

On the Cornerstones of Personhood, the Creation of the Self, and the Formation of Individual Identity.

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Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Chapter 1.1 – The Identity of Things	5
Chapter 1.2 – The Identity of Persons	10
Chapter 1.3 – The Creation of the Self	16
Chapter 2 – Cornerstones of Personhood: The Attribution of Character	24
Chapter 2.1 – Race	26
Chapter 2.2 – Nationhood	34
Chapter 2.3 – Gender	43
Chapter 2.4 – Sexuality	53
Chapter 3 – Social Facts and Retreat to Facticity	60

Abstract

This thesis aims to set out some provisional theories as to the essential factors that motivate a person to give notable prominence to a particular aspect of their person and thereby orient their attitudes and behaviours to the expression of that aspect and, in some cases, the pursuit of the right to do so. This is achieved in three chapters. The first chapter concerns the nature of identity. I draw upon the work of David Hume in explaining how identity is constituted in the being of an object, and go on to explore how such definitions can be applied to human identity, highlighting some of the problems that Hume encountered. In an effort to address these issues, I draw on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre to explain how it is possible for a person to apprehend their own self, and set out to demonstrate how Sartre's theory accounts for the creation of a personal sense of self, and the consequences thereof. Where relevant, I indicate how Sartre's view complements or resembles Hume's earlier account to demonstrate the concordance between them. The second chapter consists of four short, but focused studies of significant 'cornerstones' of personhood in an attempt to demonstrate how the phenomena described in the first chapter come to bear in real world situations. These studies of race, nationhood, gender, and sexuality should serve to demonstrate that there is a consistent and relatively predictable pattern of stimulus and response that results in a person placing particular emphasis on one of these cornerstones. The third chapter expands upon the themes introduced in chapter 1, explicating their relationship to each other and to the real world, culminating in the conclusion that the way in which individuals perceive themselves in relation to the world has a specific and identifiable behavioural response with specific social consequences.

Introduction

The subject of personal identity has in recent years, I believe, entered into the public consciousness and thus taken on a certain prominence in matters concerning civil rights and just representation. In broad terms, this thesis aims to set out some provisional theories as to the essential factors that motivate a person to give notable prominence to a particular aspect of their person and thereby orient their attitudes and behaviours to the expression of that aspect and, in some cases, the pursuit of the right to do so.

To this end, I shall first set out an account of the nature of identity as a concept, largely according to the account of David Hume, which I believe to capture the truth of the matter quite well. Subsequently, I shall explain how the concept of identity is perceived by humans to apply to issues of human identity, and then attempt an explanation of how human identity is really constituted, by reference to the account of phenomenological existentialism, and particularly to Jean-Paul Sartre who I believe provides answers to some of the problems that Hume discovered in his writings on personal identity. I believe that the gap between human perceptions of our personal identities and the reality of such, should reveal some insights into the kinds of causes that motivate the prominence of a particular aspect of one's being over others. After this, I shall seek to demonstrate some of the ways in which these causes can be seen to influence behaviours in real life, using a number of short, focused studies on a number of significant 'cornerstones' of personhood (namely race, nationality, gender, and sexuality). I believe that it should become apparent that each of these characteristics resemble one another with regards to how they are incorporated into an individual's sense of self. It is my hope that, having established some pattern to these causes, and made sense of the reasons why people may characterise themselves in terms of only a few aspects of their identity, it will be easier to identify the most prudent means of pursuing future inquiries, and potentially to more easily address the causes of issues of civil rights and/or representation.

Chapter 1.1

The Identity of Things

It should not be controversial I think, to begin by asserting that everyone has some idea of who they are. Putting aside any thought of the accuracy of that perception, or the universality of its application, it should at the very least be trivial to believe that everyone, or at the very least everyone who has not suffered any significant psychological distress such that they have lost that idea, has some sense of their own self which they could describe to someone else, with some degree of comprehension. The degree of comprehension they exhibit need not be particularly great, need not contain any philosophical or metaphysical clarity, and they need not refer to any aspect of themselves that has more than even a trifling relevance to the matter. All that should be necessary for us to believe that everyone has some sense of self, is that everyone capable of uninhibited communication should have the capacity to understand that people can describe themselves. The reason I take such care in establishing the truth of this very small matter, is that there are some, I am sure, who would jump the gun at this stage and begin introducing scepticism to the arguments presented in this section which have only descriptive purpose for the time being. The principal focus of this section is to establish the process by which the identities of objects or individuals are perceived. This matter is necessary for the conduct of any conversation regarding identity, first in order to establish the manner in which we ought to be discussing it and second, to clearly define any potential gaps between the perceived identity of a thing, and its reality.

I shall first clarify that when I use the word 'identity' I am referring to any object that is denoted when referring to one thing rather than any other things¹. In this sense, identity is the opposite of diversity, which refers to the plurality of objects that is denoted when referring to many things rather than a single thing. Now that those definitions have been made explicit, we can approach our first major question. How do we know which things have identity? The bulk of this question (and indeed many related questions) has been addressed by David Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), but his account is

¹That is to say, one single entity, apprehended by the consciousness as a single unique thing (one house rather than another, for example), which is indivisible into simpler concepts without the sense of the original thing passing out of conscious apprehension (a whole house rather than an individual brick within it).

notoriously difficult to penetrate, so it will be prudent to systematically attend to Hume's descriptions and render them as clear as possible for further reference.

In the *Treatise*, Hume describes identity in terms of objects within our perception, of which the ideas we possess remain 'invariable and uninterrupted' (THN, pg301). This definition is likened to 'sameness' and has significant strength to it. By this account we understand that an object can have identity if and only if it is always identifiable by its own *particular* identity. Diversity on the other hand, is characterised by difference. Any two objects with different properties may be said to be diverse from one another, and therefore cannot be attributed with a single identity; at best they can be described as having *two* distinct identities. There is unfortunately, a gap here between our understanding of these concepts, and our practical perceptions. Consider the example of a teacup that was purchased in pristine condition but has sustained some small damage and developed a chip on one edge. The owner of this teacup is unlikely to regard the teacup as different to the teacup they originally bought. After all, a chipped teacup greatly resembles an undamaged teacup, and the chip may not even be noticed for some time. In this case, even though the object of the teacup without a chip is diverse from the teacup with a chip, whoever happens to own the teacup would regard it in much the same manner after the damage had occurred as they did before. However, if the teacup were to sustain successive small damages such that a piece of the cup eventually fell away and the whole cup was unable to contain any liquid, at that point the owner would regard the cup differently. Even if they would not identify the cup as a different cup to that which they had bought, they would at least acknowledge that the identity of the cup had changed markedly in terms of its unified properties. Certainly then, the mind happily overlooks the diversity of certain properties simply because it does not perceive them as significant alterations, until the diversity of properties is so apparent that one cannot help but perceive the difference.

The teacup is recognisably different by the end due to a change in its *intrinsic* properties, those properties which are essential to its form and mass etc. However, there is a body of opinion, albeit a controversial one, that would extend the principle of diversity to instances of an object separated by only *relational* properties, those properties that define an object in terms of its extrinsic relations to other objects. I should stress, this view is not necessary to this thesis, but it allows a very pure reading of the argument of diversity that should assist in our understanding of the gap between the identity of objects and human perception of such. With that in mind, I shall take the example of my desk. As I stare at my

desk in front of me, I perceive only a single object. It is large, flat and wooden, and as I continue to observe it, it offers to me no indication that any of those properties are likely to change. However, I am aware that my desk does possess properties that I cannot perceive with my physical senses. It has a spatial position that changes constantly by virtue of the earth's movement, and it has a temporal quality, a 'when-ness' that is also constantly changing, to name just two. My desk can have the property of being on the eastern side of my room, or it can have the property of being on the western side, but it cannot have both, thus a desk that exists on the eastern side of my room has a different set of properties to a desk on the western side, and therefore is identifiably different. This difference is seemingly trivial granted, but if we take relational properties to be as significant as intrinsic ones, it is a difference nonetheless. Likewise, yesterday my desk existed on a Saturday, but today it exists on a Sunday. The Saturday-desk had a set of properties that differ from those of a Sunday-desk. Possibly I rested something on the Saturday-desk that I would not have rested on the Sunday-desk, or weather conditions on the Saturday differed from those on the Sunday such that the desk changed shape slightly². Regardless, I must conclude that the desk I am leaning on today possesses a set of properties that are diverse from the desk I leant on yesterday which I thought to be the same desk. If those two objects are diverse from one another, which I now know that they are, then I know that in spite of the evidence of my practical perceptions, my desk today does not share identity with my desk yesterday, so is not the same desk, as I habitually assume it to be. By this account, by some quirk of perception I routinely believe that diverse objects have unitary identity (THN pg 302), a thing that I know to be impossible.

As I said, this view is controversial, and should not be necessary to my arguments in this thesis, however, I believe it still reveals some useful information to us. Consider; every object possesses some set of properties which are defined in relation to the similar properties of other objects. For example, my drinking glass possesses the spatial property of being a certain distance from my bookcase, as defined in relation to the bookcase's own spatial properties³ (size, dimensions, location in my house etc.). While these kinds of

² This is an example of the way in which relational properties participate in grounding the identity of the entity to which they pertain (see Cameron, 2014). The Saturday-desk is a particular desk-object that stands in a relation to Saturday such that relevant properties of Saturday can act upon the properties of the desk, thus creating an entity which is unique insofar as it bears a relation to Saturday which no other desk can bear.

³ For a more practical example, see Kit Fine's essay 'Things and Their Parts', where he proposes that multiple entities can be united into a single whole by virtue of their relationship to one-another, as in the relation of multiple flowers into the being of a single 'bunch' of flowers. (Fine, 1999).

properties might not necessarily be essential to the identity of an object, we use them in the same way as we do intrinsic properties, in order to denote a particular object as distinct from others, and we are subject to the same errors in either case. There is a humorous example of this error in the film *Moulin Rouge!* (Luhrmann, 2001), wherein Harold Zidler identifies the Duke of Monroth to his courtesan Satine as 'the man Toulouse-Lautrec is waving his handkerchief at'. Of course, by the time Satine turns around to see, Toulouse is waving his handkerchief at a different man, and hilarity ensues. We can see that this mistake follows the same pattern whether it concerns intrinsic or relational properties. Just as one might misidentify a damaged teacup as an undamaged teacup due to ignorance of the fact that the set of intrinsic properties which define an undamaged teacup no longer pertain when one makes the identification, so Satine misidentifies a man who is not the Duke of Monroth as the Duke, due to ignorance of the fact that the relational property by which she identified the Duke no longer pertained when she made her identification. In a more likely scenario, if I were to have two empty cups of tea on my table, one of which I had drunk from and the other of which had been used by a guest, I might want to reuse the cups in order to make new cups of tea, but have forgotten which cup was mine and which was my guest's. In this case, the fact that the relational property of 'being drunk from by me' no longer pertains to the cup compromises my ability to identify the correct cup. I might therefore misidentify my guest's cup as my own because the differences between the two cups were too slight for me to perceive.

There are, however, cases where the changes undergone by an object are significant, and even though the changes are acknowledged by everyone nearby, we still tend not to ascribe different identity to the object after the change than before. There are two cases which Hume describes, in which we make this kind of error. It is important to note however, that these examples do not undermine the idea that it is the smallness of some changes that cause us difficulty in perceiving difference. In fact, they are simply cases where the changes taking place, while materially significant, have only minimal impact on those aspects of an object that we perceive to be most relevant to that object's identity. Hume first takes the example of a church (THN, pp305-306) that falls to ruin and is rebuilt. Even though every brick of the church may well be different once rebuilt to those used in the original, the tendency may well arise in the parishioners to think of the new building as the very same church as the old one. The only properties consistent between the old and new churches are the relationship they bear to the parish and its parishioners. Hume tell us that

this is because the first church was totally absent before construction on the second was begun. As such the parishioners will never have been in a position to see before them, two separate buildings, and the idea of multiplicity will never have been presented to them in this regard (THN, pg306). In this way, the property of the church that has most relevance to the parishioners – its relationship to the parish – can never have been questioned. Had there been two churches simultaneously, the parishioners may have been forced to think of each church differently. However, there was initially only one church with a fixed relationship to the parish, followed by a period where there was no church, followed by a new church, materially different in every way, but bearing the same relationship to the parish as did the original, and so in the minds of the parishioners, the very same church.

The second type of case in which significant changes do not seem sufficient to correct our perceptions are those where significant change is expected, and thus the idea of an object that we have is of an object that undergoes change. A river, though in constant motion and never comprised of the same material, is always thought of as being the same river, since the idea we have of rivers is of a channel through which vast quantities of water constantly flow. Hence, the changes that a river undergoes do not significantly alter our perception of the river, and we are able to maintain our idea of the river as a unitary object (THN, p306). Were the water in a river to suddenly become still, we might well question if it were still a river at all, and not in fact a lake. From this we see that in order for us to acknowledge the river's diversity from itself, we would need to witness a change of a type that we did not expect to witness.

Chapter 1.2

The Identity of Persons

Having garnered some understanding of the nature of object identity and the ways in which it is misinterpreted by our perceptions, it is now possible to advance to the more nuanced matter of personal identity. As previously explained, we are accustomed to perceiving the identity of objects as an apparent continuity. It is not however, all that distressing to admit upon philosophical reflection, that the identity of objects is not as permanent as it seems. After all, it makes very little difference to our lives on a day-to-day basis whether we are able to precisely identify the properties of any given object. Unfortunately, when introducing the notion of personhood to the discussion, it becomes substantially more difficult even to conceive of a situation where the nature of one's own identity is anything less than an unbroken continuity. Obviously, there are situations where one's perception of this apparent continuity is interrupted (as with the case of unconsciousness), or otherwise clouded (in the case of faulty memories). Nevertheless, it is the natural inclination of the mind to presume that the gaps in one's perception are joined by a seamless continuity of consciousness that one happens not to be able to perceive.

On first glance however, it does seem as if all the reasons for believing that object identity is impermanent and changing, should apply equally to all individual human identities. Certainly, this is the case with our physical bodies; one would be hard pressed to argue convincingly that our bodies are unchanging objects. Certainly also, the way our bodies change is such that we can explain why we think of them as consistent using the same object identity arguments that we can apply to any inanimate object. We can understand how we think about our own timeline by analogy to Hume's river, as a thing that changes so consistently that we are able to forget what such a change implies. We can think about how certain events affect us using the teacup example, about how each event changes us in sufficiently small a way that we may not even notice the changes occurring until much later, after which we may be happy to admit that we have changed, though not necessarily to admit that the change is sufficient to call that old version of the self a different person. Unfortunately, our perceptions regarding our own selves seem to be so near to us that we can be reluctant to even look for the gaps that our subconscious attempts to fill. When regarding inanimate objects we can persuade ourselves to ignore the apparent continuity they have to our perception, and identify those processes that cause us to make the

mistakes that are so habitual to us. When we turn that gaze inwards though, we instead find ourselves striving to find some reason why the same cannot be true of ourselves. There may be any number of reasons for this⁴, but I do not see that it is important for us here. It is necessary only to know that we are often averse to the idea that we are in any way transient.

This fear is compounded by Hume's rather persuasive arguments as to the nature of human identity. He famously asserted in the Treatise that;

“when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other...and never can observe anything but the perception”.

