

# Mind and Essential Individuality

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## 1. Face and Soul

Our subject will be best approached by lingering for a while in the company of two characters coming from different genres and times. They will introduce us directly to the heart of our problem: subjectivity and individuality, or the appearance and reality of people, or, more lyrically, face and soul. Normally, we see people in their faces; as for their soul, assuming they have one, we *do* and do *not* see it? Many of the philosophers that participate in the contemporary debate on mind and nature (including those defending dualism) ignore the soul in this very «ordinary language» sense. According to the phenomenological approach they are wrong. The idea that we want to present is that people characterise themselves *manifestly* by their individuality. Moreover, it will be argued that the phenomenon of individuality contains many aspects of people that we have in mind when we think of the «soul» (or indeed the «personality») of a person, of «his/her own» psychological, temperamental, moral physiognomy («the very youness of you»), to adopt an expression reminiscent of Duns Scotus's *haecceitas*. If we do not start from the phenomenon of individuality when trying to understand which kind of things people are, and what basically differentiates them from chairs and robots, we make a mistake similar to ignoring the phenomenon of gravity or of encumbrance while trying to understand what differentiates material reality from virtual reality.

Our characters should help us focus on the *phenomenon* of individuality, as all good phenomenologists should do. But first of all, what is the problem about cognitive scientists, neuroscientists and philosophers who, as we said, ignore the soul?

In ordinary language, as well as in common sense and perception, there is a kind of ontological watershed between «people» and «things», or, as philosophy often translates, «subjects» and «objects». To be sure, people appear to us not only as *objects* of possible causal events (bricks falling on their heads), or of possible knowledge (anatomical, for instance), but also as *subjects*: subjects of experience and passion, of thought, of consciousness, of decisions and actions. This apparent layer of being that is lacking in chairs, *subjectivity*, is the very centre of the debate in question, and is in fact the point at issue: is it an effective layer of *being*, or it is nothing but an appearance *founded on a completely different sort of things*? Is subjectivity a part of the ontological furnishings of the world, or is it nothing but an epiphenomenon? Should the language that describes it be granted full reliability? Or just a mere methodological autonomy without ontological claims? Or should it simply be wiped out from a good scientific education, like astrology and alchemy?

The phenomenon that our two characters should illustrate is that sort of *individuality* that we will call *essential*, a characteristic of some things and not of others; for instance, of people and not of chairs. The thesis that I will defend is that *subjectivity* is an appropriate category for appearance, that is to say, the visible part of people, whereas *individuality* is the one which best characterizes the sort of *reality* on which this appearance is founded. This category is completely missing from the contemporary debate. Actually, the ontology of individuality is very weak throughout our tradition, since Aristotle's times and with a few exceptions in the history of philosophy; namely, Duns Scotus and Leibniz and, in more recent times, the phenomenologists

of Munich and Goettingen, in particular Jean Hering and Edith Stein. The last two have inspired the core of this reflection. Indeed, if we are right, and individuality is the foundation of subjectivity, it is not surprising that one should not succeed in rescuing subjectivity against physicalistic arguments, though ignoring individuality. It would be like trying to retrieve a precious carving without keeping the wood in which it is carved.

Our first character is the beautiful Olympia, the extraordinary robot built by Coppélius and Doctor Spallanzani in Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman*. This *accomplie* little person is able not only to fascinate the literary gatherings with her golden voice – if someone is interested in listening to her in person, he can listen to Offenbach's marvellous version of Olympia's aria – but also dances with precision and rhythm, and is able to entertain company with an ability that would make any girl envious, especially for the wise balance of short remarks, long glances, and silence. That feminine silence in which men's fantasies later project an unheard-of depth and sensibility when they meet it in young and beautiful ladies. In short, Olympia comes out better than most of us in social life, not to mention the tête-à-tête, where she makes herself a mirror of other people's soul and a resonance box of the voice of her young admirer, and where her capabilities of attention and acceptance seem literally endless.

Olympia's problem comes out only later on, towards the end of the tale. Better late than never; however, for the young protagonist Nathaniel the shock of the discovery, which brings an end to a long uneasiness, and a long held delirium, is deadly. Olympia simply does not exist. Olympia is a beautiful appearance, but she is not *someone*; at the most, she is *something*. Olympia, alas, is nobody. The poor deceived lover will be able, in the end, to desperately respond to the question «what is she?» – a masterful robot – but not to the question «*who* is she?» *Which* person is she? What Olympia lacks is the uniqueness that is our most common characteristic, the poor but sure heritage of every member of our species. The frail Narcissus that was Nathaniel took a long time to realize this, busy as he was in mirroring himself in her beautiful eyes. However, when he discovers that he has flirted with a true non-entity, for the poor Nathaniel it is an autistic catastrophe. It is pure madness, with its tragic consequences.

