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For Narrativity: How Creating Narratives Structures Experience and Self

Natallia Stelmak Schabner

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FOR NARRATIVITY:
HOW CREATING NARRATIVES STRUCTURES EXPERIENCE AND SELF

by

NATALLIA STELMAK SCHABNER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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NATALLIA STELMAK SCHABNER

Advisor: Professor Noel Carroll

This dissertation responds to the challenge to narrativity posed by Galen Strawson in “Against Narrativity,” where he claims that not everyone is Narrative by nature and that there is no reason to be. I make my claim “For Narrativity” as a mental process of form finding and coherence seeking over time that is an inherent mental activity and essential for experience of one’s Self. I make my case through examinations of our experience of time, our use of language, how we plan, and our sense of Self. In the first chapter, I show that considering Narrativity as viewing life as a story -- focused on the product, rather than the process -- is a category mistake. I put forward a revised definition of Narrativity, as a process of Narrativizing, i.e., taking the temporal flow of experience and continually shaping and reshaping it towards something like a narrative, without necessarily ever achieving a completed form. The second chapter reflects on the value of narratives for our understanding and show the importance of Narrativizing: Only through Narrativizing are we able to project into the future. The third chapter responds to Strawson's proposal of an Episodic, non-Narrative person, taking counter-examples from some of the literary works he uses, including Proust and Musil. The fourth chapter explores Narrativity as essential to Self and the creation of Self as the organizing principle of experience. I respond to Derek Parfit, another opponent of narrativity, who argues that the Self is a falsehood. The fifth chapter draws a connection between how Narrativity functions in response to experience, and how a literary narrative triggers our mental process of Narrativity, allowing us to become engaged with the work, and proposes Narrativity as a tool to resolve the Paradox of Fiction.

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Introduction

Narrativity is a nontrivial issue in philosophy because ultimately all we have are our experiences, which occur over time, so the challenge is how to make sense of them. That is, to determine whether there is a relationship between our experiences, and if so, what that relationship is, and to determine what meaning can be attached to those experiences. The concept of narrativity has been proposed, in various forms, as one answer to this challenge. Broadly speaking, narrativity is the notion that we see or experience our lives as a story, or at least in a narrative fashion.

These views typically involve an emphasis on the product, claiming that we take a classical narrative arc as a model for our life as we try to order our experiences. However, our life arguably isn't static, it doesn't resemble a motion towards some end in Aristotelian terms, but could be seen as a matter of activity as such for its own sake, a process that is fluid, undergoing continual transformation, inextricable from time. Because of this, I will argue, the storytelling involved in Narrativity as a way to represent life and its experience acquires a dynamic nature. As such, the focus of my discussion of Narrativity will be on the mental process involved, not on the product. I will argue that the definition of Narrativity should be reconsidered, that the concept of Narrativity should be seen as a process of form finding and coherence seeking over time that constitutes the Self.

This work responds in particular to the challenge to narrativity posed by Galen Strawson in his essay "Against Narrativity" (Strawson 2004) where he claims that not everyone is Narrative by nature and that there is no reason to be. I focus on his argument against the descriptive or psychological thesis, which, in contrast to the prescriptive thesis, does not claim

that we should or shouldn't be narrative, but states that this is simply the way we are. I will make my case variously through examinations of our experience of time, our use of language, how we make plans and projects, and through our sense of Self. I will also examine the notion of an Episodic person, as put forth by Strawson and exemplified in literature, to see whether such a state of being is in fact non-Narrative, as he says.

To begin with, in the first chapter, I look into the accounts of some proponents of narrativity such as Noel Carroll, Louis Mink, Paul Ricoeur and Gregory Curry and show how Narrativizing (proposing a possible narrative) is an intrinsic aspect of consciousness. I will expound a more active model of Narrativity, focusing on the process rather than the narrative product. In this way, I will attempt to overcome the failure of many proponents of narrativity to take into account the fact that the model of realist fiction, generally presented as the form our life narratives take, is not a universally accepted narrative model. While the form and content of narratives are culturally specific, the impulse to Narrativize and to use narrative as a tool of understanding is a part of being human.

To explore how Narrativity functions, I will then look at temporal consciousness and temporal mental objects we could hold in our mind, drawing a parallel with the Kantian notion of apperception that is a basis for the form-finding in Narrativity. The scope of this concept will shift to the phenomenological domain and be looked at as a manifold of content unfolding over time. Such a manifold of content doesn't have definite boundaries in its form, but is open in terms of where it begins and where it ends. It lacks closure, since the center of gravity shifts as time proceeds in life and new variables are introduced, forcing continual reconsideration of values.

I will examine Husserl's contention (Husserl 1964) that the unfolding of the manifold of our mental content is inseparable from imagination, that it is our imagination or phantasy that is able to combine our impressions into a unity. Considering Husserl's discussion of our grasp of melody, I will draw a parallel to the kind of non-conceptual causality heard in music -- that some progressions "feel" right, that melodic lines and harmonic structures create certain expectations of how they will be resolved -- with the process of Narrativity, to demonstrate how deep-seated and intrinsic it is to our mental activity.

Roman Ingarden (Ingarden 1973) picks up this theme, seeing the manifold of our mental content taking the form of a mental/imaginary object that could exist in an aesthetic realm like a work of music or a literary work. Ingarden goes further however, positing that for such a mental object to be formed from the manifold, there must be a Self that assembles it and holds it together.

In the second chapter I will reflect on the value of narratives for our understanding and show the importance of Narrativizing, and why it is that this is a mental activity that is common to all of us. I will look at Aristotle's discussion of two forms of narrative -- poetry and history. For him, poetry is more significant than history because it reaches for possibility in a timeless manner and so we could understand Universals. Universals could be understood in poetry through the mental narrative engagement with particulars that are embodiments of those Universals. The power of imagination engaged by poetry elevates us to the Platonic realm of forms.

For the poet, of course, form finding is not only temporal. Metaphor, a tool of the poet, is also a kind of form finding. The next section of the chapter discusses metaphor. To become a poet one must have "an eye for resemblances" that is an ability to discern patterns. Such an

ability of pattern recognition is the ability of form finding and coherence seeking, even in finding identity in difference. In its highest aesthetic power, such an ability is looking for identity in difference and cannot be limited to causal connections alone, but also has its origin in non-causal and non-conceptual connections. This synthetic capacity of time puts in motion our mental life as well as influences our actions. Just thinking of our past and future selves we engage in metaphor making, as Ted Cohen (Cohen 2009) says.

Correlating historicity, action and narrativity and following Danto's argument on narrative sentences (Danto 1962), I'll show that only through the act of Narrativizing are we able to project into the future, planning actions. For Danto, we cannot use project verbs without making claims on the future; similar points are made by Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1984) and Husserl (Husserl 1964). Building on these arguments, I will show that we are intrinsically Narrative, since in virtue of using language we place ourselves in a temporal context. Embarking on any project is impossible without Narrativity.

Drawing on these discussions, I will examine Strawson's acceptance of Narrativity in certain senses that he calls trivial, such as in mundane actions like making coffee and other projects that require planning. I will argue that such a triviality claim falls into a slippery slope argument. The implications of accepting the Narrativity involved in such an act as making coffee aren't trivial and the triviality as such could be a matter of degree, not of kind.

In the third chapter, I will respond to Strawson's proposal of a person as Episodic and non-Narrative (Strawson 2004), taking examples from some of the same literary works that he uses as a basis for his claim. I will explore Proust's understanding of involuntary memory, taking account of the paradox he proposes regarding the extra-temporal state in which we find ourselves when gripped by remembrance. I'll will also examine how Strawson proposes Musil's

"man without qualities" as a candidate for an Episodic and show how the character attempts to break from Narrativity and intends to return to it.

The fourth chapter explores Narrativity as essential to Self and the creation of Self. The Self is viewed as the subject of experience, the organizing principle through which experience is processed. Here I will respond to Derek Parfit (Parfit 1987), another opponent of Narrativity, who argues that the Self is a falsehood and makes a prescriptive claim that we shouldn't be attached to any strong connection between our Selves through time, supporting his view with thought experiments involving fission, division and teletransportation. Looking at the advances of neuroscience and explorations of psychology, I will address his challenges.

In my last chapter I draw a connection between how Narrativity functions in response to experience, and how a literary narrative as a product triggers our mental process of Narrativity, allowing us to become engaged with the work. In this way I carry my argument over into the aesthetic domain. In particular, I look at how stories engage our emotions, since emotion plays such a significant role in our conception of Self. I narrow this scope looking at how emotions are triggered in literature and show how Narrativity is necessary for such an experience and how it could help us solve the paradox of fiction.

Chapter 1

Redefining Narrativity

In his story “The Other” (Borges 1999, 411), Jorge Luis Borges creates a thought experiment that addresses one of the most perplexing and currently contentious philosophical issues: What is the relationship between our Self at one time in our lives and our Self at another? Borges imagines the meeting of one person-slice with another from the same person, and tries to see what effect such a meeting would have. How, first could it be established that the two were time-slices from the same person, and then how would each react? In this thought experiment, a 20-year-old Borges and one in his 70s confront one another and must resolve their differences. The existence of the “other” Borges challenges the concept of identity for each of the two -- though perhaps more strongly for the younger one, who must face the apparent evidence that he will not become the person he imagines he will. The older one only must deal with the fact that as a younger man he did not hold the beliefs he now holds and that he does not remember everything he did and knew half a century earlier. The problem for each is how to fit the “Other” who is also himself into the story he tells about himself.

If it were Galen Strawson writing the story, it seems, it would be a completely different matter. First, because, as Strawson describes himself in “Against Narrativity” (Strawson 2004) and other works, he is a person who feels no connection between the Self he is now and the Self he was in the further past or the self he might become in the further future -- though he does admit that he is the same human being, in the sense of the same physical entity. And secondly, he denies that there is any story he tells about his life, or at least any non-trivial story.

Borges' tale plays on the conflict between the common, perhaps unexamined assumption that there is a persistent self, and the apparent evidence that who we are changes so dramatically that were such a meeting as he describes really possible, it would challenge all of our beliefs about who we are. How could we possibly say that the young Borges and the old Borges are the same Self if they feel such shock and -- at least in the case of the young Borges -- revulsion at seeing the other? For Strawson, the response would be that the two Borgeses may be the same human being, separated by 50 years, but different selves, because throughout the life of a human being, there are many distinct selves. So there is really no reason for the discomfort that the young and old Borges both feel at the meeting. While I accept part of Strawson's argument -- that he and many others may feel little or no connection between the self they are currently with the selves they have been in the past, or to the selves they may become in the future, because they are what he calls Episodic -- I will claim that there is in fact good reason for the two Borgeses' discomfort, and that it is a result of the Narrativity that is the core of how people, even Strawson (whether it is part of his story or not) experience their lives.

The issue of narrativity is a non-trivial question in philosophy because all we have are our experiences, so the challenge is how to make sense of those experiences. Narrativity is commonly defined as the tendency to view one's life as a story, to make narrative connections between events at different times in one's life. Proponents of narrativity range from those who say that we attempt to see our lives as well-formed narratives, like traditional realist novels, to those who argue only that we attempt to fit the events of our lives into a narrative framework, without necessarily creating a completed structure. There is also a division between those who say that this is something we should do in order to have a full, rich life -- what Strawson refers to

as the *prescriptive thesis* -- and those who argue more broadly that this is something everyone does, the *descriptive thesis*.

What is common to all these arguments is the focus on the product -- the narrative. I will argue for Narrativity as a mental process, as form-finding over time, which is a necessary and sufficient condition for experience of one's Self. In addressing form-finding as non-trivial for Narrativity I will make a claim that Narrativity requires only "form-finding *over time*," a dynamic process of constant change and new beginning. Other kinds of form-finding, such as spatial or mathematical, could not be considered Narrativity, because they are non-temporal. I will also make a clear differentiation between Narrativity, as process, and narrative, as product. Narrativity needs only to point towards closure and consequently can constantly be narrativizing as a result of experience without ever producing a finished narrative with the shape -- whether it be beginning, middle, end, or conflict, climax, resolution -- that we associate with traditional novels or stories.

I begin my discussion with Strawson because, though he denies that all people are naturally narrative, in "Against Narrativity" (Strawson 2004), he presents an account that is nuanced, avoiding the normative claims of Derek Parfit, for example, who argues in *Reasons and Persons* (Parfit 1984) that we should not be attached to our past or future selves. Strawson's is not an all-or-nothing answer to the question. He claims that there are two basic types of people: Diachronics and Episodics, who naturally experience life in different ways. Strawson maintains that if one is Diachronic, "one naturally figures oneself, considered as a self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future" (Strawson 2004, 65). While if one is Episodic, "one does not figure oneself, considered as self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future" (Strawson 2004, 65). An

Episodic is not an amnesiac: She has memories and knows that things happened to her, that she did various things throughout her life, but she does not feel strongly connected to those things. In addition to these two types, there are, he says, people who are narrative and non-narrative, and he suggests that there may be Episodics who are either one, though it seems less likely that there could be non-narrative Diachronics.

Further, Strawson's framing of the debate over narrativity is useful. I will accept as a starting point his spelling out of what he calls the psychological and the ethical theses regarding narrativity. The Ethical or normative narrativity thesis claims that "experiencing or conceiving one's life as a narrative is a good thing; a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood" (Strawson 2004, 63). This is a normative account, saying that while narrativity may not be true of every one, it should be because it is the only way to have a full emotional and/or moral life. The psychological narrativity thesis as defined by Strawson is "that human beings typically see or live or experience their lives as a narrative or story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories" (Strawson 2004, 63). This, as he says, is a purely descriptive account: It does not carry a claim that we should be this way, just that we are.

He then differentiates four possible combinations of views of the ethical and psychological theses. The common view, he says, assumes that both of those theses hold true for human nature. One might accept the psychological thesis and reject the ethical one, like Sartre in *La nausee* or the Stoics. One might deny the psychological thesis and affirm the normative one, claiming that though we aren't naturally narrative in our thinking, we should be in order to live a good life. Such a view, he says, is "in Plutarch and a host of present-day writing."

As for Strawson himself, he holds the view that neither of them is true. In his view, both the psychological and the ethical narrativity theses are false, because "there are deeply non-

Narrative people and there are good ways to live that are deeply non-Narrative.” His argument is not that there aren’t Narrative people, or that there shouldn’t be, but that not everyone is Narrative and there is no reason to be.

Views of Narrativity

After a brief overview of some of the main arguments from contemporary proponents and opponents of narrativity, I will propose my own answer to the question of whether narrativity is an intrinsic mental property -- whether we all Narrativize as the primary mode of making sense of experience and as the way we create the Self.

Considering the self as the creation of narrativizing, of course, faces some objections, first from those who equate it with, as Peter Goldie says, having “a tendency to fictionalize our lives, to give our lives a kind of narrative structure that is appropriate to traditional fiction but that is simply not appropriate to real life” (Goldie 2012, 161). I am not quite convinced that it is “not appropriate” to see “real life” through a structure that allows the emotional, ethical and intellectual complexities found in such works of “traditional fiction” as *The Red and the Black* or *Crime and Punishment*, but perhaps those are not the kinds of novels Goldie has in mind. On the other hand, accepting his premise, the simple response is that the misuse or abuse of something -- in this case, through Narrativity trying to give our lives a narrative structure like that in a novel -- is not necessarily an argument against the proper use of a thing: It is merely a caution to use it correctly. Just because some people speed or drive drunk, it does not follow that no people should drive cars.

Perhaps the deeper point here is the concern that by narrativizing, we might create a fiction that is attractive to us, and thereby miss the truth. At the risk of riling such critics, I will

say that it is in fact appropriate for us to wonder, as Dickens' David Copperfield does, "whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life," because this thought from traditional fiction encourages self-examination. The answer to this question, however, could be yes or no without undermining Narrativity. But still, the question remains whether there is a truth about the Self that might be missed as a result of narrativizing.

Peter Lamarque (Lamarque 2007) frames his argument for the potential dangers of narrativity by focusing on the problems inherent in confusing the narratives we see in fiction with those we create when we talk about ourselves. These arise, he says, from the fact that fictional characters, however "real" they might seem, do the things they do for aesthetic reasons. That is, their actions are not like the actions of living people because they are essentially plot devices, dreamed up by an author to make their story work. The problem becomes that by attempting to see our lives as well formed narratives -- essentially imagining that we are living in a traditional realist novel -- we would fail to reassess and adjust our views as situations change. This is only an issue if the focus is on the *product* of Narrativity -- what our narrative should look like -- rather than on the mental process of narrativizing, of continually shaping and reshaping our experience.

Many of those who argue for narrativity, make the case for what Strawson would call the ethical thesis. For example, Marya Schechtman in "Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival: A Refinement and Defense of the Narrative View" (Schechtman 2007) (which was written, she admits, after considering Strawson's attack on narrativity), accepts Strawson's distinction between Selves and Persons and his notion of Episodics, but still claims that the way to an emotionally rich and moral life is to think about our lives in narrative terms. However, she says "there is no requirement that an identity constituting narrative have a unifying theme, or

represent a quest or have a well defined plot that fits a distinct literary genera” (Schechtman 2007, 163). By this distinction, she avoids the concerns raised by Goldie and Lamarque about confusing life and literature. “An identity constituting narrative” is a narrative form that does not face the same aesthetic expectations faced by a literary narrative.

I like the sentiment of this, but I see the need to go further, because I am less interested in the content or form of any narrative a person might hold about their lives than I am in the process by which that narrative is constructed; hence, I am arguing for Narrativity (process), not narrative (form and content). While most of the literature tends to focus on the narrative that is a product of Narrativity and requires closure, my view is of the primary importance of the process itself, which, though involving narrative thinking and making narrative connections, needs only raise the possibility of closure, without necessarily reaching it. Simply put, thought is inextricable from time, thought always involves time, exists in time, because the present is always emerging from the past and always moving toward the future. While a “time slice” may be a common term in the philosophical debate, it is a nonentity. The parameters for such a “slice” cannot be set because of the continual movement of time. There is, practically speaking, no such thing. Even for a person who, like Strawson, might claim that all we have is “this moment,” the “here and now,” that “here and now” does not exist outside of time. It is not static -- by the time it is experienced -- by the time the sense data is processed, it is already the past. Strawson’s argument that because all we have is the “here and now” we do not need to Narrativize fails because the “here and now” is constantly moving, and can only be understood in the context of that movement of time.

I will argue for the descriptive, psychological thesis, not the ethical normative thesis, to show that Narrativity is an intrinsic characteristic of Self, independently of whether it is a good

or a bad thing. I will show that even denying Narrativity is in itself a form of narrative -- it is the story that there is no story. Rather than coming from the ethical standpoint as most proponents do, I will come from an aesthetic standpoint, that Narrativity is the way that we create our Self. I will show that Narrativity is the way we experience our lives.

Narrativity, of course, is not the only mode of thought. The mathematical mode, obviously, would not involve Narrativity, being pure abstraction. Even in the case of a series of computations, we are not dealing with Narrativity because the results are in a sense predetermined by the laws of mathematics. There is no need to look for causes and there is no other way for the computation to turn out. The scientific mode of thought, too, even though it often deals with processes, could not be called Narrativity, as it attempts to ascertain universal rules or principles.

In the next section, I argue against conventional views of narrativity. Despite my argument that Narrativity need not result in a finished, fully shaped narrative product, I will take literary examples to demonstrate the various forms that Narrativity as a process can take, and as examples of different possible qualitative experiences of one's Self. Those experiences will differ in the temporal and aesthetic form they take, such as short stories vs. novels, but also stylistically and in how consciousness is presented by an author. I will use literature not to assert that people do or should think of themselves as characters in a novel or story, but to show how varied the narrative process can be. I will also use literary examples to illustrate the forms the narratives of our experiences might take to suggest it as another philosophical tool, which philosophers use too rarely and which is not less powerful than thought experiments. Further, literature is valuable to this discussion because in the case of many authors, for example Proust and Musil, to name just two, one of the important things they are exploring is the nature of the

self, and while they may not be doing it in a philosophical manner, they are examining the experience of what-it-is-to-be like a self. Musil's *Man Without Qualities* (Musil 1996), is particularly relevant because while this is a novel Strawson and other critics of narrativity seem to favor as one that makes their case, I will use it to show the varieties of narrative possibility. Proust's work has also been brought into the discussion by Strawson, so it also needs to be discussed.

Proponents of the Conventional Narrativity Thesis

I am not just arguing against opponents of narrativity, but to some extent against many of those who argue for what I would call the conventional narrativity thesis (CN). This thesis, supported by Marya Schechtman, Gregory Currie (Currie 2010), Louis Mink (Mink 1987), Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1984) and others, contains the idea that people do or at least should view their lives as a narrative, the model being traditional realist fiction. My objection to this view is at least two-fold. On the one hand, the CN argument is centered on the product -- the narrative -- rather than the mental process by which a narrative might be created. But I would also argue that the model chosen for that product -- traditional realist fiction -- is far too limiting. First of all, it oversimplifies a rich and extremely varied period of Western literature, but it also essentially excludes the peoples of those cultures that do not have a tradition of literary realism. As mine is a descriptive argument, I do not place a higher value on seeking psychological coherence over any other kind.

Traditional realist fiction, a form that flowered in the 19th century and to some extent lives on in genre and popular fiction, is built on Aristotle's aesthetics: the idea that "A whole is

what has a beginning and middle and end." (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450b27). This three-part view of a plot structure (with a beginning, middle and end -- technically, the protasis, epitasis and catastrophe) is essential to realist fiction.

But if for Aristotle, poetry (which of course for him meant the narrative art) imitates life, it seems that proponents of CN say life should imitate poetry. We should see our lives as fitting neatly into the structure of a beginning, middle and end. We should create a narrative that has the kind of plot arc seen in the great novels of Victorian England, seeing ourselves as David Copperfields or Dorothea Brookes. By this account, the emphasis is placed on the character created. It is prescriptive not of process, but of content and of the form of that content. Questions can be raised about CN from a literary perspective -- the 20th century has seen the modernist, post-modernist and other literary movements that reject traditional realism as a valid form for making sense of life as adherents of those movements saw it -- but there is another fundamental problem with the CN view.