(THN 1.4.6.2)

By this he meant that at any time one would make an attempt to discern what it is that constitutes identity, one always finds that the identity is comprised only of perceptions. He can never observe anything but the perception because it is of course impossible to make an observation and not find a perception, such is the nature of observation. The concern for those who would imagine themselves to be a continuous entity arises once we understand that those perceptions each have a distinct existence. No two perceptions bear more than a trivial resemblance to one another and must therefore be said to be unique. Moreover, no two simultaneous perceptions need relate to one another in any way. If I happen to have a dull aching pain in my foot one day, but nevertheless notice myself to be in a good mood, it seems difficult to suggest that my perception of the pain in my foot has any relevance to the simultaneous perception of my good mood. So long as we are attentive to the distinctions between our successive perceptions, it is Hume's contention that;

“The identity...is not able to run the several different perceptions into one, and make them lose their characters of distinction and difference which are essential to them”

(THN 1.4.6.9)

Which means that we have no genuine means by which we can find any real relationship between our successive perceptions, and therefore can find no reason why we should

⁴ In order to determine some simple causal relationship between past and present selves as a means of understanding oneself, perhaps, or even as a means of justifying one's present demeanour to oneself or others. Regardless, the identity of the self should not be considered to be markedly different to the identity of an object in this regard.

continue to believe that our perceptions relate to one another at all. Furthermore, once separated from the notion that successive perceptions have any inherent relationship with one another, we begin to lose the sense that our perceptions correspond to the apparently enduring object that we call the self. In turn, we lose confidence in the idea of the self as a whole, due to the difficulty we face in trying to justify why successive perceptions should become implicitly related in such a way as to produce a coherent account of the self, for no other reason than the fact that the thing we presume to *be* our self happens to be able to perceive them all. An argument that relies on the existence of the whole self in order to justify the relationship between its own disparate perceptions is clearly circular, and without an argument akin to the cartesian cogito (1643) to justify the existence not just of the self, but of the enduring self, the impossibility of this state of affairs leads us to the conclusion that there is no such thing as an enduring self.

We cannot, however, conclude that there is no such thing as the self whatsoever. The cogito affirms the fact of one's own existence in at least some regard so we must conclude that while of course we exist, there is some perceptual error affecting us such that we are incapable of perceiving the proper nature of our existence. This error can be explained if we turn our attention to the relationship between subjective consciousness and the process of the identification of an object as undertaken by that consciousness. To hold up any object to one's consciousness is to be conscious of that object⁵. However, one's consciousness can apprehend only a single totality of being at any given time. To explain; when looking at a bicycle, I can apprehend the bicycle as a complete, unified entity, a totality of being with a specific nature that is defined by the totality itself. Alternatively, I can apprehend the bicycle as an assemblage of parts, as a wheel, connected to a frame, and a chain and another wheel, and a whole mess of other components, each of which is a complete unified entity with a totality of being of its own that is radically different to that of the bike as a whole. When looking at the bike, I see it as a bike and I understand its function, its shape, its mechanism, all these things are present to my consciousness. When

⁵ This is a phenomenological view to which Sartre subscribes inasmuch as the manner in which an object is seen or conceptualised defines its meaning to the consciousness to which that object is present. This is also how experience is characterised by Husserl in his *Ideas* (1913), though Sartre accused Husserl of being a Phenomenalist (one who believes objects exist only as perceptual phenomena) rather than a Phenomenologist (one who studies the structure of consciousness) due to his reluctance to pass beyond 'the plane of functional description' (Sartre, 1946, p97). It should be acknowledged that the phenomenological account does not go uncontested, and notable objections come from Derrida (1967) and Foucault (1970), but for the purposes of my argument, I shall assume the phenomenological position in order to explain how objects pass into and out of conscious apprehension, a matter which I do not believe to bear the brunt of the objection to phenomenological accounts of consciousness.

looking at a single wheel, I understand a function, shape, or mechanism that differs drastically from that of a whole bike. In this case, only the properties of the single wheel are present to my consciousness. These perceptions cannot overlap. When looking at the wheel, I may have the impression that the wheel contributes to a larger mechanism that I call a bike, but the impression of the bike that is present to my consciousness while I am observing only the wheel is not an impression derived from the bike's own factual existence. Rather, it is an impression derived from my memory, from my understanding of the concept of bicycles in general. Moreover, if I turn my consciousness to the idea of a bike that I hold in my head, the wheel has passed out of my consciousness altogether, to be replaced by the new image of a merely hypothetical bicycle⁶.

We can see then, that it is the consciousness itself that determines how certain impressions are totalised into comprehensible entities representing a particular totality of being which is its identity. Equally though, we see that the consciousness is also responsible for the de-totalisation of these entities from our subjective perception, for dissolving the clear image of the complete entity that was held in the mind and allowing it to pass out of our conscious apprehension. Once the consciousness has veered away from a particular perception and turned to another, the earlier impression loses all vivacity, remaining in the consciousness as a limpid memory. A de-totalised impression fades into the background, it is apprehended by the consciousness merely as part of everything that is 'not this thing that I am thinking about right now', or more succinctly as 'not this'.

This explains why we seem not to be able to identify anything but disparate, distinct perceptions. When we 'enter most intimately into what we call ourselves' as Hume did, we turn our consciousness inwards and reveal each perception across which we stumble to our consciousness. The consciousness, as we do so, totalises the perception into a unified totality of being so that it may be perceived and comprehended. At the same time as the consciousness totalises one perception, it de-totalises all potential others, hence the particular perception that is the object of our consciousness at the time is apprehended as separate from all other perceptions that we might perceive. This is not to say that our perceptions actually *are* connected of course. Hume is quite right in his assessment that

⁶ This view, characterised by its emphasis on the apprehension of an object as an intentional mental state, is found throughout phenomenological ideas, expressed most similarly to this by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1946), but also rooted in other notable works like Brentano's *Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) and Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900).

each of our perceptions is distinct from all others, and only one of these perceptions at a time can appear to the consciousness as a totality of being, as a complete and irreducible entity in and of itself. However, the manner in which they are distinct is not the same manner in which my pens, for example, are distinct. Instead it is more akin to the manner in which my body parts are distinct from one another. Apprehended individually as a unified totality, my foot is identifiably different from my hand, but when de-totalised to my consciousness, both return to the single unified totality which is my body, which itself is never apprehended as a collection of parts, but always as a whole single object. Our more abstract feelings then, of joy or sadness, of pain or pleasure etc., these feelings can be apprehended individually by the totalising consciousness, but always return to the single unified being of my existence just as my hand and foot always return to the being of my body. In a sense then, it is not in spite of looking that Hume cannot find anything but a perception, but precisely *because* he looks.

From this we should understand that whilst perceptions are discontinuous from one another, this does not stop them from interacting with the being that is the self in such a way as to produce a wholly different entity. After all, the front wheel of a bike is not continuous with the rear wheel, nor the chain, nor the frame. Yet, when apprehended not as individual objects but all at once as 'bike', the unified totality of being projects a form and function entirely different from those of the constituent parts. It is as if an entirely new entity is formed only by the sheer congruence of discontinuous parts. We already know that identity cannot be defined by continuity over time, as there is no possibility of any entity possessing an entirely unchanging set of properties. Now though, we are in a position to define identity in a better sense. Perhaps identity in general is best defined as 'a specific unified totality of being defined by the atemporal congruence of some particular set of more basic objects or properties'. To extend this definition to include Personal identity we need only specify that the basic objects or properties must be congruent with each other via a subjective consciousness. Using this definition we find that we are no longer worried about the identity of things being reasoned away to nothingness. We can be quite comfortable that objects exist in such a way as to have an identity, and one that is identifiable by human minds. Equally, we are no longer challenged by the apparent possibility of reducing human existence to a nothingness, since we understand that a mediating consciousness is capable of discerning the difference between a basic impression apprehended as a contingent part of a significant whole, and the same impression

apprehended as an entity in-itself alone. The only problem remaining to us is that of bridging the gap between the generalised atemporal structure of identity, and the apparent temporality of individual human identities. Our definition of identity allows us to believe that human identity is definable, but clearly this is not enough. We must explain the mechanism by which human identities are continuously redefined, and how the impression of a continuous self is produced with relation to real experience.

Chapter 1.3

The Creation of the Self

The issue we are left with is that the account of identity we have just arrived at only allows us to identify an object in the here-and-now, irrespective of whatever its nature might have been or might go on to be. Since, however, we tend to consider ourselves as existing over time, we are met with a new problem. If the nature of identity is atemporal, why is it that personal identity feels as though it is affected by temporal concerns? A being that exists in a purely atemporal sense with a finite set of properties would be a being of pure facticity, an entity defined by immutable and unchanging properties. Such a being would be incapable even of responding to external forces, let alone producing change in itself. Given that this is not the nature of human existence, there must be some other function or property of human existence that unites the property of abstract atemporal *being*, with the property of change, which is an inherently temporal property.

I should add a brief clarification here; when discussing temporalized identity, it is important to note that I am not concerned with the nature of time in general. For the purposes of this work, we are concerned only with the nature of identity as it appears to the subjective human consciousness, and time appears to progress linearly to the subjective consciousness. Hence, identity also appears to the consciousness as a thing affected by temporality, thus it is important to discern how the atemporal identity, which in temporal terms is best described as the immediate 'now', is affected by the apparent past and how it projects itself into the apparent future.

Since we have already established the nature of the identity in the 'now', it seems that the best way to progress will be to establish how the concepts of past and future are made manifest to the consciousness of the present. We know that the present cannot be linked to the past and future by the sense of continuity that seems to be implied by memory, since it is always possible to de-totalise the contents of a given perception of a period of time, a thing which should not be possible if there were any necessary connection other than selective consciousness binding more basic perceptions to one-another⁷. With this in mind, we can remind ourselves that the consciousness itself is the thing binding all our

⁸That is to say, that if two memories were joined together by anything other than the presumption of a causal relationship, it would not be possible to think of one memory without the other. The fact that memories can be separated from one another implies that they are not implicitly related.

perceptions together, which means that the totalising consciousness makes our perceptions of the past and future the object of its gaze in the 'now'; for example, the memory of a party where one met a lover might be called into the present consciousness, and for as long as that memory remains in the consciousness, its relevance to the present is clear and identifiable. Once the memory fades though, the relationship between that past experience and the present experience has de-totalised and falls into obscurity until it is called back into consciousness, but nevertheless changing the nature of oneself by virtue of having appeared at all. Likewise, the aspiration to become an astronaut in the future would be held in the present consciousness as an objective with specific relevance and importance to the present being, defining the self in the present, but passing into obscurity once that aspiration passes out of one's present consciousness.

In this way, we can see how the past and/or the future is made simultaneous with the present consciousness for as long as it is the object of focus, and as such it is made a congruent feature of the unified totality of being that is the self as soon as it is de-totalised from consciousness, in the same way that the wheel of a bike is revealed to be only a small part of the greater entity that is the whole bike once one apprehends the bike as a whole. In this way we can understand how it is possible to perceive a linear timeline from an atemporal perspective, in terms of the precise way these perceptions present themselves to the consciousness. The past is simple enough to describe, it appears to the consciousness as Memory, the idea of experiences that once affected the self but do so no longer. The future is slightly more difficult, since it cannot be apprehended as a definite experience in the same way as the past. Instead, any possible future must be conceived as an overarching Prospect, a prospective mode of being that the consciousness perceives to have the potential to be the goal of a project of personal development.

The process by which the consciousness produces the impression of a unified totality of being relies heavily on these impressions. Put very simply, Memory provides the impression of *having been*, and Prospect provides the impression of the *possibility of being or doing some particular x*⁸. To the consciousness, Memory seems to be the entire basis for the existence of the self. When analysing the contents of one's memories closely, the

⁸ Sartre calls this a Possible, which he describes as "the something which the For-itself lacks **in order** to be itself" (BN, p126). By this, he means that the being needs to pursue some Possible, so as to exist as an entity that continually surpasses itself and thereby escapes facticity. I use the term 'Prospect' in order to place greater emphasis on the aspect of motive, which has particular relevance to my arguments here.

consciousness is able to pick out apparent causal chains and describe how the being-that-was (the entity that exists in memory) becomes the being-that-is (the entity that exists in the present). This impression we know to be false. Memories are often fraught with misremembered details⁹, and large sections of time unaccounted for simply because they were not characterised by sufficiently significant events (THN, pp309-310). More than this, memories are viewed from the perspective of the being-that-is and are coloured by the attitudes of that being. Nevertheless, for as long as it is not the object of conscious apprehension, memory is de-totalised, and becomes only an indistinct part of the nebula of de-totalised impressions that comprise the being-that-is. In a very real, albeit limited sense, Memory *is* the being-that-is, in the sense that there exists a mutually defining relationship between the totality of the Memory and that of the being-that-is. The Memory can have no character if it is not defined by the totalising consciousness of the being-that-is, and yet once appraised by said consciousness, the Memory makes present to the consciousness all the commonalities between the being-that-was and the being-that-is, making evident all the ways in which the being-that-was has defined the being-that-is, thus explicating the nature of the being-that-is in its facticity.

We know, however, that we are not beings of pure facticity. There remains present to the consciousness the impression of the possibility of change. This impression confers upon the being-that-is the idea that it could be otherwise. This impression is unique to the being-that-is, we do not believe that the being-that-was is changeable in and of itself. We may wish it vainly, but we know that it exists in facticity and thus cannot be changed. The being-that-is, on the other hand, appears to us as a being of contingency, its nature continually redefined by its own consciousness' apprehension of itself and the world. In short, the being-that-is escapes its facticity by virtue of an array of potential Prospects.

A Prospect, with relation to the self, is the possibility of a given state of being expressed as an achievable end. In simple terms, a Prospect is the end result of some course of action. The significance of the prospect to human identity is manifest in the fact that Prospects cannot pertain to beings of facticity, since the Prospect is produced in the consciousness of the being-that-is as an apprehension of the possibility not simply of change, but of effected change, or more accurately, change effected by the agency of the being-that-is. The Prospect presents to the being-that-is the idea of another being, a being-that-could-be. The

⁹ See the work of Elizabeth Loftus, notably Loftus & Palmer, 1974 and Loftus & Hoffman, 1989

relationship between the being-that-is and the being-that-could-be is such that the consciousness can apprehend the consequence of a given course of action in terms of changes to personhood. The most relevant concern for us here is the change effected in the being-that-is upon apprehension of a being-that-could-be as the objective – the goal – of one’s being. Once the consciousness of the being-that-is is sufficiently motivated by relevant beliefs and impressions that it resolves to aspire to a particular state of being, it begins the process of escaping facticity. The being-that-is in this state has entered into what Sartre refers to as a ‘project’¹⁰ of being, an ongoing project in the pursuit of which the agent gives themselves criteria against which to judge the propriety of decisions with regards to a comprehensible framework; namely, whether or not a decision is more or less in line with the being-that-could-be that exists as one’s chosen Prospect which is the objective of one’s ongoing project of being.