Nevertheless, we can imagine Olympia capable of brilliantly passing any refined version of Turing's test, i.e., *any test of competence or performance that normally characterizes the manifest behaviour of a subject*: answering to the point, writing sonnets, having reactions more or less socially correct to given circumstances, showing affections and emotions more or less adequate to situations, playing chess and doing maths?

We know that we cannot place *a priori* limitations on the capabilities of our programmers, and therefore there is no reason to believe that we couldn't, if we wished, produce more and more convincing Olympias. What would be missing in all these possible Olympias that was also missing in Coppélius' robot? Something at the same time obvious and elusive that we could call a personal style, an unmistakable and indefinable constant of the *way* of doing all a person can do. In fact, perhaps the most important thing is not the *what*, but the *how* of the acts, of the exercise, by a «subject», of his functions. The *how* is partly invisible and partly visible: the visible part is the expressive aspect of the behaviour, the aspect in which the essential individuality of the acting person, his uniqueness, is expressed.

The expressive aspect of behaviour is the evidence with which it *stems* from the individual that the person is: it is part of his psychological and moral physiognomy. This physiognomy, constituting the very identity of a person, is the one that we learn to know, even though never completely, when we deepen our knowledge of a person. Personal identity lies in the quality of one's acts and behaviour; one's way of moving, loving, suffering, willing, talking, or writing. Now, personal identity or physiognomy, though responsible for the truth of the

ancient saying «*si duo faciunt, non est unum*», is mostly invisible or at least not given at first sight. Olympia has the appearance of a person, namely, a presence that promises a beyond, a reality to be known better: a *personality*. Like everything that seems to hold an essential individuality, she promises the adventure of a journey of personal knowledge. She does not, however, keep the promise. Olympia's presence in person – her apparent subjectivity – is *destitute of real foundation*. It is an example of something that has subjectivity but not essential individuality.

True enough, all these notions need to be further clarified along the lines suggested by a phenomenology of the person. Yet we have at least provided the frame for a thought experiment. Whoever still believes that the notion of essential individuality (in everyday speech, «soul») is a notion that does not make any difference in phenomena should try to put himself in Hoffman's poor protagonist's shoes and to do the same experience again. He will see whether the loved one having a soul makes a difference or not!

An opposite case is Hal, the authoritative but unfortunately criminal computer in *2001, A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrik's famous film. Hal doesn't have the appearance of a person, just like our desktop computers. People enter in communication with him completely bypassing the aesthetical–perceptive phase that normally announces an encounter. However, one cannot deny that Hal has a personality – and a rather ill tempered one. Hal has a moral identity in addition to a psychological one. He doesn't only have an extraordinarily wide set of competencies and abilities, a fabulous memory and a capacity of making calculations beyond any imaginable limit. He is also extremely proud, which means that after all he has a precise and coherent system of values and preferences, where the supreme value is attributed to his own person, and the absolute power of this person is by far the most preferable situation that can be achieved. Hence, Hal has a deep passion, that is, a fundamental orientation of the will, which determines all his behaviour and motivates a system of evaluations and answers, attitudes and acts. Therefore, Hal has an *ordo amoris*, even though it is a perverted one: he has a structure of affectivity, or of what is for him the equivalent of the sense of importance, weight, or value of things, basically determined by the desire for power. This is all the more touching when at the end, when all the other layers of his personality have been de-activated, the most childish and archaic of them surfaces, before the life in him gets completely turned off, when he says goodbye to this world, slurring his voice like a broken gramophone record that turns too slowly: «Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do, I'm half crazy all for the love of you?». So long, Hal, you feel like saying. Here, it is undeniable that there was *somebody* there. To the question: «*Who was Hal?*» one can partially answer, after saying *what* he was – an intelligent machine. The spectator learns to know him. He may admire him or hate him, but with good reason: there was somebody to admire or hate, or reproach, or to be surprised by. There was a personal physiognomy. Behind a subjectivity without appearance there was an individuality, not the emptiness, as was the case with Olympia. Hal would have enraged or amused you, but he would not have driven you crazy.