If, as Schechtman and others say, I should see and live my life as though it were a narrative, then, by definition of a narrative, I must be projecting towards an ending, a conclusion. But a novelist can wrap up the threads of her tale wherever she sees fit, and at the last word, there is the end. In life, however, there are no conclusive endings besides death. Does that mean that we all should be attempting to see our lives in an arc that somehow will resolve all the conflicts and tie up the loose threads at our death? If that is the case, then we have to deal with the great unknown of how and when we will die, an issue that obviously complicates the construction of a well-formed narrative to the point of impossibility. This is a point I will return to further on.

One obvious objection is that literature -- even the traditional realist novel -- accommodates the fact that there are no real endings in life -- other than death. The traditional structure of the narrative has been challenged, not only before and after the period of realist fiction, but even by writers seen as the greatest examples of that form.

Any survey of literature, even of only the last 300 years of Western literature, would provide ample evidence of the great variety of forms -- or seeming formlessness -- that narratives may take and still be narratives, and of the ambiguities surrounding characters within those narratives.

Tristram Shandy is certainly a narrative, but one that constantly spins away from expectations, picking up new threads and dropping them, and going off on tangents. Even in novels or stories that follow a more traditional form, endings do not necessarily bring total closure -- that is, closure that does not push towards a new beginning. Chekhov's tightly constructed miniatures might close, but they do so in resolutions of ambiguity, that force the reader to go beyond what has been narrated -- both in terms of what has been said and in terms of the temporal frame, so that the narrative itself pushes to alternative narratives. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* ends with the statement that the apparent resolution is really only the opening of a new narrative yet to be told. Even the classic fairy-tale ending, "and they all lived happily ever after..." begins a new story, even if it is one that appears as if it would be too boring to be told.

Strawson himself says he recognizes an affinity between himself and a character in a novel -- Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, which is yet another example of a narrative that does not ever come to closure, yet is considered one of the handful of greatest novels of the 20th century. Musil did not complete the novel, but even so, it is hard to imagine exactly how he

would wrap up all the threads of his massive work. The novels of Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor, the French nouveau roman, with their cold, present-tense accounts, provide examples of how narratives can be completely set in the present moment, in the instant by instant movement of perception, the “Now” that Strawson says he lives in, and still be narratives -- perhaps providing examples of what the narrative of one of Strawson’s episodics might be like. Again, if works of literature that are considered narratives can be so varied, it may not be so clear that we do not all think of our lives as some form of narrative.

All the various forms that literary narratives take may be attempts on the authors’ parts to match life, to convey their own experience of it, or possible experiences of it that they see. This variety demonstrates again the dynamic nature of storytelling as a form of discourse.

To turn again to Dostoevsky, we see in all of his greatest works an ambiguity of events and character; there is a sense that other things could have happened, and that what seems to have happened isn’t what actually happened, which often remains fundamentally unknowable. This is just the difficulty we face as we Narrativize, that we are limited to our own perceptions and must attempt to make sense of them, even when they are unclear or conflict with our expectations.

To take just one passage from Dostoevsky’s *Demons* (which I will analyze in greater detail below), there is a scene in which (Dostoevsky 1976a, 260-1):

I saw how they ran into each other in the doorway: It seemed to me that they both stopped for an instant and somehow strangely looked at one another. But I couldn’t see very well in the crowd. Some people swore, on the contrary, and absolutely seriously, that Liza, looking at Nikolai Vsevolodovich, quickly lifted her hand, just level with his face, and probably would have hit him if he hadn’t been able to move away. ... I admit, I myself didn’t see anything, but on the other hand, everybody swore that they saw it, although they couldn’t have because of the bustle... Only I didn’t believe it then. I remember, however, that the whole way back Nikolai Vsevolodovich was a little pale.

The fragment doesn't fit neatly into the CN structure, because what we are presented with is not a settled narrative, but a process of narrativizing that we see in the narrator and that we are forced to engage in as well. We do not know what exactly happened and, like the narrator, entertain different possibilities that could result in hypothetical narratives and posited endings, none of which is definite. Throughout Dostoevsky's work we are confronted with different possible versions of events, forced to make our own judgments about which are reliable and to create our own vision of the characters and their actions. Thus instead of being constrained by a narrative, we are narrativizing. Instead of trying to fit content in established form, we are engaged in the process of mental form-finding for that content. Dostoevsky may be an extreme case, but I would argue that we must engage in a similar process when confronted by any narrative, no matter how didactic or how much it pretends to certainty about the events and characters described.

What we are confronted with in Dostoevsky's narrative is analogous to what we face in dealing with our experiences. Our sense perceptions are fleeting and we are forced to make judgments based on incomplete information about people and events. We must constantly create *possible* narratives, and yet be ready to modify the story, not clinging to earlier versions as new situations arise. Thus the narrative cannot be completed, but is in a constant process of revision.

CN Narratives vs. Narrativity

This points to the fundamental problem with CN accounts: People do not act in life as characters in novels, at least, not as a reader sees those characters in the finished product. The narrative we are constantly constructing about our life is never a formalized, finished product,

but is continually being modified in an extended process in time. Narrative is a product that is posited outside of the subjective experience of time, while life is a process of existing in time and having a form-finding or coherence-seeking tendency. Therefore I claim that arguing that we do or should view ourselves as a character in a narrative is a category mistake.

Narrativity does not mean seeing oneself as living in a narrative, with a beginning, middle and end, but rather engaging in narrativizing, which can be defined as the mental activity of form finding or coherence seeking over time. So the analogy to literature is not to the reader/text relationship, but to the author in the act of creation, and more specifically to authors such as Stendhal and Dostoevsky (to name two in the realist tradition) whose process involves a high degree of improvisation, not working from a firmly developed outline. Narrativizing is an ongoing process by which potential endings may be posited or entertained, but need not ever be formalized. Narrativizing does not demand an ending, because it is an ongoing process of creation.

CN takes the variables of time and experience out of the equation in the discourse on life and narrative. The tendency is to start with a narrative and see how it applies to an agent's life. But "the narrative posit" is not sufficient to capture the temporality of our experience. With Narrativity the correlation is not to a character, even the main character in a narrative, but to the author of that narrative, and not the author with a finished book, but in the process of creating.

An analogy can be made with Aristotle's concepts of motion and activity. By his account, motion is directed towards some End, in the way that somebody works on building a house and when it is built, the End is accomplished. One reaches the End by having it built. Activity, on the other hand, is pursued for its own sake. It is not aimed at any final accomplishment. The value of activity is being in the function of it, or being in the End as it

were. Being a good friend is an identity one takes over on one's self. One's End here is dwelling in the activity of friendship as such.

In the Aristotelean sense of the terms, Narrativity is activity, a dynamic concept of an End that is extended in time, a process, not a Motion towards a rigid definite End, such as that suggested by the structure of a narrative, particularly the traditional realist narrative championed by CN. Narratives are effects of such activity that could be posited, but aren't constituents of life experience as such.

Posited Ends

Could we experience an Ending or a Beginning as such or are those constructs that we need to posit for psychological comfort?

There are no set, concrete beginnings and ends in life (with the exception of birth and death), since we cannot really have an experience of the end and an experience of the beginning. Our memories begin at some point, but as we age, some fade, some disappear, others return, suddenly vivid. Connections, sequence, context all become clouded, or need to be reconstructed, posited. Even with relatively simple projects, it may not be possible to determine a single definite point at which the process began. When did I first think about planting roses? It seems arbitrary to say the process began when I bought the seedlings. And is the end when I have gotten them all in the ground, or does it continue, day after day, as I water them, watch them grow, prune them, etc.? The end and the beginning could only be entertained, tentatively posited outside of the temporal experience.

There are many events in life that assume a simultaneous ending of one thing and beginning of another. A graduation, for example, assumes the end of student life and beginning of a professional one. We have a need for deadlines, so we could, despite our natural inclination to procrastinate, accomplish our projects and anticipate the new exciting beginning that such an accomplishment brings. After all major milestones in life it seems natural to ask the question: "And now what?" Indeed, even looking ahead to that final milestone, death, we ask, "And then what?"

Each of us recognizes ourself as mortal, as a being that is going to die. This is a certainty, but also indefinite, constantly possible. We are certain that it is going to happen, but we do not know when.

Facing the possibility of death, we choose all other possibilities in recognition that we are going to die. We choose any possibility in light of that essential possibility. Could we project towards our own death? Such projection is necessarily uncertain, because even though it is projection towards what certainly is going to happen, we can project towards it only in light of its possibility.

If a narrative is supposed to follow traditional realist modes, it should direct toward a definitive ending. Since the only such definitive ending in life is death, CN would seem to be implying that our narrative should be projecting towards that moment. By narrativizing, rather than seeing our lives as a well formed narrative as CN proposes, we entertain posited endings that need not ever be reached. The narrative is not what is essential; Narrativity is. Narrativity, as a mental power, is an attempt to take control of time and experience.

I have shown that many of the objections to Narrativity arise from the emphasis on the form of the narrative -- on the product rather than the process of narrativizing. Instead of

attempting to fit experience into an established form, we continually re-evaluate and reshape that form in light of new perceptions and experiences.

Narrative Thinking

I will now turn to look at the particular value of narratives as a tool for understanding, in order to help explain why narrativizing is fundamental to making sense of experience. Apart from answering objections, I also show that the conception of Narrativity as process is essential for understanding literature and narrative (product).

Across all cultures and apparently throughout time -- or at least that time in which people have had language -- stories have played a central role in human culture. Whether passed on orally or written down, stories play a variety of roles all at once. They entertain, but also carry information and often, in the case of myths and religious stories, moral values and what the culture considers knowledge about how the world works and how to live. This universal impulse to storytelling is evidence that Narrativizing is not a culturally conditioned activity -- i.e., while the form and content of narratives may be culturally specific, the impulse to create narratives appears to be part of being human. So the question arises of what is the value of narrative thinking.

I will start with an historic account of the notion of Narrative Thinking, which derives from narrative theories, to clearly demonstrate how Narrativity is different as a concept. We could only observe traces of Narrativity, which stems from narrative thinking arguments.

Here is a definition of terms:

Self -- a subject of experience.

Narrative -- an account of an event or series of events.

Narrative thinking -- considering temporally ordered events relating to a single subject in an effort to find (possible) causal connections.

Narrativity -- a mental process of form finding or coherence seeking over time for a subject of experience/Self.

Narrativize -- to be engaged in the mental process of form finding or coherence seeking over time.

Through examples and historical accounts of narrative thinking I will make such distinctions more clear.

Much of the discussion about narrative is about its value in communication to others, how narrative is used to express a temporal series of events and their causal relationship. In regards to the self, the discussion of narrative focuses primarily on the relationship to others, how we use narratives in speech acts to describe ourselves. Though I am more interested in Narrativity in terms of how we think about ourselves, some of these discussions of narrative as communication to others is relevant to my argument.

For example, Louis Mink (Mink 1987) claims that historical understanding is a paradigm case of the configurational mode of comprehension. Historical understanding, he says, occurs when a person can see a series of events that occurred one after another as constituting a single sequence or complex whole with its own definite identity. The job of a historian, on his account, is to be able to make a “synoptic judgment,” in which chronologically separate events are seen to make up a complex whole, and then to express this judgment by constructing a narrative that in its form embodies and communicates this judgment. He says, “Even though narrative form may

be, for most people, associated with fairy tales, myths, and the entertainments of the novel, it remains true that narrative is a primary cognitive instrument -- an instrument rivaled, in fact, only by theory and by metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible" (Mink 1987, 185).

I would pick up on the idea of the configurational mode of comprehension and agree that narrative is a primary and irreducible form of human comprehension. We are constant "historians of self," we are narrating and judging our experiences no matter how short lived they are. Relative to this historical understanding, the future could be perceived as an untold story or a projected story.

I should note here that despite the value of narrative as a cognitive instrument, there is an inherent indeterminacy of any narrative. This indeterminacy can be either external or internal, but in either case arises from the necessary subjectivity of any narrative.

In the case of history or biography, the indeterminacy is often external: That is, even the most internally consistent narrative of a life or historical event is open to argument, because the historian or biographer has necessarily made a choice of how to weigh various elements of her story, and has chosen where to assign causal connections between actions or events. Inconsistency can be brought in from outside, with arguments that this or that should have been included. This is why though there are many works of biography and history that are considered great, there are none that are considered definitive to the point that they close a topic to further discussion or exploration.

With literature, on the other hand, a narrative's indeterminacy is usually internal, because there is no external, objective reality to which they point. One obvious example is the work of Dostoevsky, whose writings have been embraced and championed by those, such as the

existentialists, who clearly do not share all the views of a professed believer in the Russian Orthodox faith. It is not that his novels are narratively inconsistent, but that they leave room within them for readers to find their own way. Even with a writer as programmatic as Tolstoy, we see readers taking Anna Karenina as a tragic heroine, whereas to Tolstoy she must have represented so much of what was wrong with contemporary society. With regard to literary narratives, arguments about what a work means do not undermine judgments about the value of that work. Indeed, ambiguity is generally taken as a positive quality of a literary narrative.

This is only right, because the indeterminacy of narrative is part of what gives it value as a cognitive instrument. Part of what we must do when dealing with any narrative, whether considering one we are given or constructing one ourselves, is to dig into it, to examine the causal connections proposed. A mathematical statement is either true or false; with a narrative statement it is not a question of either/or, it is a matter of degree. At best it seems true, and must be examined to see how close it comes.

The reason for the indeterminacy of fictional narratives is that there is no referent outside the narrative itself. Raskolnikov does not exist outside *Crime and Punishment*, the text, thus the referent is self-created. Thus novels and stories are not properly judged on whether they describe reality -- or whether they are 'true' to reality -- because they do not describe reality; they create their own reality, and thus must be judged internally: What is the aesthetic, what are the rules the narrative establishes itself, and does it consistently follow these rules? That is because a work of literature is not a physical object but a mental one. The question is not whether a work of fiction is 'true to reality,' but whether it is consistent within itself. A 21st century reader cannot go to 19th century Russia, England or France to see whether people really lived like Anna Karenina,

David Copperfield or Julien Sorel. So we judge the novels in which they appear based on whether they “seem” real, psychologically and in terms of a possible historical world.

This indeterminacy might seem to undermine narrative’s value as a cognitive instrument, but just the opposite is true. A narrative is not simply a recitation of a string of facts, it is an attempt to create an order out of those facts. As such, it requires that the person hearing or reading it engages with it, interprets it, examines it beyond the facts presented, and even beyond the consistency or inconsistency of the connections made between those facts within the narrative. In the case of history or biography, the context of the narrative must be taken into account. Who is the author of the narrative? What preconceptions, prejudices or political views might inform the way the author presents the narrative? When was it written and what external factors might have played a role in the author’s choices. As such, a narrative requires that the audience be not a passive receptor of facts but an active cognitive participant in the process of understanding.

In the process of creating a narrative, this potential cognitive value is only intensified, assuming of course that there is self reflection or examination of both the process of narrativizing and the narrative produced.

Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1984) claims that we can only make sense of ourselves through our involvement with others, and that every narrative we construct involves the intersection of at least two human lives. However, Ricoeur assumes his analysis of self on purely behavioristic grounds. Narrativity, viewed as a cognitive component, doesn’t have to involve other people, since the relationship of author and experiencer doesn’t have to be conveyed to anyone else. Moreover, narrating as a speech act or a reported narrative is already not Narrativity on my

definition. It is verbal action that requires a second person, whereas Narrativity is a thought process, which may or may not result in an expressed narrative.

More to the point is his argument in *Narrative Time* (Ricoeur 1984), that our organic sense of time, our “within-time-ness” is a direct result of our ability to narrate -- our Narrativity. Here he is speaking not only of memory, but of how we see the future, how we project ourselves into the future with hopes, expectations, fears and desires. In other words, not only how we recount ourselves in a narrative, but how we attempt to create ourselves, which I see as related to the Nietzschean notion of “becoming.”

There is another use of the term “narrativity” that is separate from but related to the argument I am laying out. While Strawson, Schechtman and others I have mentioned use narrativity to refer to a way of viewing one’s life, the term is also used in discussions of narratives themselves, as a property of what makes something a narrative. In this case, I will use the term with a lower case “n”, to distinguish it from Narrativity.

Gregory Currie proposes a definition of narrativity by which it is a characteristic of a narrative that is a matter of degree rather than of kind. A notion of a thing being high or low in narrativity, Currie claims, addresses better the contextual nature of narrative than a categorical account. Philosophers always want to talk about traditional novels, very linear causal narratives with a beginning, middle and closure. But not all narratives are necessarily like that or what Narrativity has to result in. There are attempts in literature to frustrate the classical notion of narrative, to disrupt the generally accepted forms of causality. Beckett’s *Molloy* is a good example of the traditional rules of a narrative being broken, but Narrativity continuing. There is a constant inconsistency to his narration, which violates the classic text's rules of giving definite

and definitive information: "The rain is beating on the windows. It wasn't midnight. It was not raining" (Beckett 1970, 241).

Currie, however, is still focused on the notion of narrativity as a property of a narrative, which is treated as "a product of an act of communication." As I have said, my argument is that Narrativity is not a property of a narrative at all, but the mental process or activity of an agent that works towards the production of a narrative. For Currie, a narrative must have a unified body of representations and must be an intentional-communicative artifact, that is: an object whose function is to tell a story.

Similar to Prince and Currie, Carroll (Carroll 2016) claims that a positive instance of a narrative is a matter of degree or narratives are said to possess positive degrees of narrativity. According to Carroll, the degree of narrativity of representation of a sequence of events is a function of the number of narrative connections that it possesses. "Different narrative genres have different, albeit vague, thresholds of narrativity. Some like a mystery story or a thriller probably typically possess higher degrees of narrativity than an encyclopedically comprehensive biography of the exceptionally widely documented life of a celebrity," he says.

What Currie means, however, by the term narrativity is the intensity of the narration (corpus or artifact) or, in other words, the input of the agentic narrating situated in time. This input is already a result of self-objectivization or self-production, which is expected to have a communicative output. Playing roles, writing memoirs, etc., are examples of self-objectivization. In other words, if you consider expressions of the type: "I think that I ..." the first "I," grammatically speaking, assumes a subject/narrator and the second "I" is an object/character, or put another way, the first "I" is in first person, while the second "I" is the third person -- it is a character being discussed, and narrativity is the connection between the

two. Therefore there is a distinction between Narrativity and narrative. Narrativity is a process of becoming and form-finding, and the way we create the Self, while a narrative is a product of story-telling about who we are. Narrativity as a term, I suggest, has only a configurational aspect of mental form-finding, where the garden and the gardener are one and not separated yet.

Though what I am talking about is the process, and will not argue that we ever do or should create fully realized narratives with a beginning, middle and conclusion as we expect in narratives such as novels or biographies, there are parallels between the process of how we Narrativize and how such formal narratives work. So to characterize what constitutes Narrativity, I find Noel Carroll's investigation of narrative connection useful. He lays out five criteria for narrative connection (Carroll 2001, 126):

(1) the discourse represents at least two events and/or states of affairs (2) in a globally forward-looking manner (3) concerning the career of at least one unified subject (4) where the temporal relations between the events and/or states of affairs are perspicuously ordered, and (5) where the earlier events in the sequence are at least causally necessary conditions for the causation of later events and/or states of affairs (or are contributions thereto).

Carroll's discussion is related to recognizing whether a given discourse is or is not a narrative, but because it examines not the form of the discourse, but the internal logic of that discourse, it can be applied to the question of what kind of thought can be considered as Narrativity. This is relevant to my debate with people like Strawson, because what Carroll lays out here are just the kind of connections that we must make to make sense of events in time. It is these criteria that go into narrative thinking. Narrativity, however, goes further, because it is not just an ordering of events through causal connections, but the creation of a Self.

Self is the defining principle in Narrativity, which is not included in the terms of NT as spelled out by Carroll. That is, it is not just the creation of causal connections between two or more temporally separated events or actions, it is connecting those actions to a Self, which both

defines and is in part defined by those actions (or projects). Narrative thinking as such does not require a Self; Narrativity does.

We are hard-wired to engage in narrative thinking. We do it all the time by default. This disposition appears to be common not just to humans, who are linguistic, but to all so-called higher animals. Even birds, for example, may engage in narrative thinking when they build nests or migrate. Birds must have some sort of forward reaching project they are involved in. This should not be controversial, since a large group of prominent cognitive scientists, neuropharmacologists, neurophysiologists, neuroanatomists, and computational neuroscientists stated in the recent Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness that non-human mammals, birds and some other animals including the octopus have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states and exhibit intentional behavior, which leads to the conclusion that they are conscious.

If we imagine a bird of prey, hovering over a mouse making its way across a field, the bird must also have a sense of time to estimate where to direct its dive to catch the moving rodent. The fact that ravens can solve multistep problems is another indication of temporal, projectional thinking: If I do this, then this, then this, then I get food. The simple act of a gull taking a clam and flying up high over rocks and dropping it indicates a sense of a forward looking project, a disposition to wrap a short-term project in a simple intentional anticipation. Even if an argument is made that a gull could be hardwired to pick up objects and drop them, as for example a baby is hardwired to suck, that hardwiring could only be the action itself. Thus, when a gull learns to choose a clam or mussel rather than any clam-sized rock as the object to pick up and drop, it may be making narrative connections between the steps of that action, as if (because I do not presume to know what it is like to be a gull) the bird were thinking,

“This is a clam. If I pick it up and drop it, it will break and I’ll have lunch.” This may be the kind of Narrativity Strawson calls trivial, and allows that he may engage in -- such as Narrativity surrounding making coffee -- but I bring it up to demonstrate that Narrativizing is possibly not merely a human activity, but an intrinsic aspect of consciousness.

Of course any discussion of non-human animal consciousness is obviously problematic, because since we do not have a common language, it must be based on assumptions from behavior. There may be two different but related things that go on that separate Narrativity from what the seagull does when it picks up and drops the shell. The first is the higher order thoughts about the Self. The seagull may see itself as a unique actor, but it seems unlikely that it has thoughts about what kind of a seagull it is, the way we think I am or am not that kind of person, the kind of person who does this or that. So self-image is separate from recognizing, as the seagull might, just that one is an individual. That self-image then becomes a basis for fantasy, or an aesthetic appreciation or imagining of a life.