We can now begin to piece together some account of why our existence appears to proceed in a linear temporal fashion, even though the locus of one’s consciousness is within the apparently atemporal entity of the being-that-is. We can see how the impressions of past-being and future-being can appear to the consciousness individually, in terms of the relationship both of those impressions have with the consciousness of the being-that-is. We can see that the being-that-was is linked to the being-that-is by a relationship of mutual affirmation, each testifying to the nature of the other. For example, the memory of a feeling of satisfaction arising from victory in a competition during one’s youth might testify to a being-that-is characterised in part by a competitive personality, and the mere ability to reflect upon that memory and draw the link from the past to the present testifies to a being-that-was characterised in part by that same competitive nature. Likewise, any being-that-could-be that exists as the object focus of the being-that-is, is linked to the being-that-is by a relationship of attitudes, either of approbation or aversion. For example, a desire held by the being-that-is to be an astronaut in the future, is presumably shared by the being-that-could-be that *is* an astronaut. For as long as the being-that-is shares that desire with the being-that-could-be that represents the realisation of it, the two entities are joined by attitude and intention. In either case, the being-that-could-be is apprehended by the being-that-is as the product of possible actions which are within the remit of the being-that-is to perform. Hence, we can see how these two impressions, of past-being and future-

¹⁰ “Both verb and noun. It refers to the For-Itself’s choice of its way of being and is expressed by action in the light of a future end” (BN, p654)

being, are congruous with one another via the mediating presence of the consciousness of the being-that-is, a consciousness which represents the impression of present-being. While it is true that upon reflection on any one of these three impressions, the consciousness automatically separates it from the combined whole and makes it appear as a complete entity on its own, independent from the entity of the combined whole, we know nevertheless, that for as long as these impressions are not the object of the consciousness' attention, they are each de-totalised into the unique totality of being that represents the whole being of an individual. In this state, the congruence between them is generic, the borders between them indistinct, allowing the consciousness to make the same presumption that we all do, that we are temporal beings, existing through linear time.

With this understanding of the manner in which more general concepts of personal identity are perceived, we can now begin to determine more about how the consciousness creates a specific image of personhood, a self-image. In the strictest sense, a self-image can never be truly representative of the self it hopes to represent, since an image of a thing is, by necessity, not the thing of which it is an image. What the self-image *is* then, is the reflection of characteristics that appear prominently to the consciousness of the being-that-is. In much the same way that the image reflected by a mirror is only an image of the physical characteristics opposite the plane of the mirror, self-image is an image that reflects a totality of only those characteristics that are presented to the consciousness at the time. We know however, that once a property or characteristic is presented to the consciousness, it is separated from consciousness and loses its contiguity with the being-that-is. Self-image then, when apprehended by consciousness, is a thing that exists as a totality of being in itself¹¹ as the object of consciousness but separated from consciousness as the result of being its object. Hence, self-image is a being of facticity, a being-that-was paired with a being-that-is, but devoid of the being-that-could-be marking the objective of a project of being. In other words, self-image is an entity that belongs to a consciousness that knows what kind of being it has been, and the kind of being that it is, and the presumptive causal relationship between the two, but since this image is constructed by apprehending the synthesised totality of beings past and present (both beings of facticity), this image of the self lacks the capacity to formulate an ongoing project of being. This would suggest that any appeal to an existing self-image as a means of defining one's personhood rather than

¹¹ And indeed, is an example of being-in-itself, by the Sartrean terminology (BN, 1946)

to a positively regarded being-that-could-be constitutes the pursuit of facticity, the desire to be unchanging, which is an impossible endeavour.

Not only is this endeavour impossible, but the very attempt to achieve it constitutes a hindrance to the pursuit of a Prospect, a pursuit that characterises the essential distinction between the identity of humans and the identity of objects. Engagement with a project of being is the thing that signifies the movement of a human consciousness from facticity to transcendence, a word used by Sartre (1946) to indicate the process of continuously becoming more than is implied by the being-in-itself, becoming more than the sum of its parts, like a pile of components giving rise to the being of a bike, or an assemblage of combusting gases giving rise to the being of the sun. It is important to keep in mind that facticity is not a state attainable by humans. We are conscious beings and therefore continuously changing in response to our changing environments and experiences. The only means by which a human can attain facticity is to stop changing altogether which, in practical terms, can only be attained at death. This means that the attempt to pursue facticity always fails before it has even truly begun, hence it is not implicitly devastating for one to make the attempt (it should become evident in fact, that humans frequently do, and often with little harm done), but it is misguided.

The crux of the issue is found in the moment where one pauses in order to reflect on what one is, or how one is behaving. While reflecting on the nature of one's being, one makes oneself the object of one's consciousness. This entails that one's self has been separated from one's consciousness, for much the same reason that one cannot see one's own eyes. In order to see one's own eyeball, it would first need to be removed, at which point it would not strictly *be* one's eye any longer. The same applies to the self. In order to apprehend one's own being, one first needs to totalise it as a being-in-itself, which is a being of facticity, and therefore a being which does not represent one's nature accurately. As a result, the attempt to accurately apprehend one's own person fails, since all that can be achieved is the apprehension of oneself as an object, which is inaccurate because one typically experiences one's own being only as a subject. This misapprehension of the self occurs at any time where introspective reflection occurs, regarding any characteristic at all, and when behaviour is motivated by the desire to resemble the reflected image, then such behaviour is in Bad Faith. A person who joins the army in the belief that doing so will make them brave is in bad faith, because joining the military does not magically create bravery in the being of the person who does so. At best, it creates more opportunities for bravery,

but it also creates an equal number of opportunities for cowardice, and some application of agency is required in order to determine the effect. The act of joining the army in and of itself though, cannot rationally be motivated by the desire to be brave. In truth, though they most certainly would not recognise it themselves¹², they simply want to appear courageous to other people. Since they know that joining the army is regarded by others to be a brave thing to do, joining the army will make them feel that others think of them as brave. Likewise, the waiter who so absorbs himself in his profession that he contrives to appear as 'waiter-ly' as possible in all his movements and mannerisms is in bad faith¹³, as is the person who joins the gym as their new-year's resolution, and the politician who smiles benignly and shakes hands with those whom they secretly despise. What unites all these people is the aspiration, however temporary, to something that is less than the totality of being that a human has no option but to be; to be a brave person, a healthy person, a consummate waiter or an affable politician, each of which is characterised by far fewer and less complex characteristics than a human being in their entirety. The project of each of these people is not a project of being that guides them out of facticity to transcendence, but a project of bad faith, guiding them in the aim of becoming a simplified image of a human being.

In this thesis, we are principally concerned with personal characteristics that are perceived to carry some social significance, so I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to the significant factor that social context plays in the formation of self-image. As long as one exists in a social context, which is to say, with common association between oneself and at least one other person, there is an aspect of one's being that refers specifically to the image of oneself which one perceives to exist in the mind of another. Sartre calls this aspect 'being-for-others'¹⁴ and establishes its nature with reference to the 'Look'. The Look marks the moment at which one fully comprehends the autonomous intelligence of another person, who hitherto had been apprehended by one's own consciousness as a mere object in the world. Sartre illustrates this with an analogy to a man peeping through a keyhole at someone else. The man feels no shame until he hears a noise in the house, whereon he immediately straightens up, conscious of how he might look to another person and is consequently embarrassed. Shame is here produced because at the point at which one is

¹² Bad faith must be formally distinguished from self-deception, since deception would imply that the consciousness is privy to a secret that it withholds from itself, which is impossible (BN, pp73-76).

¹³ Sartre uses an extended version of this example (BN, p82)

¹⁴ Discussed in *Being and Nothingness* Part 3 (pp243-452)

made conscious of the subjectivity of other people, one is forced to confront the existence of a perspective beyond one's own subjectivity, one becomes aware of how the other might perceive them, and what judgements they might make about one's character as a result. Hence one is presented with two potentially conflicting images of oneself; the self-image that is derived from experience and introspection, and the self-image that is derived from the comprehension of one's own existence in the mind of the other¹⁵. This conflict is untenable to the rational consciousness, as it constitutes a rendering of the being-that-is into two distinct images. Given that the being-that-is is a totality of being, it is not possible for the consciousness to maintain simultaneous apprehension of two variant totalities that refer to the same being. This apparent crisis could have very significant ramifications for the formation of an individual's self-image due to the need for some means of resolving the two distinct images of the self that one is presented, and this will be a significant theme in the following chapter.

¹⁵ In the *Treatise* David Hume claims that we are made self-aware of our own character by the 'passions and sentiments of others' (THN, p370), which produce first an idea, and consequently an impression of those passions in our own consciousness. Notably for us, Hume also claims that relations are requisite to sympathy, specifically the relation between one's idea of others and of oneself in one's own mind. I believe the Sartrean account to be more detailed on this front, and that is the account I will refer to throughout the thesis, but nevertheless, holding Hume's account in mind throughout chapter 2 may serve to demonstrate how the two accounts are linked.

Chapter 2

Cornerstones of Personhood – the Attribution of Character

It is clear enough that the process of formulating a coherent sense of self is not spontaneous. There is some kind of process, be it cognitive, cultural, behavioural or otherwise, that leads to a person placing personal emphasis on certain aspects of their being, or on groups to which they belong, insofar as they envisage their own identity. The purpose of this chapter will be to discern the nature of this process or processes by examining closely the engagement that people have with a few key cornerstones of personal identity that are frequently referenced in contemporary culture, and to investigate how close identification with any particular cornerstone of identity may affect the ongoing project of being of any particular individual.

We should by now, have some understanding of the nature of human identity, at least according to the Hume-Sartre line that we have been using. We know how our consciousness unites all our perceptions into a single unified totality of being, and we know how it unites every perception it has of the being to which it belongs into a temporalized unity such that there appears to be an even greater totality of being that extends across time. What we are left with then, is the business of determining how it is that the unique individual identity of any one person is formed, and shaped by individual experiences. The pattern of identity that we have established so far is incredibly broad, confined to abstract concerns in order that the general structure of personal identity can be determined in the abstract. If left with only these abstract terms we would likely find ourselves coming to a halt at the conclusion that self-image is a futile endeavour, but since it seems nigh impossible to conceive of any type of human existence that does not entail some kind of self-image, that conclusion rings hollow.

First of all, the capacity to identify defining properties of one's present being does not constitute an attempt by the individual in question to become a being of facticity. Self-image is only an image after all, and I am in no greater danger of mistaking my self-image for myself merely by virtue of my perception of it, than I am of mistaking my reflection for myself simply because I can see it. More significantly though, any number of factors may influence an individual's self-image. The puzzle we are left with is one of determining why it is that people identify with certain significant character traits, even if those traits have

no necessary bearing on who they are. It is not unusual, I think, to hear people attribute facets of their individual expression to another, more fundamental property of their being. Statements like “I’m loud because I am from the West Indies” or “I’m English, of course I love my tea” do not express any philosophically significant truths, they are based on speculative generalisations, and even though we all know that there are quiet Jamaicans, and Englishmen who are indifferent to tea, we understand that statements of this type still communicate something about an individual’s self-image. Of course, given that we know that identity cannot be constant, such statements would seem incompatible with our generalised definition of identity, but such attributions are exceedingly common, and it is easy enough for us to explain this inconsistency; these are individual people’s perceptions. If they believe it to be true, then they will make such attributions, it matters very little whether they are justified in doing so from a philosophical perspective.

Chapter 2.1

Race

We shall begin with the matter of race. Perennially a point of social contention, the common conception of race presents some very clear distinctions between groups of people, which gives us a firm foothold from which to begin our discussion of individual identity. Historically, Race has functioned as a means of social categorisation that has divided people according to their heritage, and this is an attitude that broadly persists to this day. It is reasonably clear that many people consider their race to be an important part of their heritage and, consequently, of their identity. Certainly, in the United States race has been and can be a significant factor with regards to the choice and closeness of friends within one's personal social group (McPherson et al., 2001), with social groups often being racially homogeneous, with a very small likelihood of racially heterogeneous confidant relationships (Marsden, 1987). More than this, the different degrees of education and social mobility afforded to different ethnic groups nationally and internationally create very visible social distinctions between groups of people. The cultural and historical reasons for this are comparatively well known, and we will address those later, however, when removed from the cultural connotations of racial tension, one would expect that the significance of race to one's identity should be quite minimal.

In modern biology, the apparent genetic distinctions between humans are not considered to be evidence for any definitive categorisation of human subtypes. Genetic variation is not identified in terms of distinct geographical regions, but in terms of 'clines', a term which describes the geographical gradation of certain genetic characteristics (Brace, 2000). More than this, the genetic variation that does exist between humans is positively minute. Humans are 99.9% genetically identical to one another, four times less variable than chimpanzees (Bamshad et al., 2004). This leaves only 0.1% of our genetic composition to account for all human variation, and 85% of human variation can be found between people of the same race, leaving only 15% of 0.1% of human genetic material that is racially exclusive (Ossorio & Duster, 2005). All of this is very interesting and useful for understanding the full extent to which race could be argued to account for individual differences between persons at the very least. It is also quite philosophically trivial. The natural diversity that exists between any two individuals is already such that each individual can only be characterised with any accuracy in terms of their whole self. Appealing to

genetic information to justify why one ought or ought not group people according to common genetic characteristics is missing the point entirely. Even if human racial distinctions were vastly more pronounced, it would still be true that each individual human could only be characterised in terms of their own person *in its entirety*, because the totality of being belonging to any given human is irreducible to its more basic characteristics, alone or in combination. To suggest that an entire group of people can be uniformly characterised according to the same shared characteristics would be to suggest that their individual identities were subordinate to a greater group totality, which is clearly absurd. Given that this is the case, it seems difficult to imagine what facts of personal identity could possibly be determined by one's genes such that it could be such a seemingly immutable factor of one's existence that it would warrant orienting one's self-image around. This is not to say such matters *can't* be a part of one's self-image, simply that there is no necessary reason for them to be. Of course, we know that self-identification with a racial group is not an exclusively biological concern. Certainly, there are those for whom genetic race seems to be of vital importance to their sense of self, which is a phenomenon we will attempt to explain later. Ultimately though, self-identification with race has far more to do with the social and cultural history of the issue than with the *prima facie* physiological characteristics which have historically acted as the impetus for racial categorisations.

It is worth acknowledging, just briefly, that while genetic factors have fairly limited application in terms of defining oneself as a unique individual, the biological processes that have resulted in racial variation as we perceive it in the modern day are not entirely random. They are the result of a network of social processes that have had identifiable biological consequences (Ossorio & Duster, 2005). Hence the visible artefacts of racial variation are indicative of some social reality; the differences in skin tone, facial features, or skeletal structure are the result of whatever social processes motivated a particular group of people to inhabit a particular environment, or to mingle with a particular other social group; social processes that have resulted in a high degree of correspondence between certain racial groupings and certain social characteristics. These social processes are not to be swept under the rug for the sake of some shallow pretence that skin colour is somehow unimportant. Given the history of racial ideologies in the west it would be naïve to suggest that genetic variation plays no part in our modern arguments of racial concerns, and it is important to acknowledge that while the genes themselves have very little role in the identity, social processes operating alongside, or on the basis of, genetic variation have led

to certain social realities that have a very significant effect on the lives – and consequently identities – of people in the modern day.

With this in mind, it is worthwhile looking into the history of modern racial ideology. In the ancient world race was not considered to be a particularly divisive factor in terms of social interaction. For them, the principal point of contention was conflict derived from conflicting ethnocentricities (Hirschman, 2004). When conflict arose, it was not race, but cultural differences that were invoked by commentators as the cause. Polybius ascribed the violence of the Cynaethians to their abandonment of the public arts in favour of ‘unjust, private forms’ (Polybius, ~200-100BC) and Cicero insisted that “there is no human being of any race [gens] who, if he finds a guide, cannot attain to virtue” (cited in Hannaford, 1996), and while ethnocentric perspectives certainly did result in some degree of prejudice and hostility, there was no suggestion that a different homeland or skin colour indicated any inferiority (Snowden, 1983). Ivan Hannaford identifies the first indication of a movement towards modern racial ideology in the works of Moses Maimonides (Hannaford, 1996). Maimonides wrote extensively on the need for logic in religious discussion, but in the process makes a very firm condemnation of those he deemed would corrupt the faith;

“Those who are outside the country are all humans who have no doctrinal beliefs...such individuals as the turks in the remote north, the negroes in the remote south, and those who resemble them...to my mind they do not have the rank of men, but have among the beings a rank lower than the rank of man...those who hold false doctrines within the country, they are worse than [the turks and kushites] and under certain circumstances it may be necessary to slay them in order that others should not be misled” (The Guide for the Perplexed, ~1190).