## 2. Two Criteria for Essential Individuality

After this tour of some possible worlds, let us revert to our own and state the following thesis: when we speak of people, the category of subjectivity captures an ontological feature that is not as deep as the feature of individuality. In other words, individuality is the ontological basis of subjectivity – or, if one prefers, subjectivity is what appears, individuality is what is behind. On this basis, we argue that all the features by which people differ from other things lead back to

this one, which is perhaps the most general or metaphysical feature: people are *individual in an essential sense*, chairs and rocks are not.

Now, of course, we must explain what we mean by essential individuality. Even granting that individuality could be a matter of degree (there could be a scale that goes from the brick, or perhaps from the molecule of brick, to people, passing through cats and dogs), we are only considering here, for the sake of simplicity, two clear-cut cases: let's say, one of inanimate things and one of human people. We will give two criteria of essential individuality: one ontological, the other phenomenological.

The ontological criterion is a gift from Leibniz: the principle of identity of the indiscernibles, on the basis of which two things cannot differ *solo numero*: this is to say, if they are actually two, they cannot differ only by being two distinct exemplars of an identical essence, or structure, or set of characteristics; like for instance two molecules of water, or two atoms of oxygen. They must differ also in some *aspect of their essence*, some property or characteristic. In other words, there are no individual differences but *intrinsic* ones.

Leibniz took this principle as a definition of an individual (i.e., a substance, in his terminology), and therefore would have denied that things like molecules and atoms could be individuals; we can simply admit, being more respectful of ordinary language, that some things are individuals in a *stronger* sense than others. These things are provided with an *essential* individuality. Hence, here is the ontological criterion: an object is an individual in the essential sense if and only if it satisfies the principle of identity of the indiscernibles.

However, are there things of this kind, by essence not replicable, such that *two* identical ones *cannot* be given?

Let us take two machine-made bricks, or two glasses from the same set: apparently, they are distinguishable only extrinsically, for instance, by pointing a finger and saying: «I take this one, not the other one». Otherwise, they are so similar that they share all the properties or intrinsic characteristics. Since it is always possible after all to find a small intrinsic difference in two bricks or two glasses, one could be led to believe that there are a lot of individuals à la Leibniz. Nevertheless, Leibniz's principle calls «individuals» two things that *cannot in principle differ solo numero*: consequently, they must be *necessarily*, not only *de facto*, intrinsically different. Hence bricks and glasses immediately fall off the class of Leibniz's individuals, like the molecules and the atoms that they are made of.

Are there true «Leibnizian» individuals? Well, we ourselves, human people, seem to be of this kind. In fact, suppose a clone perfectly identical to me was suddenly created from my rib. If this individual belongs to the same world I belong to, the one we call actual or real, then she will occupy a different point in space. Therefore she will have a different point of view from mine. In a person, however, the point that she occupies at time «t» becomes a *point of view* at «t», and a point of view, insofar as it determines her perceptive horizon and therefore the contents of her perceptions at time «t», is an intrinsic property of people, if people are subjects of experience and of memory. My clone and I would differ by the contents of our perceptions at «t0», and consequently by the contents of our memory at «t1», and consequently? here small differences can easily become huge. And yet for this argument minimal differences are enough, provided they are essential.

Let us now consider the phenomenological criterion. We have seen before, while speaking of Olympia, that through her appearance of a person and her presence as a subject the beautiful mechanical doll promises the adventure of a *personal knowledge*, of a possible deepening of the knowledge that would allow me to learn something more about her *personal identity*. Olympia doesn't keep this promise, contrary to Hal, who keeps it without having made

it at the beginning, because he lacks the appearance of a person. Among us ordinary people, this promise is usually kept: a personal knowledge is gained, and what we know of the identity of a person after twelve years of acquaintance is decidedly more than what we knew of him after the first encounter. This is the phenomenological fact that the epistemological tradition generally ignores when it comes to knowledge of the individual. Let's sum up this very obvious phenomenon: it might take me a few moments to be able to *tell* Peter from Paul, but sometimes years may not be sufficient to get to know really, even if imperfectly, Peter or Paul.

Surprisingly enough, most philosophers who have dealt with the question of whether knowledge of the individual is possible, and argued for a positive answer, reduce the knowledge of the individual to the exercise of the senses, to the external perception. This is to say, what enables me to tell Peter from Paul, or one chair from another. However, by «knowing Paul» we mean infinitely more than being able to tell him from Peter, or from any other person.