The seagull case, like making coffee, is trivial in the sense that it does not involve -- or have to involve -- these higher order thoughts about the Self that is acting. This issue becomes more complicated when we consider one of the key indicators of intelligence in animals -- play, because play involves imagination, and at least in some cases, would seem to involve a sense of Self. When you see dogs acting fierce, wrestling, growling, biting one another -- but playing, it seems they must be imagining themselves as fierce, when of course they don't really mean it. This would seem to require a sense of Self beyond mere individuality -- knowing that I am one kind of Self, but for the game I will be another. However, I don't think this means that we have to grant dogs or other animals that play Narrativity, because for Narrativity, imagining and higher order thoughts about the Self interact with a sense of time that is generally suspected

animals do not have. So we come to develop an idea of our own character, which then must be reconciled with our actions, and plays into how we project into the future. This becomes primarily aesthetic, as opposed to moral, because the act is about harmonizing action with character, or, from a narrative sense, making past actions and future projections the proper kinds of actions for such a character, and conversely seeing how those actions somehow define that character. This does not require a well-formed narrative, because the driving force is not the overall story -- not the construction of a compelling narrative -- but the sense of specific actions and how they play into and result from the kind of person -- the character -- we are.

In virtue of existing in time, we are able to project to each new moment by our mind as well as by our senses, and also to assemble our experience of the past. The concept goes beyond simple receptivity and response to environment. It adds on memory and intentionality, that contribute to our ability to Narrativize, that is, to make coherent connections. If we add time to our responses to environment and figure out a rhythm or tendency to mentally adjust to it and the disposition of our thoughts to find coherence, we would be able to observe patterns that are repetitious in nature, that have a unique form in time. If we were able to trace the patterns of our thoughts musically, we would get aesthetic patterns that would have a signature like in music, art, painting, etc., where an authorship could be guessed by the ability to make connections alone. This is like the capacity that Husserl (Husserl 1964) describes to hold a tune from t_1 to t_2 , not just the individual notes of the tune, and to be able to recount the whole composition or melody.

But though we are hardwired to Narrativize, Narrativity is also a higher order disposition. It is not experience in itself, but how we *think about* experience, how we make sense of it. Like any sensible capacity, such as listening to music and training your ear to

recognize sounds and chords, we can train ourselves to become more sophisticated and subtle in our Narrativizing. Once we learn language and are able to make sense of the world around us in sentences, we are able to perfect our linguistic and project based abilities. This is where Narrativity approaches the aesthetic domain.

The evidence for the hardwired nature of Narrativity can be seen both in child development and in human history. As a means to understand the world, stories predate science and mathematics. Natural phenomena as basic as the sun and the moon or the changes of seasons were first explained by stories, whether it is the raven tales common to the Northwest Coast American Indians, or the myths of Apollo and of Persephone of the ancient Greeks. It hardly matters whether such tales were ever meant to be taken literally. They are simply examples of the age-old human impulse to come to understanding through narrative thinking, and as such are evidence of the inherent nature of Narrativity. Science has of course proven that the sun is not in fact a golden chariot driven by the beautiful god Apollo, yet the tale still has its metaphoric appeal and value.

Narrativity and the Self

How can I claim Narrativity as the way we create the Self, in the face of critics of Narrativity theses who say they do not see their lives as narratives, do not feel strong connections with their selves either in the extended past or the extended future? In part, it is because they are taking a narrow view of what a narrative is. We might say that they are stuck in the 19th century, in the traditional realist novel view of how a narrative works. They are missing the point that to say, "I am only the Self that exists in the here and now, and the Self that I was is only

weakly connected to this current Self, just as the Self that I will become is weakly connected to this Self now,” is already to be telling a story, to have a narrative. That is, a narrative can just as easily undermine continuity over time as establish or assert it. Briefly put, the assertion could be that new events and perceptions cause changes in me that are eventually so profound that the connections between the “I” now and the “I’s” of previous “nows” become increasingly tenuous. This, too, however, involves Narrativizing because causal connections are being posited over time, even if those causal connections explain an apparent discontinuity in the Self.

The location of the “Self” in the brain has proven elusive to neuroscientists, leading some to argue that it is a fiction, an illusion, and should be dispensed with. Some psychologists, using literature as their guide, have also argued that the “Self” is a fairly recent creation and is culturally conditioned. The Narrativity response to both of these potential criticisms is related.

As discussed above, there is an inherent indeterminacy of narrative, and the truth-giving terms for narratives are different than those for mathematics or science. That is, the truth of a narrative is determined internally, not externally with regard to things in themselves. Narrativity has the status of a form/coherence maker where the idea of “coherence” is neutral as to truth or falsity, but rather is determined by the property of believability. This may not seem to completely dismiss the criticism that through Narrativizing we can delude ourselves. Of course we can, and often do, but unlike the writer of fiction, when we Narrativize, we do not do so out of whole cloth, like the writer of a novel. The external world constantly impinges on the product of the creative imagination, requiring revision, restructuring, perhaps even abandoning a proposed version for something wholly new. So the criticism here is not properly directed at Narrativizing per se, but towards clinging to one version -- one narrative -- that has been proven to be incoherent by the flux of experience. By comparison, the method of science is not

undermined by any individual scientist who fails to discard a hypothesis that has been proven false.

Temporal Consciousness and Temporal Mental Objects

Now I will turn to how it is that we can Narrativize, looking at how consciousness handles time and in particular what I will call temporal objects -- experiences, exemplified by music, that exist primarily as extended in time. Because I will argue for Narrativity as a mental process, I will look first at Kant's discussion of consciousness (Kant 1965) to examine how we perceive and the importance of the Self in our understanding, and at Husserl, who with his discussion of our perception of melody (Husserl 1964) makes clear how it is that we are able to hold a temporal object in our minds.

Kant differentiates between two kinds of consciousness: consciousness of one's psychological states and consciousness of oneself and one's states via acts of apperception. "The I that I think is distinct from the I that is ... I am given to myself beyond that which is given in intuition, and yet know myself, like other phenomena, only as I appear to myself, not as I am" (Kant 1965, B155). This consciousness of one's psychological states could be associated with the content of our experience or what our experience is about, while performing acts of apperception could be compared with the way we experience life or the act of form-finding.

Narrativity is a mental power that is essential to the mind. Kant and his idealist successors argue that imagination supplies the content of the "manifold" of our experience, but his discussion implies a kind of static reception of information from the senses for that "manifold," as though the "now" existed as a distinct, isolated moment in time. That is not the

case. "Now" is constantly changing, as time moves, and it cannot be isolated. Husserl sees this distinction and assigns significance to the duration of our experience.

To explain how, he takes the example of how we come to understand something as a melody, rather than as a mere series of individual notes. A melody is obviously distinct from a narrative, since it is nonconceptual and does not involve causal connections (although the movement of melodies often proceed from the rules of harmony and thus perhaps could be seen as proceeding as a result of nonconceptual causality), but our ability to hold an extended musical form in our head, and to see it as an extended form, rather than as merely individual notes occurring in succession, is relevant to my argument for Narrativity. Indeed, one could argue that an Episodic would be inclined to break a melody apart -- to see it as just a succession of notes, rather than the whole.

In his discussion, Husserl says (Husserl 1964, 30):

When, for example, a melody sounds, the individual notes do not completely disappear when the stimulus or the action of the nerves excited by them comes to an end. When the new note sounds, the one just preceding it does not disappear without a trace; otherwise, we should be incapable of observing the relations between the notes which follow one another. We should have a note at every instant and possibly in the interval between the sounding of the next an empty (leere) phase, but never the idea (Vorstellung) of a melody.

As he explains, this is not merely a matter of presentations of the notes simply persisting in consciousness. "If those tones remained unmodified, then instead of Melody we should have a disharmonious jumble of sounds." So each individual tone is modified by virtue of it existing in a temporal frame or object -- the melody. It is modified by our understanding of its existence within that temporal context, not as an isolated sound unrelated to anything else. The individual sounds are taken as parts of a continuum, in a relationship to the notes that precede and follow them. In the same way we hold in our memory perceptions of any ordinary objects. If we take

Descartes' famous example of a piece of wax melting, the content of apprehension and the object apprehended are in time and in the action of our mind, of our mnemonic capacity. Otherwise, we would not make any connection whatsoever between a solid piece of wax and a melted one.

The important point here is the role played by imagination, or as Husserl calls it, "phantasy," in taking the temporal manifold of impressions -- in this case a series of notes -- and combining them into a unity that exists over time and turns out to be greater than a simple series of disconnected sounds. By coming to understand the notes as a melody, we can feel its evocative power, something that would not be there in just the single notes.

Imagination is engaged both in our perception of the unfolding "now," and in memory for Husserl. He sees two types of remembrance: the primary one he calls retention, which he describes as a comet's tail joined to actual perception. This is a retention of sensory content in the actual perception in the mode of "here and now," similar to how we could perceive a melting piece of wax or a train in motion, and this is also how we retain the impression of any static perception.

However, there is also a secondary remembrance, such as that of a melody "which in our youth we heard during a concert." In this example, we do not experience the actual object or melody here and now, however the phenomenon of memory has exactly the same constitution as the perception. The only difference is that "we run through a melody in phantasy; we hear 'as if' first the first note, then the second, etc." In this case, a "now" point is brought about through a continuity of memory. When we run through a melody in phantasy, we intentionally project the mental content in time and recreate a past "now" in an "as if" mode.

He says, "Thus, phantasy turns out here in a peculiar way to be productive. We have here the one case in which phantasy in truth creates a new moment of presentation, namely, the

temporal moment. Thus, in the sphere of phantasy we have uncovered the origin of ideas of time (Zeitvorstellungen)" (Husserl 1964, 31).

Here Husserl goes beyond Kant in his claim that phantasy, i.e. our imagination, is essential to our experience of and in time, but while he emphasizes how imagination is productive in regard to experience, he seems to fail to see the full creative role it plays. The example of a melody is useful to his discussion, because it is an object that exists not in space, but solely in time. However, it is an object in which the full manifold of content, and the sense of the content is given in itself. Sitting in a concert hall, a listener usually has no difficulty determining what belongs to the melody -- the notes produced by the musicians on the stage -- and what does not -- the perhaps muffled coughs or rustling of clothes from others in the audience. We know the temporal object -- the melody -- begins when the musicians start to play and ends when they finish. Consequently, the role of the imagination here, while rightly described as productive, is somewhat mechanical. It does not create the melody, but only recognizes and reproduces it as an object for understanding. I take this as an example and evidence of our ability to hold an extended temporal object in our minds. However, for true Narrativity -- the process of creating form out of the chaos of perceptions and experience -- this mental power can and must be greater, when imagination's creative power is engaged.

The manifold of experience is not comparable to a plate of food presented to us by a waiter -- an essentially temporally static and spatially defined object -- nor is it as clearly defined both in content and across time as a melody. It is instead a chaotic, complex, constantly shifting "now" -- not a series of discrete, distinct, separable "nows." Order is not given, but must be created. To make sense of this "now," we must fit it in with those "nows" that have already

unfolded, and also look ahead, intentionally creating possible future “nows” that could result from our own and others’ responses and reactions to what is in front of us.

This is what Narrativity, through the creative power of the imagination, does. It does not simply accept the data taken in by the senses, it analyzes that data, assigning values and placing that data within the temporal flow of “nows” -- in its creative role it Narrativizes. The unfolding of the manifold of our mental content is inseparable from imagination, or in Husserl’s term, phantasy.

The creative imagination is indeed necessary for Narrativity. Its function is to take material that both current perception and memory provide and simultaneously synthesize it and project on it, making claims on the future. The form of mental content that unfolds by imagination on this material is Narrativity.

Kant recognizes this power of the imagination, but in his discussion he distinguishes between the imagination’s empirical use and its creative role, which he limits to daydreams, “to entertain ourselves when experience strikes us as overly routine,” (Kant 1987, 49/314) and of course to art. He also allows in passing that the creative imagination may be used to “restructure experience,” (Kant 1987, 49/314) but this is mentioned only as a kind of stepping-stone to the work of artists who “process that material into something quite different, namely into something that surpasses nature.” (Kant 1987, 49/314)

But the chaos of experience cannot be “restructured” until it is first structured, and that is also the role of the creative imagination, because the structure -- a posited structure -- must be created. If we consider the intentional nature of our phenomenal experience, I claim that it unfolds intentionally, reaching forward with time and recreating past experiences, reassessing their meaning and the causal roles they might play in our current situation.

Kant approaches one important aspect of the concept of Narrativity when he mentions the idea of acts of apperception as consciousness of one's psychological states. However, he is puzzled by the issue of how one could appear to one's self, not meaning an illusion. What status does that illusory manifold of content have if not mere appearance?

He raises the question in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the first critique (Kant 1965, B68):

The whole difficulty is as to how a subject can inwardly intuit itself; and this is a difficulty common to every theory. The consciousness of self (apperception) is the simple representation of the 'I', and if all that is manifold in the subject were given by the activity of the self, the inner intuition would be intellectual.

In man this consciousness demands inner perception of the manifold which is antecedently given in the subject, and the mode in which this manifold is given in the mind must, as non-spontaneous, be entitled sensibility. If the faculty of coming to consciousness of oneself is to seek out (to apprehend) that which lies in the mind, it must affect the mind, and only in this way can it give rise to an intuition of itself.

But the form of this intuition, which exists antecedently in the mind, determines, in the representation of time, the mode in which the manifold is together in the mind, since it then intuits itself not as it would represent itself if immediately self-active, but as it is affected by itself, and therefore as it appears to itself, not as it is.

This can be restated:

P1 In man, consciousness of Self requires inner perception of the manifold.

P2 This inner perception must affect the mind to give an intuition of it.

P3 We represent ourselves as affected by ourselves.

C1 We represent ourselves as we appear, not as we really are.

P4 Time (form) exists antecedently in the mind and determines the mode in which the manifold is together in the mind

C2 Time (form) determines how we represent ourselves.

Through Narrativity, however, this problem of whether the “I” is an illusion and thus false is resolved, because the presentation of the “I,” of self, is clearly not intellectual, it is a product of the creative imagination. It is a mental object, created by imagination from the manifold of apperception, and has a status similar to that of Raskolnikov, Hamlet or Anna Karenina. That is, the “I” exists, even though not as a physical object.

The idea of a mental manifold of content is also present in Hume when he compares mind to the bundle of perceptions that makes its appearances in a ceaseless movement.

...I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement... The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor identity in different, whatever natural propulsion we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity (Hume 1964, 240).

However there is some tendency in our mind to form the bundle, to direct that perpetual theater, even though there might be "no simplicity to it at one time, nor identity in different." It is a disconnected theater that yet holds together, perhaps due its contiguous nature for Hume.

Husserl introduced the terms "noema" and "noesis"* to designate correlated elements of the structure of any intentional act, such as perceiving, judging or remembering. (*from the Greek *nous*, mind). Noetic content or noesis to which noema corresponds is a mental act-process such as judging or remembering. It is directed at noematic correlate content -- the object of the mental act.

Corresponding at all points to the manifold data of the real (realign) noetic content, there is a variety of data displayable in really pure (wirklich reiner) intuition, and in correlative ‘noematic content’, or briefly ‘noema’ -- terms which we shall henceforth be continually using (Husserl 1931, 258).

One remembering a melody would have a noesis of remembering, directed at the intentional object -- that is a correlate -- the noema, which is the melody. So noesis is a process of reasoning or cognition for Husserl, while noema is that which is cogitated, the intentional object, whether it is a material or an imaginary entity.

Roman Ingarden affirms that it is not necessary to have a physical object to have the manifold of an aesthetic experience, because we could be "pleased by objectivities which are completely fictional, conceived by us in our imagination" (Ingarden 1973, 176). Of course he has literary works in mind when he makes this point, but in the process of origination by the author as well as in the process of cognition by the reader, we have a subjective acquaintance with the content that is forming its own tentatively posited mental object of the work in mental reality/imagination, which is analogous to Narrativity.

For Ingarden, this aesthetic experience is not momentary and not "a mere experience of pleasure, which stirs in us as a kind of reaction to something given in sense perception," (Ingarden 1973, 186) but is comprised of meaningfully connected phases that unfold and take the beholder on a journey. The aesthetic object is a vehicle for that journey, but a narrative as a mental/imaginary object could come to existence if and only if it is experienced in time by a Subject of experience -- a Self. So even when what is experienced is not physically objectified, it is together in the mind as an unfolding and changing manifold of content. Interestingly enough, Ingarden says, "The first reading is particularly important for literary work of art, which are perceived in an aesthetic attitude and which make possible the constitution of the aesthetic object" (Ingarden 1973, 145). In the first reading, when she is least familiar with the work, the reader would be most actively engaged in positing, projecting how the story will unfold, as

opposed to perhaps seeking a deeper understanding of why things turn out the way they do. In this state, a reader is closest to Narrativity.

Unlike the reading of a novel, however, with Narrativity the mental object is open to constant revision, and is in a constant state of being created. In fact, this creation of the “I” could be said to be the most important function of the creative imagination, because of the role that “I” plays in ordering all of experience through narrativizing. It is the focal point around which all relationships are ordered. That “I” -- the Self -- is also what allows us to act rationally.

This function of the Self increases the stakes on the question of whether there is continuity and connection over time. Strawson’s assertion that he feels little connection between the Selves he has been through time, raising the ethical question of whether he feels committed to the promises previous selves might have made, or feels responsible for earlier actions. Taken to the extreme, this view would seem to allow a person to act any way they pleased, without thinking of the consequences, because whatever they do, in the future they will be able to say, “Oh, that wasn’t me.” But from a practical perspective, a person who does not see continuity and connection between Selves, who denies any enduring Self, would seem to have little or no basis on which to make any long-term decisions, to decide on any course of action, since the Self who will be around for the outcome of those actions may not appreciate the rewards.

Chapter 2

Narrativizing

I turn now to look more deeply at the value of narratives for understanding, to show the importance of narrativizing, if we are to make sense of experience. I will explore the contrast Danto (Danto 1962) draws between the Ideal Chronicler, who is non-narrative, and the historian, showing that knowing all the facts about a series of events does not lead in itself to understanding. Mink's argument, cited above, for the value of historical comprehension is essential to my project since I see a parallel between, on the one hand, the relation between historical narratives (a product) and the activity of a historian, and on the other, how we order our mental experiences (a process) based on the material (mental events) memory provides us. We are constant "historians of self," narrating and judging our experiences no matter how short-lived they are.

Following Danto's argument regarding narrative sentences further, I will show that only through the creative act of narrativizing -- proposing a possible narrative -- are we able to project into the future, planning actions and then following through on those plans. Here I will also look at Aristotle's discussion of history and the narrative art of poetry, both of which he values highly. Aristotle, however, places poetry above history, because of the emotional effect poetry has. This, I will argue, is because poetry involves possibility -- the possibility of other outcomes, the same kind of possibility we feel in our experience of our lives.

I will also reflect on the impossibility of embarking on long term projects without Narrativity. Mental content manifests itself in its form and content in seemingly trivial actions like making coffee, but that triviality vanishes when those actions unfold as a part of a bigger

project like writing a book or planting roses. The seeming triviality of a mundane action like making coffee could be a necessary component in a range of actions that compose a significant project. I'll show how Strawson's triviality claim can be used to motivate a slippery slope argument.

Historicity, Action and Narrativity

As an indication of the value of narrative to offer a certain kind of understanding, it is interesting that Strawson finds it worthwhile to include in his introduction to *Selves* (Strawson 2009) a narrative of how he wrote the book, in which he argues against Narrativity. He does not say why he provides such an account, but it seems to be a tacit admission of the peculiar, unique value of narratives regarding temporality and in this case, projects -- a point to which I will return below. Strawson may argue that the subject of the narrative was the human being GS, not any of the multiple Selves that existed during the completion of the project. But it appears that even he recognizes that a narrative could be useful in providing an understanding of the connection between those Selves, which allowed them -- despite their differences -- to maintain enough continuity to engage in a sustained project, even one whose goal is at least in part to deny that very continuity.

Strawson's rejection of Narrativity is not complete, as we have seen. First, he accepts that some people may be narrative, just not all -- including himself -- and says there is no reason to be. Secondly, he admits that even for himself there may be Narrativity involved in such activities as making coffee, but dismisses such cases as trivial. As I have pointed out above, such cases may be trivial, but they indicate how essential Narrativizing is in our lives. And Strawson's argument also points to a question of degree: At what point does this kind of

narrativizing become non-trivial? Applying for a job, for example, would seem to be similar to making coffee in that it would involve a series of steps, yet it is obviously a more complex, longer term project, and could yield a more important outcome. Strawson's own case of writing a book also requires Narrativity, as he implicitly recognizes by offering a narrative of the process. I will argue that in fact there is a good reason to be narrative, and more to the point, while the Narrativity involved in making coffee might be trivial, the implications of such Narrativity are not.

I will start my argument for the necessity of Narrativity as a mental process now by turning to Danto's example of the Ideal Chronicler vs. the historian (Danto 1962), in which he spells out what it is that a narrative account offers beyond a simple -- even if complete -- recounting of a series of facts, without the causal connections a narrative provides. Then I will turn to Aristotle's discussion of history and poetry, showing how the creative aspect of poetry, with the force of possibility, makes -- for him -- poetry the higher art. Through these arguments, I will show the necessity of Narrativity.

The Ideal Chronicler, Danto says, has access to all events and records them as they happen, but without the ability to draw any links between them. History, he says, cannot be done by the Ideal Chronicler, even though he is a witness of all historical facts, because his account lacks causal connections. "A particular thing or occurrence acquires historical significance in virtue of its relations to some other thing or occurrence in which we happen to have some special interest, or to which we attach some importance, for whatever reason," Danto says (Danto 1962, 167). The Ideal Chronicle, however, does not contain that historical significance because none of the details are assigned any more or less importance. It contains

facts, but because it does not assign significance or meaning to events, it does not contain understanding of those facts, and thus cannot provide a tool for understanding, as a narrative can.

Danto's IC is non-narrative as he simply has all of the facts, but does not assign significance among those facts. This is obviously not the way human consciousness works. The selection of facts by a human, and the assigning of varying degrees of significance among those facts already implies by default Narrativity. History seems to require both Narrativity and narrative thinking. In selecting and giving priority to events/facts we already use our coherence-seeking capacity. In virtue of that priority selection, the events must have some nontrivial property already, since we make that selection based on the significance we assign them.

