Keeping the Door Open:

Romantic Science and the Experience of Self

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CONTENTS

Thesis Abstract

The thesis positions three modern thinkers working in different areas of the human sciences - William James, Ludwig Binswanger and Oliver Sacks - within a framework of romantic science. Romantic science is a term which is developed explicitly in the work of Sacks and also illuminates the central concerns of James and Binswanger. As such, romantic science provides a useful framework in which to discuss conceptual changes in the medical humanities (a branch of the human sciences directed to patient care) since the late nineteenth century.

The introduction explores romantic science, firstly, as a modern tradition of research and inquiry in the human and natural sciences, beginning with the ferment of intellectual activity in late eighteenth-century Germany, and, secondly, as a genre of writing, which fuses discontinuous discourses in an attempt to compensate for the inadequacies of more conventional modes of scientific understanding.

My central theoretical interest is to trace significant shifts in the terminology of 'the self' in modern manifestations of romantic science. Each of the three thinkers considered in the thesis is both theorist and practitioner (Binswanger was and Sacks is a professional physician and James consulted with private patients), which makes for a peculiar blend of theory directed towards practical ends. Theoretical issues of the self implicate a range of intersubjective problems concerning therapeutic practice. As such, the thesis is also concerned centrally with theories of reading which help to activate the self.

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I wish also to thank my family for their support and Joanna for her friendship.

[H]is inclination toward the under-dog, and his insistence on keeping the door open for every species of human experiment, sometimes brought James into alliance with causes which his social set looked on with disfavor...he was unwilling to treat the subject as a closed question.

George Herbert Palmer on William James (1930)

Despite the fact that I do not know you or can barely see you while addressing myself to you, and that you hardly know me, what I am saying is, as of a moment ago, reaching you - regardless of the trajectories and translations of signs that we address to each other in this twilight. What I have been saying comes at you, to encounter and make contact with you. Up to a certain point it becomes intelligible to you.

Jacques Derrida, 'My Chances/*Mes Chances*' (1984)

Other people put their faces on, one after the other, with uncanny rapidity and wear them out.

Ranier Maria Rilke, <u>The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge</u> (1910)

Introduction

(1) The Possibilities of Romantic Science

In her introduction to a valuable collection of essays entitled <u>Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930</u>, Dorothy Ross makes explicit a link between "the late-nineteenth-century cognitive move toward subjectivity and its aesthetic ramifications" (Ross 1994: 2). Most critics of modernism tend to deal primarily with cultural production in the early years of the twentieth century, drawing from the natural and human sciences just enough theoretical material by which they can account for, and do justice to, the conceptual developments within the field of aesthetic modernism. By way of contrast, the influence of the psychological sciences upon European and American aesthetic modernism has been traced by, for example, H. Stuart Hughes, Clive Bush and Judith Ryan. An exploration of the "move toward subjectivity" has enabled such critics to productively explore the influence of the natural and human sciences upon art in the early years of the twentieth century. Ross's collection exemplifies and extends this mode of study: instead of mapping science onto art as is usually the practice, these essays explore points of aesthetic convergence from the perspective of the human sciences. As I will argue in this thesis, the different disciplines are shown to provide a strong dialogic potential through a radical reappraisal of "the subjectivity of perception and cognition, a subjectivity that calls into question the unity of the observing subject as well as its relationship with the outside world" (Ross 1994: 6).

Within the theory and practice of the human sciences, aesthetic modes of understanding are important in the work of such early twentieth-century luminaries as William James, Ernst Mach, Henri Bergson, Carl Jung and Martin Heidegger. In a study of these thinkers it becomes possible for the critic to erase "the sharp separation between science and art that existed under the aegis of logical positivism and aesthetic modernism in the 1950s and turns both science and art into interpretive languages" (Ross 1994: 11). This dichotomy has an important precedent in Kant's argument that the transition into modernity necessitates the separation of three distinct spheres of substantive reason: the cognitive-instrumental, the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive. By continuing to argue from within a Kantian framework, mid-century writers in Britain such as Alfred North Whitehead, Jacob Bronowski, C. P. Snow and Aldous Huxley each contributed to this debate in their consideration of the increasing specialization of the sciences against the broader understanding of the arts and humanities.

The most famous example of such a distinction is to be found in C. P. Snow's Rede Lecture of 1958, entitled 'Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution', in which the English writer considers that each "culture" tends to be intolerant of the other and inclined to caricature the opposition. He argues that whilst literary "intellectuals" see a blind faith in scientific progress, "physical scientists" discern a total "lacking in foresight" amongst those whom they describe as "anti-intellectuals" committed only to the "existential moment" (Snow 1965: 5). Although primarily speaking of the British condition, Snow argues that such a chasm is a "problem for the entire West" (2). He bemoans the fact that the divide is primarily the result of ignorance, only to be rectified

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through a softening of the boundaries between the disciplines and also through educational reform.

A number of critical articles followed the reception of Snow's lecture, focusing particularly on his tendency to make use of conceptual shorthand and crude categories. Clearly, his attempts to qualify the schematic nature of "two cultures" are often unsatisfactory, but his lecture does succeed in highlighting two important processes in Western history which, as technological consequences of the Enlightenment, can be seen to have contributed to the widening of the gulf: the industrial and the applied scientific revolutions. The principle of utility, which establishes the nineteenth-century paradigm of applied science, tends to preclude any practice which deviates from the directives of precision and efficiency. As an example of what Thomas Kuhn has called "normal science", this model helps to provide the "foundation" for the study of an objective and empirically verifiable world (Kuhn 1970: 10). In short, because it claims to tell us verifiable truths about the world, to deploy the phrase of the hermeneutician Hans-Georg Gadamer, with the widespread collapse of religious frameworks in the West normal science has become "the last court of appeal and sole bearer of truth" (Wachterhauser 1994: 34).

By way of contrast, the strain of philosophy common to much of the work of Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, William James and Martin Heidegger focuses upon phenomenological experiences which are unique to the individual mind. Although a variety of intentional experiences - those which Brentano claims implicate both the perceiving subject and the object of thought - may prove to be empirically useful for the

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human sciences, they are largely ignored by the scientist intent on paring down data to what is conceived to be verifiable. Indeed, the eminent American philosopher Daniel Dennett argues in his provocative book <u>Consciousness Explained</u> (1991), firstly, that phenomenology is purely descriptive and thereby lacks any method which may be of use to explanatory science, and, secondly, in its mode of "intimate acquaintance" (Dennett 1992: 65) with the first-person, it is wholly inaccessible to a rigorous methodology and the objective measurements of scientific instruments. However, working within converging areas of the natural and human sciences, the three figures whose work I explore in this thesis (William James, Ludwig Binswanger and Oliver Sacks) reveal the possibilities, as well as the difficulties, of drawing upon phenomenological modes of inquiry to broaden the range and develop the focus of their study.

Whilst criticism that science neglects subjectivity may be valid, practitioners of micro- and sub-atomic sciences examine a field of data which is detectable only beyond the perceptual range of human sensory apparatus. Subjectivity may not be so much of an issue here; but, as H. Stuart Hughes indicates, the legacy of conceptual shifts in the human sciences in the late nineteenth century emphasizes the problems inherent in discussing the study of "human behaviour in terms of analogies drawn from natural science" (Hughes 1961: 37). Instead, the branches of science with which this thesis deals indicate the crucial importance of subjective analysis. Although deduction (the process of reasoning from *a priori* premises), central to the domains of symbolic logic and pure mathematics, is independent of description and qualification, it is possible to conceive of an overlapping territory between inductive science (moving from the collation of empirical data to reasoned conclusions) and expressive art, for they are both involved in

interpretation. Such an interpretive overlap is most readily evident in modes of inquiry which take seriously problems of intersubjectivity and communicative understanding (*Verstehen*).

Dorothy Ross goes on to stress that "despite the different discourses that have emerged around cognitive modernism, aesthetic modernism, and positivist science, they are linked in a common move toward human subjectivity and a common investment in the culture of modernity" (Ross 1994: 15). She goes on to claim that "the categories of 'aesthetic modernism' or 'cognitive modernism'" prove inadequate "if we assume that they are things-in-themselves" (15). In this thesis I will develop the argument that, with the growth and proliferation of human sciences in this century, and particularly in the discourse of the medical humanities (those applied human sciences which orient themselves towards concerns of patient care and, therefore, are primarily interested in the subjectivity of the patient: for example, clinical psychology, psychoanalysis and neuropsychology), dual and multiple modes of understanding can be productive in two important ways: firstly, they help to redefine specific areas of study; and, secondly, by linking rigorous study of human behaviour to the transformative power of aesthetic creation, they encourage the development of viable therapeutic techniques. Accordingly, although the thesis will focus on modes of medical writing, I also wish to contribute to the continuing debate over the shifting nature and ongoing implications of modernism. In particularly, I will focus on the manner in which my three central figures explore what Ewa Ziarek has called "the intense confrontation between the claims of alterity and the claims of rationality" in modern aesthetics (Ziarek 1996: 8).

C. P. Snow's argument assumes that the split between the "two cultures" is valid, in so much that they are two independent modes of study and, in many ways, opposing spheres of discursive activity. But Snow's inquiry lacks adequate historical evidence to support this account. The Platonic dichotomy between philosophy (or reason) as a discourse of truth opposed to fictive art is an easy argument to deploy when a critic wishes to denigrate art. Throughout modern history a number of literary critics - from Philip Sidney and Percy Bysshe Shelley to M. H. Abrams - have shown the vapidity of such an argument. Indeed, from a late eighteenth-century romantic perspective, the artist is seen to champion an expressive personal truth which is excluded from those scientific practices applied solely to discerning causal and natural laws. Post-romantic art is thus characterized by "things modified by the passions and imagination of the perceiver", in opposition to "the unemotional and objective description characteristic of physical science" (Abrams 1953: 299). If natural science attempts to understand the world from an Archimedean point of reference, then romantic art focuses on the primacy and irreducibility of the perceiving, feeling and imagining subject. In response to this, the challenge laid down for romantic scientists is to discover both a method and an object (or subject) of inquiry which can incorporate aesthetic interpretation, rather than dismissing it as the epiphenomenon of humans conceived as fundamentally material creatures.

Abrams goes on to argue that the distinction between poetry (as a metonym for art) and science should only be seen as a "logical device" for "isolating and defining the nature of poetic discourse", but it has often tended to crystallize and reify in a manner which has caused a "combative opposition" (299). This point indicates another danger with Snow's approach: in the binary formulation of his argument he tends to lose sight of internal

differences in each sphere of activity, the mapping of which may elicit important connections. Indeed, the debate throws into confusion generic differences between distinct areas of research and blurs the lines between specific fields of study. It is the legacy of romantic science to deny neither the objective nor the subjective approaches to the study of the human and the natural worlds; its practitioners, through a series of empirical and imaginative developments, attempt to work within a paradigm which links particular elements in each of the fields. However, romantic science should not be seen to be based on the consensual model which Kuhn describes; rather, it encompasses a number of theoretical and practical possibilities which complement existing modes of scientific research.

Romantic science is not a project which tries to fuse independent spheres of thought and inquiry for its own sake; traditionally, philosophies of holism tend to generalize from a universalist point of view and thereby ignore the specific and the contingent. Instead, if the truth claims of scientific thought are seen as no more (or no less) valid than the verisimilitude of aesthetic discourse, it becomes possible to productively blend disparate modes of discourse in an attempt, in the words of the American 'post-Philosopher' Richard Rorty, to strategically redescribe the field of inquiry. This act of hybridization would enable the discourse of romantic science to "be filed alongside all the others, one more vocabulary, one more set of metaphors which he thinks have a chance of being used" (Rorty 1989: 39). As Rorty comments in a discussion of the work of the American philosopher of language Donald Davidson,

whereas the metaphorical looks irrelevant to...positivists, the literal looks irrelevant to Romantics. For the former think that the point of language is to represent a hidden reality which lies outside us, and the latter thinks its purpose is to express a hidden reality which lies within us (19).

This does not mean the romantic scientist simply elides such perspectival differences, but attempts to compensate for the inadequacies in each point of view by juxtaposing a series of (apparently) irreconcilable perspectives through a layering of discourse. Although rarely a wildly utopian project, romantic science is projected through a language of idealism which lends the theoretical writing an emancipatory aim (to redescribe the terms of selfhood in therapeutic or pragmatic ways) to which the realities of experience do not always square up. However, despite the evident difficulties of carrying through the aims of romantic science in practical situations, when faced with inadequate alternatives, the three thinkers discussed here - James, Binswanger and Sacks - each prefer to work through a problematic, but potentially liberating, mode of writing.

(2) Theories of Selfhood and Consciousness

Complementing my initial interest in romantic science as a tradition of writing, the thesis is also stimulated by two contemporary trends in current scholarship: first, a renewed interest in theories of selfhood in theoretical discourse; and, second, the study of consciousness as the prevalent focus for (dominantly American) cognitive philosophers and neuroscientists. Because each trend has ongoing significance for the conceptual presuppositions of my argument I will deal with each in turn.

(i)

During the twentieth century subject-centred notions of humanism have been strongly challenged by language-based philosophy and the emergence of critical theory as an academic field. Most significantly, the early-century promise of phenomenologists like Brentano and Husserl to accurately describe the contents of consciousness has been severely attacked. As well as presenting the evident problems of translating thoughts into language, the very existence of non-linguistic thoughts has been thoroughly questioned by poststructuralist theorists. In literary theory, positing an author's consciousness to establish unitary or stable meaning and, thereby, guarantee that the intentions of the author are unproblematically conveyed through the transparent words of a text (evident in the phenomenologically influenced theory of, for example, the French critic Georges Poulet), has been widely discredited in favour of a model of language which can be seen to generate a multiplicity of possible meanings, depending from which perspective the reader engages with the text (or the ways in which the text incorporates the reader).

This has important consequences not just for literary criticism but also for intersubjective understanding, which for the human sciences is of central concern. The implications of reading a text (literary or otherwise) should also concern the inquirer who attempts to read the behaviour and expressions of another human being. As Poulet claims, "critical consciousness relies, by definition, on the thinking of 'another'; it finds its nourishment and its substance only therein" (Poulet 1972: 46). The implication here is that if the inquirer is sensitive to the different mind-set of the other (as Poulet says, "the significance of the *cogito*"), then such intersubjective inquiry will form "an act of self-discovery" (47).

However, as poststructuralist theory asserts, consciousness cannot be seen simply as a transparent and coherent container of words and meanings; verbal and behavioural languages are also understood as textually unstable and contradictory as written discourses. Paul Ricoeur is one such theorist who takes seriously "the existence of an opaque subjectivity which expresses itself through the detour of countless mediations - signs, symbols, texts and human praxis itself" (Kearney 1984: 32). Ricoeur's use of "detour" here may suggest there is a manner in which to bypass language; but, it actually reveals an important departure from the early romantic understanding of language as mid-world (*Zwischenwelt*), through which God's book of nature could be read. With the respective attacks of Darwinism and poststructuralism on design and authority, the necessity of taking the textual "detour" implies there is no originary or transparent meaning (or set of meanings) to be discovered through language.

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Such opacity certainly amplifies the difficulties of intersubjective communication, but may also lead towards a positing of the radical Otherness of other beings. In reaction to Poulet's work, the American literary critic J. Hillis Miller claims:

> another mind is so alien, so impenetrable that it is never possible...to lift the veil which hides the other from me. This means I can never confront the other person as an immediate presence, only encounter indirect signs and traces of his passage (Miller 1970: 221).

What seems to be a statement about the care and sensitivity needed to read another person (and also to read the process of reading), can, in the hands of sceptics, provide fuel for the radical questioning of the presence of a world of objects and of other beings who inhabit it. Although such a sceptical position is obviously untenable for practitioners dedicated to medical care, it must be taken seriously for the theorist of the human sciences. Later in the introduction I will discuss the American philosopher Stanley Cavell's refutation of scepticism; but, in the meantime, it is important to emphasize the theoretical difficulties which face a hermeneutics of human behaviour.

If one takes seriously Fredric Jameson's analysis of the erosion of the "depth model" as a metaphor for establishing self-identity (the "emotional ground tone" of "intensities" serving to replace the "hermeneutic model of inside and outside"), then so too must one address the poststructuralist attack upon truth, and self as the container of that truth, as metaphysical and uncritical terms (Jameson 1991: 6, 12). In his critique of the loss of depth model, Jameson states that "what replaces...depth models is for the most part a conception of practices, discourses, and textual play", or, in other words, "depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces" (12). A modernist concern for the crisis of

selfhood has here been conceptually displaced by a permanent schizophrenic condition ("as a breakdown of the signifying chain" [26]) or as a "simulacrum" (for which the original has been lost or had never existed as such [6]). Reading the traces of selfhood in such a conceptual territory is not only a treacherous activity but, seemingly, impossible, any strategic reading forever destabilising itself. From this perspective, the text of self can be redescribed not so much as an empty shell but as a corpse from which creative life cannot issue.

Jameson takes Jean Baudrillard to be the critic who best epitomizes the recent theoretical dismantling of self - more explicitly, the embodied self - as a meaningful metaphor (although Jameson is critical of this trend). A powerful example of this is to be found in Baudrillard's short book, The Ecstacy of Communication (1987). Here, the French theorist claims that "the body as a stage, the landscape as a stage, and time as a stage are slowly disappearing" (Baudrillard 1987: 19). Furthermore,

> the religious, metaphysical or philosophical definition of being has given way to an operational definition in terms of the genetic code (DNA) and cerebral organization (the informational code and billions of neurons). We are in a system where there is no more soul, no more metaphor of the body - the fable of the unconscious itself has lost most of its resonance. No narrative can come to metaphorize our presence; no transcendence can play a role in our definition; our being is exhausting itself in molecular linkings and neuronic convolutions (50-51).

If the metaphors of "body" and "soul" have lost their potency to describe what remains of selfhood for Baudrillard, then "there are no more individuals, but only potential mutants" (51). Baudrillard's vision of mutation allows no possibility of recouping the self from a condition of exile, in which state one could maintain "a pathetic, dramatic, critical,

aesthetic distance" (50): that is to say, one could still deal in terms of selfhood as alienated, fugitive or diminished. Instead of the modernist trope of exile, Baudrillard deploys the term "deterritorialization" as a "figure of metastasis", by which he means "a deprivation of meaning and territory, [or] lobotomy of the body" (50). In Baudrillard's rhetoric the "figure of metastasis" works on two levels: firstly, as a figure of permanent transformation from depth to surface, or from whole to fragment (from which point neither depth nor whole can be reconstructed); and, secondly, and more powerfully, as an expression of the interminable spreading of disease, a malignant cancer which rends the self and for which there is no treatment.

Such ideas may appear beguiling but they only undermine one version of the self, that conceived of as metaphysical presence or as a transcendent. If, to deploy Rorty's terminology, one utilizes the fiction of selfhood as a heuristic device - given specific content depending in which context it is posited or for what purpose it is projected - then the trope of internal disorder can be recouped as provisional agency, where disorder represents the active mutation of what has been understood to be permanent or essential characteristics. Especially in medical cases when the metaphors of disease are literalized (the cancer patient or the schizophrenic) then such a constructed notion of selfhood is extremely limited, but serves an important role in a set of practices which take patient care as their precondition. The reading of the patient, or, even better in terms of therapy, the patient's reading of themselves (where reading is conceived as an active and creative process, despite being finally incomplete and fragmentary) provides the potential for such conceptual redescription in an environment of lived experience.

Instead of recouping the self as a transcendent marker of subjectivity, the embodied self has recently been championed as a viable heuristic construct which has served to counter the anti-humanistic theoretical trends in the 1970s. Despite the non-foundational moves made by notable contemporary theorists (characterized by the writing of Rorty), the self has reemerged as the locus of experience in various fields of theory: in the very different psychoanalytic writings of Roy Schafer and Slavoj Žižek, in the philosophy of Stanley Cavell and in the narrative hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. Instead of forming a foundation for theory, the self has come to be seen as firmly embedded in discourse. To appropriate Jacques Lacan's well-known claim: the self is understood to be spoken in discourse rather than the self being the sovereign agent of enunciation. In this respect, most current theories of self-construction also consider the linguistic and narrative parameters of the self.

The return to theories of the self is foreshadowed in the work of Michel Foucault, who, after eschewing the individual as the focus of attention in The Birth of a Clinic (1963) and The Order of Things (1966), reestablishes the self as a theoretical site in his three-volume The History of Sexuality (1976-84) and his seminar on Technologies of the Self (1982). A scathing criticism of the tradition of phenomenology emerges in his writings of the 1960s, in which he claims it is merely an outgrowth of humanism seen as uncritically centring a meaningful universe around the (undeconstructed) figure of man. When viewed within the framework of the medical humanities, Foucault's image of the erasure of man - "a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea" (Foucault 1986: 387) - creates severe theoretical difficulties for the basic tenets of patient care. However, as Martin Heidegger discusses in his 'Letter on Humanism' (1947), the reevaluation of a

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humanistic tradition does not necessarily entail the rejection of humane values, or, by implication, the abandoning of medical ethics. Romantic science is committed to the maintenance of humane values and attempts to redescribe selfhood in terms which undercut Foucault's early reading of subjectivity as subjugation. As such, romantic science seeks to be both an understanding and a tolerant science.

(ii)

By way of contrast to the tenor of such theoretical debates, but closely parallelling this renewed interest in selfhood, consciousness has become the most hotly contested concept in analytic philosophy in recent years, especially in America (as can be sensed by the magnitude of the second 'Towards a Science of Consciousness' conference, 'Tucson II', held in Tucson, Arizona in April 1996). Such thinkers as Daniel Dennett, John Searle, Thomas Nagel, Patricia and Paul Churchland, Roger Penrose and Francis Crick have all turned to redefine, or, in the case of Dennett, reject consciousness as the foundation of human cognitive activity. The general argument turns on a fairly traditional conflict between behaviourists (epitomized by Dennett and the Churchlands), who treat everything non-empirical as, at best, an epiphenomenon of brain activity and, at worst, a false manner by which to understand cognition, and those thinkers (for example, Searle and Nagel) who are sensitive to the irreducible areas of subjective experience which behaviourism does not address.

Dennett claims in one of the liveliest books to be published in this area, <u>Consciousness Explained</u>, that whilst complex mental experiences cannot be reduced easily to a

chemico-physical mode of description, by following a scientific mode of interrogation one can simultaneously dispel the mystery surrounding the dualist claim for the ineffability of mind and set out an objective, third-person explanation of cognition. Dennett rejects the phenomenological investigation of mind for being too personal (it implies an introspective and autobiographical inquiry is really the only viable one); it is "invulnerable to correction" and, therefore, inaccessible to materialistic science (Dennett 1991: 67). For him there are no "intrinsic qualities" of experience (65) and no self, or "Central Meaner" (understood as a "Cartesian theatre" [228]), who imbues these qualities with language. He goes on to claim that behaviourism can offer a "neutral" answer to the problem of verification which phenomenology poses, because it seeks an "intersubjectively verifiable method" of analysis by which it can interpret "vocal sounds...that are *apparently* amenable to a linguistic or semantic analysis" (74). Dennett's "methodological assumption that there is a text to be uncovered" takes the form of an "intentional stance" (76), which he adopts towards the subject of the utterances and by which he understands the speaker to be an agent capable of rationality. He goes on to claim that the intentional stance explains why intersubjective exploration can uncover knowledge about the world and the inhabitants of that world, while it also circumvents the problems posed by retaining a conventional model of consciousness.

In direct opposition to Dennett, in The Rediscovery of Mind (1992) John Searle describes a form of biological monism (what he calls "biological naturalism") as a physico-mental continuum which accounts for both a private subjective perspective and bodily sensations (Searle 1992: 1). He bases his theory upon the assertion that "mental phenomena are caused by neurophysiological processes in the brain and are themselves features of the

brain" (1). Because they emerge from brain processes these "special features", such as "consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity, [and] mental causation" (2), cannot be reduced to them (for example, like liquidity is a "higher-level emergent property of H₂O molecules" under certain conditions [14]). Searle claims that consciousness is physical at root; it is a feature of the brain, but also, and crucially, in its"first-person ontology" (17), it is also a "higher-level" mental phenomena.

In a number of articles and, most notably, in a recent exchange in The New York Review of Books (November 1995), Searle claims that Dennett's eliminative account cannot do justice to those special features of the brain which he enumerates, whereas Dennett accuses Searle of a vestigial dualism. Whether either thinker has 'solved' the problem of consciousness is not the real issue here; rather, this latest manifestation of philosophical rivalry displays a continuity with the traditional philosophical split between monism (materialism or idealism) and dualism. Monism stresses the triumph of matter over mind (or vice versa), whereas dualism retains both within the philosophical frame, but leaves itself very vulnerable to criticism from either of the other positions.[1] In short, both Searle's and Dennett's theories are open to criticism: Searle's biological monism disguises a form of dualism and Dennett's materialistic behaviourism begs certain questions which rival models of consciousness address.

I now wish to situate my primary focus within these familiar areas of contention: how and in what ways the self - the conscious self *and* the embodied self - has endured and

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[1] Although the implication here is that a dualistic account of mind and matter is the only alternative position to materialism and behaviourism, as I will discuss later, dualism of description (rather than dualism of substance) is not necessarily incommensurable with philosophical monism.

developed as a theoretical construct within the medical humanities in the modern period. A variant of each discipline (psychology, psychoanalysis and neuropsychology) is represented by each of my chosen writers: James, although professionally a physiologist and later a philosopher, is here characterized as a psychologist who also shares an interest in spirituality and religion as meaningful human concerns; Binswanger, although an admirer of certain aspects of psychoanalysis, seeks a broader anthropological study which reestablishes the self (or Dasein) at the centre of analytic discourse; and Sacks outlines a vision of a double science, in which neurology is harnessed to psychology in order that he might focus on how neurological disorders appear from the patient's point of view. None of these thinkers finally solves any of the philosophical problems concerning ideas of consciousness and selfhood, but they do make significant attempts to redefine the terms of the debate to their own positive ends.

Within the context of the medical humanities and in order to position my discussion of selfhood within Foucault's description of the modern episteme (which he claims to stretch roughly from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century and which is characterized by the problem of subjectivity), I trace a discourse of romantic science through the work of my three thinkers. I understand romantic science to be both a tradition and a genre of writing. Beginning with the ferment of experimental and theoretical activity in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, romantic science historically opens a field of investigation in the human and the natural sciences, in which systematic observation is yoked to an interest in the non-behaviouristic aspects of human consciousness, such as imagination and spirit. I discuss at length how romantic science, as a self-conscious movement, was short-lived, becoming largely discredited by the

growth of a strictly empirical science in nineteenth-century Europe. However, I also argue that, as a genre of writing, romantic science encompasses theories of the self, aesthetic creativity (especially with reference to therapy) and philosophical anthropology, providing an unrealized potential which is richly mined by my three thinkers. In each one's thought there is a strong and discernable connection with German romanticism, but within the context of modernity they all display theoretical and cultural differences from the early Germanic models.

The reasons for my choosing James, Binswanger and Sacks as my writers are threefold. Firstly, each thinker is both theorist and practitioner (Binswanger was and Sacks is a professional physician and James consulted with private patients at his home), which makes for a blend of theory directed towards the practical ends of patient care. Each of these dimensions acts as a check on the other: theory counters technique emphasized in and for itself, and technique ensures that theoretical problems are directed towards practical ends. Secondly, the work of each is characteristic of the discursive manifold of romantic science within their own distinctive field of the medical humanities. They focus centrally on selfhood as the vehicle for understanding and expression and they concern themselves with the problems of dualism and metaphysics which are implied therein. Thirdly, although I will indicate historical and generic continuities between the three, I will also discuss their personal projects and the specific terminology which they deploy to strategically redescribe selfhood.

(3) The Genre and Genealogy of Romantic Science

Romantic science is an oxymoronic term which, whilst inscribing its object of study within philosophical parameters, directs my attention closely towards sites of theoretical tension in the work of the three thinkers. The purpose of this section is to lay the ground for my later studies of the thinkers by providing a brief overview of romantic science in Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century, in order to link romantic concerns with contemporary theories of self. Because Oliver Sacks, in his appropriation of the term "Romantic Science" from the Russian neuropsychologist Alexander Luria, is the only one of my writers to deploy the label explicitly, I will use him initially as a way of foregrounding the central concerns of the thesis.

Romantic science, firstly, characterizes a mode of writing which cannot easily be classified with reference to one or other available generic categories and, secondly, describes a particular approach for dealing with the complex theoretical problems which arise within the human sciences. As I will demonstrate, Sacks and Luria are sympathetic to both of these goals of romantic science, particularly in the field of neurology. However, my general comments below are also applicable to the aims and interests of James and Binswanger, whereas I have reserved my more detailed commentary on Sacks for a later chapter.

For the purposes of the thesis, a genre is understood to be a type of writing, categorized in respect to the specific characteristics or features which it displays, which emerges at a particular historical moment. Romantic science is a particularly heterogenous form of

discourse which combines inquiries into selfhood (encompassing forms of inductive science and philosophical anthropology) with aesthetic, phenomenological and behavioural approaches to its subject of study. As Stanley Cavell indicates, the inherent problem with describing a "full-blown" genre is that it limits the evolution of a genre to simply recombining the discursive elements already established (Cavell 1981: 28). It is important to note that there is no such thing as a "full-blown" form of romantic science for it does not exist in any one particular discipline of study. Cavell attests that "late members can 'add' something to the genre because there is...nothing one is tempted to call *the* features of a genre which all its members have in common" (28). Accordingly, there is a form of internal coherence to the genre of romantic science, as each subsequent writer reinterprets the terms of the discourse within his specialist field of study. For Cavell, "membership in the genre requires that if an instance (apparently) lacks a given feature, it must compensate for it, for example, by showing a further feature 'instead of' the one it lacks" (29). Furthermore, "the new feature introduced by the new member will, in turn, contribute to a description of the genre as a whole" (29).

From this perspective, romantic science should be seen as a dynamic genre which recombines features (and adds to them) depending on which context it is used. It closely resembles Raymond Williams's flexible historical model which posits diachronic development as passing through a series of emergent, dominant and residual transitions. Within a genre of romantic science each emergent discourse (in which "new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences, are continually being created" [Williams 1973: 41]) would be a new dominant, but within a different field of application. For example, the psychoanalytic discourse which is evident in James and

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Sacks respectively in emergent and residual forms (at least in terms of the history of psychoanalysis) is evident as a dominant feature in Binswanger's writing (although he departs from the tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis in important ways). In short, it is important to stress that there is no one form of writing which epitomizes romantic science; rather, it describes an open discursive field which enables thinkers to deploy a combination of fragmented discourses to attend to a particular set of theoretical problems.

Sacks diverges from classical neurology (understood both as a genre of writing and as a field of inquiry) because he claims it does not deal with the subjective states of mind which result from neuronal firings. Defined as a physical science which examines the matter of the brain and nervous system, neurology uses language only as it needs to linguistically represent anatomical detail. The use of precise referential language renders the blurred margins of hermeneutics negligible. By way of contrast, in his development of neuropsychology, Sacks stresses the critical and interpretive role of all discourse. Furthermore, when subjectivity becomes an issue, both the subjectivity of the inquirer and the subject of inquiry, referential language loses its precision and neurology, in an attempt to deal with non-material aspects, becomes descriptive. As Luria indicates in his autobiography, it is not impossible for neurological science to humanize itself by broadening its field of study in order to incorporate and focus attention on the disorderly experiences of patients. Just as mental states are intentional, they are always mental states of someone displaying an awareness of, and a relationship with, the world. By attending closely to the personal experiences of patients, especially those suffering from neurological disorders, the inquirer may glean more information than can be gathered from a neurological model designed *in vacuo*. Indeed, as Cavell makes explicit in his

discussion of genre, "an interest in an object is to take an interest in one's experience of the object" (Cavell 1981: 7). That is to say, the subjective experiences which neurology ignores become a central area of exploration for Sacks.[2]

The collation and description of subjective experiences, in itself an extremely complicated task, is of paramount importance for a rigorous inquiry into disorders which neurology is unable to fully explain. Luria rejects methods which rely crucially on the measurement of instruments, for he sees the importance of an inquiring, critical and interpreting mind:

> I am inclined to reject strongly an approach in which these auxiliary aids become the central method and in which their role as servant to clinical thought is reversed so that clinical reasoning follows instrumental data as a slave follows its master (Luria 1977: 177).

The sympathies of Luria and Sacks lie firmly on the phenomenological fork of the divide. Sacks discerns a separation between "the apparent poverty of scientific formulation and the manifest richness of phenomenal experience" (Sacks 1990a: 44). The "poverty" of science is the result of the methodological need to bracket, reduce or eliminate the "richness" of lived experience. In this view, any truth (a valid assertion about how the brain functions) elicited from a reductive method is always a narrow or partial one, because it fails to recognize experiences which do not have immediate implications for a single mode of inquiry. Behaviourism, the science which Dennett practices and

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[2] Like Sacks, James and Binswanger both react to forms of scientific inquiry which they claim do not do full justice to the manifold of experience: James reacts to late nineteenth-century behaviourism which deals more with physiology than psychology and Binswanger departs from Freudian psychoanalysis because he claims it to undervalue the 'spiritual' aspects of consciousness.

promotes, is treated cautiously by Sacks because he sees it to be limited in its dismissal of private mental states.

As I have previously commented, the debate is two-sided. Luria is quick to indicate that romantic science pursued to its extreme lacks logic and rigour and thereby prevents the practitioner from reaching "firm formulations" (Luria 1977: 175). He goes on to comment that "sometimes logical step-by-step analysis escapes romantic scholars, and on occasion, they let artistic preferences and intuitions take over. Frequently their descriptions not only precede explanation but replace it" (175). Luria's ideal is to discover a methodological balance, if not a synthesis, where observation encourages a causal explanation of phenomena without diminishing the importance of describing the "manifold richness" of phenomenology (178). Within reason, the greater the number of perspectives, he argues, the more likely is the possibility of understanding. Sacks also endorses this perspectival method, although, as I discuss later, critics have argued that his aims (typical of the other romantic scientists) are never fully realized in his texts or, by extension, in patient care. I will return to this issue; but, here, I explore the ramifications of the term romantic science, both in its specific historical context and its use as a signifying term which shifts across a variety of possible signifieds.

The initial paragraph of a 1990 review article by Sacks, entitled 'Neurology and the Soul', is broken by a quotation from the first part of Goethe's Faust (1808), in which the German poet celebrates the "colors of life" in contrast to the drab greyness of theory (Sacks 1990a: 44). This quotation directly echoes one of Luria's citations (Luria 1977: 174) and emphatically associates modern romantic science with the forms of inquiry which

flourished in Germany between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Sacks's article, both a review of his previous publications and an outline of other thinkers who broadly share his sympathies (the American neuroscientist Gerald Edelman and the medical theorist Israel Rosenfield), productively frames a sketch of romanticism. It is important not to lose sight of the relevance of Sacks (and, by implication, my other two thinkers) to contemporary critical debate by too easily conflating his position with that of early romanticism. In order to check this impulse, I will only sketch in the details which illuminate marked similarities and philosophical resonances. As a result, the complicated genealogy of romanticism is incompletely rendered.

In an essay on 'Romanticism in Germany', Dietrich von Engelhardt indicates that, unlike the other European countries where romanticism was prevalent, one is able in German culture to "speak of Romantic science and medicine side by side with literature and the other arts" (Engelhardt 1988: 111). Here science refers to "a metaphysical form of scientific research" which is speculative but harnessed to an empirical approach to natural phenomena. Although many of the romantic scientists were influenced by the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and Hegel, which represented an attempt "to construct all natural sciences from *a priori* speculation" (Snelders 1970: 195), they were committed to the practical application of speculative knowledge. There is no one essential form of romantic science, partly because many branches of the natural sciences were represented (amongst them, Justus Liebig in chemistry, Alexander von Humboldt in universal science, Johann Ritter and the Dane Hans Oersted in physics, Henrik Steffens in geology and Carl Carus and Gotthilf Schubert in medicine) and partly because no practitioner claimed his own discipline was categorically distinct from the others. As Alfred North

Whitehead indicates, it is important to note that "all the sciences dealing with life were still in an elementary observational stage, in which classification and direct description were dominant" (Whitehead 1929: 79). Rather than mutually "combative" (79), all of the natural sciences were seen to be interconnected and subjected to a unitary metaphysics of nature.

The *Naturphilosophen* discerned a polar "interaction between mind and matter", operating under the control of "antagonistic forces of attraction and repulsion" (Snelders 1970: 195), and, following Kant, they countered materialist philosophy by emphasizing the importance of subjectivity. The static model of Newtonian mechanics[3] was challenged in an attempt to understand the natural world as a dynamic process, which resulted from man's sensual relationship in the world and was then applied to the "mysteries of [his] own earth" (194). Accordingly, the spatial and atomistic metaphors of the French materialist La Mettrie in L'Homme machine (1747) were replaced by organic and vitalistic descriptions of nature and of the forces which hold the universe together, "as one great organism in which individual bodies are only representatives of the whole" (196). A single vision, extrapolated from the perception of the 'outward' seeing eye, was often countered by a multiple vision in which the 'inward' creative eye perceives the manifold aspects of Nature. Such a distinction is analogous to Schelling's theory of an active and engaging mind which challenged the dominant Lockean model of mind as passive receptor.

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[3] The attacks levelled against Newton often lose sight of the fact that he actually conceived of a universe made up of matter *and* spirit. Not until the eighteenth century did scientific materialism reduce this dualistic account to one fundamental substance which was understood with recourse to material laws.

Schelling also reacted to Johann Fichte's claim that nature was subordinate to the mind, by reversing the equation: "nature was not a product of the mind, rather the mind was a product, if also a culmination, of nature" (197). As Andrew Bowie indicates in his reevaluation of Schelling's place in German idealist philosophy, "what is able to know itself must be more than *what* it knows" (Bowie 1993: 23). Schelling does not assert the mind as representing the mythical foundations of the Absolute; rather, that the inquiring mind, while partially "determined by something posited outside itself", constitutes something which cannot be reduced to the level of matter (quoted by Bowie 1993: 24). Schelling's philosophy was popular amongst the romantic scientists, enabling them to consider "the totality of all being" (Snelders 1970: 197) without losing sight of their "experience of the object world" (Bowie 1993: 24).

As Bowie makes evident, the influence of Schelling is important for any consideration of romanticism, but romantic science represents a slight shift away from his idealistic tendencies, together with a retreat from the "one-sided glorification of irrationality" present in the Dionysian exuberance of some early German romantic poetry (Engelhardt 1988: 112). It is not that the early practitioners of romantic science rejected idealism *per se*, but they saw intuition and feeling as complementary to an understanding of nature achieved through the faculty of reason. As a consequence, it is possible to show a closer connection between the German natural scientists and "the pre-romantic romantics" (Tymms 1955: 9), figures like Herder, Goethe and Novalis. As "men of sentiment" (9) they displayed a relish for forms of classicism together with a regard for an emotional response for and in the world, and so stand as historical mediators between the intellectualism of the *Aufklärung* and the elevation of feeling displayed in romantic

poetry. Natural scientists were wary of applying dogmatic reason too readily to their studies; they detected the stultifying alliance between a rationalist method and what they interpreted as the rigid laws of Newtonian mechanics. Reason was only used as an organizing tool to help as they collected empirical data and did not represent the basis of their inquiry.

T. A. M. Snelders distinguishes one major difference between the *Romantik* and the *Aufklärung* approaches to scientific knowledge:

> the Newtonian mechanical-atomistic explanation of all natural phenomena was supplanted by a dynamical and organic concept, with a concomitant substitution, at the extreme, of sentiment for the critical mind. One tried to unriddle phenomena in the natural sciences, the enigma of life and disease, by intuition instead of by experiment (Snelders 1970: 194).

Intuition, harnessed to creative imagination, came to be valued as a powerful faculty for discerning "the enigma of life" which was seen to lie outside the scope of scientific instrumentation (powerfully represented by William Blake in his engraving of Urizen dividing up the material world with his calipers [Blake 1986: 60]) and apparent only to the "critical mind."

The influence of Schelling's philosophy spawned a common belief in the mutual reciprocity of self-knowledge and knowledge of nature: the mind, as a part of nature, is structured by the same laws and is not representative of a separate and ideal sphere of existence. To understand human beings is to understand nature, and vice versa: "Nature attains perfection in living organisms, where the world of physical phenomena overflows

into that of the mind" (Engelhardt 1988: 113). Andrew Bowie frames this understanding in terms of Schelling's description of "an existence (*Daseyn*)", and makes explicit a link between his thought and Heidegger's <u>Being and Time</u> (1927), which was to provide an important philosophical source for the development of Binswanger's blend of romantic science (Schelling, quoted by Bowie 1993: 24).[4]

In their combined interest in science and literature, Goethe and Novalis perhaps best represent the synthesizing potential of romantic science, although their reputations depend primarily on the quality of their art. For example, the notebooks of Novalis contain scientific musings intermingled with epigraphs, aphorisms and poetic fragments.[5] These notebooks epitomize the notion that knowledge of the mind also provides knowledge of nature as macrocosm: "the world, the human world, is just as manifold as man is" (Novalis 1989: 96). The fragment form, found elsewhere in the poetry of Blake and Coleridge, also displays the romantic dislike for grand systems. The universalizing systems favoured in the Enlightenment were seen by the romantics as "prisons of the spirit" (Berlin 1979: 8); in a drive to generality, the system tends to neglect the particular and unique. To evoke Blake's image, instead of being able to discern eternity in a grain of sand, the single grain is neglected for the sake of conceptualizing eternity. The fragment, moreover, proved to have a greater scope than just as a poetic form: "articles by scientists and medical practitioners, like literary works, often appear in unsystematic,

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[4] It is interesting to note that Rollo May, an American champion and popularizer of Binswanger's work in the late 1950s and 1960s, claims that Schelling's lecture series given at Berlin in 1841 (in which he attacks Hegel's totalizing rationalist system) marks one of the earliest significant moments in the founding of existentialism as a dominant European philosophy (May 1986: 54).

[5] One example of Novalis's common technique of combining dual modes of understanding through analogy is evident in a fragment from his <u>Encyclopedia</u>: "Physics is nothing but the teaching of the imagination" (Novalis 1989: 93).

fragmentary, aphoristic, even poetic, form. This form is chosen deliberately, as it is meant to mirror what can be understood of nature" (Engelhardt 1988: 112). It was thought that the "mysteries" of nature could only be understood at moments of intuitive insight and recorded in brief jottings and unconnected fragments. While modern thinkers may wish to dispense with the myth of romantic genius, the fragmentary form has been retained as an important element in the heterogenous and, often, discontinuous written genre of romantic science.

Romanticism has much to offer the natural and human sciences, but it contains inherent weaknesses which are of consequence to my later studies. The transcendental belief that human insights are somehow related to an organic and natural unity is often a matter of wonder and speculation rather than an empirical questioning of the framework of metaphysical premises. Although romantic scientists were not searching for grand explanations, the sense of a wordless communion with Nature has no direct applicability to science; the rapture (or perception) must be transposed into a description of phenomena which can be recorded and analyzed. The philosophical implications of this transposition from mental experience to linguistic description can be seen from two distinct, yet interconnected, perspectives.

Firstly, a wordless and essentially incommunicable and instantaneous vision can be seen to be restricted, or even debased, by transferring it to a linguistic medium; for example, Coleridge, in Biographia Literaria (1817), speaks of the treacherously ambiguous "secondary imagination" as a dissolving, diffusing and dissipating process (Coleridge 1984: 167). The purity of silent communion will always be frustrated and dismantled by

the self-conscious recalling and transcribing of it. However, by making use of symbolic language, a discourse which is suggestive rather than indicative of actual experience, the romantic writer can circumnavigate the intellectualization of feeling that is involved in self-reflection. It can be argued that, in its use of symbol, the romantic enterprise runs tangential to a scientific mode of interpretation which demands a precision of description.

The second perspective, broadly poststructuralist, questions whether there is any experience prior to the language used to describe it. This links up with J. Hillis Miller's criticism of Poulet's moment of "double consciousness" in which one can self-consciously know the cogito of the other (Miller 1970: 216). For Miller, language should be recognized as "the instrument by which the mind explores its own depths" without ever striking an epistemological bottom (225). Such an interpretation moves away from phenomenological revelation towards an analysis of the discursive cultural groupings which constitute both the experience and the subject of experience. As Paul de Man remarks in his Gauss Lecture of 1967, it is impossible to make "the actual expression coincide with what has to be expressed, of making the actual sign coincide with what it signifies" (de Man 1993: 12). In other words, there is no self-present sign which represents the "origin or constitutive focus that is ontologically prior" to experience (6).

De Man's critique of romanticism dovetails with Jacques Derrida's interrogation of Husserlian phenomenology in Speech and Phenomena (1967). Derrida argues that there is no unmediated phenomenological meaning (conceived by Husserl as pure ideality or self-presence) outside the realm of signification. This idea not only throws a sceptical shadow over the primacy of mental experience, but also undermines the romantic notion

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of transcendental consciousness by questioning the role of the subject as the locus and centre of the experience. To add to this, de Man questions the "forms of romantic deceit" which claim "self-autonomy...as a philosophical truth about the nature of human existence" and "the work of art as a self-engendered world of the subject's own making" (de Man 1993: 6).

It will be necessary to return to de Man and Derrida at later points in the dissertation as theoretical checks to romanticism. Although there are significant challenges to the romantic myth of divine creator, these alone are insufficient to dismiss the project of romantic science for being founded on entirely misguided principles. As I have argued, romantic science appropriates a diluted romanticism rather than an excessive idealism. In response to this, a counter-argument might grant that although some scientists have been influenced by strains of romantic thought, their need to follow a method will necessarily distance them from the spirit of aesthetic romanticism. But, and it is my contention, such an overview reveals that the apparently irreconcilable tension between art and science is primarily due to a reification and, in many ways, an exaggerated opposition between the terms. As de Man indicates, the romantic influence upon science should not be "measured by the contribution [it] makes to the elaboration of a cogent historical outline" (95) of romanticism; rather, in granting priority to subjectivity and psychological complexity (however this is to be interpreted in the light of deconstruction), it duplicates the counter-Enlightenment spirit of the first generation romantics, but without their tendency to repudiate inquiry based solely on reason. Furthermore, in the words of Gerald Edelman, the aspiration of romantic science is to put "the mind back into nature" (for Edelman, like the three romantic scientists discussed in

this thesis, a post-Darwinian nature [Edelman 1994: 9]), without resorting to an outmoded dualism of substance and the interactional problems which this involves. Here, the importance of critical theory can be gauged through its contribution to the study of language and narrative, rather than dealing with an ineffable realm of mentality. As will become increasingly evident, de Man's challenge indicates that language and narrative play pivotal roles in any account of mental life.

(4) Stanley Cavell and the Hermeneutics of Acknowledgement

In the concluding section of this introduction I will extend some of the ideas suggested above concerning the hermeneutic and the narrative dimensions of self by selectively reading the theoretical writings of Stanley Cavell. Although Cavell is not one of the major figures of the thesis, his work provides a way to characterize the common romantic and modernist concerns of James, Binswanger and Sacks. In particular, I will refer to three of Cavell's texts, The Senses of Walden (1972; expanded 1992), In Quest of the Ordinary (1988) and Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome (1990), in which he explicitly addresses some of the most important theoretical issues to emerge from romanticism. Although Cavell has a distinctive theoretical voice of his own, the philosophical figures to whom he most often returns throughout these books are Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Heidegger and, more recently, Derrida.[6]

Despite evident differences in the theoretical orientation of these thinkers, all four share with Cavell an emphasis upon the manner in which utterances are expressed (or written), complementing their abiding interest in semantics. Cavell has variously called the former the "mood" or "pitch" of philosophy to imply the impossibility of separating what is said from the vehicle of language in which it is said.[7] Attention to the form and style of language proves crucial to a consideration of the work of my three major figures, and a

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[6] Three studies on Cavell have influenced my reading here: Michael Fischer, Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism (1989), Ewa Ziarek, The Rhetoric of Failure (1996) and an article by Michael Wood, 'Must We Believe What We Say?' (Murray 1995: 90-105).

[7] See Cavell's essay in the expanded version of The Senses Of Walden, entitled 'An Emerson Mood' (Cavell 1992: 141-60), and the musical metaphors deployed in his autobiographical A Pitch of Philosophy (1994).

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discussion of Cavell's thought helps to foreground these concerns. Cavell's philosophy represents an ongoing attempt to develop and fuse a dual tradition of thought: the ordinary language philosophy, deriving from Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin, and the German idealist tradition, which influences the work of Heidegger. Cavell positions Emerson between these two as "a site from which to measure the difficulties within each and between both" (Cavell 1995: 13). Indeed, the Emerson who has emerged from recent critical debate (for example, in the work of Cornel West and Richard Poirier) combines an Americanist reworking of European romanticism together with an emergent pragmatism. Emerson thus prefigures much of my interest in James and also provides an important theoretical source for the dissertation as a whole.

From Cavell's early work on ordinary language philosophy and film analysis to his recent work on Emerson and Derrida, his lasting concern has been with interpretation. Cavell has shown particular interest in self-reflective discourses: those which interrogate their own processes of writing and reading. The search of romantic writers, such as Emerson, for an expressive language provides Cavell with the modernist "idea of literature becoming its own theory - literature in effect becoming philosophy while contrariwise philosophy becomes literature" (Cavell 1989: 20). The collapsing of rigid boundaries between the disciplines of philosophy and literary study encourages the same kind of hybridity set out by Luria and Sacks in their vision of romantic science. Furthermore, Cavell's attentiveness to language carries more weight than just a supplementary study to serious scientific inquiry. In his illuminating discussion of Henry David Thoreau's Walden (1854), Cavell asserts that committed writing, or, as he calls it, "serious speech", should investigate "the conditions of language as such" (Cavell 1992: 33). In other

words, the responsibility of the inquirer "remains a task of responsiveness" to language (Cavell 1990: 25).

For Cavell, words not only imply a cultural lexicon which is "totally, systematically meaningful", but they can also "contain (or conceal) [the] beliefs, express (or deny) [the] convictions" of human agents (Cavell 1992: 34). This may seem too close to Poulet's phenomenological theory of reading as the reading of another's "cogito" for theoretical comfort; but for Cavell writing can be as unstable, opaque and impenetrable as it can be illuminating. Cavell understands writing (conceived literally and as a general metaphor for aesthetic creation) as one of the most fundamental of human activities. This activity is a prerequisite for any kind of committed interpretation: to quote Emerson, "one must be an inventor to read well" (Emerson 1983: 59). It is the task of the committed writer to become a sensitive reader in order to "learn how to entrust our meaning to a word" (Cavell 1992: 34-35).[8] Writing thus becomes both "the ground upon which they [the reader and writer] will meet" (62) and the promise of communication:

> Speaking together face to face can seem to deny that distance, to deny that facing one another requires acknowledging the presence of the other, revealing our positions, betraying them if need be. But to deny such things is to deny our separateness. And that makes us fictions of one another (65).

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[8] Following Thoreau's work on 'Reading' in Walden (Thoreau 1966: 67-74), Cavell makes explicit a link between reading and writing: "Reading is a variation on writing, where they meet in meditation and achieve accounts of their opportunities; and writing is a variation of reading, since to write is to cast words together that you did not make, so as to give or take readings" (Cavell 1988: 18). This position is a development of, say, Marcel Proust's notion of active reading as an "incitement" to write "on the threshold of the spiritual life" (Proust 1994: 32, 30), because, for Cavell, deep reading is inseparable from committed writing.

This assertion stresses the importance of empathy and the acknowledgement of others through dialogic exchange.[9] As such, Cavell asserts that in romanticism "the quest for audience is exactly as questionable as that for expression" (Cavell 1989: 12). However, attending to these questions does not necessarily mean they can be overcome: for Cavell, both quests are always "questionable" (*das Bedenkliche*). His reading of Thoreau and Emerson emphasises both the difficulty and partiality of communication, but he also retains the hope that language might refer to a world in which human beings can share meaning.

Although Cavell's optimism closely echoes Emerson's hopeful vision of 'The American Scholar' (1837), the search for meaning is a laborious process. As he writes in poetic refrain, "a deep reading is not one in which you sink away from the surface of words. Words already engulf us" (Cavell 1992: 65). Mirroring Derrida's view of language (and, to a certain extent, Lacan's view of the self), Cavell attests that, instead of providing clarity and precision, language may reveal a lack, which may be a lack of sense, or a sense which cannot be incorporated into any preexistent frame of reference. Taking his metaphor from Thoreau's account of his retreat to Walden pond, Cavell sees "deep reading" as a project "in which you depart from a given word as from a point of origin; you go deep into the woods" (65). Thus the questioning (and "questionable") search for

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[9] Cavell's comments on dialogic exchange and the perfectionist nature of self invite comparison with Jürgen Habermas's formulation of the "ideal speech situation" (Habermas 1990: 88), which acts as an communicative ideal even if it can never be actualized in practice. I wish to resist such a comparison, primarily because Habermas's work tends to overlook individual differences, whereas modern romantic science focuses centrally on forms of alterity and Otherness.

sense will always lead one away from unquestioning security towards the flux and dissemination of meaning.[10]

If meaning is viewed as radically unstable, the critic may be tempted to be sceptical about the possibility of knowing the world and other beings in it, or, at the very least, sceptical about saying anything significant about them. Cavell sees the futility of attempting to claim "a final philosophical victory" over scepticism (Cavell 1989: 38), and instead acknowledges that because one must act *as if* the world is inhabited by objects and conversant peoples then, to all intents and purposes, the world and its denizens do exist. As I shall argue in the first chapter, there is much in this claim which is indebted to James's view of pragmatism, but Cavell claims that this idea derives directly from Wittgenstein's defence of ordinary beliefs:

> it is not quite right to say that we *believe* the world exists...and wrong to say we *know* it exits...he or she would have a hard time saying what it is right to say here, what truly expresses our convictions in the matter...our relation to the world's existence is somehow *closer* than the ideas of believing and knowing are made to convey (Cavell 1992: 145).