In this passage we see a very early example of language that dehumanises, that posits those of different origin or religious belief as an essential and essentially subordinate ‘other’. This kind of thought began to spread across Europe in the following years, though still not motivated by clear racial categories, but by religious categories.

Still, it wasn’t until the late eighteenth century that race became the object of concerted scientific study, and therefore began to be justified according to apparently scientific principles. Prior to the eighteenth century, there was a burgeoning of the idea that the character of different peoples of the world could be conceived in different ways. Hannah Arendt suggests that the bold political views Hobbes expresses in the *Leviathan*, that the

natural state of mankind was something akin to war, kindled something of the idea that Humanity is a fiction. She argues that Hobbes' erosion of humanity as a unifying characteristic common to all humans, forms an ideal basis for the advancement of views that necessitate the racial categorisation of human beings (Arendt, 1951). The first attempt to classify human beings into races is often attributed to Francois Bernier as late as 1684, but later attempts were made by others such as Carl Linnaeus with his *Systema Natura* (1735) and, perhaps most well-known, Johann Blumenbach in *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* (1793-95). Blumenbach himself was not convinced that the difference in cranial structure indicated anything about the character of individuals, but his categorisation of race gained such traction that it still serves as the basis of United States ethnic categories on the US census (Spencer, 2014).

The origin of our modern ideas of race is now known to us, but the origin of racial ideologies does not automatically proceed from there. The origin of those ideas is perhaps best attributed to Arthur de Gobineau¹⁶, a French aristocrat best known for his use of scientific racist theory to legitimise racism. Gobineau believed that geographical concerns had very limited influence on the progress or stagnation of a people, believing instead that the different physical characteristics of the different races were evidence of 'degeneracy' in the blood, caused by the cumulative effect of 'adulterations' (Gobineau, 1853-55). He attributed the enslavement of African peoples in America and the unfavourable social position of the Cherokee to inherent inadequacies of their race, and considered it evidence for the superiority of white people. Gobineau was not alone, and others like him also sought to employ scientific theories to prove the superiority of the white race. Once Charles Darwin published *On The Origin of Species*, these white supremacists began to use the theory of natural selection to advance their views, creating the field of Social Darwinism (Hirschman, 2004), reinforcing in their own minds the idea that white people were genetically superior. Not long afterwards Francis coined the term 'eugenics' to describe his belief that society could be improved by encouraging breeding for the selection of desirable characteristics (Galton, 1883).

There is considerably more to the story, of course, but I think this abridged account of the origin of racial ideology illustrates the necessary points. Race is a comparatively recent concept, and its rise to prominence within the collective consciousness of western culture

¹⁶ Discussed by Marius Turda in *Teleology and Modernity* (2019)

was grounded on such spurious premises that the modern fascination with racial distinction would seem absurd were it not for the terrifying consequences of ideological racism demonstrated by such horrors as the Atlantic slave trade and the holocaust. Atrocities such as these make it incredibly easy to see how the racial distinctions that motivated such horror gain personal significance in the first instance. When a prevalent social or political doctrine has attributed significance to a particular facet of one's person, a situation is created where each person possessed of that characteristic becomes conscious of being looked at exclusively in terms of that characteristic. For example, in a nation such as the United States during segregation, being black constituted a departure from the 'norm' as was represented by the government¹⁷. As such, a man ceases to be a 'man' if he is black. Instead he is a 'black man', an entity which is constituted entirely differently in the minds of his community than is a man who is regarded without reference to his colour. Likewise in Nazi Germany, Jews were forced to identify themselves as Jews, and as such were regarded differently, not because their appearance or behaviour was vastly different to that of non-Jewish Germans (any number of accounts exist of Jews matching the Aryan description successfully forgoing their badges, indicating that Germans frequently couldn't identify them with any certainty), but as an explicit result of the state doctrine decreeing them as different.

These examples demonstrate very clearly the conflict between the being-for-itself¹⁸ and the being-for-others. The being-for-others that pertains to one who is singled out for their race by their state or society is the image of a being who is explicitly condemned, but such a view is unlikely to be shared wholeheartedly by such a person themselves. Nevertheless, the social environment that encompasses them is one of such relentless disapprobation that it is not tenable to simply ignore or endure such a state of affairs without the conflict between these two accounts of their self being alleviated in some regard. Such alleviation must come in the form of a choice, between one account of the self or the other, though neither choice is without problems. To choose one's own self-image over the image presented by the being-for-others is to reject the values of society and place oneself in

¹⁷ Perhaps most starkly demonstrated in 1857 with the Dred Scott v Sandford decision, where the supreme court explicitly ruled that the United States constitution was not meant to include American citizenship for black people.

¹⁸ A Sartrean term. By my terminology, this equates to the 'being-that-is' in this context.

direct conflict with it. To choose the being-for-others is to endorse an account of one's self that is characterised by malicious stereotypes.

To illustrate; a man of African descent who once thought of himself merely as a Man, upon finding himself the object of a Look in the context of a society that distinguishes people by colour, is now forced to regard himself as he imagines the other to see him, as a Black Man. This man now sees an image of himself which is markedly different to that which he had of himself only moments before. Now that he finds himself the object of a Look, he apprehends the totality of his being-for-others, he understands that not only might the other take particular note of his skin colour, he understands that large parts of the society acting as a background to all his social interactions attribute connotations to that skin colour, and that the nature of his being in the minds of others will, in all probability, be affected by those connotations. Hence, his being-for-others becomes a being that is the object of contempt. Since he naturally disputes the idea that his skin colour makes him inherently contemptible, there is a deep motivation to unseat the being-for-others that presents him as such, and to invest himself in the reclamation of his being-for-others in order to subvert the crude, racist expectations placed upon him, or else in order that his colour be acknowledged for reasons decided upon by himself.

Frantz Fanon writes of this phenomenon in terms of a psychological complex shared by all colonial peoples. To Fanon, the reclamation of one's own colour in the face of the prejudiced Look of the other, is a reaction against the inescapable feeling of inferiority and the lack of human recognition derived from social attitudes manifest not only in the minds of colonisers, but of the colonised as well. He describes how people in the Antilles where he grew up would be desperate to rid themselves of the stigma of being black and would adopt European attitudes in order to distinguish themselves from other black Antilleans, to behave more like white people. These measures inevitably fell short. The fact of being black is an inescapable one, and as European as one may behave, as welcome as some more benevolent white people may strive to make one feel, the fact of being black is present still, inviting anxieties as to the sincerity of others' attitudes. He writes of himself;

*“What! When it was I who had every reason to hate, to despise, I was rejected?
When I should have been begged, implored, I was denied the slightest recognition?
I resolved, since it was impossible for me to get away from an inborn complex, to*

assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the other hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known.” (Fanon, 1952, pg 87)

and later on;

“When people like me, they like me “in spite of my color.” When they dislike me, they point out that it isn’t because of my color. Either way, I am locked in an infernal circle.” (Fanon, 1952, pg 88)

We can see from this reaction how the othering gaze affects its object. In a society which makes distinctions between people based on racial characteristics, where social position, economic opportunities, and personal safety can be compromised by inalienable facets of one’s being, those whose physical forms do not permit them the security afforded to those at the pinnacle of the prescribed hierarchy often do not have the liberty to think of themselves only in terms of their person in and of itself. Instead they must consider their own characteristics as qualifiers against a social ‘default’. Since in such a society it would be imprudent to ignore the social implications of the colour of one’s skin, or the shape of one’s eyes, or jaw, to ignore how the ramifications of one’s actions differ to those of the same actions performed by one without those characteristics, it is simply untenable to reject race as a significant feature of one’s personhood until such a time when one’s society no longer layers the lens of race distinction over its Look, or at least until judicial bodies make effective safeguards against racial characteristics defining social outcomes.

What then, of those I mentioned earlier, those who consider their purely genetic characteristics to be of the utmost significance, divorced from any particular interaction with socially conditioned attitudes to race? Most prominently this view is associated with white supremacists and the fascist ideology of early twentieth century Europe, and with the neo-Nazi movement of the modern day. At a first glance, the white supremacist is motivated to such close identification with their racial characteristics by many of the same factors that motivate oppressed people to do the same, with one fairly major difference. White supremacists have not typically been colonised or otherwise oppressed by people of other races, meaning that they ought to lack the same complex that Fanon describes as arising in colonised people. The white supremacist typically does not live in a society that alienates them by their colour, the gaze of the Other upon a white supremacist does not

pass through the lens of racial distinction. In fact, the white supremacist is typically counted amongst the beneficiaries of a system of racialisation, so there ought not to be any forces belonging to the social background such that there is an automatically alienating quality to the Look of the Other, and this is largely true. Any feeling of alienation experienced by a white supremacist on the basis of their colour is not produced by the explicit effect of social forces upon their consciousness. Instead, their feeling of alienation is inspired by a delusional tendency to believe that de-racialisation and a movement towards globalism constitute an inherent attack on the liberty of white people, the very same kind of attack visited upon colonised peoples by colonisers. In short, they believe that the equal treatment of people of colour constitutes an attack on what they perceive to be 'theirs', an attitude which is indicative of the inherently racialised perspective they hold. Equal employment standards are perceived to be facilitating the theft of 'white' jobs, interracial marriage seen as the appropriation of white people's potential spouses, as though such things can be racialised. Suffice to say, white supremacy is a paranoid worldview, and a self-perpetuating one at that.

With as much scorn as I view white supremacy, its unique paranoia does at least serve to illustrate certain commonalities between all those who closely incorporate their race into their sense of self. While oppressed peoples may be incited to do so in reaction to the infernal circle in which they are trapped by pervasive social racialisation – a highly legitimate cause for consternation – and white supremacists do so from personal imaginings about their racial hierarchy, nevertheless it is a sense of alienation from the self that provokes a reaction, and the desire to reclaim one's race. One cannot cease to be the colour that one is, short of drastic surgical measures, and if the colour of one's skin or the shape of one's body gains identity all of its own, then race itself can become an independent totality of being in the minds of others. Consequently, race can then be attributed to one's person not as a small part of the greater totality of one's being, but as a kind of side-effect of one's existence, an entity with character of its own that automatically affects the character of anyone of the race in question in ways outside their control. Under these auspices, it is quite easy to understand why one might seek comfort from the reclamation of that facet of one's being.

Chapter 2.2

Nationhood

It should now be worthwhile, I think, to return briefly to Fanon, and to his fellow Martinicans to introduce another feature of identity that is so captivating to many people. The people Fanon describes as returning from Europe exhibiting European attitudes and rejecting the social mannerisms common to his upbringing are not attempting to behave as though they were generically European. Specifically, they are appealing to the French national sentiment regarding behaviour and education, they are attempting to find legitimacy within the community of the nation that colonised their homeland. Fanon makes quite clear in *Black Skin, White Masks* that he considers himself to be French, and that France is the nation to which all Martinicans belong, despite his own admission that “The Antillean family has for all practical purposes no connection with the national – that is, the European French – structure” (BSWM, p115). According to Fanon’s observations, the Martinican who goes to France finds themselves faced with a choice between the society of their own family and homeland, and the society of France, which raises a thoroughly vexing question. Why should a Martinican care for France in the slightest? Arguably, Martinique has as much relation to France as it does to its neighbours in the Windward Islands, and as Fanon reminds us, the Martinican lifestyle is not the Parisian lifestyle, or the Marseillais, or European French in general. Would one not normally expect one’s national identity to correspond to one’s cultural history? Should we not expect Martinican national identity to try and distance itself from the colonial history of the French nation? What could possibly unite the Martinican French and the European French such that all would be willing to call themselves French, and espouse it as a defining characteristic of their person?

Further, there are any number of examples of nations whose participants belong to strikingly disparate social and/or cultural groups. One has only to skim through the history of Europe to find that our modern European states are comprised of innumerable smaller states, each representing a group of people with no inherently binding relationship to any other group barring their contemporary union within a larger nation state. Westphalians are not Bavarians, and vice versa, and members of either group may not take kindly to having their cultural heritage misidentified. A glance at a map of the Cantons of Switzerland are enough to make evident the distinctions between the nation’s various inhabitants, and

to this day there exist tensions between the Serbian government and the people of Kosovo, as well as many similar conflicts worldwide. Clearly the issue of nationality is contentious.

A nation is, at its most basic description, an 'imagined community' to use the terminology of Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 2006), and it must indeed be a community of the imagination because a national community exists on a scale far beyond the scale of ordinary social communities¹⁹. It is simply not possible to know everyone, or even a majority of the people within any given national community (with the possible exception of the Vatican City, though the exception is sufficiently hesitating as to be generally worth putting aside), and the sheer number and diversity of persons within a national community is so great that finding any tangible common experience with which to define a communal relationship between say, a person in Yorkshire and another in Cornwall is nearly impossible. The relative difficulty in finding common grounds between people at opposite ends of a country as small as England should be striking enough, let alone the vast sea of discontinuous cultural communities that must exist between Los Angeles and Wisconsin, or Moscow and Vladivostok. The lived experiences of people living so many miles apart vary so substantially that any kinship they feel between one another must be imagined on the basis of much less tangible experiences than common culture and upbringing. To Anderson's mind, this is most typically (though not exclusively) the experience of reading in a common language.

Prior to universal literacy, the national community was not a concept that had much currency. Anderson describes in *Imagined Communities* the pre-eminence of a different kind of imagined community prior to the advent of national consciousness, this being the religious community, a community that is bound together by common regard for the perceived objectivity of texts written in a particular language. To the kingdom of Christendom, that language was ecclesiastical Latin, to the Islamic world it was classical Arabic, and to some extent, the spread of Confucianist ideas through China's ideographic writing system contributed to a sense of community between inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom in Asia (Anderson, 2006, pp12-13). Crucially, access to these 'truth-languages' was a privileged resource, afforded only to the elite clerisy of the organisation in question,

¹⁹ This gives the imagined community something in common with personal identity. In the *Treatise*, Hume likens the human soul to a republic or commonwealth, in the sense that members are united by their relationship to the government authority, and produce new members thus changing the parts of the commonwealth without destroying the identity of the whole (Hume, 1739, p309).

communicated to wider populations orally, and often learnt by rote. In Ireland, Poland, Romania, Italy, France and many more besides, the Tridentine mass was conducted in the same way, using the same words, spoken in the same version of Latin for hundreds of years, despite the incomprehensibility of the language to most of the attendees. Similarly, communication between literate people within the Chinese Middle Kingdom was expedited by their common written form which, unlike western scripts, was intelligible to all readers regardless of how they each pronounced the syllables. The appeal to an intermediary truth-language in large parts of the world helped to create the idea of a community in the minds of huge and disparate populations. Even if a Frenchman had absolutely nothing in common with a Romanian, they each knew that the other was a follower of Christ, and therefore may have felt some kinship.

This idea of association via a common language exists within national communities as well, though in a somewhat different form. In most parts of the world, access to literacy is no longer restricted by class and/or status, meaning that a far greater range of people have the means of producing printed works, allowing written language to convey a much greater range of cultural ideas. In effect, mass literacy – in combination with unrestricted access to printed materials – has facilitated communication with other people who speak the same language as oneself, and engagement with issues affecting one's nation, prominently by means of newspapers, even if those issues do not appear to affect one personally. This has occurred largely by accident due to the simple fact that following the invention of the printing press, it was simply more lucrative to publish printed works in a homogenous linguistic style in order that the product could be understood by the greatest market possible. This access to material regarding national concerns, shared by national citizens, allows people to envision this community of readers, united by their mutual relationship to the national entity that has been made available for participation by access to printed material in a national language. This facilitates, amongst other things, the possibility of people living great distances apart feeling some sympathy for one another's lives, by virtue of a shared belief that there is something unique to their own national character, as defined in their own minds by the attitudes they see expressed by other members of their nation, and the cultural history of which they and those around them believe themselves to be a part.