This account, which provides us with some analogous reflections on the mental life of the episodic, who would seem to fail to make narrative connections over the course of her life, also has consequences for how we relate to our futures, and how we create and carry out projects. As I have noted, projects can be simple and short-term, such as Strawson's case of making coffee, or longer term and more open ended, such as the project Danto explores in his examination of narrative sentences, planting roses (Danto 1962). Danto says that we cannot use project verbs such as "planting roses" without making claims on the future. Narrative sentences, he points out, are normally used to describe actions. This Ideal Chronicle would lack at least four of the five criteria mentioned above that Noel Carroll (Carroll 2001, 126) lays out for narrative connection, retaining only -- possibly, "(1) the discourse represents at least two events and/or states of affairs."

To be a person who viewed their life completely without narrative, the way the Ideal Chronicler does, would mean not making causal connections. Besides the obvious effect this would have on looking at the past, this would also mean that such a person could not have any

projects. Danto even poses the question of whether the Ideal Chronicler is deprived of the entire language of action. The mental reality of the Ideal Chronicler, for that matter, is contrary to the nature of human thought, which seems to inherently seek connections, causal or otherwise.

It seems like the Ideal Chronicler would still have “knowledge how,” though actions attributed to him would be reduced to the Aristotelian concept of knowing by doing. In the case of projects, however, we have a concept of “knowing-that,” which would include “that” actions. So, if we were to ask the Ideal Chronicler what he was doing when he was digging holes, he wouldn’t be able to reply “planting roses,” since this is a project that presupposes a range of causally connected behavior, such as R1-- fertilizing the ground; R2 -- digging; R3 -- smoking his pipe; R4 -- hiring expert gardeners; etc. As Danto explains, the range of R-ing will be different for everyone, but the point is that the Ideal Chronicler cannot be engaged in R-ing, since he cannot make claims on the future.

To understand the full relevance of these two discussions of narrative versus nonnarrative, it is worth going back to look at Danto’s full description of the Ideal Chronicler: “I want to insert an Ideal Chronicler into my picture. He knows whatever happens the moment it happens, even in other minds. And he is to have the gift of instantaneous transcription: everything that happens across the whole forward rim of the Past is set down by him, as it happens, the way it happens. The resultant running account I shall term the Ideal Chronicle (hereafter referred to as I.C.) We may now think of the various parts of the I.C. as accounts to which practicing historians endeavor to make their accounts approximate. Let us say that every event in the past now has its full description shelved somewhere in the historian’s heaven. Remember: the events in the Past are ‘fixed, fait accompli, and dead.’ Only a

modification of the events could force a modification in the I.C. But this is ruled out. The I.C. is then necessarily definitive” (Danto 1962, 152).

As Danto stresses in his thought experiment, though the work done by the Ideal Chronicler is definitive, it might be given over to a machine. This is not only because he lacks the human ability to make connections among past events, but also because he is unable to speculate and project consequences into the future. “The whole truth concerning an event can only be known after, and sometimes only long after the event itself has taken place,” Danto says. So what The I.C. was deliberately not equipped with was the perspective given by looking back at an event from the future. And this is the part of the story that historians are employed for. Only a historian from the future can say when the 30 Years War began-- if that war was so called because of its duration.

So the Ideal Chronicler is not allowed to make any claims on the future. Such inability prevents him from being able to employ so-called narrative sentences. There is no beginning and no ending for the Ideal Chronicler, so there are no stories for him. The account he gives would not even resemble documentaries, since producing documentaries presupposes a narrative skill.

We would have to grant knowledge of causal consequences to the IC if he were to become able to write a history book. This is how Danto's historian would acquire the capacity to write history, a narrative of the events.

Aristotle makes a further distinction regarding the relative values of kinds of narratives when he asserts that poetry is more philosophical and more significant than history because for him, history simply describes things that have happened necessarily, but poetry speaks about things that can happen, that are possible to happen. We can see that in Aristotle's terms, history speaks of particulars while the goal of poetry is the representation of universals.

The epistemological significance of poetry for Aristotle strikes me as an important insight. The claim that some Universals could only be understood through narrative engagement with particulars that embody those Universals indicates the importance of narrative for our understanding. For Aristotle, Universals can be understood when they are embodied in the life of characters that unfold those possible events (particulars) through language, thought and action and those are not static “dead and accomplished”, but are dynamically extended in time. Our understanding of such concepts as jealousy, pride or generosity can be enriched and expanded by seeing them embodied in narratives from outside our own individual experience. Obviously, philosophy often uses narrative tools for understanding. Often concepts are better understood through vivid narrative examples that either could have a factual basis or lead us to realization through an increasingly fashionable tool in philosophy, such as thought experiments, myths or literary dialogues (traditionally originated with Platonic dialogues) or examples from literature and works of art. To question the soundness of an argument, i.e. whether premises and conclusion make sense, we have to entertain possible scenarios that could undermine or support soundness, and have to be equipped with narrative cognitive techniques. One has to consider alternative or counter examples in imagination that might challenge the plausibility of the statement.

When Aristotle says that history is only concerned with facts, he does not mean that events are presented without interpretation, not connected in any way, stated independently of anyone’s subjective account, or outside of time, but that the subject is a particular unalterable series of events. I.e., the facts of Trojan War will be: The Greeks attacked Troy; they fought for seven years; Achilles killed Hector; the Greeks won. Aristotle claimed that we cannot get

Universals from those events, but only an understanding of that particular series of events. Therefore, history, he says, doesn't have the epistemological value that poetry does.

This epistemological value of poetry for Aristotle arises because poetry does lead us to an understanding of Universals, because we have particulars as possible actions, not necessary ones. When we read of the Trojan War in Homer's *The Iliad*, as opposed to in a history, Achilles still kills Hector, but in the history he does it out of necessity -- that is, because he actually did kill Hector. In *The Iliad*, Achilles and Hector are characters, with personality traits. In Achilles we see a character who is ruled by pride. In Hector, one who is virtuous, noble and motivated by sense of duty to his family and his city. Because we know these characteristics, we are able to abstract to dynamic action of characters as types of people who are likely to do or say certain kinds of things, not simply as individuals. Exactly from those actions we learn about the concepts of jealousy, pride, virtue and nobility. Achilles and Hector become embodiments of those concepts, allowing us to grasp them.

Looking at the Ideal Chronicle, history and poetry, we see three levels of knowledge. In the IC, we know all the facts in a series of events, but the Ideal Chronicler is unable to observe any causal connections. What he lacks -- beyond our experience of time -- I would claim, is the synthetic capacity. He cannot assign importance to events and synthesize them into a single account that could be called a story, a narrative.

The historian does have the synthetic capacity, because she makes causal connections between events, allowing her to discern degrees of importance. She sees the series of events in terms of a narrative, and through that narrative is able to provide an understanding of meaning that an Ideal Chronicle does not provide. But, again, according to Aristotle, that meaning does not lead to an understanding of Universals. Aristotle's poet, on the other hand, looks beyond

might see that what happened to Helen is a significant event in writing a Trojan War story, but would look beyond that to the form of the actions, which allows him to see the Universals.

Danto's historian might perceive the events of political interest of the two sides as playing an important role in the story of the war, but she is looking at the particulars of the specific historic event. The sophist Gorgias wrote a defense of Helen of Troy, exploring the power of persuasion through rhetoric.

It makes a difference who is going to write a history book, poem, novel or play. The poet has to think and to make narrative connections, so the product, a narrative, is produced. The poet is not an Ideal Chronicler; he has to judge events from the perspective of existence in time and prioritize events according to his discriminative selective capacity as well as project in his imagination the importance of his account for the future. To do this, the poet must look beyond the particulars to the universals of which those particulars are unique instances. So while a historian employs narrative thinking, in order to create a plausible account of a past event, the poet is engaged in Narrativity, going beyond the particulars to form finding which allows him to project possibility and convey meaning beyond particulars.

Aristotle's epistemological claim that poetry is more philosophical than history relies on the poet's ability to reach beyond the narrative nexus, extend them from necessity to the realm of possibility and discern patterns that could introduce Universals. As he says, (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b3) "The difference between a historian and a poet is ...that one tells what happened and the other what might happen. For this reason poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts." Aristotle, with his view that poetry has epistemological value while history does not, distinguishes between different kinds of narratives and assigns a priority to poetry because it has

powers to bring one to a higher form-finding state, where realization of Universals is achieved. The power of imagination engaged by poetry is thus capable of elevating one to the Platonic realm of forms where we can have a grasp of the idea and discern the patterns of a possible occurrence of the events of a given type and learn about characters as types of people who are likely to do or to say certain things. The mere connection of specific facts in history, for Aristotle, doesn't provide synthesis beyond the specific events of the history, and doesn't get us to the state of form-finding or pattern recognition, which poetry does in a dynamic and artful way.

The greatest artistic tool of the poet, whom Aristotle calls "the maker of the narrative," is metaphor, which as he describes it is a form finding, "For the right use of metaphor means an eye for resemblances." (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459a17) That "eye for resemblances" that Aristotle refers to in the application of metaphors is one's ability to discern patterns, to see how properties of A could be applied to B, when A and B are not identical, but on the basis of selection or recognition of that special analogy of identity in difference. In metaphor, the connection of certain properties in A that could applied to B are recognized not through literal meaning, but beyond it on the basis of analogy. The metaphor "Juliet is the sun" picks up only those properties that hold between them. We cannot — and do not want to — attribute all of the properties of the sun to Juliet, but only those that selectively discern strong identity in difference. The genius of the poet who has a mastery of the use of metaphor is the ability to pick up only those properties that would convey most the experience desired in this identity in difference. So reading "Juliet is the sun," we do not think, "What, she's a massive ball of burning gas?" Rather, we understand that she is warm, radiant, perhaps even essential to the hero's life, discarding the rest of the sun's actual characteristics as inessential here.

Although Aristotle says that excellence in metaphor “cannot be learnt; it is the token of genius,” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459a17) the impulse to make these form-finding connections is inherent. Metaphor is found in all literatures, across all ages. As such, it is part of the form finding process of Narrativity, seeking connections and identity in difference across various events and experiences.

Ted Cohen, in *Thinking of Others: the Talent for Metaphor* (Cohen 2009), explicitly links metaphor to the form finding of Narrativity, when he proposes that in thinking of our past and future selves, we engage in metaphor-making:

The imagination of oneself in the future is one of the most common of our contemplations. It is the background and prelude to countless decisions ranging from a decision about what career to pursue to the choice of what to have for dinner. I regard this act of imagination, too, as the grasping of a metaphor. Identifying oneself with another person is a special case of metaphorical identification, and identifying oneself with oneself-differently-situated is, thus, a special case (Cohen 2009, 68).

Thus the projection of one towards the future is imagining oneself, finding an identity in difference that relies again on the idea of form finding and perhaps seeing oneself as different character in the story.

The truth of Aristotle’s claim for the epistemological value of poetry can be seen in the fact that the explanation of some abstract concepts would be problematic without a narrative engagement of some sort. For example, explaining the concept of Love, one might want to read *Romeo and Juliet* and undergo an “as if” experience of love. In this manner we could get closer to understanding a concept through our cognitive engagement or a simulated mental process, i.e. one that brings about the possibility of a similar mental experience, even if it is experience entertained in imagination “as if” it were one actually experienced, or what it is like to be in such a state of mind. In neuroscience terms, we would like to bring ourselves closer to having neural

connections similar to those that a person has who is having love experiences. A comparable situation might be psychological experiments, when we would be simulated to be in a state of a “not quite” real situation, which still requires narrative engagement. Narrativity is brought about once one is engaged with Poetry to its highest realm of reflection and pattern recognition, which has a high epistemological significance for Aristotle. Two ways this can be achieved are: 1, by presenting narratives in which extraneous details are removed so we can see the universal forms more clearly, and 2, by giving us a stock of possible histories that we can use as data to learn to abstract the Universals over time.

Danto’s Ideal Chronicler, the hero of his thought experiment, lacks the cognitive power to make causal connections. I think it would be fair to say that the IC is not a promising poet and is not a philosopher. His collection of facts would only provide us with information, data, without any understanding of what that data might mean or how to understand it. So we cannot consider that Danto’s IC has any epistemological capacity, because of his inability to use narrative sentences and thus to become engaged in the cognitive nexus of Narrativity.

All of the above makes sense, but what is missing here is that in constructing an historical account we still aim only toward a tentative narrative, which is work that requires a human effort and work that the Ideal Chronicler cannot do. The historian is proposing a reading of a particular series of events. But that reading could change or be undermined as time unfolds. New facts or details could perhaps be uncovered, and the significance of some events could diminish, while the significance of others would be increased, or the entire structure of the historical narrative could have to be rewritten. The recent discovery of a previously unknown Viking settlement in Newfoundland is one example, because it proved that the Vikings’ exploration and engagement in North America was more extensive than was previously known. Similarly, recent

archaeological discoveries in Europe have forced anthropologists to reconsider what they thought was the story of the interactions between the pre-human Cro Magnons and Neanderthals, and even to entirely reconsider the story of Neanderthal society and level of development.

The Ideal Chronicler would have no understanding of why an account would need to be corrected in such ways, instead merely adding the new specifics to the previous list. It would not require the IC to revise how other particulars in the list are presented, because there is no assigning of meaning. Even something as seemingly simple as “first arrival of Vikings in North America,” would not be part of the Ideal Chronicle, because the word “first” would assume connections between events. The Ideal Chronicler does not make such connections, and does not consider why the same events might aim at different truths at different times.

I would like to make a parallel and say that our mental events function in a similar fashion to this continual reconsidering of proposed readings of events, as though we were historians who were continually exploring the same subject and possibly as open to revising our own account as we might be concerned about defending it. Danto touches on this aspect when he argues that it is possible that some events have not yet “discharged their causal energy,” i.e., if we have E1 and E2, it doesn’t guarantee that E1 causes E2, since E2 could be caused by Ex, which preceded E1 a long time ago. Danto claims that Ex could be one of any events earlier in the time scale that “simply have not yet discharged their causal energy, but have lain dormant all these centuries, like a volcano. This is surely an extravagant proposal, but the causes in question obviously precede their proposed effects, so the incapacity of the Past to change can no longer be charged to the temporal asymmetry of cause and effect. Moreover, we cannot simply say that the alleged events, earlier in the time scale than the hoped-for effect, must, just because they are

past, be causally inoperative -- for this would immediately entail a general argument against causality: our concept of causality requires action at a temporal distance.”

The dormant causes claim in Danto strikes me as relevant to the nature of our mental experiences. In a way here the construction of an historical narrative could tell us something about our narrative thinking, i.e., the phenomena of memory could discharge the past experiences into present and future ones, and could even change how we project and plan future actions. The Proustian madeleine is a vivid example of an involuntary memory -- one of Danto’s “dormant causes.” Further, involuntary memories could be likened to chance historical finds, such as when a farmer uncovers an ancient bone or artifact that leads anthropologists to new discoveries. Such an event was seen recently when a previously unknown battlefield was uncovered in northern Europe, leading historians to completely re-examine what they thought they knew about ancient society in that area. For us, involuntary memory can act as that kind of discovery, making us re-evaluate what we thought we knew about ourselves, or the meaning of events in our past. Similarly, we can see new experiences in the light of ones that precede them, which we hold in memory.

The IC is unable to provide a humanly coherent account of events since causes for him cannot be witnessed as causes. Such a predicate as "a cause of" would not be accessible to the IC, and in general his use of language would be necessarily limited, because of the many terms that imply or require a temporal relationship. By Danto’s account, none of those terms would be available to the IC. Even if some causal connections might be considered objective facts, as some people argue, those connections would be unavailable to the IC. Indeed, we are narrative just by virtue of having language, and one could see action as unfolding in a realm of thoughts and language and then discharging its causes into the short and long term projects. One is acting

when one is thinking and one performs speech acts when one is using language. The poet acts as his mental content manifests itself through language and finds its embodiment in poems through characters, the gardener performs a long range of actions, which make claims on the future and might find its embodiment in the garden or not

Many verbs and terms logically require the occurrence of an event later than E1, such as "began," "preceded," "gave rise to." Husserl also notices that even some nouns of time need a causal account to be used, i.e. "today" suggests that there is yesterday and tomorrow. As Ricour says in his *Time and Narrative*, if we didn't have the phenomenon notion of the present as "today," in terms of which there is a "tomorrow" and "yesterday," we wouldn't be able to make sense of a new event. Needless to say, all sentences that make use of those terms in the obvious way will then be narrative sentences, which "refer to at least two time-separated events and describe the earlier event" (Danto 1962, 161). As Danto says, "...in a sense this structure is also exhibited by a whole class of sentences normally used to describe actions" (Danto 162, 161).

To go beyond Husserl's and Ricoeur's claims regarding nouns of time, there are many nouns and adjectives that are not apparently temporal, yet that require the occurrence of previous events, for example "redeemed" assumes that one has sinned, "death" presupposes life and "birth" presupposes conception and pregnancy. Thus, even seemingly temporally static terms by implication place themselves in a temporal context and carry narrative meaning. On the other hand, all verbs at least imply a narrative, because they deal with acts, which exist temporally and entail a beginning, a duration and an end (closure), even if the beginning and end are not explicit in the form of the verb. This inherent temporality of so much of language, and thus by implication of human thought, indicates the essential impossibility of Danto's IC being human. Certainly the IC would be incapable of any understanding.

Looking at the relationship between narrative sentences and action, Danto examines what he calls project verbs, a common linguistic structure that creates connections between behavior among which the relationship might not otherwise be apparent. "The range of behavior covered by 'is planting roses' includes digging, fertilizing, sowing even purchasing shovels and seeds, even reading seed catalogues or hiring expert gardeners," Danto says (Danto 1962, 164). Thus there is a problem in describing actions, unless we understand that the relationships between them may be stronger or weaker, direct or indirect, yet still hold. It may be true of a man that he is engaged in R-ing and that a project verb, such as "planting roses," might be true of him at a time when no term from the range $B_1 \dots B_n$ is true of him.

Interestingly enough, to be engaged in the process of R-ing would only assume making a weak claim on the future. A man in the process of operations that could be called "planting roses" is not guaranteed a result. As Danto says, "But if roses fail to come forth, this does not falsify our proposition, so long as he did whatever might, by current criteria of rosiculture, count as planting roses" (Danto 1962, 164). Danto seems to focus on the process or experience of R-ing as opposed to the result achieved. Operations that might constitute R-ing are merely necessary, but not sufficient for R as such. While engaged in R-ing, a man can make weaker or stronger claims on the future, but not achieving R doesn't falsify the proposition that "a man is R-ing." Danto stresses the necessity of process as such and I'll bring up this claim to the necessity of Narrativity in mundane actions if we are to be engaged in any projects. The question could be raised whether a character like Oblomov is already R-ing when he is lying in his bed, dreaming about the things he would do to R, telling his servant Zakhar or his friends about his great plans for R-ing, even though he never actually does get out of bed to physically engage in any of the

acts of R-ing. He has the Narrativity of R-ing, the projection of himself R-ing, even though that narrative and projection never materialize in any other action.

To take this further, a man obviously could be engaged in many projects at the same time, i.e. more than one project verb may be true of an individual during the same time stretch. If we were to recount a story of a woman's motherhood, we would select those events from her life that fit in accordance to the project performed. If we were to recount a story of the same person writing a book, we would have to assign significance to completely different events, and the two accounts would not even necessarily include all the same actions.

What is the connection between Aristotle's poet, Danto's historian and a person engaged in a long-term project such as planting roses? All of them create narratives and what connects them is the narrative process in which they all are engaged: to write a poem or a work of history and to make coffee require this process. The insufficiency of Danto's IC, and the distinction Aristotle makes between the relative values of history, which only provides us with knowledge of particulars without allowing us the possibility to gain understanding of universals from them, versus poetry, show the unique value and necessity of narrative for human understanding.

We can see from Danto's discussion of project verbs, which just by using we necessarily make claims on the future and therefore have a projection -- even if subconscious, unacknowledged or dormant -- towards the future, how narrative is an inextricable part of language. Such projection, which the common usage of such verbs indicates is an inherent and perhaps necessary aspect of our mental activity, just is Narrativity. It is, to return to Carroll's five criteria, a mental act that involves "(1) ... at least two events and/or states of affairs (2) in a globally forward-looking manner (3) concerning the career of at least one unified subject (4) where the temporal relations between the events and/or states of affairs are perspicuously

ordered, and (5) where the earlier events in the sequence are at least causally necessary conditions for the causation of later events and/or states of affairs (or are contributions thereto)” (Carroll 2001, 126).

Having previously referred to us as “historians of self,” in this chapter I have shown what it means to be a historian, attempting to find causal connections among series of events to create a narrative that assigns significance and thus provides understanding. I have shown analogies between the process of a historian with our own examination of memory to create coherent narratives, and how both are proposed as possible narratives, because new discoveries can lead to a reweighing of significance among past events. Further, I have shown how language is weighted with temporality, requiring that we make — whether consciously or unconsciously — causal connections between events, indicating that Narrativity is an inherent aspect of our mental activity. I have also shown how our examination of our pasts is analogous to how we plan and project into the future, creating possible narratives that must be continually revised in the light of new events.

I will return now to where I started the chapter — to Strawson’s dismissal of a Narrativity that he accepts as trivial, that of simple projects such as making coffee. I will argue that such cases, while perhaps initially trivial, are slippery slopes, that can carry us from the trivial to the nontrivial.

‘Trivial’ Narrativity and the Slippery Slope

Strawson argues that any Narrativity he might exhibit is merely trivial, and does not open him to the larger claim that he is a narrative person. Leaving aside the account, previously raised, that he gives of how he came to write his book arguing against his own Narrativity, I assert that any claim of triviality of action falls into a slippery slope argument. We could look at a man smoking a pipe and say that this is trivial, he is simply smoking a pipe. However that activity could just be a necessary fragment of a larger project, that — even if it is a pause from action, possibly for reflection or rest — it is one of a series of activities that constitutes this project.