Elsewhere, Cavell speaks of the need to "accept" or to "receive" (133) the world as it is ("*closer* than the ideas of believing and knowing"), rather than reshaping it to how we want it to be, or, to use Emerson's term, to "clutch" desperately at it. This does not mean one cannot redescribe the world in Rorty's sense of the phrase, only that an attempt to engage with a world of others should not be abandoned for solipsistic flights of

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[10] In similar vein, Richard Poirier comments on the positive aspects of scepticism: "the democratic impulse shared by Emersonian pragmatists also involved a recognition that language, if it is to represent the flow of individual experience, ceases to be an instrument of clarification or of clarity and, instead, becomes the instrument of a saving uncertainty and vagueness" (Poirier 1992: 3-4).

imagination. Because animals (including humans) have the propensity to resourcefully act in and upon the world and can adapt to moderate changes in environment, the world is understood to exist in real ways for them. Moreover, because humans have the capacity of self-consciousness, which enables them to cognitively map their environment and describe it in language, the world also exists discursively.

Such an understanding does not thereby prevent the confusion of meaning which misrecognition may induce. Indeed, instead of verifying the unproblematic existence of the world, Cavell sees "deep reading" as a task which is committed "to observe the strangeness of our lives, our estrangement from ourselves" (Cavell 1992: 55) and that to which we are proximate (146). "Deep reading" leads one into the very thick of scepticism, but, for Cavell (as for Emerson and Wittgenstein), it can also lead one "on a path" out of it (Cavell 1989: 17). In other words, reading is a commitment to take scepticism seriously: "the scene of a struggle of philosophy with itself, for itself" (40). This commitment is much more than taking abstract philosophical problems seriously. For Cavell, philosophy "out of school"[11] addresses problems of psychology, aesthetics, intersubjectivity and morality which arise in lived situations and deserve the experiencer's undivided attention. Thus, Cavell interprets Thoreau to claim that "his writing is *part* of his living, an instance of the life of philosophy" and, furthermore, "that the reader could not understand his claim to be a philosopher until he or she understands what it is to be his reader" (Cavell 1988: 10-11).

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[11] A phrase appropriated from Cavell's 1984 book Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, reprinted 1988.

Deploying a common modernist technique, he claims that language, when used in an attentive and committed manner, has the capacity to defamiliarize the common and to render "the perception of the sublime in the everyday" in order that one might attend to the unique and the singular in the self and in others" (Cavell 1992: 150).[12] "The near, the low, the common" are those details which most interest Emerson and Thoreau; details which disclose a type of Otherness which Cavell argues has recently been neglected in favour of the radically Other. For instance, in 'The American Scholar' Emerson famously writes:

> That, which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts...I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic...I embrace the common. I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low (Emerson 1983: 68-69).

Here, the "foreign" and the "romantic" are not simply eschewed as points of interest in favour of the common, but that foreignness and rarity can be perceived in the most familiar of objects: as Emerson goes on to say, "the near explains the far" (69). The deep reading which Cavell upholds often begins with defamiliarization of the familiar as something problematic or questionable. Cavell's interest in the "ordinary" proves ultimately to be a concern with the "intimacy of existence, and of an intimacy lost" (Cavell 1988: 4).

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[12] See Victor Shklovsky's 1917 essay 'Art as Technique' (Schklovsky 1965: 5-22). It is notable that Cavell's attention to the form of writing is emphasized by borrowing the term "defamiliarization" (ostraénie) from the school of Russian Formalism. Shklovsky notes that Tolstoy, along with the romantics, utilizes this technique, but it was the modernist enterprises of Joyce, Stein, Lorca, Brecht *et al* which brought the term centrally into twentieth-century critical discourse.

Crucial for my consideration - and once more echoing Poulet as much as Heidegger - an acknowledgement of the world turns out to also be an acknowledgement of the self within that world.[13] To this end Cavell claims that the "quest" of Walden "is for the recovery of the self, as from an *illness*" [my italics] (Cavell 1992: 80). When I move on to discuss one of Sacks's major works Awakenings (1973), the metaphor of awakening is indicative of this understanding of the recovery of self from a condition characterized by loss of meaning, brought about through debilitating illness. Emerson's "aspiration to the human" (Cavell 1990: 57) takes on profound significance in extreme cases where the fundamental criteria which constitute "the human" are stripped away. True recovery from such a state accompanies the awakening of self to an acknowledgement of itself within the context of the world.

Moreover, Cavell locates "Emerson's proposed therapy...of so-called man's loss of existence" (Cavell 1988: 112) as an acknowledgement that one cannot have an ongoing "original relation to the universe" (Emerson 1983: 7), but that one must necessarily interpret a cultural language of "relation". Cavell does not argue that one must forever recycle the "quotes" of "some saint or sage" (which, for Emerson, serve to postpone the possibility of a committed life [Emerson 1983: 270]); rather, that the experiencer cannot be his or her own sovereign creator because one always already speaks and writes with inherited language (Cavell 1988: 113). Thus, awakening does not merely represent a

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[13] This kind of acknowledgement is particular apposite in a discussion of the human sciences when the focus of study is the nature of human existence. As Gadamer succinctly states: "knowledge in the human sciences always has something of self-knowledge about it" (Wachterhauser 1994: 29). When viewed hermeneutically, practitioners of the human sciences "experience a provocation [*Anstoss*]" by the world in which the self is only a part: we are thus "confronted not only with ourselves...but with something else as well" (29).

moment of defamiliarization or a romantic epiphany, but a commitment to live (and to read) seriously with both the threat of scepticism and "the obligation of therapy" (12):

> what is discredited in the romantic's knowledge about self-authoring is only a partial picture of authoring and of creation, a picture of human creation as a literalized anthropomorphism of God's creation - as if to create myself I were required to begin with the dust of the ground and magic breath, rather than with, say, an uncreated human being and the power of thinking (111).

Cavell's theory of the committed reader of signs indicates that it may be possible to retain the rhetoric of becoming without swallowing the whole "discredited romantic picture of the author or artist as incomprehensibly original" (110).

The importance of Cavell's thought to my argument, apropos the theoretical-therapeutic perspective of James, Binswanger and Sacks, is that the hermeneutic activity begins with "a loss of self-knowledge; of being, so to speak, at a loss" (Cavell 1989: 36). To appropriate a cliché of popular psychology (and to go beyond that cliché), such a commitment is for the self to learn to live with loss, but also the refusal to erase or forget that loss. For Cavell, even if one cannot speak the self as 'I' (in the Cartesian sense), then, like Nietzsche's Zarathustra (following Emerson), one may be able to speak of the active bodily performance of 'I' (Nietzsche 1969: 62).[14] One of the aims of modern romantic scientists is to develop techniques which encourage individuals suffering from loss actively to reconstruct the embodied self as a meaningful vehicle of agency. But this possibility should be accompanied by a commitment to forget neither the provisionality nor the fragility of selfhood. Cavell understands the emancipatory promise of

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[14] Nietzsche proves another important intellectual source for Cavell (and for the thesis as a whole), providing a pivot between Emerson's transcendentalism and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.

romanticism does not entail a repudiation of the everyday and the ordinary, but a responsiveness to them.

Knowledge of self and world is never indubitable, but the possibility of knowing is a risk which Cavell incites the reader to take. The human scientist who refutes such an understanding may "profit in gaining the whole world" at the risk of "losing one's soul" (Cavell 1990: 26). As James claims in his discussion of Pascal's wager, the gains of risking an encounter with the self might be infinite, whereas refusing to take the risk will certainly lead to "finite loss" (James 1956: 5). Cavell stresses in many of his writings that one must take this risk, but one must also retain the possibility of being "wrong...unsure, surprised" (Cavell 1979: 397). One of the primary reasons why he cannot claim philosophical victory over scepticism is because this would also constitute a victory "over the human" and the fallible (Cavell 1989: 38).

Ideal as Cavell's hopes might be, his project of "deep reading" begs the question of how such acknowledgement might be brought about. Hints of such a development are to be found towards the end of the section on Thoreau in The Senses of Walden, in which Cavell considers the idea of becoming, "to allow the world to change, and to learn change from it, to permit it strangers, accepting its own strangeness, are conditions of knowing it" (Cavell 1992: 119). Two key terms here - "change" and "allow" - emerge from Cavell's study of Walden and are given wider significance in the first of his 1988 Carus Lectures, Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome, in which he develops his reservations concerning "philosophy's anxiety about reading" (Cavell 1990: 6).

Cavell's 1988 lectures take their title from Emerson's essay on 'Experience' (1844): "I take the evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition" (Emerson 1983: 473, quoted by Cavell 1990: 41). To clutch at the world implies that the "unhandsome" self is one who acts out of frustration or desperation in the face of doubt and uncertainty. Despite the urgency of which Emerson and Cavell speak, only by allowing the world to be, or "letting be" (*sein lassen*) in Heidegger's phrase, can one be committed or resolute in relation to it. Not only does this allow one to renew an intellectual and emotional relationship with a defamiliarized world (a renewed world of objects and others), but, also, that one can begin to use what is "to hand" in order to fulfil the possibility of transforming it (Cavell 1990: 38). Emerson is understood to search for interpretive ways in which he can "counteract the role of experience as removing us from, instead of securing us to, the world" (40). Security cannot be rendered through passive conformity or a quietist world-view, but neither can change be brought about through furiously (or, for Heidegger, violently) grasping at the world. Cavell thus understands the "handsome" part of the human condition to be "what Emerson calls being drawn and what Heidegger calls getting in the draw, or the draft, of thinking" (41). The "draft" of thinking can only be brought about through interaction and provides "the conditions for my recognizing my difference from others as a function of my recognizing my difference from myself" (53).

One of the most problematic areas of thought which Cavell has developed over recent years is his discussions of "moral perfectionism" (1) and "Emersonian Perfectionism" (3). He defines these terms variously as "being true to oneself" (often by a romantic act of

defiance), a "tradition of the moral life...called the state of one's soul" (3) and the neoplatonic "transformation of self through self-education" (7). Despite these and numerous other descriptive statements, Cavell acknowledges finally that not only has he "no complete list of necessary and sufficient conditions for using the term", but he has "no theory in which a definition of perfectionism would play a useful role" (4). As with his understanding of genre as open to a number of possible permutations, this description suggests an "open-ended thematics...of perfectionism" (4) which can be extended or redefined to suit the needs of the individual. The criticism that Cavell endorses a form of individual exceptionalism (in the sense of a perfected or perfectible self) is deflected when one considers that for neither Emerson nor Cavell does the self imply perfectibility (although the ability to read the self does imply a degree of interpretive competence). Just as there are no absolute grounds for positing the self (at least epistemologically speaking), neither is there a *telos* at which point one can know the self through reflection. Instead, Cavell understands that "*each* state of the self is, so to speak, final" (3). One might understand the self ephemerally (through a combination of reflection and projection) within a particular context (with a particular set of spatial, temporal and cultural coordinates), but the potential "next self" (9) suggests the inability of ever comprehensively mapping, or, indeed, fully comprehending, these coordinates.

That is not to say that the self cannot be acknowledged through interpretation, only that the interpretive process leaves traces of unknowability, or a residue of mystery, which defies the ability to finally fix a substantive definition on the self. Cavell's hermeneutics imply that there is no truth as such to be understood (although the interpreter or experiencer can be true to that understanding); rather there is a set of possibilities, or

pragmatic paths, which can lead one through a dense network of possible significations. Just as the self is not to be understood by "anything picturable" nor by extrapolating backwards from a *telos*, neither can the journey along an interpretive path be understood "beyond the way of the journey itself" (10). Cavell concludes that to recognize the "unattained but attainable self" is "a step in attaining it": in other words, "'having' 'a' self is a process of moving to, and from, nexts...we are from the beginning, that is from the time we can be described as having a self, a next, knotted" (12). It is my contention that the only way to map this self is to position it within a narrative framework to lend it spatial and temporal coordinates. Although stages of the narrative of self may suggest closure, the plotting of a master-narrative, or a final denouement of any unifying narrative, is perpetually deferred because there is always the possibility of a "next" narrative to be told. As such, the self is always actively under way and can never be finally attained.

What makes Cavell's reading of self particularly interesting for a consideration of the human sciences, and particularly that sector of the medical humanities in which the well-being of the self is of utmost concern (especially in cases where bodily passivity or mental paralysis are paramount), is that as the "knotted" self sides with the next potential self, it must also side "against my attained perfection" (31). In the knots of the self one must turn away from stasis and solipsism to recognize the existence of "an other" and an "acknowledgment of a relationship" (31) with that other (whether that relationship is with a family, a community, or a personal relationship with the physician). The reason why Cavell takes scepticism so seriously is that these relationships are always liable to collapse under their fragility and the fear of misrecognition and doubt. Similarly, the

reason why the natural and the human sciences need to be tolerant of "human" issues is because, for Cavell, "being human" is tantamount to being fallible.[15]

In both Cavell's and Emerson's work the "aspiration to the human" (Cavell 1990: 57) is intricately bound up with an inquiry into the parameters (and possibilities) of the human. It is clear why Cavell attributes the language of authenticity to Emerson, but whether there is actually a positive moral content in the orientation of the self towards the world (over and above a sense of commitment to taking the risk to understand others and the "struggle against false or debased perfectionisms" [13]) is beyond the scope of this thesis. Save to say, the "moral urgency" which Cavell interprets Emerson to demand is not a moralizing tendency (associated here with pedestrian conformity) but the possibility of "acting beyond the self and making oneself intelligible to those beyond it" (Cavell 1990: 46). No amount of "deep reading" can guarantee that we can know the self (whether it is myself or yourself); but, similarly, no amount of scepticism can shake the acknowledgment of self as possibility (as the epigraph from Derrida describes).

Each of my three principal thinkers treat seriously the possibility of knowing the self through particular categories of understanding. However, as I develop in my explication of their work, it is the narrative potentiality of self as active artificer (as Cavell outlines it) to which each turns in order to indicate areas in which aesthetic modes of expression can complement the conventional scope of the human sciences. As such, a movement

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[15] One of the reasons why romantic science does not adhere to Kuhn's model of "normal science", is because it treats scientific knowledge sceptically. As Barry Barnes comments: Kuhn is not "willing to allow that scientific knowledge is taught tentatively and provisionally, or scepticism and open-mindedness are seriously cultivated by teachers, with the intention of ensuring scientists remain flexible and receptive to new experience" (Skinner 1990: 90).

away from epistemology towards a narratively constructed self can be traced through romantic science; a movement which, following the thrust of Cavell's work, is inflected by both an expressive and a moral romanticism. Whilst both James and Binswanger go some way to dissolve the boundaries between the theory and practical application of romantic science, it is Sacks who most successfully combines a theorization of selfhood with the development of a set of viable therapeutic techniques. Accordingly, my chapters on James and Binswanger will trace the movement in their thinking from philosophical conceptions of self to their considerations of a narratively constructed self (a transition which is most readily discerned in the third sections of the first two chapters: James on will and Binswanger on dreams), whereas the concluding chapter on Sacks discusses his attempts to synthesize theories of self and narrative.

I. William James

The one thing in the world,
of value, is the active soul.
Ralph Waldo Emerson,
'The American Scholar' (1837)

(1) James on Habit: from Physiology to Ethics

William James was professionally a scientist and a university lecturer, in contrast to Binswanger and Sacks whose theories feed directly into their professional therapeutic practices. During his time at Harvard University, James's attention shifted from concerns with medicine, anatomy, physiology and psychology to a developing interest in philosophy and religion. James also brought to his studies an aesthetic sensibility which derived from his early twenties when he considered painting as a career, together with the influence of his equally famous younger brother. Underlying and connecting these various modes of thought is a preoccupation with selfhood, which aligns his ideas closely with the tenets of romantic science. Moreover, as Donald Meyer and Eugene Taylor have both indicated, James's interest in subconscious and "supernormal" mental states led him to practice a version of therapy on a private basis during the 1890s (Taylor 1984: 150). I will argue that the therapeutic strain of James's thought is an important trajectory of his thought and, therefore, should not be isolated from a study of the conceptual developments of his theory of self. In order to address these issues, this chapter on James focuses upon two principal works, The Principles of Psychology (1890, hereafter Principles) and Varieties of Religious Experience (1902, hereafter Varieties), which I will read alongside a number of his essays.

The Principles of Psychology is James's first major published work and represents his *magnum opus*, at least in the discipline of psychology. In 1872 he was appointed as an instructor in physiology and anatomy at Harvard where he devised a seminal course on experimental psychology, 'The Relations between Physiology and Psychology', first

taught in 1875. James's experimental psychology can be seen to derive from his attempts to theorize, and account for, personal experience, together with his interest in the French experimental physiology of Claude Bernard, and an engagement with the work of two American thinkers, Chauncey Wright and Charles Sanders Peirce, on evolutionary theory and the philosophy of science.[1] Stimulated by his students' interest in the course, James was contracted in 1878 to write a book for the American Science Series on the central principles of psychology, which he predicted he would finish within two years. Partially appearing as a series of articles over the next decade, the two volumes of <u>Principles</u> were not published until 1890. As James indicates in the preface to Henry Holt's 1890 edition, his "treatise" had "grown up in connection with the author's class-room instruction...to a length which no one can regret more than the writer himself" (James 1950a: v). To compensate for the unwieldy length of the two volumes, James outlines his pedagogical intention by suggesting a shorter route for "beginners" and students of psychology by omitting certain of the chapters "on a first reading" (v). Although his manual of psychological principles is extensive, the implication here is that there are a number of possible paths towards an understanding of mind and self.

Throughout <u>Principles</u> James stresses his desire to adhere to a perspective of natural science and thereby avoid the theoretical murkiness of metaphysics, which he understands to be a branch of philosophy entirely immune to empirical testing. As James

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[1] In his <u>Introduction à l'étude de la Médicine Experimental</u> (1865) Claude Bernard proposes that experimental psychology should be practised under laboratory conditions in order to achieve "surgical control over an animal's physiological reactions" (Johnson 1990: 40). Aligning himself with Bernard, in a 1906 lecture on 'Common Sense', James states, "the scope of the practical control of nature newly put into our hand by scientific ways of thinking vastly exceeds the scope of the old control grounded on common sense" (James 1981: 85).

comments in an 1892 article in <u>Philosophical Review</u>, 'A Plea for Psychology as a "Natural Science"': "I wished, by treating psychology *like* a natural science, to help her to become one" (James 1969: 317). He conceives of psychology as a division of natural science, particularly in reference to the object of its study: "the mind of distinct individuals inhabiting definite portions of a real space and a real time" (James 1950a: 183). By displaying a tendency to move towards the middle ground of science, James confirms a common sense assumption of the existence of a 'real' external world. Even when he makes use of the subjective technique of introspection he claims to deploy it in order to examine a sensory reality which "he talks about...in an objective way" (183). This commitment to objectivity signals James's desire to develop an empirical science, through which he aims "to test some pre-existing hypothesis" (194) with reference to concrete experience. But, as James was aware, any attempt to explicate the central principles of psychology, without brushing against metaphysical questions which plague the natural sciences, is an arduous task.

In an 1892 essay James responds to G. T. Ladd's article, 'Psychology as so-called natural science', published in the same volume of <u>Philosophical Review</u>.[2] Ladd takes issue with James's lack of consistency in <u>Principles</u>. Although he claims to treat psychology as a natural science, Ladd detects instances when James stumbles upon metaphysical problems. James's response is to argue that if "psychology is ever to conform to the type of the other natural sciences, it must renounce certain ultimate solutions" (James 1969:

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[2] J. T. Ladd, <u>Philosophical Review</u>, 1, 24-53. For a fuller discussion of James's response to Ladd, see Amedeo Giorgi's essay 'The Implications of James's Pleas for Psychology as a Natural Science' (Johnson 1990: 63-74).

317). By renouncing "ultimate solutions" James detects a set of limits beyond which he
cannot hope to penetrate:

> This book...contends that psychology when she has ascertained the
> empirical correlation of the various sorts of thought or feeling with
> definite conditions of the brain can go no farther - can go no farther, that
> is, as a natural science. If she goes farther she becomes metaphysical (vi).

In an attempt to resist metaphysical speculation, which would undermine the empirical

"mass of descriptive details" of Principles, he does not hesitate to indicate those areas

where psychology "can go no farther" (vii).

James's opening comments illuminate one of the central theoretical dilemmas of the text:

how to set out the principles of psychology whilst resisting metaphysical speculation.

Although, his "positivistic" solution is formulated in order to avoid two current

metaphysically informed philosophies - "the associationist and the spiritualist theories"

(vi) - James insistently stresses those points where natural science opens into "queries

which only a metaphysics alive to the weight of her task can hope successfully to deal

with" (vii). He goes on to outline the major areas of nineteenth-century psychology, but

he does not claim for his principles a set of final limits. An aspect of his thought which

will become vital for my later considerations of his work is herein outlined: "the reader

will in vain seek for any closed system in the book"; for, he claims, "the best mark of

health that a science can show is this unfinished-seeming front" (vii). So, whilst

Principles extends to over 1350 pages and ostensibly seems to take its place alongside

Lyell, Darwin, Comte, Spencer et al as a product of the nineteenth-century systematic

rigour in empirical science, it opens out into a modernist text which explores "queries" and aporias of knowledge.

It is through this lens that I wish to view Principles as a pivotal work which can be interpreted either as a late Victorian example of rigorous empiricism or as a more troubled expression of modernity. I wish to choose neither template as the sole mode of approach to James, for it is through an examination of this moment of transition that it becomes possible to cast light back on the aspirations and the problems incurred by the early nineteenth-century romantic scientists. In many ways James stands free from this Germanic shadow, but it is precisely the distance from that earlier moment (both in terms of history and culture) by which it becomes possible to develop the initiatives of romantic science.

My chosen path into Principles is through James's consideration of habit: the concern of the fourth chapter of the first volume and a theme which becomes a recurring principle throughout the work. By attending closely to James's discussion on habit it is possible to explore the breadth of his writing whilst maintaining a focused vision; a focus which, in this chapter, I will develop by interpreting his later work as a continuation of his early concerns in a different guise. My interest in Principles derives from those instances when the author of a scientific manual shifts into therapeutic territory.[3] The use of multiple discourse characterizes James as a writer who cuts across established genres of writing

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[3] Philip Fisher comments that the "manual" as "a book of techniques" is a common nineteenth-century form of "conduct book" (Fisher 1973: 12). Unlike, for example, Samuel Smiles's classic Victorian book of conduct, Self-Help (1859), Principles is a "manual" of current psychological tenets. However, there are moments (for example, the conclusions he draws at the end of his chapter on habit) where James's work becomes explicitly instructive.

in order to broaden the field of investigation. Similarly, as I later argue, it is in the revision and the working through of philosophical problems that the self can be redefined in the face of determinism and necessity. Consequently, before I concentrate closely on the function of habit in James's thought it is important to delineate the philosophical position which underpins his psychology.

In the first chapter of Principles, on 'The Scope of Psychology', James expands upon his opening statements concerning the inadequacy of spiritualist and associationist modes of psychological explanation. He begins by suggesting that the bewildering "variety and complexity" of psychological phenomena historically have been unified through the theologically-informed theory of "the personal Soul" (1). This kind of philosophy is devoted "to abstract and eternal principles" (James 1981: 9), characterized both by Descartes's dualistic view of mind and by Kant's idealism, the latter which found an American outlet in New England Transcendentalism between the 1830s and the 1850s and, more immediately for James, in the work of the Harvard philosopher, Josiah Royce. The rival associationist theory, a "psychology without a soul", proceeds by examining "common elements in the divers mental facts rather than a common agent behind them" (James 1950a: 1). Championed by John Locke and the British empiricists, associationism explains phenomena by reference to "the various forms of arrangement of these elements" (1). Unlike the spiritualist, the associationist argues that the self does not preexist perception and emotion, but emerges *a posteriori* "as their last and most complicated fruit" (2).

James rejects the spiritualist theory in so far as it posits essences or faculties such as "Cognition" or "Memory" as the "absolute properties of the soul" (2). Because neither is empirically verifiable, he rejects the mysterious Cartesian interface which connects the mental to the physical, together with the metaphysical unity which Royce asserts. Explicitly reacting to Royce's notion of an all-encompassing principle by which every empirical contradiction can be resolved, James argues that essences are unverifiable because they exist prior to experience: "there is something grotesque and irrational in the supposition that the soul is equipped with elementary powers of such an ingeniously intricate sort" (3). Here, his choice of adjectives implies a hostility to monistic absolutism which is more than that of a disinterested philosopher. In conclusion, he stresses that "the [mental] faculty does not exist absolutely, but works under conditions; and the quest of the conditions becomes the psychologist's most interesting task" (3).

However, James does not reject the spiritualist's theory wholesale, for he does gravitate towards a conception of "Mind" which can only be inferred through an analysis of its "indubitable expressions" (11). Indeed, this notion of active "Mind" is crucial to an understanding of James's break from a Spenserian psychology, which espouses the passive "adjustment of inner to outer relations" and the manner in which environmental "conditions" determine consciousness (6). Although James taught Herbert Spencer's psychological treatise on the First Principles of Psychology (1864) at Harvard and he commended him for advancing psychology beyond "the old-fashioned 'rational psychology,' which treated the soul as a detached existent, sufficient unto itself", as outlined in his 1884 essay, 'The Dilemma of Determinism', James found Spencer's

behaviourism too mechanical and deterministic (Perry 1935a: 482).[4] For example, in an 1878 essay on Spencer, James asserts that survival should be understood as "only one out of many interests" (James 1969: 43). He argues that humans also maintain the ability to interact socially, to act upon external reality and to make ideal choices. Thus, when James claims in Principles that "minds inhabit environments which act on them and on which they in turn react" (James 1950a: 6), he indicates an interaction between mind and world, in which the conscious self is partially determined by the natural and the social world but retains the power to act in and upon it.

James goes on to reject associationism for what he deems to be a residue of the spiritualistic theory: the "fantastic laws of clinging" by which ideas are associated and arrange themselves in "an endless carpet...like dominoes in ceaseless change, or the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope" (6). Although James is sympathetic to the associationist idea that the self arises from lived experience, he is dubious about the position of sceptical philosophers, who, like David Hume, reject the idea of a knowing self but then cannot explain how the ideas that constitute a particular memory are arranged and configured. So, while James agrees that, on the most "immediate" level, the object-world is experienced through the senses and cannot be justifiably conceived from a perspective which preexists sensation, he claims:

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[4] As the founder of Social Darwinism, Spencer tended to disregard emotions, sentiments and beliefs in his favour of the survival instinct. William Graham Sumner was a fervent American advocate of Spencer's ideas. He, like Spencer, pronounces survival as the ruling impulse in life and argues that "the mind is entirely moulded by circumstances" (Miller 1956: xxvii). In reaction to Sumner, Lester Ward, who shares James's assertion that humans can influence their environment, argues that "mind, which at first was the servant of desire, has become the master of nature" (xxix).

The bare existence of a past fact is no ground for our remembering it. Unless we have seen it, or somehow *undergone* it, we shall never know of its having been. The experiences of the body are thus one of the conditions of the faculty of memory being what it is. And a very small amount of reflection on facts shows that one part of the body, namely, the brain, is the part whose experiences are directly concerned (4).

The disregard for what James considers to be physiological reality renders associationism untenable for him. Instead of asserting a wholly determinant environment, James focuses upon bodily "conditions" through which the self develops within an environment.

Without finally refuting either of the rival claims, James suggests that he and the reader must assume the "coexistence" of thoughts and brain-states as the "ultimate laws of our science" (vii). He devises an "empirical parallelism" through which he pursues his examination of cerebral patterns as codetermining the philosophical result (182). He suggests a kind of causal reciprocity between mental and physical: "mental phenomena are not only conditioned *a parte ante* by bodily processes; but they lead to them *a parte post*" (5). As I have claimed in the introduction in reference to John Searle's philosophy of mind, parallelism implies a dualistic model which James cannot entirely avoid. But, by claiming that "no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change" (5), James conceives of a "psycho-physic formula" (182) which goes some way to avoid the metaphysical problems implicit in each of the other two theories.

By speaking in terms of "empirical parallelism" he avoids surrendering, firstly, to a purely physiological description; secondly, to the utter contingency of the mental and physical; and, thirdly, to a theology of soul. James does not elude the problems implicit in his own

theory; but, in this opening chapter, he does clear the philosophical ground for the remainder of his work. Indeed, he seems to understand the futility of searching for indubitable foundations when, later, he humbly suggests that nature "has mixed us of clay and flame, of brain and mind, that the two things hang indubitably together and determine each other's being, but how or why, no mortal may ever know" (182). Albeit surrounded by queries, it is this philosophical space from where James begins his exploration of psychological principles.

James substantiates his opening comments by basing his psychological discussions upon an empirical study of physiological mechanisms and a consideration of the simple reflex responses of lower animals in his discussion of 'The Functions of the Brain'. Just as he clarifies his philosophical position in the opening chapter, here he clears a physiological space from which a consideration of psychology emerges. By beginning <u>Principles</u> with a description of physiology, he is able to direct his attention towards psychological processes without reducing his study to crude materialism. James does not overlook the problems inherent in dualism, because he goes on to defend his deliberate strategy of "mixing the physical and mental" (24). He claims that conceiving of "the chain of events amongst the cells and fibres as complete in itself" would be "an unreal abstraction", whilst speaking solely in terms of Roycean "ideas" would ignore the fundamental importance of their organic cause (24). However, other weaknesses of dualism remain.

Broadly, he follows an evolutionary argument in which the more complicated cerebral mechanisms are discernible in higher organisms whose hemispheres have developed to a greater degree than those lower down the evolutionary tree. He detects an organism's

evolution to have taken two directions: "the lower centres passing downwards into more hesitating automatism and the higher ones upwards into larger intellectuality" (79). Intelligent action is characterized by three capacities or abilities: sentience; the ability to discriminate; and the ability to project goals or ends towards which action can be directed. He argues that, as the physiological seat of the reflex evolves from the spinal cord and the lower brain (medulla oblongata) to the centres of the cerebral cortex, so these abilities are made possible by the "passage of functions forward to the ever-enlarging hemispheres" (79). Consequently, James asserts that those basal reflexes which in lower creatures are conditioned entirely as fixed responses to sensory stimuli (he takes for his example the frog's nervous system) have evolved into cerebral tendencies which are "modifiable by education" in higher organisms (80).[5]

His argument here is not original. But, whilst he owes much of his thought to Spencer and the American Darwinists, James moves strategically to argue that it is possible to speak of those "cerebral reflexes" discernable in higher creatures "entirely" as a "cortical transaction." Prefiguring an aspect of Freud's thought, James claims that it is possible to arrive at "psychological truth...without entangling ourselves on a dubious anatomy and physiology" (80). These psychological truths do not constitute an ineffable realm of ideas severed from their organic roots. But, he argues, it is possible to speak in the terms of aptitudes and abilities as the "fruits" of experience without needing to reduce them to a

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[5] James's discussion of the frog's nervous system sheds light on the more complex neurology of humans, as Paul MacLean points out in an article 'On the Evolution of Three Mentalities' (1975). MacLean describes what he calls a "triune brain" which "expands in hierarchic fashion along the lines of three basic patterns that may be characterized as reptilian, paleomammalian, and neomammalian" (MacLean 1975: 216, 223). By examining each of these patterns it is possible to trace the evolutionary development of the neomammalian brain.

causal discourse of cortical stimulation and excitation. In order to develop this argument James turns to his consideration of the "aptitude of the brain for acquiring habits" (103).

James initially asserts the existence of habits in "living creatures" from a behaviouristic point of view. By observing a variety of organisms the behaviourist can perceive and record certain tendencies in creatures to repeat activities by following similar patterns of response. Habits form two types of response: instincts, which are fixed and appear to be innate, and those habits which are "the result of education" (104). These two types of habit fall into range of the classical philosophical debate on determinism and free will: those responses which follow the predetermined laws of cause and effect and those which are "variable" and can be adapted and modified "to suit the exigencies of the case." In contrast to a description of immutable natural laws, James (following a romantic precedent) attributes the variability of habits to the "organic world" (104), because, unlike inorganic matter, living organisms are able to repair moderate damage to tissues and organs.[6]

James continues his discussion by declaring that more complex organisms possess a wider repertoire of flexible habits. He infers this conclusion from the physicalist argument that matter "of a compound mass" has a greater capacity to change its composition than does an "elementary particle." Importantly, it is in the relational change between neural components of an organism that such flexibility derives. He infers that

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[6] James's suggestion that organic material contains special properties of growth as contradistinct from inorganic matter finds another parallel in Searle's thought. Following "the principles of evolutionary biology", Searle reacts to the claims of champions of strong artificial intelligence (who wish to artificially replicate mental activity without reference to organic matter) by asserting that consciousness is necessarily "a biological feature of human and certain animal brains" (Searle 1992: 88, 90).

relational change represents an ability to adapt "the outward shape" to changes in environment without complete transformation or total dissolution of form. Thus, James posits the notion of "plasticity" which is present in organisms who possess "a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once" (105).

By retaining a notion of free will, without surrendering to the law of necessity which automatism implies, James echoes the Victorian polymath, John Stuart Mill, who, in his reaction to Jeremy Bentham's and his father's versions of utilitarianism (which, for him, ignored the "internal culture of the individual" [Mill 1974: 15]), argues that free will can be maintained in the face of deterministic philosophy: "that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capacities of willing" (Mill 1981: 169). By extending Mill's argument into the domain of biology, James is able to maintain a physiological principle which underpins such modification. Indeed, this is not merely a distant echo of Mill. James's notion of plasticity is a crucial tool in his refutation of Spencer's passive account of mind, enabling him to claim that an individual can act upon an environment at the same time that he or she is moulded by it. In what was perhaps his most influential book upon Victorian thought, A System of Logic (1843), Mill argues that the philosopher of necessity, who claims that character is wholly determined by circumstance, makes a critical error: a human "has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character. Its being, in the ultimate resort, formed for him, is not inconsistent with its being, in part, formed by him as one of the intermediate agents" (Mill 1987: 117). Mill's famous argument for compatibility does not deny causal necessity, but reserves a philosophical space for self-determinism.

By deploying the metaphor of "plasticity", James is able, firstly, to substantiate Mill's assertion that character, although being strongly influenced by environment, maintains a resistance to it; and, secondly, he continues to stress his resistance to metaphysics by basing Mill's argument on a physiological principle. Mill's argument, like James's, is open to the criticism that "experience" (an individual's sensual and perceptive interaction with the world) remains the sovereign determining factor. However, as I move on to consider in the next section of this chapter, it is through a redescription of experience in the kind of writing which I am calling romantic science that James goes some way to distance himself from a metaphysical conception of experience and, furthermore, to dissolve the strict dichotomy of self and world.

James claims that habit is "at bottom a physical principle", but he does so without reverting to the hard metaphors of mechanics. James's choice of language is significant in his description of "structural modification":

> nature has carefully shut up our brain and spinal cord in bony boxes...She
> has floated them in fluid so that only the severest shocks can give them
> a concussion, and blanketed and wrapped them about in an altogether
> exceptional way (107).

Here, the softness of the verbs "floated", "blanketed" and "wrapped" implies that the formation of habits is, for higher organisms, a kind of subterranean sculpting, in which sensory "currents...leave their traces in the [neural] paths which they take" through the tissue of the brain (107). Initially these "shocks" will meet resistance, but if the sensation is strong enough "the wave of rearrangement" will succeed in facilitating a pathway through the nervous system, which "once traversed by a nerve-current might be expected

to follow the law of most of the paths we know" to become "more permeable than before" (108). James likens a neural path to "a natural drainage-channel" which forms itself in relatively amorphous tissue and, thereby, contributes to the developing complexion of the brain. He complements his explanation of the facilitation of pathways by developing Spencer's ideas concerning the "beginning of a new reflex arc", which is formed by chance when "blocks" occur in habitual pathways (109). However, once more, he admits that the details of such phenomena are "vague to the last degree" (109).

In the same chapter, he subtly moves from a consideration of habit as a physical principle to the learning of skills through training and discipline. He argues that this developmental process occurs throughout the neural systems of higher organisms, but only humans can develop complex intellectual activities. Drawing heavily on the British physiologist William B. Carpenter's study, Principles of Mental Physiology (1874), James asserts two critical points. Firstly, the channelling and rechannelling of good habits can be acquired through discipline and effort: "our nervous system grows to the modes in which it has been exercised" (112). As skills are learnt and refined the effort expended in the accomplishment of them "diminishes": "if practice did not make perfect, nor habit economize the expense of nervous and muscular energy, [humans] would therefore be in a sorry plight" (113). This leads to the second point, that "habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed" (114).

In a skilled activity the chain of events which constitutes the action can be initialized by "a single instantaneous 'cue'", rather than needing to be worked through as a series of laborious stages; each "muscular contraction" (115) instigating the appropriate

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contraction of the next in an automatic sequence which James compares with an involuntary wave of muscular peristalsis (116). As skills are learnt and mastered the higher regions of the brain are set free from the process of learning in order that they might engage with other tasks. However, anticipating Heidegger, James claims that although conscious attention does not attend to these learnt habits, "if they go *wrong*" the person retains the ability to intervene in an automatic process (118). Thus, he argues that while acquired habits may seem like involuntary actions, unlike reflex actions there is a level of consciousness, below the level of direct attention, which possesses a regulative capacity.

In this way James indicates what he deems to be the "ethical implications of the law of habit" (120). By encouraging good habits a person can reserve their intellectual and muscular energy in order to pursue other ends. He suggests that "the period between twenty and thirty is the critical one in the formation of intellectual and professional habits" (121), whilst "the period below twenty is more important still for the fixing of *personal* habits...such as vocalization and pronunciation, gesture, motion, and address" (122). The cultivation of good habits is important in the civilizing processes by which humans become people; the acculturation of individuals being largely characterized through the development of speech and writing. By instilling habits and "useful actions" at an early age James claims it is possible "to make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy" (122). By evoking a principle of utility here James's ideas leads directly into his theory of Pragmatism (1907).

There are two crucial aspects of James's account of habit - firstly, the implication that there is an underlying moral pattern to his thought and, secondly, his principle of action - that become central expressions of James's philosophical project. If, as I am arguing, one interpretation of James is as an intellectual progeny of the early nineteenth-century speculative German romantic scientists, it is necessary to scrutinize both these aspects of his thought in the light of other developments in post-romantic ideas. In order to position James in this context, I want to conclude this section by considering his notion of habit in the light of the comments of two key modernist figures: the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the English aesthete, Walter Pater. By comparing their positions in relation to James it is possible to consider each of the connected aspects - morality and action - in turn.

In one of Nietzsche's transitional works, Human, All Too Human (1878), the German philosopher contemplates "the history of moral feelings" (Nietzsche 1994: 39). For his translator, Marion Faber, this book marks a break from Nietzsche's early romantic associations with Richard Wagner and his philosophical allegiance with Arthur Schopenhauer, towards a later rejection of Christian morality and an elaboration of his doctrine of will to power. He anticipates ideas he expands upon in Beyond Good and Evil (1886) and On the Genealogy of Morals (1887) by considering morality to be closely connected with a veneration for the preservation of custom: "to be moral, correct, ethical means to obey an age-old law or tradition" (Nietzsche 1994: 66). In this way, it is the "tradition or law" (67) which determines the valency of good and evil. Goodness is therefore a value which rests on the weight of its inheritance, whilst "evil is to be 'not moral' (immoral), to practice bad habits, go against tradition" (66). He discerns that a

form of pleasure is gained from the knowledge that a habit (*Gewohnheiten*) has "stood the test" of experience and, in pragmatic vein, proves "useful" (67).

Nietzsche goes on to criticize this doctrine for proclaiming that "because one feels good with one custom" it becomes the "*only* possibility by which one can feel good" (67). He detects that some societies tolerate and preserve difficult and "burdensome" customs because they seem to be "highly useful" in the pursuit of more important ends (68). Following Emerson's comments on passive conformity (as discussed in the last section of the introduction), Nietzsche later develops this position to argue that often slave mentalities are nurtured and preserved through a desensitization to the constraints of custom and the values of traditional morality.

However, far from rejecting habits wholesale, in The Gay Science (1882) Nietzsche claims: "I love brief habits...and consider them an inestimable means for getting to know many things and states" (Kaufmann 1974: 236). In this view, those habits which facilitate the development of an active self are seen to be both useful and enjoyable. But, he then goes on to say: "enduring habits I hate. I feel as if a tyrant had come near me and as if the air I breathe had thickened when events take such a turn that it appears that they will inevitably give rise to enduring habits" (237). Rather than providing a source of personal enlightenment, "enduring habits" appear to lead only to suffocating bondage and the repetition of sameness. By perpetuating habits, the goodness inherent in "brief habits" (what is good for the self at one particular moment) collapses into what is good under the aegis of law or the weight of custom.

James's theory of habit is clearly different from the Nietzschean view. Early in <u>Principles</u> James outlines a moral hierarchy which moves upwards from "permanent drunkards" (James 1950a: 127) and tramps who live "from hour to hour", through "the bachelor", "the father", "the patriot" and upwards to the heights of the "philosopher and saint whose cares are for humanity and eternity" (23). The formation of good habits is thought to influence and to contribute to the perpetuation of social values. However, there are other aspects of James's thoughts which push him much closer to Nietzsche. Although, on one level, James appears to espouse a personal morality which adheres closely to public values, he speaks of the "abrupt acquisition of the new habit" as the "best way" of acting upon resolution (124). Furthermore, echoing Nietzsche's two extremes of the release of powerful creative energy and worldly abstinence through solitude, James claims that the "best way" in which to keep "the faculty of effort alive" (126) is either by practising "a little gratuitous exercise every day" or through "a sharp period of suffering, and then a free time" (124).

In this manner, public and private morality cannot be easily elided in James's thought; he proposes that the individual should find techniques for disrupting the passive absorption of pregiven values. Like his refusal to simply accept Spencer's "fatalistic" account of self, James combines his conception of introspection as a method of self-awareness with methods of resisting stasis through the activity of bodily movement. James, following Nietzsche, implies that the acquisition of a 'good' habit should be seen as an enabling device or a technique for self-creation ("to make one's self over again" [124]) rather than a fixed pattern which restricts individual liberty.

The second aspect of James's thought - his principle of action - is, perhaps, one of his distinctive marks as a nineteenth-century thinker. Against the "sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed" (125), James encourages active decision making ("we must take care to launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible") and the "need of securing success at the outset" (123). In this way, he positions himself alongside the likes of Mill and Thomas Carlyle (an advocate of hero-worship and strong leadership) against the decadent aesthetes who emerged in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century.

In an essay on 'The Failure of Habit' (1973), the critic Philip Fisher uses Walter Pater's famous 'Conclusion' to The Renaissance (1873) to exemplify the position against which James reacts. When Pater, in modernist vein, claims,

> in a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits. For, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations look alike (Pater 1986: 152),

Fisher interprets him to mean that "perception, not action" is made "the center of the self" (Fisher 1973: 3). However, whereas James asserts that strenuous labour should be privileged over the defamiliarizing pleasure derived from burning with a "hard, gem-like flame" (Pater 1986: 152), those soft metaphors from earlier in the chapter lessen the distance between an autonomous self and the kind of individuation which the aesthete seeks. Furthermore, when James comments that the "more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers of

mind will be set free for their own proper work" (James 1950a: 122), he does not preclude the appreciation of subtle distinctions or the qualitative evaluation of art. Indeed, in a later chapter on attention, James explicitly speaks in painterly vocabulary: "interest alone gives accent and emphasis, light and shade, background and foreground - intelligible perspective, in a word" (402).

In contrast to Pater's post-Kantian and antifunctional expression of disinterested pleasure, James adheres to the neoclassical notion that art should be instructive and morally edifying. Reiterating the warnings of Vita Scudder[7] concerning "excessive novel-reading and theatre going" (125), James would seem to reject the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art* because:

> one becomes filled with emotions which habitually pass without prompting to any deed, and so the inertly sentimental condition is kept up. The remedy would be, never to suffer one's self to have an emotion at a concert, without expressing it afterward in *some* active way (126).

James's two examples of action ("speaking genially to one's aunt, or giving up one's seat in a horse-car" [126]) indicate that art and music should invoke compassion and altruism. Of course, James's examples do not preclude an aesthetic response; but it is, as he says, the "particular lines" and "general forms of discharge" that are important in order to ensure that the sensation and perception of music is not merely internalized (126). Rather than passively receiving sense-data, James implies that only by striving to keep the neural pathways open to possibility by acting upon the world can a sense of bodily equilibrium and psychic well-being be maintained. However, equilibrium is not to be equated with

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[7] See Scudder's article 'The Moral Dangers of Musical Devotees', <u>Andover Review</u>, January 1887, 46-53.

repetition and bodily stasis nor, in Spencer's definition, the "equilibration" which represents the end or the "impassable limit" of evolution (Hofstadter 1992: 37). Thus, James can be seen to argue that the cultivation of good habits is an important aspect of character building, but the extremes of habitual action only lead back to the kind of compulsive necessity from which he hopes to escape. The metaphor of discharge (together with his previous use of soft metaphors) lends to James's conception of habit the language of dynamism which shifts his position away from Spencer's idea of biological equilibrium.

James's romantic rhetoric of dynamism hovers between two notions of selfhood. Either the self is conceived as an autonomous and sovereign entity which creatively acts in and upon the world, but is relatively unaffected by it, or it is understood as a flexible structure which fluctuates with changes in environment. In the later pages of 'Habit' James appears to gravitate towards the former version of an active self, but his notion of biological evolutionism rests closer to the other pole of selfhood. James's theory of self actually rejects both poles for their extremity. He seeks a middle path by which the self is understood to be both an active entity (guided by the formation of good habits) at the same time that it fluidly changes and passively adapts to its environment.[8] Moreover, this notion of the self in "flux" leads from James's discussion of habit directly into his chapter on 'The Stream of Thought.'

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[8] In this way James perhaps lies closer to the Paterian strain of romantic thought than may seem apparent: that the self is acted upon (in Pater's thought the self is acted upon by the work of art) as much as it acts.

(2) The Stream of Thought: a "theatre of simultaneous possibilities"?

This section focuses upon James's discussion of 'The Stream of Thought', working from within the framework of habit and repetition established in the last section. Although theoretical problems remain unresolved in James's work, I argue that he sets up a tenable model of consciousness which leads neither to idealism nor dualism. This enables him in the following chapter, 'The Consciousness of Self', productively to discuss ideas of identity and selfhood. Like his thoughts on habit, much of James's discussion is not original and, in the light of the over-used language of "streams of consciousness", it may seem a particularly well-worn discourse; but, in the development of James's thought, the following exposition represents a crucial stage which anticipates his later work.

In 'The Stream of Thought', and elsewhere in Principles, James deploys a series of images that later became potent for characterising the psychological technique implemented by modernist writers. The technique of free indirect speech suggests a slippage between different modes and levels of (represented) consciousness without requiring the writer to mark or signpost them as such. I will argue in this section that such writerly experimentation is homologous to James's description of consciousness, both for his broad aesthetic concerns and the series of metaphors he deploys to represent fluidity.

The image of the stream follows closely from James's Darwinian description of the plasticity of mind, which moulds itself to adapt to change and mutability in the environment. The mental stream is conceived to flow through a landscape of objects, but it is not entirely distinct from it. As the phenomenologist Franz Brentano makes clear,

the objects can only be perceived and known through their aspects as they are available to consciousness.[9] James's notions of flexibility and malleability become central in his attempt to conceive of the self midway between the sovereign and self-contained entity of nineteenth-century bourgeois myth and the kind of predetermined bundle of physiological reflexes which he understands to exist beneath the level of consciousness.

In the chapter preceding 'The Streams of Thought', James considers one of the central concerns of modern philosophy: the mind in relation to an object world. He suggests an "individual consciousness" should not be conceived as a seamless whole, because it undergoes temporal breaks and interruptions (James 1950a: 199). Accordingly, he claims that "sleep, fainting, coma, epilepsy, and other 'unconscious' conditions are apt to break in upon and occupy large durations of what we nevertheless consider the mental history of a single man" (199). Instead of an individual's "mental history" only constituting waking, or conscious, life, James proposes that an interruption to this unidirectional history may occur "where we do not suspect it...in a incessant and fine-grained form" (199). In this counter-Enlightenment argument, the "single man" is not aware of all the contents of his consciousness nor of his exact place in relation to the world (a world of objects and a world of humans). Although he champions the introspective method, James acknowledges its limitations for knowing the self: "fine-grained" consciousness can be only partially known.

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[9] In the first volume of Mind (1876), a psychological and philosophical journal to which James frequently contributed, Brentano's Psychologie vom Empirischen Standpunte (1874) was reviewed to high acclaim. The reviewer, R. Flint, suggests that it is "a work which no psychologist should overlook" (116). Flint comments on Brentano's empirically based "psychological method", which enables him to move between physiological, psychological and phenomenological aspects of consciousness. James acknowledges Brentano in Principles, both for his rigorous empiricism and his attention to mental phenomena (James 1950a: 187, 547).

He goes on to claim that one does not usually experience these "gaps" or breaches directly (200); one only become aware of them through reference to objective or "outward time" (for example, "the sight of our wound" after an anaesthetized operation or the awareness of a lapse in chronological time). He remains uncertain how one could indubitably decide whether consciousness is fragmentary or continuous. But, rather than favouring the direction of Descartes and Locke, who claim that consciousness sinks to "a minimal state" or ceases to exist during sleep, he suggests that the self possesses a "form of a secondary consciousness entirely cut off from the primary or normal one, but susceptible of being tapped and made to testify to its existence in various odd ways" (203).[10] Acknowledging his debt to the French experimental physicians, Pierre Janet and Alfred Binet, James detects that this type of secondary consciousness is most readily apparent in patients with blind-sight or those under hypnotic trance, who display an awareness of objects even though they appear to be physiologically incapable of doing so.[11]

Binet's research in the 1880s revealed that many hysterics maintain the ability to write "automatically" whilst in an unconscious state. In his 1896 Lowell Lectures on 'Exceptional Mental States' James explains his own study of automatic writing, in which he postulates "two simultaneously operating systems of intelligent consciousness, one above the threshold of awareness and one below, with separate characteristics" (Taylor

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[10] James directly addresses this issue of what happens to consciousness whilst sleeping. Closely paralleling the French philosopher Henri Bergson, he stresses that although there is a formal break ("for the onlooking psychologist" [238]) in the durational level of consciousness (*la durée*), the subject only experiences the break by inferring it through the passage of chronological time, or such physiological symptoms as stiffness or hunger. Without these signs the individual would be left with a sense of unbroken consciousness.

[11] For a sample of the work of these two students of Charcot, see Binet and Charles Féré, 'L'hypnotisme chez les hysteriques', Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger, 19, 1885, 1-25 and Janet, L'Automatisme psychologique (1889). Binet's paper on 'Visual Hallucinations in Hypnotism' was published in Mind, 9(35), 1884, 413-14 and Janet's book was reviewed in the same journal, 14(56), 1889, 598.

1984: 6). He concludes in Principles that "the method of automatic writing proves that their perceptions exist, only cut off from communication with the upper consciousness" (James 1950a: 206). This severance of the two levels, or layers, of consciousness encourages James to postulate the splitting of identity into the "upper" and "under" self; a split which is particularly apparent amongst hysterics who suffer from "alterations of the natural sensibility of various parts and organs of the body" (202). The upper self, corresponding to the higher intellectual regions of the brain, can express itself through speech and vocal articulation, whilst the under self (which he sometimes calls the "sub-conscious" self [207]) reveals itself through somatic symptoms ("pricks, burns, and pinches" [206]) and forms of writing which are free from cerebral control.[12]

James claims that even in non-hysterics these two levels of self remain to a large extent in "mutual ignorance" of each other (208), which serves to undermine the Cartesian idea of the self as privileged knower. In A Discourse on Method (1637) and, more fully, in Meditations (1641), Descartes postulates that the self, or mind, is able to clearly and distinctly conceive of itself, although it may doubt everything else. In this manner he arrives at his first principles of the knowing mind as the indubitable grounds for knowledge. However, if James takes as his model a split and semi-ignorant self then the epistemological certainty of Descartes's subject becomes highly questionable. For James, the interplay between the two levels of consciousness problematizes the idea of

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[12] James parallels the work of Freud and Breuer in Studies on Hysteria (1895) and Freud's later metapsychological papers, with his notion of "upper" self corresponding to Freud's ego and "under" self with id. However, although James later came into contact with Freud's writings, he rarely uses the term "unconscious", preferring "sub-conscious" or, more frequently, "subliminal self" which he appropriates from the German psychologist, F. W. H. Myers, who wrote an important paper on automatic writing in 1885 (James 1950a: 400).

intentionality: "we must never take a person's testimony, however sincere, that he has felt nothing, as proof positive that no feeling has been there" (211).

This position lends itself to the eye of the sceptic and leads James's work towards the same philosophical impasse which Stanley Cavell's hermeneutics address: if the autonomy of the knowing and intending subject is questionable then so too is any claim to know anything about the world and other living entities in it. James resists pushing his discussion towards a rejection of all grounds for knowledge. As he later expounds more eloquently in Pragmatism, humans live in an *as if* world in which they have to accept certain realities in order to survive and accomplish certain ends. James's emerging pragmatism counters the extreme uncertainty of the Humean sceptical position, which he discards together with the absolute autonomy of the Cartesian self (originally posited in response to earlier sceptics). As I shall discuss more fully in the next section, James realizes the difficulties of attempting to argue for ultimate foundations and, instead, favours "indirectly or only potentially verifying processes" as more useful for the accomplishment of goals (James 1981: 95).