What though, of colonial territories? Those regions whose native languages have all but been replaced by the language of their colonisers? Despite often speaking the same

language as their respective colonising powers, the vast majority of former colonies developed pronounced nationalist movements and broke away from their colonisers over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. The key to this particular difference is twofold. First, the matter of administrative distance, and secondly the matter of cultural relevance in printed works. In terms of administration, the reasons for anti-colonial nationalism are very plain. While the official language of administration would remain the same between the colonial power and the colonised region, colonial powers had a habit of alienating members of the colonial administration who were born in their colonies. Swadeshi leader Bipin Chandra Pal described how Indian magistrates in the British Raj were disqualified from trying European British subjects in court, despite the fact that their qualifications were identical to those of British-born magistrates, and also that the Indian magistrates themselves were educated in Britain (Pal, 1932), and therefore had received the very same education as had the British. In the Spanish Caribbean, even those whose ancestry was entirely Spanish would be considered to be 'Creoles' if they had been born abroad, or moved abroad early enough in their lives, and in the minds of the Spanish Imperial administration, would be considered less worthy of significant administrative power.

Under these circumstances, natives of a colonised region were incredibly unlikely to ever receive any administrative position outside their own homeland, and thus no connection to the central Imperial community would be formed by participation in the central administration of their linguistic community. By this process of alienation, the inhabitants of colonised regions find a certain sense of distance, both geographical and cultural, separating them from the nation that governs them. This distance creates a distinction between the community of the colonial power, and the community of the colony. Despite sharing a common language, the colonised peoples develop amongst themselves a separate linguistic community. Venezuela, for example, is a Spanish-speaking linguistic community, separated from nearby English-speaking communities in Trinidad and Tobago or Grenada by the same administrative boundaries that separate England and Spain in Europe, defined by the congruence of nation, which is itself defined by linguistic community, and political representation thereof. Equally though, Venezuela is separated from Spain by a cultural and administrative distance that was propagated in the colonial era by Spanish attitudes towards its colonial territories. These factors create a situation where Venezuela is a linguistic community that is defined in terms of its shared understanding of the Spanish

language, but deprived of Spanish national identity by Spain's alienation of Venezuela from the Spanish national community.

As far as the cultural relevance of printed materials is concerned, the significance is fairly apparent. Despite the capability of colonised people to read works produced in the language of their colonisers, they would have no particular reason to be interested. For example, works produced in England, about England, and for the English would be unlikely to elicit any cultural resonance in a citizen of colonial Ghana. Equally, someone in the Côte d'Ivoire would likely have very limited national interest in a newspaper detailing events unfolding in Marseille. It may pique their curiosity to hear of some festival or political rally that had taken place in France, but the likelihood of such events inspiring a feeling of national fellowship with the European French is relatively slim. While the widespread availability of printed works (and newspapers in particular) contributes to the creation of a vivid imagined community of readers, the community can only consist of those to whom the works are culturally significant and the news explicitly relevant.

At this point it becomes relatively clear why nationalist feelings tended to arise in colonised regions and drive the people towards national independence. There is simply no reason for Indians, for example, to have any reason to engage with British national identity. The countries are four and a half thousand miles apart, most goings-on in England have little or no relation to Indians bar those imposed on the Indians by the British regime, or those voluntarily entered into by individual Indian citizens. The Indians were not afforded the same rights as the British, and the British did very little to invite Indians to participate with the British national sentiment, so much as they attempted to 'educate' the Indian-ness out of them by prescribing an 'English' education ("If our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence – Macaulay, B., 1835). Moreover, the administrative officials of a colonised region were frequently selected from amongst the locals. In cases where colonised peoples adopted the language of their colonisers entirely, this created an explicit and unmitigated congruence between the citizenry of the region and their political officials, that manifested separately from the national entity to which their colonisers belonged. This being the case, a national entity was able to develop in the minds of the colonised people, characterised as a national body existing independently of the colonial power, rather than merely a regional identity existing subordinate to that power.

Having now seen how the concept of a nation comes about, we can trace the reasons for nationalism to take root in individuals or societies as a personal or social ideology. The most basic principle of nationalism is that the political and the national units should be congruent (Gellner, 1983), and recent colonial history stands as a sufficient testament to the danger of oppression and abuse that is threatened by the violation of this principle. Certainly, those whose nationalism is rooted in anti-colonial sentiment have good reason to insist on the validity of their national identity, they have historically justified anxieties. Nevertheless, nationalism is not confined to those whose reasons to fear encroachment are justified. Nationalism arises whenever the congruence of nation and politics is perceived to be threatened and can lead to far more contemptible outcomes than the just liberation of an oppressed nation.

To the individual, nationality represents a great deal more than mere geographical distributions, it represents an institution that is the origin, and sustaining force of, one's cultural attitudes, one's religious background, and the bonds between one's friends and associates. The customs and traditions emphasised by national sentiment are not elected, they arise from a shared history and culture, through a mutually understood national mythology. It is not necessary that the basis for national sentiment to be built on especially firm foundations, the essential character of a nation is determined by a collective unspoken agreement. As David Miller puts it; "collective belief that something is essential to national identity comes close to making it so" (Miller, 1995). On a personal basis then, national identity appears to the consciousness as an unshakeable aspect of one's being, and in a very real sense it is, since one's experiences are rigidly fixed in the past. To put it simply, they happened²⁰, and cannot simply be changed after the fact. One cannot retroactively forget all the details of a childhood spent in Woking, for example, and suddenly start fondly remembering details of formative years spend in Hamburg, if those experiences never occurred. Certainly, one's attitudes to the experiences received in Woking might change over the course of a lifetime, one's sensibilities might vary depending on more contemporaneous experiences but fundamentally, the memories of bringing tins of food to school for the harvest festival, or singing protestant hymns in school assemblies leave a distinctly English imprint on the mind that is not going to be supplanted by imagined notions of childhood Walpurgisnacht celebrations.

²⁰ Or rather, to all intents and purposes, we should believe that they happened.

Still though, there is more to the matter of nationality than memory and cultural affiliations. Where a nation is legitimised by a representative political state, nationhood becomes a matter greater than mere sentiment and public culture. A national state endorsed by the public is a political entity that guarantees the perpetuation of the cultural entity it represents, thereby guaranteeing the right of its citizens to participate in the culture of their upbringing, and by extension, the right to hold and express beliefs derived from that national culture. With this in mind, it is easy to understand why the nationalist desire for political and national congruence gains such personal significance. The threat of persecution for holding beliefs that are not shared by the ruling body is well represented in the history books. The history of Europe is littered with wars fought over national religion, and as discussed earlier, imperial expansion has frequently resulted in the suppression of national culture and language, including the stigmatization of Polynesian *māhū* (Hamer & Wilson, 2014), the prohibition on Welsh language, and the forced assimilation of the Ainu people by the Japanese (Siddle, 1996).

We can see then, how criticism or infringement upon national identity can personally affect an individual. A simple criticism of the customs and/or character of a particular nation can evoke the same kind of insecurities that we identified in our discussions of racial prejudice. One is presented with a damning account of an aspect of one's character that is inalienable from oneself. I cannot help but have been born English, so the implication that the English are less moral than other people, or bearing any negative character trait for that matter, may easily be taken to be offensive. One may quite easily find oneself caught between the desire to be good, and the idea that is implied by such allegations, namely that one's very nationality somehow prevents this. The apparent alienation of one's national character from one's own conscious awareness of one's identity creates a crisis of identity as one struggles to resolve the conflicting accounts of oneself with regards to one's national character into a coherent account of one's totality of being. Put simply, I cannot be both a good Englishman and a bad Englishman if Englishmen are inherently bad. Since I do not consider myself to be inherently bad, then if Englishmen *are* inherently bad I must not be an Englishman. Unfortunately, I do happen to be English, so I must either accept that I am a bad person, contrary to my own beliefs, or I must believe that the perceptions of those around me who tell me so are flawed. If the attitudes levelled against me are persistent and/or pervasive to the society I inhabit, then I am doomed to struggle no matter which I choose. In the former case, I am forced to come to terms with my apparently innate

badness, contrary to my own sincere beliefs, and in the latter I commit to an ongoing struggle against dominant social attitudes, a struggle I do not have the means to win on my own. Clearly though, this problem is simply distracting. As it happens, the English are not inherently bad people, and neither are the French, or the Russians, or the Angolans or Ghanaians or anyone else for that matter. But that fact is not likely to comfort anyone at such a time as they find themselves confronted with a person or group of people who are adamant that such-and-such a group actually *are* inherently evil.

In order to understand how this affects the development of self-image, we shall imagine a woman who belongs to a minority cultural group within a larger nation. The minority group has their own history, their own language, their own art, music and dance etc, and the reason they are a minority group is that their territory was subsumed some hundred years previously by a nearby, much more powerful civilisation. Over the last century of belonging to this new, larger nation, many citizens within this minority group are quite content to think of themselves as part of this nation, as they appreciate the protection of its police force, and the improved economic infrastructure that connects them to the rest of the country. We shall suppose that the government of their nation passes a law promoting uniformity of language, prohibiting the usage of any language besides the official national language of the country. Measures are put in place to ensure that nobody speaks a minority language. Schoolteachers punish students for speaking their native language, police apprehend anyone they hear speaking a minority language and distribute hefty fines, and it is forbidden to print or trade books in any language but the official national language.

Imagine that our friend is a native speaker of the minority language, perhaps she has very rarely had any reason to speak the national language before now and has difficulty in doing so. In this case, she is made intimately aware of the difference between herself and members of the majority cultural group every time she speaks. If she speaks her own language and communicates as she would like to, she is chastised by police who tell her that everybody in the nation ought to speak the same language. If she speaks the same language as them, she stumbles over the words and struggles to communicate with other members of what she has been told is her community. At times she has to endure the derision of those who mock her for being slow, at others the condescending attitude of others who interrupt her to finish her sentences, and sometimes the belittling shame of her own thoughts, condemning her for not being able to speak what she has been told is her own national language. Not only does she have to endure this, but so do her friends

and family. Her children come home from school reporting the punishments they received for forgetting to speak in the right language, her spouse comes home with a fine for speaking their own language in public, and her friends all report similar hardships. Under these conditions, the simple act of speaking is enough to produce in the mind, the idea of a distinction between those that speak the minority language, and those that speak the national language. Where before, the distinction between the different cultures within the nation were acknowledged, but ultimately considered to be insignificant next to the nation union that they had in common, the majority culture is now an essential 'other'.

Participation with the national whole has been placed behind a language barrier, and now those who cannot speak the national language have been alienated from the nation to which they had considered themselves a part. Equally, the members of the minority culture are aware that the way they appear to the majority culture is as an 'other' that is formally constituted into the same national unit, rather than a part of the nation first and foremost. The being-for-others that they apprehend from the majority culture resembles that of a foreigner, and since conformity to a specific national standard has been accepted as necessary for participation in the national unit, that particular aspect of the being-for-others goes unchallenged. They are no longer considered to be an inherent part of the nation by themselves, or by others, and so these citizens define a new nation for themselves, participation in which is expressed in terms of affiliation to their own minority culture, but also defined in terms of explicit opposition to the majority.

We know that national communities are communities of the imagination only, and the differences that are likely to exist between the minority culture and majority culture in the above example are likely to be no greater than the differences between Norwegians and Sami in Norway, but our example here shows that just as the links between people in a given nation are formed by the imagination, so too can they be severed by the imagination if a sufficiently divisive cause emphasises those differences, especially if the generally accepted qualifications for participation in the national unit change suddenly and exclude certain groups of people. In such circumstances, the individual that suddenly finds themselves considered as an 'other' by the majority demographic can do very little but strive to assimilate, as Fanon's Martinicans attempted (even if it did trap them in an 'infernal circle' as Fanon suggested), or to characterise themselves more prominently as a member of a different community, and thus as a nationalist of that community.

Chapter 2.3

Gender

Just briefly, before we enter into the discussion of gender, I feel I ought to stress that although the phenomena I will describe while discussing issues of gender are of particular prominence among the transgender community, the same issues may still apply to anyone who happens not to enjoy participating in the kind of social expression expected of them according to their society's concept of gender. It certainly isn't unheard of for children to find themselves the victims of bullying because they won't play football with the other boys, or they don't want to join in with conversations about makeup and clothes, or because they do want to play football or join in with conversation about makeup and others feel that they aren't supposed to. While this could be written off as children being cruel to one another, we would be foolish to ignore those cases where such cruelty is tacitly endorsed or even encouraged by parents and other adult figures of authority, and the tendencies this can produce towards unhealthy or even destructive patterns of behaviour in the attempt to conform to these expectations are by no means limited to transgender people.

It has been conventional in Western society to employ a binary concept of gender in our social interactions, with the masculine and feminine genders corresponding to the male and female sexes. It is generally presumed by many that the reason for this concerns the biological differences between the sexes, and that the physiology of each sex lends it to the behavioural tendencies which characterise its corresponding gender. There is a certain truth to this idea, insofar as a person's biology *does* have some measurable effect on their behaviour, but we cannot infer a necessary, linear relationship between biological sex and gender expression for a number of reasons. First, the male and female sexes are not as clearly distinct in humans as we often presume. Humans are a weakly dimorphic species, there is considerable overlap between male and female sex characteristics, meaning much of our gender/sex presentation is social and behavioural rather than explicitly biological (Birdwhistell, 1970). Second, even though hormones and suchlike exist to a greater or lesser extent in each sex, there is no suggestion that, for instance, testosterone is a qualifying factor in one's masculinity. Men who have demonstrably lower levels of testosterone like those who are married or in committed relationships (Van Anders & Watson, 2006) are not considered to be less like men than those with higher levels of testosterone. Third, the 'normal' brain chemistry for each sex is distinctly ambiguous. Notably, it has been observed

that brains of transgender people can often exhibit structural and chemical features more usually associated with brains of their opposite sex²¹. This is, I think, sufficient evidence for us to let go of the idea that gender is strictly determined by sex characteristics, and adhere instead to the model of social construction espoused by Simone de Beauvoir when she wrote “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1949, p330). Assuming that, as de Beauvoir contends, man creates himself as he creates woman as his essential other, I believe we can extend this principle to the masculine as well and contend that our concept of gender rests on much less tangible phenomena than biological sex alone.

The matter of biology is however, quite beside the point. We are principally concerned with the effect of the concept of gender on the formation of the individual identity, and there are some significant ontological distinctions between sex and gender. The aforementioned gap between the diversity of human behaviours that have been classified according to the gender-values they express and the sum of those that can be explained by physiological differences is certainly a hefty example, but there is an equally relevant point to be made about the variations in cultural interpretation of gender between different societies. Though our western concept may be very tidy – each of two genders corresponding to each of two sexes – other cultures allow for broader interpretations of the concept. It is fairly well known that some cultures include a third gender; the *kathoey* in Thailand are probably among the best known of these, possibly alongside the Hawaiian *māhū*, but similar concepts exist with the Samoan *fa’afafine*, Indian *hijra* and Māori *whakawahine*. Equally, Native Americans between them have a vast range of interpretations of gender, and social role according to gender, which are often grouped together under the more contemporary moniker ‘Two-Spirit’ (de Vries, 2009). Depending on which Native American culture is concerned, Two-Spirit can refer to anything from someone dressing in the manner of the opposite sex, to one who is transformed or who changes into the opposite sex, to one who lives as the opposite sex. Quite clearly, sexual dimorphism is not the sole determinant of global cultural interpretations of gender.