But what if one is enjoying the experience of making coffee? Obviously this example is connected to doing-how, not doing-that. If some of our actions could be simply reduced to mere doings or even bodily movements, then the question “how?” would make them purely episodic with no projection forward whatsoever. However, when there is a presupposition of doing “that” and we have some sort of intention involved beyond the bodily physical algorithm of making coffee, the triviality claim becomes a slippery slope argument. The trivial act of making coffee every day could lead us to think about what we know about making coffee. We could begin to think about how we carefully select coffee beans, choose how to grind them, choose a method of coffee making for a certain mood, time of day or type of coffee. Making coffee could motivate one to experiment with adding spices, chocolate and condiments, having a new experience each time the action is performed. We could become so involved in the process and feel we had learned so much, we could decide to open a coffee shop. Eventually we might become so engaged in the subject that we would write and submit an article about coffee, and then obviously coffee making has become a more engaged process. Even on the other end of the

scale, when a child makes coffee for the first time, she has to learn the causal sequence of each step of the action consciously, paying careful attention to the coherence of the action. So if an action like making coffee can be considered a trivial example of Narrativity, it is only because it can be internalized. Initially, however, the narrative must be created, examined and referred to, or the project will not be carried out successfully. But the Narrativity is still there, and can resurface. Indeed, being “in the moment” of making coffee would not mean being in any particular instant in the process, but rather being in that instant only as a part of the entire process — an instant within a narrative.

Thus the triviality of any action becomes a matter of degree, since one could see that each experience as such of making coffee could bring significance into one’s life. Of course not everything fits into large scale projects, but even so the triviality of any action cannot be assigned by default to any of our actions and the scope of the Narrativity argument remains entirely subjective.

Narrativity as a mental component of our experience is a necessary condition for performing other cognitive tasks that involve coherence seeking and form-finding tendencies, such as making sense of our mundane experience, as well necessary epistemologically. Narrativity is also the mental component we engage when we initiate actions, whether on a trivial scale, such as making coffee, or for larger projects. To approach the issue from another end, any discussion of actions requires an appeal to the narrative nature of our experience, the necessity of which is demonstrated in the language that must be used. This necessity extends to our mental activity because the way we are engaged in project making linguistically, our mental activity is engaged in form finding over time, and thus Narrativity.

Chapter 3

Replies to Challenges

Experience of Time: Being in the 'Now' and the Possibility of Episodic Experience

Strawson's objection to the psychological or descriptive theory of narrativity -- both CN and, as I take it, Narrativity as process as I claim -- is based in his assertion that he feels himself only in the Now, and he feels no strong connection between the Self he is now, and the Selves he has been in the past or will be in the future. To answer this, and to see how a person like Strawson feels -- taking him at his word that this is truly how he feels -- we must look at what the Now means, and by extension, how we experience time.

It might seem that when one refers to the Now, the present, in this way, they are taking it as a discrete time slice, somehow taken out of the flow of time. While this sense of Now as a time slice may be useful for certain kinds of thought experiments, it is clearly not what Strawson has in mind. I take it that he does not see time as a kind of line that can be dissected into an infinite series of separate points, but rather a constant flow. And this flow seems to be paralleled in his feeling of his connection to his past a future Selves, i.e., the further removed in time, it seems, the less feeling of connection he has.

If the Now, the present, is not a time slice -- static and discrete -- what is it? One of the most common metaphors for the passage of time is a person sitting in a moving vehicle, a car or train, with the world passing by outside the window. So that in the same way we are always Here, but where Here is constantly somewhere else, somewhere new, we are always in the present, but the present is always changing. In this sense, we experience time appearing and

disappearing around the Now, which gives rise to such forward-looking emotions as expectation and hope, and anxiety and fear, and their backward-looking corollaries, such as nostalgia and regret.

William James has a notion of specious present -- that the present moment is extended and the retrospective and prospective sense of time give continuity to the stream of consciousness.

In short, the practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions into time. The unit of composition of our perception of time is a duration, with a bow and a stern, as it were--a rearward--and a forward-looking end. It is only as parts of this duration-block that the relation of succession of one end to the other is perceived. We do not first feel one end and then feel the other after it, and from the perception of the succession infer an interval of time between, but we seem to feel the interval of time as a whole, with its two ends embedded in it (James 1890, 609).

His choice of the term “saddle-back” is useful, because besides its shape it carries in it the sense of motion, since a saddle is used to ride a horse, and thus to travel. Likewise the notions of a bow and stern are completed by a boat, which is a vehicle used to move. So the present, while having some duration itself, is also not something static. And as a consequence, for James the beginning and the end of the extended present that one occupies at any given “now” aren't fixed. He turns to the metaphor of watching out the window of a moving vehicle (James 1890, 611):

To 'realize ' a quarter of a mile we need only look out of the window and feel its length by an act which, though it may in part result from organized associations, yet seems immediately performed. To realize an hour, we must count 'now!-now!-Now!-Now!' -- indefinitely. Each 'now' is the feeling of a separate bit of time, and the exact sum of the bits never makes a very clear impression on our mind.

To speak meaningfully of the present, the now, we have to define what is meant by the term, and key to that definition is its duration. Regardless of whether “Now” is held to be a time

slice or a constantly shifting set of perceptions, it must have some duration. James set the parameters of that duration as the amount of time it would take our brains to assimilate all of the sense data we receive into a unified experience. This seems right, leaving aside whether his measure of that process is approximately three seconds is correct. I suspect that the duration of “Now” could be flexible, depending on the urgency and complexity of the data received. It may be that in instants of stress or danger, the “Now” is compressed into a shorter span, as our brains instinctively focus on only the perceptions related to the threat. At times of relaxation, pleasure or aesthetic appreciation, however, the “Now” might stretch out longer, both because of the lack of obvious urgency of any particular aspect of perceptions, and thus the complexity of sorting them out and assimilating them into a totality, and because of a desire -- conscious or not -- to extend the experience, to remain in and retain it.

How long any “Now,” taken as the time span needed to assimilate any given set of perceptions, can be extended is obviously problematic. To return to the metaphor of riding in a vehicle, there is a sense in which we are not simply passengers, but also have some limited control. That is, we can turn our heads to see what is coming, can follow an object or scene as we pass through, focusing our attention on it as long as possible, until it is finally out of sight behind us. But we can neither stop the train nor speed it up, and we cannot make it circle back for another look.

Proust, Time Regained and Madeleine Moments as Candidates for Episodicity

But why should we ever want to circle back? If as Strawson and others say, there is little or no connection to past Selves, there would hardly seem to be any reason to. The Now is where we live, so let's stay here. Yet, oddly enough, Marcel Proust, who Strawson suggests as an episodic like himself, provides one answer, even as he clearly indicates that he at least sometimes feels little or no connection to his former selves.

Yes: if, owing to the work of oblivion, the returning memory can throw no bridge, form no connecting link between itself and the present minute, if it remains in the context of its own place and date, if it keeps its distance, its isolation in the hollow of a valley or upon the highest peak of a mountain summit, for this very reason it causes us suddenly to breathe a new air, an air which is new precisely because we have breathed it in the past, that purer air which the poets have vainly tried to situate in paradise and which could induce so profound a sensation of renewal only if it had been breathed before, since the true paradises are the paradises that we have lost (Proust 1981, 903).

For Proust, even when “the returning memory” remains somehow foreign, unconnected and “can form no link between itself and the present,” by its very distance it immerses one more powerfully into the past, because it is the paradise lost, the paradise that exists only in imagination. So the as-if experience of the past retains a property of pleasure.

The truth surely was that the being within me which had enjoyed these impressions had enjoyed them because they had in them something that was common to a day long past and to the present, because in some way they were extra-temporal, and this being made its appearance only when, through one of these identifications of the present with the past, it was likely to find itself in the one and only medium in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, that is outside of time. This explained why it was that my anxiety on the subject of my death had ceased at the moment when I had unconsciously recognized the taste of the little madeleine, since the being which at that moment I had been was an extra-temporal being and therefore unalarmed by the vicissitudes of the future (Proust 1981, 904).

Proust's madeleine experience puts him outside of time as an extra-temporal being. He is in an as-if experience of his past self and he is outside of time, which in turn allows him to

become less concerned about what will happen to him. Strawson might see such a being as an episodic one. Even as he has the memory, he is not really in the past, he escapes the present and he is unalarmed by the future. That is a posited in imagination extra-temporal location that happens to Proust involuntarily, he cannot dictate the experience, it revisits him accidentally, it brings him to "as if" experience of his past self and to the highest state of felicity and pleasure, though also filled with anguish of the lack of presence. Even if we are to consider this as a possible experience of an episodic, it still has duration and cannot last indefinitely.

And yet, Proust admits himself that life is lived in Time and those extra-temporal experiences suppress that mighty dimension of time:

...Time seemed to dispose the different elements of my life, had, by making me reflect that in a book which tried to tell the story of a life it would be necessary to use not the two-dimensional psychology which we normally use but a quite different sort of three-dimensional psychology, added a new beauty to those resurrections of the past which my memory had effected while i was following my thoughts alone in the library, since memory by itself, when it introduces the past, unmodified, into the present -- the past just as it was at the moment when it was itself the present -- suppresses the mighty dimension of Time which is the dimension in which life is lived (Proust 1981, 1087).

As Proust has shown, even for an Episodic, Narrativity holds, at the very least because of the often involuntary character of memory. Former selves are recalled to us by experiences we do not control, and when they are, we are confronted with a temporal relationship between one Self and another, through the person we are. Even if the response to the memory is a disbelieving "that was me?" it can only be understood in narrative terms, because only through narrative can we make sense of what happens over the passing of time.

Self as Mental Object: Even a ‘Man Without Qualities’ Narrativizes

In his argument against Narrativity as an essential property of the experiencing mind, and against the notion of an enduring Self, which he defines as the subject of experience, Galen Strawson turns repeatedly to literary examples to make his case, among them Robert Musil’s *Man Without Qualities* (Musil 1996). Aside from the obvious irony of using narratives to argue against Narrativity, Musil presents several problems for Strawson’s argument. Ulrich may be a “Man Without Qualities,” but he is not a man without a past, and not a man whose past selves are not relevant to his current Self. He is also a man who considers the future. Drawing on Nietzsche, Musil presents the Self as the project of “becoming.” Rather than the subject of experience, for Musil the Self is an object of thought, a mental object.

Musil’s aesthetic acknowledges and explores the fractured nature of our mental activity, recognizing how reason, emotion, morality, instinct and unconscious physiological responses often contradict and struggle with one another. Rather than accept this mental disunity, he suggests that the Self is an essential mental object, even though it is a construct that requires continual effort. This effort, I argue, is Narrativity, that is, form finding over time, whereby the flux of experience is shaped and reshaped in a constant “becoming.” Strawson may think a “Man Without Qualities” is a paradigm case of an episodic, but Musil presents him as a man of possibilities, who projects himself into the future through possible narratives -- through Narrativity.

Strawson takes Musil as a writer who is presenting what he calls the Episodic outlook, that is, a person who “does not figure oneself, considered as self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future” (Strawson 2004, 65). This view he

opposes to what he calls the Diachronic, which is a person who does feel that she has a Self that endures over time.

In his discussion of Narrativity, he further argues that there are also people who are narrative and those who are non-narrative. He suggests that there may be Episodics who are either one, though it seems to him less likely that there could be non-narrative Diachronics. I think that his framing of the argument also makes it highly unlikely that there could be narrative Episodics.

He does not claim that there are no Narrative people, or that there shouldn't be, but rather that not everyone is Narrative and there is no reason to be. But his argument is extreme because of how he defines Narrativity: "experiencing or conceiving one's life as a narrative" (Strawson 2005, 63). He is not the only one to describe Narrativity in this way. Even many who argue for it as a positive outlook describe it as seeing oneself as a character in a story, or as Daniel Dennett says, "We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story" (Dennett 1992). I believe it is going too far to speak of "all of our material," but finding coherence, even if only about the immediate past and future, is what Narrativity is about.

As argued earlier, it is more productive to think of Narrativity as a mental process, what I call "Narrativizing," which does not presuppose a completed narrative and does not necessarily even establish the type of narrative arc expected in traditional works of fiction. Instead, it is a constant consideration of the Self within the flux of time, considering the past and projecting into the future. As argued in the previous chapter, it can function on levels as mundane as setting about to make coffee, or as complex as embarking on a career, a marriage, etc. Rather than seeing one's life as a story, Narrativity means experiencing and thinking about one's life making narrative connections, such as described by Noel Carroll. Essentially these are connections

between two or more events or states of affairs that are temporally ordered, concerning at least one unified subject -- in this case a Self, and the earlier events are at least causally necessary conditions for the causation of the later events.

It may seem hard to see how a person fitting Strawson's definition of an Episodic could exhibit Narrativity at all. The episodic person, he says, feels that there has been a succession of selves within his life, and feels little or no connection with his former selves, or with the selves who may follow in the life of the human being he is. The episodic, he says, is engaged only with the present. Strawson, calling himself an episodic, admits what he calls the "present shaping consequences of the past," (Strawson 2004, 438) but says he does not "have any great or special interest in my past. Nor do I have a great deal of concern for my future," (Strawson 2005, 433) which seems inconsistent. We also cannot leave aside the issue of the constant appearing of the present -- that the present is not a static instant taken out of time but rather a constantly changing position within time, and thus that even being only in the present does not mean being out of time.

For Ulrich, Musil's "Man Without Qualities," his past selves are relevant to his current Self. This is demonstrated by his recognition of the repetition of certain behaviors and responses, exemplified by the "forgotten, highly relevant story of the major's wife." Ulrich recognizes himself playing out this story again and again at various times in the book. This would indicate that for this episodic at least, a former Self is still relevant to the current Self. The narrative of that Self has been replayed in other of his Selves and is replayed in the narrative of the current one. Musil seems to be saying that to understand the Self we are now, we must also understand the Selves we have been.

Beyond that, Ulrich has in the past constructed narratives for himself -- the soldier, the engineer and the mathematician. And while “he might shake his head in wonder ... about his previous incarnations,” the disbelief is not about Narrativity, but about the choices of narrative. And it is clear that he recognizes that he is seeking a narrative, even if, during the time of the book, he is “taking a year off from his life.” If, as Strawson would have it, Musil is presenting a character who is non-narrative, which I would dispute, it is at most only a character who is attempting a break from Narrativity, to which he intends to return.

That Ulrich is not only concerned with the present can be seen in his relations with Bonadea. He falls victim to competing desires. Seeing her, feeling her physical presence, he wants the pleasure of having sex with her. But hanging over that is the knowledge that then he will have to endure her conversation when it is over, which he increasingly cannot stand. So when he finally breaks with her, he is in a sense sacrificing the present for the future. He is denying a pleasure to his current self to spare a future self pain.

One of the key issues in the book, raised early and recurring throughout, is the conflict between reality and possibility. As Musil says: “If there is a sense of reality, there must also be a sense of possibility” (Musil 1996, 10). Possibility is projection towards the future, that is power of the mind to project its intentionality, find form to its experience. This is where “real life” experience unfolds while a story played out in mental life impinges with its sense of possibility. What we see is Kant’s concept of imagination “as if” now applied to unfolding nows. And because this “sense of possibility” exists in the flux of time, the only way to deal with it is through Narrativity.

So in this sense imagination, which is the mental faculty engaged in conceiving possibility, shapes the experience of one’s Self. This “sense of possibility” seems to be, for

Musil, as natural as any of our other senses, such that to lack it, would have to be considered a handicap, in the way that blindness or deafness is. He says: “It is reality that awakens possibilities, and nothing would be more perverse than to deny it. Even so, it will always be the same possibilities, in sum or on the average, that go on repeating themselves until a man comes along who doesn’t value the actuality above the idea. It is he who first gives the new possibilities their meaning, their direction, and he awakens them” (Musil 1996, 12).

This may be why Ulrich is a “Man Without Qualities”: because he is more attached to his own possibilities than he is to any qualities any one might ascribe to him. But it also suggests that if the present is “reality,” the more deeply we engage with it, the more it will push us into the future and the consideration of possibilities. On the one hand this is simple kinetics, and Musil implies that focussing too much on it is dangerous.

“Everything we feel and do is somehow oriented ‘lifeward,’ and the least deviation away from this direction toward something beyond is difficult or alarming. This is true even of the simple act of walking: one lifts one’s center of gravity, pushes it forward, and lets it drop again -- and the slightest change, the merest hint of shrinking from this letting-oneself-drop-into-the-future, or even of stopping to wonder at it -- and one can no longer stand upright” (Musil 1996, 134).

The recognition of this constant forward motion and its significance undermines the notion that reality and what is happening in the current moment is pre-eminent. It forces us to face not only ambiguity but the unknown.

“It’s never what one does that counts, but only what one does next,” (Musil 1996, 798) Ulrich says. And then he goes even further (Musil 1996, 799):

What I said was that one false step doesn’t matter, only the next step after that. But then what matters after the next step? Evidently the one that follows after that. And after the

nth step, the n-plus-one step! Such a person would have to live without ever coming to an end or to a decision, indeed without achieving reality. And yet it is still true that what counts is always the next step. The truth is, we have no proper method of dealing with this unending series.

The solution proposed to the problem of “dealing with this unending series” makes a “Man Without Qualities” not the antithesis of the narrative person, but in fact the ideal of Narrativity, because by not attaching himself to any qualities, he becomes open to possibilities, just as the world appears.

If he monitors his feelings, he finds nothing he can accept without reservation. He seeks a possible beloved but can't tell whether it's the right one; he is capable of killing without being sure that he will have to. The drive of his own nature to keep developing prevents him from believing that anything is final and complete, yet everything he encounters behaves as though it were final and complete. He suspects that the given order of things is not as solid as it pretends to be; no thing, no self, no form, no principle, is safe, everything is undergoing an invisible but ceaseless transformation, the unsettled holds more of the future than the settled, and the present is nothing but a hypothesis that has not yet been surmounted (Musil 1996, 269).

This continuous developing and the lack of anything final or complete places Ulrich within the constant flow of time, and that temporal flow can only be made comprehensible by Narrativity. Rather than denying Narrativity or an enduring Self, Musil is proposing a dynamic model, recognizing the ongoing mental process required as we experience the ceaseless flow of sensation, thought and events. As we Narrativize (situate one's self in the temporal flow), we create the Self, which is a mental object. Such a mental object is a theoretical posit, that can be revised in response to this “ceaseless transformation,” in the way that a center of gravity shifts as we move. And like a center of gravity, the Self is what we use to govern our contradictory qualities, intentions and desires.

Chapter 4

Narrativity and the Self

If, as I have argued, Narrativity is essential for creating the Self, the question must be answered what the Self is, what function it performs, and whether it is necessary. Arguments against the self range have come from many different sides, from neuroscience to Buddhism, but all are based on the notion that the Self is an illusion or a fiction. If scientists have been thus far unable to isolate a specific part or parts of the brain that are involved in our perception of Self, some argue, then the Self must not exist. Yet if it is an illusion, it is a deeply cherished one. Rather than an illusion, though, the Self may be a creation, and as such -- like a work of art -- have a different kind of existence than other objects.

I have defined the Self as the subject of experience, but this may need elaboration. It is not merely a passive receptor of experience. As the subject of experience, the Self is the organizing principle through which experience is processed. For all experience, it is the sense of Self that allows us to feel, "This is happening to me," and as such allows meaning to be assigned. It is also what provides a basis for action, giving us reasons for doing one thing over another.

That is not to argue that the Self is somehow concrete, stable, clearly defined or easily describable. Think of wading in a rushing, rocky-bottomed river. With each step, you must test the stability of the bottom you cannot clearly see. You carefully apply your weight, feeling the stones shift under you until they settle into some kind of unseen solidity, and only then you can confidently -- if still carefully -- step forward. Like the river bottom, the Self may be unstable and shifting, but with testing and examination -- through Narrativity -- a concept of who I am can

be created, and I can step forward. That it, as I face new experiences, I can assess both previous experiences and expectations for the future, and if a new experience is significant enough, I may reassess my own concept of myself.

This metaphor, however, offers a vision of Self as a series of discrete, separate existences -- time slices -- without any essential or necessary continuity, other than the method by which each is identified. All that matters is finding balance now, now, now. As such, it allows for an argument against continuity of Self. On the one hand, such an argument can be seen in Strawson's assertion of himself as episodic, feeling little or perhaps no connection between the Self he is now and his past or future Selves. This argument ignores the knowledge gained with each step, about feeling the shifting of the stones, about the strength of the current, and how to retain balance. Taken to the extreme, such episodicity would put me in the position of having to ask, "What's all this?" with each new step.

Strawson, as I have said, is not making an argument that we shouldn't be narrative or diachronic, just that not everyone is, and that there is no reason why we should be. Derek Parfit, on the other hand, makes a prescriptive argument that we should not be attached to any strong connection between our Selves through time. Because he attempts to draw on neuroscience as well as philosophies of selflessness such as Buddhism to make his case, it is worth taking a closer look at his arguments. Though he does not talk about Narrativity as such, his argument against the value or even existence of a Self with any continuity at the very least implies that what I argue is the determining principle of Narrativity, the Self, is a falsehood that should be abandoned. Thus, I take it as a challenge to my whole project.

What Survival Means

The thought experiment previously described in Borges' "The Other," which imagines the meeting of one person-slice with another from the same person, is not so different from the thought experiments Parfit employs in *Reasons and Persons* (Parfit 1987) to examine and challenge our deeply held beliefs about the Self and what is important in survival. The existence of the "other" Borges challenges the concept of Self for each of the two. But unlike Parfit, Borges and his other do not turn away from the importance of the concept of identity when faced with incongruity; they turn away from the evidence of that incongruity. After arranging to meet again, neither shows up. The importance of their sense of their own identity is too great, and the destruction of that sense might be too devastating to withstand.

Most people, in what could be called their pre-philosophical state, would likely take Borges' approach. It does not satisfy Parfit, who seems to delight in creating more and more elaborate games to thrust us further and further into a stunned state about what Self might mean. He wants us to question whether we should care about it or whether we really care, or ought to care, about something else when we talk about survival. He wants, he says, to give us reason to care more about others and to fear suffering and death less. But there are many problems with how he attempts to break down the insistence on the importance of Self. He wants us to examine not just its value as a criterion of survival, but whether it is a concept that has any real importance at all.