The point here is that humans have to assume some knowledge of their consciousness and, by extension, of the object world in order to have any agency. This departs from the Spencerian position which states that humans have an innate impulse for survival over which they have little, if any, control. In response, James argues that ultimately humans rely on feelings and sense-perception in order to know (in both its senses, *connaître* and *savoir*) about themselves and the environment in which they live. But, as he goes on to expound in the first two chapters of the second volume of Principles, "a pure sensation

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is an abstraction" in so far as it is always contaminated with "voluminous associative or reproductive processes in the cortex" (James 1950b: 3). He goes on to qualify sensation as that which occurs "with a minimum of perception" (3). Nevertheless, even from a young age, the two are understood to be deeply and inextricably intertwined; one cannot philosophically rise above the system of relations and associations which constitute physio-psychic life. This argument, like that which posits a semi-ignorant self, resists the Cartesian position for a more complex world-view in which subjects have only a partial and incomplete perspective.

This argument moves my discussion into the very midst of his chapter on 'The Stream of Thought.' James develops Spencer's discussion of the "relations between feelings" which characterize consciousness (James 1950a: 249), by suggesting that one is initially inside a phenomenological system of relations, rather than being able to secure an impartial or an omniscient view of it. Although James fundamentally differs from Descartes, for both of them the 'I', or first-person, is in a unique position to explore consciousness. As a behavioural psychologist, James relies on observation as a method by which to study the mind; but, he goes on to argue, only introspective knowledge of one's own particular thoughts can evince a fuller understanding of personal psychology.

When James opens the chapter by proposing that "we now begin our study of the mind from within" (224), he suggests that this is the only tenable position from which to view it. Similarly, when he outlines the "important characters in the process" of thought, he invites the reader "to plunge *in media res* as regards our vocabulary", as if this is likewise the only viable manner through which to view the mental process (225). For James, the

philosophical task is not a matter of proving that one has thoughts or that there is someone to whom thoughts happen (as it is for Descartes), but to characterize and describe the stream of thought as it occurs for the individual. This stubborn refusal to entertain the metaphysics of mind lends the description an empirical sense of rootedness in the ongoing life of the mind, which, as John Wild argues at length, encourages Principles to be read from a phenomenological perspective (Wild 1970: 55-78).

James outlines, and then expands upon, five major characteristics of thought: that thought is personal; that it constantly changes; that "thought is sensibly continuous"; it views an object-world; and it displays interest "in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of others" and is thus able to choose between them. James posits these characteristics not from an *a priori* argument, but from an empirical exploration and description of the contents of consciousness. Rather than moving consecutively through the five characteristics, as does James, I focus my discussion on the second and third aspects (change and continuity) in order to explore the manner in which James interprets Spencer's phrase "relations between feelings."[13]

Whereas Spencer bases his conception of the brain on an economic model of neuronal discharge by which psychic energy is expended, James incorporates this description into his more subtle view of the "waxing" and "waning" of brain states: "no changes in the brain are physiologically ineffective, and that presumably none are bare of psychological result" (235). The phasing of residual and emergent elements encourages James to

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[13] In a long footnote spanning four pages James reviews a section of Spencer's First Principles of Psychology (Spencer 1870: 65ff.) and other philosophers who have considered the problematic term "relations through feeling" (247ff.).

describe thoughts as "overtones" (258) which cannot be isolated to a single sequence. James's image of the complex interplay of tonal elements promotes a model of "multitudinous" brain-states over the atomistic simplicity of Locke's position, a model which James claims is necessary in order to explain complex thought processes (236). He goes on to develop his view of the complex nature of thought by closely considering the axis of time along which such waxing and waning occurs.

Because thoughts occur along a temporal plane James surmises that "no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before" (230). Echoing and developing the thought of the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, he stresses that no two experiences can be exactly alike: the interplay of sense and perception ("the river of elementary feeling" [233]) inevitably changes with time. He argues that the complexity of such a relationship constitutes the peculiar and irreducible fabric of experience. Experience, then, emerges by acknowledging the subtle differences and variations between perception and sensation. Because it is only possible to speak of "pure" sensation as an abstraction, complex experience cannot be reduced to the level of simplicity which Locke desires. Moreover, because particular experiences are unique, James proposes that it is the responsibility of the individual to attend to his own perceptions: "experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date" (234).

This may appear to be another manifestation of James the moralist; but, as he indicates in the previous chapter, not only is it impossible to adequately theorize experience, but it is also impossible for the self to attend to, or to comprehend the entirety of, what it

experiences. Because there are different and conflicting levels of consciousness, the self is understood to be only ever aware of a minute segment of the whole. Moreover, as experience alters through time so must one's ability to attend to changes in it. Quoting from the writing of his British friend, Shadworth Hodgson, James establishes what Hodgson calls "a sequence of differents" (Hodgson 1878: 290), which describes experience as corresponding to a succession of temporal moments.[14] One might perceive the same object more than once, but the ideas which an individual has of that object are never precisely alike. In a covert attack on the sensationalist school of philosophy, he claims that it is only through the refusal, or inability, to attend to subtle changes in perception that gives the perceiver a sense of a static and unchanging phenomenological world: "the entire history of Sensation is a commentary on our inability to tell whether two sensations received apart are exactly alike" (231).

Once more, James resorts to his painterly vocabulary to suggest that one should be more attentive to the "ratio" (the contrasts and the gradations) between different kinds or levels of consciousness: "we feel things differently according as we are sleepy or wake, hungry or full, fresh or tired" (232). By inferring (rather than directly perceiving or sensing) the differences between these stages the inquirer can begin to make a rudimentary "first charcoal sketch upon [his or her] canvas" (225). Anticipating the modernist technique of defamiliarization, James claims that even

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[14] See Shadworth H. Hodgson, The Philosophy of Reflection, 2 volumes (1878). Like James, Hodgson can be seen as a precursor of phenomenology, by "dealing with phenomena which are but very partially accessible to us" (1). Hodgson outlines his project as an attempt to "lay down the outlines, principles, and methods of a system of metaphysic, basing it upon known facts of consciousness." However, unlike James, he welcomes the language of metaphysics (although he acknowledges that it is "peculiarly liable to self-deception" [3]) in, what he calls, his search for "foundations."

when the identical fact recurs, we *must* think of it in a fresh manner, see it under a somewhat different angle, apprehend it in different relations from those which it last appeared. And the thought by which we cognize it is the thought of it-in-those-relations, a thought suffused with the consciousness of all that dim context (233).

It is not the awareness of the object as such, but the changes in the whole relational field of consciousness which alter the value or meaning of the object for the viewer. Developing his discussion of defamiliarization espoused in 'Habit', James recommends that the individual develops the capacity to attend to differences without losing the ability to think of objects "in a fresh manner."

James's position in 'Habit' can be read to oppose the kind of disinterested pleasure proposed by Pater's aesthetic theory. Here, however, he appears to value the cultivation of good habits, but only when they are yoked to an awareness of those unharmonius, or unassimilable, elements which cause contrasts between levels of consciousness. James describes his model explicitly in aesthetic terms: "when everything is dark a somewhat less dark sensation makes us see an object white" (232). Similarly, "as one color succeeding another is modified by the contrast, silence sounds delicious after noise...and...in music the whole aesthetic effect comes from the manner in which one set of sounds alters our feeling of another" (234-35). Comparable aesthetic contrasts are described as Pater relates his passionate engagement with works of art. Rather than the viewer imposing a preformulated pattern upon a painting, for Pater art tends to work on the mind of the viewer. To return to Pater's 'Conclusion' to The Renaissance:

At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality...But when

reflexion begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence...each object is loosed into a group of impressions - colour, odour, texture - in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects...but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them...the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind (Pater 1986: 151).

Here, Pater directly parallels James's need to cultivate reflexive attention in order to focus upon the subtle differences between "flickering" impressions as they are experienced by the individual. Making sense of the uncontrollable "flood of external objects" is a way of giving pattern and meaning to experience.

By attending closely to minute changes in disparate experiences and attempting to express them in representational form, it is possible to redescribe Pater's image of the flood in terms of James's language of the stream. The stream may overflow the banks which define its space; but, unlike a flood, it is essentially containable and, although far from unidirectional, it suggests a steady, if not uniform, sense of temporal flow. As I discuss later in this chapter, the temporal flow implied in James's metaphor moves his writing towards a concern with narrative, by which one is able to make sense of the deluge and confusion of sense-impressions.

In the opening comments of the next section on the continuity of thought, James seems to contradict this relational model. However, it is not unlike him to move backwards, in order to concede a point or complicate his own argument, before he moves on to substantiate his position. He opens by defining "'continuous' as that which is without breach, crack, or division" (237). In "a single mind" the only "breaches" directly

conceived are "time-gaps" and contrasts in the "quality, or content, of the thought." He claims that even these breaks tend to be assimilated within the general flow or plenum of experience. The feeling of the unbroken flow of thought enables an individual to retain a sense of identity with both recent and distant past: "the natural name for it is *myself, I,* or *me*" (238). The qualities of "warmth and intimacy" (239) are those with which James associates the function of memory for maintaining a sense of enduring identity within the flow of experience, and by which he can recognize a particular experience as belonging to him. The significance of his image of stream is herein revealed: it describes a continuous, unjointed flow to which the more mechanistic images of "chain" and "train" used by the associationists cannot do justice.

James claims that "even within the limits of the same self...a kind of jointing and separateness among the parts" becomes apparent. He refers explicitly to the "contrasts in quality" to which he makes reference in the previous section. Some phenomena are "discrete and discontinuous" (for example, a loud explosion in the midst of calm), but

> their comings and goings and contrasts no more break the flow of the thought that thinks them than they break the time and space in which they lie. A silence may be broken by a thunder-clap, and we may be so stunned and confused for a moment by the shock as to give no instant account to ourselves of what has happened. But that very confusion is a mental state, and a state that passes us straight over from the silence to the sound (240).

The sound of thunder might cause a momentary shock which registers as a sense of confusion, but even this confusion is part of the stream of thought. Indeed, there is no outside to which the stream can be contrasted on this model. Rather, the contrasts and differences between thoughts are contained within the flow of experience.

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Acknowledging his phenomenological connections with Brentano, James claims that "what we hear when the thunder crashes is not thunder *pure*, but thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it." It is the background or context (the whole of the stream) which determines the significance and the meaning of the object to which attention is focused. This context refers to all past experiences, whether clearly recalled, dimly recollected or subliminally registered, and an accompanying awareness, no matter how peripheral, of "our own bodily position, attitude, condition" (240). Once more, it is "our bodily selves" which James claims are "the seat of the thinking" and which provide the bedrock (or absolute grounds, although clearly these are not explanatory grounds) for these "phenomena of contrast" (242).

The contrasts are not between different streams of thought, but the "difference of subjective states" as experienced within the stream (243). These differences are caused by a complex and overdetermined relationship between neurochemical excitation, the state of consciousness, the object attended to, the motivation of attention and the experiential passage of time. The stream is not unidirectional, nor does it flow at the same rate. James claims that "what strikes us first is this different pace of its parts...it seems to be made of an alteration of flights and perchings"; the "substantive parts" ("resting-places") are contrasted to the "transitive parts" ("places of flight") which "lead us from one substantive conclusion to another" (243).

James detects a general neglect of these 'in-between' transitive parts in psychology, in favour of more tangible substantives. But it is these "differents", or transitives, which structure and connect thoughts and to which James recommends the individual should

turn his or her attention; for, without vigilance, he detects the substantive conclusion "so exceeds them in vigor and stability that it quite eclipses and swallows them up in its glare" (243-44). The homology between substantive thoughts and nouns and between transitive thoughts and verbs and conjunctions is apparent here, but James declares that language is a secondary accretion which is "incapable of doing justice" to all the gradations and "shades" of experience. The movement and dynamism expressed, but also suppressed, in the conjunctions "and", "if", "but" and "by", become as important to James's description of the stream of thought as they do for Freud in his analysis of dreams (246).[15] This is clearly reminiscent of James's earlier position, in which he claims the inquirer can only infer differences rather than perceiving them directly: only by cultivating an awareness of the differences between formal elements in the compositional field can one begin to understand consciousness.

One major problem remains: if one cannot attend to differences directly, how can the necessary inferences be made? This is where James's ideas of repetition and pattern established in 'Habit' come into play. Like a musical scale or a sentence construction, the sense of familiar pattern encourages an anticipatory response: a "noun in certain position demands a verb in a certain mood and number, in another position it expects a relative pronoun" (254). Similarly, shifts in the perceptual field represent a modification of a previous pattern, rather than wholesale change: repetition as the pronunciation of the same does not follow from James's notion of the changing stream (here the Heraclitean

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[15] See Freud's principles of condensation and displacement expounded in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). He argues that only by working within the logic of these mechanisms can the analyst come to a knowledge of what is meant by the dream (the latent dream-thought).

aphorism is apposite: "we never descend twice into the same stream" [233]).[16] Instead

of positing the repetition of the same, James's model of knowledge as reflection (304) is

inflected by the Kierkegaardian sense of repetition as recollection. Here, recollection

suggests the memory of something previously misplaced or forgotten: one can only have

a memory of an object or an event if it has been temporarily absent or lost.[17]

This notion of repetition-with-difference feeds into James's sense of the continuity and

preservation of identity despite flux and mutability. The idea that the organism must

adapt itself to changes in the environment implies the impossibility of maintaining a

static state of selfhood. Instead, the patterns that constitute mental phenomena (an

awareness of a changing environment) are incessantly repeated in different combinations.

As an element is rearranged, so must one modify an awareness of "its relations, near and

remote, the dying echo of whence it came to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to

lead" (255). Rather than trekking through a previously unexplored phenomenological

wilderness, one is led by those structures and patterns by which one can anticipate the

rearrangement of elements:

> The significance, the value, of the image is all in this halo or penumbra
> that surrounds and escorts it, - or rather that is fused into one with

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[16] This is not to devalue the importance of sameness in James's thought. A point to which he frequently returns, sameness gives one a sense of a relatively stable world ("sameness in a multiplicity of objective appearances is thus the basis of our belief in realities outside of thought" [272]) and, as he comments at length on 'The Consciousness of Self', the idea of sameness is crucial to one's sense of enduring identity (331ff.).

[17] In Repetition: A Venture in Experimenting Psychology (1843) Kierkegaard's alter-ego Constantin Constantius states "for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition, properly so called is recollected forwards" (Kierkegaard 1983: 131). This assertion resembles James's suggestion that memory and anticipation are integrally intertwined and prefigures Sacks's interest in neurological disorders which affect the faculty of memory.

it...leaving it, it is true, an image of the same *thing* it was before, but making it an image of that thing newly taken and freshly understood.

At one and the same moment, an individual experiences both repetition and change: the experience of the loss of a particular, previously dominant, configuration of elements and the memory of the association of past components blended with the anticipation of new ones.

In order to describe this "halo or penumbra" James introduces the word "fringe" to characterize the "influence of a faint brain-process upon our thought, as it makes itself aware of relations and objects but dimly perceived" (258). Such dim perceptions account for the waxing and waning of relational elements as they restructure an individual's perceptual field, as well as for those subliminal perceptions only detectable (by the third-person) through somatic signs, dreams or expressed through a medium such as automatic writing.

When he returns to consider the individual's noetic knowledge of his or her perceptual field, James implies that one is "only aware in the penumbral nascent way of a 'fringe' of unarticulated affinities about it" (259). Even those unassimilable elements influence an awareness of the fringe: "a gap we cannot yet fill with a definite picture, word, or phrase, but which...influences us in an intensely active and determinate psychic way" (259). The gaps may either feel "definite" and tangible, or may "merely carry a mood of interest." Either way, the presence of gaps indicate that the flow of thought between substantives (those goals in which one invests a particular interest) are structured around relations and contrasts. Because the relations are constantly shifting they cannot be interpreted in a

synchronic fashion, but only as a diachronic series of fringe-like phasings which melt and dissolve into each other. Indeed, as James comments in an important footnote, the narration of these thought processes is analogous to a young child who listens "with such rapt attention to the reading of stories expressed in words half of which [he does not] understand": the child makes "flying leaps over large portions" and attends "only to substantive starting points, turning points, and conclusions" (264-65). In this way, one moves from recognizable elements without registering the elements which cannot be represented in language.

This development of James's general argument leads me to his poetic claim that the mind is "a theatre of simultaneous possibilities" (288). Through the "agency of attention" consciousness selects the elements by which it has come to recognize and order the world. Invading and contaminating these habitual and structuring perceptions are the "primordial chaos of sensations" (fundamentally bodily sensations) in which they are embedded (288). Whilst habits, customs and social codes (such as a language system) encourage individuals to reject those "swarming atoms" (289) which lie beyond established modes of representation, these constitutive elements remain the raw material of one's sense-impressions. Following James's pragmatic argument, by "rejecting certain portions" of this entropic world it is possible to establish a composition which serves one's needs in the pursuit of goals. However, resonances of chaotic impressions (resonances which register in those subliminal regions of which the upper self is ignorant) disrupt an orderly universe of which the individual is the artist-creator. Just as he rejects the determinism of Spencerian psychology, James cannot accept such an extreme romantic position, for it reduces the hidden complexity of thought to the manifest

autocracy of the sovereign artist. As becomes increasingly important when I consider <u>Varieties</u>, those critical moments when chaotic impressions invade an orderly sense of reality imply that one can only maintain provisional control over the self.

Before I move on to these considerations, there is one important question which remains unresolved in James's thinking which proves central to the development of romantic science. Unless one accepts the alternative position in which the self is an entirely passive entity or merely the epiphenomenon of the stream of thought, it is necessary to establish what James means when he speaks of the consciousness willing itself to attend to objects. It is this topic which forms the subject of my next section.

(3) "The heave of the will": a Chance to Act

In order to outline the manner in which James's redescription of the processes of thought

has bearing on his conception of an active self, I will couple a reading of James's

discussion of will in the second volume of Principles with a look at his famous essay 'The

Will to Believe' (1896). By addressing the "will" as a philosophical concept, James

stumbles upon one of the most contentious areas of nineteenth-century thought, in both

Anglo-American and German philosophy. Although in this section I will comment upon

certain parallels between James's and Nietzsche's considerations of the willing self, I want

to stress that James's notion of will-as-activity is subtly different from either of the

philosophical traditions which inform his thinking. Furthermore, by taking as his starting

point the verb "to will", rather than "the will" as noun, or, by extension, as a

psychological faculty, James manages to circumvent the trap of metaphysics. His desire

to bracket off metaphysics represents a positive move towards his theory of "radical

empiricism" which enables him to describe an embodied self rather than a philosophical

self *in vacuo*.

In the language of romanticism the will takes its place alongside the soul as an ineffable

region of the self which eludes empirical analysis, but a region which, deriving from a

tradition of Pauline Christianity, has frequently been a defining factor of human identity.

Empirically, however, only the effects of the will can be perceived or judged and only by

extrapolating backwards can the causal factor be inferred. The crucial question for James

is whether such an inference is a good one; or, more accurately, in the light of his

pragmatic theory of action, whether it enables the individual to do useful things and to

pursue desired ends. James's theoretical movement away from epistemology towards pragmatism does not imply that questions of knowledge should be altogether suspended; but, prefiguring the post-foundationalist arguments of Richard Rorty, that no absolute grounds of knowledge will provide human beings with the ultimate foundation for an active (or moral) life. For James, will is the central term for understanding this transition. It provides for him a useful tool, not only as an explanatory idea, but also as an enabling device, the belief in which can reinject a notion of agency into what may seem like a wholly determined environment, both in a philosophical sense and, as I comment later, in James's personal experience.

James wishes to retain a notion of will, but he refuses to do so at the cost of retaining a metaphysical foundation for psychology. Hence, he keeps the will as a useful theoretical and practical tool in only a limited sense. In this section I argue that James realizes his need to recoup a philosophical model of agency if he is to resist both Spencer's deterministic philosophy and the logic of his own dynamic, but subject-less, stream of thought. He does this in <u>Principles</u> by linking a notion of will to his earlier considerations of attention and motivated behaviour and, later, in 'The Will to Believe', as a hypothesis to understand meaningful activity.

As a representative of the Anglo-American psychological tradition, the British psychologist Alexander Bain, in his influential work <u>The Emotions and the Will</u> (1859), reprinted four times before the turn of the century, considers the will as a faculty which accounts for voluntary activity. Although John Stuart Mill's argument for volition successfully counters an immutable model of cause and effect, it does not appear to have

a sound philosophical base. Instead, it seems to constitute a belief about the world. Not surprisingly, the faculty of will was an anathema to the Spencerians whose Darwinian model was founded upon the primacy of involuntary instincts and drives. In many ways, the existence of will was the last line of defence for those thinkers who, like Mill, wished to keep alive the belief in the freedom of reasoned choice. For individuals to retain a sense of purpose and self-fashioning in a post-Darwinian world, it is important to assert a capacity for volition and a belief in the ability to make choices. James adopts and works through these themes, but refuses to be sucked into the futile intellectual task of attempting to expound a theory which can verify the existence of the will. Instead, and with increasing clarity in his pragmatic writings, James works with will as a device which enables him to account for otherwise unaccountable aspects of human behaviour.

The other strain of writing which runs through Principles and his later work is his strong connection with romanticism, which furnishes him with a different notion of will as a descriptive term. Romantic writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries often used the term to describe the poet's sense of agency and an inherent design in Nature. For Wordsworth and Emerson, for example, the will is viewed as a positive force which, when exercised, can invoke empathic and altruistic feelings for the wider organic and spiritual worlds. However, for both these writers, a guiding force (Wordsworth's "Nature" and Emerson's "Over-Soul") is needed in order to temper the capricious drive of the will. Thus, for them, the will lies somewhere between an innate appreciation of, and sympathy for, the familiar natural world (the interpretation of Nature as sacred) and an activity through which the poet can express feeling.

At the other extreme from this expression of optimism and faith in the mythical virtue of human nature, the importance of the German tradition for the darker aspects of James's thought is evident in the light of Schopenhauer's conception of will as an evil force. In The World as Will and Representation (1819) Schopenhauer argues at length that the will is the primary source of misery and pain in this world and if humans are to liberate themselves, then they must cultivate the denial of the will. For Schopenhauer, life and will are mutually incompatible and the privileging of the one means the negation of the other. The life of the saint should accordingly be both ascetic and altruistic, repudiating selfhood and self-advancing behaviour. James has an ambivalent relation to Schopenhauer's ideas. He credits the German for addressing "the concrete truth about the ills of life" (Perry 1935a: 721), but goes on to reject his intense pessimism, which he claims is merely "a species of fatalism, in the worst sense...an abandonment of the better possibility for sheer inaction" (722). Schopenhauer appears as an influence upon the mood of James's religious writings, but the optimistic thrust of the American's writing resists his intensely bleak vision.

Nietzsche, Schopenhauer's most rebellious disciple, fuses the positive and negative aspects of the will in his notion of will to power. This entails the self-conscious overcoming of the limitations of selfhood through the exertion of the will, in an ongoing search for spiritual self-fulfilment. For Nietzsche, the will to power expresses itself as a celebration of life, to which it gives value and meaning. He moves away from Schopenhauer's rejection of the tyranny of the will, towards an affirmatory philosophy in which the will to power overtakes the self as the important defining concept in human

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activity.[18] Although both German thinkers have bearing on James's ideas, it is Emerson, as I discuss in the next section, who provides James's most direct link to a romantic tradition. The American and German intellectual currents merge in James's thought in a twofold manner: firstly, through the transcendental 'Concord' Emerson, and, secondly, through the 'Germanic' Emerson whom Nietzsche enthusiastically read.

Before I proceed to consider James's account of the will, in which some elements of these traditions will become evident, it is important to take a couple of steps backwards to see how his ideas on 'Habit' and 'The Stream of Thought' bear directly on his version of 'The Consciousness of Self.' Although 'Will' follows some sixteen chapters after his meditation on the self, conceptually it leads directly on from it. In making such a chronological leap in Principles I neglect much of the complexity of James's argument, but where it is necessary I refer to the intervening chapters.

In 'The Consciousness of Self', James shifts from describing the constituents of the self to the "feelings and emotions they arouse" and to the "actions to which they prompt" (292). This movement, from a consideration of those cultural and bodily signs that maintain a relatively stable sense of identity despite the flux of experience to a position which establishes the centrality of agency, follows the wider scope of James's writing. This manoeuvre is not only a philosophical exercise, which transfers attention from epistemology to pragmatism, but also marks his transition to an explicitly therapeutic

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[18] In a fragment of his notebooks from 1887, Nietzsche claims that Schopenhauer has a "basic misunderstanding of the will", in his "attempt to see something higher...in willing no more, in 'being a subject *without* aim and purpose'" (Nietzsche 1968: 52). Both Nietzsche and James place emphasis on the importance of will, both in the weak pragmatic sense of getting things done and the strong pragmatic sense of what is good for the self in the pursuit of ideals, for Nietzsche one of which is self-overcoming.

form of writing. At all times James opposes stasis as a condition to avoid, whether intellectually or practically, because it entails the surrendering to blind forces of instinct or natural laws which for him lead to a fatalistic view of life. This does not mean that self-contemplation should be abandoned for an active life devoid of reflection. Far from it, the individual should understand that certain aspects of the body "seem more intimately ours than the rest", and thus constitute a material home. Extending outwards through the circles of family and social recognition (for example, name-giving, sharing a common language and accepting a social role), these zones constitute a habitat in the world.

Unlike Spencer, James does not believe that habitat is wholly predetermined, to which humans must adapt themselves if they are to survive. Clearly, an argument for adaptation informs James's thought to a significant degree (as it does for Binswanger and Sacks), but the sense that humans can develop good habits (either through self-development or following educational programs) implies they have the ability to alter the shape and scope of their habitat.

A habitat should not be figured as a fixed zone, or territory, into which individuals are born; rather, the habitat is the ground for a human's experience of the world:

> If the stream as a whole is identified with the Self far more than any outward thing, a certain portion of the stream abstracted from the rest is so identified in an altogether peculiar degree, and is felt by all men as a sort of innermost centre within the circle, of sanctuary within the citadel, constituted by the subjective life as a whole (James 1950a: 297).

James suggests that there is a portion of the stream of experience which, although in constant flux, adheres together and coheres more intimately than the rest. The claim that there is an element which "other elements end by seeming to accrete round it and belong to it" (298) pushes his theoretical position precariously close to the associationist model he resists. However, he goes on to state that "the active element" helps to constitute and sustain this "innermost center" of selfhood: that is to say, the forces which can act upon the environment and assimilate certain sensations are those which constitute a sense of identity within a habitat. James calls this "center" a "home of interest", which is at one and the same time a cognitive and a sentient centre: "that within us to which pleasure and pain, the pleasant and the painful, speak" (298). Through this reading, his description of a "citadel" can be rescued from the assertion of an imperial self to a notion of active self-construction *only* within the bounds of experience.

James cannot dismiss the self as fiction (at least, in the non-real or falsifying sense of the term), because he claims "this central part of the Self is *felt*...something with which we...have direct sensible acquaintance" (298-99). Once more, James endorses phenomenological introspection for investigating the "palpitating inward life" of the self, the existence of which the individual must confirm for him or herself (299). His claim for a sustaining self can be stated in another way: even if the self is a fiction, it is one which is constructed in order to make sense of, and give recognisable shape to, the chaotic sense impressions of experience. James counters Hume's denial that there is any one entity, or faculty, which exists above the flow of sense experience by claiming that, because one privileges and attends to some aspects of experience over others, it is possible to postulate a sense of experiencing self.

Attention is not an unproblematic activity which can be easily assimilated into a simple perspective or by the construction of a stable subject-position, for in his Pateresque description of the perceptual process James writes: "I cannot think in visual terms, for example, without feeling a fluctuating play of pressures, convergences, divergences, and accommodations in my eyeballs" (300). Despite the complexity and mutability of such sensations (whether visual, tactile, oral, aural or olfactory), the recurring and "distinct portions" (302) of these impressions are seen to constitute one's centre of identity.

In order to clarify such an account, James conceptually splits the self into two aspects: the adjusting, or "nuclear", self which provides a sense of continuity, and the executing, or "shifting", self which enables one to act upon the environment in the pursuit of future goals (302). In the dynamic space between these two, which is both conservative (the cumulative result of following habitual patterns) and unstable (the revision of those patterns in the light of new experiences), James locates the sense of 'I'. This 'I' is both a linguistic structure which enables one to express oneself in language, and a felt centre of activity which exists despite the blurring of the mutable fringes of experience: as James says, "the birthplace of conclusions and the starting point of acts" (303).

It is productive to understand James's view of the self as a site where remembering (retaining traces of past activities) and willing (forcing new perceptual stances) meet. This leads directly back to James's consideration of time in 'The Stream of Thought' chapter. Memory does not trace backwards in an unidirectional fashion to connect with a line of identical past selves, nor does the self maintain a stable shape as it pushes into the future. Instead, those fringes of experience which disrupt such a linear sequence

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cause slight modifications and disruptions in habitual behaviour. The idea of repetition-with-difference means that the self cannot preserve the same pattern over a period of time, because, even within the same perceptual encounter, the combination of elements (the "cephalic movements of 'adjustments'" [305]) change their constitutive meaning for the perceiver. Consequently, James reverses the priority of knowledge over attention when he suggests that the "condition of the experience is not one of the things experienced at the moment; this knowing is not immediately known. It is only known in subsequent reflection" (304). Knowledge of identity is thus the operation of "thinking back" to make connections through the activity of memory. The nuclear self constitutes a site in which events in the present are ordered, but it is also partly constitutive of, and partly dependent upon, the reconfiguration of past elements and events. This idea enables James to retain a sense of selfhood (the "nuclear self") as "an abstract, hypothetic or conceptual entity" postulated in an act of reflection (which can be either deliberate or involuntary), and a "*Scious*ness" as the active, protean and "shifting self" (304).

This model accounts for the manifold phenomenal world and those fringes of experiences to which the individual must adjust, and propels James's account of the self in the direction of Cavell's hermeneutic self.[19] Interpretation occurs most conspicuously at those moments when it is necessary to connect the "shifting self" with the memory of a formerly postulated "nuclear self": for example, at times of crisis associated with

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[19] James's and Nietzsche's interpretative accounts of self also encourage comparison. For both thinkers, value is the crucial element by which meaning is given to life, a value which is personal and idiosyncratic. Thus, for Nietzsche, "the individual derives the values of his acts from himself; because he has to interpret in a quite individual way even the words he has inherited...as an interpreter he is still creative." (Nietzsche 1968: 403) As in James's thought, here evaluation is an aesthetic manner of relating to the world and one by which the self is able to creatively "become."

profound bodily or environmental changes. The necessary adjustment enables one to locate the bridging dynamic self as the maker of meaning, rather than the epiphenomenon of passive sensation. Through this line of argument James reaches a convincing position for retaining a concept of self which is compatible with, and not contradictory to, his description of the stream of thought.

Of course, his model runs up against several conceptual difficulties. The inability to make sense of an event (for example, a sublime experience or a traumatic crisis) may result in the repudiation of the present moment for a self located in a safe past. In addition, the loss of memory, or the refusal to remember, may loosen the "shifting self" from its "nuclear" moorings into a free-floating world of unconnectable and unassimilable presents. But, these points do not inflict real damage upon James's theory (although they later have bearing on my consideration of some of Sacks's more extreme medical cases). As James goes on to consider towards the end of this chapter, loss of memory and split-personalities are "not rare in mental pathology" (336). His experiments with hysterics indicate that those areas of experience which cannot be expressed (either because the patient is neurologically impaired, or because the experiencer cannot bear to express his or her ordeal) indicate a subliminal level of experience which contributes to selfhood, but cannot itself be incorporated into a conscious knowledge of identity. To a greater or lesser extent, these subliminal elements are seen to impinge dimly upon accessible conscious experiences and, theoretically, disrupt a sense of sovereign self. However, these disruptive elements do not preclude or disable most individuals from positing a sense of selfhood through which activity can become meaningful.

James's sustained consideration of will transfers attention from will as faculty (as described by Bain), towards will as the act of attending. He begins from the premise that we can only execute "voluntary movements" of the body if the movement has already occurred involuntarily prior to mental exertion: thus, "reflex, instinctive, and emotional movements are all primary performances" (James 1950b: 487). Far from reverting to a Spencerian position in which an organism is innately equipped with a set of fixed responses that cannot be modified or expanded, James introduces the idea of chance to suggest that involuntary acts are often the result of contingent changes in environment. Similarly, rather than always following a fixed pattern of responses, sometimes the disruption of habits will force the individual to take up a different mode of response. Once this reflexive act has occurred, James suggests one can learn to master the response and cultivate it as a new habit. Prior to the willed execution of an activity, one must entertain the "memory-images of these sensations, defining which special act it is" (492). Memory enables the individual to recollect the consequences of a previous activity or event, which, in turn, helps him or her to make informed choices about the future. In this way, it is possible to actualize the memory of such a response through the exertion of will.

This description seems fairly conventional, but a question raised later in the chapter complicates matters:

> Is the bare idea of a movement's sensible effects its sufficient mental cue...or must there be an additional mental antecedent, in the shape of a fiat, decision, consent, volitional mandate, or other synonymous phenomenon of consciousness, before the movement can follow? (522)

In other words, why does James retain the will if all the self needs is a "kinaesthetic idea" (493) or the memory of a previous response? He concedes that in certain situations "the bare idea is sufficient" to stimulate activity: for example, the chain of habitual responses which an initial stimulus triggers off (522). After William Carpenter, he calls this type of immediate response an "ideo-motor action." However, when he considers deliberate actions, James suggests some type of "fiat, mandate, or express consent, has to intervene and precede the movement" in order to resolve internal conflict (522).

Following James's earlier description of the mind as a "theatre of simultaneous possibilities" (James 1950a: 288), the will would take the role of a judicial decision-maker in situations in which different options present themselves as equally tenable, or desirable in different ways. Where James departs from the conventional position of positing a faculty of will, which mysteriously exists above the flow of experience and is called upon to arbitrate in difficult situations, is that he understands it as a vehicle by which an act of attention (that which constitutes motivated behaviour) is transferred into bodily kinetic movement:

> The effort to attend is therefore only a part of what the word 'will' covers; it covers also the effort to consent to something to which our attention is not quite complete...although attention is the first and fundamental thing in volition, express consent to the reality of what is attended to is often an additional and quite distinct phenomenon involved (James 1950b: 568).

The will thus becomes the key term which James postulates in order to redescribe the Cartesian contemplative theatre of the mind as an embodied self existing in a world of activity. Although "the terminus of the psychological process in volition, the point to which the will is directly applied, is always an idea" (567), the application or

actualization of this idea in a world of matter suggests that willing is part of the "psychological process" rather than a metaphysical entity.

In his explication of this idea, James speaks at length about five different types of decision, by which one settles contradictions; by an appeal to reason; by acquiescing to either internal or external pressures: by following a conviction; or by resolving to follow a particular course of action (531-35). In most situations decision-making provides the individual with few difficulties: after balancing up the options, the gains of one particular course of action usually outweigh the losses. Reasoned choice appears to provide the foundation for this model, but James's understanding of "resolve" (534) undermines the supremacy of reason as the crucial criterion in the making of decisions.[20] He claims that even if he wished to retain the idea of reasoned choice, it is not that, but the feeling of exertion or "living effort", which encourages him to postulate the existence of will; the "feeling of effort" suggesting an inner activity through which conflicting impulses are resolved. Unlike other types of decision-making, he claims that resolve is not a blind act of will, but an activity by which "in the very act of murdering the vanquished possibility the chooser realizes how much in that instant he is making himself lose" (534). Overcoming internal conflict cannot be explained with reference to the concepts of habit, chance or reason, only, according to James, by implicating the "heave of the will" (534).

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[20] James seems to use the noun "resolve" in both its senses: firstly, to determine or decide amongst conflicting options; and, secondly, as possessing the conviction to persevere with a course of action or belief in oneself. It is this second meaning which maintains James's ethical position *vis-à-vis* the cultivation or creation of a better self (or selves). The notion of resolve serves to push James's work in two directions: the resolute thinking of early Heidegger and the deep reading of Cavell.

This hypothesis is further problematized if willing is viewed as merely another type of instinct or habitual response. In response to this he argues that, because an individual can simultaneously entertain more than one possibility, it implies, at the least, that one possesses the *capacity* to follow a particular course of action, "whether the act then follows or not is a matter quite immaterial, so far as the willing itself goes" (530). He later substantiates this idea:

> The essential achievement of the will, in short, when it is most 'voluntary', is to ATTEND to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind. The so-doing is the fiat; and it is a mere physiological incident that when the object is thus attended to, immediate motor consequences should ensue. A resolve, whose contemplated motor consequences are not to ensue until some possibly far distant future condition shall have been fulfilled, involves all the psychic elements of a motor fiat except the word 'now;' and it is the same with many of our purely theoretic beliefs (561-62).

To characterize this capacity, James introduces the idea of an "ordinary healthiness of will" (536), which couples an "impulsive power" to a "creative contribution" with some external criterion like reason, convention or belief may or may not result in immediate or remote kinetic action. By extension, an unhealthy will would be one in which "the action may follow the stimulus or idea too rapidly, leaving no time for the arousal of restraining associates" (James calls this the "obstructed" will), or "the ratio which the impulsive and inhibitive forces normally bear to each other may be distorted" (the "explosive" will) (537).[21] Like his relational model of mind, it is crucially the "ratio" between impulses and motives which constitute an area of activity over which one has

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[21] Although "obstructed" and "explosive" willing is sometimes useful for extricating the self from particularly exacting situations, this may be a covert reference to the "unhealthy" type of will (that which is not 'good' for the self in most situations) of which Schopenhauer speaks. With this in mind, I will suspend my discussion of James's deployment of the language of health and sickness for my discussion of Varieties.

some control, rather than the individual being the victim of impulse and caprice or, conversely, stasis and immobility. James claims the feeling of effort is the result of the inhibition and neutralization of those impulses of "a more instinctive and habitual kind"; a feeling which occurs "whenever strongly explosive tendencies are checked, or strongly obstructive conditions overcome" (548).

In summary, he characterizes the activity of will as a type of habit which has entered the realm of conscious life, and by which one has the capacity to override and legislate for activities which would normally occur beneath the realm of consciousness. In other words, it is at those moments of difficult decision making when one must recoup a sense of a nuclear self from the plenum of phenomena, in order to reflect and consider options based upon past experiences. This does not imply that James wishes to rescue some timeless sense of selfhood as a therapeutic prop, only a sense of selfhood which can be constituted from, and bears upon, previous experiences.

According to James, the "machinery" of willed activity is "essentially a system of arcs and paths, a reflex system" (575). By grounding volition in physiology, he demonstrates that will can only be posited within the limits of natural laws and cannot transcend them: "the reflex way is, after all, the universal way of conceiving the business" (575). But the capacity to resist, inhibit or override the reflex or habitual "way", suggests a realm of indeterminacy, dependant upon the decisions which an individual (or, by extension, a collective group) makes. The "formation of new paths" (580) is an activity within volitional control which enables the self to switch from one course or pattern of activity to another. Crucially, this ability to choose between a variety of options and to

consciously adapt to situations is dependent upon bodily constitution (the neurological and physiological base) and mental aptitude (the "education of the will" [579]), but also upon random movements of "quasi-accidental reflexes" (580). As I elaborate in the fifth section of this chapter, accidental or random discharge is an important manner in which "new paths" can be formed, but here it is the selective capacity to choose amongst "possibilities" (584) which enables James to affirm the construction of a nuclear self which can act in and upon an "indeterminate" world (571). He claims:

> I shall...never hesitate to invoke the efficacy of the conscious comment, where no strictly mechanical reason appears why a current escaping from a cell should take one path rather than another. But the existence of the current, and its tendency towards either path, I feel bound to account for by mechanical laws (571).

James's position can be dismissed as paradoxically asserting the coexistence of a determined and an undetermined world. But, in his defence, he discerns a space of indeterminacy within the natural laws of cause and effect in which the self can act.

In the preface to The Will to Believe (1897), a collection of his short philosophical essays from the 1880s and 1890s, James characterizes "radical empiricism" as a twofold enterprise which accounts for this hypothesis of a willing self. Firstly, it is empirical because "it is contented to regard its most assured conclusions concerning matters of fact as hypotheses liable to modification in the course of future experience" (James 1956: vii). That is to say, the hypothesis of self emerges from an engagement with the world, its meaning and function being revisable in the light of future experiences. He claims it is a radical position "because it treats the doctrine of monism as an hypothesis, and...it does not dogmatically affirm monism as something with which all experience has got to

square" (vii-viii). An inquiry into the "absolute unity" (viii) of phenomena is therefore suspended for a pluralistic position in which "the crudity of experience remains an eternal element thereof" (ix). James sets up a series of incomplete and revisable concepts by which he can account for those fringes of experience that philosophical monists tend to ignore. He does not try to prove the existence of the willing self from first principles, but posits it in order to account for his empirical observations of individuals. Here he recapitulates his claim in Principles that "only by postulating such thinking do we make things currently intelligible" (James 1950b: 571).

In the essay 'The Will to Believe' he substantiates this by claiming hypotheses should be judged upon empirical evidence. He attests "any hypothesis is either live or dead", the quality of the hypothesis depending on whether it "appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed": the "deadness and liveness in an hypothesis are not intrinsic properties, but relations to the individual thinker...measured by his willingness to act" (James 1956: 2-3). James realizes that the presence of will cannot be established indubitably on a rational basis, because finally it relies on a matter of belief.[22] The hypothesis of the willing self is thus dependent upon whether it is in the individual's interest to entertain a notion of selfhood, by which he or she can order the flux of experience and act meaningfully with reference to it. For James, the postulate of will

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[22] James realizes the futility of searching for philosophical absolutes. He claims "to know is one thing, and to know for certain that we know is another. One may hold to the first being true without the second" (12). Following this line of argument, even though James description of physiology encourages him to posit the existence of will as a psychological activity, he realizes that this position is refutable. In 'The Will to Believe' it is that which the idea of will makes possible for the individual that becomes the most important consideration (in this case, the ability to act in a meaningful way).

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does not enable one to alter or transgress the laws of nature, but it does provide the individual with a belief that he or she is capable of aspiring towards goals.

As I commented in reference to Cavell's response to scepticism in the introduction, James cites the example of Pascal's wager, by which he suggests that the individual must weigh up finite loss (the risk of setting up false models) against infinite gain (the benefits which can be accrued through investigating and investing in those same models). He suggests "the risk of being in error is a very small matter when compared with the blessings of real knowledge, and be ready to be duped many times in your investigation rather than postpone indefinitely the chance of guessing true" (18). Even if the postulate of self turns out to be erroneous, James suggests that by avoiding the realm of philosophical absolutes individuals can revise their opinions dependent on environmental or bodily change. In any case, he admits, errors are inevitable, and should not (in either philosophical or practical terms) be seen as "such awfully solemn things" (19). Indeed, James goes on to suggest that the existence of the willing self may be a moral question, "whose solution cannot wait for sensible proof" (22). That is to say, one needs to have a sense of identity to get on with life (even if its existence is irrationally postulated), without waiting for an irrefutable argument by which to confirm its existence. James does not refuse the right for other inquirers to "wait" for such proof, but for him (the experiencer, as well as the philosopher) to do so would be analogous to the stasis he seeks to avoid. Thus, he claims finally that only by acting, and believing that such activity is meaningful, can "we" begin to take "our life in our hands" (30).

James wishes to establish the importance of activity on grounds which are both empirical (the close physiological observation of <u>Principles</u>) and philosophical (although not foundational). It is through the postulate of a willing self that he is able to do this, a hypothesis without which his later work on religious experience would not be possible.

(4) *"That shape am I"*: the Narrative of Self

In one of the most frequently cited passages of <u>Varieties</u>, James disguises a lurid description of the mental and spiritual breakdown he had experienced in the autumn of 1872 by attributing it to a (fictional) French correspondent. At the time of delivering his 1901 Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh no public evidence existed to suggest that this passage was anything but another of the lengthy quotations which frequent the pages of <u>Varieties</u> and lend to the text a breadth which authorial discourse would fail to accomplish. Two years after the publication of the book James wrote to Frank Abauzit, who was in the preliminary stages of translating <u>Varieties</u> into French, admitting that "the document on p.160 is my own case - acute neurasthenic attack with phobia. I naturally disguised the provenance! So you may translate freely" (quoted in Myers 1986: 608).

Two crucial issues are raised here. Firstly, by disguising his intention, James is able to leave the dramatic rhetoric to work upon the reader, instead of framing the account with the medical diagnosis he uses in the letter. Secondly, by concealing the provenance of the account he throws it open to the kind of expansive interpretation which he encourages in his gloss on many of the quoted passages in <u>Varieties</u>. Instead of reducing the description to the level of medical materialism, he encourages a hermeneutic pluralism which mirrors his own growing commitment to a pluralistic and open-ended philosophy, later outlined in <u>A Pluralistic Universe</u> (1909).

The central italicized line of the account - *"That shape am I*, I felt, potentially" (James 1985: 160) - crystallizes the fear and dread the correspondent feels in the face of the

vision of a mummified epileptic patient whom he had previously seen in an asylum. The description of the epileptic idiot ("with greenish skin, entirely idiotic") can be seen to draw on the ideas of the German psychologist Carl Carus who, in his ground-breaking book Psyche, published in 1846 and expanded in 1851, postulates that epilepsy is an unstable phenomenon which occupies a precarious middle space between insanity (a structural malady) and idiocy (an anatomical affliction): that is, between illnesses of mind and body. The account in Varieties depicts a wretched figure sitting motionless in a fugue state, which makes his appearance "absolutely non-human" (160). The figure is characterized, almost caricatured, in traditional nineteenth-century fashion by possessing all the outward physiological markers of a profound internal disorder. Sitting prostrate in the asylum like "a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy", he is portrayed in an analogous fashion to the medical drawings which Sander Gilman suggests characterize the prevalent view of madness as manifesting itself in outward grotesquerie. In his book on Disease and Representation (1988), Gilman argues that one of the ways in which medical art of the nineteenth century (at least in Western Europe) distanced "the fear of collapse, the sense of dissolution" (Gilman 1988: 1) from the general public was by exaggerating the features of sufferers so that they appeared to be totally consumed by the disease. However, by focusing attention on the exaggerated features of the face and body, psychological illness tended to remain enshrined in mystery. Importantly, in James's account, this type of representational confinement is spatially mirrored not only by the limited space of the asylum, but it is also repeated by the enclosure of the "benches, or rather shelves against the wall" and the "coarse grey undershirt...inclosing his entire figure" (James 1985: 160).

When the correspondent exclaims "*that shape am I*" he perceives in himself a potential

coincidence with the condition of the figure who is entombed not only in the cell and his

body, but also by the mode of language which describes him in this stigmatized fashion.

Carus is important for a discussion of James because his book is one of the first medical

accounts to elaborate upon a model of the unconscious, which he believes to have a

profound influence on conscious mental life. Following closely from this, Carus

understands the appearance of hallucinatory phantoms to be a projection of the fear of the

self: the mental manifestation of an unconscious or barely known double who is

nourished on anxiety and psychic trauma. He outlines three forms of "derangement of the

conscious by the unconscious" - love, visionary trance and religious ecstasy - which

characterize the experience of "sinking into a new world" of Otherness. In this new

world Carus detects the "psychopathological phenomena [which are] precariously

governed by occult forces lodged in the self, in others, and in the cosmos" (Rice 1985:

140).

This kind of psychic "derangement" is reflected in the acute emotional reaction of James's

correspondent:

> There was such a horror of him, and such a perception of my own merely
> momentary discrepancy from him, that it was as if something hitherto
> solid within my breast gave way entirely, and I became a mass of
> quivering fear (160).

In direct contrast to the enclosed and confined picture of the imagined figure, the

emotional reaction is one in which solidity disintegrates into "quivering fear." This

contrast is vital. The figure is stylized, hidden away from himself and the world,

categorically defined in the limited topographical and conceptual space assigned to him, whereas the correspondent's fear is described as a breakdown of rigid solidity into something fragile and unstable. Following James, it is possible to interpret this emotional crisis as a threshold state out of which emerges a fresh perspective. The correspondent is converted to a "morbid" or melancholic view in which the dominant feeling is one of persistent dread and insecurity. When he goes on to explain why he thinks his melancholia "had a religious bearing" (161), he does not retreat into the immediate security of the scriptures, but he reads them as a means by which he can resist the paralysis encapsulated in his vision. For James, the person displaying "fighting faith" does not seek a religious panacea, but utilizes the scriptures for the wisdom and solace they may sometimes bring in an ongoing pursuit for, what he calls, a committed and "strenuous" life.[23]

Later, in his disclosure to Abauzit, when he admits that the vision actually depicts his own youthful experience, James appears to endorse my reading of the passage, in which he juxtaposes his open-ended interpretation with the enclosed and stylized image of the epileptic idiot. This opposition dovetails with the affiliation he displays for the morbid temperament over and above the attractions of the healthy-minded. Both examples represent attempts to resist a world-view which ignores mists and shades in its pursuit of monochromatic vision. Through this Cyclopean lens the healthy-minded ignore or dismiss the existence of evil which James perceives as part of the "very essence" of the

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[23] The American historian T. J. Jackson Lears in No Place of Grace (1981) argues that, during the decades straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was a widespread tendency in America (but also apparent amongst the aesthetes of *fin-de-siècle* Europe) to seek new and intense experiences. This links to James's proposal for a "strenuous life", a phrase which had widespread currency at this time. See, for example, Theodore Roosevelt's The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses (1900).

morbid-minded life (131). His philosophical aim to disrupt unity and harmony in order to privilege doubleness and plurality becomes, in the disguised story of the breakdown, a textual deployment which seeks to open up the spaces which tend to enclose, confine and, in the case of the mummified epileptic idiot, dehumanize. The liberation of these textual spaces represents James's attempt to introduce a more complex philosophy to religious discourse.

The popular interpretation of the passage is that by including a third-person account of his own breakdown James is practising a form of self-therapy. I would like to extend this idea by suggesting that the passage dramatizes James's attempt to break down any system of thought which seeks to define and disambiguate rather than liberate (an attempt which characterizes one of the defining tendencies of romantic science). This quest sets the tone for his lectures on religious experience. By deeply embedding a notion of open-endedness within his autobiographical account, James renders Varieties as a generically hybrid text. In doing so, James interweaves different strands of discourse (combining empirically based methodology, an interest in the unrecorded areas of psychological and spiritual experience, a preoccupation with the body, a collection of religious case studies and a theoretical subtext) to form a pluralistic discourse. However, unlike the critic Frederick Ruf who discerns Varieties to be structured around patterns of entropy and dissolution, I argue that structures can readily be found by which James places temporary limits and boundaries on what he considers to be the amorphous mass of pre-definitional flux. By examining the discontinuities between the different discursive levels of the text it is possible to illuminate James's notion of pluralism.

In the light of my earlier sections on James, the description of his breakdown indicates that his resistance to Spencer's deterministic principles is not based solely on philosophical grounds, but also derives from very personal concerns. In <u>Varieties</u>, James continues to stress the possibility of free will and autonomy in order to resist surrendering to the blind forces of biology and neurology. The contemporary medical language of neurasthenia available to James did little to uncover identifiable traits of mental illness; as Jackson Lears discerns, the "common effect" of neurasthenia was a "paralysis of the will" (Lears 1983: 50). If illness is closely associated with a loss of volition, then belief in free will may enable the experiencer to invest psychic energy in narrative possibilities, without giving up to the lure of metapatterns or interpretive absolutes. James's therapy is not confined to the covert inclusion of the autobiographical passage, but can be discerned throughout his work. Instead of the description of his breakdown representing a point of rupture where autobiography leaks into the discourse of the lectures, the passage is better understood as one of the nodal points of the text where many ideas played out at length elsewhere are compressed into an explosive dramatic moment.

In order to substantiate this claim I will take the phrase "*that shape am I*" and trace it laterally through <u>Varieties</u> with special reference to James's various comments on narrative patterns. Narrative is not merely of incidental importance to him: as he goes on to expound in <u>Pragmatism</u>, "things tell a story. Their parts hang together so as to work out a climax" (James 1981: 67). James's account of narrative moves away from a traditional linear structure which neatly resolves itself in a final denouement. Instead, he outlines a discontinuous discourse: "the world is full of partial stories that run parallel to one another, beginning and ending at odd times. They mutually interlace and interfere

at points, but we cannot not unify them completely in our minds" (67). This form of narrative provides a method by which events can be ordered and interpreted, without the story ever reaching a *telos* or a final moment of stasis. Here, James displays a close connection with modernist writers who resist the closure of dominant nineteenth-century narrative forms in an attempt to do justice to the complexities of experience. But, rather than pushing his thought in the direction of the aesthetic modernism of his one-time pupil Gertrude Stein, James looks to a romantic template to give "a shape and significance" to his experience of modernity (Eliot 1975: 177).

In his comprehensive survey of romantic aetiology, Natural Supernaturalism (1971), M. H. Abrams pays special attention to the geometric formations which recur throughout romantic poetry and philosophy. He discerns the most recurrent pattern to be the circle; a figure which he discerns in the writings of Hegel, Novalis, Hölderlin, Wordsworth and Coleridge, through to Nietzsche's conception of eternal return and to the beginnings of modernist literature.

Abrams traces romantic theodicy (which, after Carlyle, he terms "natural supernaturalism" [Carlyle 1991: 193]) back as far as St. Augustine. In Augustine he perceives a shift from "the classical procedure of putting oneself forward as the representative of a cultural ideal, performing overt deeds on a public stage, into a circumstantial narrative of the private events of the individual mind" (Abrams 1973: 83). He goes on to characterize the Confessions as "the first sustained history of an inner life" (83), in which Augustine reflects upon "the silent workings of God's providential plan" (85) and the "significance" (86) of his own spiritual journey. Furthermore, Abrams

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discerns in this text the establishment of "the spiritual vocabulary for all later self-analyses and treatments of self-formation and the discovery of one's identity" (86-87). It is, however, in Augustine's understanding of memory and time (both external and subjective time) where the motif of the circle first occurs. In the final book of the Confessions Augustine reflects upon the end of time as a return to the beginning and the "uncreation of all things" (87). At the end of the book Augustine speaks of the cycle of the days and the eternity which will arrive with the "seventh day", which "has no evening and has no ending" (Augustine 1992: 304); but, at the same moment, he completes a formal circle by recalling the beginning of his work and reverting back to his initial praise of God. Because in God is contained both beginning and end (227) and because His "seeing is not in time" (304), by communing with Him through prayer and rapture, Augustine claims he is able to catch brief glimpses of the eternity which lies beyond the time-bound constraints of perception and sensation (127).