What actually does determine our particular interpretation of the concepts of gender is categorised in a markedly different fashion. We know that the ideas we have regarding what constitute the attitudes or behaviours of a particular gender are far too complex and numerous to proceed naturally from the brute facts of biology. There is no implicit

²¹ See Zhou et al., 1995, Kujiver et al., 2000, Rametti et al., 2010 and Luders et al., 2009 for details

relationship between the Y chromosome and beer, or the colour blue, but we still implicitly understand that these things are associated with masculinity²². Likewise, neither a taste for the colour pink, nor an interest in fashion, nor the ability to sew, are likely to cause anyone to think that everyone bearing these characteristics must, with no exceptions, be female. These things are merely the artefacts of collective socialisation, but they nevertheless communicate key pieces of information regarding what kind of person is synonymous with masculinity or femininity. They communicate to us the kinds of attitudes and behaviours that our society has associated with one another to form vast networks of socially constructed preconceptions that we name 'man' and 'woman'. Crucially, this disconnect between our presumption that gender is biologically determined and our actual cultural expectations of what proper gender-presentation entails, reveals to us that our expectations are not learned from empirical observations, but inherited from a culture that prioritises the inculcation of different behavioural values in the different sexes.

Therefore, we can outline the constitutive elements of each the masculine and the feminine in terms of the general character of the corresponding social role, as we perceive it²³. While I am certain that our cultural understanding of gender goes somewhat deeper than matters of expected social presentation, nonetheless it seems to me that understanding how gender has been organised into two distinct roles significantly aids in understanding the wider concept. For example, the masculinity of a person has often been considered to incite an inclination to fulfil certain social roles that are perceived to share similarly masculine characteristics; roles such as scholar, or lawyer, or often more abstract roles such as 'breadwinner', or 'head of the family'. Each of these other roles has been judged to be best suited to men, the reasons for which vary from case to case, but are nearly always grounded in the idea that the uniquely masculine character of men makes them ideal for such roles, and that the equally unique and feminine character of women would disqualify them²⁴. Social roles though, are not grounded in anything so materially

²² It seems that our sense of what is masculine or feminine in the context of our own social environment is fairly intuitive, and at least reliable enough that such intuitions are used in the creation of inventories of gendered characteristics for the purposes of psychological investigation (as with the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1957), or the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974)).

²³ Note 'as we perceive it' here. The idea of characterising gender roles has been criticised due to the difference between roles like 'teacher' or 'sister' (Lopata & Thorne (1978)) as gender is a *master identity* rather than that kind of *situated identity* (Hughes, 1945). Importantly though, gender is treated by the public as if it *does* constitute a social role.

²⁴ This kind of implicit gender bias is most evident in workplace hiring practices. It is well recorded that employers will prefer men for masculine or nonfeminine jobs, and women for feminine jobs (See Biernat & Kobryniewicz, 1997; Davison & Burke, 2000; Steinpreis, Anders & Ritzke, 1999; and Heilman, 2001).

significant, they do not imply any immutable states of being such as to necessitate such mutually exclusive sets of personal characteristics. Instead, social roles are applicable to an individual based on whether certain obligations to a given role are fulfilled. Take for example, the role of 'political leader'. It would be absurd for me to suggest that such a role is applicable to myself, since I meet none of the reasonable criteria for being a political leader. I am not actively engaged in local political matters, I do not belong to any political party, nor am I responsible for representing the political interests of any group of people. For me to justifiably claim the title of 'political leader' and entitlement to all the benefits thereof, I would need to meet at least some of these criteria, or others besides. However, since I do not meet any of the necessary criteria, the term 'political leader' cannot reasonably be applied to me.

Such is the case for any role one might name, and as such we can see how roles can be adopted or abandoned according to the whims of the individual in question. Whatever the means by which a role is conferred on an individual, it remains a matter of personal agency whether one makes any effort to fulfil the obligations for such a role. In cases where the role is adopted entirely voluntarily, this is a very symmetrical process. For example, the role of political leader must be voluntary, and in order to adopt the role I would need to go to the trouble of contacting like-minded people and begin campaigning for our shared interests, and in order to relinquish the role, I would simply need to indicate that I no longer wished to represent the political interests of that group. Other roles are conferred by social convention. For example, on reaching the age of majority, one is expected to adopt the role of 'mature adult', and this is recognised to be the case by social convention, barring any significant action to the contrary. If one wishes to relinquish the role of 'mature adult' one needs to indicate through concerted effort that one is not sufficiently mature as to bear the responsibilities borne by other mature adults.

One would expect then that it should be possible to relinquish a gender role (or at least those parts of it that seem undesirable) just as easily. If social convention dictates that to be a man one ought to behave in a masculine fashion, then one need only make a conscious effort to be as non-masculine as possible and after a time it should become evident that

Interestingly, some research demonstrates that both sexes have an implicit bias in favour of women, associating women more readily than men with positive characteristics (Eagly & Madinic, 1994; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004), but men discard this bias towards women who have a position of authority over them (Richeson & Ambady, 2001).

the term 'man' would no longer apply; to call someone a man past that point would make as little sense as it would to call me a political leader when I am not. At the very least one should expect it to be possible to distance oneself from the archetypal masculine in favour of a more moderate and selective adoption of masculine traits. Broadly speaking, this should be the case. Depending on one's social environment, it may indeed be possible to interpret one's gender role in such a way as to make the notion of belonging to the role more amenable, but such possibilities are limited to environments which already permit some variation in gender expression. It may be more useful to us to think of gender as an 'ascribed status' in the sense the term was used by Ralph Linton, as a social status assigned by a society wherein the 'role' is a separate but implicitly linked concept defined as the 'dynamic aspect' (behaviour) of the status (Linton, 1936). Using this framework we can see how the precise nature of the role is affected by the nature of the status in its ascription. If a given society conceives of gender as an immutable thing, determined by biological characteristics, then it will make its ascriptions of gender-status in those terms. While it is easy to abandon a role by refusing to enact the dynamic element of a status, the surrounding society, having made the ascription, still has the option to irrationally refuse to withdraw it, which can culminate in an impregnable barrier of rigid thinking wherein a person cannot bear to entertain the idea that one can simply discard the gender one has been assigned even if one no longer bears any of the hallmarks of the role or, in extreme cases, that one might reject the very notion of 'ideal' gender presentation²⁵.

The compulsion to adhere to established cultural beliefs is perfectly normal, and often understandable but there is a contradiction involved in this kind of thought. If having a gender ascribed to oneself involves a host of distinct, but related characteristics being ascribed or even prescribed to oneself as well, then it is to be presumed that those consequent characteristics are necessary features of that concept of gender. If a person ascribed with that gender happens not to display all, or even any, of those consequent characteristics, then either it turns out that said person does not belong to that gender at all, or that those consequent characteristics are not as necessary to the gender as has hitherto been believed. If we accept the first possibility, then we accept that a person can belong to a gender other than the one initially ascribed to them. If we accept the second

²⁵ Komarovsky's article 'Cultural Contradictions and Sex Roles' (1946) contains a number of extremely lucid reports to this effect, documenting the apparent difficulties of some people to adapt to new ideas about women in education.

possibility, then we will keep finding people who belong to a particular gender but do not have a particular characteristic that we have deemed necessary to the concept, because no behavioural characteristic is always (or never) present for one gender or the other (Kessler & McKenna, 1978), and we will therefore have to eliminate that characteristic from the list of characteristics that we deem necessary to the role. Eventually, the list of necessary characteristics will be reduced to a list of only sex-dependent physiological characteristics that are mutually exclusive with the opposite sex. At this stage, we would either have to double down and insist that sex and gender are completely synonymous, which would be absurd given the wealth of cultural baggage attached to our concepts of gender, or concede that gender is defined predominantly by cultural character and only tangentially by physiology and is therefore no more necessary to an individual's character than even highly trivial cultural affects such as one's favourite sport to watch, or preferred alcoholic beverage.

Unfortunately, in places where this circle of reasoning feeds back into the ambient cultural environment, the collective social attitudes towards gender and the accepted means of expressing one's gender can create a set of circumstances which cause confusion to anyone who diverges from those accepted norms²⁶. A passive lack of acknowledgement of the validity of behavioural tendencies contrary to the gender norms that one's society has encouraged, instead of eliminating any burgeoning tendencies to that effect, simply causes one to mistrust the validity of one's own subjective consciousness. This phenomenon is highly analogous to the same phenomenon identified earlier in relation to racial or national prejudice. In those cases, a single immutable fact about a person, be it skin colour, place of birth or suchlike, is taken by other people within a given social environment to be indicative of certain other personal characteristics. In the case of gender however, this is not limited to the mere equivocation of personal characteristics. The presumption that one's sex confers upon oneself a particular social role carries with it a certain moral imperative, the idea that one 'ought' to behave in accordance with that role. These imperatives are derived merely from custom and habit, and any suspicion, hostility or lack of recognition provoked by nonconformity to this custom is likely to cause some confusion or pain to those whose nonconformity was merely an unconscious behavioural tendency.

²⁶ A particularly vexing problem since, as Komarovsky observes, social norms can persist even though they are no longer functionally appropriate, and behaviour patterns which may have been useful at some stage can become dysfunctional over time (Komarovsky, 1950).

Even supposing that one's social environment is not particularly hostile, one is still left with a problem. If, while growing up, one begins to have thoughts and feelings that do not appear to be shared by those around them (because they certainly aren't being actively *expressed* by those around them), then how is one supposed to make sense of them in order to find a place for themselves within the tapestry of social interactions around them? It is alienating enough to be the only boy at school who doesn't want to play football, and if one varies from the gender norm in no more than that, one already *feels* different. If though, that boy who doesn't like football also privately dreams of wearing dresses, and no one else around them even acknowledges the possibility of having such feelings, they will find it impossible to conceive of a satisfying means of incorporating themselves into their social environment in a way that feels honest and leads to a satisfying social existence²⁷.

Consequently, those who do not operate within the normally accepted parameters for gender expression within their own social community are presented with a problem when attempting to totalise their self-image into a unified totality of being. There is, as ever, the image of themselves that they hold in the head which is the sum total of the being-that-is, the being-that-was and the being-that-could-be, unified by the consciousness into a single entity. However, the society surrounding an individual supplies its own image of one's identity, one's being-for-others, and by its collective norms of gender expression (and in many cases, their ignorance of the private gender affiliation of the individual in question), creates an image of a person that exists without all the inclinations towards non-normative expressions of gender that the gender non-conforming person knows that they have. What's more, because said norms typically conflate sex and gender characteristics, the society-derived image of the self is such that it does not allow for such inclinations to exist within the mind. The individual then, is left with two images of themselves, one of which, the being-for-others, admits no possibility for the non-normative expressions of gender that categorically *do* exist within the mind of the individual in question, and another which contains these expressions, but is so consumed by the social norms that deny its own nature that the individual begins to doubt the validity of their own identity.

²⁷ Professor Sophie Grace Chappell writes a very honest and forthright description of her own experiences very much to this effect in *Being Transgender and Transgender Being* (Chappell, 2016).

This situation is untenable, one cannot simultaneously hold attitudes and values that conflict with social expectations of 'correct' gender presentation and believe that such attitudes and beliefs are impossible. Either one condemns oneself as abnormal and endeavours to suppress that aspect of one's identity, or one commits to it, and attempts to reclaim the right to define what is entailed by transgression of these social norms. If the former becomes the case, then the effect on the individual may vary depending on how strong these feelings of non-conformity are. One may be able to suppress them entirely, or even come to find value in including the social norms into their identity. Even if they don't go away, if those feelings are not too consuming, perhaps other, more socially accepted characteristics may become more prominent. Potentially though, those conflicting gender ideals may not go away at all, and one might simply continue to live in a state of internal conflict. If one strives to define one's transgressions from social gender norms for oneself though, one is forced to give character to a highly particular mode of transgression, unique to one's person by virtue of its originating in one's own identity, and this is an impossible task. One's own unique interpretation of how gender norms are best incorporated into one's identity cannot be given character *post hoc*, its unique character simply *is* by virtue of its being. The conditions that gave rise to its being as a part of one's greater totality of being are what define it, in conjunction with one's attitudes towards that interpretation across all dimensions of one's totality of being. Nevertheless, when one's own society threatens to ignore this impossibility and characterise one's gender or attitudes towards gender in an unflattering light, the temptation to supplant their characterisation with one's own, in one's own mind at least, is often too powerful to ignore²⁸.

Unfortunately, when one attempts to give one's own gender expression a character that goes beyond the simple truth contained within the being-that-is, one creates a new entity, a new concept of optimal gender-expression that, while removed from the social norms of gender-expression, is no less inhibiting. Instead of feeling compelled to conform to a rigidly defined concept of gender by social pressure, one is instead compelled to conform to one's own rigid concept by the threat of appearing to be inauthentic if one chooses varies from it. If a woman decides that it is perfectly acceptable for a woman to go without makeup,

²⁸ This conflict is very clearly identifiable in Harold Garfinkel's famous case study of 'Agnes', a transgender woman (by modern terms). Agnes' idea of femininity was very close in accordance to the general social view of femininity at the time but crucially, she was noted as engaging in "Active and deliberate management of her appearances before others as an object" (Garfinkel, 1967), indicating that she was preoccupied to a certain extent with being perceived *by others* to be a woman, which is an attitude of bad faith.

and that women ought not to be the victims of snide remarks simply because they chose to do so, there exists the anxiety that should she choose at any point, to wear makeup for a special occasion, or just because she feels like it, that someone might accuse her of hypocrisy. It wouldn't be hypocrisy at all, of course, but the possibility remains, and while that may be a fairly innocuous example, unlikely to cause significant distress to the woman involved, much more significant distress can be caused in other, more complex circumstances. Imagine for example, a transgender woman in a similar situation, she too believes that it is perfectly acceptable for a woman to go without makeup. However, in her childhood, while she was less confident of her gender identity, she argued with her family over whether a boy could wear makeup, her family insisting that it wouldn't be right, and she insisting that it would. Having since begun to live as a woman, that conflict lingers in her mind, and each time she puts on her makeup she remembers it, and how essential she feels wearing makeup was to adopting a feminine lifestyle for herself. She may well worry that it is hypocritical to believe that women do not have to wear makeup to be seen to be suitably feminine, and simultaneously that wearing makeup is essential to her feminine identity.

Once more, this is not hypocritical. One individual believing that the act of wearing makeup is essential in satisfying their own attitudes towards their femininity does not conflict with the general principle that makeup is not essential to the general concept of femininity. More accurate would be to say that just as makeup is commonly identified as a feature of a feminine personality, but is not a necessary feature of every single feminine personality, an individual may simply choose to conform to that social expectation for their own reasons²⁹. Nevertheless, such anxieties are thoroughly absorbing, and incessantly draw the attention of the consciousness. Someone consumed by this kind of anxiety is far more likely to police their own thoughts and behaviour in a very similar way to how social communities will police them, only from a different perspective. If one begins to suspect their beliefs or behaviours are drifting too far from the characterisation they established for themselves, they may go out of their way to realign with that earlier, inflexible image of themselves so as to avoid the guilt of perceived inauthenticity. This realignment to a potentially outdated

²⁹In the case of the transgender woman outlined here, the reason is simply that she experiences misplaced anxieties regarding her gender expression due to difficult experiences early in life. Her position on makeup is irrational (she does not *need* to wear makeup in order to be feminine), but it is not hypocritical because her mistake is in believing that there is something unique to herself that causes her to be an exception to this rule. She is not a hypocrite, she is merely mistaken.

image is by its nature a conscious decision to perform gender in a subtly contrived fashion, and accusations of inauthenticity from others, though often not founded in any real evidence of such, strike at that precise anxiety, provoking a retaliation in the form of redoubled, possibly more extreme, expressions of that same inflexible norm of gender expression one set for oneself.