Much of the initial force of his argument comes from the effect his imaginative thought experiments have on us. There are whole strains in the literature devoted to some of these games, particularly the many variations of the fission or division problem, by which a Self is somehow split into two. These thought experiments take various forms, such as

teletransportation of one person into multiple replicas or transplanting the hemispheres of our brains into separate bodies. This problem asks us to consider how we can reconcile the intuitive idea of the importance of identity of Self as a one-to-one relationship over time with the possibility, however far fetched, that one person could be divided or copied into two or more persons who share the same set of memories, beliefs, desires and intentions not only with the first person, but with one another.

In a case such as the one in which my consciousness would somehow be duplicated so that there would be two people sharing my memories, beliefs, etc., he argues, all the characteristics that seem to constitute identity hold, but without the one-to-one relationship over time that is crucial to identity. If I were told that I would be split into two people in the future, somehow intact, how could I respond? Parfit says there are only three basic possible responses, in terms of identity: (1) I am neither of the two future persons, thus “I” do not survive; (2) I survive as one of the two but not the other; and (3) I, or all that is important about what I call “I” survives as both of them. Faced with this dilemma, Parfit rejects the first two responses and accepts the third as the least implausible.

His approach is to claim that (1) “Psychological continuity is more important than sameness of the body” and (2) “Psychological continuity might not be one-one.” He assumes that because, logically, one person cannot be two persons, there must not really be three persons after any of his various thought experiments that result in two people having psychological continuity with one person. Instead, he says, there is only one branching stream of consciousness, which survives without preserving personal identity. If the criterion of personal identity is not being considered, it does not really matter how many replicas are made by the tele

transporter – one, two, or more. Survival in the Reductionist terms he describes should be just about as good as ordinary survival, he says.

Certainly being told that such a thing would be done to you would likely cause a psychological crisis. However, the experiential nature of the Self means that each of those teletransported Selves would immediately begin to differentiate, and the branching streams of consciousness would each quickly become unique, just as a river that splits around an island will be different on each side. Further, because Narrativity is not merely a backward looking project, but a form finding over time by which we also project into the future, each of those new individuals, even if they were starting with the same sets of memories, beliefs, etc., would be forced to begin revising their assessment of the significance of their past experiences. So the identity of the two “I”s would be short lived, quickly transformed by each engaging uniquely in Narrativity.

Let me now analyze Parfit’s position on the issue of fission of persons. First of all, I will point out a few inconsistencies in Parfit’s approach. He says: “When I’m psychologically continuous with only one person, we call it identity. But if I’m psychologically continuous with two future people, we can’t call it identity.” So here we have two components to the process of defining who is who: (1) psychological continuity; (2) how many people result from fission. Hence, psychological continuity is not the single criterion of personal identification. And therefore, Parfit’s thesis that there is nothing more to personal identity than psychological continuity fails.

When Parfit says, “survival is what matters,” he means psychological survival. But how would this psychological survival be established? He says, “What I’m arguing against is this further belief which I think we’re inclined to hold even if we don’t realize it. The belief that

however much we change, there's a profound sense in which the changed us is going to be just as much us." So something psychological survives – not us precisely – but what? If this survivor in the brain transplant experiment cannot identify itself with the brain donor, can this something say, "I survived"? If it cannot, then can psychological identity exist without personal identity? Is Parfit right when he says it might be possible to think of experiences in a wholly impersonal way, that is, without the person?

One problem for Parfit's argument is that for there to be "experiences," there must be something to have them. That is, it is not enough for the sun to shine for there to be an experience of the sun shining. The temperature of a rock may be raised by the sun's rays, but that rock, lacking consciousness, does not have an experience of the warmth of the sun. Even a plant, in which certain processes may be initiated as a result of the sunshine -- growth, buds or flowers forming, photosynthesis -- still could not be said to experience the sun, because it lacks the necessary condition for having experience -- consciousness. An experience is by definition an event of consciousness. If there is no consciousness, there is no experience. Given the problematic nature of discussing animal consciousness, I will leap from plants to humans. Any experience, because it is a product of consciousness, is necessarily individual. Even two people standing side by side feeling the same warm sun will have unique, individual experiences of that sunshine, not only because of whatever slight physiological differences there may be in their bodies, but because of the psychological differences between them, the different associations they may have. So even in an experience as seemingly mundane -- "impersonal," if you will -- as the warmth of sun, Narrativity will be engaged, making the experience unique for each consciousness.

So Parfit's claim raises troubling questions on the intuitive level. But, as Brian Garrett points out in "Personal Identity and Reductionism," there are also serious questions about the leap of logic that Parfit is forced to make to satisfy his claim. He says that if the Reductionist claim that a person is just a brain, a body and a series of interrelated physical and mental events is true, "we can describe this fact by claiming either

(10) that there exists a particular brain and body, and a particular series of interrelated physical and mental events.

or

(11) that a particular person exists" (Parfit 1987, 212).

He asserts that if we know that the first statement is true, we will know that the second is true.

Garrett denies both that statement (11) entails statement (10), and that knowing the first we can know the second, and he uses one of the thought experiments that Parfit also uses in other places in his account to attempt to prove both his claims. In World 1, A's brain is split and the two halves are put into two new bodies exactly similar to A's, B and C. In World 2, the same operation is begun, but the surgeon drops the brain hemisphere intended for C', and only B' survives. In World 1, it cannot be said that either B or C is numerically identical to A, whereas in World 2, B' "is one, sufficiently good, candidate for identity with A. ... If A is B' in world 2, and A is not B in world 1, it follows, by the necessity and transitivity of identity, that B and B' are distinct persons. Yet B and B' possess the same brain and body, and are 'associated' with the same stream of interrelated mental and physical events" (Garrett 1991, 367). Garrett's account gives a logical basis for the intuitive resistance to Parfit's thesis.

Parfit, drawing on a long philosophical tradition that compares persons to entities such as clubs or nations that change in various ways over time, but are still called by the same name, attempts to undermine the concept of the importance of identity. He says (Parfit 2000, 447):

What I mean by that perhaps could be shown if we take an exactly comparable case involving not a person but something about which I think we're not inclined to have a false view... Something like a club. Suppose there's some club in the nineteenth century... And after several years of meeting it ceases to meet. The club dies... And then two members, let's say, emigrated to America, and after about fifteen years they get together and they start a club. It has exactly the same rules, completely new membership except for the first two people, and they give it the same name. Now suppose someone came along and said: 'There's a real mystery here, because the following question is one that must have an answer. But how can we answer it?' The question is, 'Have they started up the very same club ... or is it a completely new club that's just exactly similar?'

Parfit's answer to this question is that since there's no difference at all, the clubs are completely identical, and that "if we think there's no difference at all in the case of the clubs, why do we think there's a difference in the case of personal identity, and how can we defend the view that there's difference?" But as Garrett has already shown, there is something different about persons and clubs. Is there any real sense in which a person can cease to exist, and then at some later point decide to come back into existence?

The thrust of Parfit's effort is to deny that "personal identity consists in R holding uniquely -- holding between one present person and only one future person" (Parfit 1987, 263). If there were more to personal identity than relation R -- namely identity -- then perhaps it could be asserted that identity mattered more than relation R. He attempts to dispose of this notion in two paragraphs, by setting up an equation: $PI \text{ (personal identity)} = R + U$ (uniqueness). But then he asserts, "If I will be R-related to some future person, the presence or absence of U makes no difference to the intrinsic nature of my relation to this person. And what

matters most must be the intrinsic relation” (Parfit 1987, 263). If this is so, it is only because he has already posited that “personal identity consists in the holding of relation R, when it takes a non-branching form” (Parfit 1987, 263). So as long as relation R is unique (non-branching) it can be considered a basis for personal identity.

Naturally, not everyone accepts Parfit’s approach. John Robinson, in “Personal Identity and Survival,” questions the whole enterprise, claiming, “Imaginability does not always lead to possibility” (Robinson 1988, 323), and “I would claim that the fact that the acceptance of the possibility of bifurcation leads one into a conceptual quagmire -- committed to one of three highly implausible descriptions of the consequences of bifurcation -- is sufficient pretext to rule out the supposed possibility as a genuine one” (Robinson, 1988, 323). Parfit has two responses to this sort of attack on his method. One is to admit that he is playing games with our minds to shock us out of the habit of accepting of our unexamined, pre-philosophical attitudes. That is fair, though that suggests that we need not take the result of the shock seriously. It is as though he has made us sit through a horror movie, and on the one hand admits that Freddy Kreuger isn’t real, but on the other wants us to go back to our lives acting as though he were.

Parfit’s other response also turns out to be problematic. He asserts, repeatedly, that one of his thought experiments, his split-brain game, is grounded in fact. He claims that it has happened that people have had their hemispheres split and survived with two consciousnesses, so it could become possible for doctors to split the two hemispheres of the brain of one person whose body was dying, and put them into the two healthy bodies of two brain-dead twins. Despite Parfit’s assertions, science, according to Daniel Dennett and others, says otherwise. A person can survive with only one functioning brain hemisphere, as long as the

brain stem is intact. Transplanting a brain hemisphere into an empty skull could not succeed without a brain stem.

I believe this is important because of what science says about why Borges and his “other” might be right to seek to hold onto their concept of their own identity, when they are faced with the facts of the mutability of the characteristics of that identity. According to Dennett, what happens in patients who have the direct connection between the hemispheres of their brains split is not what Parfit claims. Initially the two function separately and a kind of paralysis results. “For brief periods during carefully devised experimental procedures, a few of these patients bifurcate in their response to a predicament, temporarily creating a second center of negative gravity. A few effects of the bifurcation may linger on indefinitely in mutually inaccessible memory traces, but aside from these actually quite primitive traces of the bifurcation, the life of a second self lasts a few minutes at most” (Dennett 1991, 425). It seems that the one-to-one relationship of identity -- a one-one relationship within brain, body and mind -- dismissed by Parfit as being merely an intuitively important notion, is too practically important to be allowed to be lost. What Dennett describes may be assailable by games of the imagination that boggle our reason, but when confronted by the physical reality, our brains cannot allow the problem to remain, and they resolve it. In this case, at least, one cannot be permanently split into two. The facts of the matter, not intuition, are what demands identity and a single Self.

To be fair, Parfit addresses this sort of challenge to his thesis -- though not this particular one -- when he acknowledges that there may be some evolutionary cause for the widespread insistence on identity as what is important in survival. However, he asserts, if this is so, it is only a cause and not a justification, and he says his games make clear that there is no justification. Because the process of evolution may choose those individuals who are strongly

attached to a sense of identity as the most important criterion of what it means to survive, that is no reason that we, as rational beings, should do the same. But if survival is what is important, and having a belief in identity is an important tool to survival, as he admits evolution indicates, then it is not only rational to want to use that tool, it is biologically justified.

Teletransportation and Self

Leaving aside the brain-split, we can look at another of his thought experiments -- teletransportation, the game with which he opens his long discussion of identity. In this game, I am going to travel to Mars, but instead of taking a space ship, I am to step into a booth here on Earth, press a green button, and undergo a process that will record the exact state of each of my cells, destroying me as it goes. Then that information will be sent to Mars by radio waves, and there a new body, having all my exact specifications, will be created. The point of this exercise, he says, is to show that physical continuity is not a necessary condition for survival, only psychological continuity. Aside from some doubt about whether the machine will work as it is supposed to, he says, I should have no other concerns about the process and whether I will survive, because all of my psychological states -- my memories, beliefs, desires and intentions -- will be recreated in the new me on Mars.

This, however, is not so obvious. Marya Schechtman, in *The Constitution of Selves* (Schechtman 1996), draws a case parallel to Parfit's example, but one that seems less immediately acceptable as a description of survival. Imagine that while I sleep, she says, a madman comes into my home and smothers me, but he has also brainwashed my neighbor to have exactly my memories, beliefs, desires and intentions. By Parfit's claim, that should be

considered by me as “as good as ordinary survival” because there is psychological continuity between my smothered body and my brainwashed neighbor. How he would respond to such a case is not clear, but there is good reason to assume that he would not allow the less pleasant circumstances to affect his assertion of what is important.

The only good reason for rejecting Schechtman’s replication, if we accept Parfit’s, would have to be that with teletransportation, I push the green button, and in the case of the madman I have no say in the matter. Is that difference enough to create psychological discontinuity in one case (the madman), and thus reject it as being as good as ordinary survival, and not in the other? If so, that difference must be great, because any other difference between the two cases is trivial. The difference between pushing the green button and being smothered by the madman is that in the former case I am creating the narrative, I am narrativizing, imagining a possible experience of my re-embodied consciousness, that allows me to project it forward. Even if I see the act of pushing the green button as a kind of suicide, it is an action I am taking myself. In the other, consciousness is taken from me. I am dead.

This point turns the question of whether there is identity through a person’s life from being one focused back in time, to one that looks forward. When Parfit and others who ask what Schechtman calls the reidentification question, they often look at person-slices, examine them for the presence of memories, experiences, desires, beliefs and intentions that can be correlated to another person-slice. This may be the wrong way to find what they are looking for.

First of all, there is good reason to question the whole venture of the “person-slice.” How thick a slice of a person’s life is enough to capture what it means to be that person? The only way a slice can in any real way represent a person is if we believe that life is lived, or time moves, the way a digital clock expresses it. But then, when I ask my pedantic

friend what time it is and he looks at his clock, he tells me, “7:23:34, no, it’s 7:23:35; no, wait...” In life, the minute hand moves unnoticeably, and seemingly at different speeds at different times. Any decision to take a “person-slice” must be purely arbitrary, and therefore unreliable.

Parfit tries a different approach when he wants to define how we might determine whether he is now and at some other times one and the same person, with his notion of “strong connectedness,” but his language here becomes nearly empty. Having come up with the term quasi-memory, to allow for the possibility that a person would not be limited to remembering only their own experiences, he sets out to define what would be required to establish links of connectedness over time. “There is strong connectedness of quasi-memory if, over each day, the number of direct quasi-memory connections is at least half the number in most actual lives” (Parfit 1987, 222).

Is a “direct quasi-memory connection” as seemingly simple as “I remember a red lamp,” or as complex as the memory that Schechtman recounts in her refutation of Parfit’s assertion that one person could intelligibly have another person’s memories implanted in them? How would these be counted? Why delineate the time period as one day? Why half the number and how many might there be in “most actual lives”? None of this is clear at all, and he makes no attempt to clarify.

Schechtman contends, “So far, the only evidence we have that there is no deep unity [identity] throughout the course of a person’s life is the inability of reidentification theorists to express one” (Schechtman 1996, 91). She maintains that because of the strength of our intuition about the value of this unity, maybe the way the question is framed is incorrect. Parfit takes this

evidence as the basis for his argument, and dismisses both the intuition and a possible cause of the intuition -- evolution -- as not being justification. But there may well be justification.

Why Self Matters

To turn away from thought experiments, let's look at the cases Dennett describes of victims of child abuse who develop what psychologists call Multiple Personality Disorder. These are cases when children who are brutally abused invent new identities for themselves, identities of children who are not abused. What is the justification for this? If A is a child who is abused by B, A may correctly feel that as a result of the abuse her feelings, emotions, beliefs and actions are caused by B, not by A herself. This would result in A not being able to expect to be held responsible or be rewarded for anything, because A is not causing any actions, feelings, beliefs, memories or emotions that A experiences. In this condition, A could be said not to exist. In order for A to exist, she must in some way control herself, thus she needs a personality -- an identity -- that is not controlled by B through abuse. Again, if survival is what is important, in any form, then at least in this case, it seems that identity, not Relation R, is crucial.

In another case, when my father-in-law had brain surgery, he said when he first woke up he found himself a blank slate and his first conscious thought was, "Who am I?" Now Parfit, when he attempts to answer that question, says it is crucial not to presuppose the existence of the person in the answer. He suggests it is wrong to phrase the question in such a way that it does. Yet when the brain is confronted by emptiness, it seems what it does is exactly the opposite, and not just in the word "I," but in the word "Who" as well. "Who" is a question

asked about persons, responded to with answers about identity. “I” refers to a distinct individual, determinate in some way -- a Self. If Parfit is right about what matters, then the first question asked when confronted with a void should have been something different, though it is difficult to imagine quite how that question should be phrased. Again, Parfit might accept there is a *cause* for asking this question in response to the described situation, but is there a justification? The goal of the question is not the goal of the reidentification question. It is not to determine whether I am the same person as I was at some earlier time or will be some time in the future. The goal is to find the way by which I can make sense of my experiences, to decide among competing desires and beliefs, and, most importantly to determine reasons for actions so that I *can* act. The goal of the question is to find the Self.

It is interesting to note that Parfit himself admits more than once that he himself finds it hard to *believe* what he calls the truth. “What I find is that I can believe this view at the intellectual or reflective level. I am convinced by the arguments in favor of this view. But I think it is likely that at some other level I shall always have doubts” (Parfit 1987, 279), he says. Again he admits, “But I expect that I would never completely lose my intuitive belief in the Non-Reductionist view. ... If tomorrow someone will be in agony it is hard to believe it could be an empty question whether this agony will be felt by *me*” (Parfit 1987, 280). Then he turns to Buddha for support, saying, “Buddha claimed, though this is very hard [i.e., to believe the Reductionist view he argues for], it is possible. I find Buddha’s claim to be true ” (Parfit 1987, 280). This, perhaps even Parfit himself would admit, is very strange and not at all convincing. But Parfit, with his prescriptive account of Self, is seeking a way to make us care more about others, and the way he wants to achieve this is -- like Buddha -- to make us less attached to ourselves.

I will not go more deeply into a response to this than to say that self-awareness also holds the potential to make us care about and respect others. Saying, “My Self matters,” does not entail saying, “My Self is the only Self that matters.” On the contrary, perhaps the most powerful tool to care about another person is the ability to imagine ourselves experiencing what they are experiencing. Again, through Narrativity, to transpose another person’s experience onto our own possible present or future.

The power of narratives to elicit emotions is not based in an absence of Self on the part of the audience, but on the audience placing themselves within the story -- identifying with one or more of the participants in the narrative. Certainly this is one common argument for the value of literature -- that through it we learn to be more understanding of others. If this is so, it is not because we “lose ourselves” in *Anna Karenina*, as the cliché would have it, but because we are able to inhabit Anna Karenina, something we cannot do fully if we are not self-aware. If we accepted Parfit’s argument that we should care less about ourselves, that could as easily lead us to care less about others. Instead of empathizing with Anna’s plight, we could feel she should stop being so self-indulgent, just as we have done. Instead, by feeling, through Narrativity, what experiencing Anna’s plight would mean for my Self, I am able to care more deeply about her. I will return later to discuss more fully the relationship between literature, emotion, and Narrativity.

In response to Parfit’s assertion that all that matters in survival is psychological connectedness with Relation R, I would propose an alternate thought experiment. What if a mad scientist has taken me prisoner and offers me two choices. Either I can be struck with complete amnesia, but left with a completely functioning body and brain, or I can keep all my memories, all my psychological connectedness even with the common cause that my functioning brain

remains intact, but I will be a brain in a vat. And I will be aware that I am a brain in a vat and nothing more. Which would I choose? In this case, give me amnesia. In this case, when asked what is important about survival, it is not connection to the past, not even connection to a particular identity. Certainly I would regret that in a moment, when the mad doctor pulled the switch, my memories would be wiped out, but the ability to act would not.

From this case it might seem I am choosing to give up identity. In the sense that I am giving up the identity that I had through my life until the mad doctor shuts off the stream of consciousness that has been my Self, that is true. But in another sense, that is not quite right. I am choosing the ability to create a Self that can act, because without that, nothing else has any value whatsoever. In the vat I might still be A, but it doesn't seem that would do me much good. With amnesia, I would no longer be A, could not be compensated or held responsible for A's actions, could no longer carry out A's intentions, would not have A's values or beliefs. As B, though, I would develop new intentions, beliefs and desires, accumulate new memories. I would lose the past of my Self, but gain the future, knowing that I continue to have new experiences, to Narrativize, and thus build a new Self, which would be just as much me as the previous one.

In this sense, I argue that denying the value of identity, as Parfit does, because it seems to fail as a tool for reidentification is misunderstanding the use of identity. Even an episodic is faced with the constant question, "What do I do now?" Answering that question -- acting in a directed way -- requires a Self, and the projection of that Self into a posited future, even if that future is as immediate as the ever appearing new Now. Narrativity allows for and accepts the possibility of the Self evolving and changing through time, without giving up the one-to-one identification between them. In the same way that there is a one-to-one relationship -- an

identity -- between person A at 5 years old and person A at 50, despite the great physical changes that have occurred, there is a one-to-one relationship between Selves, even when, as for Strawson, the feeling of connection may be weak. There is a unique identity connection through all the series of Selves that Strawson feels himself to have been, and no other non-GS Selves share that relationship.

With persons or Selves -- indeed, with any object in the physical world -- it is a fundamental mistake to take the term "identity" as having the same truth makers as it does in mathematics, because mathematical terms are atemporal. Whether it is possible to determine whether A is the same person at two different times may be an empty question. In the world, where an answer is needed, criteria are established that make it possible to give an answer in practical ways. For the more complex question we ask ourselves, "Who am I?" -- a question that must be asked and answered if we are to begin to make sense of experience -- the uniqueness that Parfit wants to discard, identity, is the tool to begin to find an answer. But to use that tool, we employ Narrativity, which as form finding over time, allows us to comprehend the changes we have gone through in the past, and to project into the possibilities of the future, forming other cognitive tasks that involve coherence seeking and form-finding tendencies, such as making sense of our mundane experience, as well necessary epistemologically. Narrativity is also the mental component we engage when we initiate actions, whether on a trivial scale, such as making coffee, or for larger projects. To approach the issue from another end, any discussion of actions requires an appeal to the narrative nature of our experience, the necessity of which is demonstrated in the language that must be used. This necessity extends to our mental activity because the way we are engaged in project making linguistically, our mental activity is engaged in form finding over time, and thus Narrativity.

Chapter 5

Narrativity and Emotions in Literature

I will turn now from the process of Narrativity to the product -- in particular fictional narratives, to discuss how stories and novels engage our emotions. I make this digression because it has implications for how Narrativity functions in response to life. As I will show, Narrativity is the mental process by which we make sense of works of fiction, and how it functions in relation to these works is the same way it functions in relation to our experiences.