By transferring this circular template from the macrocosmic universe to the private quest of the individual Augustine paves the way for the kind of circuitous and wandering, even discursive, journey found in later religious allegories, such as those by Edmund Spenser and John Bunyan, through to the romantics and Coleridge's rather more pagan image of "the snake with it's Tail in it's Mouth" (quoted in Abrams 1973: 271). The quotation from Coleridge is particularly significant, for, just as Hegel discerns that the dialectical journey to ultimate knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) "is a circle that returns to itself, that presupposes its beginning, and reaches its beginning only in its end", Coleridge argues that the purpose of narrative (the telling of that journey) is to make "those events. which in real or imagined History move on in a *strait* Line. assume to our Understandings a

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circular motion" (quoted in Abrams 1973: 235, 271). For Coleridge imaginative art contains within it the potential to make whole a universe which could otherwise only be perceived in sensual fragments. For example, in the tenth chapter of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge speaks of the "esemplastic power" of imagination which has this capacity to "shape into one" (Coleridge 1984: 91). However, for many of the romantics, the "circular motion" does not return to its point of origin, but is a constantly evolving entity which returns upon itself at the same instant that it moves: in the words of Hegel, "this circle is a circle of circles; for each member...is intro-Reflection which, returning to the beginning, is at the same time the beginning of a new member" (quoted in Abrams 1973: 509). Out of the traditional figure of the circle emerges another more complex pattern, the spiral, helix, or "ascending circle" (Abrams 1973: 184), which constantly develops and expands at the very moment it turns back on itself.

One of Abrams's major achievements in Natural Supernaturalism is to chart the historical transition from the neoplatonists who, like Plotinus, follow the mystical circle back to the "simple, undifferentiated unity of its origin" to the romantics who, through their art, strive to attain "a unity which is higher, because it incorporates the intervening differentiations" (183-84). The major difference between the circle and the spiral is that the latter "rotates along a third, vertical dimension, to close where it had begun, but on a higher plane of value. It thus fuses the idea of the circular return with the idea of linear progress" (184). Moreover, whereas the circle is a closed shape which circumscribes a well-defined space, the spiral is open-ended and constantly shifts its position along both its vertical (symbolic) and horizontal (narrative) axes. As I move back towards a consideration of

James's Varieties, through a reading of Emerson's important essay 'Circles' (1841), this geometric distinction is a crucial one to bear in mind.

'Circles' opens with a series of repetitions: visual perception opens a concentric series which emanates outwards in widening arcs "throughout nature" to be "repeated without end" (Emerson 1983: 403). Because, like James, he roots the genesis of the circular form in the act of human perception ("the eye is the first circle"), Emerson immediately prioritizes a pattern which arises from personal experience, rather than an abstract system which he imposes on the world. He cites Augustine's image of "a circle whose centre was everywhere, and its circumference nowhere" which exists outside the range of all experience and represents the logical impossibility of circumscribing an outward limit to knowledge (403). He sees the circularity to extend in all directions:

> every action admits of being outdone...around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens (403).

Although it is here symbolically deployed, the circle is a spatial pattern by which Emerson defines his perceptual zone in a world which fades out of view at the perimeter. These momentary perceptions are constantly interconnected and fused to create a capacious sense of the world. But there is no sense of permanence: it "is only a word of degrees" (404).

The visual act cannot be frozen in order to trace the absolute circle which lies in an ideal sphere outside of experience. Only the individual who has the strength to resist the

pretentions of those who wish to track these ultimate and permanent fixtures (like the Unitarians whose doctrine Emerson rejected) will be able to see beyond a limited world of sensuous reality:

> The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end. The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force or truth of the individual soul (404).

The "force" of the individual refers not to brute aggrandisement, but to the recognition that certain aspects remain outside the "mental horizon" of human knowledge: that "there is no outside, no enclosing wall, no circumference to us" (405).

Emerson can be read to suggest that every limit, or floor, is provisional and will fall through or give way to the next, although the experiencer is not always in a position to see over the horizon. He claims that those who are content with limits are sinful (406) in rejecting the virtues of the "experimenter" (412) and the "sacred" coming of the active and "energising spirit" (413). Whilst his philosophy is optimistic and forward-looking, Emerson does not see a simple progression from one state to another as a cumulative process which tends towards "rest, conservatism, appropriation, inertia" (412). Movement comes instead through spiritual renewal which may as well go backwards to germination and "spring" as it goes onwards to the realization of goals. Far from the interconnected circles, or horizons, revolving around a stable axis, they are liable to overlap or turn back on each other: "we now and then detect in nature slight dislocations, which apprise us that this surface on which we now stand is not fixed, but sliding" (409). These sliding surfaces indicate that the circle is never completed on one plane and a

return to the "aboriginal" act of perception can never be truly accomplished, for the circular formation is open and constantly shifting away from one's grasp. Like Cavell's knotting and unknotting selves, tracing a circle is a temporary measure which enables one to ascertain location, before it is reinscribed in another conceptual space.

Emerson concludes his essay by suggesting that the "great man" possesses the "character", "power and courage to make a new road to new and better goals" (413).[24] Again, this is not accomplished by blind forward movement, but by nourishing the "enthusiasm" and "courage" to abandon former goals (413): in short, the resolve not to shy away from diversions and changes of direction because of the risk involved. The ability "to draw a new circle" in Emerson's sense does not rest upon the desire to make of nature a closed and understandable system, but the "insatiable desire...to forget ourselves" and previously cherished beliefs (414). The application of volition tempered with a belief in a guiding force (for Emerson, internal impulses directed from without by a benevolent Over-Soul) is a precarious combination by which Nietzschean ruthless autonomy is rejected without surrendering to the blind forces of whim or caprice.

In a 1903 address delivered to commemorate the centenary of Emerson's birth, James begins by lionizing Emerson for his unique "blend" of morality and literary insight (James 1988: 316). James shares with Emerson a tendency to resist "consecutive" and systematic thinking, truth coming to them "in gleams, in sentences" and fragments (316). Despite their similarities, he remains critical of Emerson for his dual tendency towards

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[24] Here the "great man" may be interpreted either as one of Emerson's Representative Men (1850), as the distinguished public figures lauded in Carlyle's work, On Heroes and Hero-Worship (1841), or as one who seeks the "strenuous life" of the saint as outlined in Varieties.

"absolute monism" and "radical individualism" (316). James goes on to say: "they sound contradictory enough; but he held to each of them in its extremist form" (318). In order to make conceptual connections between Emerson and James in my reading of 'Circles' I have tried to resist both these impulses which are, nevertheless, equally apparent in the essay. It is much easier to argue for James's proximity to Emersonian individualism than it is for them holding similar metaphysical positions. Having said this, James detects that, despite Emerson's idealistic tendencies, he "never drew a consequence from the Oneness that made him any the less willing to acknowledge the rank diversity of individual facts" (319).

Emerson and James each ground their philosophies ultimately in the "concrete perceptions" of experience and, in James's words, they both conceive the individual as "an angle" of the "Cosmic intellect", "each moment in us a refracted ray of its vision" (319). Here, the metaphor of refraction implies a disruption to the process of vision and provides a metaphor which encourages both thinkers to turn to a spiritual "more", in which they detect the source of light to be beyond the realm of the senses. For James, this does not mean a blind turning to spiritual authority as manifested in orthodox and institutionalized religions; for him, the primacy of individual experience is of fundamental importance. James ends his speech with a line which echoes Emerson and Blake (who, together with Henry James Snr., were both one-time followers of the eighteenth-century mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg) as much as Thoreau's notion of civil disobedience: "it follows from all this that there is something in even the lowliest of us that ought not to consent" (319).

James's biographer, Ralph Barton Perry, detects two strong propelling forces in <u>Varieties</u>. Quoting from James's letters, Perry suggests, firstly, that James wishes to defend experience as the "real backbone of the world's religious life"; and, secondly, the life of religion is "mankind's most important function" (Perry 1935b: 327). The vital impulse of religion is understood to derive from the individual's own place in, and experience of, the universe (both the sensual world and the supersensual world of the unseen and unseeable), rather than issuing from the "systematic" theologies found in institutionalized religious creeds. For James, "abstract definitions and systems of concatenated adjectives" should be viewed as "secondary accretions upon these phenomena of vital conversation with the unseen divine" (James 1985: 446-47). If doctrinal thought is subordinated for its tendency to restrict and delimit the range of possible experiences, then so too should its narrative pattern be rejected as a universal template to follow. Instead of describing a totalizing narrative, James suggests that for the "twice-born...the world is a double-storied mystery" (166), and, elsewhere, that the morbid-minded find themselves immersed in "a universe two stories deep" (187).

This rejection of established religious narratives pushes James's position toward the romantic (and, later, the existentialist) need to renew the social carapace of language in order to make it intense, personal and authentic. Moreover, it also demands that one does not whimsically follow ill-considered caprice, for this speaks not of "vital conversation" but an instinct which compels the individual to take up a necessary pattern of response. The pattern should not be seen to be totally determined, either culturally or biologically, but neither should it be completely disbanded. Instead, James seems to be searching for

a structural pattern through which he can avoid the dogmatism of creed as well as the disturbing chaos of a wholly disordered universe. As he says in a long footnote:

> When one views the world with no definite theological bias one way or the other, one sees that order and disorder, as we now recognize them, are purely human inventions. We are interested in certain types of arrangement, useful, aesthetic, or moral, - so interested that whenever we find them realized, the fact emphatically rivets our attention. The result is that we work over the contents of the world selectively. It is overflowing with disorderly arrangements from our point of view, but order is the only thing we care for and look at, and by choosing, one can always find some sort of orderly arrangement in the midst of any chaos...We count and name whatever lies upon the special lines we trace, whilst the other things and the untraced lines are neither named nor counted (438).

Here James illustrates the archetypal experience of modernity: the moral and aesthetic need to trace new patterns in the loose sand of what was once the solid stone of pregiven religious paths. He outlines the dual need to recognize that the concepts of "order" and "disorder" are imposed by the observer on the "vast plenum" of "Nature" (438) and that the psychological complexion of humans demand that they direct attention towards certain aspects in order to arrive at ends-directed plans to follow. Whilst recognition and attention are part of his vocabulary of cognition, their guiding force consists of an admixture of a "vital conversation" with the unseen "more", shaped by an act of will both to foresee goals and to devise plans to obtain those ends. Far from being able to master a fixed repertoire of decisive movements, the demands upon the religious traveller force him or her constantly to revise and reconsider the paths started out upon. The "morbid-minded" traveller is plagued not only with a denser and more contradictory universe than it once seemed, but with the added difficulties that all his or her steps must be tentative and carefully considered, without falling into the equally modern trap of perpetual

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prevarication. In the tradition of protestant humility, the traveller must be constantly wary of the vice of pride, but, at the same time, develop the strength of character to seek the "strenuous life" which James proposes.

The chapter on 'Mysticism' provides many of the clues which lead towards unravelling James's notion of path-finding which I began to trace in his work on habit. James wishes to rescue mysticism from its general usage as a word of "mere reproach" (379) as he attempts to ground the ineffability and transience of religious experience into a concrete pattern which can bridge the inchoate source of inspiration with the demands of this world. The sense of "deeper significance" which characterizes such an experience opens the subject to "vague vistas of a life continuous with our own, beckoning and inviting, yet ever eluding our pursuit" (383). These vistas, often experienced as "dreamy states", are, according to James, accompanied by "the feeling of an enlargement of perception which seems imminent but which never completes itself" (384).[25]

The haziness and capaciousness of these experiences signify a path which cannot be judged solely by worldly ends and which are therefore impossible to foresee to their ultimate conclusion. The very fact that such experiences occur indicates the presence of a "beyond [to] anything known in ordinary consciousness" (412):

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[25] James quotes the phrase "dreamy states" from an article by Sir James Crichton-Brown published in The Lancet (6th & 13th July 1895). Whilst James appropriates the term, he takes issue with Crichton-Brown's dualistic position which "follows" the phenomenon "along the downward ladder, to insanity", thereby reducing its personal significance to the level of medical formulae. James claims that his "path pursues the upward ladder chiefly" (a romantic movement upwards and outwards) in an attempt to find significance in all "of a phenomenon's connections" (James 1985: 384).

> We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less to a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest. We feel them as reconciling, unifying states. They appeal to the yes-function more than to the no-function (416).

Whilst such an experience seems to move upwards and outwards, like Emerson, the perception "never completes itself": there is no final point of stasis, but only the promise of affirmatory rest.

At the end of this lecture James characterizes mystical states as signifying "the supremacy of the ideal, of vastness, of union, of safety, and of rest", they open up a "wider", a "more extensive and inclusive world" which, taking his lead from Emerson, James believes cannot be known and bounded by systematic thought (429).[26] As I discuss later in the thesis, this is analogous to Sacks's conception of health, which contains within it the promise of homecoming as a spur to encourage the patient to move in a direction which liberates rather than limits and restricts. Whilst some may choose, or be compelled to follow, a fixed or repetitive pattern, only by loosening these strictures can the idea (and ideal) of health be redescribed elsewhere. So too, for James, only the morbid-minded traveller who seeks a fresh and fuller conception of the universe and, in the process, succeeds in pushing back the boundaries of the old, can forego the material comforts of an earthly home in the pursuit of this final, always elusive, homecoming.

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[26] This structure closely echoes the central aspects of Buddhism: at every limit there is a higher stage, or higher state of contemplation (*dhyana*), the pursuit of which takes the experiencer past the semblance of rest. Although James's religious thought has connections with Buddhism, he claims in a postscript to Varieties that "I am ignorant of Buddhism and speak under correction" (522). This comment can be interpreted as a modest disclaimer or a recognition of the limitations of his work.

However, this reading begs several questions. If one can no longer invest importance in the old and outworn religious paths because they only lead to the strictures of earthly creeds, then in what direction do transient mystical experiences lead? In other words, where can conceptual redescription take one in pragmatic terms? James's answer is complicated, but he appears to suggest that the marks of mystical experience bring about both a new orientation to life and an inner conviction that the direction to follow should eschew the worldly goals of affluence, comfort and security, in order to pursue an Emersonian path which is constantly merging with higher routes too difficult to directly perceive. This path is not wholly other-worldly: the actions of those who follow the saintly path can have direct effects on the worldly environment around them. As "vivifiers and animators of potentialities" (358) saints have the strength of will to transfer their vision of the ideal into the realm of the real and thereby "energize" those around them in order to produce "practical fruits" (259). Whilst their initial orientation is melancholic, from this emerges a "denial of the finite self" and a spiritual need to identify with "an always enlarging Self" (418). This idea may seem to lead back to the undifferentiated unity of the neoplatonists and forward to the universal consciousness of Carl Jung, but James (like Cavell) is distinct in insisting that the journey to this state is always under way and incomplete. As a result, the narrative of the journey can never be finally told and must be continually revised *en route*.

James concludes his lectures by commenting on the irreducibility of personal experience: "I turn back and close the circle which I opened in my first lecture" (484). Rather than actually closing the circle, he goes on to add that "I might easily, if time allowed, multiply both my documents and my discriminations" (484). This suggests that the circle is

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perpetually open and its dimensions are always provisional and, therefore, revisable. In a footnote to his concluding lecture, he discusses the possibilities of romantic science in bridging the chasm between "scientist facts and religious facts" (501). This should be done, he says, by giving up the notion of "final human opinion" and by reverting "to the more personal style, just as any path of progress may follow a spiral rather than a straight line" (501). Not only is the circle forever open, but the figure of the spiral gestures back to the figures which Abrams detects in romantic writing. The pattern cuts against any notion of either simple return to origins or a straightforward progressive movement and, by implication, provides the template for the saintly journey. The spiral may seem to move upwards and outwards away from a material world, but, as it circles round, it cannot leave the body behind for more than a fleeting moment of transcendence. James can be read to claim that there is an unbreakable link between the idealistic aspirations of man who searches for "the highest society conceivable" (375) and, as is dramatized in his account of the breakdown, an intractable organic embeddedness in the world.

On returning to the disguised portrait of the breakdown I have moved through an arc of James's writing without reaching firm ground. But, as I have argued, James's suggests a therapeutic path along which the convert can move away from the total paralysis dramatized in the hunched and lifeless figure who is bereft of will or the possibility of self-definition. When the correspondent retches forth the apocalyptic words *"that shape am I,* I felt, potentially", the reader is made aware both of an identification with the figure and a dissociation from the state of utter wretchedness. Varieties can be read as James's attempt to find an alternative shape, or pattern, which can lead away from determinism without leaving behind the organic body for abstract metaphysical musings. For

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Emerson, the act of perception is central to a sense of self and a place in a cosmos and, without that initial act, a narrative of self-overcoming cannot unfold. Similarly, for James, without attention and acknowledgement (grounded in psychology and physiology) one cannot hope to locate oneself, for however briefly, in a pluralistic universe.

(5) Breaching the Path: Energizing the Body

In the last section I highlighted an emergent spatial pattern in James's writing which projects noetic knowledge gained through mystical experience along a temporal plane, but without abandoning that moment of insight for linear progression away from it. Like Emerson, James wishes to abort the doctrinaire aspects of Puritanism and derive a new spirituality from a transcendent moment of divination. Similarly, they both believe in a moral pattern which is intuited and divined from personal experience and without "reference to external authority" (Howe 1986: 9).[27] In the words of Irving Howe, where James wishes to depart from Emerson's attempt to maintain "an immediate apprehension of the divine" by transfiguring experience as "consciousness lifted free from the alloys of circumstance" (11), is his preoccupation with the corporeal body which insistently encroaches on a transcendent "bliss of spiritual exchange" (9). I argue in this section that James's conception and formation of religious paths or, more accurately, because they are always constructed through an interpretive framework, spiritual narratives, should be conceived as energizing structures which motivate the body into action, as much as they do the mind. However, James's insistence on the corporeal body permits only the possibility of a spiritual realm by which material limitations can be transcended.

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[27] One problem detected by Irving Howe is how a "moral pattern" can be "derived" wholly from "personal experience." Howe can only conjecture that Emerson's reply would be submission to an inner truth which is nurtured and counselled through contact with God and Nature. The problem for Howe seems to be that one can only understand this kind of counselling through the language of prayer and ecclesiastical codes. This is a problem which haunts James's notion of the irreducibility of personal experience and Cavell's version of Emersonian perfectionism: of what does experience consist? through which (social) codes is reality interpreted?

The conceptual differences between Emerson and James also help to clarify the different moods of the two thinkers. If, as Nietzsche characterizes him, Emerson is to be seen as "enlightened", "happier", "contented", "grateful", and "cheerful" (Nietzsche 1990: 85), then James shares with Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer a "darker" (James 1985: 83) and more troubled view of the self's relation to the universe. In his two lectures on 'The Sick-Soul' James starkly characterizes the difference between the two tempers: "the sanguine and healthy-minded live habitually on the sunny side of their misery-line, the depressed and melancholy live beyond it, in darkness and apprehension" (135). James reverses the Enlightenment optical dichotomy of light-dark, to suggest a mysterious universe which cannot be clearly illuminated and understood. In addition, his image of the "misery-line" stresses the primacy of an emotional engagement over the intellectualized process of cognitive ratiocination. For James, the "ennobling sadness" of the European writers coincides with his general attitude to religion ("solemn, serious, and tender"); but, as he goes on to say, it "is almost as often only peevishness running away with the bit between its teeth" (38). He also claims that the "sallies" of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche "remind one, half the time, of the sick shriekings of two dying rats." James's writing resists such primal extremes and is characterised instead by an 'in-between', or purgatorial, tone which imbues it with the solemnity of "religious sadness" (38).

Although it asserts a strong influence on his writing, the romantic gloom of the Germans is nevertheless tempered by the influence of Emersonian optimism which, in James's interpretation, rather than descending into the abyss of nihilism, results in motivating movement and activity. This is not the "sky-blue" optimism of the New England mind-curists, but an inherent piety which serves to "protect all ideal interests and keep the

world's balance straight" (33). James's notion of a pluralistic universe is more heterogenous and complex than Emerson's "divine soul of order", but both thinkers share a motivation to create anew. <u>Varieties</u> can be understood as James's contribution to an ongoing American debate (but also, more broadly, a romantic project) to relocate a spiritual life outside the support of religious institutions, but without ignoring its central importance for the solitary and experiencing human being. The "American Newness", detected by Howe among others, echoes Abrams'conception of "natural supernaturalism" and indicates the post-romantic need to redefine spirituality within the terms of modernity.

Following on from my discussion on narrative patterns in the last section, I conclude my reading of <u>Varieties</u> by focusing on James's conception of energy as a motivating force, which, deriving from his earlier discussions of physiology and consciousness, is given a central place in his understanding of religious experience. James's consideration of energy pulls together my reading of his work on habit, 'The Will to Believe' and spiritual narrative.

The "new life" which emerges out of the French corespondent's vision of the "epileptic patient" (160) both represents a departure from, and a supplement to, the old narrative pattern by projecting it through a new dimension. James calls such moments of insight "temporary 'melting moods', into which either the trials of real life, or the theatre, or a novel sometimes throw us" (James 1985: 267). The metaphor deployed here suggests a softening, or a liquification, of previously unified material which is stimulated by a

change in the habitual emotional composition.[28] At these moments the self stands at the threshold between two possible patterns, the outcome, crucially, resulting from individual choice. By choosing the easy option, whether it is the comfort of simple ecclesiastical piety or a backsliding into drunkenness and vice, the liberation of transformation is eschewed for the safe and the habitual. Conversely, by choosing the more complex pattern the experience resolves itself as contributing towards the pursuit of the strenuous life: the ego-boundaries dissolve and reform in a different configuration.

James does not reserve this eschewal of openness and plenitude only for those who safeguard themselves against religious conversion, for the "narrow" excesses of sainthood, characterized by absorption, withdrawal, limitation and fanaticism, also run tangential to his embracing vision of mysticism; only the precarious blend of energetic action and surrender to a sense of a larger self will propel the experiencer along the "extensive" and "inclusive" path.

These two forces of action and yielding converge by affirming "the new centre of personal energy" and allowing it to "burst forth" (210). The active and creative element is the will to believe in an inner voice, to break through the constraining force of inhibitions and conventions and to nourish the ability to say "Yes! yes!" (261). Like Carlyle's Teufelsdrökh in <u>Sartor Resartus</u>, James indicates this affirmatory movement passes "from the everlasting No to the everlasting Yes through a 'Centre of Indifference'" (212). In Carlyle's thought the 'Centre of Indifference' can be thought to "represent the

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[28] James's phrase "melting moods" is worth comparing with the following passage from 'The Stream of Thought' chapter in <u>Principles</u>: "as the brain-changes are continuous, so do all these consciousnesses melt into each other like dissolving views" (James 1950a: 247-48).

soul's inability to cast aside an enervating egotism, in order to attain a broader perspective" (Buckley 1981: 95). By undergoing a "little death" a new life can emerge which sheds the constraints of egoism. Whilst James acknowledges correspondences between his and Carlyle's affirmatory voices, the temper of James's writing positions him nearer to the Dionysian exuberance of the "Yes-saying" Nietzsche than the strong conservative politics which inform Carlyle's writing. But, while James's notion of will to believe overcomes the passivity of mystical experience and the activity of pursuing ideals, he does not share in Nietzsche's ruthless drive to overcome the self at the expense of human fellowship. His sharp criticism of those activities which tend towards self-absorption and withdrawal from the world lends to his writing a note of altruism and compassion which Nietzsche lacks and which sets the tone for James's moral framework.

For James the cries of "Yes! yes!" accompany the release of hidden energies; but these energies are already guided by an almost pantheistic feeling. James presents a negative example to characterize this moral framework. He argues that the impulse of the alcoholic which encourages him to imbibe more alcohol may seem to be affirmatory, but, within James's scheme, this would only be a surrender to habit: a yielding without action and a refusal to pursue an ideal. In his opinion, only by affirming the nuclear self in its connection to a subliminal self and, in so doing, giving up the earthly limits and restraints of selfhood can the negative and false voices be overcome.

As I have stressed James is not a "refined" (James 1985: 520) systematic thinker who wishes to define either the universe or consciousness; nor does he seek the clarity of traditional philosophy. Instead he understands that

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elements of the universe which may make no rational whole in conjunction with the other elements, and which, from the point of view of any system which those other elements make up, can only be considered so much irrelevance and accident - so much 'dirt,' as it were, and matter out of place (133).

Similarly, "the psychological basis of the twice-born character [is thought] to be a certain discordancy or heterogeneity in the native temperament of the subject, an incompletely unified moral and intellectual constitution" (167).[29] Inspiration does not emerge from a conscious and reasoned process, but derives from a sudden and often violent revelation or manifestation of the subliminal self: "the higher condition, having reached the due degree of energy, bursts through all barriers and sweeps in like a sudden flood" (216). Such a revelation forces the experiencer to reevaluate his or her former life and redirect him or herself towards new goals.

To expand upon James's understanding of energy I wish to turn my consideration to his 1906 Presidential Address, 'The Energies of Men'. James suggests a parallel to Teufelsdrökh's "Centre of Indifference" through the colloquial Adironrackian term "*oold*": a feeling of "intellectual or muscular" staleness or fatigue. This notion is analogous to the state of "*adhedonia*" or spiritual apathy outlined in Varieties and appears to share characteristics with those illnesses grouped together under the collective title neurasthenia. James interprets *adhedonia* as a spiritual vacuum: a "mere passive joylessness and dreariness, discouragement, dejection, lack of taste and zest and spring"

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[29] James's phrase "native temperament" seems to work in tension with his argument that through conversion the former path can be diverted or one can alter the ideals which one pursues. However, rather than personality being entirely determined, James's view of "temperament" does not preclude the effect of circumstance and experience to modify disposition. Thus, he speaks in terms of "a temperament organically weighted" rather than genetically prescribed (135).

(145). It represents a state of absolute depletion and stasis accompanied by a feeling of spiritual vacuity; characteristics common to the symptoms which were, at that time, thought to comprise neurasthenia. Championed by the New York neurologist George Beard in the 1880s, the popular cure for the nervous exhaustion brought on by modern life was considered to be rest and the conservation of energy.[30]

James's argument directly counters Beard's rest-cure therapy. He argues that we should not surrender to this general feeling of fatigue:

> it gets worse up to a certain critical point, when gradually or suddenly it passes away, and we are fresher than before. We have evidently tapped a level of new energy, masked until then by the fatigue-obstacle usually obeyed. There may be layer after layer of this experience (James 1971: 34).

By tapping into the hidden resources of the subliminal self the individual is able to draw upon latent motivating forces which can energize him or her into renewed activity. This is a very different kind of abandonment from the rest-cure. In a distinction suggested by the political theorist William Corlett, this would represent a loss of self-control or a "giving in to" impulses which exist beneath the level of conscious control rather than a "giving up" from asking questions about selfhood implied by Beard's recommendation (Corlett 1993: 3). This distinction does not necessarily implicate a model of the unconscious, but of an inner bodily energy which exists latently in the deeper recesses of

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[30] Beard's rest-cure is diametrically opposite to James's energetic recommendations, in that it seems to represent an escape from, rather than the confrontation of, the forces and logic of modernization as described in Georg Simmel's classic essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), in which the German sociologist speaks of the plethora of chaotic sense-impressions encountered in modern cities. Even when James writes on 'The Gospel of Relaxation', he suggests that the individual should "resolve to become *strenuously* relaxed" [my italics] in a self-reliant Emersonian manner (James 1899: 507).

the self. By making contact with the subliminal self the release of spiritual inspiration has the capacity to galvanize the body into a more strenuous life. As for Nietzsche, by tapping into a Dionysian energy source James envisages a self liberated from the rigid structures of egoism. By linking to the range of fluid metaphors employed in 'The Streams of Thought' chapter of Principles, James extends his notion of those "melting moods" which characterize mystical experiences.

Once again, James's ideas touch upon Buddhistic thought (as well as Cavell's version of moral perfectionism) which encourages the overcoming of mental barriers in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Moreover, the spiritual pursuit of Buddhism, like James's strenuous life, is never completed: the pursuit is always under way. Believers should aspire, for the Buddhist, toward Nirvana and, for James's strenuous religious man, toward saintlihood, but the ultimate achievement of the status is always deferred. Again, despite the similarities, one crucial difference between the two positions is that, whereas the Buddhist internalizes the energy and, in so doing, tends to deny the body in the search of higher levels of consciousness, James suggests the release of hidden energies which could sustain our "inner as well as our outer work" (James 1985: 37).

James pushes his ideas of "hidden" energies towards a very individualistic doctrine of living at maximum energy and performing to the optimum: a doctrine which coincides with the late-century trend to seek intense experiences as outlined by Jackson Lears. He plugs into this contemporary feeling when he speaks of "excitements, ideas, and efforts" which can "carry us over the dam" of apathy or of "chronic invalidism" (38). James argues that the source of this energy (biochemical, psychic and spiritual) must stem from

the individual's will to confront stasis. However, the problem which shadows both 'The Energies of Man' and the lectures of Varieties is one which questions the form of discourse in which it is possible to conceptualize energy flow. It is to this problem that I wish now to turn.

There are at least three possible discourses by which James can speak of "hidden" energies. The first, which links with James's metaphoric use of "dam", is the hydraulic system shared by Herbert Spencer in his essay on 'The Physiology of Laughter' (1860) and the early writings of Freud. They both posit theories which conceptualize the build-up of nervous energy until it reaches a critical limit, at which point it necessitates release through a bodily outlet. In his abandoned 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' (1895), Freud parallels James's psychological project in Principles by seeking to "furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science...to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles" (Freud 1971: 1, 295). Freud goes on to outline a neural model of the mind "in terms of increase, diminution, displacement and discharge of energy or 'quantity' conceived as flowing through and accumulating within a differentiated network of neurones" (Dews 1987: 45). In his later writings Freud can be seen to move away from a natural-scientific standpoint in the direction of a more explicitly metaphorical understanding of psychic apparatus. However, notions of discharge continue to inform a work such as Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905) in the shape of laughter, which Freud conceives as a cathartic channel of psychic relief.

The second option, and one with which James also shares an affinity, links directly with the mood and experimentation of early nineteenth-century German romantic science. In his 'Condition of England' essay, 'Signs of the Times' (1829), Carlyle makes an impassioned plea for the emergence of a "dynamic science" which could counter what he considers to be the dehumanizing mechanization of rationalistic thought seen to be embodied in systems of utilitarianism. By evoking a distinctly romantic metaphor, Carlyle proposes to revitalize a science which, at that time, remained reliant on the physical laws of a Newtonian science: a "dynamic" science "which treats of, and practically addresses, the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion, all which have a truly vital and infinite character" (Carlyle 1987: 72). If Carlyle's "science" could be conceptualized it would enable James to speak of ineffable phenomena in terms of emotions, without reducing them to the level of undifferentiated psychic energy. Although Carlyle outlines a programme to revitalize science he does not have the technical rigour to detail particulars.

The third option, and the one to which James most closely adheres, is a discourse of relational structure. Here, as in the 'Stream of Thought' chapter, energies would be conceptualized as being part of a relational system conceived in an homologous manner to consciousness understood as a perpetually moving stream. In the Jamesian description of consciousness, transitive relations between intentional objects are considered to be of greater importance than unconnected substantives. The channels through which energy is directed and the modes in which it becomes kineticized should not deflect one's attention from a consideration of the energy flow understood as the relations between its

physical manifestations. At the same time, one can speak figuratively of poetic, spiritual or religious energy as the particular end toward which biochemical energy is channelled without needing to revert to, for James, an obsolete faculty-based philosophy. By exercising the will it is possible to redirect energy through one particular channel. This active exertion represents both a rupturing of the old pattern and an establishment, or facilitation (*Bahnung*), of new pathways.

In a shift away from Freud's early neurological model of mind, and anticipating his later thoughts on 'A Note Upon the "Mystic-Writing Pad"' (1924), Jacques Derrida encourages the reader to think of Freud's hypothesis of "breaching" or "path-breaking" (*frayage*) "as a metaphorical model and not as a neurological description" (Derrida 1978: 200). In this way, Derrida releases the metaphorical content of "path" from Freud's explicitly neurological context in order to associate it with his later elaboration of a "trace which breaks open its own path" (214). Thus, for Derrida, "breaching, the tracing of a trail, opens up a conducting path" in which the old "path is broken, cracked, *fracta*, breached" before it can be rechannelled towards a new end (200). This, then, would constitute repetition-with-difference rather than a repetition of the same. Transferred into Jamesian language, "breaching" would represent either a willed or an accidental deviation from the rigid pattern of habit.

For Freud, facilitation depends on the "magnitude of impressions" and the "frequency with which the same impression is repeated" (Freud 1971: 1, 300). But Derrida detects that if, as Freud conceives, memory is associated exclusively with quantity and "perception without memory" linked solely to quality, then "the concept of breaching

shows itself intolerant of this intention" (Derrida 1978: 201). Instead, the inquirer should attempt to examine the qualitative differences between remembered traces. Only by highlighting the notion of "difference between possible breaches" can Derrida reconcile Freud's general description of mind with the idea of "preference" (201): "the possibility of choice determined by facilitation" (Freud 1971: 1, 301). This position coincides with James's various descriptions of the directedness and attentiveness of mind to object, the "phenomena of contrast" (James 1950a: 242) and the will to invest spiritual energy in the pursuit of a goal as described in <u>Varieties</u>. Indeed, Freud's "magnitude of impressions" should not be dismissed as the remnants of his abandoned philosophy; it is possible to trace this notion back to romantic theories of the immensity of the sublime and the dramatic impression which James associates with religious experiences.

In order to speak in terms of religious experience James must first articulate a conception of energy, both as a real, but latent, force (like will, the inquirer can only detect energy empirically through its kineticized manifestations) and as a metaphor for action. Thus, when he speaks of "the threshold of a man's consciousness in general, to indicate the amount of noise, pressure, or other outer stimulus which it takes to arouse his attention at all" he is talking in terms of excitation of the mind "at which one state...passes into another" (James 1985: 135, 134). The mystical experience will often occur at such moments as a perceptual manifestation of this excess of bodily energy. But rather than arbitrary epiphenomena of bodily excitation, James conceives of these revelations as disclosing the possibility of a different path to follow than the self-serving worldly road.

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Whereas Carl Carus links peculiar mental states with a visionary revelation of a double self, Freud understands hallucinations to be merely a manifestation of psychopathology. Rather than trying to explain away these kinds of hallucinatory phenomena, as Freud does in his essays on Dostoyevsky and 'A Religious Experience' (both of 1927), James, like Carus (and, later, Binswanger), speaks in terms of the exceptional and extraordinary nature of mystical experiences over and above an attempt to characterize them in terms of pathology. For James, the threshold between one mental state and another, where the "new" state leaves a permanent mark on the psyche, would be the moment of "breaching": both in terms of the rupturing of an old pattern and the reformulation of a different configuration which, adhering to the spiral pattern discussed in the last section, moves upwards and outwards away from earthly constraints.

In James's philosophy this "giving in to" the revelations as they occur is not a passive process. The search for a strenuous life is one which sets the tone for the energetic excess of these experiences. In addition, the choice to heed insights takes a resolute strength of will, because invariably the vision points out the more arduous of the two directions. Rather than stimulating a "backsliding" to an old pattern, the experiencer should realize that his perception of himself is always temporary and incomplete. Such a recognition may then initiate a striving for a fuller appreciation of the human condition, which, in Jamesian thought, is representative of both an acknowledgement of a subliminal self and an urge to overcome "the habit of inferiority to our full self" (James 1971: 38).

James poses two important questions which emerge directly from this desire to be other than, or more than, the existing self. Firstly,

admit so much, then, and admit also that the charge of being inferior to their full self is far truer of some men than of others; then the practical question ensues: to what do the better men owe their escape? and, in the fluctuations which all men feel in their own degree of energizing, to what are the improvements due, when they occur? (38)[31]

James directly answers his questions when he suggests that "either some unusual stimulus fills them with emotional excitement, or some unusual idea of necessity induces them to make an extra effort of will. Excitements, ideas, and efforts, in a word, are what carry us over the dam" (38). Whether it is "stimulus" or "idea", only by cultivating a sensitivity to the qualities of the "unusual", the peculiar and the strange is it possible to shake off "an inveterate habit" and the *adhedonia* of daily life. According to James, daily life tends to impress upon individuals a routine pattern which encourages "habit-neurosis" (39). One can make an exerted effort to avoid such repetitions by defamiliarizing the ordinary and the habitual; but the abrupt and unpremeditated nature of the revelations serve to indicate to the experiencer "a deeper kind of conscious being than he could enjoy before" (James 1985: 157).

Secondly, James suggests that conversions can be empowering. He claims they can "unify us", even if only temporarily, to result in "freedom, and often a great enlargement of power" (James 1971: 47). By following the arduous path, then, one may encounter a range of freedom which would be unthought from within the strictures of daily routine. The tracing of a visionary path may lead to an understanding from which one is able to confront, or to escape from, one's imprisoning condition, even if it is at the risk of

[31] For James these "better men" are those "twice-born" religious believers who have written of their conversion experiences: Ignatius Loyola, St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, Swedenborg, Tolstoy, Bunyan and Emerson.

socially defined integrity. This notion of rebellion against social conformity and clinical categories of illness perhaps indicates a higher realm of morality. James goes on to say "whatever it is, it may be a high-water mark of energy, in which 'noes,' once impossible, are easy, and in which a new range of 'yeses' gains the right of way" (47). This would be the possibility of negation and affirmation on a higher, existential, platform which eschews class-bound morality, "intellectual respectability", "literality" and "decorum" for their tendency to confine the ends to which humans can direct their energy: "locking up the rest of his organism and leaving it unused" (49). The metaphor here of "locking up" and unlocking the self suggests an activity more refined than simple unblocking brought about by a release of energy. It seems the key is to be procured only through constructing and nurturing a narrative pattern which can incorporate vivid and intense perceptual manifestations.

For James, a life of moral virtue is not necessarily a stoic life. Anything which unlocks or excites the "Yes function in man" and which "makes him for the moment one with truth" should be utilized (James 1985: 387). Anticipating Aldous Huxley's experimentation with mescalin, James suggests that to stimulate mystical experiences one should make experimental use of alcohol, nitrous oxide and the search of the extraordinary in order to unlock this "higher" life.[32] Where James and Nietzsche part company, however, is the Jamesian notion that there are boundaries where the pursuit of

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[32] In the double-book The Doors of Perception (1954) and Heaven and Hell (1956) Huxley reflects upon his attempts to extend the mystical tradition with "controlled" use of hallucinogenic drugs. It is also interesting that Oliver Sacks, in one of his numerous appendices to the 1990 edition of Awakenings, pays tribute to three early medical experimenters - Freud, James and Havelock Ellis - who toy with the "notion of a drug which will banish sadness and fatigue, increase energy, expand consciousness, imbue or reimbue the world with wonder" (Sacks 1991a: 323).

intense experiences should be delimited by a strong sense of morality and human compassion.

I intimated in my opening comments to this section that James's writing on sublime experiences proves richer for my consideration than either the transcendentalists or the mind-curists, primarily because of his preoccupation with the body. At the beginning of both Principles and Varieties he commences his discussion with reference to physiology and neurology. He expresses the psychological postulate that "there is not a single one of our states of mind, high or low, healthy or morbid, that has not some organic process as its condition" (14). Although he wishes to shift his consideration to the "higher" processes of mind, he constantly returns to a notion of the body as the material vehicle for mental experiences: "every one of them without exception flows from the state of their possessor's body." While one may transcend the corporeal to maintain an unmediated union with God (or a similar transcendental signifier), James is intensely aware of limits which infringe and constrain these metaphysical flights of the mind. He criticizes the limited "healthy-minded" perspective which in the search for a sanitized "perfect health" (183) tends to "divert our attention from disease and death" to create a hygienic "poetic fiction far handsomer and cleaner and better than the world really is" (90). In an 1897 tract entitled In Tune With the Infinite, written by one of New England's chief mind-curists, Ralph Waldo Trine, this would be achieved by a simple "exchange [of] dis-ease for ease, inharmony for harmony, suffering and pain for abounding health and strength" (James 1985: 101). However, for James, this would be a denial of the presence of evil or strife in the universe and with it a denial of man's finite and complex composition.

James goes on to quote another mind-curist, Henry Wood, who, in <u>Ideal Suggestion Through Mental Photography</u> (1899), considers the "soul's real world" to be that

> which it has built of its thoughts, mental states, and imaginations. If we *will* we can turn our backs upon the lower and sensuous plane, and lift ourselves into the realm of the spiritual and the Real, and there gain a residence...The spiritual hearing becomes delicately sensitive, so that the 'still, small voice' is audible, the tumultuous waves of external sense are hushed and there is a great calm (117).

Herein are echoes both of James's recommendation to exercise the will in order that the individual might move away from a "lower" plane and his attention to qualitative detail ("a still small voice" [James 1950: 549]) which is discerned amongst the noise of sensual tumult. However, it is also possible to detect a strain of divine healing, which, closely connected to ideas of mind-cure, encourages a shedding of all that is corporeal. Thus, James states "in mind-cure circles the fundamental article of faith is that disease should never be accepted. It is wholly of the pit" (James 1985: 113). Whilst he would encourage the pursuit of goals to lift humans out of repetitive and dehumanizing patterns, he realizes that only by accepting and embracing the "dirt" of the "pit" can one begin to understand mortality. James evokes the supernatural elements of <u>Macbeth</u> (c.1606) as well as the universal morality dramatized in mediaeval Everyman plays when he tropes on a fine phrase: "still the evil background is really there to be thought of, and the skull will grin in at the banquet" (140).

It is as if the body acts as a material regulator for mental or spiritual life which will always betray a Faustian flight to reach divinity. Of course, the betrayal is only apparent. James claims that biochemical energy provides the initial stimulant for mystical

experiences. Thus, the flight is inscribed in the space of the body. Indeed, there is no real flight because the mind and spirit can only be understood in reference to the physiological.

James does not suggest that all mystical experiences occur in a state of bodily excitation (take, for example, the case of J. A. Symonds and his state of muscular rest [385]); but only that, for him, the body represents the ultimate site of one's experience (although, in Human Immortality (1898), he does leave open the *possibility* of an afterlife). Conversely, although psychic experience is seen to be a transmissive function of the brain, it is irreducible to the bodily states which determine it. Only with reference to James's activity of willing, as described in Principles and 'The Will To Believe', is it possible to approach a conception of Carlyle's "dynamic science." In this way, James seeks to avoid the traps of monism and dualism for a pluralistic model which enables him to speak of directing energy towards the "breaching" of old paths and towards the pursuit of new. It is not a wish to escape the bodily condition which James commends, because, for him, the body is a source of life and vitality. Rather, he encourages a conceptual shift away from stasis towards an open and incomplete universe and, with it, a pragmatic movement towards a narrative of spiritual plenitude.

II. Ludwig Binswanger

I sat listening to my strange travelling-companion,

who spoke to me of Being, of Life, of Man.

Thomas Mann,

Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man (1954)

(1) Circumventing the Mind-Body Problem: Binswanger versus Freud

In the first chapter I discussed the manner in which James shifts his discussion of the conscious and embodied self away from a Cartesian description of two distinct, yet interacting, realms, towards the formulation of an integrated psycho-physical structure. However, despite James's attempts in <u>Principles</u> to dissolve this dichotomy, he continues to deploy a language of mind and body and, thereby, retains an implicit dualism. This does not directly inflict damage to his theory of pragmatism; but, his attempts to wrest psychology away from metaphysics continue to remain problematic.

It is Ludwig Binswanger, the Swiss psychiatrist and existential analyst, to whom I now turn in order to investigate another set of ideas which attempts to dissolve mind-body dualism in order to reconceptualize the sphere of human existence.[1] This is not purely a theoretical exercise for Binswanger, but also a means by which he can radicalize what he calls the "Magna Charta" of psychiatry which bases the psychological study of man on a model taken from natural science. Binswanger's extensive correspondence with Freud during the 1910s revolves around a dispute concerning the nature and role of psychological analysis in the human sciences; the outcome of which provided impetus for the practice of various strains of existential therapy across Europe during the 1930s and thereafter.

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[1] Binswanger's only direct link to James is a mention of the American thinker's "endogenous depressive desperation and anxiety" (as represented in the breakdown of the French correspondent in <u>Varieties</u>), in <u>Über Ideenflucht</u>, Zürich, 1933, 138. However, as I will indicate, there are a number of conceptual links which align the two thinkers in key areas of their thought.

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Whereas James's interest in psychology is, more often than not, directed towards either himself as experiencer (as can be detected in the disguised account of his breakdown in Varieties) or the abstract psychological subject of Principles, Binswanger's case studies focus explicitly on the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) of individual patients. In order to describe this shift of emphasis, which I develop further in the chapter on Sacks, this chapter will be divided into five sections in which I explicate Binswanger's thought and assess his contribution to the tradition of romantic science. Carl Jung, his one-time teacher at Zürich, perhaps has as much claim to this tradition as does Binswanger, but Jung, in his studies of mysticism and the occult, arguably leans further towards the pole of romanticism than would be productive for my thesis. By linking questions of identity with problems of interpretation, Binswanger's thought lends itself to the tenor of my study, especially through his engagement with Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Moreover, Binswanger's emphasis on Being (*Sein*) does not totally debunk Freud's vision of psychoanalysis, but seeks to complement it, by introducing a method of study which he deems to have been hitherto neglected in the human sciences.

In the first two sections of this chapter I construct a framework, both historical and theoretical, through which Binswanger's case studies can be viewed and tested. This section considers some of the central areas of dispute between Binswanger and Freud, especially with reference to the former's appropriation of ideas expressed in Heidegger's Being and Time. In the second section I explore Heidegger's influence on Binswanger more thoroughly and examine some of the areas in which the Swiss psychiatrist departs from the German's founding existentialist work. Here, I consider the claims of a rival Swiss analyst, Medard Boss, who takes issue with what he and Heidegger view as a

subjectivist undercurrent in Binswanger's work. The third section focuses on Binswanger's essay 'Dream and Existence' (1930), which is central for assessing his importance both to existential analysis and to the thought of Michel Foucault. Foucault's early work rooted in phenomenology is important here, including his introduction to Binswanger's essay (1954), but I also read back into 'Dream and Existence' Foucault's later neo-Nietzschean writings on the aesthetics of existence in History of Sexuality and Technologies of the Self. Like the section on will in the previous chapter, this section provides a theoretical context for my concluding two sections, in which I attend to the details of the cases of 'Lola Voss' and 'Ellen West', published in Binswanger's book, Schizophrenie (1957).

Swiss psychiatry made important advances in the early years of the twentieth century, especially in the German speaking parts of the North where Binswanger studied at Burghölzli hospital under Eugen Bleuler and Jung. Burghölzli had served as a training clinic for Zürich University since 1860 and became an important focal point for Swiss psychiatry after Jung's arrival in 1900 and Binswanger's in 1906. Binswanger met Freud in 1907 on a trip to Vienna and developed a close friendship after his move to Kreuzlingen, where he took up a post at Bellevue sanatorium founded by his grandfather Otto Binswanger (who wrote the standard Swiss textbook on hysteria in 1904) and continued by his father Robert Binswanger.

Freud knew the Binswanger family and felt favourably about Bellevue, referring some of his own patients there. Although both Jung and Binswanger came to disagree with similar aspects of Freud's psychological principles, the younger Swiss retained his

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personal friendship with the Austrian analyst long after their meeting in 1907. The friendship is documented in <u>Erinnerungen an Freud</u> (1956)[2], a book in which Binswanger comments on the paternal role Freud took in relation to him (an attitude which Jung rebelled against).[3] Indeed, in his diary Binswanger writes that he cared more for Freud as a "human being" for his "scope and depth of humanity" than he did for Freud as a scientist (quoted in Schmidl 1959: 47). This expression of emotion is not merely illustrative of his depth of feeling for Freud, but is central to Binswanger's analytic project, through which he seeks an anthropological understanding of man and an empathic relationship with his patients. In short, he believes it is necessary to empathize (*einfühlen*) with his patient's condition prior to any thematic study of him or her. Despite the obvious problems such an emphasis poses for transference in therapy, Binswanger links this empathic understanding with an attempt to include those aspects of the patient's psychological world which the approaches and taxonomies of natural science fail to address. In a similar manner to James, Binswanger wishes to include aspects of psychic life (primarily phenomenological and spiritual aspects) which are not directly available to empirical investigation. Both thinkers wish to radicalize empiricism by developing a phenomenological approach to the self.

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[2] Translated as <u>Sigmund Freud: Reminiscences of a Friendship</u>, New York: Grune and Stratton, 1957. This book provides an alternative view to standard biographies of Freud (Jones 1955 & Gay 1989), which tend to underplay the private and professional relationship between Binswanger and Freud. See also Herausgegeben von Gerhard Fichtner, <u>Sigmund Freud/Ludwig Binswanger, Briefwechsel 1908-1938</u> (1992) and Fritz Schmidl's essay on 'Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Binswanger' (Schmidl 1959).

[3] This is best illustrated in the letters Jung sent to Freud in the years preceding his resignation from the presidency of the International Association of Psychoanalysis in 1914, <u>The Freud/Jung Letters</u> (McGuire 1991: 256). See also the chapter on Freud in Jung's autobiographical <u>Memories, Dreams, Reflections</u>, 1961 (Jung 1995: 169-93).

Binswanger's attempt to broaden the focus of psychoanalysis represents the cornerstone of his thought, and one which is best viewed from a dual perspective. Many of his theoretical writings and public addresses discuss those areas of thought Freud inherited from a nineteenth-century tradition of biological science which, in turn, had helped to delineate a specific area of study for psychiatry and psychoanalysis. As I discussed in the last section on James, Freud's attempt to forge psychoanalysis as a natural science is evident throughout his writings, from the abandoned 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' through to his important Metapsychological Papers written in the mid-1910s and his lectures on psychoanalysis in the 1930s. To investigate Binswanger's descriptions of this project and his departure from it, it is important to clearly identify the theoretical differences of the two analysts. I will do this by coupling a consideration of Binswanger's characterization of Freud's project with a reading of the related areas of Freud's own writings. This will enable me in the next section to clarify those aspects of Heidegger's thought which bear upon Binswanger's work and furnish him with an alternative theoretical vocabulary.

In his essay on 'Freud and the Magna Charta of Clinical Psychiatry' (1955), Binswanger states that psychoanalysis has inherited its "basic conceptual categories" from what he views as the founding moment of clinical psychiatry in 1861 (Needleman 1963: 186).[4] The second edition of Wilhelm Griesinger's Pathologie und Therapie der psychischen

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[4] Several of Binswanger's essays to which I refer in this and subsequent sections have been translated in two collections on existential psychoanalysis: Jacob Needleman, ed., Being-in-the-World: Selected Papers of Ludwig Binswanger (1963), which includes a long theoretical introduction by the editor and a collection of Binswanger's previously untranslated essays, and Rollo May et al, eds., Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology (1958), which provides a variety of other source material alongside translations of Binswanger.

Krankheiten was published in this year (originally published in 1845), in which the first director at Burghölzli claims that because psychic phenomena are shown to be organically rooted in brain processes, they "ought only to be 'interpreted' by natural scientists" (186). Binswanger criticizes Griesinger's understanding that the psyche is comparable to the physiological reflex action, and therefore should be approached through similar conceptual and methodological procedures: he "reduced human psychic life to quantiatively variable, dynamic elementary processes taking place in objective time" (186). This materialistic model dictates that subjectively-felt qualitative experiences are to be understood to derive from "elementary processes in neural matter" (187). In a later case history, Binswanger expresses his reservations about such reductionism:

> we immediately realize how radical is the process of reduction which the natural-historically oriented clinical method must use in order to be able to speak of a disease-process and to project it upon the 'organism' and the structure and modes of functioning of the brain (May 1958: 329).

Whilst Griesinger does not preclude the possibility of leaving "the door open for a 'descriptive and analytical' or *verstehende* psychology" (Needleman 1963: 187), Binswanger writes that "today [1955] the charter shows signs of having become so dogmatically rigidified that many of its advocates deem any measure proper that would condemn and excommunicate those scientists who seem to hold opposing views" (188).

If the Magna Charta proclaimed that Western psychiatry should be understood as a branch of natural science, then Freud's adherence to this model is seen by Binswanger to strengthen and dogmatize Griesinger's ideas. However, although contaminated with the language of natural science, it is important to note that, as Paul Ricoeur argues, Freud's

project seeks to extend the scope of medical psychiatry by developing psychoanalysis as a specifically interpretive practice (Ricoeur 1970: 20-36).

Binswanger goes on to state that "Freudian theory fills in a very pronounced *gap* in the charter", but it also "deepens the very ideas contained in it by casting light upon things that could never have been seen from within the charter alone" (204). By strengthening the claim of psychiatry to be viewed as a branch of a natural science, Binswanger accuses Freud of translating the "pictorial language of psychology" into "more uniform, coarser, chemical and physical 'images' that, for him, seemed closer to reality" (200). This statement implies that it is not Freud's understanding of empiricism *per se* to which Binswanger takes exception, but the materialistic and epistemological presuppositions which underpin Freud's conception of psychic life.

