism of the individual who chooses to make the *pursuit* of power a guiding principle is not even the will to power at its most sinister. At its most destructive, the will to power is centred on the ego pole of collectivity, and fulfilled here through the reduction of individual egos to unconditional obedience for integration into a single body. Military cultures and all other cultures of obedience operate on the understanding that the more machine-like their mode of operation, the greater the power; and with the expenditure of energy in maintaining discipline, such cultures tend to exist in the perpetual need to discharge themselves.

It should be clear that the egos of individualism and collectivism are not primordial, but are the result of conditions unique to modern times. There may be some question of which ego Nietzsche's most resembles – the artless ego of an Achilles or the calculated self-interest of a Machiavellian prince? While the justice of an Agamemnon consists in the bestowal of honours where it is due, the virtue of an Achilles lies in the pursuit of honour even to the disregard of any instinct for self-preservation. Although the lust for honour gnaws even at the vitals of those either too proud to pander to it, or mindful of the futility of ever satisfying it, the egoism of Nietzsche seems *closest* to that of Shakespeare's Coriolanus. His is a solitary ego which disdains honours he considers beneath him, and which "needs no applause and clapping of hands, if only he is assured of his own hand-clapping" (Nietzsche, 1887/1974, p. 260). There is a nobility, and at the same time futility, in such an ego, which has the makings of a drama which is not only beyond good and evil, but also beyond tragedy, in that it is so seldom understood.

Ego as Psychic

Up to this point, this paper has kept exclusively to philosophy, phenomenology, and to primary sources. But, at the risk of a too abrupt a transition, we would like now to turn to the psychology of James Hillman. As a psychologist, he takes many a contrarian turn, and in this he follows in the footsteps of Nietzsche ... at least as a champion of multiplicity. To be sure, when he speaks of the ego as having its "base in archetypical principles of the hero myth" (Hillman, 1976, p. 40), he cannot be speaking of the egos of epistemology, or even the ego of ego identity. Although archetypes seem quite compatible with Heidegger's historicality, a reduction of ego to cultural artifact surely is in violation of much that is phenomenological. But despite (if not in keeping with this) following Jung, Hillman also speaks of the ego as "personality Number One" that "rules the day world" (p. 32), and he sees therapy as involving "the freeing of the soul from its identity with the ego and the waking state" (p. 33), a work of *deconstruction of* the kind of ego integration that Scheler seems to advocate.

To understand Hillman philosophically is to recognize that the psychic is not and cannot be "mental" in either the sense of ego movement or ego consciousness, and that it also defies apophantic conceptualization, that is, what Hillman would dismiss as "nominalism". For Hillman, concepts are of no use in understanding the psychological, because the "psyche" is not of the mind, but of the imagination. "Images and metaphors present themselves always as living psychic subjects with which I am obliged to be in relation. They keep me aware of the power of the words I work with, whereas concepts tend to delude me into nominalism" (1976, p. 32). Archetypal psychology dances around such questions as the origins of archetypes and the exact material out of which they are made, but perhaps it would be fair to say that the imagination of myth is not the soul itself, but simply the way in which the psychic manifests itself.

If the soul is not of imagination, perhaps it is time – as much as this seems to be a violation of everything archetypal – to think of it as ego. Perhaps Hillman does not get it *quite* right when he says "the ego is not the whole psyche, only one member of a community" (p. 31). Rather, it might be more accurate to say that the soul is a community of egos, and that, as we rotate from ego to ego, we invent a unity that does not in fact exist. Perhaps this ego "Number One", even should it manage to identify itself, is not as secure in its rule as we may imagine: that, while we worship one God, we, in our hearts, remain polytheistic. Ego integration exists as an ideal, and the forging of these multiple egos into a single unit is at best a work in progress. Like so many other modern ideals – reason, equality, freedom – we reach and, in our conceit, imagine that we grasp.

Perhaps a minor point – but, just as it is possible to split an act of thought from a thought image, and *the act* of perception from a perceived image, the contention here is that the image of imagination can be separated from an action. Things imagined are in one way or another grounded in body, but only body that has undergone a certain transformation that renders it psychic. Transparency is a property of thought, or at least of that thought which is directed at communication. Things perceived can be made transparent in communicative acts by being pointed out, but this soul has nothing in it that can be made the object of pointing. There is no looking inward, only a looking outwards, and these outward manifestations of soul are the products of imagination. Mythology, metaphor, symbolism, story-telling are ways of making visible that which defies being made transparent in any other way. And here we would speak of this otherwise opaque activity as ego, although there are any number of, and perhaps better, ways of conceiving it.