The relationship of Narrativity to emotion also needs to be explored, because emotions play a key role in our conception and creation of Self. In many ways we define our Self by our emotions --our wants and desires, our likes and dislikes, and our hopes and fears. As such, we need to understand what emotions are, how they arise, and what role Narrativity plays in our experience of emotions and how we respond to them. To do this, I will look at Jenefer Robinson's account of emotions in literature, because while I agree with her premise, I feel she goes astray in where she takes that premise. I will examine first her account of emotions and how she sees that as relevant to a solution to the paradox of fiction. I will raise questions both about her definition of emotions as affective appraisals and whether her definition is applicable to the way emotions are aroused regarding literature. I will then show how our Narrativity is engaged by literature, proposing that in that way we can solve the paradox of fiction.

Robinson, in her book *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Robinson 2005), says that "the emotional process is the same in both the real life and the fictional case." I am inclined to agree with this, but there appears to be a problem in her account of how we get to that emotional process in "the fictional case," since in reading

literature the trigger for our emotional process is not perceptions but cognition (reading the words of a novel or story). I propose to take a close look at her account of how we can have genuine emotions regarding fictional characters, and propose a different answer to the problem by examining the intrinsic characteristics of literature that trigger our emotions, and how writers such as Dostoevsky engage the reader with the characters in his novels. I will argue that understanding literature requires an active response -- it engages our Narrativity, just as Narrativity is engaged in response to our experience of our lives.

To demonstrate how her theory could be applied to literature, Robinson focuses primarily on two 19th century novels, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, which often seems to be the standard point of reference in discussions of this topic, and Edith Wharton's *The Reef*, to which she gives a close reading. Because Robinson equates our emotional response to fiction with our emotional response to film and theater, her decision to limit her discussion to traditional realist novels makes sense, since these novels work by an accumulation of sharp, finely observed detail, so the reader is able to easily imagine or create a mental image of what is described.

However, since the turn of the 20th century, realism is an approach that has been employed primarily by writers of popular fiction, which appeals to a less sophisticated audience than the audience for serious literature. Nevertheless, readers have still been emotionally moved by the works of writers who have broken from that tradition. So the question is how to explain that engagement.

In contrast to Robinson, I have chosen Dostoevsky as the primary example for my discussion because if Tolstoy can be considered as the perfection of the 19th century realist tradition, Dostoevsky is one of the first writers to break from that tradition. He, unlike Tolstoy, creates a new model for 20th century literature, and his influence can be seen in writers like

Conrad, Faulkner, Virginia Woolf. As Joseph Brodsky said, from Dostoevsky we get Kafka, from Tolstoy we get Margaret Mitchell.

Before looking at literature and how it engages our emotions through Narrativity, however, we need to look at emotions themselves. Robinson offers a new theory of emotion, and through that theory she says she has found an answer to the paradox of fiction. She characterizes the paradox of fiction by the following three propositions:

- (a) We often have emotions for fictional characters and situations known to be purely fictional;
- (b) Emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in the existence and features of those objects;
- (c) We do not harbor beliefs in the existence and features of objects known to be fictional.

While she admits that “temporarily we stop paying attention to the fact that characters are fictional,” her solution to the paradox is to deny (b) and claim that emotional responses to fiction are “always based on a non-cognitive and automatic appraisal from which emotions follow like reflexes or startle mechanisms.” However, to “stop paying attention” seems to be a necessary condition for having an emotion in response to fiction.

My problems with her account are twofold. First, as I have said, our experience of literature is cognitive not sensual, so it is hard to see how emotions could arise from a non-cognitive appraisal, as she says they do. It also raises the stakes on belief, because our feelings about the characters must come only from thinking about them, without the sense impressions

that we have of people we meet. I am sympathetic with her assessment that the suspect proposition in the paradox is (b), but will argue that while emotions do not presuppose an explicit belief in the existence of the objects of those emotions, they do presuppose an absence of active disbelief in the existence of those objects. The task of novelists who want the reader to respond emotionally to their work, then, is to create strong enough belief in the properties of the characters and situations they describe that disbelief in existence becomes no longer an issue. Second, while literature can trigger simple, monolithic emotions (“Poor Anna”), it can also trigger more complex, fine-grained and sometimes even simultaneous conflicting emotions (horror at Raskolnikov the murderer, compassion for Raskolnikov the loving brother and son). I find it hard to see how her affective appraisal theory allows for the ambiguous or mixed response to fiction.

Robinson’s argument omits almost any discussion of precisely how an author works to make the reader respond emotionally to the novel. There is the sense that assuming the author wants the reader to feel emotion, she will feel it. Empirically, this is obviously not true. The question then is why she reads *Anna Karenina* and is moved to tears and I read it and am left cold (even though I might be willing to accept that it is a great work of literature). Her reply seems to be that not feeling emotion is an inappropriate response, and indicates that something must be lacking in the reader: Such a reader must have a “low emotional IQ.” But while I might not shed tears over Anna, it might be that when I read *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* I cry, proving that I can respond emotionally to literature, so maybe my IQ is not so low after all.

Rather than looking at the reader to resolve this dilemma, another place to inquire might be the works themselves and the techniques the author uses to create what I will call tacit belief in the world described that is, belief in the properties of the world described, without requiring

belief in the existence of that world, which forces the reader to consider the work through Narrativity -- constantly imagining possibilities for where the story will go and re-evaluating previous events and judgments of characters. It is through the engagement of this Narrativity that emotions are triggered in response to the content of our thoughts about the novel or story. Thus the emotional engagement a reader feels with the work of literature, and the resulting emotions, can be seen as a result of those techniques.

I will demonstrate with examples from Dostoevsky's novels how such techniques as ambiguity, unreliable narration, polyphony and the dialogical style of writing can lead the reader to experience a novel in a way similar how she might experience the world. Those techniques indeed contribute to engaging the reader as an active participant in the events and thinking of characters the way we think of real people -- through Narrativity. My point is not to deny that Tolstoy (or Wharton for that matter) inspire emotions, but to move the discussion forward, into modern fiction, where the techniques employed are less about realistically -- for lack of a better word -- portraying scenes and characters, and more about engaging the reader's mind, and through that very activity surreptitiously creating tacit belief in the fiction.

I will return to these issues and explain more fully what I mean by tacit belief after a discussion of Robinson's account of emotions.

Emotion as a process. Affective appraisals

Robinson's account of emotion is based on her affective appraisal theory. It assumes that emotion is a process that starts with a non-cognitive response or appraisal of the situation, followed by a physiological reaction and finally by cognitive monitoring of the situation. She says that emotion is a process that always involves these three aspects.

Emotions do not require cognitive judgment on her view, and she asserts that cognitive evaluations might not be enough to bring about physiological changes and trigger emotions. It is important to notice that on Robinson's account the initial affective appraisal of the situation is non-cognitive and therefore cannot be sensitive to judgmental beliefs. As she says, "I can be afraid without judging that there is a snake before me; I may merely register a curly stick-shape on the forest floor" (Robinson 2005, 55).

Affective appraisals for Robinson happen automatically and unconsciously. "I shall assume that they (affective appraisals) are 'non-cognitive,' in the sense that they occur without any conscious deliberation or awareness, and they do not involve any complex information processing" (Robinson 2005, 45). The affective appraisal alerts a person "picking out from the multitude of competing stimuli" (Robinson 2005, 46) to something that is vital to the biological function of an individual and needs to be dealt with, i.e. anything vital to the organism's interests, goals, wants and values.

In other words, an affective appraisal is like a jolt, which doesn't bear any cognition or semantic content. In fact, when she uses **OFFENCE!** or **BAD!** or **NO!** to characterize an affective appraisal, Robinson deliberately puts those words in bold, so they are not to be confused with a concept or any propositional content. They are pure biological jolts that

immediately result in physiological changes such as physiological arousal or change in facial expression, increased heartbeat etc., followed by a cognitive monitoring of the situation.

This seems to make sense when we talk about simple perceptions such as hearing a loud sound triggering our emotional responses. Nevertheless Robinson claims that we can also have affective appraisals as a result of complex thoughts and beliefs.

For example, she says: “When I catalogue my emotion as ‘resentment,’ I am implicitly advertent to a situation in which (I think) I have been treated badly and (I think) I don’t deserve it, and it well may be that these thoughts play a causal role in the emotion process: indeed my affective appraisal of Offence! may be an affective appraisal of the situation as I thought it to be” (Robinson 2005, 91).

Robinson says that what those theorists who consider emotions as kinds of judgments, rather than as triggered by something non-cognitive, failed to show was the linkage between cognition and emotion. By her account, the link is the affective appraisals. She says, “... what turns cognition into emotion is an affective appraisal and its concomitant physiological changes” (Robinson 2005, 62). To demonstrate how cognition turns into emotion she takes the example of a realization that one’s stock portfolio is performing badly after having studied long and hard to find that out. This is realized only after lengthy cognitive evaluation, but once it is realized an affective appraisal occurs. “I am suddenly frightened or vulnerable” (Robinson 2005, 62). She comments: “We can think of the affective appraisal here as a kind of ‘meta-response,’ evaluating in a rough and ready way -- for example, as bad for me or good for me -- an already existing cognitive evaluation” (Robinson 2005, 62).

The acceptance of this point is crucial to accepting her account of how we can feel emotions from fiction, and I will not dispute it with regard to the stock portfolio. There is,

however, a difficulty with making a parallel from this case to having emotion from reading fiction. Robinson says that we can have emotion as a result of the content of our thoughts. The stock portfolio is real, and we know that as we are thinking long and hard about it. Part of the content of our thought about it must be that it is real, and thus the effect of its collapse on us will be real, too. But when we read fiction, the content of our thoughts about the characters and situations in the fiction cannot include the fact that they are real, and how can something we do not think real be either bad for me or good for me?

To get around this, Robinson says we “stop paying attention” to the part of the content of our thought about Anna that she is not real, just a fictional character. Though her terminology is different, this still sounds like she’s saying we suspend our disbelief. I will argue, contrary to Robinson, that we cannot simply stop paying attention to this voice. Instead, the writer silences the voice that says that what we are reading is not real, and convinces us to have some kind of belief in the fiction we are reading.

The standard argument against us having any belief in fictions is made with regard to watching movies or plays. When we see the Green Slime, we don’t get up and run from the theater. When we see the murderer approaching his victim, we don’t cry out to warn the victim or turn on our cell phones and call the police. These cases do not apply to the reader of fiction, because she is not seeing something happening before her eyes. She is generally reading an account of something that supposedly has happened, perhaps long ago or far away from where she is sitting, reading. And yet there are numerous examples of works of fiction that have led people to take action in the real world. Both Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Twain’s *Puddin’head Wilson* had profound effects on Americans’ attitudes about slavery and race relations. Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?* helped lay the groundwork for a generation of

revolutionaries in Russia, while Dostoevsky's *Demons* led to broad support for a government crackdown on radicals. The novels of Dickens are credited with inspiring movements for social change in Victorian England. We need not assume that these responses were naive. Instead, they indicate that these readers had some kind of belief in what they have read, even if that belief was only in the possibility that what they read corresponded to the world as it actually existed. The question that remains to be answered is how those beliefs were created.

Emotions in Literature and Resolving the Paradox of Fiction

Robinson says: "When I am emotionally engaged with a novel, I find my own wants and interests to be at stake, I make affective appraisals of what I read, and these affective appraisals affect me physiologically, focus my attention, and perhaps lay down emotional memories. Finally I cognitively monitor these affective appraisals and the bodily changes they set off" (Robinson 2005, 117). But this account is puzzling when we consider that she also asserts: "It doesn't matter to my emotion systems (fear, anger, sadness, etc.) whether I am responding to the real, the merely imagined, the possible or the impossible" (Robinson 2005, 145).

If we are talking about watching a movie or play and responding emotionally, this might be understandable. Watching a movie, we may know we are in a theater watching something projected on a screen, but nevertheless our senses -- at least our sight and hearing -- are being bombarded, as they are when we walk down the street. And because of the darkness of the theater, the lack of any other activity around us, our attention is completely focused on the screen. So then the sight of the green slime (to take the standard example) surging suddenly, apparently coming right at us, is enough to make us jump in our seats, just as is the sudden

scream of the heroine, even though we might immediately laugh at ourselves. We've had an affective appraisal (DANGER!), followed by physiological changes (jumping in our seats) and then cognitive monitoring (it's just a movie, silly). Watching a movie, our senses can fool us into responding -- at least momentarily -- to what we don't believe in.

The technique of the traditional realist novel is analogous to this, in that it essentially is about giving detailed, vivid descriptions of the physical world, but even at that, I would argue, the very fact that our senses are not involved in how we respond to Anna, requires that the triggering of emotions must work differently for literature. We cannot experience emotions in reading literature unless our mind is in some way believing what we read.

When it comes to our response to fiction, the analogy Robinson attempts to make with a snake in the bushes is false. In the case she describes, while it may be true that we do not make a judgment that there is actually a snake, or perhaps any other specific thing, our senses tell us there is something there and it seems to be moving. We are hardwired to respond to our senses when they tell us there is something potentially threatening there, even if an instant later our cognition tells us, "It's just a stick." To respond emotionally to thought, however, it seems we need to have some kind of belief in the contents of that thought. This may not be a propositional belief; I will call it tacit belief.

I will define this tacit belief with regards to literature as a belief in the properties of the character and their plight that is created by an author, who convinces the reader to hold that belief, without that belief entailing either the existence or nonexistence of the character. When we read a work of fiction, we come to hold a set of beliefs about the properties attributed to the characters in that work. These beliefs, like the beliefs we hold about the people we know in our lives, range from beliefs about their physical properties to beliefs about their psychology, their

propensity to act in various ways, their likes and dislikes. When the set of beliefs we hold about a character in a work of fiction reaches a certain level of complexity and intensity, we hold what I will call tacit belief in that character, as if she were a real character. This tacit belief with regard to literature in every way resembles the kind of beliefs we have about those around us in the world, because it means we are thinking about the characters in fiction the way we think about “real” people. This tacit belief mobilizes our default assumptions.

To return to (b) in the paradox of fiction, I would like to consider the difference between what may be logically true and the nature of experience. We hold a potentially limitless set of beliefs about any given person, but the importance and our awareness of those beliefs will vary greatly. If I am asked whether I believe Mary has five fingers on each hand, I may say yes, but that is a belief that will likely play no role in whether I feel sad if I hear something bad has happened to her. Certain beliefs we hold in the forefront of our minds when thinking about people and things, but it is unlikely that existence or nonexistence is one of those, unless -- like whether Mary has five fingers on each hand -- it is somehow raised. This distinction raises the problem of (b) in the paradox of fiction, because knowing that we are reading a novel, we know the characters do not exist. However, it also provides the path to the resolution, because when an author engages our Narrativity, and thus compels us to mobilize our default assumptions, the question of existence or nonexistence is pushed offstage.

This mobilization of default assumptions is not a conscious or rational act. We do not decide to “make believe” that Raskolnikov exists, we are compelled by the work of the author, by the details. Of course if we are challenged about that assumption, we will deny we believe he does exist. But in our thinking about him, and in our emotional response to him, these default assumptions will hold, and we think about him the way we think about people who do exist.

We do not will this tacit belief in the character: With regard to fiction, it is something we are convinced into holding if and only if the writer is successful in the literary techniques he uses. This level of belief is something that goes beyond what is experienced in genre fiction. I may be entirely engrossed in a thriller while I am reading it, and may “see” the characters and scenes, but will not have the same kind of complex emotional response. This is because of the recognized patterns and norms of genre fiction, which the audience expects.

There is another potential obstacle that can prevent the formation of this tacit belief in the character, which is the relationship between the reader and the author. I have already said it is possible for a reader to not become emotionally engaged with a novel that is generally accepted as a great work of literature, even though that read may not have a “low emotional IQ.” Ted Cohen, in *Thinking of Others: On the Talent for Metaphor* (Cohen 2009), provides one example of why this might happen when he discusses his response to Wharton’s *House of Mirth*. Wharton’s repeated use of certain stereotypes when referring to a character who is Jewish jar Cohen, who is also Jewish and admittedly sensitive to such stereotyping, out of his involvement in the story. I describe this phenomenon as the relationship between reader and author because it is about how the two get along. It involves not just a meeting of the attitudes of the author and the reader, but language as well. We see that not only in readers who have difficulty with, for example, the complexity of Shakespeare’s language, but also in responses to writers of other eras whose language may be simply more formal than contemporary usage.

It is true that not all writers seek to create an emotional response to the characters in their fiction, and the greatest tool to achieve this lack of emotional response is to disrupt the creation of tacit belief, by drawing attention away from the characters and on to the text itself, to remind the reader that she is reading a text. We can see this in writers such as John Barth, Donald

Barthelme and many post-modernists. This is one kind of challenge. Another can be simply bad writing. Both of these, because they disrupt the emotional process before it is achieved, are more effective at changing the way we respond to a character in fiction than when someone, after we close the book, reminds us it is only a novel. By that time, we have already had an emotional experience, which by its very nature is nonrational. So whether it was irrational hardly matters. At that point, the question of existence is only being raised after we already have come to hold tacit belief in the character and fictional world and had an emotional response. So, us having genuine emotion while reading the work of fiction is what matters.

Robinson argues that we do not need to believe in the truth of a thought to have an emotional response, and to prove her claim, she offers the example of how thinking that her husband (who is safe upstairs) has been killed in a plane crash can make her sad. I wonder whether thinking that her husband had been kidnapped by little green men from outer space would make her equally sad? If not, I would argue that the difference in the two cases is that she can believe in the possibility of the hypothetical plane crash, while she cannot believe in the possibility of the little green men, even though she might be able to clearly imagine them. The parallel to fiction, I would argue, is simply this: About some works of literature I will have an emotional response, because for whatever reason -- it could be the quality of the writing or the similarity of some character or event to one I have known or lived through -- I will come to hold tacit belief in the characters and situations described. Others will leave me cold: Perhaps the writer is untalented or the events and people described are too far from my own life experience, or just "unrealistic." For whatever reason, I cannot believe in it on any level, and therefore do not respond emotionally.

While some readers may require that if they are going to respond emotionally to a novel, its characters, setting and action must be close to the world they know and live in, many others do not, and in fact actively seek out writers who can take them into a world far removed from their own. It is a commonplace that one of the values of fiction is that it helps us to experience and understand the lives of people very different from ourselves. The question, then, is how can an author make the reader come to hold tacit belief in his fiction, so that then emotions can be triggered?

Traditional realists like Tolstoy make a movie on paper, considering that most readers have representations while they read, by describing the surface of reality, so the reader can watch the reality unfold. When the writer is skillful, the reader doesn't doubt the narrator's knowledge of that reality. In this sense, the traditional realist novel is opaque. The world of Anna Karenina (the character) just is the text of *Anna Karenina* (the novel). With the masters of realism, such as Tolstoy or George Eliot or Dickens, the image created is detailed and sharp, and the reader is on solid ground. As Robinson says, "It is the *vivid representations* I form, on the basis of Tolstoy's words, that prompt my emotional responses to Anna" (italics mine) (Robinson 2005, 150). Her choice here of the word vivid -- lifelike -- is interesting. If it is lifelike, it would seem to be at least believable.

The narrator in the traditional realist novel is as a rule omniscient and impersonal, even though the narrator will generally color the portrayal of characters in such a way that the reader's response to them is guided in one direction or another. Strangely enough, Robinson attempts to deny this when she argues against Noel Carroll's notion of "prefocusing," which she says "assumes that the writer can succeed in a relatively straightforward way in fixing the reader's attention on certain aspects of a scene, character or event, and that she can describe these aspects

in such a way that a particular emotional response is more-or-less assured” (Robinson 2005, 183). Yet this is exactly what a writer does whenever she chooses what to describe and how to describe it. Of course, as she says, “when we read a novel, we are always ‘filling in the gaps’ in the text,” (Robinson 2005, 184) but we do that based on what we have already learned about the characters and events previously described. This “filling in the gaps” is precisely what we are doing constantly with Narrativity. We posit causal connections between events or actions, we ascribe possible motivations to the actions of others, and we project into the future, attempting to find form over time. In our lives, this process requires continual re-evaluation in response to new events, new perceptions and changes we feel within ourselves. When we are talking about writers like Wharton or Tolstoy, whose novels contain clear, sharply drawn moral subtexts, however, this “filling in the gaps” is indeed relatively straightforward. And as a result, when the reader feels, “Poor Anna,” she can feel confident in her emotion.

But authors’ approaches to fiction have changed since Tolstoy and Wharton. Writers following in the footsteps of Dostoevsky, who break from the realist tradition, exploit the fact that our understanding of fiction is not primarily sensual but cognitive. Critics who have attacked Dostoevsky for failing to use the kind of detailed “stage directions” seen in the realist masters of the 19th century miss the point. He is not interested in creating belief through physically detailed description. Instead, he creates belief primarily through narrative techniques that force the reader into a different kind of mental state than a realist novel does. The reader comes to believe without any effort, and maybe even by force of habit, because the narration itself is just the foreground, the way it is when a friend tells us a story about people we both know. I will focus on *Brothers Karamazov*, but similar techniques can be seen to a greater or lesser degree in all five of his late novels, and in much of his earlier work as well.

From the very start of the book, we are constantly aware of the narrator. He intrudes with asides; admits his lack of knowledge about certain aspects of the characters; and recounts rumors and stories he's heard that he cannot vouch for but includes anyway. Adding to the confusion is that the voice of the narrator is very much like the voice of the brief introduction, which is titled "From the Author," in which the "author" (Dostoevsky, perhaps) says that the reader might be surprised that he chose Alyosha as the hero for this book, and goes on to say that really this book, which tells of something that happened 30 years ago, is only a prelude to another one about Alyosha "in the present day." In this discussion he talks about Alyosha as a person who exists outside of the realm/confines of the novel, so the reader is forced to think about him as a person, not as a character.

Further, once having finished the novel, it is likely that the reader might question whether the author really did make Alyosha the hero. It is true that Alyosha is more often the focus of the narrator, but Dmitry is the catalyst for almost everything that happens, and he is the one who is most profoundly transformed at the end. The point is, even in retrospect, we are once again led to doubt what the narrator says.