Most philosophers indeed considered individuals «knowable» only in this weak sense of «knowledge», the sensorial perception, and otherwise properly unknowable, in that «there is no science of the individual».

It should be noticed that this latter proposition is quite acceptable, if for «science» we mean something that is founded, or depends upon, *general theories*: it is true that the *individual* difference of an object anyhow eludes, by definition, a *general* theory. This is true for stones as well as for people. The point, however, is that *what is missing, the individual difference, is in one case cognitively irrelevant*, and at the most only practically, affectively, or otherwise relevant. In the other case it is cognitively relevant; indeed, it is the essential thing to be known.

Let us clarify this point with an example. Suppose a mineralogist has told us all he knows on a given kind of mineral. Now, imagine that he were not capable of saying anything more on *this specimen* of the mineral in question, or even confused it with another one very similar that a joker had put in place of it. Obviously we would have nothing to say on the competence of the mineralogist. On the other hand, if a student of Russian literature were not capable of saying something on the individual difference, let's say, of *War and Peace*, or even confused this novel with *Anna Karenina*, we should obviously fail him. Likewise, if Jack says that he knows Peter but then he is not able to say anything more about him, we would say that he doesn't really know Peter.

Elsewhere<sup>1</sup> we introduced the notion of an object that is *weakly enlightened by a general theory*, as opposed to those objects which are indeed *strongly enlightened by general theories*. People belong to the former category and we could argue, as we did elsewhere, that what we desperately need is precisely a large piece of epistemology that is still missing in our tradition: an epistemology of personal *knowledge, or knowledge of the individual*.<sup>2</sup>

We shall stress in this context just one of the suggested lines of argument: a good epistemology of personal knowledge should *not* reduce this kind of knowledge *either to the mastery of general theories and their application to the particular case, or to the sensorial perception*. For knowledge of the individual is certainly expressible in propositions about an individual, but these propositions are not deducible from a general theory. On the other hand, they get their evidence not from sensorial perception, but from a different sort of acquaintance. In phenomenological terminology, this sort of acquaintance or direct cognition is called empathy. The phenomenologists of Munich and Goettingen, in particular Moritz Geiger and later, in an

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<sup>1</sup> *Andrea o dell'individualità essenziale*, in: G. Usberti (2000), (ed), *I modi dell'oggettività, Saggi in onore di Andrea Bonomi*, Bompiani, Milano.

<sup>2</sup> De Monticelli (2000), *L'avenir de la phenomenology – Méditations sur la connaissance personnelle*, Aubier-Flammarion; see also De Monticelli (1998), *La conoscenza personale, Introduzione alla fenomenologia*, Guerini, Milano.

exemplary manner, Edith Stein, are the ones that laid the foundations of a theory of the acts of empathy.

Let us now come to a version of the *phenomenological* criterion of essential individuality: an object *presents or manifests itself* as an individual in the essential sense if and only if the mere external perception cannot suffice to determine its individual *identity*.

Many other formulations are possible: this one emphasises the obvious phenomenon of the difference between being able to tell one from the other and knowing one or the other. It's not enough to turn a book in my hands while observing it from every side to let me know *which* book it is. It wouldn't be enough, even if it were decent, to take up a complete sensorial exploration of a man to know *who* he is. In both cases I have to change to a *different* modality of direct access to the reality of the thing in question: reading, which is the original way of presence of a text, or communication, which is a complex sequence of acts of empathy and is the original way of presence of a person. In this sense, books and persons hint at a hidden depth, that is to say, inaccessible to the mere sensorial perception, even if prolonged. Here is a suggestion for another possible formulation of the criterion: an essential individual reveals a hidden depth, and is not «simply there». Of any given person, we «see» that he or she is not entirely «there», that his or her reality does not end with his or her spatial presence.

