
Contents

Introduction	1
Part One	5
1 Subjectivity and Ipseity	7
1.1 From Kant to cybernetics	9
1.2 The sense of self and the variety of experience	11
1.3 Nonlinear systems and the construction of the self	12
Nonlinear systems	12
Construction of the self	14
1.4 The organization of living systems and constructivism of the self	16
The organization of living systems	17
Constructivism of the self	18
1.5 Robert's self from a systemic perspective	21
1.6 The continuity of the sense of self	22
1.7 The return of the world and the question 'Who?'	23
Returning to the world	24
The question 'Who?' (<i>Die Werfrage</i>)	25
1.8 Finding itself in things and with others	27
1.9 Reflection	28
1.10 Meaning	29
1.11 Inclination	31
2 Ipseity and Language	37
2.1 Traces of the other	37
2.2 Shared meaning	39
2.3 <i>Finding</i> oneself in the world: suggestions from phenomenology	41
2.4 Body-to-body	43

2.5	The significativity of expressions and objects	46
2.6	Referential communication	47
2.7	Oneself in the mirror and in the refraction of language	50
2.8	Recognition of self in the mirror and in language	52
2.9	Affective engagements	55
2.10	Acting and speaking	57
3	Personal Identity	65
3.1	Speaking of the past	67
3.2	Stories of the future	68
3.3	The sense of self in the age of reason	70
3.4	The modes of identity	71
3.5	Inclinations	75
3.6	Situatedness	78
3.7	The body, pain and others	79
4	Emotioning	87
4.1	Embodied emotions and judgements of the body	87
4.2	E-moting	90
4.3	E-moting with others	93
4.4	Emotional inclinations	95
4.5	Constructionist situatedness	97
4.6	The impact of technology	99
4.7	Technological tuning	101
4.8	Mediated affective engagement	102
Part Two		107
5	The Eating Disorder-prone Style of Personality	111
5.1	Co-perceiving the self and other	114
5.2	Disorders	119
	Anorexia nervosa	119
	Bulimia nervosa	121
	Binge-eating disorder	124
	Disorders connected to male body shape	126
	Behavioural addictions (compulsive buying, pathological gambling, kleptomania, internet addiction, impulsive-compulsive sexual behaviour, pyromania)	128
6	The Obsessive-Compulsive-prone Style of Personality	133
6.1	<i>Michael Kohlhaas</i>	134
6.2	<i>Mr Prokharichin</i>	137
6.3	Disorders	141
	Thematic personality disorders	144
	Obsessive-compulsive disorders	150

6.4 Case vignettes	151
Uncertainty about one's own thoughts	151
Uncertainty about one's actions and their consequences	153
Uncertainty about one's sense of self	154
7 Personalities Prone to Hypochondria-Hysteria	157
7.1 The Loser	159
7.2 Disorders	163
Hysteria	165
Hypochondria	171
8 The Phobia-prone Style of Personality	179
8.1 Interoceptive awareness and emotional experience	180
8.2 'The stuffed bird'	182
8.3 Zuccarello the distinguished melodist	183
8.4 Case vignette	186
8.5 Disorders	188
The distortion of personal stability	188
The fear of fear	189
What is the origin of distorted beliefs?	191
Agoraphobia	194
8.6 Case vignettes	195
Specific phobia?	195
Spontaneous panic?	196
9 The Depression-prone Style of Personality	199
9.1 The margins of the problem	199
9.2 Enduring dispositions	203
9.3 The depression-prone style of personality	204
9.4 Disorders	212
9.5 Case vignette	214
9.6 Is depression an adaptation?	215
Message in a Bottle	221
References	223
Index	263

Introduction

The title of a book, like a proper name, defines its identity. There are three interweaving themes informing this text. The first is selfhood, which, in line with the continental hermeneutic–phenomenological tradition, we have termed ipseity – thus emphasizing the need to account for the way in which each person, in dealing with others and the different circumstances of everyday life, is present to himself and pre-reflexively conscious of himself. This perspective of selfhood emerges from the ontological need to grasp individuals from their ways of being rather than by conceptualizing them according to the same categories that are applied to objects.

It is this very need that underlines the second theme of the book, identity, which in relation to action and feeling raises the question of ‘who’ to a new level: that of temporality. Stating who a person is implies that all individual passions and actions be understood within the framework of a historical dimension characterized by the permanence of the person, designated by its proper name, as being the same over time. In line with the work of Ricoeur, we have come to envisage narrative as the act by means of which personal identity takes shape while events interweave to form a plot. It is through the various forms of narrative that the person acquires his historical identity, which we term ‘narrative identity’.

If narrative is what enables the individual to recognize his own experiences as personal experiences, and hence to identify himself, narrative variances can be seen to reflect different ways of experiencing one’s own life. It is on the basis of these reflections on the relation between the pre-reflexive dimension and its narrative configuration that we have approached the third theme of the book: the psychological typifying of personality according to different emotional tendencies which crystallize in the course of a person’s life and are reflected in the construction of his personal story. This is where we turn to the neurosciences and develop a psychopathology that can take account of continuity with

normal personality. From this perspective, our appeal to literary (as well as clinical) examples should be regarded as an engagement with an experimental field within which we can observe the variations and boundaries of the narrative and of its characters: a sort of laboratory allowing us to analyse the heterogeneous ‘experiments’ performed on identity, thus drawing literature and psychology closer together.