Binswanger reiterates and expands upon these ideas in many other of his essays, but his basic point is that psychoanalysis cannot fulfil itself as a general theory of psychology if it is conceived only as a branch of natural science. This moot point arises from the central differences between the two analysts. Despite Freud's assertion that "strictly speaking...there are only two sciences - psychology, pure and applied, and natural science" of which psychiatry is one branch (Freud 1946: 229), in his lecture on 'A Philosophy of Life' (1932) he argues that psychoanalysis is not "in a position to create a *Weltanschauung* of its own" (232). Freud speaks derogatively about a *Weltanschauung*, by which he means:

> an intellectual construction which gives a unified solution of all the problems of existence in virtue of a comprehensive hypothesis, a

construction, therefore, in which no question is left open and in which everything in which we are interested finds a place (202).

Instead of offering a "unified solution", Freud realises that psychoanalysis "does not take everything into its scope, it is incomplete and it makes no claim to being comprehensive or to constituting a system" (232).

Binswanger's disagreement with Freud rests upon what he understands as the Austrian's misconception of *Weltanschauung* as a totalizing philosophy of life. Freud claims that psychoanalysis "is quite unsuited to form a *Weltanschauung* of its own; it must accept that of science in general" (203), whereas Binswanger wishes to extend Heidegger's project by examining the basic structures of existence. By focusing upon "the existential concept of science" Binswanger argues that "psychiatry in general [is placed] in a position to account for the actuality, possibility, and limits of its own scientific world design or, as we may also call it, transcendental horizon of understanding" (Needleman 1963: 206). The "transcendental horizon of understanding" enables the existential analyst to address the limits of the natural-scientific view and to contribute to "the effort of psychiatry *to understand itself as science*" (207). He goes on to suggest that "such an accounting cannot be executed with the methods of the particular science itself, but only with the aid of philosophical methods" (208).

The disagreement is essentially with Freud's resistance to the "encroachment" of speculative philosophy into the realm of natural science (from which psychology had broken free in the late nineteenth century), against Binswanger's assertion that such a modification would provide science with the means to "understand itself", by accounting

"for the manner in which "*qua* this particular *scientific* mode of grounding, it approaches the things it studies and has them speak of it" (208). He clarifies this point when he later claims that an "analytic of existence...can indicate to psychiatry the limits within which it may inquire and expect and answer and can, as well, indicate the general horizon within which answers, as such, are to be found" (211). In this way Binswanger seeks to rescue the spirit of *Weltanschauung* (if not the term itself) from Freud's criticisms of it and to forge an analytic method which addresses the "total phenomena" of psychic life (May 1958: 329).

In the same essay, Binswanger claims that both psychiatry and psychoanalysis (stimulated by the defections of Jung and Alfred Adler) have recently reached a crisis point concerning their founding presuppositions. He argues that the crisis can only be resolved by carrying out a form of "empirical existential-analytic research", in order to "cast light on psychiatry's horizon of understanding" (211). In practical terms, this directive encourages a radical reconception of both psychic disturbance and the human being in whom the disturbance is manifested. Binswanger claims that most practitioners of psychiatry have tended to view human beings "within the natural-scientific - mainly biological - horizon of understanding" (208-9). This means that the object of study for natural scientists is "the 'sick' organism", whereas Binswanger wishes to attend to the sick "human being": in other words, how sickness is manifested in the individual psyche. Although this comment does not seem very different from a reading of Freud's case studies as close investigations of idiosyncratic psychic disturbances, it does emphasize how important it is for the analyst to be receptive to the psychological requirements of the patient. As with other branches of romantic science, this anthropological project

firmly emphasizes the individuality and peculiarity of the subject over against a cataloguing of symptoms.

Whilst he wishes to broaden "the horizon of understanding", Binswanger does not see the two projects - the scientific and the anthropological - as mutually exclusive: "in actual practice, these two conceptual orientations of psychiatry usually overlap" (209). However, he does stress that empathy with the patient in therapy must occur prior to any systematic categorizing of the patient as a specific type. This point corresponds to Heidegger's division between ontological understanding (the study of structures of existence) and ontic, or thematic, understanding (the study of factical and factual structures). In an essay on Edmund Husserl, Binswanger stresses

> the idea of being is not wholly coincident with the idea of being an object, or, in other words, that being and being an object cannot be used as interchangeable terms...this is at any rate the fundamental thesis of Heidegger's ontology, as well as our own (Binswanger 1942: 201).

He argues that only if an ontological mode of understanding provides the focus for analysis can ontic understanding be rescued from a reductive or partial understanding of psychic disturbance. Binswanger is not primarily worried about Freud's rigorous scientific approach, but he is concerned with his dismissal and reduction of those areas of psychic life which manifest themselves in ways not discernible within a conventional empirical framework. The aim of an analytic of existence is to indicate what is withdrawn, or lost, when humans are understood only with reference to the concepts taken from a limited sphere of ontic understanding. As such, like James, Binswanger's phenomenological approach can be seen to be radically empirical.

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Freud and Binswanger crucially differ over their respective understanding of what an empirical approach to the self entails. In 'The Existential Analysis School of Thought' (1946), Binswanger characterizes these two types of "empirical scientific knowledge" as, firstly, "*discursive inductive* knowledge" which entails "describing, explaining, and controlling 'natural events'" and, secondly, "*phenomenological empirical* knowledge in the sense of a methodical, critical exploration or interpretation of phenomenal contents" (May 1959: 192). In the hermeneutic thought of Ricoeur (himself influenced by the phenomenology of Gabriel Marcel and Heidegger in the 1930s) the former is aligned with an explanatory project which seeks to "*expose and to abolish idols* which are merely the projections of the human will", whereas the latter stresses understanding which "requires *a willingness to listen with openness* to symbols and to 'indirect' language" (Thiselton 1992: 344). Ricoeur wishes to combine explanation with understanding to compensate for the limitations of each: the reductive tendency of the former and the uncritical nature of the latter.

It is an oversimplification to suggest that Freud adheres only to the explanatory pole and Binswanger to the ideal of understanding, but for the purposes of this discussion the general drift of their respective writings can be characterized as such. Moreover, it is Binswanger who seeks to redress the explanatory bias of Freudian writing, not to deliberately oppose it. I will consider each of these approaches (explanation and understanding) in turn in order to clarify the parameters of, and the problems posed by, Binswanger's existential analysis.

In 'A Philosophy of Life' Freud stresses the scrupulous attention demanded by the object of psychoanalytic study and the importance of the intellect in analytic thought: "our best hope for the future is that the intellect - the scientific spirit, reason - should in time establish a dictatorship over the human mind" (Freud 1946: 219). He claims that his psychoanalytical concepts are postulated only after attending closely to behaviour and symptoms. Thus, for example, the unconscious and the ego are not to be seen as part of "a speculative system of ideas" which are then imposed on his patients' experiences; but, as he says, they are "the result of experience, being founded either on direct observations or on conclusions drawn from observations" (208). Indeed, Freud's understanding of the revision and modification of concepts is quite sophisticated and, at times, reminiscent of James's pragmatic approach. For example, in 1915 Freud writes:

> The true beginning of scientific activity consists...in describing phenomena and then in proceeding to group, classify and correlate them. Even at this stage of description it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone...They must at first necessarily possess some degree of indefiniteness; there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content...It is only after more thorough investigation of the field of observation that we are able to formulate its basic scientific concepts with increased precision, and progressively so to modify them that they become serviceable and consistent over a wide area (Freud 1984: 113).

Without such explanatory concepts psychoanalysis would have no basis for therapy nor any adequate tools for analysing anxiety or psychosis. The hypothesizing, revision and modification of concepts is thus confirmed as a necessary precondition for an interpretive science.

Binswanger agrees both with these points (although, as I later discuss, he came to query the existence of the unconscious in terms of a "simple opposition" to consciousness [Binswanger 1957: 64]), but he is unhappy with Freud's reductive views of religion and art. Freud claims both are the epiphenomena of instincts which themselves lie "on the frontier between the mental and physical" (Freud 1984: 108) and he understands spiritual and aesthetic impulses to be sublimations of those instinctual drives which form the basic dynamics of psychic life. Because imagination and spirit are impalpable, he perceives them both to be illusions: art is "almost always harmless and beneficent, it does not seek to be anything else but an illusion" and the irrational affirmation of religious life is seen to be diametrically opposed to rational inquiry (Freud 1946: 205). In 'A Philosophy of Life' and The Future of an Illusion (1927), Freud acknowledges the rival claims to truth of religion, but he emphasizes that "truth" can be unearthed through scientific methods alone:

> The bare fact is that truth cannot be tolerant and cannot admit compromise or limitations, that scientific research looks on the whole field of human activity as its own, and must adopt an uncompromisingly critical attitude towards any other power that seeks to usurp and part of its province (Freud 1946: 205).

In both of these essays he subjects religion to the "critical examination" (213) of science and concludes that, unlike art, religion is not merely an illusion, but a dangerous illusion which leads to the kind of pacification which Nietzsche claims to derive from deeply entrenched habits.

Binswanger reacts strongly to these views, believing that such conclusions derive from Freud's strict adherence to a limited version of empiricism. Moreover, he is concerned

about Freud's dismissal of the "actual content of the human psychic life in its whole richness", which is the result of "an enormous *simplification* of the life of the psyche and to a *reduction* of it to a crude natural scientific schema governed by a few principles" (Needleman 1963: 203). Closely reflecting James's theoretical move from epistemology to radical empiricism, Binswanger understands that an empirical method should entail close description of psychic phenomena as they appear to the individual. In this way, religious experiences are to be understood and investigated as they subjectively arise, to recall James's term, as the "fruits" of experience, rather than subsequently translating the phenomena into a preexistent discourse of metapsychology.

This does not mean that Binswanger simply reintroduces the language of soul (*die Seele*) into analytic vocabulary. He claims that soul "is a religious, metaphysical, and ethical concept" which can be admitted "only as a theoretical, auxiliary construct within a specific field - as, for example, in psychopathology" (May 1958: 231). Instead, Binswanger wishes to preserve a language of spirituality which he reinterprets through Heidegger's framework of Being. He describes this kind of phenomenological-analytic project as follows:

> In phenomenological experience, the discursive taking apart of natural objects into characteristics or qualities and their inductive elaboration into types, concepts, judgments, conclusions, and theories is replaced by giving expression to the content of what is purely phenomenally given and therefore is not part of 'nature' in any way (May 1959: 192).

Here the dichotomy of "taking apart" and "giving expression to" emphasizes the creative and collaborative aspects of therapy over those elements which tend to be reductive to the level of libido. Corresponding to Cavell's romantic attention to expressive language,

Binswanger implies here that the mode, or form, of expression cannot be untangled from the content of thought. One example of this can be detected in Binswanger's analysis of dreams for their manifest dream content; an investigation which Binswanger believes should be carried out in preference to the dream work (a causal interpretation) which Freud recommends. This does not mean that phenomenology ignores the importance of dispelling illusions, only that Binswanger wishes to shift his emphasis from determinate explanations to descriptions of the "essential structures" (194) which characterize the life-world of the individual.

Three fundamental criticisms of Binswanger's phenomenological approach need to be addressed here. Firstly, the claim that phenomenology is an uncritical and purely descriptive philosophical practice is a common criticism of the tradition in which Binswanger places himself. However, in an essay 'On the Nature and Aims of Phenomenology" (1943), John Wild asserts that phenomenology should be distinguished from phenomenalism, "which sets for itself the really hopeless task of transcribing the infinitely variable succession of appearances as they occur" (Wild 1943: 85). He argues that phenomenology is "radically empirical" by directing "its attention to that formal or eidetic structure of the phenomena, which is implicit in them, but which requires painstaking and repeated observation" (85). Wild stresses the "laborious and uncommon effort" (90) involved in such an attempt to describe phenomena, but he also stresses this kind of study is preferable to any "premature attempts at synthesis" (91).

The second criticism is that phenomenology preserves the object-subject dichotomy and, in this way, does nothing to depart from the Cartesian tradition of rational inquiry. Here,

it is Heidegger's break from Husserl's phenomenology which helps to dissolve the dichotomy. Heidegger departs from Husserl's project to extract the essences which structure phenomena ("the concealed foundation" of idealizations), because he sees no possibility of objectively "dismantling" the phenomenological sedimentations (Husserl 1973: 47-48). This position marks a move away from Kantian transcendental phenomenology, which attempts to rescue the things-in-themselves lying behind phenomena, towards a hermeneutic phenomenology which recognizes that the inquirer is always already embedded in the world. Like James's metaphor of the stream of thought, the subject of consciousness does not face the object, but each is implicated by, and partially constitutive of, the other (Needleman 1963: 13-23). This idea enables Heidegger to reject both idealism and materialism. By grounding his philosophy on neither subject nor object, he stresses the intractable nature of each through the radical notion of *Dasein* or Being-in-the-world.

Binswanger appropriates Heidegger's formulation of Being-in-the-world as a way of circumventing the mind-body problem. Heidegger claims it is "a purely theoretical problem", implying that it has little, if no, practical significance, and he goes on to claim that the mind-body problem is "incorrectly formulated" (Heidegger 1963: 209-10). As a therapist Binswanger would obviously disagree with the practical import of this theoretical problem, but echoing Heidegger he detects that

> the situation can be put to rights only if we go *behind* both conceptual horizons or reality-conceptions - that of nature and that of "culture" - and approach man's basic function of understanding Being as the establishing of ground - a transcendental function (210).

This does not represent a return to the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl, but implies that Being-in-the-world is a condition of existence which is anterior to a subject-object split.[5] Heidegger's notion of "thrownness" into existence transforms Kant's description of the transcendental ego and Husserl's rhetoric of essences into an exploration of the "temporality of human existence" (206). Not only does this rescue a temporal dimension which seems lacking in Husserl's ahistorical phenomenology, but it also implicates the task of the interpreter. As Heidegger's translator, David Farrell Krell, comments: "because Dasein is itself historical all inquiry concerning it must scrutinize its own history: ontology of Dasein must be *hermeneutical*, that is, aware of its own historical formation and indefatigably attentive to the problem of interpretation" (Heidegger 1978: 21). By adopting this Heideggerian position, Binswanger makes temporal and interpretive understanding central to an analysis of his patients' life-worlds.

The third criticism of phenomenology and one which has been taken most seriously by poststructuralist critics is, in Wild's words, that phenomenologists seek to disclose the "original pre-analytic data" of phenomena (Wild 1943: 86). As Derrida and de Man argue, interpretation is always already the domain of any data one wishes to examine, whether in the practice of phenomenology, of natural science or of literary studies. Thus, if "pre-analytic data" is held to be synonymous with pre-linguistic, or raw, culturally unmediated, data, then Binswanger's phenomenological method reaches a serious theoretical impasse. However, in Binswanger's defence, the third section of his essay on 'The Existential Analysis School of Thought' states "the phenomena to be interpreted are

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[5] In Heidegger's words: "the existential analytic of Dasein comes *before* any psychology or anthropology, and certainly before any biology" (Heidegger 1962: 71).

largely language phenomena" (May 1959: 200). The existential structures which he seeks to disclose are those always already expressed in language, a medium through which they "actually ensconce and articulate themselves and where, therefore, they can be ascertained and communicated" (200). Although his comments on language are not a dominant focus of his writings (he worked briefly on aphasia in 1926), admissions like this imply that, instead of attempting to discover the essences of sedimentations stripped of language (the aim of Husserl's phenomenology), he realizes that structures can only be disclosed through language and, furthermore, that the underlying structures themselves are part of a wider semiotic matrix.

How then does the phenomenological method (and particularly the Heideggerian interpretation of it) allow Binswanger to shift emphasis away from the scientific explanation expressed in Freud's analytic writings? Fundamentally, it is in his attempt to redescribe *Weltanschauung*, not as a totalizing and complete picture of the world, but as an inquiry "into the *being* of *man as a whole*" (Needleman 1963: 211). Even if one rejects Freud's reductive criticisms of the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions, Binswanger argues that the scientific conception of man "as a physical-psychological-spiritual unity does not say enough" (211). In his thought, such a "summative enumeration" will always be partial and fall short of addressing "the Dasein as being-in-the-world" (211). In short, "existential analysis undertakes to work out being human in all its existential forms and their worlds, in its being-able-to-be (existence), being-allowed-to-be (love), and having-to-be (thrownness)" (May 1959: 315). He claims that psychoanalysis can deal only with the last of these (a form of psychic determination), whereas existential analysis not only enables Binswanger to retain the possibility of affirming a spiritual dimension in his

conception of the human psyche, but also furnishes him with an analytic vocabulary which transcends the biological basis of Freud's project and enables him to circumvent the mind-body problem.

There are many theoretical problems left open in this section, in particular, the claim that Binswanger's position is merely a disguised form of idealism. Accordingly, his deeper engagement and ultimate departure from Heidegger's early existentialist philosophy forms the focus of my next section.

(2) Binswanger and Heidegger: the Question of Being

Binswanger was not the only influential existential analyst to distance himself from

Freudian orthodoxy. A number of years after Binswanger had written his most important

analytic papers, a younger Swiss analyst, Medard Boss, also sought to align his work with

Heidegger's thought in an attempt to compensate for the limitations of psychoanalysis.

In Psychoanalysis and Daseinanalysis (1963), Boss, like Binswanger, takes issue with the

"prescientific presuppositions" which underpin Freud's conception of psychoanalysis as

a natural science (Boss 1963: 75). Boss claims that these presuppositions result in

splitting up

> the unity of man's 'Being-in-the-world' into three primordially separated
> particles: the 'psyche,' the human body, and the external world. Once this
> conceptual split had been achieved, these three theoretically abstracted
> parts of man's world can never be linked together again (78).

In response to this natural-scientific tendency, Boss affirms Heidegger's description of

Being-in-the-world as the primary, and irreducible, condition of human life. Moreover,

Boss stresses that it is important "to determine - through careful investigation of their

origins, their essences, and their respective practical impacts on psychiatry and

psychotherapy - whether there is any connection at all" between *psychoanalyse* and

Daseinanalyse (2-3). He also wishes to distinguish his allegiance to Heidegger's

"fundamental insights" (4) from "the shocking intellectual confusion which has come to

prevail under the blanket term 'existentialism'" (3). Whilst Binswanger's name is only

mentioned twice in the course of the book, the writings of the elder Swiss analyst

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represent one strain of "fashionable" existentialism from which Boss wishes to disassociate himself.[6]

Boss delineates several misconceptions of Dasein, by which he clears the way for his own reading of Heidegger. His primary concern is to prevent existential analysis from falling back into an idealistic, pre-Heideggerian, manner of conceiving the self. Binswanger's theory of existential analysis is accordingly criticized for being a "subjectivistic revision" of Heidegger's philosophy (51). According to Boss this entails the recuperation of a pre-existentialist notion of subjectivity which pushes "aside the real meaning of Being-in-the-world" (53). Far from resolving the "subject-object dichotomy", "Being-in-the-world is then pictured as a property, or as a character trait, of a subject 'in' whom this property resides or who 'has' it" (53). Thus, "Being-in-the-world turns out to be merely a somewhat wider and more useful version of the concept of subjectivity" (54). In other words, rather than Being-in-the-world representing the primary "luminous realm of Being-ness", Boss claims it "gains access to the unity of human existence only at the price of losing all psychotherapeutic possibilities" (53).

Boss's criticism, levelled at Binswanger, Jung and Sartre for different reasons, indicates that, instead of Being signifying an originary and intractable embeddedness in the world, the Cartesian private subject is asserted as the primary model of selfhood. Whilst there are elements of Binswanger's thought which *are* vulnerable to criticism, such a comment

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[6] The criticisms of Binswanger are more evident in the original German version of Psychoanalyse und Daseinsanalytiker, the manuscript of which was approved by Heidegger. As William Sadler notes, "in the enlarged English version, published apparently without Heidegger's assistance, the criticism is less clear and to the point" (Sadler 1969: 118).

indicates that Boss misunderstands Binswanger's insistence on Being-in-the-world-with-others, which is the crucial starting point both for his conception of self and for his existential analysis. Indeed, although Heidegger claims in section twenty-six of the first division of Being and Time that man is fundamentally "Being-with", he and Boss often underplay the importance of such an assertion (Heidegger 1962: 153).

In order to clarify Binswanger's position *vis-à-vis* Heidegger and to defend his work against the criticisms of Boss, I will use Heidegger's comments on "Being-with" to discuss Binswanger's theoretical position and thereby outline the intersubjective dynamics of his analysis. In his book on existential phenomenology, William Sadler cites a personal letter from Binswanger, in which the Swiss analyst notes "that he had in fact misunderstood the nature of Heidegger's ontology; however, he hoped that his own development of a Heideggerian type of existential analysis would be considered a fruitful misunderstanding" (Sadler 1969: 118). This comment tends to limit much of the critical material on Binswanger to his adherence to, and departure from, Heidegger's working through of ontological questions in Being and Time. Instead of simply linking the positions of Binswanger and Boss to early and late Heidegger respectively, where relevant I will couple a consideration of Binswanger's theories to Heidegger's later work, in order to stress the Swiss analyst's place in a tradition of romantic science.[7]

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[7] In a paper on 'Martin Heidegger's Zollikon Seminars' (1968), Boss recounts his first correspondence with Heidegger in 1946 (Boss 1988: 7-20). At this time Heidegger had already "turned" from the concerns of Being and Time towards a more explicit concern with language. Heidegger continued to stress the chasm between ontology and psychology, but in this later phase, during which time he gave seminars in Switzerland to Boss's medical students, he does outline some common ground between the two disciplines.

Heidegger's conception of Being-in-the-world implies a connection with a shared "world" in which Dasein is "co-determined" (Heidegger 1962: 154). He describes a state in which the assertion of 'I' does not begin "by starting out and isolating" the self against the backdrop of others; rather, that iterating 'I' necessarily implicates those others "from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself - those among whom one is too" (154). Once more, the Cartesian subject is implicitly attacked for conceptually dividing the world into a private self (which 'I' can know by following a sceptical method of doubt) and those other shadowy "beings" (objects and entities) which inhabit the world, and from which epistemological doubt arises. This split rests upon Descartes's association of mind with the true self and body as representative of the contingent world in which the mind is corporeally suspended.[8] By way of contrast, Heidegger, by suggesting a model of Dasein which is anterior to the subject-object split, undermines the Cartesian model by arguing that "with" and "too" (in the above quotation) "are to be understood *existentially*" as relational terms which link the self with others (155). Thus, "by reason of this *with-like* [*mithaften*] Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]" (155).

Heidegger clarifies what he means by Being-in-the-world by claiming that 'I' is always already "I-here", a "locative personal designation [which] must be understood in terms of Dasein's existential spatiality" (155). This does not mean that 'I' does not signify; rather, that each articulation and affirmation of 'I' confirms the coexistence of the spatial plane (here rather than there) and the temporal plane (now rather than then). Heidegger

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[8] Husserl adheres to the Cartesian model of self: he admits that his transcendental phenomenology is "a neo-Cartesianism, even though it is obliged...to reject nearly all the well-known doctrinal content of Cartesian philosophy" (Husserl 1977: 1).

addresses the temporal dimension of existence in the second division of Being and Time

and he goes on to emphasize the coexistence of the spatial and the personal dimensions

in 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' (1951), a paper in which he argues that the one term can

only be expressed and understood in relation to the other. Heidegger suggests humans

are homeless in two ways - they are estranged both from Being and from an authentic

mode of dwelling in the world - and it is the task of philosophy to work through such

estrangement. As a Cavellian reading of the opening of Being and Time implies,

although understanding often leads to the perplexity of scepticism, perplexity may also

lead back towards understanding. Moreover, as I comment later in this chapter,

Heidegger's expression of double estrangement is important for Binswanger's therapy.

Heidegger's comments in 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' indicate a shared public

language, over against a private language of selfhood, which presupposes a relational

model of Dasein. This view is evidently shared by Binswanger, when he claims that

"what attracts our attention in existential-analysis is...the content of language expressions

and manifestations in so far as they point to the world-design or designs in which the

speaker lives or has lived or, in one word, their world-content" (May 1959: 201). Such

a relational view of language denotes a social dimension which patient and analyst share

and through which communication is possible. By attending closely to the behaviour and

expressions of the patient, the analyst may be able to understand "the way in which the

given form or configuration of existence discovers [the] world designs"

(*Mundanisierung*) which structure an individual's life-world.[9] Because Binswanger

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[9] Jacob Needleman translates *Mundanisierung* as "existential *a priori*" (Needleman 1963: 23-31). Binswanger expands most thoroughly on the "forms" which underlie behavioural patterns in Grundformen und Erkenntnis Menschlichen Daseins, 2nd ed., Zürich, 1953.

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realizes that an understanding of *Lebenswelt* always rests upon a series of intersubjective interpretations, his hermeneutic model stresses the primacy of a shared network of Being-with. In other words, in order to complement areas to which introspective inquiry is inadequate, Binswanger recommends that the analyst should encourage dialogic exchange with his patients and to attend closely to the vocal and bodily expressions which may disclose alterations in their world-designs.

The communal dimension of language is confirmed in Binswanger's thought when he describes the primacy of "certain phenomenal, intentional, and preintentional modes of Being-together (*Mitseinandersein*) and co-being (*Mitsein*)", the expressions of which are central to his analysis (May 1959: 226). He thus deems intersubjectivity to be the central arena for existential analysis and the crucial problematic for any form of therapy. I will return to Binswanger's comments on love and sympathy and how they resist Freud's theorization of transference in my reading of his case studies, but here it is important to note that the Swiss analyst insists upon the centrality of Being-with:

> since world always means not only the What within which an existence exists but as the same time the How and Who of its existing, the forms of the How and of the Who, of the being-in and being-oneself, become manifest quite 'of their own accord' from the characterization of the momentary [*jeweilig*] world. Let it be further noted in advance that the term 'world' means at one and the same time the *Umwelt*, the *Mitwelt*, and the *Eigenwelt*. This by no means constitutes a fusion of these three worlds into a single one, but is rather an expression for the general way in which 'world' forms itself in these three world-regions (269).

Dasein is simultaneously related to itself in its own habitat ("*Eigenwelt* presupposes self-awareness, self-relatedness") and to the social (*Mitwelt*) and natural (*Umwelt*) worlds in which it is embedded (63). By emphasizing the interrelated nature of these three worlds,

it is possible to defend Binswanger's position from Boss's criticisms: instead of misreading Heidegger from a subjectivist perspective, Binswanger claims that any singular understanding of "being-oneself" (*Eigenwelt*) is only one expression of Dasein which needs to be understood in terms of the other two "world-regions" (*Mitwelt*, *Umwelt*). Binswanger goes on to characterize his patient's inability, or the diminution of their ability, to understand their world designs from such a multiple perspective as being closely associated with psychosis. For him, only the reaffirmation of a coexisting world can rectify the turning inward which is often associated with psychiatric disorder.

It is Binswanger's concept of world-design which Boss regards with a particularly critical eye. In 'The Existential Analysis School of Thought', Binswanger indicates that world-design is peculiar to human beings (as distinct from animals) "not only [as it] contains numerous possibilities of modes of being", but because it is "precisely rooted in this multifold potentiality of being": "the *what* of the respective world-design always furnishes information about the *how* of the Being-in-the-world and the *how* of being oneself" (May 1959: 197, 195). In other words, Binswanger claims that, unlike animals which are (largely) genetically determined, humans, on an ontic level, are capable of taking up a variety of roles within society and, on an ontological level, are capable of motivating (or creatively "designing") themselves "toward the most different potentialities of being" (198). This claim has similarities with James's stress upon the overcoming of the limitations of the self through an exertion of will; but Binswanger is careful to emphasize both the limitations of world-designs which are anterior to consciousness (and therefore cannot be lucidly examined by a conscious act, nor wholly

refashioned through an act of will) and the range of "potential modes of being for the self" (198).

Binswanger goes on to assert that animals do not have worlds in the same way as humans because they do not possess a notion of selfhood (that is, the inability to say "*I-you-we*"); he claims that "self and world are indeed, reciprocal concepts." Selfhood is thus defined not merely as the ability to say the words "*I-you-we*", but, in doing so, the ability to position the self as a subject within a shared discourse. Moreover, unlike most animals, humans have the potential to "transcend" their determining environment into which each one is thrown, by designing, or opening up, their world. However, if one has the potential to transform the determinate context (to "decide independently in and for a situation" [198]), then it follows that the self is separable from such a context. In this reading, Binswanger seems to recuperate a pre-Heideggerian conception of self. However, later in the same essay, Binswanger asserts that a world-design is not a conscious fashioning of the world by which the individual imposes him or herself on the world. Indeed, he claims that world "does not refer to anything psychological but to something which only makes possible the psychic fact" (204). That is to say, one cannot change a world-design in its entirety by an act of will, for the world-design is constitutive of the psychological self. But, and here Binswanger converges with Heidegger's thought, this does not prohibit the self from devising "other ways of Being which we can choose as our own" within the parameters of the world-design" (Hoeller 1988: 3).

There are obvious links between Heidegger's exposition of Being (*Sein*) and Binswanger's conception of world-design. In his introduction to <u>Being and Time</u>, Heidegger claims

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that Being is "the most universal and the emptiest of concepts", which eludes definition but, at the same time, "does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face" (Heidegger 1962: 21, 23). The world-design for Binswanger has a similar elusive definition. His project to disclose world-designs adheres closely to Heidegger's assertion that "what is sought in the question of Being is not something completely unfamiliar, although it is at first totally ungraspable" (46). Binswanger argues that a world-design is discernable in each of the utterances and acts of an individual, but is not wholly deducible from them. Similarly, Heidegger asserts that "Dasein is ontically 'closest' to itself, while ontologically farthest away" (58): only by addressing the ontic level can the ontological level be approached. However, the problem of how to move from the ontic to ontological level remains to haunt both Heidegger and Binswanger. An argument can be mounted to suggest that Binswanger's project to disclose world-designs never actually breaches the ontological level, but instead is wholly of the ontic. In order to explore these issues more thoroughly, I will consider each problem in relation to Binswanger's work: firstly, the question of meaning and, secondly, the conceptual gap between ontic and ontological.

Binswanger's notion of world-design implies a "meaning-matrix" *(Bedeutungsrichtung)* through which the self experiences itself in relation to the world and to others (Needleman 1963: 29). This is less an innate propensity to view the world in a certain manner (which would adhere to Binswanger's view of genetic conditioning), and more a factor which conditions aptitudes and a ground against which an individual can understand him or herself in their own personal terms. An awareness of the structure of world-designs thus represents the possibility of finding meaning within language.

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Through an examination of Binswanger's case studies it is evident that a world-design revolves around a set of binary oppositions, one side of which, under certain conditions, is limiting or debilitating and the other which is enabling or freeing. While there are a number of oppositions which Binswanger outlines (full-empty, order-chaos, movement-stasis, continuity-discontinuity, rising-falling) the exact manifestation and combination is peculiar to individual. Because of this, it is impossible for Binswanger to set out a metapsychology through which the general cause of neurosis can be evinced. Instead, his analysis demands close attention to, and a working through of, the expressions of the patient in order to discover the dynamics of a particular world-design. This raises a question of epistemology: how is it possible for either analyst or patient to uncover the characteristic world-design? The answer to such a question lies within the purview of the hermeneutic phenomenology which Heidegger sets out, an activity which situates the self (and an acknowledgement of the self) within discourse, and one which is integrally concerned with the problem of interpretation. The world-design as "meaning-matrix" thus represents a frame of reference which constitutes its world by investing meaning in it, and which, furthermore, links a communal world inextricably to the 'private' world of the individual. It is the ability to understand and make meaning out of Dasein which constitute the grounds of being human and the structure of which determines all possibilities of experience.

Throughout Binswanger's writing there is an ambiguity as to whether there is one world-design (one axis of meaning) for each individual, or whether there are a number of complementary world-designs which are constitutive of a particular set of activities or responses to stimuli. At different points he seems to endorse both readings; or, at least,

he suggests the *possibility* that several world-designs structure the life of an individual. However, in his defense, Binswanger does distinguish between what he means by world-design and those "categories" of understanding through which the analyst is made aware of it:

> the emptier, more simplified, and more constricted the world-design to which an existence has committed itself, the sooner will anxiety appear and the more severe will it be. The "world" of the healthy with its tremendously varied contexture of reference and compounds of circumstance can never become entirely shaky or sink. If it is threatened in one region, other regions will emerge and offer a foothold. But where the "world"...is so greatly dominated by one or a few categories, naturally the threat to the preservation of that one or those few categories must result in more intensified anxiety (May 1959: 205).

Whilst, like James, Binswanger associates health with multiplicity and plurality and illness with limitation and constriction, there is an ambiguity as to whether "categories" are different manifestations of a set of universal world-designs (which manifest themselves in different structural combinations for different individuals), or whether they are themselves constitutive of different world-designs which characterize how individuals come to understand and act upon their experiences.

A brief glance at two of his shorter case studies serves to clarify this point. His "first clinical illustration" in 'The Existential Analysis School of Thought' describes "a young girl who...experienced a puzzling attack of anxiety and faint when her heel got stuck in her skate" (203). These fits continue throughout the woman's life "whenever a heel of one of her shoes appeared to loosen" or when she saw "a loose button hanging on a thread or a break in the thread of saliva" (205). By observing these symptoms (which he describes in greater detail in the paper), Binswanger discerns a "depletion of being-in-the-

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world" of the woman which, because of the existential consequences of this event, is "narrowed down to include only the category of continuity" (205). This case indicates that "categories" are really different ways of conceiving the world within the framework of a world-design, which, in the case of this woman, is limited to one mode of interpretation. A world-design is thus understood as a formal structure which, through experience, allows for the development of a habitual set of responses which subsequently helps to mould, or, in Jamesian terms, to sculpt, particular categories of understanding. Shock or trauma (but trauma which is rarely linked to a Freudian Oedipal scenario) serves to rigidify this multiplicity into one pattern, or category, of meaning.

Similarly, the world-design of another patient is described as being polarized around the axis of "urgency" and "narrowness" (206), which allows for "no steadiness": "everything occurs by jerks and starts" (207). When I move on to consider the work of Sacks the neurological content of such a patient's world will become of greater importance; but, here it will suffice to indicate that only when a world-design becomes contracted into one manner of interpretation does psychosis manifest itself. As I shall discuss in the next section, Binswanger's therapy encourages the patient to cultivate different techniques and practices to open up their experience of the world on all levels (*Eigenwelt, Mitwelt* and *Umwelt*).

This reading defends Binswanger against the assertions of Boss, but the second question remains as to whether these existential structures are actually ontological, or, as Needleman argues, are "meta-ontic" (Needleman 1963: 26). By "meta-ontic" Needleman means "any discipline that concerns itself with the transcendentally *a priori* essential

structures and possibilities of concrete human existence is, strictly speaking, neither

ontological nor ontic, but lies, rather, somewhere in between" (27). From this premise,

Needleman suggests that world-designs "are the universal forms that stand to the

experience of *each* human being." Boss is particularly concerned with Binswanger's

claim that through existential analysis it is possible to disclose the "universal forms"

which underlie Dasein and thereby overcome the blockages of psychosis. Heidegger

understands authenticity to arise from an attempt to disclose the question which is Being

(that question from which humans are under most conditions estranged); but, like Cavell's

reading of him, the task is always under way and is never permanently achieved. In other

words, the structure of self-recognition, which enables a human to disclose Being in

relation to the self, to the natural world and to society, is an ongoing pursuit which seems

to preclude any therapeutic solution.[10] However, the main concern for Heidegger and

Boss is that uncovering a meta-ontic structure does not represent a disclosure (*aletheia*)

of Being, and, indeed, may well constitute another obscuring factor in the pursuit of

Being.

This is the point at which Binswanger's project of *Daseinanalyse* departs from

Heidegger's *Daseinanalytik* and, perhaps, is the one vital factor which distinguishes the

phenomenological anthropology of the Swiss analyst from the phenomenological

ontology of the German philosopher. Binswanger addresses this problem when he

differentiates his project from that of Heidegger:

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[10] This position mirrors one which Freud moves towards in his essay on 'Analysis, Terminable and Interminable' (1937), in which the patient's renewed ability to cope is stressed over and above successful psychoanalytic cure. This is a strain of Freudian thought which Philip Rieff develops in the last chapter of <u>Freud: The Mind of the Moralist</u> (Rieff 1979: 329-57).

Existential analysis (*Daseinanalyse*, as we speak of it) must not be confused with Heidegger's analytic of existence (*Daseinanalytik*). The first is a hermeneutic exegesis on the ontic-anthropological level, a phenomenological analysis of actual human existence. The second is a phenomenological hermeneutic of Being understood as existence, and moves on an ontological level (May 1958: 269-70).

Because Binswanger's project is of a practical nature, the "ontic-anthropological level" necessarily encroaches on the ontological. Addressing himself to this kind of encroachment, Paul de Man, in his essay on 'Ludwig Binswanger and the Sublimation of the Self' (1966), focuses on the discrepancy between the ontological and the meta-ontic. He comes to the conclusion that

[a] certain degree of confusion arises when this knowledge is interpreted as a *means* to act upon the destiny that the knowledge reveals. This is the moment at which the ontological inquiry is abandoned for empirical concerns that are bound to lead it astray (de Man 1983: 48).

Whilst de Man's criticism is explicitly directed towards Binswanger's writing, he admits that such a tension arises in any study which forsakes "the barren world of ontological reduction for the wealth of lived experience" (49). With this tension in mind, the remainder of this section investigates the manner in which the world-design is developed in Binswanger's work and how it forms the basic premise of his methodology.

Binswanger's central point is that, by virtue of the world-design, humans have "the possibility of transcending this being...of climbing above it in care and swinging beyond it in love" (May 1958: 198). By transcending (*Ueberstieg*) Binswanger means "a climbing over or above, mounting", an activity involving both a goal or aim "toward which the *Ueberstieg* is directed" (the world) and "that which is *ueberstiegen*" (193) or

transcended (being [*Seiende*], rather than Being [*Sein*]). Although this appears comparable to Nietzsche's description of overcoming, the terms "care" and "love" are crucial limiting factors in such an activity. Both of these terms - "care" (*Sorge*) and "love" (*Liebe*) - involve the detailed attention of self to other: the first in showing concern for the Otherness which is the self (*Eigenwelt*) and the second a concern for those others with which one inhabits the world (*Mitwelt*). Although both terms can be attributed to the thought of Heidegger, it is only the first which receives detailed attention in <u>Being and Time</u>.

For Heidegger, "care" is seen as fundamentally ontological: "it lies 'before'...every factical 'attitude' and 'situation' of Dasein, and it does so existentially *a priori*; this means that it always lies *in* them" (Heidegger 1962: 238). On this account, care is a looking after, and a looking out for, the self:

> because Being-in-the-world is essentially care, Being-alongside the ready-to-hand could be taken in our previous analyses as *concern*, and being with the Dasein-with of Others as we encounter it within-the-world could be taken as *solicitude* (237).[11]

What Heidegger terms "*solicitude*", Binswanger, following the existential work of Max Scheler, Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber, calls "love": a way of responding or relating to another human, which enables the situation (usually limiting or depleting) to be

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[11] Elsewhere Heidegger defines the "Being of the ready-to-hand (involvement) is definable as a context of assignments or references" (Heidegger 1962: 121). Hubert Dreyfus translates *Zuhandenheit* as "availableness": those "available" techniques for coping or dealing with situations.

transcended in a joint venture.[12]   Following Scheler, Binswanger cultivates the

importance of an ethic of genuine sympathy, or "fellow feeling" (*Mitgefühl*), in his

therapy: "fellow-feeling for other people's circumstances, values and standards" enables

humans "to effect a real *enlargement* of our own lives and to *transcend* the limitations

of our own actual experience" (Scheler 1954: 49). While care is a technique of looking

after the self, only sympathetic love can induce a "creative movement" which combines

solidarity with independence, and which simultaneously affirms companionship without

obscuring Otherness (Sadler 1969: 48-62).

By appropriating this conception of sympathetic love from Scheler, Binswanger clarifies

his development of Heidegger's position: "Being-in-the-world as being of the existence

for the sake of *myself* (designated by Heidegger as 'care') has been juxtaposed with 'being-

beyond-the-world' as being of the existence for the sake of *myself* (designated by me as

'love')" (May 1959: 195).   Binswanger stresses intersubjectivity (an "overswing"

[*Überschwung*] of love) over and above the care of the self (a Nietzschean "overclimb"

of care), and, in so doing, he claims that only through reciprocity can the self overcome

its existential limitations. He sees love as possessing a two-fold potential: firstly, as an

ideal to be striven towards (eternity [*Ewigkeit*]) and, secondly, as a "haven" (*Heimat*)

which the sympathetic encounter with the analyst offers (201). This kind of reciprocity

does not mean a renunciation of the undeniable limitations and finitude of living for an

unobtainable ideal, but an acquiescence to the conditions of existence without

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[12] Despite Boss's criticisms of Binswanger, as he describes in his article on 'Martin Heidegger's Zollikon Seminars' (1977), their projects are fundamentally similar in their search for "that highest form of humanness in the relation to others, namely, of that selfless, loving, 'vorspringende' caring which frees the other to his own selfhood" (Hoeller 1988: 10).

surrendering completely to them. Authenticity for Binswanger thereby represents a striving to disclose Dasein with the care and support of another which, in the therapeutic encounter, is designated the empathic task of the analyst. Once more, by stressing Being-with as the central concern of existential analysis, Binswanger directs attention to an embeddedness in the world of others in which he detects the roots of therapy.

In the above cited case of the woman who gets her heel stuck in her skate as a child, the anxiety (*Angst*) which Binswanger describes is appropriated from Kierkegaard (via Heidegger). By this Binswanger means a subliminal dread of existence which cannot be associated with an identifiable object or a particular set of psychological demands. In an article on 'Dread and Authenticity' (1989), Julius Heuscher distinguishes between fear which "is linked to 'actual' dangers, whereas 'dread' and 'anxiety' are viewed as having 'imaginary,' 'uncanny,' 'incomprehensible,' and 'irrational' elements" (Heuscher 1989: 140). Although Binswanger often associates the locus of anxiety with a traumatic moment in childhood, this understanding does not contradict such a distinction. The actual moment of trauma seems less important than its subsequent limiting of experiential categories. For Binswanger, therapy would not constitute a coming to terms with the incident in order to purge the patient's feelings of anxiety: this would represent an inauthentic covering up for him. Instead, the therapeutic goal seeks, firstly, to disclose anxiety as a vital response to authentic existence and, secondly, to disturb a repetitive pattern of compulsion by nurturing a mutual relationship of care and love. Heuscher later agrees with one of the key commitments of existential analysis when he claims that "dread is the shadow-side of love: not of an ethereal, fantastic love, but of the committed love by an embodied human being for another mortal individual" (142).

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(3) Binswanger and Foucault: Dreaming through Existence

Before I move on to consider two of Binswanger's most illuminating case studies, it is important to spent some time addressing his article Dream and Existence (1930). In this essay Binswanger restates many of his central arguments concerning analytic anthropology and existential structures. But, he extends his previous discussion of therapy as the attempt to disclose a patient's world-designs by stressing a close association between imaginative creation and dreaming. To supplement my discussion of this essay I read it alongside Michel Foucault's essay 'Dream, Imagination and Existence' (1954), as well as the French theorist's later work on the aesthetics of existence. I do not wish to mask the central concerns of Binswanger's essay by using Foucault's work[13]; rather, I will combine certain ideas which emerge in my reading of 'Dream and Existence' with Foucault's more rigorous expression of self-creation. Here, the work of Nietzsche provides the point of convergence between Binswanger and Foucault, as well as recalling many of the ideas raised in the chapter on James. Nietzsche's subtitle to Ecce Homo (1908) - 'How One Becomes What One Is'- although not in itself a romantic dogma, proves central to the current of thought which I am tracing through romantic science.

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[13] In his review of the recent Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry reissue of the combined essays of Binswanger and Foucault, David Macey suggests 'Dream, Imagination and Existence' (the anglicized title given to Foucault's 1954 essay) tends to overshadow the earlier text, partly because it is twice the length of Binswanger's essay and partly because of Foucault's important place in contemporary theory. As Macey suggests, "Dream and Existence is now much more likely to be read for the light it sheds on Foucault's early development" (Macey 1994: 59). I wish to retain my central interest in the development of the Binswanger's thought by following Foucault's wish "only to write in the margins" of the Swiss analyst's text (Hoeller 1993: 33).

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Freud's seminal work on The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), followed soon after by his own synopsis of it, 'On Dreams' (1901), set the tenor for the importance of dreams in analysis. Although Freud's emphasis on interpretation in these works is more akin to the theoretical drift of Binswanger's project than is the biological model which underpins his metapsychology, there are fundamental differences between the two thinkers as to the meaning which they assign to dreams. Indeed, Freud's model of the unconscious (a structural presupposition in his writing on dreams) is alien to the phenomenological method which Binswanger adopts. Freud understands the unconscious to represent a repository for repressed libidinal feelings, which are only discernible through dreams or psychic lapses, such as slips of the tongue, jokes or repetitive behaviour. Binswanger agrees about the influence of dreams upon waking life, but rejects Freud's notion of a structural unconscious. As Foucault notes, "Freud...restored a psychological dimension to the dream, but he did not succeed in understanding it as a specific form of experience" (Hoeller 1993: 43). Although Binswanger characterizes dreaming as having a status distinct from that of waking thoughts (and here he relies on Freud's explication of the logic of condensation and displacement which characterizes dream states), they are both undercut by the plenum of existence. As Foucault corroborates, "if dreams are so weighty for determining existential meanings, it is because they trace in their fundamental coordinates the trajectory of existence itself" (60).

The unconscious has a place in Binswanger's thought, but only as a region of consciousness which the experiencer is unable to reflect upon at that particular moment: in his words, a "sense of nonattention or forgetting" (May 1958: 326). Repression of unconscious desires is therefore not the primary cause of neurosis, but an aspect of it.

Referring to the case of the patient who, as a young girl, caught her heel in the ice-skate, Binswanger claims:

> We should...not explain the emergence of the phobia by an overly strong "pre-oedipal" tie to the mother, but rather realize that such overly strong filial tie is only possible on the premise of a world-design exclusively based on connectedness, cohesiveness, continuity. Such a way of experiencing "world" - which always implies such a "key" [*Gestimmtheit*] - does not have to be "conscious"; but neither must we call it "unconscious" in the psychoanalytical sense, since it is outside the contrast of these opposites. Indeed, it does not refer to anything psychological but to something which only makes possible the psychic fact (204).

The primacy of Being-in-the-world in Binswanger's thought does not permit him to conceive of an unconscious as a "second person" existing in a negative realm "behind" consciousness (326), because,

> an unconscious id is not in the world in the sense of existence (*Dasein*), for being-in-the-world always means to be in the world as I-myself, He-himself, We-ourselves, or anonymous oneself; and least of all does the id know anything of "home," as its true of the dual We, of the I and Thou. The id is a scientific construct which objectifies existence - a "reservoir of instinctual energy" (326-27).

He implies that the Freudian unconscious is merely an extension of a biological model of psychic instincts; a model to which existential analysis, with its emphasis on an anthropological approach to man, does not adhere. Moreover, the interarticulation of space (the "home" of Dasein) and time (Heidegger's "thrownness" into being) implies a need for Daseinanalysts to describe the unconscious world of dreams in terms of a multi-dimensional locative region or landscape.

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Binswanger's main point of contention is that the dream-world should be conceived precisely as "world" in the sense of a locative experience. Borrowing a term from Heraclitus, Foucault reads Binswanger's description of the dream-world to represent an *"idios kosmos"*: "a world of its own...in the sense that it is constituted in the original mode of a world which belongs to me, while at the same time exhibiting my solitude" (Hoeller 1993: 51).[14] I will return to Binswanger's reading of Heraclitus, but here it is important to stress his conception of dream-world as a stage for the imaginative dramatization of unresolved psychic problems.

Binswanger frequently elides the memory and verbal (or written) accounts of dreams with passages from literature (most often from German romantic literature) which, for him, are characterized by similar elevated moods (*Stimmung*). Indeed, in a paragraph omitted from the 1947 version of the essay (and thereafter), Binswanger claims that to understand dreams "we must even today still turn primarily to individual creators of language, to the poets" (104). There are obvious problems here concerning the craft and artifice associated with the creation of art versus the, at least supposed, immediacy of dream recreation. For a start, it tends to recycle the mystifying comments of romantic poets such as Coleridge who claimed the "dream" of 'Kubla Khan' came to him in a vision which he wrote down immediately before being "awakened" by a visitor.[15] However,

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[14] It is important to note that for Heraclitus *kosmos* does not just signify universe (*idios kosmos* as private universe), but also, as his translator indicates, "an orderly arrangement" and "something which beautifies and is pleasant to contemplate" (Barnes 1987: 19). This second dimension of *kosmos* is crucial to the Binswangerian-Foucauldian notion that one possesses a capacity to make (*poetria*) or aesthetically create a personal world.

[15] See Coleridge's account of the composition of 'Kubla Khan' which was published alongside the poem in 1816 (Coleridge 1986: 163-64). It is interesting to note that here, in one of the most famous expressions of spontaneous creation, Coleridge writes: "on awaking he [the poet] appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole" vision. Implicit in this phrase is the mediating mechanism of memory which

following a tradition which can be traced back at least as far as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, Coleridge's transformative vision is an example of a particular kind of elevated consciousness which is aesthetic in character. Thus, for example, Nietzsche speaks of "elevated moods" (*hohe Stimmungen*) in The Gay Science, which he understands as transitory but necessary goals to be striven towards as a permanent possibility. In the first volume of The World as Will and Representation, Schopenhauer claims that in such aesthetic states "man relinquishes the common way of looking at things"; one "can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception" because "both have become one, because the whole of consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture" (Schopenhauer 1907: 231). Revealing similarities with the moods portrayed in the symbolist poetry of Stephane Mallarmé, heightened states of consciousness in which the perceiver and perception are fused together (at least phenomenologically) are central to Binswanger's understanding of those moods characteristic of dreams.

If one takes as given the inevitable creative element at work during the recollection of dreams (stressed in Emerson's and Nietzsche's language of creative energy as opposed to the disinterested aesthetic ideal of Kant), it is possible to view both dream-reflection and literary creation on a *re*-constructive level, whilst still accounting for their respective contexts of production or utterance. Because Freud tends to dismiss aesthetic products as representing a sublimation of libidinal instincts, Binswanger's *donnée* can be seen to be essentially very different. For example, in 'The Case of Ellen West', Binswanger

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filters the immediate experience of dreaming and the subsequent rendering of it.

considers autobiographical accounts, diary entries, poems, dreams and testimonies by others to explore the "human individuality" of his patient (May 1958: 267). In Daseinanalysis each of these products is taken as an imaginative "seeing" of the existential structures which make up a life (Gras 1973: 185). It is the relative value which each analyst assigns to imagination which provides the key to understanding this difference.[16]

Foucault rightly understands Binswanger's essay to privilege the "dream experience", which "silently encompasses...a whole anthropology of the imagination" and requires "a new way of conceiving how meanings are manifested" (33). As I have shown, Binswanger stresses his anthropological approach in an attempt to counter the ontic limitations of any single line of inquiry; an understanding through which, as Foucault goes on to claim, he "rediscovered the notion that the signifying value of the dream tends to be tailored to the psychological analyses that can be effected" (44). On this account, it is not surprising that Freud is able to read the expression of unresolved Oedipal crises into the dreams of his patients.

Whilst Freud subscribes to a trend in nineteenth-century psychology to understand a dream as "a rhapsody of images" (43) - as the translator of Foucault's essay, Forrest Williams, suggests, "a degenerated variety of imagining" (25) - Binswanger and Foucault both argue that there is a textual quality to dreams which "has a content all the richer to

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[16] James's chapter on 'Imagination' in the second volume of Principles is helpful here for mapping the ongoing interest of romantic scientists in the imaginative and creative world of the individual. James's definition of imagination proves particularly instructive: "sensations, once experience, modify the nervous organism, so that copies of them rise again the mind after the original outward stimulus is gone" (James 1950b: 44).

the degree that it is irreducible to the psychological determinations to which one tries to adapt it" (44). This kind of comment shifts the interpretive emphasis from image to symbol, and thereby to a trope which, by its nature, is inexhaustible on the level of meaning and irreducible to any one mode of inquiry. As James detects in Principles, objects are "imagined by a 'cluster' or 'gang' of ideas", but these cannot be broken down into their constitutive parts in terms of the phenomenological world of the individual: "an imagined object, however complex, is at any one moment thought in one idea, which is aware of all its qualities together" (James 1950b: 45). Moreover, for Binswanger, the imaginative impulse of dreams represents an elevation in the mood of the dreamer which demands that the analyst respond with particular sensitivity to, and qualitative appreciation of, the language in which the dream is expressed.

Like Freud, Binswanger studies dreams in order to probe the psyche of the patient and the structures of existence which characterize it, but the emphasis upon these evaluations is very different for each analyst. For one, Binswanger emphasizes the "manifest content of the dream" - both its formal vehicle and its remembered content - which he claims "has in modern times receded all too far into the background", over and above the "latent dream thoughts" which Freud wishes to uncover through his dream-work (88).[17] This does not necessarily imply a lapse into a naive form of dream interpretation; rather a reconception of what dreams mean in terms of the life-world of the experiencer: by "steeping oneself in the manifest content of the dream...one learns the proper evaluation

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[17] In his two books on dreams, The Analysis of Dreams (1958) and "I dreamt last night" (1977), Boss goes so far as to dispense entirely with the language of dream-work. He sees Freud's postulate that there is a causal relation between latent thoughts and manifest content undermines his (and, in this case, Binswanger's) focus upon the individual's subjective response to dreams (Boss 1958: 34-36 & Boss 1977: 7).

of the primal and strict interdependence of feeling and image, of being attuned (*Gestimmtsein*) and pictorial realization" (88). Aligning himself with the aims of the French symbolists, the double focus - on image and mood - is interpreted by Binswanger as reflective "of the larger and deeper rhythms of normal and pathologically manic and depressive 'disattunement' (*Verstimmung*)" (88). He understands dreams to be distinct from life by virtue of the logic of image-condensation, but they are continuous with life in the mood they evoke in the individual's consciousness. However, only by reflecting upon the double displacement of dreams, where the dreamer takes the roles of both participant and observer, can these moods be identified and rearticulated in an analytic encounter.