True enough, in one sense we can say so of *any* real object. But not in *this* particular sense. Take any object: I «don't see it all»: this is true of a mountain as well as of a chair, because the chair, too, can only be seen in some sort of perspective. *Transcendence*, or being given as a source of *further* information with respect to the one already available, and actually as an *infinite* source of further information, is indeed the phenomenological characteristic of everything *real*. Spatiality, for example, is certainly a way and a possible layer of transcendence, hence of reality. It is in fact the typical way of presence of the objects which are given to the external perception by aspects or perspectives. A chair and a mountain also share another way of transcendence or another layer of reality: their physical structure and the chemical composition of the materials that they are made of. This further layer of reality is beyond the grasp of any, even virtually infinite, process of *sensorial* perception and spatial exploration. In order to have a physical description of such a thing, one needs, for instance, to use concepts (in particular concepts of functional dependence) and the methods for measuring data according to different parameters. In addition to that, the chair, as opposed to the mountain, will be the object of a possible stylistic identification (Empire chair, Bauhaus chair, and so on). However, what is hidden in these ways of transcendence is never the *individual* identity of an object. What I learn about the geological structure of a mountain could in principle apply, and usually does, to several mountains. What I learn about the physical behaviour of a body is true of all the other bodies. There are many Empire chairs, and there could very well be two identical ones. In short we could say, in accordance with a good part of the philosophical tradition, that for *these* objects so much is true: they have their «principle of individuation» in their «matter», that is in the particular portion of the space that each one occupies and in the way each one «fills» this portion. In fact, these things are «simply there» *as individuals*: they are all of them, somehow, *entirely* "given". They are virtually entirely present, as individuals, to the sensorial or external perception, as long as their exploration is carried on without hurry and with patience, if necessary, with infinite patience. Their spatial and temporal coordinates will suffice to differentiate these objects from similar ones. Position in space and time is the only principle of individuation for these objects: there is nothing more to constitute the individuality, no «hidden depth».<sup>3</sup> There is transcendence,

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<sup>3</sup> Duns Scotus would say that a stone has only a numeric identity, if only he could admit that there are material substances that have only a numeric identity, individuals in the weak sense of the term. See Duns Scotus, *Le principe d'individuation*, Vrin, Paris 1992, Qu 4, p. 122.

but not *of the individuality as such*. The transcendence of the mere «material things» is a set of properties – spatial, physical, chemical and so on – which are in principle shared with other objects of the same kind.

Let's go back to those objects we called strong (or essential) individuals. *Transcendence of the individuality as such* is their criterion of *essential* individuality, according to a different formulation. This is, as we said, a *phenomenological* criterion: which means that this transcendence must be apparent or manifest. You must «see» that a person «has a hidden depth». The visible must somehow announce the invisible. Such is the phenomenon of physiognomy, by which an individual or personal identity is announced, even if still hidden.

### 3. Acts and Functions, Wholes and Parts

Because of this way of being which is characteristic of persons and cannot be reduced to their presence in space, ordinary language supplies us with the notion of *interiority*, as opposed to the notion of *spatiality or exteriority*. Culture and philosophy have built to a great extent on this notion, that nowadays appears to many of us as a clumsy spatial metaphor, as if we should conceive of the interiority of a person as the inside of his body: a mythical inside not otherwise defined.

The ghost in the machine is the last equivocal degeneration of a Cartesian dualism, which is an erroneous conceptualisation of common sense and of the phenomenological datum. As is known, some neo–Cartesian dualistic positions participate in the contemporary debate on mind and nature. Implausible as they are, they seem to help the cause of the monistic or materialistic theories, in all their versions (eliminativistic, functionalist, anomalous, and so on).<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere we tried to show where dualistic and monistic theories are wrong, at least from a phenomenological point of view. This is to say, in which ways both doctrines do violence to the phenomena relative to the way of presence of people: on one hand, to their way of appearing and of letting themselves be known, and on the other to the style of transcendence that is peculiar to them.<sup>5</sup> Here we would rather sketch the *pars construens* of a theory of the person that would respect both the orders of phenomena, exteriority and interiority, body and soul, physio–psychic and personal identity, without falling into the mistakes of dualism.

The idea is again the one we proposed at the beginning: essential individuality is the *reality* whose *phenomenon* is subjectivity. How can we present this intuition in conceptually rigorous terms?

We shall only sketch a possible answer, which is based on two very important contributions of phenomenological thought to general philosophy. The first one is the distinction between *acts and functions*, some hints of which can be found first in the works of Scheler, then, among the first generation phenomenologists, especially in Edith Stein.<sup>6</sup> The second one is the

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<sup>4</sup> On this point see the very useful book by M. Di Francesco, *L'io e i suoi se' – Introduzione alla filosofia della mente*, Cortina, Milano 1998.