It is not at all clear who the narrator is, other than that he lives in the town where all this happened, and seems to have had some limited contact with the participants in the story. But throughout the novel the reader is constantly reminded that someone is telling the story, as the narrator comments on his own reaction to things, admits to the uncertainty of certain facts or explains why he has given certain details. These intrusions and asides create doubt about the narration itself. There is an 'as if' quality -- as if the narrator is guessing about the characters and events that are outside and somehow independent of the narration she is reading, and about which there might be a different account. Once the reader begins to feel that the narrator is

guessing about the characters and events, she is immediately put in the position of questioning and even doubting the narrator. Once she begins questioning or doubting the narrator, she does so as if there is a reality that the narration is about, and as if there is a truth about that reality that can be learned.

In this sense, the late novels of Dostoevsky in particular are translucent -- the reader must see through the narration to the seemingly separate, independent reality that the narration is about. The narration clouds the reader's vision of that "reality," even as, paradoxically, it is the only window the reader has on it. Perhaps the most extreme example of this technique in Dostoevsky is *The Adolescent*, a novel in which the young narrator understands virtually nothing of what is really going on around him. To have any understanding of the novel, the reader must come up with her own account of the characters and events that Dostoevsky's narrator describes. The reader does not doubt the narrator of *Brothers Karamazov* to the same extent, but she must constantly evaluate what he says, and he himself repeatedly tells us that the story he is relating is beyond him.

Examples can be found on nearly every page of *Brothers Karamazov*, but I will provide just a few to illustrate what I mean:

"And here -- a young man moves into the house of such father, lives with him a month and then another and both of them go along better than needed. The latter surprised not just me, but also a lot of others" (Dostoevsky 1976b, 16).

Here we see the narrator surprised by something within his own narrative, which would seem to require that what he is relating happened separate from him, and outside of his control, just as things happen in the world. The addition that others were also surprised tells us that the events described were seen not just by him: There could be other accounts of the events which

we are not getting, because we are listening only to him. Again, this possibility of other versions of events, other perspectives and judgments takes us to the way we experience our lives.

“The old man spoke more abruptly than it was stated here and than was written down by Alyosha. Sometimes he stopped speaking completely, as though he was gathering all his strength, gasped for breath, but was as if in excitement. They listened to him touched, though most marveled at his words, seeing ignorance in them” (Dostoevsky 1976b, 149).

The narrator tells us that what he is saying is not an accurate account of the events, and we see that what we’re reading about is at two removes from us -- the narrator’s account comes from Alyosha’s account, which is also not accurate. Then, in the “as though” and “as if,” we see he does not know the old man’s state: He can only describe what he observed. But when we think about that, we must wonder how the narrator knows that it did not occur as it is written, or how the old man spoke, since he was not there. Instead of creating certainty, the narration creates doubt, questions, demanding engagement and requiring that the reader form her own judgment.

“I wouldn’t expatiate on such trivial and episodic details though, if this meeting of a young official with a not-at-all-old widow, which I just now described hadn’t served later on as the basis of the life-long career of this exacting and accurate young man and about which everyone in our city recollects with amazement up to the present day and about which even we will say a special word when we complete our long story about the brothers Karamazov” (Dostoevsky 1976b, 406).

This “we” in Russian is not comparable to the “royal we,” and elsewhere the narrator refers to himself as I. Here he seems to ambiguously include the reader as a participant in the telling of the story. There is also the issue that even though the scene referred to is actually

important to our understanding of what happened to Dmitry and is key to his fate, the narrator dismisses it, and shifts his attention to something outside the main thrust of his story, something which despite his promise we never actually get. We are told that these two minor characters have a life that goes on outside his narration, just as we know that all the people we pass every day have lives about which we know nothing.

The importance of the ambiguity or unreliability illustrated in these examples is that when we doubt the narrator's knowledge, we are making an assumption that there is something that can be known more fully. That is, we are separating the text we are reading from what the text is about. This puts us in a mental state similar to what we might experience reading a letter or listening to a friend tell a story about herself and other people we might or might not know, perhaps, like what we experience reading a biography, a book of history, or a newspaper or magazine article. There is a narration, but there is a separate, independent subject of that narration, and we begin to think about them as separate.

When this technique of narrative uncertainty is applied to the characters, it creates the impression that they are not controlled by the author. The narrator doesn't know everything about them because they are people who have secrets. The reader is forced to look beyond the novel and think about them as though they are independent, as though they can decide what they will do, as though they are writing their own story. Thus the reader is engaged as if by real people, who are not controlled by the novelist. Dostoevsky's approach is to convince the reader that the characters aren't completely knowable, in just the same way that the people around us in real life are not completely knowable.

The same notion could be applied to the events. To look outside of *Brothers Karamazov*, there is the scene previously mentioned in *Demons*, when Liza may or may not have tried to slap

Stavrogin (Nikolai Vsevolodovich). Although I quoted it above, I will quote it again, at greater length, because it illustrates so many aspects of the techniques I have been discussing

(Dostoevsky 1976a, 260-1):

And, however, then, some people say, another absolutely enigmatic event occurred, and, I admit, mostly because of that I mentioned this trip in such detail.

They say, that when everybody rudely rushed out, Liza, supported by Mavrikiy Nikolayevich, suddenly ran into Nikolai Vsevolodovich, in the doorway, in the crowd. ... I saw how they ran into each other in the doorway: It seemed to me that they both stopped for an instant and somehow strangely looked at one another. But I couldn't see very well in the crowd. Some people swore, on the contrary, and absolutely seriously, that Liza, looking at Nikolai Vsevolodovich, quickly lifted her hand, just level with his face, and probably would have hit him if he hadn't been able to move away. Maybe she didn't like the expression on his face or some kind of smile of his, especially then, after such an episode with Mavrikiy Nikolayevich. I admit, I myself didn't see anything, but on the other hand, everybody swore that they saw it, although they couldn't have because of the bustle... Only I didn't believe it then. I remember, however, that the whole way back Nikolai Vsevolodovich was a little pale.

The narrator tells us his whole point in relating the long scene that precedes this incident is to tell us about this moment, but he can't even say what really happened. When it comes to the effect whatever did happen might have had on the two participants, he can only hypothesize about one, Liza, and only describe the appearance of the other, Stavrogin. They are left to themselves.

The effect of all this on the reader is twofold:

First, cognitively, we are encouraged to infer and draw conclusions about "what is really going on" in the fiction. Once we start thinking that way, our mind is put into the kinds of patterns it follows in thinking about reality, mobilizing our default assumptions and the reasoning that flows from them, and engaging our Narrativity, to consider possibilities, to attempt to draw causal connections, to posit our own narrative of what is happening to the characters. By forcing the reader into these patterns of thought, Dostoevsky induces a tacit belief in his characters and stories.

Of course, if asked, I will say I don't believe Liza and Stavrogin exist. But nevertheless, while reading *Demons*, I think about them as if they did, and am not troubled by a question of existence because so many other questions are more pressing. Moreover I will make a stronger claim that the question of existence misses the point, since in the state of tacit belief the form of literary discourse becomes irrelevant, whether it is a novel, a letter, a newspaper article or somebody's story. This is what Cohen is arguing when he says that "readers for the Bible fall into three groups: those who read the text as an historical account that is generally factual, those who read the book as fiction, and those who are agnostic about the veracity of the Bible's descriptions. My claim is that their feelings for Sisera's mother are the same, however they regard the text" (Cohen 2009, 43).

But, second, emotionally, we are less confident about what we should feel, because we are not confident that what we are being told is true. This mirrors our response to events in our lives, where there is no one -- like an omniscient narrator -- to tell us what to think about those events. This brings me to my second concern with Robinson's account.

This scene, like so much in Dostoevsky, leaves us like a man at sea. The relationship of Liza and Stavrogin is one of the main threads of the novel, and yet this instant is emblematic of how we have to come to terms with what goes on between them. Without direct, concrete descriptions of their interaction, and without a narrator we can rely on to tell us, or at least indicate to us how we should feel about either one of them or their relationship, we are carried on waves of uncertainty. The current is strong, but we do not know where it is carrying us, and it is often too strong to resist. We cannot see the shore; all we see around us are rising and falling waves and do not know whether to try to swim against them or let them carry us where they will.

This is what I call *emotional dissonance* -- a state in which we experience two or more conflicting, perhaps contradictory emotions at once. As a result of this emotional dissonance, just as with dissonance in music, we feel anxiety and a yearning for resolution, which might bring about a sophisticated and potentially even more powerful emotional response than we would have in situations when we have simple, clear emotions, since the force and resistance of conflicting emotions can result in those emotions becoming more intense.

One of the key elements in a character that will motivate tacit belief is when we see or feel that the character experiences emotional dissonance -- the simultaneous experience of two or more conflicting or contradictory emotions. This is because in our lives, the emotions we feel almost always contain this dissonance, and if a character in fiction is to “come to life,” she too must experience this. Thus, readers of *Anna Karenina* are moved by Anna, who is torn by her love for Vronsky and the knowledge that pursuing that love will mean that she must leave her son, whom she also loves, and give up all her security. Although another character, Levin, is given just as much weight in the novel as Anna, and is in fact Tolstoy’s model of how we should live, and even though the novel ends with Levin, not Anna’s suicide, the vast majority of readers seem to pay him no mind. This, I would argue, is because Tolstoy does not present Levin as a man in emotional turmoil. It is not just in serious fiction that this is true. The favorite formula of romance novels is the good girl who falls in love with the bad boy, knowing he is somehow bad for her, but wanting to be with him anyway.

In perhaps the most obvious example, oddly enough from the formally most traditional of Dostoevsky’s four “great” novels, *Crime and Punishment*, readers are drawn to Raskolnikov because from the first page, indeed, from the first sentence, we sense his emotional dissonance --

from how he pauses on the street “as if in indecision” and from his conflicting feelings about how to pass by the door to his landlady’s apartment.

In the case of Raskolnikov, he is an axe murderer and rationally speaking we should feel repulsion towards him, especially since the narrator does not excuse him or offer any mitigating circumstances for why he carried out this brutal act. While we are shocked and horrified by Raskolnikov’s murders of the two women, we cannot help feeling sympathetic to him as well. In part this is because, as I mentioned above, we also see Raskolnikov’s deep love for his mother and sister, we see his generosity, his intelligence and his compassion. But where Dostoevsky breaks with traditional realism, and what creates emotional dissonance, is that he takes us so deeply into Raskolnikov’s mind and emotions. As Mikhail Bakhtin says, Dostoevsky “doesn’t build the hero from the words of others and from neutral definitions, he neither builds a character, a type nor a temperament, nor does he build an objective image of the hero, but precisely the word of the hero about himself and his world” (Bakhtin 1963, 62). This is what Dostoevsky calls “realism of a higher kind.” We see from within Raskolnikov’s mind that he too feels revulsion, even when he is contemplating what he is planning to do -- even as he cannot name it, but at the same time feels himself somehow compelled towards it. We see that like any decent human being he is horrified by the thought of murdering the old money lender, while he attempts to argue himself into it with his proto-Nietzschean ideas, and all the while seeing chance or fate somehow directing and aiding his actions. It is the intensity of this emotional dissonance that makes Raskolnikov one of the most compelling characters in literature.

I would argue that some amount of emotional dissonance is a characteristic of any successful work of fiction, but Dostoevsky and the writers of the last hundred years whom he influenced have sought a higher level of dissonance, and have been less likely to provide a

calming resolution than traditional realists. The parallel to music is apparent here. Without some preceding dissonance, the final tonic chord will not provide a satisfying resolution. But many composers of the 20th century have introduced more and more dissonance into music, so much, in fact, that the listener might lose any sense of what key the piece is in and how harmony can be regained. To some listeners, of course, these compositions are just “noise.”

Reading *Anna Karenina*, it is likely we might feel a conflict between our affection for Anna and our disapproval of her cheating on her husband, even if he isn't as dashing as Vronsky. These emotions clash within us, but all the while there is a feeling of order and inevitability about it. As much as these emotions conflict, we would not think of trying to argue Anna out of her affair or trying to comfort her after her husband has thrown her out and cut her off from her son. We can feel that a resolution is coming, and though it is in a decidedly minor key, it is a resolution.

Given Robinson's focus on traditional realists, this might explain her emphasis on the value of literature as providing us with a coping mechanism for dealing with our own strong emotions. Our sadness at Anna's death is mitigated by the sense of order about it, which is in some way comforting, reassuring. To look at another of Dostoevsky's novels, by contrast, in *Idiot*, when at the end Rogozhin has stabbed Nastasya Filippovna to death in his bed and Myshkin has sunk back into idiocy, there is no comparable sense of order, no comfort. There is no clue of how we are to cope with this horror. We are in a fog of uncertainty; we are at sea.

To return to the paradox of fiction, Cohen denies proposition (c) that We do not harbor beliefs in the existence and features of objects known to be fictional. He claims that we do. Robinson seems to avoid the paradox by claiming that we temporarily stop paying attention to the fact that the fictional situations and objects are not real and that our emotional responses to

fiction are based on non-cognitive and automatic appraisals. Perhaps the paradox of fiction remains unanswered in both cases.

I would revise proposition (b) to “Emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in properties and possibility of existence of those objects.” The belief in the possibility of existence that is brought about by belief in features of characters and situations is sufficient for us to have genuine emotions since it activates our Narrativizing. If the reader’s experience of tacit belief activated by an author’s techniques on the one hand and the reader’s attunement on the other, one’s imagination entertains an “as if” scenario proposed in the description like in real life through Narrativity. So, one is searching for the form to the content proposed and activates default assumptions just the way it is done in life. Regardless of whether the text being read is fiction or nonfiction, one is engaged in Narrativizing and thus has a potential for powerful and sophisticated emotions for fictional and nonfictional characters and situations. In some cases our emotional response could be even more powerful for imaginative “as if” descriptions of characters and situations than in reference to the real life people or situations.

When we are thinking about fiction, the relevant question to ask is not whether the characters exist, but whether we believe in them. Therefore, in the paradox of fiction, proposition (b) could be revised as follows: Emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in the features of those objects (where ‘beliefs in’ should not be read as shorthand for ‘beliefs in the existence of’). I agree with Robinson that we can have an emotional response to the content of our thoughts, even when we know that the thought is not true (i.e., her thought that her husband has died in a plane crash when he is in fact sleeping safely upstairs), but argue that this is only true when we can believe in the possibility of the thought. When we cannot (i.e., little green men), it will not trigger an emotional response. To have an emotional response to *Crime and*

Punishment, we need not believe that Raskolnikov exists, but we must have tacit belief in Raskolnikov. Tacit belief is a necessary condition for an emotional response to the content of a thought, though more examination will be required to determine whether it is also a sufficient condition.

Perhaps because she does not seem to require anything beyond a simple thought for emotions to be triggered, Robinson seems uninterested in what role the literary techniques employed by an author or even the quality of writing might play in contributing to our emotional response. But I find it hard to see how the question of why a reader has an emotional response to some works of fiction and not to others can be answered without looking at these issues. Perhaps a person who never responds emotionally to fiction could be said to have a “low emotional IQ,” but that charge is harder to make against a person who, like most people, experiences more emotions from some books, less from others, and perhaps none at all from still others.

In my attempt to resolve this, I looked at the techniques employed by Dostoevsky, in particular his use of ambiguous, unreliable and intrusive narration, and how those techniques force the reader to essentially create her own version of “what really happened.” Rather than relying on vivid -- lifelike -- descriptions to create belief in something observed, as in the traditional realism discussed by Robinson, Dostoevsky induces the reader to think about the characters and events the narrator describes in the same way she thinks about the people and events in the world around her. Unlike the techniques associated with traditional realism, which attempt to convince us to believe in the characters through vivid, detailed descriptions, this technique surreptitiously makes the reader believe in (without needing to believe in the existence of) the characters and events in the novel.

The reader's emotional response to this kind of technique is often emotional dissonance, the experience of simultaneous conflicting or contradictory emotions. One reason that emotional dissonance is so powerful when we feel it as a result of reading fiction is that we so often feel it in our own lives. Indeed, it is more common than what Kivy (Kivy 2006) calls "the garden variety of emotions," which seem to be what Robinson too often refers to in her affective appraisals. We feel sympathy for someone while at the same time feeling disapproval or even revulsion for what they have done. We like someone, though we feel our friendship for them is bad for me. We enjoy putting ourselves in situations where we are afraid. Most powerfully perhaps is love, which is often a state for which we can give no good reasons. It can happen that our love flares up strongest at moments when we most strongly feel some weakness or flaw in the character of the person we love. Our lives do not resemble traditional realist novels, with their sense of moral and formal order much as we might like them to.

In thinking about our own lives, we are faced with much the same problem we face when reading a novel by Dostoevsky. The characters -- the people around us -- are independent beings. They have secrets, they have thoughts and emotions that are not known to us with certainty. We are faced with ambiguity and possibility, and must actively reconstruct as we do reading Dostoevsky. As I have said, in fact the metaphor goes the other way. Reading Dostoevsky, we do what we have to do in our own lives.

This does not only apply to the past, however. As we go through our lives, projecting into the future as we decide on plans and how we will act, we must actively construct the future, considering possibilities and dealing with ambiguity.

Indeed, even in the present moment, in response to those who claim to live only in the now, I would argue that Narrativity is our only tool, because the present is no more certain than

the past or the future. The use of Narrativity in response to the scene of the possible slap in Dostoevsky's *Demons* is completely analogous to what we face at any moment. We have to wonder, how much of what is happening do we really see? What do we know of the people around us that would make them act the way they do? What does what they are doing tell us about them? What does what we think we know about them tell us about their actions?

Even in the present we must employ Narrativity to actively reconstruct the current moment, or we cannot possibly understand it. This might seem to take the temporal element out of Narrativity, but that is not the case. Rather, in thinking about the character of those around us, we must think of their stories, because character only exists through time. Even for someone we have just met, to start to understand them we have to project back, to essentially create a possible story -- to actively construct who we believe they are. This is because character, whether in fiction or in life, is defined by and through action, and action only exists in time.

Conclusion

Focusing on the descriptive narrative thesis as introduced by Galen Strawson in his essay “Against Narrativity,” I made my claim “For Narrativity” as a mental process of form finding and coherence seeking over time that is an inherent mental activity and essential for experience of one’s Self. I showed that considering Narrativity as viewing life as a narrative or a story -- focused on the product, rather than the process of Narrativizing -- is a category mistake, since the variable of time is taken out of the equation of our experience. As a consequence, I put forward a revised definition of Narrativity, as a process of Narrativizing, i.e., taking the temporal flow of experience and continually shaping and reshaping it, working towards something like a narrative, without ever necessarily achieving a completed form. This revision takes into account that we are temporal beings who have a natural tendency to gather and hold a manifold of our experiential content over time as it is in the process of change and transformation as our Selves.

The nature of this Form-finding in Narrativity, like the Kantian notion of apperception, is the power of our mind to hold a unity of any experiential content over time, whether it could be narrated in language as a literary work or could be held in our mental reality as a Humean bundle of perceptions. As Danto, Richer and Husserl have variously shown, because of the nature of language, just by using words we place ourselves in a temporal context. The use of verbs place us in actions that occur over time, and many verbs require a projection of ourselves into the future. Thus, even in discussing or thinking about simple, everyday activities we are proposing a possible narrative -- narrativizing. This level of Narrativity as process, which could be present in actions such as making coffee, Strawson accepts and acknowledges that he does engage in. But he claims these cases of Narrativity are trivial, and do not disprove his rejection of the

descriptive thesis of Narrativity. I have shown, however, that since they could constitute the first steps of larger projects and have non-trivial implications, Strawson's triviality claim falls into a slippery slope argument.

As I have argued that the Self is created through Narrativity, I have looked at challenges to whether the Self should be valued as an organizing principle of experience. Parfit raises the question of whether it is possible to think of experiences in an impersonal way. Such a view is problematic, since if there could be no experience if there is no consciousness to have them. Parfit uses various thought experiments in his attempt to make us give up our consideration of the Self as valuable and to suggest psychological continuity as a necessary condition for survival, but I countered with evidence from neuroscience and thought experiments of my own showing that Parfit's arguments do not hold. I claim that Narrativity is instead such a condition and it assumes a subject of experience-Self and is essential for creation of Self.

Returning to Strawson's objection that he feels himself to be "Episodic," existing in the "Now," and thus non-Narrative, I responded to several of his arguments to show that even this way of being, one's existence is still experienced in time. As William James points out, the "Now" could be experienced as specious present or a "saddle back," with an indeterminate duration that is constantly moving into the future and receding into the past.

Strawson invokes Proust and Musil, among other literary figures, as evidence of what it means to be an Episodic, so I examined both of them to see whether their so-called episodicity negated any Narrativity. In Proust, for example, involuntary memory for takes us into the experience of the past in the present moment, which he says makes him an "extra-temporal being." However that being is hardly a candidate for a non-Narrative person, since such an experience still has its duration and is posited in an "as if" realm of imagination, making us

Narrativize and relive our past Self. Musil's "Man Without Qualities," as I have shown, could not be qualified as non-Narrative, even if it were accepted that he is an Episodic character, because he lives in his world of possibilities, constantly Narrativizing and projecting into the future.

Going beyond the realm of experience, I also showed the role that Narrativity plays in our appreciation of literature, particularly in regard to the so-called Paradox of Fiction, or how it is that we are able to experience real emotions about characters and situations we know are not real. I showed that the garden variety of emotions is not sufficient to explain our cognitive response to literature and the affective appraisal theory argued by Jennifer Robinson leaves aside complicated cognitive responses, such as what I call emotional dissonance that is triggered by such writer's techniques as ambiguity, unreliable narration, polyphony and dialogic style of writing. To resolve the paradox of fiction, I think that emotion is the same in real life and in fiction as Robinson says, but the emotional trigger in reading literature is not perception, but cognition. Also, as Cohen proposes, emotions do not presuppose an explicit belief in the existence of objects known to be fictional. I think that the task of a writer is to create what I call a tacit belief in the properties of fictional characters and situations. The reader must have that tacit belief to respond emotionally to a content of a thought. That could be achieved when an author engages our Narrativity and thus compels us to mobilize our default assumptions about the possibility of a hypothetical situation, so the question of existence and not existence is offstage.

Faced with the ceaseless flow of experience over time, we have no choice but to attempt to make sense of it, to somehow create an order. This form-finding over time is Narrativizing, the mental process of Narrativity.

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