Binswanger presents an example of such a "double movement" in those dreams in which 'I' (the experiencer) "keep my feet on the ground even as I fall and introspectively observe my own falling" (85). In 'Dream and Existence' he focuses particularly on the moods associated with rising and falling, but the same emphasis on mood is deemed to hold true for the other sets of categories "which [contain] a particular existential significance 'for' our Dasein" (82). Analysis is directed towards the mode in which "the pulse of Dasein, its systole and diastole, its expansion and depression, its ascension and sinking" is expressed (88). The task of the therapist is to encourage patients to remember their dreams in order that they can reenact the double movement in waking life and thereby open up the possibilities of new modes of being. Mirroring Heidegger's assertion that "only where there is language, is there world" (Gras 1973: 31), Binswanger claims that the experiencer needs language as a precondition for recreating dreams:

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if the individuality is what its world is...and if its world is only affirmed in language, in other words, needs language to be world at all, then we cannot speak of individuality where language is not yet language, that is, communication and meaningful expression (May 1958: 326).

Through such an intersubjective endeavour both therapist and patient, in Foucault's words, can hope "to arrive at a comprehension of existential structures" which are anterior to psychic phenomena (Hoeller 1993: 33).

Freud describes three kinds of dream: "intelligible" dreams which "can be inserted without further difficulty into the context of our mental life"; dreams which "have a *bewildering* effect, because we cannot see how to fit that sense into our mental life"; and "dreams which are without either sense or intelligibility, which seem *disconnected, confused* and *meaningless*" (Freud 1986: 89-90). It is the latter two types towards which Freud's dream analysis is directed, in an attempt to piece together fragments and discontinuities so that coherent meaning can be established. The psychoanalyst faces the difficulty of trying to unravel the transformative logic of dream in order to overcome "the obscurity of the dream-content and the state of repression...of certain of the dream-thoughts" (114). The puzzling character of dreams, "modified [by] repetition, complicated by interpolations", is that to which Freud pays particular attention, as he goes on to admit "faithful and straight-forward reproductions of real scenes only rarely appear in dreams" (103). As Slavoj Žižek discerns, the real mystery which dream interpretation seeks to uphold is not the latent content in itself, but the dream-work "which confers on it the form of a dream" (Žižek 1989: 12). It is the very fact that latent dream-thoughts cannot be retranslated into "the 'normal', everyday common language of inter-subjective communication", because that would serve only to ignore the *"form* of the 'dream' in

which "unconscious desire [is] articulated" (13). As Freud asserts, and Žižek quotes, "the dream-work...creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming - the explanation of its peculiar nature" (Freud 1977: 650).

Binswanger does not explicitly refer to Freud's conception of dream-work in his essay, partly, perhaps, because it implies a causal understanding of unconscious from which he wishes to distance himself. For the Swiss thinker there is no such transformative logic to unravel, only a need to pay close attention to the heightening of mood and intensification of image in the dream. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the form of dreams is comparable to Freud's. Whereas Freud speaks of dream-work, Binswanger identifies the intensity of mood as the dynamic factor of dreams: "Dasein moves within the meaning matrix (*Bedeutungsrichtung*) of stumbling, sinking and falling...in this case form and content are *one*" (Hoeller 1993: 82). In dreams, literally "we are completely uprooted, and we lose our footing in the world" (81). Thus, the mood of the dream is encapsulated both by the images of rising and falling and the affect induced in the "*dramatis persona*" of the dreamer (85). The persona of the dreamer in no way need resemble "the individual body in its outward form"[18], but refers

> to something that can serve as the subject of the particular structural moment (in this case the moment of rising and falling), and this subject may well be, in its sensory aspect, an alien, external subject. It is,

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[18] Binswanger's claim that the "isolated form" of the body is "unessential" in itself, and thus may be transmuted into a "thousand" personae in dreams, leaves him vulnerable to the criticism that he is establishing an argument for idealism. If Binswanger is understood to equate the essential part of the self with the disembodied 'I' then such a reading is tenable. But his point that the "essential ontological structure" is conceived as prior to any dualistic split implies that the self is always already embodied. On this reading, Binswanger can be aligned with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Roy Schafer in their stress upon the *meaning* which 'I' assign to my embodiment.

nevertheless, *I* who remain the primal subject of that which rises and falls (84).

The "structural moment" in which the 'I' is positioned and the meaning to which the individual assigns to it are the central factors of concern here. Binswanger goes on to suggest that "falling itself...and its opposite, rising, are not themselves derivable from anything else. Here we strike bottom ontologically" (83).

In many of the examples presented in this essay the rhythm of rise and fall is dramatized by dreams in which birds act as the symbolic focus. Binswanger's examples suggest two main forms of "bird" dream: firstly, the awe evoked by the sight of a majestic bird (Binswanger provides examples of an eagle, described in Eduard Mörike's <u>Painter Nolten</u> (1832), and a kite, taken from the journals of the Swiss writer Gottfried Keller); and, secondly, scenes in which birds of prey attack smaller birds symbolic of beauty or frailty, such as a dove or a pigeon.[19] Binswanger implies that these symbols are universals (in the first case, perhaps, a variation on the Icarus myth and, secondly, a generic narrative of anxiety), but there seems to be a particularly Germanic feel here resonating through the overreaching figure of modernity, Faust, who is caught between his soaring desire for the heavens and a gravitational attraction to the physical world.[20] Although Binswanger

[19] To confirm that Binswanger is not citing isolated cases of dreams in which birds figure as important symbols, Ellen West writes an early poem entitled 'Spring Moods' in which she expresses an ecstatic longing for death: "I'd like to die just as the birdling does/That splits his throat in highest jubilation" (May 1958: 246). Other examples from literature can be mentioned to substantiate Binswanger's claim as to the prevalence of such symbols (although this does nothing to help establish these symbols as universals). For example, Bard Bracy's dream in the second part of Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1801), in which a snake is seen coiled around a dove, and the autumnal wanderer who follows the migrating birds in Georg Trakl's 'The Wanderer' and 'Song of the Departed' (1914).

[20] As the German critic Johannes Pfeiffer discerns in his reading of <u>Faust</u>, Goethe's hero is divided between a self-serving drive to master the secrets of nature and a search for "authentic being as the highest value" (Gras 1873: 218). The two modes of being - the single mode of egotism and the dual mode of love -

concentrates primarily on bird imagery, he does provide other examples of the rising and falling of moods, such as in a passage describing a "boat dream" in Goethe's Italian Journey (1816), where a "sudden change of a victoriously happy vital current into one that is fraught with anxiety is expressed by the fading or disappearance of brilliantly lit colors and by the obscuring of light and vision" (89). The passage from Goethe is significant not only as an example of his romantic-scientific interest in optics, but also in its description of dreams and visions, which "have a charm, for while they spring from our inner self, they possess more or less of an analogy with the rest of our lives and fortunes" (quoted by Binswanger [90]). Both the "charm" of the dream (which "invites" the reader/analyst to "feel" himself into world of the writer/patient [88]) and its "analogous" function to waking life are two aspects of dreaming upon which Binswanger lays particular emphasis.[21]

As the examples given here and the accounts of his patients' dreams emphasize, Binswanger is interested in those dreams which fall into Freud's first two categories: those which are intelligible, but may also induce bewilderment or unease in the dreamer. These are the types of dream in which the experiencer stages, or works through, an emotional crisis or an affective response to an event in waking life as he or she imaginatively recreates the situation through dreams. Although Binswanger does not overlook the fragmentary and contradictory character of dreams, his conception of dramatically staging unresolved, or troublesome, feelings is important because it implies

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represent the two extremes between which many of Binswanger's patients are thrown.

[21] An alternative translation of this sentence by W. H. Auden & Elizabeth Mayer is equally revealing: "Such fantastic images give us great delight, and, since they are created by us, they undoubtedly have a symbolic relation to our lives and destinies" (Goethe 1962: 112).

some level of meaningful activity in the dream-world of the individual. This does not mean the individual is in control of his or her dream in the respect that they are the conscious and lucid maker of it (the individual is "the one for whom...the dream occurs" [102]); rather that the creative moment shuttles between the remembering and interpretation of the dream in waking life and the dream-world itself:

> the dreamer awakens in that unfathomable moment when he decides not only to seek to know "what hit him", but seeks also to strike into and take hold of the dynamics in these events, "himself" - the moment, that is, when he resolves to bring continuity or consequence into a life that rises and falls, falls and rises. Only then does he *make* something (102).

If the dream is seen as a vignette of waking life, then by attending to the meaning of the symbols as experienced in dream and situating them within the context of the individual's threefold world (*Eigenwelt, Mitwelt,* and *Umwelt*), one can actively recreate the self through an act of narration. In this way, Binswanger departs from Freud's wholly epistemological model of dream interpretation to one which approximates to James's notion that pragmatic activity needs to supplement an inquiry into self-knowledge.

Binswanger positions the self in, and by means of, an ongoing narrative which, in its retentive and potential elements, characterizes "the inherent temporality of human existence" (23). The spatial coordinates of dreams - the "overlapping of journeys, paths crossing, roads which converge to the same place on the horizon" (61) - are, through the act of narration, given an explicit temporal meaning within the life-world of the experiencer. Binswanger places emphasis on the portentous and revelational aspects of dreams because it is these which characterize one's movement towards infinity and death: "just as we do not know where life and dream begin, so we are, in the course of our lives,

ever again reminded that it lies beyond man's powers 'to be "individual" in the highest sense'" (103). A concerted attempt to understand dreams is not a futile activity merely because one can never reach such a transcendent moment (although it may be experienced fleetingly through the rhythm of dream); nor should a coherent (that is, static and complete) understanding of dreams ever hope to be elicited. In his essay, 'On a Quote from Hofmannsthal' (1955), Binswanger states: "the poet's [or dreamer's] quest never arrives at its destination. Every poem [or dream] signifies...a being-at-home and a breaking-up simultaneously" (Binswanger 1981: 192). Rather than adding to a seamless perspective of life, as Foucault indicates, "the ultimate in all those dreams that are haunted by the anguish of death" may, in fact, "paradoxically" disclose "the movement of freedom toward the world, the point of origin from which freedom makes itself world" (Hoeller 1993: 54, 51).

Taking his lead from Heraclitus, Foucault goes on to understand the responsibility of self-interpretation to represent a vital element of one's *idios kosmos*. Despite a turning away from a phenomenological approach to self during the course of his writing, Foucault returns to examine those practices which are constitutive of the self in his later work on The History of Sexuality. While his emphasis here is on those "etho-poetic" rules of conduct which are followed in order to transform the self, he retains an emphasis on "the way a human turns him- or herself into a subject" (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 208). He shuns what he considers to be the oppressive subjugation of self in recent history, and instead favours the Stoic technique of *askesis*: "an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought" (Foucault 1992: 9). In his extended analysis of "the relation between care and self-knowledge", he explains that *askesis* is "not a disclosure of the secret self" (the laying

bare of an unconscious), "but a remembering" (Foucault 1988: 21, 35). *Askesis* is thus understood to be the

> progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth. It has as its final aim not preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world. The Greek word for this is *paraskeuazo* ("to get prepared"). It is a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action. *Aletheia* becomes *ethos*. It is a process of becoming more subjective (35).

While it is not necessary to assimilate the entire Stoic doctrine to appropriate the movement from *aletheia* to *ethos* for my discussion of dream analysis, Foucault importantly indicates that one Stoic technique of *premeditatio mallorum* ("an ethical, imaginary experience") dictates that "one shouldn't envisage things as possibly taking place in the distant future but as already actual and in the process of taking place" (36). The tenor of this practice is central to understanding the manner in which Binswanger conceives of dream interpretation as combining self-understanding and a recognition of "the fact of [one's] own destiny", along with an active moral commitment to exercise insights in waking life (Hoeller 1993: 54).

Binswanger also takes his lead from pre-Socratic versions of a "dynamistic world-view", as contrasted to a modern "explicative (*erklärich*)" science (96).[22] His writings appear caught between Nietzsche's stress on the ceaseless flux of becoming and Heidegger's emphasis on Being revealed through hermeneutic disclosure. But, as the political theorist

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[22] Here Binswanger's comments can be aligned with the thought of Heidegger who, in his essay on 'The Question Concerning Technology' (1953), favourably contrasts the *technē* of the pre-Socratics (particularly *poiēsis*) with the menace of modern technology (Heidegger 1978: 318ff.).

Leslie Thiele discerns, if Being is understood not as "stable and unchanging", but as "a coming to presence, less a *what* than a *how*, then becoming is not only compatible with Being but constitutes its very essence" (Thiele 1995: 26).[23] This conceptual shift is detectable alike in Foucault's techniques of existence and Binswanger's dynamistic understanding of self and is also reminiscent of James's shift of emphasis from the epistemological inquiries found in Principles towards his development of the theory (and practice) of a pragmatic self.

For Binswanger, this reconception is illustrated by his quotation of a remark by the Roman philosopher Gaius Petronius, that "Each man creates his own!" (*sed sibi quisque facit!*), which he deploys as a central maxim for considering the question of dream and existence. In pondering the *Quisque* of Petronius, Binswanger fixes upon the "problem of man's moral responsibility for his dreams", which leads him away from the *idios kosmos* of the isolated dreamer (and with it the morally dangerous overreaching which is implicit in Nietzsche's doctrine of self-overcoming) towards a responsible attitude to the "*koinos cosmos*", or the larger community of humans (99). By shifting from the private world of dreaming to the collaborative venture of interpretation, Binswanger affirms his emphasis on the love and care which is demanded in order to help the patient understand his or her structures of existence.

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[23] Thiele substantiates his claim by quoting from Heidegger's work on Schelling: "Becoming is a manner of preserving Being, serviceable to Being, not the simple opposite of Being as it might easily appear if Being and becoming are only distinguished in formal respects and Being is understood as objective presence" (quoted in Thiele 1995: 26).

In so doing, he draws a distinction between the temporary state of dreaming and permanent delusion which represents a withdrawal into "private opinion" or "*doxa*" (98). From Heraclitus he understands "genuine awakeness" to result only if the patient struggles to comprehend the whole plenum of existence: if "we live in awareness of this interconnection" between the individual, the natural and the social worlds. In the analytic encounter this would be represented by a patient

> [who] must decide whether, in pride and defiance, to cling to his private opinion - his private theater...- or whether to place himself in the hands of a physician viewed as the wise mediator between the private and the communal world, between deception and truth...none can attain to genuine health in his innermost being unless the physician succeeds in awakening in him that little spark of spirituality that must be awake in order for such a spirit to feel the slightest breath (99).

The analyst, whilst not equipped with miraculous powers of health-giving, is able to indicate existential structures which the patient may overlook or may not wish to see. But the analyst can only do this if he or she is aware of the exact meaning of the dream symbolism for the patient. Appropriately, the collaborative activity of analyst and patient is the key to Binswanger's theory of dream analysis. However, as I make clear in the next two sections, the realities of dialogic communication often renders this therapeutic goal as optimistic in the extreme.

(4) Lola Voss and the Fear of Living

In the previous three sections I provided a reading of Binswanger's grounding in, and

understanding of, existential analysis, with particular reference to his Heideggerian

reconception of self as Dasein. Although his thought can largely be defended against the

criticism of rival analysts like Boss, there are undeniable weaknesses running through his

work; most notably, the applicability of Dasein to clinical analysis and the lofty

therapeutic aims of existential analysis. In order to address these aspects, in this and the

next section I will contextualize Binswanger's theoretical writings with extended

reference to two case studies taken from the collection Schizophrenie.[23]

It is not surprising that Binswanger chose to study the psychological manifestations of

schizophrenia. Eugen Bleuler, his former teacher at the Burghölzli, coined the term to

describe patients who display a particular form of dementia, characterized by "a loosening

of the tension of associations, in a manner more or less similar to what happens in dreams

or in daydreams" (Ellenberger 1970: 287). As described in Dementia Praecox, oder

Gruppe der Schizophrenien (1911), Bleuler's "organo-dynamic" theory broke with the

strictly organicist theories of nineteenth-century psychiatry and give rise to extensive

research into schizophrenia in the ensuing years. Just as James addresses the *fin-de-siècle*

urban illness of neurasthenia, so Binswanger follows the work of Karl Jaspers and

Eugene Minkowski by focusing closely on the various mental and behavioural

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[23] The collection consists of an introduction (translated in Needleman 1963: 249-64) and five case studies which had been printed separately in journals over the previous decade: the cases of 'Ilse', 'Ellen West', 'Jürg Zünd', 'Lola Voss' and 'Suzanne Urban'. 'Lola Voss' is available in the Needleman collection (266-341) and the first two cases have also been translated (May 1958: 214-36 & 237-364).

phenomena which characterize schizophrenia.[24] Their shared methodology of descriptive phenomenology appears inadequate for those patients who cannot remember and/or articulate their experiences to the analyst. This problem is one which strains against Binswanger's description of collaborative therapy in 'Dream and Existence'. However, taking his lead from Minkowski's work, Binswanger's extensive study of existential forms is deployed to complement the patient's phenomenological descriptions of his or her life-world, by disclosing "connections and interrelations between...data" provided by the patient (May 1958: 99-100).

In his introduction to Schizophrenie, Binswanger states that his primary aim is to approach each patient without theoretical preconceptions in order to glean "insights into the *specific* ontological structure of our cases" (Needleman 1963: 251). He outlines his hostility to the clinical tendency to "transform" data into "symptoms of illness" because this implies the patient is conceived as a "disease unit" (250-51). Instead, he wishes to view the patients as individuals who reveal "a *unity* of definite existential structures and processes" (251). Although schizophrenia is varied and cannot be reduced to one definable set of symptoms, for Binswanger it represents a disproportionate and particularly "unfortunate form" (Sadler 1969: 289) of Being-in-the-world which is characterized by delusions and grandiose ideals. Such an understanding enables him to dispense with the normative taxonomies "of healthy and sick, normal and abnormal" in order to concentrate on the "distinct modes of existence" which schizophrenic patients display (Needleman 1963: 250). For example, in 'The Case of Lola Voss' (1949),

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[24] See Jasper's General Psychopathology (Berlin, 1923) and Minkowski's La Schizophrénie (Paris, 1927). One of Minkowski's earlier papers, 'Findings in a Case of Schizophrenic Depression', is available in translation (May 1958: 127-138).

Binswanger claims the analyst must "focus upon the 'world' in which Lola presents herself to us already as a very sick person...without bothering in the least about the purposive biological judgment that pronounces Lola as 'sick'" (289). Similarly, in a review article published two years before Schizophrenie, Manfred Bleuler, the son of Eugen and also a professor at the Burghölzli, outlines this kind of approach to schizophrenia:

> Existential analysis refuses absolutely to examine pathological expressions with a view to seeing whether they are bizarre, absurd, illogical or otherwise defective; rather it attempts to understand the particular world of experience to which these experiences point and how this world is formed and how it falls apart...The remarkable result of existential analytical research in schizophrenia lies in the discovery that even in schizophrenia the human spirit is not split into fragments...If the mental life of a schizophrenic...is not merely a field strewn with ruins but has retained a certain structure, then it becomes evident that it must be described not as an agglomeration of symptoms, but as a whole and as a *Gestalt* (quoted by Ellenberger in May 1958: 124).

It is the attempt to recognize and explicate this *Gestalt* which forms the basis of Binswanger's methodological approach to his patients.

The theoretical problem here is one which I have already intimated and is crucial to a consideration of Binswanger's aim to disclose his patient's world-designs: is there an inherent pattern which reveals itself by closely attending to a patient's behaviour and their phenomenological descriptions, or is the pattern generated by the mode of analysis? Whilst Binswanger's anthropological approach addresses the limitations of Freudian analysis, it nevertheless carries the presupposition that there is an underlying world-design (or a combination of world-designs) which can be mapped despite disorderly, and often contradictory, behaviour. The question turns on the issue of whether experiential

states can be expressed, whether aesthetically or otherwise, in order that a world-design can be discerned; or, indeed, whether expression is reducible to a structural principle.

By contrast, as is evident both in Binswanger's early word-association experiments (1907) under the supervision of Jung and in the examples of 'literary' dreams cited in 'Dream and Existence', although he responds to the excess of meaning inherent in symbolic language, he maintains that the content and mood of dreams are an expression of the patient's world-design. However, following a romantic precedent recognizable in Emerson's and James's thought, Binswanger, in his emphasis upon the transformative nature of expression, also suggests a world of flux and instability which is constantly being remade: the *Gestalt* is thus "something which [patients] actively create, by the use of the power of the imagination" (Binswanger 1964: 586). In Binswanger's reading of his patients' attempts to disclose the structure of their world-designs he appears to admit that temporal experience is not wholly reducible to a synchronic pattern. The cases in Schizophrenie help to foreground this problem, by providing concrete cases of patients whose behavioural patterns change through the course of their illness, rather than just intensifying in degree.

It is interesting to compare the cases of Lola Voss and Ellen West, not only because they share similar schizophrenic characteristics, but also because they illustrate the place of the body in Binswanger's thought: Lola displays an outward phobia towards clothes and Ellen incorporates her anxiety into her eating habits. Both cases indicate that, whilst the self conceived as Dasein is primarily concerned with meaning structures, because Dasein is embedded in the world it often seeks expression through the body. Compared with the

emphasis on physicality in the work of Merleau-Ponty, Binswanger can be accused of neglecting the body in his work on Daseinanalysis. However, he explicitly defends himself from those who "accuse *Daseinanalyse* of 'neglecting the body'" (212). He is keen only to stress that "if physical needs are given authority over the whole of man's being, then the image of man becomes one-sidedly distorted and ontologically falsified" (Needleman 1963: 160). For him, the spatial and temporal trajectories of corporeality should be "accommodated within the totality of man's knowledge of himself", rather than privileging them over the existential dimension.

Although the body is often underplayed in Binswanger's writing, it reappears in the guise of metaphors relating to the world designs of depth/surface and rising/falling which are thought to characterize patients suffering from schizophrenia. In developing this theme I will argue that the acute anxiety experienced by both patients is manifested by their inability to come to terms with the Otherness of embodied life. Thus they find themselves in a state of exile, or, in Heidegger's phrase, double estrangement, from themselves. A consideration of Binswanger's analysis of the "loss of world and self" (Needleman 1963: 338) not only clarifies certain areas of his thought, but also mediates links between the work of James and Sacks as representatives of converging currents in modern romantic science.

In the introduction to Schizophrenie Binswanger proceeds to outline four characteristic qualities, or stages, of schizophrenia. Firstly, the patient undergoes a "breakdown in the consistency of natural experience" which is accompanied by the "inability to 'let things be' in the immediate encounter with them, the inability...to reside serenely among things"

(Needleman 1963: 252). As I indicated in the introduction, the Heideggerian notion to

'let be' (*sein lassen*) is characterized by composure of mind and equanimity: "this...mood

springs from resoluteness, which, in a moment of *vision*, *looks* at those Situations which

are possible in one's potentiality-for-Being-a-whole as disclosed in our anticipation

of...death" (Heidegger 1962: 396). Far from being a "quietist" philosophy, the

resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) of 'letting things be' is a "highly positive and active"

posture by which one is able to face the finite limits of existence (Needleman 1963: 252).

In this way Dasein is rendered "ahead of itself in *resolve*" (a term comparable to

Foucault's understanding of the Stoic preparatory technique of *askesis*).[25] Unable to bear

such anxiety, Binswanger's patients also appear unable "to come to terms with the

inconsistency and disorder of their experience" and so they construct delusions in their

search "for a *way out* so that order can be re-established" (253). In the cases presented

in Schizophrenie these delusions take the form of each patient choosing, or compulsively

following, an "inappropriate" course of action (as opposed to Emerson's choice of

appropriate, or moral, action). In Binswanger's words, their world-design "manifests

itself without exception in the formation of Extravagant [*verstiegene*] ideals that

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[25] In his interpretation of the first division of Being and Time, Hubert Dreyfus indicates that *Entschlossenheit* means both resoluteness and, when written with a hyphen, "unclosedness" or "openness" (Dreyfus 1992: 318). He quotes Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics (1953), in which the German claims "the essence of resoluteness (*Ent-schlossenheit*) lies in the opening (*Ent-borgenheit*) of human Dasein into the clearing of being...Its relation to being is one of letting-be" (Heidegger 1959: 17). Dreyfus understands that by embracing openness one acknowledges the "impotence" of the self for making absolutely "lucid" and rational decisions. Transposing this reading onto Binswanger's work, a patient who cannot 'let things be' and is forced into a restrictive binary logic cannot accept this powerlessness and the "impossibility" to be resolute in "an *authentic* being-toward-death [*Sein zum Tode*]" (Needleman 1963: 257).

masquerade as a life-stance, and in the hopeless struggle to pursue and maintain these ideals" (253).[26]

The second quality of schizophrenia is a consequence of the first, in that the patients display a "splitting off of experiential consistency into alternatives" which take the form of a "rigid *either-or*" logic (254). Such disproportionate logic leads back to Binswanger's theory of the diminution of the plurality of various world-designs which structure the psyche of the individual into one fixed pattern of response. Subsequently,

> the complete submersion of the Dasein in the particular pair of alternatives also means that the existence can, in general, temporalize itself only in the mode of "deficiency" - in the mode, namely, that we have come to know as *fallenness* to the world, or in short, as "*mundanization*" [*Verweltlichung*] (257).

In an attempt to avoid facing the alternative modes of Being-in-the-world the individual often conceals those choices which are "unbearable to the Dasein so that the Extravagant ideal might thereby be buttressed" (258). This inauthentic activity of "covering" represents the third characteristic of schizophrenia. The fourth constitutes the feeling of "no longer being able to find a way out or in" (258), a self-surrender "to existential powers alien to itself" (259), either in the form of "the will of others" (263) or compulsive

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[26] I will return to the concept of Extravagance later in this and the next section, a translation of *Verstiegenheit* to which William Sadler objects. He prefers to translate the term as "high-flown" which "suggests a climber who has gone too high up the mountain and has become stuck on a ridge; he can neither rise higher nor can he come back down onto common ground", as characterized by the character of Halvard Solness in Henrik Ibsen's The Master Builder (Sadler 1969: 292). The extravagance of the master builder is an important image for Binswanger which recurs in his essay on *Verstiegenheit* (Needleman 1963: 342-49), originally the first chapter of Drei Formen Missglückten Daseins (Tübingen, 1956), as well as his longer work on Henrik Ibsen und das Problem der Selbstrealisation in der Kunst (Heidelberg. 1949), an extract of which is translated as 'Ibsen's Masterbuilder' (Gras 1973: 185-216).

behaviour, and a final "*resignation* or a *renunciation* of the whole antinomic problem" which "takes the form of an existential *retreat*" (258).

The case studies in <u>Schizophrenie</u> are each divided into roughly three parts: the first is a standard case history of the patient; the second represents Binswanger's attempt at existential analysis; and the third, a clinical analysis in which he attends closely to the particular form of psychopathology displayed by the patient. This format is similar to Freud's case studies and serves to contextualize the forms of psychopathology within the fuller life-history of the patient. By responding to the peculiar situation of each patient Binswanger is forced to attend scrupulously to their testimonies (verbal and written accounts of letters, diaries, dreams and hallucinations) and also to information which may be garnered from families and associates of the patient, as well as from medical records. Binswanger's primary interest is not in the final stage of schizophrenia *per se*, but rather "the existential process" (249) which leads to a retreat from the communal life of Being-in-the-world-with-others. For him,

> the decisive element lies...in the particular nature of the *resignation* or final capitulation of the Dasein culminating in the withdrawal from the Dasein's decisional frame of reference...the Dasein's surrendering of itself to the will of "alien" forces or "alien" persons. In the place of antinomic tension...between two irreconcilable alternatives, what emerges now is a more "one-sided" and thus more consistent, "incorrigible", "unproblematic" experience in the sense of a psychotic experiential model according to which all new experience is fashioned (264).

In his attempts to investigate the "existential process" Binswanger focuses his analysis on the personality of the patient and the unique situation in which they find themselves.

The data available to Binswanger concerning the life of Lola Voss before she enters Kreuzlingen at the age of twenty-four is limited. He is forced to rely on her father to fill in the biographical details of her life, details which he states were later confirmed by her mother. Lola was born in South America to a German father and Spanish American mother. Spoilt as a child, she suffered from typhoid fever at the age of twelve and attended a German boarding-school at thirteen where she showed a propensity for needlework and painting. Not until she fell in love with a Spanish doctor at the age of twenty and her father expressed concern about the suitability of the match did she show signs of fasting, appearing "joyless and depressed" (267). At twenty-two she displayed the first signs of 'clothes-phobia' on a trip with her mother to a German spa: she "refused to go aboard the boat unless a certain dress was removed from the luggage" (267). Around this time the Spanish doctor delayed his proposal to Lola and she became "melancholic and peculiarly superstitious" (268), displaying an aversion to particular objects as well as to hunchbacked women ("hunchbacked men she considered lucky, however, and even tried to touch them"). Whilst spending time with her aunts in Germany she turned against her mother, considering anything associated with her "bewitched" (268), particularly personal items such as clothes and underwear.

In the early days of her entry to the sanatorium no systematic study was attempted, although her first physician notices that she was "verbally astute", particularly in "the art of lying" (269). From this early stage it seems unlikely that Binswanger's collaborative ideal is a viable mode of therapy to help Lola contend with her growing anxiety, which began to manifest itself in extreme superstition and a refusal to change her clothing. Fortunately, a new physician took over supervision of Voss with whom she was more

inclined to communicate. Although she continued to resist talking about herself, this physician eventually learnt that her superstition regarding clothes derived from a stay in New York when she began to fear that "something might happen to her friend if she wrote to him while wearing a particular dress" (271). Her fear of hunchbacks is also thought to be linked closely to a letter expressing bad feeling between her and a male friend. During her trip to America, she visited a department store to buy a new dress, but she ran out "in horror" when she noticed that "the saleslady" was "squint-eyed" (275). These "obsessive ideas" become more intense during the period of her engagement, at which time her superstition begins to take on different guises: she "explained that it was the compulsion to 'read' *something into everything* that made her so exhausted, and the more so, the more she was among people" (271). In this hyper-analytic state, Lola becomes obsessed with objects whose names she associates with either good or bad luck.

One particular instance, which she initially claims was "so terrible that she could not possible talk about it", concerned an umbrella, which in German (*Schirm*) contains the word *si*, "an affirmation" (272). This incident she associates with a previous traumatic moment when,

> her father had bought a new umbrella...[and] she[had] met a woman hunchback on the street...now all the bad luck emanating from the hunchback was displaced onto the umbrella...the bad luck...confirmed through the meaning of the *si* (272).

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Also documented are other instances when an umbrella symbolizes for Lola the transferral of bad luck onto people (her mother and, later, her nurse[27]), or the contamination of objects with which it had been in contact. At this time she expressed her ongoing suffering in a letter to her physician, in which she writes of her unrelenting "terror" (273) and "sadness" which accompanies the "horrible possibility" (276) of bad luck. Her residence at Bellevue was soon terminated (after a total of fourteen months at Kreuzlingen) when she received news that her family "was now ready to permit her to marry the Spanish physician" (277). To supplement the information already collated, the next year of Lola's life in Paris and, later, in South America is charted through letters to her physician, in which she expresses her ongoing fears and anxieties. The first section of the case study ends here.

In his existential analysis Binswanger outlines definite signs of schizophrenia in Lola's behaviour. He discerns a shift from the early stages of schizophrenia, in which "the self was still able to preserve itself to some modest degree" (312), towards "an extreme degree" (284) of the second stage of the schizophrenic process in which Lola "is completely delivered to the superior power of the world, and benumbed by it" (312). This stage is characterized by

> what we call mundanization...a process in which the Dasein is abandoning itself in its actual, free potentiality of being-itself, and is giving itself over to a specific world-design...the Dasein can no longer freely allow the world to be, but is, rather, increasingly surrendered over to one particular world-design, possessed by it, overwhelmed by it (284).

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[27] The importance of the mother, nurse and father in Lola's story lends itself to a Freudian analysis of the family romance. However, I wish to resist approaching the case in this manner in order to explore Binswanger's mode of Daseinanalysis.

Binswanger calls the state in which Dasein surrenders itself to powers external to itself "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*), as oppose to Heidegger's use of the term to characterize existence in general. Thrownness for Binswanger describes the gradual erosion and "absorption" (285) of existence by those objects and people that populate the world of Dasein. Instead of seeking a Being-in-the-world-with-others through the dual mode of love, Lola is "not able to harmonize ideal and reality" (285). Heidegger asserts that Dasein "finds itself primarily and usually in things because...it always in some way or other rests in things" (Heidegger 1982: 159). Similarly, the others in Lola's life, who "for the most part '*are there*' in everyday Being-with-one-another" (Heidegger 1962: 164), represent the usual state of affairs, so long as the Dasein maintains a relational distance through the activity of care. If Dasein becomes overwhelmed by the Otherness of relations it finds its "extreme expression in the phenomenon of delusion" (Needleman 1963: 285). In Lola's case this manifests itself in her belief in a malevolent fate and her fears of paranoia and persecution.

Lola's extravagant ideal is understood to protect herself from the anxiety she associates with human relations and to secure her existence by "being left alone by the world...to let no one and nothing come close to her" (285). For her, "the coexistors [*Mitdaseinenden*] are accessible only by way of a predesign of unfamiliarity, of the Uncanny [*Verunheimlichung*], or - alternatively - of the expectation of the Threatening" (285). As a consequence, "when it retreats from the world of fellowmen, from its coexistors, the Dasein also forgoes itself, or rather forgoes itself as a self" (288). Such a retreat represents an inability of "being-oneself" (284) or of "achieving the self

[*Selbstgewinnung*]" (296), because avoiding relations with others means only a surrender to their will or investing magical controlling properties in objects. Thus,

> where Dasein no longer temporalizes and spatializes, where it has ceased to be a self and to communicate with others, it no longer has a "here" (*da*). For it has its "here" only in the transcendence [*Überstieg*] of Care [*Sorge*] - not to speak of the exaltation [*Überschwang*] of Love (288).

Binswanger designates such a loss of selfhood as "existential weakness", by which he means,

> a person does not stand autonomously in his world, that he blocks himself off from the ground of his existence, that he does not take his existence upon himself but trusts himself to alien powers, that he makes alien powers 'responsible' for his fate instead of himself (290).

In James's language this weakening of will (an important aspect of resolve and care) is representative of an inability, or a refusal, to be socialized in a manner deemed appropriate by others. This claim may appear to reimpose those normative structures of health/sickness and sane/insane which Binswanger wishes to discard, by covertly criticizing the schizophrenic patient for not living up to social expectations. However, rather than resisting the constraints of expectation, a Foucauldian reading of Binswanger suggests that Dasein should first accept these limitations in order to transcend (or, for Foucault, transgress) them in an act of self-transformation. Paradoxically, for Binswanger, "existential richness" (289) and resolve springs from letting things be, rather than surrendering to the will of others by retreating from the world of human relations. Here, the similarity between Binswanger's resolute self and James's strenuous self (in contrast to the existential retreat characterized by George Beard's rest-cure) is startlingly evident.

Because Being-in-the-world is characterized by relations with others, the powers to which Lola surrenders "although alien to the self, cannot be considered alien to existence, as something outside or above it" (291). Lola's state of thrownness "seduces existence time and again, reassures it temporarily, alienates it more and more from itself, and completely prevails upon it" (291). The significant others in Lola's life - for the most part her mother and nurse - are not the primary agents who impose this condition upon her, but rather they make manifest to her "a superior, uncanny, even dreadful *it*, confronted with which the Dasein feels completely forlorn" (292). Thus, while Lola feels "abandoned by the others" (and here Binswanger makes the physician the only exception - he is "the post to which existence clings while adrift in the whirlpool"), it is she who surrenders herself over to the constant threat of "the Uncanny and the Dreadful" (292).[28]

Binswanger suggests two responses by which Lola experiences the Uncanny: she attempts to "'capture' the Dreadful and anticipate its 'intentions' with the help of words and playing on words" and she also tries "to put spatial distance between [herself] and the persons and objects struck by the Dreadful's curse" (292). Both responses - Lola's tendency to read profound significance into phonetic associations and her retreat from "spatial closeness" (293) which leads to a "narrowing of the life space" (296) - are described as deriving from a feeling of the self being overpowered by each of the spheres of existence (*Umwelt*, *Mitwelt* and *Eigenwelt*). Her belief in fate "combines with the

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[28] Binswanger admits that he favours Schelling's definition of the uncanny - "anything which ought to remain in secrecy and obscurity and has become manifest is known as uncanny" (306) - to Freud's discussion in his 1919 paper. Binswanger supplements Schelling's understanding by stating "what was supposed to remain in secrecy and hiding is the original anxiety, which now 'has emerged'" (306). Although both versions of the uncanny turn on the axis of familiarity/unfamiliarity, as I discuss in a consideration of Sacks's The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat, Freud's discussion is useful for a fuller understanding of the term.

Uncanny and superstition" throws her into a state of "anxiety without any possibility of regaining herself, or even becoming aware of herself" (297). This does not necessarily mean that Lola is unaware of her anxiety, rather that she cannot see that her belief in fate as "an uncanny *objective* power" is unjustifiable. Binswanger, revealing himself to be a true modern, draws the analogy with this state of hyper-analysis with "astrological superstition" (298). He claims that "what is common to both is the clinging to alleged, blindly operating, power and evasion of the opportunity to retrieve *oneself* from thrownness and return to being one's real self or to accept genuine religious faith" (298). This "return" is not to some essential, or foundational, selfhood. Although memory is a retrospective activity, it acts primarily as a means for self-transformation. As for James and Emerson, the "genuine religious faith" in Binswanger's thought is a confirmation of the spiritual dimension of the self.

In a manner similar to the grotesque vision experienced by James's French correspondent, Binswanger understands Lola's fear of female hunchbacks to be a potential staging of her future, a staging which she believes to be confirmed by the hunchback's association with the umbrella (*si*). The symbol of the female hunchback thus represents

> [an] ominous portent (just as does the squinting salesgirl) from the "abnormality" of these life-phenomena, an abnormality in the sense of a "descending life"...namely, of deformation, crippling, disfigurement. These forms of "descending life" figure so prominently in all superstition because superstition "springs" from the anxiety of being-in-the-world per se, of the naked existence thrown into uncanniness (298).

Whereas Heidegger describes authenticity as a Being-towards-death, Lola is understood to retreat from a symbol which she associates with her "descending life." In doing so, her

anxiety "makes the world appear ever more insignificant, ever more simple, because it 'petrifies' existence, narrows its openness, its 'here', down to ever smaller circles" (299). Contrasted to the optimistic plenitude of Emerson's "self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles" (Emerson 1992: 147), the image of decreasing circles is characteristic of a restricted and petrified life without escape. The resulting "loss of freedom and compulsive entanglement in the net of external circumstances" derives from "a transformation of life-historical spaciality into mundane space" (Needleman 1963: 300). In other words, the interarticulation of time and space gives way to the "mundanization" of a perpetual present which repeats itself *ad infinitum*. This covering strategy, added to her retreat from the world of others, combine in Lola's attempt to stave off her Being-towards-death, but only serve to compound her anxiety.

Closely connected to Lola's fear of female disfigurement is her peculiar relation to clothing.[29] Binswanger suggests that clothing for Lola, particularly dresses, "become actual representatives...of the mother." In contrast to Jürg Zünd who refuses to remove his coat for fear of others thinking that he is a degenerate, Lola actually fears "the world of garments" (301). As I discuss in the next section, Ellen West, like Jürg Zünd, is anxious about what lies beneath the surface of the body, whereas Binswanger claims that Lola is concerned "only with the cover provided by the clothes" (301). However, if each

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[29] Binswanger admits that to address this issue fully "we would have to conduct a biographical investigation. Unfortunately, we do not have any historical points of reference at our disposal" (300). Details such as the kinds of dresses Lola dislikes and what particular items of clothing mean to her were presumably unavailable. Such limiting factors are common in this kind of analysis and check the therapeutic ideal stressed in 'Dream and Existence.' However, Binswanger is more successful at collecting biographical information in the case of Jürg Zünd.

case is seen to display "the transformation of existential anxiety into the horrible fear of a 'worldly' shell" (301), Lola's refusal to wear clothes only associated with good omens can be read as an attempt to preserve the *depth* of her body. Because Binswanger sees Lola to have lost a hold upon her "physical and psychic world", the surface world of clothing "assumes prime importance" (301).[30] Furthermore, because Lola cannot express her "physical and psychic world" except through the metonymy of clothing, when she cuts them up and destroys them she is, in effect, enacting a displaced masochistic violence to her body.

This insight strikes at the core of Lola's condition. In her wish to literally wear good luck she attempts to wrest "from the intangible, uncanny Dreadful a personlike character, namely the personification of a fate that proceeds according to predictable intentions" (302). Rather than associating her "worn-out dress" with the "descending life" signified by the female hunchback, Binswanger understands Lola's reluctance to buy new clothes as a sign of the imminent "catastrophe" she feels to be "implicit in the new dress" (303). She is seen to accept the "external mundane continuity" of the old dress rather than "risking an uncanny adventure" by acquiring a new one: in other words, "the Sudden against which she tries to protect herself" (303). Consequently, the ideal of "existential continuity, the authentic becoming in the sense of authentic historicity", in which Dasein is granted some agency, "is replaced by the uncannily sudden jump from one 'now-point'

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[30] Binswanger stresses the "expressive significance" of clothing in dreams in an important footnote (302). Instead of metaphoric or metonymic logic only serving to structure a logically autonomous realm of dreams, the nature of schizophrenia suggests a constant slippage between dream-states, hallucinations and waking life. When, at the end of 'Dream and Existence', Binswanger speaks of a "genuine awakenness" he gestures towards an untangling of this logic in order to reflect upon it. Most clearly illustrated in Sacks's case of Leonard L., although an individual may have moments of insight into his or her condition, ultimate enlightenment is a state always deferred because the self is always already articulated in language.

to the next" (303).[31] Kierkegaard's description of repetition-with-difference, signifying "genuine existential continuity", is abandoned in favour of "recurrence of sameness." Following James's work on repetition, the habit of wearing worn-out clothes crystallizes into a compulsive-repetitive pattern for which, in Lola's case, there is no apparent escape. Binswanger extends James's understanding of habit by offering an analytic understanding of particular cases. Lola's clothes-phobia (closely related to her delusions of persecution) is not a symptom of an underlying fear of the future (although Binswanger can be read to mean this), but the manner in which inexpressible uncanniness is articulated in terms of her world.

To conclude this section it is useful to quote the American analyst Carl Rogers, who, in his essay on 'The Loneliness of Contemporary Man' (1961), outlines "two elements to the sense of aloneness" which are characteristic of schizophrenic patients (Rogers 1961: 94). Both elements are indicative of Lola's inability to express her condition: firstly, Rogers describes "the estrangement of man from himself, from his experiencing organism...thus we find man lonely because of an inability to communicate freely within himself"; and, secondly, "in our loneliness is the lack of any relationship in which we communicate our real experiencing - and hence our real self - to another" (94). Even if one ignores the problematics of the word "reality" for Rogers, this appraisal of a self divided from itself and from those others whose language it shares, but with whom it consistently fails to communicate, is illustrative not only of schizophrenic patients but of the central isolating experience of modernity, as symbolized by the title of the American sociologist David

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[31] This may be read to mean that Binswanger is promoting a form of commodity fetishism ("a change of clothes is identified with a change of persons" [333]), but the acquisition of clothes is used here only as an example in which the schizophrenic foregoes Being-towards-possibilities in favour of a mundane present.

Riesman's book <u>The Lonely Crowd</u> (1950). Binswanger's ideal of empathic understanding and collaborative overcoming is less an antidote to such loneliness than a belief in future possibility. For him, a 'case' is never closed but always open to self-transformative reworkings. However, as the next section makes clear, the optimism of medical care faces its sternest test with terminable cases in which the "potentially fatal division" that Rogers describes inexorably moves towards its conclusion.

(5) Ellen West and the Revolt against Corporeality

'The Case of Ellen West' (1944-45) is the one single piece of Binswanger's work which has received the most critical attention. Not only is Ellen West presented as the most articulate, and therefore the most insightful, of Binswanger's patients (echoing James's lucid, yet fictional, French correspondent and prefiguring the most perspicacious of Sacks's post-encephalitic patients, Leonard L.), but the denouement of her case provides one of the most dramatic moments in Western analytic history. My primary interest in this case is twofold: firstly, to conclude my discussion on the active and embodied self in Binswanger's thought; and, secondly, to outline how schizophrenia delineates a certain imaginative space (simultaneously as the illness diminishes the possibility of participating in the world of others). The insights gleaned from Ellen's dreams, poems, diaries and letters are invaluable sources for Binswanger's existential analysis. Moreover, these 'first-hand' accounts (as always, a degree of scepticism accompanies this term) often introduce elements which are either overlooked or cannot be assimilated into the anthropological schema of Daseinanalysis. Appropriately, this section indicates some of the limits of Binswanger's project.

Here I will outline only the essentials of the case, reserving my comments on particular details for later in this section. Ellen's family background is described as displaying instances of mental instability: she has a Jewish father with "suicidal ideas" (237), a nervous mother, a mentally ill aunt, an uncle who shot himself, a grandmother who died of "dementia senilis" (238) and a manic-depressive great-grandmother. Ellen is characterized as a "headstrong and violent child" (but by whom the reader is not told);

at school she favours languages; she expresses signs that she wishes to be a boy (a desire which she later renounces); and she is prone to excessive mood swings. At the age of seventeen she reads the Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen's novel <u>Niels Lyhne</u> (1880) which stimulates her transition "from a deeply religious person...to a complete atheist" (239). The characteristics of "rigorous esthetic individualism and religious nihilism" (272) displayed by Jacobsen's protagonist are reflected in Ellen's expressions of her own spiritual struggle and existential anxiety, which she subsequently attempts to stave off by thinking less and working more. Her early adult life is characterized by "happiness, yearning, and hopes" (as she looks forward to a journey overseas with her parents [241]) and the feeling that she is "small and wholly forsaken in a world which she cannot understand" (when she goes to nurse her brother in Sicily [242]).

As a child Ellen shows a liking for meat and a "resistance" (238) to deserts and sweets. By the age of twenty-one her anxiety begins to manifest itself with worries over the size of her body: she is "constantly tormented by the idea she is getting fat" (242). In her diary she writes: "my inner self is so closely connected with my body that the two form a unity and together constitute my 'I', my unlogical, nervous, individual 'I'" (242). This close identification of "inner self" and body becomes a central characteristic of her eating disorder. At this time her poems begin to figure death as animaginative and seductive force, "not a man with a scythe but 'a glorious woman, white asters in her hair, large eyes, dream-deep and gray'" (242).

In the following year she marries her cousin, but she continues to experience a worsening struggle between physical mortification ("I long to be violated - *and indeed I do violence*

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to myself every hour" [255]) and her spiritual aspirations ("I still will not give up my 'ideal'" [250]), the latter to which, Binswanger claims, she subordinated "every one of her actions to this end" (249). She writes powerfully of her feelings of imprisonment: "I am in a prison caught in a net from which I cannot free myself. I am a prisoner within myself; I get more and more entangled, and every day is a new, useless struggle; the meshes tighten more and more" (258). She is subsequently advised to follow a variation of Beard's model of rest cure. This advice is to little avail. She suffers a miscarriage at the age of twenty-nine and a general decline in strength, mainly because she begins to imbibe laxatives. She begins psychoanalysis in her early thirties to which she shows little response. At the age of thirty-three she attempts suicide for the first time "by taking fifty-six tablets of Somnacetin" (which she vomits up) and soon after "she makes her second suicide attempt by taking twenty tablets of a barbiturate compound" (252).

Soon after her first suicide attempt she joins the Bellevue clinic at Kreuzlingen but continues to display eating disorders, suicidal tendencies, increased agitation and profound depression. Much of the information concerning the turmoil of Ellen's life-world is documented during this time as diary entries and dreams, both of which express her longing for death. In the light of her "increasing risk of suicide" and her failure to respond to therapy at Bellevue, the three physicians (Binswanger, Eugen Bleuler and "a foreign psychiatrist") eventually decide either to move her into a "closed ward" or to release her, the latter which they decide would mean "certain suicide" (266). After lengthy consultation with both Ellen and her husband the doctors decide to "give in to the patient's demand for discharge" (266).

On returning home initially her symptoms do not alter, but the case reports "on the third day of being home she is as if transformed" (267). She is in "festive mood", eats healthily, walks with her husband, reads Rilke, Storm, Goethe, and Tennyson (writers who describe high passions and imaginative exuberance) and she writes a letter to another patient friend (a transcript of this letter is not provided). The report closes with this statement, presumably offered by her husband: "in the evening she takes a lethal dose of poison, and on the following morning she is dead. 'She looked as she had never looked in life - calm happy and peaceful'" (267).

In one extreme response to the publication of the full case history, the critic David Lester argues that not only are "the facts...distorted by omission in the report of the case" (indeed there are absences: for example, a full report by Ellen's husband) in order that Binswanger could use Ellen's "life and death...as a vehicle to demonstrate the technique of existential analysis" (Lester 1971: 251), but the details of the case conceal the possibility of psychic homicide. Lester argues that this phenomenon, in which "suicide victims may be propelled into unconscious or partly conscious acting out of the wishes of others", takes the form of "hostile neglect" on the part of the husband (252). Together with the gross irresponsibility which he attributes to Binswanger (by agreeing to release Ellen from Bellevue and by orchestrating "an intellectual exercise in abstract thought with no implications for behavior change or psychotherapy"), Lester argues that the case expresses Binswanger's "need to acquit himself for responsibility for her death" (262). While such a reading is tenuous and overlooks the sensitivity with which Binswanger addresses Ellen's death wishes, Lester's comments indicate serious areas of concern for reading this case.

In one of his later books, <u>The Voice of Experience</u> (1982), the famous anti-psychiatrist R. D. Laing cites 'The Case of Ellen West' as "generally taken to be a standard work in its field, an exemplary model of its kind" (Laing 1982: 53). Having established this, Laing goes on to criticize Binswanger both for his diagnosis of Ellen as schizophrenic (despite discernable traces of the four stages of schizophrenia, the other analysts dealing with the case had variously diagnosed hysteria, severe obsessional neurosis with "manic-depressive oscillations", melancholia and psychasthenia [59-60]) and for evidence of central contradictions in his methodology.

The "dual mode of love", outlined in his theoretical writings and recapitulated as a therapeutic goal in 'Dream and Existence', is present only as an unfulfilled ideal in the case of Lola Voss. Having established this ideal it is surprising that, at the beginning of the analytic section of Ellen's case, Binswanger claims that "the foregoing account summarizes what we know, on the basis of credible autobiographical and biographical documents and testimonies, about the human individuality to whom we have given the name Ellen West" (May 1958: 267). Already the reader has the sense that Binswanger does not know Ellen intimately, since he never interacts with her at length or analyses her dreams in terms of her own responses to them. Binswanger goes on to claim that

> this knowledge is of a purely historical sort...her specific name loses its function of a mere verbal label for a human individuality...and takes on the meaning of an eponym (*fama*). The name Ellen West (in this connection, of course, it makes no difference whether this name is real or fictitious) thus designates the totality of a historical figure or personage (267).

Again, the personal quality of Ellen's condition appears absent. Added to this is the surprising assertion that by assigning the patient an "eponym" (to protect the real Ellen and her family) he does not alter the symbolic proportions of the case, especially regarding the choice of such an evocative surname.

Binswanger attempts to suspend clinical judgments ("be they moral, esthetic, social, medical, or in any other way derived from a prior point of view, and most of all our own judgment" [268]), seemingly, even at the expense of personal contact with Ellen. Of course, Binswanger cannot be held wholly responsible for attending to the patient for the full duration of her stay at Bellevue, but, as Laing scathingly indicates,

> in view of [his previous] theoretical reflections it is surprising that Binswanger writes...that conditions were particularly favourable to existential analysis, just because he did not know her [Ellen] personally. Better than that, he has at his disposal an abundance of written material. Usually, in such cases of deteriorated schizophrenia, material for existential analysis can only be obtained by persistent and systematic exploration of patients over months and years. Evidently, the attempt to establish a 'dual' relationship with such patients is only a waste of time. In her case, he has pages and pages of useful material. He can spread it out before him, all at once, and look at it. No need to spend time in the presence of a person whose presence in the world is so totally unfortunate and miserable. The existential Gestalt that is Ellen West is unable to 'relate'. His study exemplifies exactly what he attacks (Laing 1982: 61).

I agree with Laing that Binswanger counters his earlier emphasis on the "love, the dual mode of existence" (May 1958: 273) - although he does retain it as an unfulfilled possibility for Ellen - and, in light of his comments on the role of the analyst ("the post to which existence clings while adrift in the whirlpool"), his professional distance appears to amplify Ellen's feelings of loneliness. However, given the terms of the case, he can (at the stage of writing it) only hope to analyze the material he and his colleagues have

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collected over the previous years "in as many details as it is at all possible" (May 1958: 268). Furthermore, in displaying a proximity to the central concerns of romantic science, Binswanger asserts that "Extravagance can never be understood solely from a subjective point of view, but only from the combined perspective of subjectivity and objectivity" (Needleman 1963: 349).