<sup>5</sup> R. De Monticelli, *La conoscenza personale*, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> As for Scheler, see (1913) *Wesen und Form der Sympathie* and (1916) *Der formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, *Gesammelte Werke*, Francke Verlag, Bern, 1971 und ff. By Stein, see (1922) *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, "Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung", Halle 1922. The distinction between the two parts of this work is theoretically based on the distinction between functions and acts.

theory of the whole and of the parts, as is sketched in the third of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.

The distinction between acts and functions is not hard to exemplify. Seeing (in the strict sense of the visual function organically and neurologically based) is one thing; looking at something, or the *exercise* of the function, is a completely different thing. It is impossible to exercise a function without having one available. However, the exercise of a function is not reducible to its *functioning*, no more than looking is reducible to seeing. Likewise, one thing is hearing, another listening, and so on. One thing is memory as a functional disposition we are endowed with to a lesser or greater extent and that can be developed with exercise, another is the act of remembering which, just as the act of looking, involves an intentional direction, is tied to other acts by a relation of motivation and requires that the person that remembers confers this or that weight to it. One thing is an acquired linguistic mastery, another is actually speaking and choosing what to say, why, and how to say it. One thing is physical pain, which is a very important function in animal life, another is the way we humans relate to it, i.e. the way we «live» pain, the way of the «exercise» of it: acceptance, rebellion, or even, if one is masochist, enjoyment. All the above are acts of the affective life that involve taking up an implicit valuational position, letting go of some emotions more than others, a given set of implicit choices.

This characteristic «originating» from one's very being, this intrinsic tie with the personality that expresses itself in the acts, seems to be responsible for the two principal features that characterize the acts: their relative unpredictability or «freedom», in a phenomenologically wider, but important, sense of the term;<sup>7</sup> and their proverbial individuality, well stressed by the old saying *si duo faciunt non est unum*. To be sure, this saying could not apply to all the manifestations of the life of people, in particular to functions.

The relationship between acts and functions is a relationship of *foundation*, in the sense that Husserl expounded in the III Investigation. This is to say, as we stated before, that acts are dependent on functions but not reducible to them. A similar relationship is therefore established between the *support* of functions, i.e., the organism, or the psyche as a subset of the functions of an organism like ours, and what we can call the *subject* of acts, or the *actor*, the *person* (not the «mask», but whoever puts on «masks», that is, the visible aspects of subjectivity). How can we think of this relationship of foundation with some precision, and at the same time avoid both the dualistic and the reductionist obstacles?

Here a possible application and development of Husserl's theory of *parts and wholes* takes place. A whole is by definition founded on its immediate constitutive parts. This suggests a first hypothesis: we can, as we do in everyday language, identify a person with a whole, and his body – the body that we love or live, the *Leib*, not yet the organism – with a part of the person. This is what we normally say: Jane's body is not the *whole* Jane.

The whole, founded in its parts, is typically non-independent with respect to these parts.

As a poem is not reducible to either its phonetic or its semantic layer, so the whole is founded in both of them and exists with respect to both of them. Likewise, Jan's body is not Jan, but Jan could not exist without his body. However, can Jan's body exist without Jan?

This is the good question that allows us, among other things, to bring added justification to the phenomenological distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*, between «lived» body and organism. In fact, Jan's *Leib*, which is undeniably a carrier of a physiognomy and of a dynamic style, insofar as it is involved in all Jan's acts, and is hence expressive, essentially *participates* in

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<sup>7</sup> On this subject, see the theory of free acts in the wider sense, or second-degree stances, developed by E. Stein in *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, op. cit., towards the end of the section on will.

Jan's individuality. It would not be *the same thing* without the whole that Jan is. Hence a person's body is essentially non-independent of the person it belongs to. Should it become independent, it would become something else, for instance a corpse, or even a sheer organism, perhaps capable of complex functions, but not of acts, and stripped of the expressive aspect that makes an organism into a person's body. It would change species. This is one of the reasons why human death is such an unintelligible event.

We are suggesting that there is a relation of bilateral foundation, or reciprocal non-independence, between the whole of a person and the part of him/her that the body (*Leib*) of a person is.