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This ego cannot be instinct or "body" as Merleau-Ponty understood it. It certainly cannot be found in the "they" of Heidegger. This selfsame ego is the seat of anxiety, and just as solitude is known to amplify anxiety, being with others "brings Dasein a tranquillity" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 222). If the psychic is not rooted in community, that is, communal in the sense of being shared with others, then is not an archetype merely a way in which the psychic finds expression; an activity that is not of the light, but of the depths, and which seeks the light? It is in our dreams that this unseen psychic world becomes visible, and do our dreams not, much like our thoughts, reach towards expression? They speak not only of the underworld – for the underworld is not nearly as remote as we imagine it to be – but also of the day world. Not prophetically in the ancient, naïve sense, but still quite literally, in that they reveal our ego involvements with others. Like "vital feelings", our dreams can "reveal dangers and advantages, not through associations of experience, but directly, *before* I comprehend the intellectual sense of such dangers and advantages" (Scheler, 1916/1973a, p. 341).

The only way that an archetype can be *owned* is as an ego that enjoys a particular standing in the community. Individuals remain divisible into distinctly separable selves, even though the laws of God and of men now hold only one of them accountable. Ancient times were different. Life was far more fragmented. Citizens took on roles (selves), many of which were sponsored by a god, but they did not make it a matter of conscience to clothe any particular self in the mantle of "Number One". In moving from ego to ego, it was not incumbent on these different selves to maintain a logical consistency. The self of war did not live by the morality of hearth and home. The self of sensuality did not live by the morality of motherhood. And, above all, no one of these selves took it upon itself to pass judgment on the others. Nietzsche (1901/1967) saw "moral monsters" of this kind as "a contradiction of the classical", and not least in so far as "Precisely a preponderance of one virtue over the others is hostile to the classical power of equilibrium" (Nietzsche, p. 441). Times have changed and so have the rules, but this does not mean that the ancients lived by no rules. Every self followed strict standards of conduct, each deeply rooted in some aspect of life and ordered to respect all the others.

Ego as Being With

While Hillman may be quite compatible with Scheler the theoretician, he seems altogether incompatible with Scheler the moralist ... or would be if he were to advocate a return to polytheism. What he proposes is an arrangement which is epistemologically quite consistent with Heidegger. "Until Descartes every thing present-at-hand for itself was a 'subject', but now the 'I' becomes the special subject, that with regard to which all the remaining things first determine themselves as such" (Heidegger, 1967, p. 105). "In the language of the middle ages", "a golden mountain" represented an "*objectum*", whereas it "is, according to the usage of language of today, merely something 'subjective'; for 'a golden mountain' does not exist 'objectively' in the meaning of the changed linguistic use" (p. 106). In what may seem like an inversion, what Hillman proposes is to reinstate the traditional meaning of the terms, thereby treating the "golden mountain" as real, and the "special subject" of subjectivity as an empty abstraction.

When Hillman speaks of "literalizing", he is inferring the direction the Cartesian ego takes in consolidation, and when speaking of "personification", the direction needed for the deconstruction of the Cartesian ego and a return to multiplicity. What he advocates is ousting the monogenetic *mythologies* of science and restoring the polygenetic mythologies of tradition, and for no better reason than because they are more congenial to life. His epistemology would "dethrone the dominant fantasy ruling our view of the world as ultimately a unity" (p. 41). A unified "*subjectum*" – such as found in natural science – that underpins objective reality exists only as a hypothetical – or, perhaps, a vague – goal. Hillman's psychology is based on the realization that natural science can never accept psychic activities on their own terms as phenomena, and this would be of no consequence if it were not for the fact that, by weaving the Cartesian subject into the fabric of being, we are made unwitting accomplices in ego consolidation.