To his credit, Binswanger writes of his "uncertain, fluctuating, and incomplete" judgments (which are the only ones to be evinced from the available data) and he expresses a need to respond to the details sympathetically (as opposed to applying "scientific judgment"): "love alone, and the imagination originating from it, can rise above this single point of regard" (268). Here, though, he has shifted his stance from that of analyst-therapist of patients to analyst-hermeneutician of a literary text of Ellen's life. If the conflation of life and text is all that can be hoped for after Ellen's death, then the "dual mode" of intersubjectivity is transformed into a mode of textual interpretation. It transpires that the question posed in the last section, apropos the importance of disclosing the structures of Dasein in order to reorient the patient in her world, here implies that the world-design is an analytic structure which, at least in this case, can be fully discerned only after the event. The resulting form of posthumous literary criticism (which reveals marked similarities with Binswanger's interpretation of Ibsen's <u>The Masterbuilder</u>) retains the search for an underlying world-design, both as a structuring pattern and as a temporal dynamic which is seen to undergo certain "transformations" during the course of Ellen's life (269). Whilst Binswanger's reading certainly addresses important aspects of the case, I wish to indicate that the account of Ellen's life generates alternative readings which can complement and, often, challenge the structures of existential analysis. Ellen's text

generates an excess of meaning, particular in relation to the prominent role her body-image plays in her life-world, instead of Daseinanalysis simply disclosing *the* central pattern.

The very opening words of the case ("Ellen West, a non-Swiss...") suggest an Otherness that cannot be contained within the framework of Daseinanalysis, and, perhaps, indicates that Binswanger's description of world-designs is, at best, culturally specific. Otherness in this case is twofold: the difficulty which Binswanger experiences in his appraisal of Ellen's "death-history" (296) and Ellen's constant battle with her split self: "I confront myself as a strange person" (254). This assertion does not mean that Binswanger is insensitive to the strangeness of the case, but that the rhetoric of empathy and union of Daseinanalysis is inadequate to Ellen's internalized experiences. Having stressed this, it is productive to see Ellen's case and Binswanger's analysis of it as extending (if not completing) the complex world of Dasein which his earlier comments on love seem to brush over. I wish to suspend commentary on the medical ethics of Binswanger's position in his agreeing to release Ellen from Bellevue, noting only that, following Heidegger, he stresses that Ellen's existence is authentic "only when she *faces* death" [my italics], a comment which does not necessarily mean he is in agreement with her final act (310).[32] When he writes "only in her decision for death did she find herself and choose herself" (298), he interprets Ellen's decision from within the framework of her personal symbolic world rather than making an explicit moral comment.

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[32] For another response to the (in)authenticity of Ellen's actions see Foucault's introduction to 'Dream and Existence' and his American biographer James Miller's interpretation of Foucault's response to Ellen's transgressive "limit experience" (Miller 1994: 73-78).

Ellen's "becoming" can be seen as her attempt to discover a self-reliant and autonomous path for her life; her early religious distance from her parents indicates a lasting wish to take responsibility for herself. From a promethean romantic perspective it is commendable that "in no respect does she care about the judgment of the world" (239), but her later renunciation of the worldly (rejecting the significant others in her life) and the corporeal (the wasting of her body) displays how extravagantly she seeks such independence. To quote Binswanger's words from the introduction to Schizophrenie, in Ellen's desperate search for self-reliance, "the Dasein...'grabs blindly and falsely' in its choice of means, overruns itself in a single experimental possibility that, regardless of *its* own inner consistency, has all the earmarks of the larger inconsistency" (Needleman 1963: 254). Beneath her desire for independence lies Ellen's profound unhappiness with her earthly condition, an unhappiness which is to reveal itself in the deficiency of mundanization (*Verweltlichung*). Ellen's will to self-reliance can be seen to conceal her resignation to those alien forces within herself. Because she aligns her identity so closely with her body, it is not surprising to find that the constricted world-design manifests itself in a compulsion to eat followed by bodily mortification. Rather than becoming herself through starvation, Ellen's attempts to empty her body perversely turn into "nothing but a metamorphosis of freedom into compulsion" (341). Ellen can be seen to eschew, or abandon, a future of "definite possibilities" for one which is empty and "hangs in the air" (303).

Just as the protagonist of Jacobsen's Niels Lyhne renounces the promises of conventional religion, Ellen has "no star" to follow, or, following Cavell's comments on moral

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individualism, no map to perfectionism which could guide her in her life. Binswanger writes,

> she suddenly discards her faith, which she had cherished in opposition to her father, and feels confirmed, indeed strengthened, in her individualism. Feeling no longer any trust in, or obligation to a deity, "nowhere caring" again about the judgement of the *Mitwelt*, she is now completely reliant on herself, determining the guide-lines and goals of her actions, in the words of Niels Lyhne, entirely "as a solitary individual," "by what she in her best moments ranks highest according to what there is in her." With such concepts as "best moments" and "highest," existence and ideas are raised to the realm of the superlative. This superlative, however, requires as correlative a superlative measure of "strength and independence." After reading Niels Lyhne, Ellen credits herself with that measure (272-73).

Ellen introjects all her yearning into the world of the *Eigenwelt*, but, according to Binswanger, "that also means that the self remains limited to passionately wishing and dreaming" (273). The "moral responsibility" of which Binswanger speaks in 'Dream and Existence' is a directive which should lead the individual away from the *idios kosmos* of the dreamer towards a participation in the communal "*koinos cosmos*" (Hoeller 1993: 99). Rather than Emersonian self-reliance here leading to a freedom imbued with an optimistic effusion of creativity, Ellen's poems and dreams reveal a wish to escape the confines of worldly existence - in this case the *Mitwelt* and the *Umwelt* - for a poeticized world of ethereal existence.

All four of Ellen's dreams described in the case link her desire to eat with encroaching images of death: "the joyous expectation that I shall soon die"; "she asks him to get a revolver and shoot them both"; "she jumped into the water through a porthole"; she "wants to set herself on fire in the forest" (263). Obviously, the dreams have been

selected by Binswanger for their reflection of her anorexic schizophrenia[33] and their anticipation of her final suicide: he claims that, taken together, the dreams form "the expression of one and the same anthropological fact, namely, the intertwined, inner connectedness of the motif of gluttony and death" (291-92). In terms of the whole case, only in her resolve towards death is Ellen able to extricate herself from a repetitive pattern which invades both her dreaming and waking life. However, to read Ellen's final act into her earlier dream serves to set up a form of psychic determinism. A fairer reading would be to suggest the images of death are expressions of Ellen's deep unhappiness about her condition. Indeed, the variety of scenes of death experienced in the dreams connote death as an empty signifier which may as well suggest any form of transition (perhaps a figurative death and rebirth instead of an actual one).

Accordingly, Binswanger brings his readings in line with the pattern of her world-design rather than reading Ellen's death as inevitable. As Binswanger's extensive analysis of the third 'sea dream' makes clear, the peculiar combination of fire and water of the last two dreams is atypical of Ellen's Dasein which passes between opposing images of earth and air. Appropriating the elemental symbolism of Gaston Bachelard, Binswanger conceives the elements as suggestive of a set of universal properties.[34] Binswanger interprets the

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[33] I have deliberately avoided the term anorexia nervosa to describe Ellen's condition for the purposes of my explication of Binswanger's work. Although Ellen's eating disorder is certainly a form of both "intake-restricting (or abstinent) anorexia and bulimia/anorexia (characterized by alternating bouts of gorging and starving and/or gorging and vomiting)" (Bordo 1985: 94), not only does Binswanger use the term sparingly (Ellen's case being one of the first extended clinical case studies of anorexia), but, following the aims of existential analysis, clinical terminology is resisted in order not to obscure the personal dynamics of the case.

[34] See, for example, Bachelard's La Psychoanalyse du Feu (Paris, 1938) and L'Air et les songes (Paris, 1943). Despite Binswanger's commitment to read only the manifest dream content, by importing this form of elemental symbolism he can be accused of merely resorting to another structural version of Freud's dream-apparatus. However, by appropriating a very broad symbolic schema and by using the details of

deep water of Ellen's past to be contrasted, in the fourth dream, with the fire of purification (later to manifest itself in her resolution to commit suicide). The upward movement of fire and air combine to portend a revolt against, and a flight away from, time (water) and body (earth) which is as true of the pattern of her bulimia as it is of her suicide.

As Binswanger comments in his essay on 'Extravagance', it is "possible for human existence to go *too* far" by enacting a "disharmony in the relation between rising upward and striding forth" (Needleman 1963: 342-43). In Ellen's case such an "anthropological disproportion" is characterised through an imbalance in the structure of her empty/full world-design. By emptying her body of food - an ascetic starving or a gorging followed by the imbibing of laxatives - as an extravagant manner of "rising upward" from her earthly state. Binswanger speaks of the desire to overcome "earth's gravity", as a desire to "gain a 'higher' perspective" upon that which surrounds and limits the self (345). This desire is realized in Ellen's case by a choice to rise *"above* the particular worldly situation and thus *above* the ambit of the known and seen" (345). In his description of "manic ideation", Binswanger distinguishes between the exertion of will, understood merely as "taking a stance", and "being *carried*" by moods. The element of desire implicit in this second condition indicates that Binswanger moves the terms of his study beyond the Jamesian notion of simply making a willed choice. As such, the interplay of compulsion and decision is one which links Binswanger's writing as much with Freud as it does with Heidegger.

Ellen's case to dictate the typical or atypical terms of the dream (at a particular time in her life) an argument can be mounted to defend his position.

While Ellen's renunciation of the worldly (in the language of her poetry, "the worm on earth") may seem like a form of asceticism, in a letter to her husband she speaks of the "greed to realize my ideal" and the "hatred of the surrounding world which wants to make this impossible" (251). Characterized by modes of excessive hardship, asceticism shows the same kind of extravagance and disproportion more apparent in forms of greed. In Ellen's case, as a mode of expression - "the birdling...that splits his throat in highest jubilation" - the ascetic starving of her body becomes a negative choice, rather than a positive acceptance, or a letting things be. Alone, the rising upward - the "being-beyond-the-world" - robs itself of "*communio* and *communicatio*" and thereby "Dasein can no longer widen, revise, or examine its 'experiential horizon' and remains rooted to a 'narrow minded', i.e., sharply limited, standpoint" (343). The obstinacy of such a position is characteristic of the kind of "hysterical twilight state" by which Dasein reacts to the deficiency of a mundane existence (252).

Binswanger interprets the two images of the worm and the jubilant bird as being characteristic of the two poles of Ellen's world-design between which she shuttles. On the one pole accumulate the terms fat, earthy, burdened, passive, lazy, withered and aged, and on the other pole gather images of slenderness, airiness, freedom, activity, flowering and youth. Ellen's wish to renounce the former pole is evident in her early hatred for indolence and conformity:

> I am twenty-one years old and am supposed to be silent and grin like a puppet. I am no puppet. I am a human being with red blood and a woman with a quivering heart. And I cannot breathe in this atmosphere of hypocrisy and cowardice, and I mean to do something great and must

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get a little closer to my ideal, my proud ideal...I am not thinking of the liberation of the soul; I mean the real, tangible liberation of the people from the chains of their oppressors...Call it unsatisfied urge to action...To me it is as if this boiling in my blood were something better. Oh I am choking in this petty, commonplace life. Bloated self-satisfaction or egotistical greed, joyless submissiveness or crude indifference; those are the plants which thrive in the sunshine of the commonplace. They grow and proliferate, and like weeds they smother the flower of longing which germinates among them...The morning must come after this siege of nightmares (243-44).

I have quoted the patient at length because I wish to contend that Binswanger's interpretation of a single world-design (empty/full) is here complicated by a third term: an expression of an intensity of bodily existence ("boiling" blood) which is both of a bodily and ideal (or ethereal) order. Her fear of being reduced to an uncanny puppet which, as I elaborate in my reading of Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny' in the next chapter on Sacks, is conceived as being neither entirely human nor entirely non-human, provides a central image of Ellen's desire to fulfil this third way which is excluded within the rigid either/or dichotomy of her world-design.

To deploy Jamesian terminology, this third way would enable Ellen to harness her romantic yearning with a celebration of her corporeality in a strenuous drive to meaningful and life-affirming action. However, Ellen's poems and dreams express that this path is barred: "all your projects/...all of them lie buried,/Scattered in wind and storm,/And you've become a nothing/A timid earthy worm" (244). Later on she does not even equate her existence with that of the worm, but, as Binswanger notes, "to lifeless, worthless material: she is nothing more than discarded husk, cracked, useless, worthless" (286). As Ellen's youthful romanticism is quashed by the mundanity of her existence, so the possibility of becoming herself through this third way diminishes: "she now hates her

body too and beats it with her fist" (286). As such, the rest of her life dramatizes a desperate wish "*not* to be oneself" (297). The retreat from herself is played out in the negative cycles of gorging and fasting which eventually lead to her suicide: "in her death we perceive...the existential meaning, or more accurately, contra-meaning, of her life. This meaning was not that of being herself, but rather that of being *not* herself" (297).

Binswanger is sensitive to the early possibility of the third way, in which he sees an "attempt at harmonizing the ethereal world ideal with the world of practical action", but he concludes that "in view of the powers available to her this attempt is so high-flown as to make us dizzy" (283). Ellen is thought to lack the power to achieve her dreams only because she severs herself from the shared worlds of *Mitwelt* and *Umwelt* and introjects all her desires into *Eigenwelt*. The suggestion here is that isolated existence leads to the projection of unrealistic or extravagant goals: only in communion with the natural and social worlds can ideals be achieved. However, it is interesting to note that one limitation of Binswanger's perspective reveals itself in the pronoun "us" in the above quotation, implying that it is the analyst (as reader of Ellen's life) who is destabilized and liable to fall as much as, or rather than, the patient herself. Such an admission complicates Binswanger's otherwise sound analysis of Ellen's condition and indicates the fragile basis on which his analytic interpretation is based. By setting up a coherent narrative pattern which structures Ellen's existence and actions, Binswanger's analysis falls short of addressing the discrete experiences of Ellen's life: the complex marriage to her cousin, her recurrent wish to violate her body and the letter to the patient-friend at the end of her life. Perhaps lacking vital information for some of these incidents, the third-person analytic narrative nevertheless reveals its own inadequacy in telling the life of another.

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especially one whose world-design is so extravagant. At the end of the account the reader is left with a feeling of the substantial gap between Ellen's experience and Binswanger's interpretation of her condition.

To conclude this chapter, it is useful to consider how the centrality of the body in this case illuminates Binswanger's broader view of the self conceived as Dasein. Towards the end of his analysis of Ellen's case he states that the body "signifies the sphere of our existence which is on hand here and now, spatially expanded, present *here*" (341). What differentiates this statement from the classical philosophical definition of physical bodies extended in space is the notion that the body is "on hand", in the respect that it actively presents itself in the world. Because, for Binswanger, the world of Dasein is always threefold, the bodily self is properly understood as a phenomenal body (Merleau Ponty's *corps propre*), by which it is embedded both spatially in the organic and social worlds and temporally through the possibility of self-becoming. By limiting her existence to *Eigenwelt*, Ellen conceptually empties the self of meaningful content and cuts herself from the potentiality of time. Consequently, the manifold "sphere of existence" is reduced to the image of the "worm of the earth...cut off from the future [which] no longer sees wideness and brightness before her, but now only moves in a dark, tight circle" (306). Elsewhere, Binswanger uses the same image of the closed circle to symbolize the entrapment cycle in which she is caught, characterized by gorging and fasting (289). Although this image is Binswanger's, rather than one which figures prominently in Ellen's writings, the closed circle beautifully symbolizes an existence which is self-enclosed and cut off from the possibility of the temporal. Instead of Emerson's optimistic image of connecting circles, or James's figure of the ascending spiral, the closed circle becomes

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a prison which prohibits both a communal Being-in-the-world-with-others or an authentic Being-towards-death.

This chapter on Binswanger's thought has shown that, by breaking with certain presuppositions of Freudian metapsychology and deploying a Heideggerian exploration of Dasein, he is able to dispense with much extraneous psychoanalytic apparatus in order to study what he conceives to be the basic patterns of experience, manifested variously in his patient's testimonies, dreams, aesthetic expressions and bodily symptoms. However, the limitations of this form of case-history and subsequent analysis (conceived as a two-stage analytic process) are also very apparent. Especially evident in 'The Case of Ellen West', a totalizing narrative written after the patient's death seeks to circumscribe transitory experiences within a framework of phenomenological meaning and with the hindsight of narrative closure. If no overall pattern can be mapped without undermining temporal flux, one must turn to a fragmentary and more modest type of medical narrative to represent the experience of illness. It is the writings of Oliver Sacks to which I now turn to explore these ideas.

III. Oliver Sacks

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us:

he is the hidden face of our identity,

the space that wrecks our abode...

Julia Kristeva,

Strangers To Ourselves (1991)

(1) "No safe point": Awakening the Self

This chapter assesses the importance of the writings of Oliver Sacks for approaching questions of selfhood from the perspective of romantic science, as discussed in the chapters on James and Binswanger. As I have intimated in the introduction, Sacks associates himself with romantic science more explicitly than do the other two thinkers. However, it has been important to work through alternative possibilities of romantic science to indicate what is implicit in Sacks's account. This chapter is less philosophical than the previous two, with more attention focused on theories (and practices) of a narratively constructed self. As such, this forms the concluding chapter of the thesis in which I link together the strains of thought already discussed. By situating Sacks's work as the culmination of an intellectual history I detect the danger of composing a kind of heroic eulogy to him. Instead, this final chapter seeks to resolve certain problems which James and Binswanger encounter in their work without masking the limitations which are implicit in Sacks's version of romantic science.

My prefatory comments here position Sacks's work within the context invited by him: a self-conscious reaction against scientific practices which aim to objectively classify diseases, often at the expense of overlooking the subjective experience of illness. A distinction made by Howard Brody in Stories of Sickness (1987) between disease as objectively classified and illness as subjectively experienced, provides an appropriate focus for Sacks's hope (following James's) to account for more, rather than less, of his patients' experiences of illness. In the following sections I move on to consider the

narrative forms which Sacks deploys in order to broaden the scope of neurological science.

(i)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to indicate one privileged discipline illuminated by Sacks's work, because his theoretical trajectory cuts across a variety of discourses, or, more precisely, it represents an attempt to fuse and synthesize what he interprets as hitherto discrete modes of inquiry. Presently a professor of neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, New York City, Sacks's work with post-encephalitic patients at Mount Carmel chronic hospital in the late 1960s, presented in Awakenings (1973) and documented in the Yorkshire TV film (1974), brought him widespread critical attention. As is apparent from reading any of his books, Sacks's romantic sensibility challenges accepted modes of inquiry into neurological illness and its relation to the self. Sacks claims that classical neurology, in partnership with cognitive science, tends to view brain disorder as objectively analyzable through tracing neural networks and mapping energy-pockets, whereas he is also integrally interested in illness as it is embodied in, and experienced by, the patient. Accordingly, he emphasizes the subjective experience of illness: how it feels for patients to be ill and how they narrate their condition in an attempt to understand and accommodate debilitating illness. He discerns that the physician should encourage such discourses because they have the potential to challenge or disrupt the presuppositions of existing models. Sacks, in his numerous revisions of Awakenings and in his subsequent publications, has concentrated on the phenomenological aspect of illness, but not at the expense of neurological

integrity. Because his mode of inquiry often runs tangential to the hard science of neurology, it can be argued that he is merely a scientific popularizer, who has, at least in his books, overshadowed the serious pursuit of science with literary pseudo-science. He insists, however, that his is a complementary approach to classical neurology and not a substitute for it.

Much of Sacks's writing explicitly encourages such a reading. He has often criticized the forms of classical neurology for being too narrowly interested in the physical aspect of disorder; and hence a tendency to ignore or eliminate the mental states of the patient. Consequently, his interest is not only in the physiological aspects of neurology, but also the psychology of the patient suffering from the disorder. By foregrounding a description of mental states, interwoven with expositions of brain dysfunction and neurological impairment, he attempts to put this aim into practice.

There are two traditional neurological approaches which trouble Sacks: the holist and the mosaic views. The former approach conceives of the "'total energy' of the brain" as "uniform, undifferentiated, and quantifiable" and the latter describes a myriad of energy-centres which break down the total brain-energy into smaller "sub-systems" (Sacks 1991a: 239-40). Whilst he sees each approach to have certain strengths, he deems both to be inadequate when pursued in isolation because, he claims, "they are completely alien to the experiences of the patient" (240). Instead, he argues that the physician should be less the disinterested inquirer and more the intimate collaborator who is able to "feel with" the patient (240), in the sense that he is receptive to the patient's idiosyncratic and

qualitative expressions of awareness.[1] Sacks's hope for an expressive space, where the patient can figuratively describe the idiosyncrasies of illness, may provide the physician with a method by which to challenge, or to expand upon, the presuppositions of these two neurological approaches.

Although Sacks has often called for institutional reform, he understands that the patient's expressive space is crucially determined by the degree and severity of the illness: that is, whether the patient has the neuropsychological motility to collaborate in the production of such a space. Following Binswanger's comments on care and love, the recommendation for a more humanistic approach to patients is central to Sacks's professional ethics, but only faintly brushes against a mass of theoretical implications which surround it.[2] In order to give some ballast to his retreat from the classical trends of neurology, Sacks has appropriated and developed romantic science from the late work of Alexander Luria. In doing so, he not only marks a break with existing institutional models, but associates himself with a strain of scientific counter-culture which emerges out of the 1960s Anglo-American anti-psychiatry trends.

The argument that Sacks is a romantic reactionary against a hegemonic neurology (a neurology practised under the aegis of the Enlightenment pursuit for knowledge) can be

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[1] As Binswanger implies in his image of the physician as "the post to which existence clings while adrift in the whirlpool" (Needleman 1963: 292), the ideal of empathic understanding does not require, even if it were possible, that the physician should identify completely with the patient's position. As my study of Sacks demonstrates, the physician should be able to shift his or her subject-position as the different modes of inquiry demand: sometimes the sympathetic friend, sometimes the collaborative partner and sometimes the authoritative physician.

[2] For a discussion of the project to humanize medical protocol see the article by Michael Schwartz & Osborne Wiggins, 'Science, Humanism and the Nature of Medical Practice: A Phenomenological View'. in Perspectives in Biology and Medicine, 28(3), 1985, 331-61.

countered in his attempt to synthesize or reconnect what Jürgen Habermas, following Max Weber, calls the "separation of the spheres" (Habermas 1982: 131). Following Habermas's argument, if the now "autonomous" Kantian spheres of science, morality and art are reunited, then the "hermeneutics of everyday communication" (132) may be released from the knot of specialization. Following the aspirations of James and Binswanger, Sacks does not want to debunk the whole neurological programme; but, from his place within it, he wishes to include certain elements in order to broaden its foundations and the objects, or, more accurately, the subjects, of its study. In short, his goal is to phenomenologize neurology. Accordingly, Sacks's critical position can be sketched at the intersection of the human and the natural sciences. In addition, through his frequent deployment of figurative language, he also highlights a central place for an aesthetics of expression. His writing can be positioned at the interface between different modes of inquiry projected through a variety of written forms, some clinical and some literary. It thus represents one of the recent developments in the tradition characterized by the work of James and Binswanger, in which Sacks seeks to problematize the taxonomies of self-other and self-world.

In order to introduce Sacks's particular vision of romantic science I wish to return to his essays 'Neurology and the Soul' (which I considered in the introduction) and 'Luria and "Romantic Science"' (1990b), to examine the significance of the term for the development of neurological science.

As a physician it is Sacks's professional purpose not only to study neurological dysfunction for its own sake, but also to help suffering patients regain their ability to live

in the most expansive manner possible. The institutionalization of medicine in the nineteenth century has done much to shake off the archaic meaning of physician as healer; nevertheless, Sacks wishes to stress that his fundamental task is to cure patients of their ills and help restore them to health. Biological investigations and technological advances have turned the body into a medical arena where reparation is increasingly possible, but the complexities of brain activity remain beyond current understanding. Neuropsychology, the double science endorsed by Luria and Sacks, approaches the brain less as a physical entity and more as centre for the mental processing of meaning, involving both "the higher cortical functions and cognitive activities in humans" (Sacks 1990b: 189). Sacks charts the manner in which Luria in his last two books begins to "see his way to resolving the 'crisis'...to a *conjunction* of the two...modes of anatomy and art" (189). This is done, firstly by the Heideggerian reconception of the "individual as a *being*", "a living being, containing (but transcending) organic functions and drives, a being rooted in the depths of biology, but historically, culturally, biographically unique"; and, secondly, by creating a "biological biography" which attempts to construct (or discursively reconstruct) the life-world of the patient. Sacks follows Luria in his attempts to restore the patient from the "statistical entity" (Sacks 1986a: x) of medical records to a descriptive and narrative account of an experiencing being.

In order to conceive of the human being in this manner, Sacks does not resort to the mysterious dualistic interface between mind and body; like both James and Searle, he deploys the mental and physical as two different descriptive categories. In 'Neurology and the Soul', following the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, Sacks depicts the body and mind as two realms, or levels of meaning, by which the individual exists and

requiring two quite different modes of description. One flaw in Spinoza's philosophy is that the monistic substance (fundamentally neither mental nor physical) turns out to be as empirically elusive as the Cartesian mind. One way around this problem is to posit a biological monism which can underpin property dualism. As Searle claims, consciousness is not connected to the brain by a quasi-mental, quasi-divine umbilical cord, but is a metastructural sector emerging from the organic brain, a sector which enables the assignation of meanings and categories to sensual perception. This sector, to use a Freudian principle, is overdetermined and therefore cannot be reduced to a single determining factor. Thus, whilst ultimately dependent on the unimpaired functioning of the organic brain, it is a structure which cannot be adequately explained on the level of synapses or neurone-firings. Rather, it demands a mode of description on the level of semantics: the organization of meanings and the assignation of hierarchies to values which are essentially cultural rather than physical.

Gerald Edelman, another 'multiple' scientist working on the boundaries of biology, neuropsychology and philosophy, asserts that the mind-brain, in all its aspects, can only fully be understood through an interactive study of morphological and evolutionary processes, both biological and cultural. By placing the individual patient within a biographical framework, the discerning physician may be able to unearth peculiarities of the self which lie in the intersecting spheres of neurobiology and social psychology. Sacks, echoing both James and Edelman, posits a self,

> rising from experience, continually growing and revised...[It] is a confederation, an organic unity, of innumerable categorizations, and categorizations of its own activities, and from these, its self-reflection,

there arises consciousness, the Mind, a metastructure...built upon the real worlds of the brain (Sacks 1990a: 50).

He substantiates his use of "confederation" by assigning "an organic and personal and historical unity" to the mind. This unity is the result of the interaction between primary and higher-order consciousness, both of which emerge from the biological brain: the former providing a sentient awareness of the world and the latter enabling the individual to reflect upon conscious awareness. Following James's description of 'The Stream of Thought', such reflection is nevertheless provisional and evolving through time. Humans, together with other primates, are unique in their evolutionary development of higher-order consciousness and with it "the powers of language, conception and thought" (Sacks 1991b: 186), and, as such, they have the ability to articulate their condition (the ability to say "*I-you-we*" as described by Binswanger [May 1958: 198]). Sacks does not view the self as a seamless metaphysical whole, but as a series of evolving constructs, which derive from higher-order consciousness, and, when placed in a symbolic structure (a structure of meanings which give content to the self), enables personal identity to be constructed.

Much of Sacks's work has dealt with patients who, through neurological impairment, have lost a significant function of their primary consciousness (which usually elicits automatic or subconscious, feelings of wholeness, solidity and, in Fredric Jameson's phrase, "depth"), which, in turn, creates a "hole" or lacuna in higher-order consciousness (186). Sacks is particularly interested in individuals for whom the breakdown of primary consciousness results in a "philosophical emergency." By activating their faculty of higher-order consciousness, such patients must attempt to understand and, if possible, to

discover a means by which they can compensate for neuropsychological loss. The language of alienation and loss is often the only available idiom to describe these sensations. Of course, Sacks, as physician, has no divine access to understanding the unique formations of and impairments to the levels of consciousness of his patients. He is reliant not only on observing their behaviour, but also in listening to and interpreting their attempts to convey a loss of identity and selfhood. Once more, attention to language and, more broadly, aesthetic expression (and the various forms which it takes), provides a mediating zone between interpersonal psychology and philosophical inquiry and, as I shall discuss in my studies of Sacks's central texts - <u>Awakenings</u> (1973), <u>A Leg To Stand On</u> (1984) and <u>The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat</u> (1986, hereafter <u>The Man</u>) - is vital for his ongoing project of romantic science.

In a study of romantic science it is important to distinguish between the method of study and the object being studied. Ostensibly this task presents few problems. Practitioners of medicine and neuroscience can cultivate a humanistic approach to deal with patients as living people with particular desires and needs, but also maintain a perspective which relies on the observation of behaviour and the development of experimental research, in order to map neurone-circuits in the brain and nervous system. In this manner, neurological illness is conceived as the disorder of brain functions stemming from damaged or altered neural groupings. Thus, while patients are treated as holistic organisms with their own phenomenal life-world, the primary aim of neurology is to understand dysfunction at the level of brain mechanisms and processes. Through an understanding of the hard-wiring of the brain it (hopefully) becomes possible to reduce the intensity of the *dis-ease*, both for the suffering patient and those who may develop

similar conditions. Moreover, as Patrick Wall comments in The Listener (3/8/72), the suffering patient may also participate in the currency of such a viewpoint. According to Wall, a patient will be relieved to learn that a prolonged pain results "from some fault in the body mechanism" (Wall 1972: 139), rather than to believe that the pain is mental and hence not easy to locate, because the latter understanding may implicate the whole self.[3] If the pain can be isolated and materially rooted, it may be possible to treat it, either chemically or physically. Conversely, if the pain represents a general feeling or overall condition, the patient may feel it results from a personal failure, or an inability to integrate and to cope. In this case directive treatment cannot be easily implemented because the material root may elude inquiry, or appear altogether impalpable.

Sacks agrees with the above description, in so far as he conceives neurological illness to be crucially grounded in an understanding of bodily disorder. But, in his acceptance of Edelman's model of primary and higher-order consciousness, he subscribes to a more sophisticated understanding of illness, conceived both as fact *and* value. By this he means that on one level illness should be understood as a factual description of bodily impairment and on another level represents a qualitative evaluation of the strength and ability of the person. Whilst he endorses the importance of a test-based approach for mapping neural complexities, he claims that the mysteries of brain functions are such that sometimes the best possible route to the understanding of illness is through dialogic contact and close interaction with the suffering patient. The patient should not be

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[3] However, some patients react adversely to being categorized as suffering from a recognizable illness and as displaying a set of 'classic' symptoms.

conceived as a statistic to be treated or a problem to solve, but as a unified person who is undergoing a variety of debilitating effects: physical, mental, moral and spiritual.

Unlike scientific approaches which claim to be value-neutral, this medical development of romantic science demonstrates the impossibility of separating the object of study from the method, because the former is always already construed through the conceptual presuppositions of the latter. Romantic science, as conceived by Luria and Sacks, has such a defamiliarizing potential because its conceptual framework is not precisely defined nor easily delimited within a particular epistemological method. As Sacks comments in an earlier article, 'The Great Awakening' (1972), the terms by which he attempts to understand the various conditions of his patients "are ontological definitions, and as such cross the boundaries of the usual neurological or psychiatric 'diagnoses'" (Sacks 1972: 522). In addition to being at root a disorder of function, neurological illness can be conceived as having ontological proportions; that is to say, crucially bound up with a sense of existence. An attempt to glean knowledge of these supra-physical dimensions represents an endeavour to understand and elaborate upon Heidegger's conception of Dasein. In short, such an inquiry into disease can be equated with a radical questioning of selfhood.

The philosopher Thomas Nagel argues that even if the brain could be completely understood on a physico-chemical level, it would still leave out what it means to experience and feel in the first-person. Nagel's view is diametrically opposed both to the extreme empiricism of Hume, in which the 'I' of experience exists above the flow of sense impressions as a unified centre of mental-processing, and to the claims of scientism.

which claims that every aspect of life can be reduced to a fundamentally physical explanation. He argues that the 'I' as a mark of identity has two fundamental aspects, which he calls objective and subjective (or external and internal viewpoints), but, as with Spinoza's philosophy, held together by an underlying monism. Whilst the two aspects are never mutually independent (there are only ever continuous grades of subjectivity and objectivity), recourse to only one of them will always do an injustice to the other. The objective point of view has a capacity "to transcend our particular viewpoint and develop an expanded consciousness that takes the world in more fully" (Nagel 1986: 5). But, Nagel claims, "there are things...that cannot be adequately understood from a maximally objective standpoint", a position which can only lead to "false reductions or to outright denial that certain patently real phenomena exist at all" (7). As I outlined in the introduction, natural science, particularly the classical neurology which Sacks combats, tends to privilege the objective perspective over and above the subjective views from which it has developed" (5). As do James and Binswanger, Sacks attempts to develop a scientific approach which can combine behaviouristic and introspective methods of study in order to rectify this imbalance.

Just as an empirical investigation of experience can omit the experiencing self, there is no manner of scientifically verifying this broader conception of illness because it is wholly personal. However, although Nagel runs into the problem of extreme subjectivism where it is impossible to know anything about anyone else's subjective condition[4], following Sacks's lead, it is possible, through careful readings of his patients

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[4] See Douglas Hofstadter's 'Reflections' on Nagel's essay 'What Is It Like To Be A Bat', in The Mind's I (1981), 403-14.

(readings which include the patients own expressions of their illness in addition to the observation of their behaviour), to enter an interpretive space which can broaden a conception of the health-illness complex. By this, Sacks can be understood to mean that, instead of health being seen merely as the absence of malady and illness conceived as a series of diagnoses, they should be seen to be in a perpetual dyadic centre of conflict, around which manifest symptoms revolve. Through the filter of romantic science the balance between the art of medicine (figuring and imagining) and the science of medicine (inquiring and examining) is held in check: experimentation is thus balanced by "poetic vision."[5]

(ii)

By positioning Sacks's work within a framework of romantic science I have traced a tradition of thought through James and Binswanger which provides his writing with a clear set of values. It is now important to move the focus of the discussion into close range of the texts. Although I progress through a rough chronological discussion of Sacks's writings, many of the ideas are central to his whole project and cannot easily be confined to individual texts. As a result, there is often a need to oscillate between close a reading of his work and a more generalized commentary.

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[5] Quoted from a letter of comment to 'The Great Awakening', by R. M. Allott in The Listener, 30/11/72, 756.

In order to explore the role of illness for understanding the self as conceived by romantic science, I will examine first Sack's major book, Awakenings. The historical context of the illness is recounted by Sacks in the early stages of the book and provides an important context for the philosophical lines he later follows. He recounts the spread of the *encephalitis lethargica* pandemic (sleeping sickness) from Vienna in the winter of 1916-17, which resulted in worldwide deaths over the following ten years. Of those that survived the coma, some recovered to the extent that they could return to a working life, but many of the sufferers "subsequently developed neurological or psychiatric disorders" (Sacks 1991a: 20). Such disorders were not easily categorizable, as can be gauged from the five hundred "distinct symptoms and signs" documented by Constantin von Economo in 1929 to the "twenty thousand clearly different disorders of function" recorded by Sacks (Sacks 1972: 521). Mount Carmel Hospital was set up after the Great War for war-victims suffering profound damage to their nervous system, but later admitted some of the most chronic post-encephalitic patients. In the mid-1960s Sacks was commissioned to treat these patients, but, such was the unique and strange nature of the disorder, that the book describes his uncertainty about how to implement any form of rehabilitative treatment. Awakenings documents the close study of twenty of these post-encephalitic patients, from which Sacks draws his preliminary conclusions in the later sections of the book. His primary aim is to understand the illness, or group of illnesses, in such a manner that the patients could be treated. Because each patient shows a wide variety of individualized symptoms, he soon realizes that in order to understand the particular manifestation of the illness, it is important to elicit personal responses from each of them.

Despite the plethora of symptoms recorded by Sacks, he is able to distinguish two moods of being, which he terms "negative" and "positive disorders." Many of those who recovered from the coma "failed to recover their original aliveness. They would be conscious and awake - yet not fully awake...They were as insubstantial as ghosts, and as passive as zombies...They were ontologically dead, or suspended, or 'asleep'" (522). Others display "over-animations and excesses and perversions of behaviour" closely connected to Parkinsonian symptoms. Those displaying "negative" behaviour appeared to have entirely lost their selfhood during the course of their illness[6], in contrast to the bodily "coercions" exhibited by the other group of patients; Sacks comments that it was "as if their very selves were being clenched or tensed or twisted or torn" (522). Both types of description reveal Sacks is concerned not only with the mechanics of dysfunctional illness but how, in an ontological sense, the disorder undermines and strips away a sense of selfhood. Still, although the "positive" patients retain an ability to express themselves, so remaining ontologically alive or "awake", Sacks, through close observation, is certain that the "negative" or catatonic patients continue to exist in a minimal sense. In the face of profound illness Sacks develops a version of Dennett's "intentional stance" (as discussed in the introduction) by acknowledging (in the Cavellian sense) the ongoing existence of the life-worlds of his more severely afflicted patients.

Much of the philosophical interest in Awakenings stems from Sacks, as physician, standing in relation to the catatonic patients as people rather than bodies emptied of any mental life. The exact impairments of their brains are shown to be a mystery to the

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[6] As can be gleaned from von Economo's description of the patients as "extinct volcanoes" (Sacks 1991a: 14).

methods of classical neurology and, not until Sacks approaches the problem through a series of intuitions, hunches and guesses, do the enigmas of the illness begin to unfold. Periodically an "oculogyric crisis", a "sudden spasmodic activity" characteristic of Parkinsonism, breaks through the catatonia (Sacks 1991a: 45). Sacks, following his predecessors working in this field, recounts his realization that there are as many different crises as there are patients. He comes to the conclusion that only by positioning each of his patients within their individual life-story can he begin to unravel the intricacies of the disorder:

> what seemed an impersonal or even depersonalizing disease had, in fact, a strong quality of the personal, and could not be understood without reference to the personal. It was not merely humanly, or ethically, necessary to see these patients as individuals, it was scientifically necessary to do so as well (45).

Accordingly, the central section of the text is a collection of individualized cases which chart the responses of the patients to the drug L-DOPA, which was administered to them during the summer of 1969.[7] Although some patients do not respond at all to the drug and others react badly, the remarkable awakening displayed by a number of the catatonic patients enables them to regain many of the lost dimensions of selfhood. Sacks lays particular emphasis on two primary abilities, which correspond to the two central aspects I have explored in relation to James and Binswanger: the ability to give expression to the personal qualities of their illness and the ability to act practically. He claims that it is as if L-DOPA presents them with a chemical window through which their mental life can

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[7] L-DOPA was administered in order to compensate for a defective level of the nerve-transmitter *dopamine*, but, as Sacks has frequently indicated (Sacks 1991a: 30), the long duration of the illness (both in its latent and manifest stages) meant that, for the patients of Awakenings, much of the neurological damage was of a structural nature and could not simply be "topped up" (30).

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find a concrete outlet. Whilst the documentary evidence of the various responses to L-DOPA represents the empirical data for Sacks's technical commentary, as I discuss later, the cases are presented in a manner closer to symbolic narrative (through which Sacks hopes to convey something of the drama of recovery) than to clinical record. A simple comparison between the huge number of impersonalized entries in his earlier book Migraine (1970) and the extended narratives of Awakenings is enough to indicate this shift in emphasis.

Awakenings represents a study which is simultaneously scientific and romantic, but, in its attempt to fuse perspectives, is often in danger of being essentially neither. The condition of the patients at Mount Carmel is primary neurological; but, as the title implies, the poetic triumph of the book derives from the possibility of rediscovering, or recalling, an active and expressive self. One of the figurative connotations of the title is the tearing away of a veil, by which a truer, or more authentic, self is to be discerned behind the catatonic mask of illness. In conveying the general exuberance which the awakenings release, Sacks often treads a precarious line between his tribute to, and celebration of, his patients' attempts to cope with the profound effects on their nervous system and the preservation of the professional bearing of an inquisitive, but impartial, scientist. Consequently the book reads as a hotchpotch of ideas and observations which, although deriving from his clinical experience, indicate his concerted attempt to render what he views as something basic to the human condition: a life-force, or repository, of health which survives despite illness and can transcend, if only momentarily, the severity of bodily constraints.

He maintains an optimistic and often sentimental vision which frequently jars with the bodily disorders he depicts. But, as he claims in his 'Preface to the Original Edition' (1973):

> The general style of the book - with its alteration of narrative and reflection, its proliferation of images and metaphors, its remarks, repetitions, asides and footnotes - is one which I have been impelled towards by the very nature of the subject-matter. My aim is not to make a system, or to see patients as systems, but to picture a world, a variety of worlds - the landscapes of being in which these patients reside (Sacks 1991a: xviii).

The painterly verbs here import to the text a figurative quality which blurs the margins between orthodox case study, symbolic narrative and a form of philosophical contemplation. This is a deliberate strategy, since Sacks is not a systematic thinker who wishes to categorically define selfhood. He relies heavily on metaphors by which he hopes to gesture towards a Being which can never be adequately described. His later editions of the text (1982, 1991) read as a series of revisions and reflections, constantly widening the focus of his study within larger circles and thought-patterns. Where the fragments of the text meet and intersect, meanings proliferate in centrifugal rings which cannot be traced back to a centre. If selfhood can be said to exist for the patients it is always fleeting and fugitive, inscribed within discourse but unable to be ever fully revealed by description.

In the preface, Sacks acknowledges the difficulty of writing Awakenings, "although" he claims "its ideas and intentions are simple and straightforward" (Sacks 1991a: xix). This may go some way in accounting for his need to periodically revise and extend the text. It also, importantly, indicates that he is aware of the various dynamic problems in writing

a study of this kind. When he comments "one struggles to gain the right perspective, focus and tone - and then, one loses it, all unawares" (xix), the reader is made aware that the text is only provisional: it is always in process and under critical revision. Just as the patients struggle to discover a voice from within their illness, Sacks struggles to deliver a study which can be both descriptive and explanatory, romantic and classical. The ongoing tension between the two modes of inquiry creates a site of conflict which at the moment of elucidation may, paradoxically, tend to opacity.

Sacks's chief aim is to combine an understanding of his patients' phenomenological condition with an interrogation into behavioural patterns resulting from neuronal disturbance. He attempts to retrieve "a combined vision of body and soul, 'It' and 'I'" (Sacks 1986a: 88), which, through the influence of Luria, he believes has been lost in the professional bifurcation of the neurological and the psychological sciences early in the century. He wishes to supplement the study of "It" (the object of neurological study) with an investigation into "the terms in which we experience health and disease", terms which "neither require nor admit definition; they are understood at once, but defy explanation; they are at once exact, intuitive, obvious, mysterious, irreducible and indefinable" (Sacks 1991a: 224). Closely resembling Binswanger's recommendations for analysis, Sacks's notion of giving, or presenting, the self over to the experience of dialogic relation (a relation of mutual acknowledgement) correlates with a belief that the physician should cultivate a human relationship in an "existential encounter" (226) which should complement, rather than conflict with, a technical understanding of symptoms and syndromes.

Sacks's ideal dialogue would incorporate the institutional relationship and move beyond it into a realm of "direct and human confrontation, an 'I-Thou' relation, between the discoursing worlds of physicians and patients" (225).[8] Such a dialogue should not entail a complete effacement of the physician's role, in which he attempts complete intimacy with the patient; Sacks claims, "he must inhabit, simultaneously, two frames of reference, and make it possible for the patient to do likewise" (226). Extending Binswanger's comments on fellow-feeling, Sacks's ideal of "real communication" represents a scenario in which "the physician becomes a fellow traveller, a fellow explorer, continually moving *with* his patients, discovering with them a vivid, exact, and figurative language which will reach out towards the incommunicable" (225-26).

The obvious problem here is that Sacks often uses his own voice to comment on the experiences of his patients, rather than attempting to incorporate their individual voices within the text. One general criticism of Sacks's writings is that, although his intention to render the feelings and thoughts of the post-encephalitic patients is well-meaning, he does little more than to project his own preoccupations onto the textual site inhabited by his patients. J. K. Wing, writing a review of The Man, comments that, although "not so obtrusive in Awakenings", "one is...uneasily aware...that Sacks's patients all talk as he

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[8] The major influence on this aspect of Sack's thought is the religious existentialist Martin Buber, a thinker to whom Binswanger acknowledges his debt in the introduction to Grundformen (Binswanger 1964: 11). Sacks shares with Buber an optimism that, whilst an interpersonal intimacy is rarely, if ever, achieved, the possibility of dialogic understanding should be a continual motivation. In I and Thou (1923) Buber's central claim is that "primary words are not isolated words, but combined words" which indicate "relations" (Buber 1987: 15). He describes two "primary words" - *I-Thou* and *I-It* - which hold the 'I' in relation with another, and by which the signification of that 'I' is determined. Like Cavell, Buber's work reveals a faith that Otherness can be met through relation, elevating it to a Thou rather than obliterating it through the projections of selfhood. Relation thus constitutes a boundary over which 'I' can only transgress at the risk of losing the Thou. Corresponding to Heidegger's distinction between the ontological and the ontic, Buber's philosophy indicates that only the I-Thou relation is authentic for it "can only be spoken with the whole being", whereas the I-It relation "can never be spoken with the whole being" (15-16).

does. He cannot quite give them their own accents and idiom" (Wing 1986: 146). One indication of this occurs when Sacks relates that Leonard L. (on whom the central character of Penny Marshall's film <u>Awakenings</u> (1990) is based) "using his shrunken, dystrophic index-fingers...typed out an autobiography 50,000 words in length" (Sacks 1991a: 212). But he does little more than comment on Leonard's study in a short footnote. Extensive documentation or quotation from Leonard's autobiography would lend Sacks's project a depth and authenticity which is often under threat from the persistency of his voice.[9]

I do not wish to mount a defence of Sacks on this issue, although it will later inform my readings of his case histories. Instead, I wish to indicate that, just as Sacks comments that "one cannot go straight forward unless the way is clear, and the way is *allowed*" (xix), it is important to clear the way in order to approach Sacks's project within the terms of his texts. In his deployment of the existential language of "I and Thou" (xix), Sacks sets for himself a project which is always in danger of falling short of the mark, of breaking into monologue or resulting in dissolution. Clearing the way is a task which the reader needs to accomplish just as much as the author; a task which considers the potential of romantic science as much as its limitations.

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[9] This criticism can be levelled at Luria too, who, in <u>The Man With a Shattered World</u> (1972), almost edits Zasetsky's voice out of the narrative.

(2) Clinical Tales: A Question of Form

One of the distinctive features of romantic science is the juxtaposition and assimilation of different types of written discourse. Appropriately, Sacks's interest in the form of medical writing coincides with a wish to extend the area of traditional empirical study towards a type of inquiry which does justice to the idiosyncratic psychic worlds of his patients. For Sacks, romantic science offers a distinctive way of seeing, facilitated through close attention to methods of interpretation and to the form of what he calls his "clinical tales" (Sacks 1986b: 16-23).

Although Sacks deploys figurative language in order to challenge the dominant forms of medical charts and case histories, he is primarily a neurological scientist who wishes to expand the conventional forms in which medical knowledge is documented. However, in his reliance upon symbolic and associative language Sacks seems to endorse two anti-rationalist directives. Firstly, he acknowledges that Cartesian lucidity does not always lead to a clear and distinct view of truth; and, secondly, in adherence with the Heideggerian view, Being may only be disclosed through a non-intellectualized, non-cognitive beholding of it. But, far from being an irrationalist, Sacks shifts his stance between an explanation of mental states with reference to material causes and an expression of his own enchantment with ineffable phenomena. Accordingly, his aim to romanticize science should not solely be seen as a self-conscious echo of the earlier movement's commitment to an expressive poetic language. In contrast to the philosophical emphasis in the thought of James and Binswanger, Sacks is primarily a

practitioner, and secondarily a theorist. Accordingly, it is his tales in which he seeks to redescribe the conditions of health and illness.

Although I am broadly sympathetic to Sacks's desire to redescribe medical knowledge in literary terms, the rhetoric of his project has often been understood by his critics to obscure his actual, empirical accomplishments. It can be claimed that Sacks uses the literary accoutrements of romanticism to hide his, essentially, institutional polemic. As such, the form of his tales may be seen as secondary and peripheral to his role as a clinical and, in some respects, reactionary neurologist. However, it is my contention, that the two aspects, the clinical and the literary, cannot be easily distinguished without doing an injustice to them both. Sacks's riposte to the dominant practices of neurology relies as much on his consideration of literary form as it does upon the thrust of his argument. Indeed, the argument, whether directly in commentary or covertly in his tales, is fundamentally one which seeks to refigure disability in terms of aesthetic expression. As such, Sacks's aim to find a suitable genre in which to write mirrors, what he believes to be, the patient's need to discover, or rediscover, an expressive voice. He argues that if one is to experience an "awakening" it is essential to develop both aesthetic and neurological awareness. Rather than adopting the role of a mind-curist, who would argue that once the body is cured the mind will be set free, Sacks (echoing James and Binswanger) senses that cure must be of the whole Being.

The form of Sacks's "clinical tale" can be productively thrown into relief by a consideration of the presuppositions that inform institutionalized medical formats. The "tales" are not simply introduced into the medical arena from the outside, but they

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represent a development from accepted forms. Nor should they be seen to conform to a generically distinguishable model. Within the corpus of Sacks's writing one can discern emergent details which indicate the hybridity of the form he hopes to develop. By acknowledging a debt to his predecessors (most frequently Luria and Freud), he enables the reader to glimpse the larger cultural dynamic from which his individual project unfolds. To balance the broad intellectual framework described in the first section, I will now consider the medical forms out of which Sacks's work emerges. Before I return to a close reading of Awakenings, it is productive to consider one of the crudest forms of clinical documentation, the medical chart, in order to indicate the manner in which Sacks develops his clinical tales.

In 'Charting the Chart', a collaborative essay published in the journal Literature and Medicine (1992), Suzanne Poirier and the Chicago Narrative Study Group assess the textual qualities of a particular patient's chart. As the editors of this issue comment, the contributors "form a shadow team, a chorus of voices, to comment on the work of the health care-team" (Poirier 1992: ix). The chart documents a patient, Mrs. R, who had been admitted to a rehabilitation centre after initial hospital treatment for a stroke. Her two month stay was recorded by a team of two physicians, a nurse, two therapists, a chaplain, a psychologist and a social worker. The chart is structured around a series of journal entries, characterized by the type of brevity and clarity of comment that can facilitate communication between consultants. First devised by Lawrence Weed in the

late 1960s and known by the acronym "SOAP", the protocol aims at producing a *"problem-orientated record"* (3) of a patient in care.[10]

SOAP entails a four-point method for documenting aspects of the patient's condition: their *subjective* response, an *objective* description of the condition written by the health official, followed by an interpretive *assessment* and a *plan* outlining any subsequent action. Weed's intention was to complement a version of scientific medicine "based on the Newtonian model", by producing a medical history in the form of a "scientific document" (Hunter, 1992: 166). SOAP was devised in reaction to the impressionistic case history, which, Weed claimed, "often failed to take account of physiological fact", by employing a structure through which a clear hierarchization of problems could replace the "narratively recorded impressions of change" (166).

The SOAP format fits well with the "computer-assisted, decision-making field of medical informatics" which Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, in 'Remaking the Case' (1992), discerns to be the prevalent practice of American medicine during the 1980s. Hunter is critical of both Feinstein and Weed. She claims that Feinstein's appeal to found scientific knowledge on the model of mathematics is "primarily rhetorical, a way of addressing the problem of uncertainty" (167). She develops her criticism by claiming that "Weed's goal is the identification and control of the observer's subjectivity in the face of an unattainable scientific objectivity" (177). She goes on to argue, however, that the interpretive methods deployed by medical teams derive less from the physical and

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[10] Lawrence L. Weed, 'Medical Records That Guide and Teach', <u>New England Journal of Medicine</u>, 278, 14/3/68, 593-600 & 21/3/1968, 652-57.

deductive sciences favoured by Feinstein, than from "methodology familiar to social scientists" (167). In the 1950s and early 1960s the goal of objectivity, Thomas Nagel's "view from nowhere", was not confined solely to the domain of the natural sciences, but also exemplified by trends in the human sciences, namely the French structuralists (with whom Binswanger shares some of his basic presuppositions) and the *Annales* historians. These ideals have since been challenged by two types of theory: firstly, a hermeneutic reconsideration of diachronic narrative and storytelling in case history; and, secondly, the poststructuralist focus on the indeterminacy of language.

Hunter develops her argument in the light of these theories, discerning that, "Weed's assumption that the clinical observer can be labeled *objective*...aligns his problem-orientated record with the work of those social scientists, now under attack, who make no allowance for their own socially conditioned, inevitable subjective viewpoints" (167). The objectivity of scientific description implies that the medical official, and, by implication, the profession, has attained a position of unquestionable authority. But, Hunter suggests, "such an assumption is part of the problem of unacknowledged epistemological uncertainty", an uncertainty which Sacks implies is especially true when the medical profession encounters the complex illnesses of neurology. Influenced by the likes of Sacks in the neurological sciences, Roy Schafer in psychoanalysis and Paul Ricoeur in literary theory, many of the critics who have contributed to <u>Literature and Medicine</u> (first published in 1982) have begun to assess the vital importance of narrative modes in preserving a humanistic approach towards the patient. Rather than advocating a return to the impressionistic case history denounced by Weed, the contributors have mounted a rigorous investigation into the institutional and textual politics implied in

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different medical forms. This kind of serious study not only opens up the medical arena to a variety of theoretical influences, but also highlights that medical writing should be seen distinctly and fundamentally as a cultural production.

The co-authors of 'Charting the Chart' respond individually to particular aspects of the chart and, more generally, to whether they thought "Mrs. R received "good care" and whether hers was a "good story" (Poirier 1992: 2). Although, as Poirier suggests, a "good story" may appear to be an unfair criterion by which to judge a medical record, it is one which serves to provoke responses concerning "how 'reality' is constructed" by particular institutions and to what extent the reader is able recoup the patient's personality from their representation on the chart (19). Although the commentaries elicit some positive responses, many of the authors are critical or, at least, sceptical about such a rigid format. On the positive side, Barbara Sharf acknowledges the benefits of the procedure in that it "enables health professionals to work from a fuller data base and provide more coordinated care" (7). The document is a vital means of communication, which allows consultants to briefly scan over particular comments and diagnoses in order to more fully inform their own. However, the information conveyed by the chart is limited. Later in the essay, Lioness Ayres points out that "this format suits small, well-defined problems, such as surgical wounds" but is found inadequate for more general or intricate complaints (10).