Chapter 2.4

Sexuality

As for sexual orientation, many of the principles are very similar to those of gender, but, the matter of sexuality does still bear some discussion, since the character of sexual orientation as it exists within the identity of an individual is substantially different to that of gender identity, and will therefore have different implications for the development of self-image in any particular individual. The most notable distinction, in my view, is how unbelievably specific a characteristic sexual orientation actually *is* compared to gender, or even to nationality. While those things are broad characteristics, laden with connotations, related to vast numbers of social behaviours and the cultivation of attitudes towards a tremendous number of concerns, sexuality on its own, apprehended as independent from the social attitudes of a particular culture relates only to matters of sex and romance, and attitudes towards such matters.

Certainly, one's sexuality may have a very prominent effect on the attitudes one takes towards gender norms, what constitutes morally appropriate behaviour, and other such concerns. This usually occurs if one is aware of certain differences between oneself and the social norm, a situation which can contribute to an inclination towards scrutinising of other social norms that have more tangential relationships to sexuality. When apprehended as separate from all the social constructs and connotations surrounding it though, sexuality seems to be a relatively minor characteristic. If we try to conceive only of those aspects of one's life that would be affected by sexuality if no conflict arose around it, I think we would struggle to think of much outside the realm of sex and romance, and even there, only to a given extent. I can think of precious few elements of human existence that are significantly and necessarily defined by sexuality outside of the complex social mechanisms that arise from social conflicts oriented around sexual orientation. Outside of the context of a society facing these conflicts, I do not think sexuality would have any political significance, nor would it shape non-romantic or non-sexual interactions, nor would it have any bearing on who one chooses to keep as friends. In this sense, sexuality has something in common with race, in that many of the 'consequent' attitudes and behaviours derived from that trait are not so much implicit to the trait itself, as they are the consequence of having to defend one's self-image from a hostile social environment.

If we imagine, for a moment, the experience of growing up gay in a social environment that does not accommodate such lifestyles, we will find a situation much like that experienced by the gender non-conforming. As do most children, the child experiences the development of sexual feelings at adolescence, but are increasingly conscious that those feelings are directed towards the 'wrong' people, according to the social mores of their community. They do not necessarily understand why they feel differently, or that anyone else might feel similarly. If this is the case, then they experience many of those same problems we have already identified. They may attempt to suppress their feelings, they may even be successful, but if the feelings don't go away, they won't find their social existence as satisfying as if they were able to endorse their own feelings entirely. If however, they do understand their feelings, they understand that they are gay, or bisexual, or something else which—in a hostile social environment— may as well be the same thing, then they may well be conscious of an array of militant attitudes and/or far-fetched stereotypes that they understand to be directed at themselves. These stereotypes naturally do not resonate all that strongly within their sense of self. Certainly, no-one who is gay *feels* particularly satanic, or unnatural (at least, not for reasons pertaining to their sexuality), nor are they necessarily going to feel inclined to do each and every thing it is presumed by those around them that gay people do. Being gay in itself implies nothing about a person but their sexual and/or romantic inclinations, in much the same way that one's nationality implies nothing inherent to the self but the place of one's birth and/or upbringing.

So how is one to respond to persistently being implicated in a fictitious version of one's own sexuality that is so clearly scorned by a significant portion of one's own community? How is one to react to the derisive whispers directed at others who are presumed to be gay for seemingly arbitrary reasons by those under the impression that everyone they know shares their disposition? One gathers an idea of how others suppose a gay man to look. It is nail polish, or it is tight t-shirts, or it is long hair, or it is too flamboyant a manner of walking, the description changes from place to place, each and every stereotype is arbitrary, and each stereotype describes the personality of a gay man in equally arbitrary terms. To anyone who is gay but does not match their community's accepted wisdom of what 'gay' looks like, or how gay people behave, the disconnect between the nature of gay people as depicted in stereotypes and the nature of oneself according to one's own self-image can create doubts as to whether one actually is gay, which should not be something about which one can have doubts; certainly no-one else has better empirical grounds than oneself

to believe they know how one feels about sex³⁰. Alternatively, if one does understand that such stereotypes are not definitive, and that homosexuality does not imply everything that one's social community claims it to, this disconnect may breed resentment against those who subscribe to such baseless stereotypes and thereby foster the desire to reclaim the definition of gay for oneself.

By this stage there is an awful lot going on in the head of our hypothetical gay friends, so let us try to unpick the thought processes that they have in sequence. We shall imagine a young man, who has not disclosed his sexuality to any of his family, nor anyone else from his local community. We shall imagine that he lives in a community that has a very religious-conservative attitude to homosexuality, and associates it with hedonism, debauchery, and other assorted vices. However, our friend has managed to meet and converse with other gay people from outside his local community and has begun to see some errors in the perception of gay people by that community. Perhaps one of his gay acquaintances happens to also be a Christian despite having similar experiences with very conservative relatives, indicating that homosexuality need not be the opposite of piety. Now we shall imagine that our friend has encountered a situation that demands some kind of commitment to his self-image, one of his gay friends has expressed romantic interest in him, for instance. Now our friend needs to resolve whatever crisis he is experiencing in order to be able to respond appropriately. He thinks of himself as gay, and certainly he has identified certain flaws in the views of his community regarding homosexuality, some of which have been the cause of significant stress to him when he finds himself bearing the brunt of some careless prejudice. His experiences certainly lend him to believe that he may well be gay.

Unfortunately, he is somewhat fettered by the fact that he has grown up in a community that subscribes to a very narrow description of what 'gay' is, and as such, he is left with the niggling feeling that he himself does not align with the idea of 'gay' that has been impressed upon him. This problem is easy enough for him to solve, and truth be told he has already done so. By learning about other gay people from his friendships with them he has learned that there is no single way to be a gay person. In fact, since sexual identity is so small a part

³⁰ It should be acknowledged that there is every possibility that one might lack proper self-knowledge to the extent that other people genuinely do have a better idea of one's sexuality than oneself. However, if others do have a better idea, it is by accident. Nobody external to the self has sufficient empirical evidence to make such a claim categorically.

of one's identity, the expression of homosexuality can only be apprehended either in the sense that a) one is gay or one is not and everything else about oneself is a different concern, or b) that there are so infinite a number of possible ways of expressing oneself with regards to one's sexuality that it ceases to be sensible to talk about what the character of 'gay' happens to be. With this concern resolved, our friend can turn his attention to the more relevant concerns of whether or not he is sufficiently confident that he is gay to be able to consider a romantic involvement with another man. Is he sexually or romantically attracted to other men? We shall imagine that he is. Is he similarly attracted to women? He is not. Based on this, he concludes that yes, he is gay, and confident enough in that belief to reciprocate the feelings that his friend has expressed to him.

Next though, there is another problem. Though he is now comfortable with the idea that he is gay, his social situation is still such that he does not feel safe engaging in public displays of affection with his boyfriend. The need to conceal those inclinations which, were they heteronormatively aligned, the social mores of his society would gladly permit, leads to a deeply unsatisfying social existence. There is a drive then, in the back of our friend's mind, to actualise his identity as a gay man by means of some public behaviour, but circumstances demand that the display be covert. The typical approach to solving this problem has been to develop a kind of countercultural movement that breaks away from all the established social conventions in order to create a co-existing social environment where the expression of one's personhood in this way is sanctioned by a different social institution. In the 1950s in Britain, gay men used Polari, a kind of cant or slang language, to disguise their sexuality in public spaces (Bryant, 2012), and subtle fashion trends tended to arise in order to make gay people identifiable to each other, such as the green carnation made famous by Robert Hichens' book of the same name (published 1894), or coloured handkerchiefs displayed discreetly to disclose sexual preferences (Townsend, 1983).

Our friend doesn't wish to draw too much attention to himself by dressing much differently, so he opts for something very subtle, perhaps he has his ears pierced and wears slightly effeminate earrings. In doing so, he makes himself visibly gay to other gay people, and enters into this countercultural community which, as communities tend to, has its own traditions, customs, and social mores, all of which are marked out as 'gay', either by association with gay people, or by being the 'other' standing in contrast to heteronormative values. Participation in this community gives our friend the opportunity to have a satisfying social existence, by allowing him to present himself candidly to the world without having

to conceal any aspect of his being. While attending parties in private spaces he can conduct a romance as any heterosexual person might, and he can freely explore the lives of other gay people by having conversations in a social environment that does not demand that such topics remain undiscussed. In public, though he cannot display his homosexuality openly, his earring constitutes enough of a personal expression for him not to feel as though he is being inauthentic while otherwise concealing the fact that he is gay.

There is a final problem though. Our friend is now caught between two sets of social conventions. One is the set of conventions he has been brought up with, and the other is the 'gay culture' he has acquired from his gay friends and acquaintances, and the two sets of conventions are framed within his mind as polar opposites. We have already established that our friend gets most satisfaction from his social existence when guided by the conventions of his gay community, but suppose that our friend still finds himself thinking in terms of his childhood social values. These thoughts need not be particularly offensive, they may simply entail a periodical passing thought that someone's choice of clothing is a bit inappropriate, a thought he has inherited from his religious upbringing. Such thoughts, while individually harmless, are indicative that our friend is not entirely consumed by the counterculture of which he is a part. This should not be surprising to us, human beings tend not to be defined by a single set of conventions, or a single cultural influence, but in our friend's mind such thoughts entail the endorsement of a worldview that condemns homosexuality entirely, and as a gay man, he ought not to be having such thoughts. Having by now endorsed the gay lifestyle entirely, he experiences acute feelings of guilt for 'not being gay enough', for not sufficiently endorsing the entire body of conventions that have arisen from gay counterculture.

I am certain that such anxieties as typified by our friend here are not common to all gay people, but I am equally certain that they are not unique to this example. Once a coherent cultural space exists for gay people, it has its own cultural norms which, while different in terms of specific values and customs, act upon the consciousness in the same way as one's initial culture. Participation in the culture is incorporated into the totality of being by the consciousness by virtue of one's having participated and one's current participation, and any appreciative attitudes towards the Prospect of continued participation. Thus, participation in a given culture or community is a part of one's identity in the being-that-was, the being-that-is, and the being-that-could-be. As such, it has been uniformly incorporated into one's identity. Once participation with a particular group has been

incorporated into one's identity in this way, the illusion of permanence to which we fall prey regarding our own identities makes one feel as though relinquishing that participation would mean dissolving part of one's identity, relinquishing one's personhood. Our friend's misapprehension that continuing to exhibit behaviours instilled in him by a community which, in his mind, is characterised by its homophobia, causes him to feel as though holding those values would make him somewhat homophobic by association.

Simultaneously, the part of his mind that correctly identifies that suppressing those childhood values is somewhat disingenuous causes him to doubt the sincerity of his expression of his own sexuality. The belief that participation in these cultural communities is mutually exclusive causes incredible stress, and he finds it impossible to acknowledge that both sides can be part of his identity simultaneously. Hence, he does not feel that he can be certain of the authenticity of either aspect of him. He chooses instead, to focus only on what he *does* know. On reflecting on his thoughts and feelings, he determines that even if his commitment to the cultural norms of the gay community is not as exhaustive as he feels it ought to be, he knows that his feelings for his boyfriend are genuine. He *knows* that he is gay, and so, as I suspect most people would, rather than contemplate his identity as the enormous, complicated nebula of interconnected properties and characteristics that he feels incapable of resolving into a coherent image of himself, he instead strives to find comfort and affirmation from the seemingly cast-iron fact of his homosexuality. As often as it is safe to do so, he expresses himself in terms of what constitutes the characteristics of a gay man, insofar as he perceives them. In doing so, he finds that he is able to put existential anxieties out of his mind. It feels to him as though the nature of his being is set – he is gay. At times he may be other things as well, but at all times he is gay. To this end, he finds that the greatest affirmation he is able to achieve occurs when he is most accurately aligned with the image of homosexuality he has designed for himself; so long as he can identify the image of 'gay' in his own self-image, he is convinced of the nature of his personhood by comparison to a rigidly defined concept, which must itself have a definitive identity by virtue of its own definition. It should be stressed that even if his idea of what constitutes homosexuality changes, his relationship with the concept will not change. His behaviour is governed in large part by appeal to his idea of what a gay man looks like and acts like, and that will remain true, whatever his idea of a gay man might be at any given moment.

It is possible by now, to see why sexuality can become such a controversial issue, and why people can get so irate about preposterous accusations of consorting with the devil or suchlike, which should clearly be laughed off, or about accusations of inauthenticity that they know categorically to be false. Such attacks are not merely expressions of disapproval, they are criticisms of someone's entire means of orienting their sense of self and guiding their future decision-making. When someone is criticised for being gay, they are being told that their project of being, their chosen Prospect of identity is incorrect, impossible, or inferior to another. Granted, such methods of orienting one's behaviour are not perfectly rational, they are based on those errors of perception that we outlined in Chapter One. The appeal to a specific image of 'gay' is analogous to the example of the church. Where the church is not defined by the nature of the actual edifice, but by whatever relation to the parish the parishioners collectively believe to be sufficient to define a church, so too is the character of homosexuality defined by whatever collection of characteristics are believed by enough people to be a representative image of homosexuality itself³¹. These are common errors though, and there are plenty of reasons why one may feel better off for submitting to them. Besides which, being criticised for the manner in which one governs one's own self-image is a harsh thing, and while inflammatory responses to such criticisms are not particularly productive, they are at least understandable.

³¹ Though I wish to reiterate here, that this image should be thought of as a *mere* image.

Chapter 3

Social Facts and Retreat to Facticity

In the first chapter, we explored how human identities are formed by apprehending the self in the past, present, and future in relation to a unifying consciousness, which provides us with a basic understanding of how an individual creates an image of themselves. One apprehends certain facts that are necessary to the being-that-was, facts that are necessary to the being-that-is, and facts that are necessary to whichever prospective being-that-could-be is the current object of the consciousness' aspirations. The consciousness then resolves all these facts into a single entity that it considers to be the 'self' according to their mutual relationship to the totalising consciousness, and this entity constitutes the unified totality of being that pertains to that self-same consciousness. Throughout the second chapter, we explored race, nationhood, gender, and sexuality – all identity features that carry considerable weight in modern society – and saw how these features can be incorporated into one's self-image, and how some of the perceptual errors identified by Hume can lead to such features motivating behaviour or attitudes that are not strictly implied by the simple nature of each character trait alone.

It should be reasonably clear by now that much of the process of incorporating a given feature into one's self-image is consistent between many different features. We have seen in each one of our examples, the same kind of pattern emerging. A certain feature gains priority in one's self-image due to some prejudice, or other significant experience elucidating the fact that this feature distinguishes oneself from others. Persistent prejudice, or resistance to that feature of one's identity causes a crisis between the desire to allay the prejudice by conforming to normative expectations, and the desire to have that feature accepted by others. In absence of any means of relinquishing the characteristic in question in a way that would be sufficiently sincere, one is provoked into a state of mind which prioritises the expression of the self in terms of a subjectively defined 'ideal' of that characteristic. This is the general conclusion that I believe we can draw from the evidence outlined in the preceding chapters, but I would like to use the remainder of this thesis to elaborate upon this very concise description, and address any ambiguities remaining.