It was our wish for the cover of the book to be embellished by the reproduction of a painting: Francis Bacon’s ‘Study of George Dyer’. This original choice was due to the ontological perspective that informs our work – and which Bacon grasps in his painting: a perspective that sees the living body as a way of being in the world, and its happening as a wholly original phenomenon. We too, like Bacon, see the perceiving flesh and the perceived body as one. Unfortunately, although we did our best to elucidate the reasons why we wished to make use of this reproduction, the Bacon Estate did not grant us permission.

The text comprises two parts. Part One, in four chapters, explores the first two themes of the book. In the five following chapters, Part Two discusses the various styles of personality and the pathologies these may engender.

Chapter 1 focuses on the difference between the typically modern conceptualization of the Self and a view of ipseity that by placing one’s way of feeling in the world at the centre of its analysis reverses both the perspective on the meaning of experience and that on reflection and personal identity. Chapter 2 engages with the relation between ipseity and language, starting from the problem of individual understanding of the other, which has been addressed in developmental psychology and the neurosciences. The importance and limits of the Mirror Neuron System (MNS) as a means to explain the relation between experience and language represents the driving motive behind our argument. Chapter 3 introduces the question of how to account, by means of language, for the permanence of Self over time. Personal identity dynamically takes shape through the narrative act: through language, it reflects different emotional inclinations which, when configured into a story, allow the person to perceive himself as stably situated over time. These dispositions may be defined on a continuum that extends from the Inward to the Outward polarity, depending on whether the frame of reference adopted by the individual in his search for personal stability is predominantly based on the body or on an externally anchored system of coordinates.

Chapter 4, which ends the first section, turns to the psychology of emotions to explore the distinction traced in the previous chapter between Inward and Outward, showing how the different possible combinations along the continuum demarcated by these polarities correspond to different ways of feeling emotion. This emotional basis will be the foundation on which to present the different styles of personality that characterize the five chapters making up the second section of the book. Each style may thus manifest those characteristics that mark one of the two polarities in a more or less prevalent way, thereby finding a place within the continuum.

In the context of the Outward polarity, Chapter 5 explores issues surrounding the type of personality prone to eating disorders, while Chapter 6 examines the style prone to obsessive-compulsive disorders.

Unlike the previous styles of personality, the style prone to hysteria and hypochondria – the object of Chapter 7 – may be considered a sort of combination of the two polarities, as both are here used in the search for personal stability.

In the context of the Inward polarity, the styles of personality prone to phobias and depression are analyzed in Chapters 8 and 9, respectively.

Arguments fixed in the written form cannot but show the influence of the conversations, debates and exchanges of ideas that have accompanied us during the writing of this text: in particular, our meetings and walks with Vittorio Gallese, in whose company we spent many late nights discussing the meaning of experience and its neural substrate – an experience often enriched by our discussions on phenomenology and the philosophy of science with Corrado Sinigaglia. To these we should add our weekly reflections on research methodology, genetics, psychiatry and neurosciences with Alessandro Bertolino; our daily dialogues on developmental psychology, the neurosciences and psychotherapy with Viridiana Mazzola; our pondering on the themes of ancient philosophy with Michele Alessandrelli and on hermeneutics with Elizbieta O'Bara.

On the day on which this introduction was written, one of our pupils, Martina Grilli, lost her life in a car accident. She too took part in the conversations that contributed to shape this book. We express our most profound and sincere gratitude to Martina and all our students for their curiosity and eagerness to learn, and for the confidence they placed in us by choosing us as their teachers.

We warmly wish to thank the many people who have supported us, or have otherwise contributed to the writing of this book. Both of us would particularly like to thank:

Professors Mario Maj and Norman Sartorius, for their strong support towards the fulfilment of this project;

Professor Marcello Nardini, for having supported the empirical researches that enrich this volume through his discrete presence;

Professors Francois Ferrero and Gilles Bertschy, who have been constant sources of encouragement and support and, above all, have allowed us to meet regularly during the preparation of the manuscript;

our friend Maurizio Bigioni, for his warm and generous support of Ipra research;

our Ipra colleagues in Rome, Bari, Reggio Emilia and Tenerife, our colleagues at the Slop of Tortona and those at the post-rationalist centres of Santiago and Buenos Aires;

the members of the Depression and Bipolar Programs of the Department of Psychiatry of the University Hospitals of Geneva, and particularly Jean-Michel Aubry, Lucio Bizzini, Françoise Jermann and Béatrice Weber, whose pragmatism, wisdom and wit have been an inspiration in times of self-doubt;

our families, for their unwavering support, and especially Marie, Julie and 'Leopardo' for their kindness and patience.

Finally, special thanks goes out to Sergio Knipe and Steve McKend for their hermeneutical sensitivity in helping us to put the work into the final English form and to Fiona Woods for her professional competence and unconditional support.