Even though we long ago set aside the custom of imbuing the natural world with ego presences, every prominent feature of our world – whether geological or topiary, aquatic or subterranean – remains open to personification. And personification comes knocking because pathology, despite all our protestations, remains the rule which governs our lives, while rationality remains the hard won exception. This is not to advocate a return to life in the manner of the ancients. "For I can never again achieve the old naïveté; I can only understand it" (Husserl, 1954/1970, p. 210). A mountain or river as god remains a superstition, but personification involves the recognition that, in order for it to be of the imagination, which is to say psychological, it must be taken for real. The monster in a child's closet comes to life by being real. Pathologies hold sway over us by their being real, and would not be pathological if they could be reasoned with.[4]

In personalization, Hillman is far closer to Heidegger than to Husserl, and certainly the ego presence of a god

[4] "Because something has become transparent to us, we think it will no longer offer us any resistance – and are then amazed when we discover we can see through it but cannot go through it! It is the same folly and amazement as overcomes the fly in face of a pane of glass." (Nietzsche, 1881/1997, p. 188)

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is more a being *with* others in *dasein* than a being *towards* others in the solitude of intersubjectivity. The ego presence of a god is the stuff of dreams, and for this reason it has something in it of community. A god is a *veiled* presence which the imagination fills with images of fear and awe; which is to say, with ego. The Greek gods displayed all the signs: envious, forever taking offense at real or imagined affronts, engaging in intrigues against the other gods. And Homer's audience was ever counselled to avoid hubris and be mindful that the "gods are stronger than men" (Homer, p. 370), presumably because the egos of mortals impinge on those of the gods. Personification is dreaming while awake; and even in dreams there is ego identity, even though it is fluid in a way that the ego of the daytime is not. And is it not this ego element that makes dreams more vivid and real than any "reality" of the day?

Conclusion

The ego is not, nor ever can be, an apodictic given. It is a concept based on evidence gained from the experience of our response to others and theirs in return. The best evidence for the ego is not found in introspection, but out in the world among others, and even there it is available only in bits and pieces, fragments that we collect and synthesize into a nebulous whole and place in an imagined interior that we call self. The epistemological egos of Descartes and Husserl, the ego of egoism, the heroic ego, or the ego of Scheler's lived body, or any of the other commonly spoken of egos, converge at a single point, and that is in solitude, but a solitude that makes its presence felt in others.

Phenomenology often seems faced with an either-or, neither of which seems entirely satisfactory. Whereas intersubjectivity demands what Husserl (1954/1970) characterises as "a unique sort of philosophical solitude" (p. 184), Heidegger (1927/1962) would claim that "authentic being-one's-self" cannot be "detached from the 'they'" but "is rather an *existentiell* modification of the 'they'" (p. 168). It thus becomes a matter of choosing either solitude, which is to say Husserl's ego, or else Heidegger's "they", which is to say the "equiprimordiality" (p. 170) of community in the object. Then there is Merleau-Ponty's doctrine of the priority of perception, which would commit to neither. Is it not conceivable that self may be both of solitude *and* of community? Even as we bathe in the presence of others, can we not sense veiled ego operations that are inter-subjective in nature? Behind every ego presence we divine an ego, and in it we unconsciously accept the existence of processes which might be accessed through participation in a shared solitude.

Phenomenology is faced with a similar either-or with regard to the priority of perception. Is there not perhaps a doubling in which perception is indeed prior, but in which it is coupled with an image which is something of community as well as of solitude? The facial or bodily motions of others can be perceived as things, but it is through the sightedness of imagination that we see the waxing and waning of ego and the animations which constitute selfhood. Of beauty and of youth, of manner and force of personality: these are sensed by means other than perception. Even in the things themselves, lurking behind perception, there is an image which is of soul, a doubling that can be observed in a peculiar flickering ambience, particularly acute in the experience of *déjà vu*. Perception is always on the verge of disengagement from the thing perceived to the "*actus re-flexivus*" of imagination, from the sightedness of the body to the sightedness of the lived ego.

If imagination is neither of mind nor of body, then what is it? Certainly, a thought image is different from a dream image, even though both would seem to draw on perception. And surely a dream image is as much of solitude as it is of community, although dreams reach for communication by making themselves conscious. How togetherness in community is accessed is through imitation, by participation in pre-existing forms of behaviour as well as forms of communication. And if it is erroneous, if not harmful, to reduce soul to mind, imagination to thought, is it not equally erroneous to reduce soul to mimicry, or to treat it as the spawn of culture? It is a question of whether soul is primarily the stuff of cultural antecedents with existential modifications, or whether it can be better understood as composed of solitude shaped by our dealing *with others*. And the answer we make to this question has profound implications for our understanding and the manner in which we conduct research, as well as for the manner in which we conduct our lives.

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