Take, for example, the issue of cultural inheritance that we discussed in chapter two. Cultural inheritance is a matter that pertains to gender and to nationality because the

nature of each of those features, the effect that they will have on one's consciousness and by extension on the self, is entirely constituted by cultural associations held by others during one's formative years. Unlike features of one's identity that one possesses by virtue of genetic inheritance, one's cultural inheritance is not simply given character after the fact (though that can still happen as well), it is defined at its inception in entirely abstract terms. We have seen how national communities are essentially imagined, that the cultural ties binding people together are artificial, the result of mythologizing the shared occupation of a particular tract of land, generally by people sharing a common language. Likewise, the concept of gender varies by region and culture, so the way one constitutes the idea of one's own gender and/or gender expression will be different depending on the culture to which one belongs. In the absence of any culture to which to belong, concepts of nation or gender would be essentially meaningless. Their nature, their incorporation into human identity relies upon a collective agreement as to what that nature is. However, other traits, such as skin colour, and biological sex would still have as much implicit meaning³² when removed from a cultural environment as they do within it, which is to say, very little, but at the very least, one's skin would still have a colour, and one would still have reproductive organs, whereas concepts of gender and nationality dissolve entirely when taken out of their cultural context.

This distinction indicates a corresponding distinction regarding how a person can incorporate these features into their self-image. A person considering their personhood does not consider brute material facts to be worthy of note. My skin colour does not indicate much beyond the quantity of melanin I possess, and my sex is a reflection of little more than the type of chromosomes that I have, neither of which are things any sane individual can make prominent within their self-image. I cannot consider my Y chromosome to be a prized possession, nor is there any joy to be found in my relative lack of melanin, such things are of no personal consequence, their significance is given by others by reference to factors external to my being. There are occasions where people may believe such things to be of significance to their sense of self, but in such cases they are confusing the connotations to a culture or to personhood that a particular trait has with the trait itself. It no longer matters to them what the trait actually entails. Regardless of what a given trait entails, the social consensus to which such a person subscribes is that 'x is good', and so

³² That is to say, they would imply the same number of other identity traits that arise as the necessary consequence of their own nature.

long as said person also perceives that 'I am x' then they will consequently believe 'I am good (or at least better) for being x'. Even if, over time, trait x ceases to entail some consequent trait a, and instead entails trait b, or c, the attitude of 'I am good for being x' does not cease to pertain so long as the wider social attitude 'x is good' still pertains. What is important to the consciousness is not whether x entails a, b, or c, but whether 'I am x' and whether 'x is good'. Hence, we see that the sense of a particular trait is not as important to the consciousness as the way in which the presence of that trait in oneself affects one's relationship to one's environment.

It should be stressed that although I discuss these issues with regard for a social consensus in order to preserve the real-world context, the phenomenon would not be substantially different if there were no wider social body with which to contend. The attitudes surrounding a given trait x are native to the consciousness of the subject in question, meaning that the subject can still choose to adhere to those values regarding x even if there is no social convention to constrain them. The social context merely introduces a particular kind of constraint that is ubiquitous to all social environments, but in the absence of social conventions, one may constrain one's interpretation of the nature of certain traits according to other factors, both rational and irrational. To illustrate, a wild man who lives in the woods may designate a particular clearing as 'home' (it has the property of 'homeness'), but nonetheless he is free to change his mind and designate another location as 'home' if he wishes. He may, within the confines of his own mind, have disqualified certain locations on some rational grounds, for example if a particular area is too dangerous to be his home, or perhaps on irrational or subjective grounds, such as superstitious unease about a certain area, or dislike of the environment. If his woods are settled by a group of others though, they may determine that certain areas are disqualified from being the wild man's home, and by their actions prevent him from making them so. In this case, the wild man is constrained by social conventions imposed on him by a forced relationship between himself and the settlers. A consensus would need to be formed between both parties as to which areas may be called the wild man's home.

How though, do we explain why people find value in traits that are not rooted in any tangible facts? In these cases we cannot say that people are simply presuming that a certain x entails a certain y. In these cases, there is no x to begin with, there is merely a presumption that there is some x, and a general, collective agreement of what x is. This is initially perplexing, though on closer inspection we should admit that it is not entirely

accurate. There must be an *x* of some kind in order that we might be able to make an agreement about it; it is simply that such concepts are self-perpetuating rather than being grounded in material facts. They continue to exist because they have been accepted as common wisdom, the existence of such concepts within our collective social understanding is taken as sufficient reason in and of itself to perpetuate them. The origin of such traits may well have been rooted in more tangible facts at some time previously; for instance, the nation I was born in was once inhabited by a group of people called the Angles, and the land they lived on was given their name, which over time became 'England'. However, even in such cases the sense has often long since been lost. I have no identifiable connection to the Angles, just as I have no implicit connection with any other people who have lived on the same bit of land as me before or since, barring my direct ancestors. Nothing connects us but the fact that we all, by custom, have called ourselves English.

For our purposes though, it does not matter if such traits ever made sense or not, because a person can easily be aware of a certain trait, principle, or value, and its place in their society without knowing its justification, and can therefore develop an attitude towards that value and find a place for it in their sense of self if they choose. What interests us is how the sense of a value can change without changing its social function, or its relationships to those people invested in it. By analogy, we can imagine a national border that is internationally agreed to be defined by the course of a river. The river is not itself the border. A national border is a political concept, not a geographical feature, but it is more convenient to all parties involved to refer to the course of the river as though it were the national border, as if the concept of a natural and a political boundary were one and the same. Over time though, the river changes shape as it erodes its banks, but the border is never defined in different terms, so the shape of the national border changes alongside the shape of the river. This is possible because the border itself was the invention of a human consciousness, it never existed in any tangible sense, it existed only to resolve political disputes, but convention dictates that the river *is* the border, and so despite the fact that the river's course may change, citizens of each nation continue to treat it as the marker for the extent of their nation's territory. Likewise, traits such as nationality and gender that only exist by virtue of collective agreement are considered in terms of transient constituent features that seem to most individuals to be concretely defined from their subjective perspective, but which can in fact change significantly over a sufficient period of time. While it may be perfectly possible to identify what properties constitute a given national

character or form of gender expression, to the extent that nearly everyone has a clear idea of what such a thing may entail, the agreement that such concepts exist can persist far longer than the nature of said concepts as a particular community understands them at a particular point in time. If I had been born two or three hundred years earlier, I would still have called myself English, but what being English entailed in the minds of my peers would be very different. The apparent continuity of English national character from the 18th century to now is perpetuated by the common mistake that the characteristics ascribed to Englishmen as a whole are consistent, that my understanding of what is meant by 'stiff upper lip', for example, is the same as the understanding of the term that I would have if I had been born in the 18th century³³. In reality, the nature of our collective understanding of such concepts changes just as surely as does the identity of anything else, it simply changes slowly enough that we trick ourselves into thinking that they are consistent. It might be that while Englishmen today may associate the stiff upper lip with the blitz spirit, or great composure in the face of danger, an Englishman three hundred years ago may have associated it more explicitly with valour, or chivalry, or other such virtues that resemble, but are not equivalent to, a modern interpretation of the phrase. If this is the case, then while modern Englishmen and Georgian Englishmen might agree on the importance of a stiff upper lip, we disagree on what is meant by that, and recognising that disagreement might be a great deal more difficult if none of us recognises the need to compare our interpretations.

The general form of this phenomenon then, is that some concept x is collectively agreed to embody the essence of some other concept or set of concepts y, in such a way that so long as changes to y are not jarring, or explicitly contradictory to the prevailing understanding of x, then those changes will be overlooked in order to preserve the functional relationship between x and the subjective consciousness. This is a fairly mundane conclusion but for the fact that so much of an individual's understanding of these relevant concepts is conferred upon them by their social environment. This socially conventional account is then continuously reiterated by the totalising Look of the other which makes apparent to the consciousness its being-for-others. The reason this is so significant is because it is the being-for-others that reveals to the consciousness its existence as an object in the world. Unless

³³ Hume has much to say on this in his essay 'On National Character'. He puts great emphasis on the ways in which civilisations of the past differ in character to the nominal descendants of those civilisations in his own time (Hume, 1753).

the consciousness is the object of a Look, it regards itself only as a subject, but once the Look is turned on the consciousness in question, then the individual is aware that they exist as a being in the midst of the world, and consequently that they can be an object within somebody else's consciousness. We have discussed at length in Chapter 2 the ways in which disagreement between one's being-for-others and one's self-image causes conflict, but I believe it is prudent to explain the reason for this conflict here in more definite terms.

As explained in Chapter 1, one's self-image is an image of the self that is characterised by facticity, its properties and characteristics at any given time are defined in strictly immutable terms, and the attitude of the self towards the self-image is descriptive; the self believes the self-image to be an accurate description of the sense of their being. We know that since the self-image lacks any kind of project of being, it cannot accurately reflect the sense of a human existence. What the self-image is then, is an account of the being that exists by virtue of all the experiences that the individual can recall. By comparison, the being-for-others is an entity contrived by the consciousness to represent the self as one imagines oneself to be perceived by others. It is this image that the consciousness uses to interpret the nature of the self as an object in the world. It should be made clear that a complex social system is not necessary for a being-for-others to become apparent, there simply needs to be some apparent agency that can make the self the object of a Look, and stands in some tangible relation to the self that is revealed by the Look. The Look of a hungry tiger produces a being-for-others that reveals to the consciousness the possibility of its existence in the world shortly becoming that of tiger-food. In the same way, the Look of another human being, depending on social context and conventions, can reveal the self-in-the-world as being a friend, enemy, master, slave, romantic interest, sexual competitor, professional, amateur, etc. We can therefore see why it is necessary to pay at least some attention to the being-for-others.

The trouble arises when the account of the self which one perceives in the being-for-others does not correspond with the experiences one has committed to one's self-image. If I were to think of myself as a friend of John, and I felt proud to be John's friend, and I respected him greatly, I might be shocked to discover that John sincerely resents me, and he insults me to all of his other friends as soon as I leave. Upon discovering this, I am forced to internalise this being-for-others that I now recognise and stop thinking of myself as John's friend. However, this new self-image, one in which I am not a friend of John, is so incongruent with my earlier experiences that I may struggle to internalise it and may resist

accepting it in favour of other explanations. Perhaps I was lied to, perhaps someone who was jealous of my friendship with John decided to sow discord between us, perhaps I misunderstood what I was told. Incongruence of this sort occurs when there is a discrepancy between the actual experience of an individual and the self-image of the individual as it represents that experience (Rogers, 2007), a state of affairs that is bound to occur when the image presented by the being-for-others supplants an existing self-image contrary to the experiences one would personally have judged to constitute their sense of self. These incongruences are frequently perceived by individuals in question to constitute a threat to a particular value which they hold essential to their existence as a self, which is the most essential source of anxiety (May, 1960).

I may find it very hurtful that John does not reciprocate my feelings of friendship, but regarding broader issues like those discussed in Chapter 2, these anxieties can be a great deal more consuming, because they deal with incongruencies not merely oriented around relationships between individuals, but around issues of one's place in society, and one's relationship to every other individual in that same society. We rely on the being-for-others to reveal to us the manner in which we fit into the world, but if the being-for-others reveals an account of the self that does not match our experiences, the result is an incongruence that is incredibly difficult to resolve. When the being-for-others is coloured by prejudice, it is virtually guaranteed to be incongruous with the experiences that have shaped one's self-image, and it is by way of these prejudicial influences on the being-for-others that the black man discovers that he is a violent brute, the gay man finds that he is an abomination to the Lord, and the strong-willed woman discovers that she is a bitch, all in spite of what each of these people believes about themselves. How is this incongruence resolved? When I was told that John and I were not the friends I thought we were, my first reaction against this incongruence was to check the veracity of the claim, to make sure that I had not misunderstood, or been misinformed. These reactions have the potential for resolving the incongruence, because even if my hopes are thwarted and John really does dislike me, I can still reappraise my experience in light of this new information such that my experience once more corresponds with the self-image I derived from the being-for-others. In these examples of prejudice though, no amount of rationalising is going to make the prejudice seem reasonable, or concordant with one's experience. No-one who knows themselves to be conscientious and gentle is going to be persuaded that they must actually be violent because their skin is too dark for them to possibly be kind. Equally though, no-one can

happily ignore their being-for-others either, to do so could put one in severe danger in a sufficiently hostile social environment if people react violently to exposure to characteristics their society does not accept.

There is no rational escape from this problem. One cannot accept the being-for-others that is incongruous with one's experiences, and neither can one ignore it, since nobody else is likely to stop regarding one in such terms simply because one personally elects not to care. Further, an individual is seldom likely to undermine the mores of a society on their own such that the incongruous being-for-others is dissolved by proxy. The outcome, therefore, is irrational behaviour, specifically the pursuit of a particular image of the self as a retaliation against the being-for-others that brands one as a kind of person it is inconceivable to one's own mind for one to be. In some cases, this reaction is militant, as with Fanon's insistence on being a black man as overtly as possible in order to be personally responsible for othering himself from white people and avoiding the subtle alienation he would experience otherwise; or else with gay men who act 'outrageously' gay to avoid being the victim of stereotypes, instead gaining a certain degree of responsibility for those stereotypes. On other occasions though, this pursuit of facticity manifests as a conformity to a manner of being that one believes would confer a more widely accepted being-for-others on oneself. This happens in cases such as with transgender people who conform to a strictly binary account of their preferred gender in an effort to compel others to acknowledge the concomitance between their experiences and their social behaviour, or else with the Martinicans who conformed to European social mores in the attempt to be recognised as civilised people by Europeans according to the European's own values. In any case, the reaction to a being-for-others that is incongruous with one's own experiences is to apprehend some being of facticity as the overall goal of one's project of being in the attempt to gain some affirmation of one's sense of self. In so doing, one allays the anxiety that is produced by the threat to one's sense of self which is perceived to originate from the incongruous being-for-others.

Over the course of this thesis we have seen how human minds conceive of identity, both in the beings of objects and of human beings, and how a sense of identity is constructed on the basis of perceptions which are apprehended by the consciousness and totalised into a single entity which is characterised in terms of the mutual relationship of all these perceptions to the consciousness itself. We have also seen some of the ways in which humans can be mistaken regarding the identity of certain objects, and some of the many

pitfalls that can cause a person to act in bad faith. We then went on to examine issues of race, nationality, gender, and sexuality, and in each case discovered that the particular emphasis placed on such a characteristic over others is a response to external attitudes regarding those characteristics prompting an anxiety that is the result of the incongruence of the being-for-others which manifests in the mind from exposure to certain social attitudes, and the experience apparent to the self as the result of actually existing as a being with the relevant characteristic. We have also seen that the consequent behaviours of a person affected by this incongruence are significantly characterised by the pursuit of facticity as part of a project of bad faith aimed at alleviating/undermining derogatory attitudes and seeking affirmation of one's self-image from oneself or others. There is considerable scope for further study, but as far as this thesis is concerned, I am satisfied that the ideas expressed here are sufficient to demonstrate that derogatory social attitudes (or attitudes perceived as such) play some role in provoking certain individuals into giving undue prominence to certain of their personal characteristics. The effect of this phenomenon in broader terms being a matter for future discussion, possibly regarding the extent to which such derogatory attitudes or the consequent actions in bad faith are responsible for exacerbating conflicts surrounding issues of civil rights and representation.

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