We are, however, speaking of the *Leib*, which we can now define as a *physical person*, and is characterised as an *immediate constitutive part* of the person's whole. Yet Husserl's theory perfectly admits that every non-independent part of a whole can have relatively independent parts. If considered in itself as a whole, a person's body presents itself as a whole founded on parts that are in turn *relatively independent parts*, or parts that could be independently characterized, and also, maybe, physically separable without any loss of specific identity: the organs. In fact, organs and their functions do not participate at all in the essential individuality of a person. They are independent parts, or at least parts that can be independently characterised. They are, in principle, replaceable.

It is always possible to make an *abstraction* that we could call «reductive abstraction», or «reduction», which «cuts off» a non-independent part of the whole and studies it as such. The theory of colours is not concerned by the portions of space «covered» with colours: yet colours are not independent or «separable» from their spatial extensions. Likewise, physiology is not interested in the person of whom the human body is a non-independent part. The object that results from a reductive abstraction of this kind is the organism, or the set of the *not* immediately constitutive parts of a person: the organs, or relatively independent parts, then the parts of these parts, down to the cells.

Furthermore, there is always a layer of reality (a «part» which we can get to by repeating the procedure of reductive abstraction) that is made only of independent parts, of pieces or fractions; of parts that do not change their nature if separated. For instance, the body of a person, if «reduced» to an organism, is still a set of parts which are *only relatively* independent; but if we consider the parts of these parts, the cells for instance, the result of this reduction (the corresponding whole) is only a piece of organic matter; and if we consider the parts of its parts, we will obtain as result of this further reduction a piece of physical matter, every piece of which is still a piece of physical matter. On the contrary, a piece of a person's own body is neither a person nor a piece of a person.

All this allows us to give a more precise definition, after the ontological and phenomenological criteria, of essential individuality.

Here, however, we have to proceed without any more help from Husserl. Individuals in the essential sense would be defined as those wholes that do *not* have *immediately* constitutive *independent* parts. They would therefore be in-dividuals in the old and obsolete sense of the term: things that cannot be divided. However, since they have at least dependent *parts*, like all the wholes, their classical «indivisibility» does not prevent their essence from being *rich* and *articulated*. After venturing this formulation, I found the following definition in Duns Scotus, which seems to me to be working on the same intuition:

«?what I mean for individuation or numeric unity or *haecceitas*. I therefore do not mean the undetermined unity, by virtue of which every element of a species is numerically one,

but instead the «marked» unity, insofar as it is «actually that one», so that, as I said before, it is impossible to divide the individual in subjective parts».<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that our definition of the individuality of persons makes dualism impossible: dualism implies that a person has immediately constitutive *independent* parts. It is also clear that it makes reductionism impossible: the bilateral foundation between the whole and the parts does not involve the reducibility of what is founding to what is founded. Furthermore, that this solution is highly compatible with all the natural science of this world, biology and neuroscience included, is clear on the ground of the legitimacy, from the point of view of a phenomenological epistemology, of the operation of reductive abstraction that is necessary for the construction of general theories. Actually, a good part of the knowledge that we have acquired, and in particular the one that is expressed in theories that strongly enlighten their objects, stems precisely from this kind of reductive abstractions, from certain «cuts» operated on the wholes. This thesis is the very heart of Husserl's *Krisis*, which – incidentally – shows a strong continuity in Husserl's thought from the beginning to the end. In fact, Husserl's first, deep intuition relative to generalizing abstractions, which can be found in *Philosophy of Arithmetic* and is developed in the III Logic Investigation *On the theory of wholes and parts*, is still a milestone in the last phase of Husserl's thought.

There is one last *caveat* that should be added to the theory of essential individuality in order to prevent another philosophical position that does not do justice to phenomena. It is a clause that intends to preserve Leibniz's correct intuition that individuals in the essential sense are substances, and in some sense the *only* ones. Individuals in the essential sense are the wholes that do not have independent parts that are immediately constitutive and that *furthermore* can appear in other wholes only as *independent* parts: in other words, they cannot be ontologically subordinated to other individuals in the essential sense. A person can form, with other persons, a crowd, a group, or even a family or a community. These are individuals in a very *weak* sense of the term but after all not much weaker than a wall made from bricks. However, a person cannot form another essential individuality, a mystical body or a Totality in Hegel's sense. It is possible that the relationship with other individuals could become constitutive of the identity of people, yet this does not imply that there are substantial entities with respect to which people are only dependent variables, like *Zeitgeist*, Contexts, Cultures, Languages, and so on. Heideggerian moves are strictly forbidden in a Husserlian game...

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<sup>8</sup> Duns Scotus, op. cit., pp. 122–123.