The contributors collectively indicate three broad types of problem which arise from their consideration of the SOAP protocol and of the chart itself. Firstly, attention is directed towards the material conditions under which the document is completed. Sharf indicates

that "chart writing is regarded by many as an onerous task or an administrative or legal exercise" (7). Daniel Brauner recognizes that the brevity of the notes can be explained by reference to the time and the circumstances of their composition: "written during stolen moments in a physician's cluttered day, they represent the execution of a chore whose benefits may seem abstract when compared to other necessary tasks" (12).

Both Sharf and Brauner indicate that instead of documenting valid intersubjective responses, the actual conditions under which writing occurs may mean that aspects of the written report are often cursory and fail to do justice to either the patients themselves or their condition. Moreover, Sharf points out that "charts do not invite interaction and feedback", tending "to be more a collection of monologues than a true dialogue or colloquy" (7). She implies that charts are sometimes viewed as little more than procedural exercises which (often because of illegibility or indecipherable shorthand) rarely fulfil their communicative potential.

The second type of criticism is directed towards the subjective entry of the chart, usually represented by a direct quotation from the patient. Although the patient's contribution is given some priority, the quotation tends to be delimited by the length of the space on the chart as much as the attitude of the health professional to the patient. As the cultural critic Kenneth Burke terms it, this "representative anecdote" (Burke 1969: 59) is clinically selected from a variety of experiences articulated by the patient; anecdotes which are more likely to be guided by the subsequent categories of description and assessment than by comments which the patient feels to be important. The personal context, against which comments are to be understood, is given the barest of attention. Relevant

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conditions may include the patient's tone of voice; the status and severity of the ailment at the time of enunciation; whether the patient is cooperative or reluctant to impart information; or whether patients have difficulty in articulating a description of certain bodily experiences. In short, the SOAP chart limits the contribution of the patient to a selected anecdote, often without any contextualizing remarks.

Thirdly and, perhaps, most importantly the critics raise questions concerning the demand that health officials record "objective" comments. Pursued alone, objectivity denies both the expression of the individual's particular point of view and the emotions which he or she may experience. I have already discussed Hunter's claim that epistemological uncertainty undermines the scientific status of the chart, so here I will limit my discussion to the comments of the health officials. Close and extensive work with a patient is likely to provoke a range of emotions amongst the interacting members of the medical team, especially the type of interaction in which nurses and social workers involve themselves. Focusing her comments on the nurse's entry, Ayres writes:

> SOAP charting excludes from the clinical record *any* evidence of the feelings or reactions of the nurse, and focuses on the objective (and by implication unbiased) facts. Opinions, impressions, and hunches may form the keystone of expert practice, but they lack objectivity and thus resist clinical documentation (9).

Although the nurse's feelings may inform many of the objectified comments presented in the document, the SOAP format does not permit any emotive description, thereby prohibiting the patient's story from being told in anything other than flat and clinical terms.

The critics do not wish to counterpoise the SOAP format with an unwieldy and lengthy series of emotional responses from each of the consultants; but, rather, they prefer a document which would enable the reader, whether a clinical- or a lay-reader, to glean a sense of the patient's story in both its private and institutional dimensions. An expression of emotion can serve to highlight aspects of a relationship which objective description omits. In addition, the frequent use of medical jargon and shorthand succeeds in objectifying the voices of both patient and physician and of highlighting the institutional relationship, often at the expense of the interpersonal. Although, this may have been Weed's intention, if, as for the Chicago Study Group, the patient's story is seen to be of a paramount importance, the SOAP chart appears to entail an entirely unsatisfactory format. Lorie Rosenblum sums up this third criticism by commenting that procedures such as SOAP may, ultimately, effect "a deeper dismemberment of the patient's story" (15) which, although it is necessary if vital information concerning the patient is to be relayed across time and space, may not be recoupable by the reader.

Poirier, in summary, questions whether the commentary is "fair to the intent (and content) of the medical record [designed as] an internal document, a data base, and a means of communication" (19). In response to her own query, she claims that the article in Literature and Medicine was written in order to evaluate "to what extent do perceptions, misperceptions, hasty judgments, professional interest, or prejudice carelessly enter the chart in a way that contributes to a 'characterization' of the patient that may be false or a caricature of a complex human being?" (19). To some degree, characterization is inevitable if the patient is to be placed within a symbolic narrative: the patient literally becomes the character of the text. But, if the patient's story is to be rescued from amongst

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the isolated comments of the chart then an alternative format is thought to be more representative not only of the patient, but also of the conditions of writing the document.

Having asserted this, the SOAP format does not obliterate all the components of story. The attentive reader preserves the ability to reconstitute the narrative. As Poirier comments, each of the readers respond to Mrs. R's isolation and fear, feelings which "cannot be repressed despite the structure of the chart or the concerns of its constructors" (20). But such a format exacerbates the reader's difficulty of gaining an insight into the psychology of either the patient or the health official. The impersonal tone in which the entries are expressed ("Pt. found crying in room"; "Pt. unable to wash..." [3]; "Mrs. R has been very tearful throughout..." [5]) does little more than suggest the fear, despair and inadequacy which, despite the format, Mrs. R is nevertheless sensed to have felt.

The literary theorist Jonathan Culler, in his discussion of Gustave Flaubert's theory of writing (as a synecdoche for modernist poetics in general), suggests that "impersonality depends not on what is said but on the fact that no identifiable narrator speaks" (Culler 1984: 110). As the third criticism makes clear, the flat and impersonal voices demanded by the chart imply

> the desire to prevent the text from being recuperated as the speech of a characterizable narrator, to prevent it...from being read as the vision of someone who becomes an object that the reader can judge... a personality whom we feel we know (78).

However, unlike the modernist writer, the impersonal clinical author does not refine him or herself out of existence in order that the reader will attend more closely to complexities

of language and characterization. The scientific narrator stands at the inaccessible locus of authority, thereby increasing the difficulty for the reader of the text to judge how the patient responds to, and is treated by, health officials. As a result, the reader is left with only a vague sense of either the subject of the story or its storyteller(s).

Sacks argues in his article 'Clinical Tales' (1986) that it is possible to construct a narrative in such a manner to highlight the voice of the physician as writer as much as the character of the patient. By constructing a case history as a "tale", the reader is aware that the document is the physician's aesthetic response to the patient and not a value-neutral clinical biography. Thus, Sacks asserts, "if I write 'Clinical Tales' it is because I am *forced* to...they do not seem to me a gratuitous or arbitrary compound of two forms, but an elemental form which is indispensable for medical understanding, practice, and communication" (Sacks 1986b: 16). A "tale" does not merely refer to a narrative of character and event, but represents a mode of writing in which it is possible to express the subjective aspects of the illness (aspects which cannot be scientifically documented) by constructing them within a symbolic narrative. The "elemental" quality of the tale derives from Sacks's claim that "it is the form *patients* adopt" (16) when they explain themselves to the doctor. The patient's story is not usually presented in the form of anecdote or isolated comment, but a temporal narrative, through which the different "stages" of the illness are described.[11]

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[11] Often a patient's response is provoked or prompted by particular questions posed by the health official. This technique can be used to substantiate the idea that the making of the story is in fact a collaborative practice. As such, Sacks argues that it is essential to pay close attention to the form and content of the questions as much as the patient's response.

As Larry Churchill argues in 'The Human Experience of Dying' (1979), the illness experience is not a series of disconnected stages, but integrally influenced by the personality and viewpoint of the storyteller:

> "story" is a category of interpretation...logically prior to "stage"...Stages are formal abstractions created by professionals...Stories employ the words of patients; stages are couched in the language of psychiatry, clinical psychology and the behavioral sciences. Stages are second-order creations whose validity in interpreting the meaning of a particular patient's experience is contingent upon their derivation from and fidelity to that patient's story (Churchill 1979: 30).

Although the SOAP format does not entirely write out the patient's story (Poirier claims that it remains present in "the margins of the text" [Poirier 1992: 21]), it tends to obliterate the personality of the storyteller beneath the institutional weight of the chart. Unlike the modernist aesthetic to which Culler refers, the chart, like the historical annal, fails to elaborate on character because of brevity of form and rigidity of structure. In response, Sacks counteracts the kind of format in which the patient is reduced to a case, by envisioning a written medium through which it is possible to delineate "a history of illness from its first intimations, through all its subsequent effects and evolutions, to (perhaps) its final crisis and resolution" (Sacks 1986b: 17).

Neither Sacks nor Churchill discount the importance of breaking down a narrative into sequential stages in order to understand aspects of the experience; nor do they dismiss the importance of abstract categories of syndromes and types for characterizing forms of illness. Rather, they emphasize that the story should be viewed as ontologically prior to the abstraction of stages and components. Only when the format begins to "assume the status of impersonal, rationally-ordered scientific data" (Churchill 1979: 31), do they

argue that it is important to rescue the personal quality of the story. Sacks believes that disease cannot be easily separated from how it is manifested in, and embodied by, the patient as illness. Instead of conceptualizing the disease and the patient as separate entities, he makes the romantic claim that they must to be conceived as an ontological whole.

The concept of the "diseased individual" leads Sacks towards a concentration on "the *subject*, at the deeper, the 'existential', level of an identity struggle" (17). At this level, he figures the individual as undergoing a symbolic battle to recover a sense of agency, to regain "one's 'world' (the integration of one's nervous system, one's mind, one's *self*)" (18). By attempting to construct the life-world of the patient within the textual world of the tale, it is possible to productively contextualize illness with a view to understanding how the disease is experienced. In other words, even if the organic disease is incurable as such, it may be possible, through the collaborative construction of narrative, for the patient to accommodate the illness. Sacks argues that the patient's world (corresponding to Binswanger's threefold world) is not to be regained passively, but must be actively "remade" from within the hostile environment of illness. Thus, importantly, as I have argued in relation to Cavell's perfectionist theory of self, identity is never refound but always refigured.

In cases where severe debilitation or profound illness may render the patient inarticulate or unable to express their condition, Sacks claims it is the physician's ethical duty to help the patient construct the story. He is sceptical about approaching this position from a wholly objectivist view-point, or by making a wild imaginative leap into the mind of the

sufferer.[12] Imagination and observation should be deployed together with extensive research into the patient's personal and family history, through which it may be possible to piece together some of the biographical fragments. The process of constructing the tale may often turn out to be of greater value to the physician and patient than is the completed text.[13] But this is Sacks's point. As for James and Cavell, the construction of the tale is always in process and under revision. As Albert Camus intimates in his retelling of the Sisyphus myth, a story of perpetual process may turn out to be preferable to one which eventually reaches its *telos*.

Although it is possible to follow Sacks's central argument throughout his books and articles, he creates difficulties for the reader through his ambiguous use of terminology. The extraordinary and fabulous dimensions of the tales in The Man and, to an extent, in his latest book An Anthropologist on Mars (1995) signify, on one level, an aesthetic or fictive realm which is some distance from the realities of neurological illness. It can be argued that he leaves the material body behind for an aesthetic plane of idealistic musings. In other places, his formulation of the generic character of his tales often appears confused. For example, in his preface to Awakenings he states:

> what I needed to convey, was neither purely classical nor purely romantic,
> but seemed to move into the profound realm of allegory or myth. Even
> my title, Awakenings, had a double meaning, partly literal, partly in the
> mode of metaphor or myth (Sacks 1991a: xxxvii).

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[12] Arguably, this approach is characterized by Tony Harrison in his treatment of Alzheimer's disease in Black Daisies For The Bride (1993). The question of imaginative authenticity is raised by Michael Ignatieff in a BBC Late Show Special interview with Harrison (30/6/1993).

[13] Sacks is always aware of the 'other' reader of his tales. Even if the tale offers no tangible assistance for the severely ill patient, it may provide insight into the experience of illness, or provide solace, to other isolated or despairing sufferers.

Here he appears to use "allegory", "myth" and "metaphor" as synonyms without acknowledging their important differences. Likewise, in 'Clinical Tales', he suggests that one manner in which the drama of illness can be extrapolated is by situating the battling self within "a sort of allegory or epic" (Sacks 1986b: 18). By equating these literary terms he seems to deploy them in a suggestive sense, to create a mood or a set of signals for his texts, rather than formulating a prescriptive code of writing. However, sharing the tendency of literary theorists of romanticism like J. Hillis Miller and Paul de Man, Sacks can be understood to use allegory in a particular way. By focusing briefly on the term, allegory, it is possible to distinguish some recurrent characteristics of Sacks's writing from these, seemingly, blurred markers.

The renaissance-humanist concern with dissembling and duplicity can be traced through the figure of *allegoria*. Allegory can simply be seen as a temporally extended metaphor which produces meaning on a number of simultaneous levels. It is the reader's task to find the hidden planes of meaning which lie concealed behind the ostensible level. Famously, Thomas Aquinas, in <u>Summa Theologica</u> (1273) suggested four such levels. The literal, or historical, level is that by which language simply refers to objects in the world, whereas the other three levels (the moral, the analogical and the anagogical) are collectively known as allegorical planes of interpretation. Accordingly, the critic Northrop Frye, in his discussion of Aquinas's fourfold scheme, suggests that allegory refers to a "whole descriptive level of meaning" (Frye 1950: 250) and that "all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic

imagery" (Frye 1957: 59). As such, allegory (*alienum, diversium*) can be seen, through a consideration of its etymology, to suggest a multiplicity of polysemic meanings.

There are broadly two ways in which allegory can be understood. Firstly, as a generic form, an allegory represents a telling of a 'twice-told tale' which relies on the reader's knowledge of a known precedent. Without reference to the archetypal myth on which it is based, allegory loses much of its impact. As such, the world of allegory is often experienced as a "combination of elusiveness and familiarity" (Clifford 1974: 2). The reader, thrown into a strange landscape, must actively interpret images and events with reference to an established framework. This mythic framework, as it is manifested in mediaeval morality plays and in Spenser's and Bunyan's allegories, tends to be culturally conservative. Thus, allegory is often employed for pedagogic instruction. The reader follows the journey of a central figure whose task it is to interpret the signs of the (often alien) world in which they find themselves. The author is thus able to include enough clues to enable the reader to unravel the hidden meaning which is, to a great extent, fixed and limited. However, the second, polysemous, trajectory of allegory indicates that there are a number of possible ways of reading allegory. Even if the author's intention to convey a primary story is evident, there are other readings and configurations which can be elicited from the text.

This second reading, however, moves away from the traditional conception of allegory, towards a mode of symbolism popular amongst romantic writers. Unlike the fixity of an icon, a symbol connotes a multitude of possible meanings. There is no one allegorical reading upon which the whole piece of writing depends. Although allegory and

symbolism are often delineated as contrasting literary figures, they can be rendered compatible by pursuing the conception of allegory as a polysemous form. Moreover, not only can this kind of 'symbolic allegory' surpass the limits of didactic instruction, it has the potential to disrupt and subvert. Contributing to the debate on the reappraisal of allegory, the literary critic Stephen Greenblatt comments in his preface to Allegory and Representation (1981) that its "deeper purpose" and effect "is to acknowledge the darkness, the arbitrariness, and the void that underlie, all representation of realms of light, order, and presence" (Greenblatt 1981: vii).

Rather than an uncomplicated mimetic representation rendered in and through language, Greenblatt argues that allegory avoids the dangers of portraying a "stable, objective reality" (viii). Following de Man's thesis in Blindness and Insight (1974), by understanding the "hidden" meaning the reader does not unravel the text in its entirety; at the moment of insight other, unseen, possibilities remain latent. The act of reading suppresses some potential meanings and realizes, or activates, others. By highlighting the impossibility of understanding "order and presence", allegorical understanding can indicate the uncertainty which reading always entails.

Sacks, then, far from misusing the term, can be read as deploying allegory in two complementary ways. In the broadest sense, an allegorical tale is a metaphorical and descriptive tale which recognizes and discloses its own figurative status. Unlike the SOAP format which, although rudimentary, describes a relatively unproblematic social and personal reality, an allegorical tale displays its own structure of representation. its limits and indeterminacies. However, at the moment of disruption, allegory retains the

ability to preserve and connect: the disruptive potential of symbolic allegory is checked by the conserving structure of the traditional narrative allegory. Greenblatt comments, "allegory arises in periods of loss...from the painful absence of that which it claims to recover" (viii). By presenting an often stylized story the allegorical mode reveals wider cultural archetypes through which the illness experience can be understood.[14] If allegory positions an individual experience within a larger cultural narrative, then such a reclamative story may provide a means to empower the suffering patient. Sacks's allegorical form does not pretend to fully represent the illness experience, nor does it claim to possess messianic powers. But as the patient actively tells and interprets his or her own story, it may be possible to glimpse the seeds of hope in a recovery from, or an accommodation of, illness.

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[14] Three of these archetypal experiences, the quest, the transformation and the Fall (archetypes explored, although far from exclusively, by romantic writers), I discuss more thoroughly with reference to A Leg To Stand On.

(3) Constructing Narrative Voices

After two lengthy, but important, preliminary sections, I will now make a detailed analysis of Sacks's clinical tales, in order to assess his claims for the development of the medical case study. Although the patients documented in <u>Awakenings</u> react to L-DOPA in unique ways, their narratives share a general underlying structure, the study of which provides an insight into the manner in which Sacks conceives of encephalitic illness. The cases continue to contain an extra-narrative dimension of commentary and footnoting, but Sacks consistently foregrounds the patient's story. This format is evidently distinct from the brevity of the medical chart and the cases presented in Sacks's earlier book, <u>Migraine</u>, where typology is highlighted over and above the emplotment of story. However, the two books are alike in the respect that they both follow a pattern of description, explanation and speculation which, as the critic William Howarth discerns, "follows classic therapy (observe, describe, analyze, prescribe) but toward a romantic end, the "continuous double vision" that sees migraine as both a structure and strategy, reflecting "the absolute continuity of mind and body" (Howarth 1990: 107). The two perspectives, focusing on neurological "structure" and emotional "strategy", enable Sacks to figure different illnesses as both "physical and symbolic events" (Sacks 1970: 14).

<u>Migraine</u> and <u>Awakenings</u> have been published in numerous editions, in which Sacks extends and updates the case studies and commentaries and which, in the words of Howarth, are presented as "unfinished and continuing, very like a series of medical charts waiting for new entries" (Howarth 1990: 107). But, unlike the medical chart discussed in the previous section, the discursive and narrative dimensions serve to locate

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<u>Awakenings</u> outside the scope of classical scientific texts. In addition to a description of neurological details, the cases are situated within a web of fragmenting and interconnecting symbolic narratives, which are not only told, but *re*-told; the "mystical thread" of symbolic stories is intertwined with the primary narrative relating the long-term effects of encephalitis, the life of the patients in Mount Carmel and the administration of L-DOPA (Sacks 1992: 32).[15] In this manner, the reader is invited to shift across different planes of textual engagement.

The story of the patient's illness, moving through, but irreducible to, a series of distinct, yet continuous, stages, is not a stable narrative, but constantly under revision. The shifting relationship between narrator (alternating between the physician and the patient) and narrated (variously, the physician, the patient and the illness) highlights questions of authority and authorship: who is the storyteller? whose story is being told? and what is the epistemological status of (re)telling? Moving between these unstable textual spaces is the figure of Sacks. By presenting himself variously in the roles of reader, listener and narrator he exemplifies what Jean-François Lyotard has termed the "pragmatics" of narration: "all the complicated relations that exist...between the story-teller and his listener, and between the listener and the story told by the story-teller" (Lyotard 1989: 125).

Sacks highlights the symbolic dimension of storytelling in order to complicate conventional scientific explanations of neurological phenomena; he argues that scientific

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[15] In <u>Awakenings</u> these stories tend to be one of two kinds: stories of strangeness (Lewis Carroll's Alice and Gogol's tales) and stories of rebirth (Lazarus, Oliver Twist, Sleeping Beauty). Both kinds serve to disrupt a continuous narrative by moving through one of a number of transformations.

explanation should never be totalizing, for "like any story [it] takes other stories as its reference" (126). In splicing explanation with allusion, suggestion and comment, Sacks undermines a closed explanatory structure. Narrative openness provides the retelling of patients' stories with two therapeutic dimensions: firstly, the emotional appeal of the story provides a touchstone through which the patient may be able to connect with his or her lost past; and, secondly, because any single account is embedded in other stories, the narratives are open to revision and extension. In (re)telling stories it may be possible, as Howard Brody has commented, to alter the "meaning of the illness experience...in a positive direction" (Brody 1987: 5).

Arguing from a similar position to Sacks, Roy Shafer, in his reading of Freud, suggests that this type of destabilizing narrative can actually be reconstitutive. Instead of the analyst "reconstituting a single past" from "the analysis of the analytic encounter itself", an encounter "held to be in itself a final criterion of insight and an essential determinant of analytic results", he argues that "the analyst goes on learning about the analytic encounter as he or she goes on developing the...life-histories" (Schafer 1983: 208). Whereas Binswanger narrates the 'finished' stories of Lola Voss and Ellen West, both Schafer and Sacks argue that there is never a safe point outside the narrative from which to tell the story. For Schafer,

> the analyst uses the analytically defined elements of narrative incoherence to begin to *retell* the analysand's presentations and to bring the analysand into the process of retelling...the analyst and analysand together construct *a* history...[which]...will be...both more confident and more provisional than those they have replaced (Schafer 1992: 10).

In order to help the patient find his or her own therapeutic solution, the (re)telling of narrative should be conceived both as reclamative and open-ended. Heuristic narratives inscribe the past with meaningful patterns, through which it is possible for the patient to come to an understanding and acceptance (in Sacks's language, an "accommodation" [Sacks 1991a: 266]) of his or her illness, whilst the multiple telling of unfinished tales opens up the possibility of future recovery.

Just as this type of flexible story can open up the fixity of a patient's long-term illness to the possibility of change, so, too, the physician has a stake in the revision of cases. David Flood and Rhonda Soricelli have suggested that the construction of the discursive medical study (as opposed to the concise format of the chart) is crucially dependent on "finding an appropriate narrative voice" (Flood 1992: 67), by which the physician can shift between the positions of medical authority and collaborative researcher of illness.[16] In oscillating between the "diagnostic utility" of documenting medical complaints and the "personal encounter" (71) with the patient, drawing from an extra-medical or "premedical understanding of people" (67), the physician must tackle the difficulties of constructing a narrative voice. Because the physician should be flexible enough to account for the particular characteristics of the illness and the needs of the patient, the voice must be adaptable, whilst retaining a sense of continuous personality. Rather than refining "the author out of existence", the case study should "concentrate on *finding* the author" (80).

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[16] In Speech and Phenomena Derrida insists that voice, as a metaphor for expressing the intimate relationship between speech, presence and sense, has traditionally been suggestive of self-evident or unmediated truth, in contrast to the dissemination of meanings indicative of writing. In deploying metaphors of speech, I wish less to endorse these correspondences and more to suggest that "voice" is not confined to intentional utterances: voices can also be unintentional or somatic. Like Cavell, Sacks balances the romantic belief in an expressive and authentic 'inner' voice and the poststructuralist notion that there is no one transparent route to truth, only a number of textual detours or possible stories to be told.

Flood and Soricelli suggest that whilst attending to the patient's voice, the physician must also be able to listen to the "narrative voice to hear what it reveals about the author's professionalized self" (80). Accordingly, rather than focusing on one particular voice, I will transfer my attention between the textual spaces designated to patient and physician.

Instead of attempting to analyze the whole text, of the twenty patients featuring in the book I have chosen just two (Frances D. and Leonard L.) to provide the basis for my discussion of the wider framework of Sacks's practice. These two studies have something of a representative quality of his clinical tales, if only because they contain many of Sacks's ideas and revisions that are germane to the other entries.

Frances D.

The narrative of Frances D. (39-67) is the first and also one of the longest of those presented. Typically, it is split into five sections through which the story moves from an initial medical commentary of Frances's experiences, to her admission at Mount Carmel hospital and her reactions to L-DOPA, followed by later developments and her attempts to accommodate her condition. However, the closure of the narrative is deferred for a number of reasons, not least because Sacks inserts an epilogue (1982) later in the text, in which he summarizes the changes of the following decade and, in Frances's case, her eventual death. But her death is situated outside the frame of *this* story (although it always looms close by) as a future draft or another text embedded in the larger story of Awakenings. The individual stories are not told in isolation; they are inextricably

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intertwined with the narratives of the other patients. This larger story frames "*fifty* 'awakenings'...fifty individuals emerging from the decades-long isolation their illness had imposed on them" (Sacks 1991a: 65). Here, Sacks stresses the importance of the community, or "body", of sufferers, in whom the contagious laughter of "camaraderie" and "conviviality" serve to replace the muted voices of illness (65). There is a curious tension between the isolation of the ageing and enfeebled bodies and the renewed vitality of a hitherto arrested youthfulness: on one level, hinting to an allegorical passage to a higher and less corporeal form of existence and, on another, conveying the possibilities of recovery amongst the distressing realities of bodily decrepitude and of institutionalized life.

Although Sacks insists that the primary trajectory of <u>Awakenings</u> is to convey the personalities of the patients, the stories read as discontinuous biographies in which the narrator pauses at certain times to expand his commentary, either within the body of the text or in a footnote, to questions of illness, neurological practice and modes of therapy. However, the patient's story is rarely overshadowed by excursus. The arrangement of sections indicates that the administration of L-DOPA is the crucial catalyst for changing the direction of the illness narrative; a catalyst which, in this case, presents Frances with a chemical window through which to speak of her experience.

Whilst most of the first section is presented in a factual manner by a third-person narrator, there are traces which inscribe the description of the physiological symptoms with philosophical and symbolic subtexts. The opening sentence ("Miss D. was born in New York in 1904, the youngest and brightest of four children" [39]) serves to introduce

the patient, but also outlines an allegorical strain which runs through the narrative. As Bruno Bettleheim indicates in The Uses of Enchantment (1976) the hero of *Märchen*, is often the youngest of the family (usually the youngest of three), representing the most spirited and the quick-witted of the siblings. Here, the mythic resonance carries the impact of the tragic illness which strips the youth and intelligence from this fifteen year old girl to "cut across" her life. This cut serves to sever the orderliness of her life and to arrest the promise of her childhood. But, at this stage the "cut" does not represent a complete break from the balance of her childhood, for she is able to regain her "previously well-integrated personality and harmonious family life" (39).

Frances's extravagant and hyper-kinetic form of *encephalitis lethargica*, marked by "insomnia", "restlessness" and "impulsiveness" (39), within a year subsides sufficiently for her to reintegrate with a healthy body and a relatively unimpaired life at high school. Unlike the narrowing of Lola Voss's condition, Sacks stresses the richness and fullness of Frances's life, focusing particularly on her creative talents - "she was fond of theatre, an avid reader, a collector of old china" - and her interaction with others (Binswanger's *Mitwelt*) - she was "an active committee-woman" and "frequently entertained friends" (40). Although the residues of her initial illness ("panting attacks" [39] and oculogyric crises[17]), remains with her until 1949, Sacks charts a simple movement from the vitality of childhood to debilitation and back to a healthy social and emotional life. The temporal movement can be conceived either as cyclic or as linear, marked by a "cut" (39), or marred by a period of invalidity, before order is resumed. However, health is viewed

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[17] Oculogyric crises are glossed as "attacks of forced deviation of gaze, often associated with a surge of Parkinsonism, catatonia, tics, obsessiveness, suggestibility, etc., etc." (392).

more than just a regulative concept, a balanced body characteristic of homeostasis[18]; it is also performative, a background ability which enables an agent to execute coordinated actions.

A marked change in Frances's condition occurs in the 1950s, characterized by the contrary tendencies to freeze and hurry in her speech and movements. At this point Frances speaks in her own voice, through which she is able to indicate the *"essential* symptom" (40) of her experience, in opposition to the "banal symptoms" that Sacks is able to perceive ("essential" suggesting the most profound, or intensely felt, of the experiences). By privileging Frances's own diagnosis, Sacks indicates the importance of the patient's attempt to describe the characteristics of his or her illness. Even though an observer is able to detect the starting and stopping of her bodily movements, the loss of "in-between states" (40) felt by Frances can only be spoken in the first-person.[19] Frances appears to experience these "urges" (42) passively, as if she has lost regulative control over her body. However, her knowledge that the attacks usually occur at regular intervals ("'like clockwork' every fifth day" [40]) enables her mentally to prepare for the routine, even though she is unable to do much about the crises. Her balanced bodily state which, until disrupted by illness, makes action possible, is threatened by the violent forces experienced during her crises.

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[18] The history of homeostasis and bodily equilibrium encompasses pre-modern conceptions of health, including Heraclitus's correspondence theory of harmony in the macro- and microcosms (a version of which is to be found in Emerson's essays), the medieval humours (*umor*), and traditional Chinese and Indian notions of balance.

[19] As I have commented, the accuracy of the portrayals has, to a large extent. to be taken on trust. Of course, the narratives can be read as purely fictional stories, but the evidence of the Awakenings documentary (1974) and the textual details (both biographical and neurological) substantiate Sacks's claims for realism and accuracy.

The body cannot be explained merely as being out of control, or asserting a will of its own; Frances simultaneously displays both a withdrawal into herself (a fixed emotion and expression) and an exaggeration of activity (deviation of gaze and flaying of limbs). There appear to be two competing conceptions of personal identity at work here: one founded on the Cartesian split between body and mind and the other viewing the Parkinsonism as affecting the whole and indivisible self. Whilst it may seem naive to conceive of the 'real' Frances as being the sentient prisoner of a wildly malfunctioning body, the images of "Rip van Winkles or Sleeping Beauties" (65) are potent symbols for conveying the potential recovery from torpor. In contrast, supporters of the second view, such as Edelman, would argue that, although it may appear that the motor part of the brain has lost its regulative capacity, whilst the cognitive part (that which Edelman calls higher-order consciousness) remains functional, but powerless, to reflect on the condition of her body, signs of engagement remain. The tension between these two views is evident when Sacks implies that the opposing Parkinsonian forces of pushing and pulling are in competition for possession of her whole person, the distinctive trait of staring attacks becoming dominant at this moment, suggesting that the 'real' self is locked inside the body. Such crises are figured as kinds of anti-epiphany, where corporeal sensation suppresses a freezing of the expressive voice, resulting in a purely internal moment without any transcendence.[20]

By the time Frances is admitted to Mount Carmel in 1969, her condition has worsened to the extent that she is unable to walk or hold her body upright. The following section,

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[20] Ashley Nichols detects the recurrent characteristics of the literary epiphany to be its brevity and its personal significance (Nichols 1987: 1-12). In this instance, both of these aspects are reversed: Frances's anti-epiphany is marked by temporal extension and compulsive repetition.

'Before L-DOPA', serves to recapitulate, and to expand upon, the inventory of symptoms that she had developed, in order that Sacks might show the changes which the drug brings about.

Frances's bodily pulsion decreases in inverse proportion to her tendency to freeze; only when some external stimulus distracts her fixed attention can she continue her movements. Her body continues to show signs of movement and rapid action, but movement which prohibits her from acting in any meaningful sense: the "flapping" of her right hand, the "grinding" of her teeth and the "puckering" of her mouth display a prohibitive channel of energy (44). Similarly, Sacks indicates that Frances's "restlessness" can only be quelled by occupying her hands. The most marked changes appear in the loss of her "personal" qualities (42), marked by a masking of her face and the monotony of her voice, which varies only in the speed of her utterances. Her handwriting also loses its distinctive quality ("large, effortless and rapid"), resulting either in chaotic and illegible scrawl or gradually becoming "smaller and slower and stickier until it became a motionless point" (43).[21] Bodily symptoms are here transferred into a textual space, in which her writing serves to display the opposing tendencies of pulsion and festination.

In order to balance these distressing signs of bodily deterioration, Sacks focuses briefly on the aspects which maintain the traits of Frances's personality. She remains alert in

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[21] This writing tendency is one commonly displayed by the other patients with severe Parkinsonism. But as Joseph Conrad has portrayed, through the figure of the idiot character, Stevie Verloc, in The Secret Agent (1907) it represents a powerful metaphor for chaotic mental (and social) states. For an analysis of this text see my MA dissertation (Halliwell 1993: 52-72).

observation; she retains a quickness of thought (which is present despite the loss of vocal intonation); she is "punctual, and methodical in all her activities" without being obsessional or phobic; and she is able to recognize similar maladies amongst the other patients in her ward. In these aspects Frances appears able to retain the qualities of selfhood and to maintain what Sacks perceives as "a healthy self-respect" (44) for her (virtually) uncontrollable body and the demoralizing effect of institutionalization.[22] Throughout all the narratives Sacks is at pains to indicate the limited methods which the patients' adopt in order to remain "alive and human in a Total Institution" (62). For Frances, it seems that only through such means can she compensate for a loss of bodily mastery and motor control, in order that she might assert herself as a meaningful actor in her oppressive physical and topographical environments.[23]

The central section of the narrative, 'Course on L-DOPA', is structured in the form of successive journal entries. Sacks closely documents the dates and precise quantities of L-DOPA administered, in order to chart the "complex mixture of desirable and adverse effects" of the drug (45). He continues to focus on the body as the site of display, inferring cognitive changes with the aid of Frances's own comments.

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[22] Howard Brody suggests that the patient's self-respect is a crucial sign that he or she still possesses the desire to live and is willing to take measures to combat the illness. Michael Ignatieff, in an article published in New Society (20/1/83), focuses on the significance of personal items ("a comb, a mirror and make-up" [Ignatieff 1983: 96]) which, however inadequately, enable the patient to tend to their bodies: "the self...manoeuvres if it can towards some tiny affirming gesture" (97).

[23] Sacks borrows the term "Total Institution" from Erving Goffman's influential study on Asylums (1961). In many ways Sacks echoes Goffman's stress on the negative experiences of institutionalized life; but, as a practising physician, he needs to retain a positive and life-affirming outlook both for himself and his patients. Goffman claims that a meaningful activity is too dignified a term to describe what he calls "removal activities": "voluntary unserious pursuits" which are encouraged by the hospital staff in an attempt to "lift the participant out of himself" (Goffman 1961: 67). He argues, that instead of granting the patient any sense of agency, the activities merely serve to "kill" time.

The initial dosage of L-DOPA serves to increase Frances's "drive" to act in any manner that she found possible - crochet, wash, write - for, at this stage, as Sacks informs the reader, she is "unable to tolerate inactivity" (45). An increase in dosage appeared to stimulate a feeling of "well-being and abounding energy" (45), together with the ability to channel, or structure, the energy into the shape of words or pedal movement. Adversely, however, her ability to breathe is affected, although her "urge" to respire becomes more intense; an urge which, after subsequent modification of dosage, manifests itself in frequent respiratory crises. In a long footnote, Sacks comments that these attacks display a mixture of the "idiosyncratic" and the communal: they represent a "remarkable 'fossil' symptom" left over from the onset of Frances's encephalitis in 1919, but also share a characteristic in common with the other Parkinsonian patients (46). Sacks interprets such crises to be associated "with emotional needs and contexts" brought on by the peculiar bodily reactions to L-DOPA (46).[24]

Such was the violence and persistence of these attacks that Sacks expresses an unwillingness to continue with the drug; but, with Frances's "insistence" (47), he decides to continue with half the dosage. However, although she "was looking, feeling and moving far better than she had done in twenty years", the crises continue and Sacks is led to, what he calls, a "therapeutic dilemma" (48). Acting in his role of physician, he is forced to judge between the different qualitative effects on the patient. He ceases his hitherto primary role of documenter of physiological detail and now admits his predilections in the narrative. Consequently, he shifts his stance from being primarily a

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[24] See Sacks's paper written with Marjorie Kohl, 'Incontinent Nostalgia Induced by L-DOPA', Lancet 1, 1970, 1394-95 and Smith Ely Jelliffe's early study Post-Encephalitic Respiratory Disorders, Washington D.C.: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1927.

third-person narrator to become a central figure in the story, and thus charts a movement

from Binswanger's "post to which existence clings" to James's model of the active

experiencer. He appears to share Frances's need to rediscover, or newly to find, this lost

"in-between" equilibrium of health, by finding an amenable drug dosage. At this stage

he speaks in the plural ("could we find a happy medium" [48]), but when describing the

"emotional needs and contexts" of Frances's illness, he reverts to the autobiographical

first-person:

> I was slow to realize, while noting the causes of Miss D.'s crises, that the
> most potent "trigger" of all was me, myself...When I asked Miss D. if this
> could be the case, she indignantly denied the very possibility, but blushed
> an affirmative crimson (49).

The introduction of the first-person voice can be seen from two contrasting points of

view. Firstly, by positioning his persona in the story Sacks adds to its sense of historical

authenticity, but, more importantly, he is able to convey a sense of intimacy with his

patient. Currents of transference and counter-transference indicate that the relationship

between patient and physician is also an analytic one: the use of drugs to regulate the

illness is seen as an addition to, rather than a replacement of, a personal encounter.

However, the second viewpoint, expressed by Ella Kusnetz in her essay 'The Soul of

Oliver Sacks' (1992), treats such comments with greater suspicion. Sacks begins to

recognize signs of Frances's psychic transference, "only when an observant nurse giggled

and remarked to me, 'Dr Sacks, *you* are the object of Miss D.'s crises!', that I belatedly

tumbled to the truth" (49). The tone here implies (unlike the more open contact with

another patient, Rose R.) the encounter to be one of (sublimated) desire, revealed through

this "belated" disclosure and the repetition and assertion of "me, myself." Moreover, as

Kusnetz indicates, when "the therapy goes wrong" (Kusnetz 1992: 181-82) the personal pronoun is replaced by "we", implying the culpability of the whole medical team. Kusnetz claims that "he is eager to divest himself of this identity", a criticism validated later in the narrative when Sacks records the adverse reactions to L-DOPA: "it produced more and more 'side-effects' which I - *we, her doctors* - seemed powerless to prevent" (Sacks 1991a: 54).

Although these "emotional needs" constitute an important determining factor, the respiratory crises have many causes: organic, psychic and social. Another important "psychic cause" which, Sacks claims, he "could not have known of had Miss D. not mentioned it", is revealed when Frances comments that "as soon as *I think of getting a crisis*...I am apt to get one. And if I try to think about not thinking about my crises, I get one. Do you suppose they are becoming an obsession?" (49). Here, the idea that the body entirely extricates itself from the motor control of the brain is again refuted.[25] Frances's emotions of "passion, intransigence, obstinacy and obsession" (50), to a large degree, induce her respiratory attacks. Furthermore, the fear which accompanies the onset of each attack is described as "a special, strange sort of fear" (50): in clinical terms diagnosed as a pathology and in existential terms described as subliminal dread or *Angst*. To her mind the drug-as-regulator has been replaced by the drug-as-lifeline. Frances reveals her dependency for L-DOPA as she claims that the discontinuation of the drug

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[25] There is a psychoanalytic subtext which Sacks goes some way to avoiding in his emphasis upon the neurological, rather than the psychological, causes of the illness. The references to obsessive somatic compulsions are similar to those discussed by Freud and Breuer in Studies in Hysteria, in which the (female) patient is often deemed to be at fault in contracting the illness. Although Sacks shares Freud's perspectives on many issues (the existence of psychic obstacles, or defense mechanisms, and a version of the principle of constancy), there are clear theoretical differences. Importantly, Sacks (like Binswanger and Shafer) argues that there is no *one* event, or occurrence (for Freud, having libidinal origins), which can be cathartically brought to consciousness during analysis.

would be "like a death penalty" (50). However, both patient and physician note that, when once she is transfixed and "rooted to the spot", the body appears to be autonomous and to have a will of its own.[26]

Sacks infers that beneath, or bypassing, the level of coordinated neurological control is "a mass of strange and almost sub-human compulsions" (51). Here, "sub-human" refers to two levels of implied meaning: affirming that humans are fundamentally animals (Frances claims: "I bite and chew like a ravenous animal, and there's nothing I can do about it" [51]) and also indicating that such dark compulsions cannot always be understood through the rational grammar of thought. The only way in which the physician can glean a sense of these, almost, reflexive processes is through close observation of, and participation with, patients and by encouraging them to express (in whatever form) what it is like to experience such sensations. Again, the mythic element is herein revealed. Both the patient and physician are figured as ill-equipped travellers in the strange world of neurological disorder. However, unlike classical allegory, the signs do not indicate a single level of meaning. Instead, there are layers of possible meaning which intersect and often contradict each other.

This symbolic pattern is apparent in the conflicting symptoms warring on the bodily site. Similarly, the stark contrast of Frances's "good day" (in which she spends "a perfect day - so peaceful" in "the country") is thrown into relief by the following one which "saw the

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[26] This rooting to the spot maybe an unwillingness, as well as an inability, to move from a zone of safety; when faced with a traumatic situation, the patient's need to find roots often proves stronger than the need for movement. However, Luce Irigaray has indicated that "hysteria", in this case marked by somatic symptoms and immobility, may be a manner in which to avoid the hegemony of patriarchal speech (here manifested by the controlling voice of the physician): "a privileged place for preserving - but 'in latency', 'in sufferance' - that which does not speak" (Irigaray 1991: 138).

onset of the worst and most protracted crisis of Miss D.'s entire life" (51), the experience of which convinces Sacks to discontinue his administration of L-DOPA. The violence of this sixty-hour crisis can be sensed in the verbs "jam" and catapult, which replace the less virulent texture of "freeze" and "urge" (51). The crisis is described as moving from an increase in bodily distraction and palilalic speech to wild movement of the arms and "a shrill piercing scream" (52). Waves of excitement accompany a denial of selfhood ("It's not me, not me, not me at all" [52]), as if the only way to contend with the anguish is for Frances to attempt to extricate her life-world from the outward contortions of her body. Sacks conveys this disjunction with the broken prose of his quotation and the anecdote in which, after the crisis, Frances wryly christens the drug "*Hell*-DOPA!" Her extreme states are couched in a symbolic opposition between the heaven of the pastoral day, which Frances claims she will never forget, and the hellish distress of these climactic moments of self-negation. The exteriority of the countryside (a recurrent romantic motif for Sacks) is figured outside of the tyranny of the body and the hospital and is presented in stark contrast to the interiority of this crisis: a turning inwards (almost) to a point of self-annihilation.

Another level of meaning is revealed by the respiratory nature of the crises. Sacks notes that for Frances each crisis is inexorably linked both to the presence of voice and an emotional, or spiritual, need: "her voice, normally low-pitched and soft, rose to a shrill and piercing scream" (51-52). The movement upwards and outwards ("each wave rising higher and higher towards some limitless climax" [52]) suggests a macabre anti-epiphany where the physicality of the body prevents any transcendental experience. In a discussion on asthma, Marsha Rowe has pointed out that the verb 'breathe' and the noun 'breath' have

two etymologies.[27] The first derives from the fourteenth century, from the Latin *animalus* - an animal, or being, that breathes - and the second, widespread in Augustan thought, from *spiritus*. In both cases the connection between breath, breathing and soul is evident. Thus, the most severe of Frances's respiratory crises is cast amongst the most profound of symbolic proportions: her struggle to cling onto a physical and spiritual life is, at root, wholly dependent on her ability to breathe.

The next two sections, which focus on the changes occurring when Frances stops taking the drug, are the most reflective and speculative of the five, as can be sensed by the frequency and length of the footnotes. One reason for this is that Frances appears to enter a more stable "subterranean state" (52), which the speech-therapist, Miss Kohl (a source of information whilst Sacks is absent from the hospital), compares to the withdrawn fugue state of shell-shock. It is as if her "appetite for living" (52-53) extinguishes itself for two important reasons. Firstly, the drug, which seems to offer a life, is now unmistakably seen as a false god and, moreover, in Sacks's absence, the other sources of life, the relationships with the physician and fellow sufferers, "had been disbanded" (53) due to administrative changes. Once more echoing Binswanger's stress on *Mitwelt*, Sacks feels that only if he can succeed in reestablishing these relationships would Frances recover her motivation to live.

The commentary accompanying this section is not merely limited to the physician's thoughts, for Sacks stresses that he wishes to "interrupt her 'story' for *her* analysis of the

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[27] In a discussion chaired by Roy Porter at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, 7/12/93.

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situation" [my italics] (54). Here, the extremes of illness, the rise and fall of bodily states, the emotions of fear, rage and betrayal are left for Frances to recount. Following the general tone of this section, Sacks acts as the scribe and the memory of the patient, his theoretical comments being reserved for footnotes, which, perhaps to his discredit, often spill over into the body of the text.

One significant example of this occurs when, once again, Sacks stresses the view that body and mind should not be split. Sacks frames this moment of authorial speech within the context of a liaison with Frances. He writes:

> the 'things' which gripped her under the influence of L-DOPA...could not be dismissed by her as 'purely physical' or completely 'alien' to her 'real self', but, on the contrary, were felt to be in some sense *releases* or *exposures* or *disclosures* or *confessions* of very deep and ancient parts of herself, monstrous creatures from her unconscious and from unimaginable physiological depths below the unconscious...and she could not look upon these suddenly exposed parts of herself with detachment; they called to her with siren voices, they enticed her, they thrilled her, they terrified her, they filled her with feelings of guilt and punishment, they possessed her with the consuming, ravishing power of nightmare (55).

It is in passages such as this that Sacks may be accused of losing the precision of his earlier documentation in wildly suggestive rhetoric, where ideas are stressed at the expense of losing the feel of the patient's voice. The meaning is beautifully poised between the registers of psychoanalysis and myth; but, as Sacks says of certain of his patients, the language seems over-ebullient, leaving an investigation of the patient's condition behind for a moment of poetic excess. In defence of Sacks, though, such a

passage does convey the almost gothic drama of visual scenes (such as Frances's grotesque crisis) in a manner which would be lacking in more clinical prose.[28]

Sacks, as physician, moves from a dispassionate recorder of detail to a central actor, intricately bound up in this emotional drama. The earlier comments from Schafer indicate that, given the patient's dependency on the physician for her physical and emotional needs, such a meeting is inevitably an analytic one, involving transference and resistance. The physician is seen as the sole arbiter of life and death. For Frances, the physician-cum-alchemist, caught between the images of Redeemer and Devil, or good and wicked doctors, experiments with a drug which promises salvation only to offer her a living death. But, here, unlike the coy amorosity of the previous passages, Sacks is comfortably able to discuss the transference of Frances's feelings: "thus Miss D. found herself entangled in the labyrinth of a torturing transference-neurosis, a labyrinth from which there seemed no exit" (57).

Sacks realizes that in order to bear the mantle of an analyst, as well as physician, he must be the figure with whom Frances works through her anxieties. In the mode of Freud's transference cure, this identification of the doctor as a source of health and life encourages the patient to invest her desire in the figure. When she realizes that the offer of life is only illusory, alienation followed by a disintegration of her ego-ideal occurs. Only then can the patient recognize her unconscious desires and come to realize the extent to which she has invested of her emotions. However, the presence of severe bodily

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[28] The visual impact of the Parkinsonian body is, perhaps, inevitably lost in a written account. Consequently, Sacks commends the documentary film as a companion to the text, in which the patients' bodily contortions are visually presented.

illness complicates matters. The sense of bodily fragmentation is likely to lead to the need to secure relationships (in Frances's case relationships with Sacks and the other patients) which the third stage of psychic fragmentation tends to undermine. In this case, the sense of double fragmentation may be so painful that a resolution is never adequately established.

The image of the closed labyrinth conjures up this sense of blockage, but it may be one that Sacks, because he is not a professional analyst, is unable to resolve. In referring to Freud's paper 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937), Kusnetz points out, "if, as Freud discovered...the sticky matter of psychic resistance makes a simple transference cure an inadequate model for the physician's treatment of neurotic illness, it is even more inadequate for the physician's management of such intractable medical illness" (Kusnetz 1992: 181). Kusnetz argues that unless Sacks is to burden himself with the permanent mantle of analyst, a position which is not amenable to the variety of roles he seeks to adopt, he needs to abandon the "old transferential figure of 'magic' and 'authority'", and also his reluctant role as the administrator of drugs, and relate to his patients as "'co-equals', 'co-explorers' and co-actors in the drama of their illness" (185).[29] Although many of Kusnetz's comments are well targeted, she neglects to point out that in this instance Sacks does trace the transference-neurosis to its resolution. He recounts that over a year later Frances manages to find a "release from the labyrinth", to turn "*away* from her phantasies, and *towards* her reality" (62). Having asserted this, Sacks's later description

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[29] It is noticeable that increasingly in <u>Awakenings</u> and, especially, in <u>An Anthropologist on Mars</u>, Sacks stresses his role as fellow traveller and befriender (using the language of the social-worker) rather than as analyst and problem-solver.

of the manner in which the "impostures of the L-DOPA 'situation' fell away like a carapace, revealing...the real self...underneath" (62) tends to be too neatly resolved on textual and therapeutic levels.

In the last section, 'Summer 1972', Sacks continues to relate Frances's story, but now from a position of temporal and theoretical distance. His personal involvement in the story recedes to a point of professional concern as he reviews the methods of therapy employed over the three subsequent years. This section updates the story to the publication date of the first edition of the book and, in many respects, represents a tribute to Frances's courage and "mysterious reserves of health and sanity" (58). Sacks believes that the extreme tensions of 1969 had served to "forge" and "temper" Frances, rather than break her: a rebuilding of stability, rather than a crumbling of foundations. He administers another low dosage of L-DOPA which causes a "milder" cyclic reaction of "improvements-exacerbation-withdrawal symptoms" (59). In contrast to the uncontrollable extravagance of the earlier respiratory crises, an awareness of this cyclical movement enables Frances to contend with the approaching stages.

The narrative ends with commentary on other therapeutic techniques employed in order to help Frances regain a sense of autonomy and selfhood. Of the techniques, the most personal and intimate (laughter, touch and music) contain the greatest capacity to "awaken" Frances, to "defreeze" her (63), to free her from the constrained monotony of her torpor and to provide a means through which her attention can be channelled away

from her physical condition.[30] For example, Sacks finds, in order to rouse Frances, it is necessary that music appeals to her individual sensitivity. In a moment of recognition, reminiscent of the care with which Binswanger's treats the structure of his patients' world-designs, Sacks realizes that Frances required music to be "firm but 'shapely'" (61) and "*legato*" (62), because "raw or overpowering rhythm...causes pathological jerking; it coerces instead of freeing the patient, and thus has an anti-musical effect. Shapeless crooning...without sufficient rhythmic/motor power, fails to move her - either emotionally or motorically - at all" (61).

Sacks cites Nietzsche's view of healthy and degenerate, or sick, music, but does not prescribe the particular forms these should take, because he realizes that different patients respond to particular pieces in a variety of ways. Music does not appeal to cognition, but on different levels of reception: physically, to the rhythm of the body; chemically, to "the 'go' parts of the brain" (61); and, metaphysically, serving to "move" her soul. Sacks suggests that, by synchronizing bodily movement with the tempo and rhythm of the music, the Parkinsonian patient is able to discover an ability to channel the displays of excessive energy. In this way it is possible to coordinate the movements of limbs and so to give a shape and structure to the violent tics. Accordingly, he comments that "the 'movement' [of the body] was simultaneously emotional and motoric, and essentially autonomous" (62). This mode of therapy is shown to affirm Frances's individuality and, with it, some notion of autonomy and agency, as well as gesturing towards an elusive return to health.

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[30] Sacks's conception of an "expressive" music is thoroughly romantic: the patient's life-world is not revealed through speech, but through the rhythm, or voice, of the body.

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Leonard L.

Forming the backbone of the plot for the Penny Marshall film, <u>Awakenings</u>, the narrative of Leonard L. (203-19) powerfully portrays the creative dimensions of recuperation in contrast to the mental poverty of catatonia. However, as Sacks comments in an appendix to the 1991 edition of <u>Awakenings</u>, the film is both "very different in structure, concentrating on a single patient" and adds dramatic details (such as Leonard's romantic involvement with Paula, "the creation of a violent psychiatric ward", and the stereotyped responses of "repressive" doctors) which are "entirely new" (374). Consequently, in a consideration of the narrative it is important to distinguish between Sacks's neurological case and Robert de Niro's portrayal of Leonard in the film. Having asserted this, Sacks expresses that the film and his text both share, what he calls, the "emotional truth of the portrayals": that is, "the imagination and depiction of the inner lives of the characters" (374). Sacks claims that Steve Zaillian's screenplay shares with him an attempt to blend emotional sincerity with neurological accuracy (de Niro convincingly mimics Parkinsonian symptoms), and maintains a focus upon the human dimension of the narrative.[31]

Unlike Frances's narrative, the story of Leonard does not begin with a biographical sketch; Sacks describes Leonard as he appeared to him as a "mummified" patient (204). Rather than the physician composing a resumé of his life, Leonard is left to describe the significant details. Sacks comments that he is only "able to form any adequate picture

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[31] A conflicting view is to be found in an article by Paul Taylor in <u>The Independent</u> (28'4'94) in which he questions Sacks's "criterion" of "emotional truth" and he castigates de Niro's acting as "both technically dazzling and morally quite unacceptable" (Taylor 1994: 23).

of his state of mind and being" (206) over a number of years of contact with Leonard and his mother.[32] Towards the beginning of the narrative Leonard is described as "a man of most unusual intelligence, cultivation, and sophistication...with an introspective and investigative passion" (204), qualities which import a poetic and philosophical feel to this case. Even before Frances is given L-DOPA she retains her voice, albeit only a whisper, with which to speak of her experience of illness. In contrast, by the time Sacks is introduced to him in 1966, Leonard's only means of communication is a letter-board through which he painfully taps out phrases in "an abbreviated, telegraphic, and sometimes cryptic form" (207). The role of Sacks as reader of the codes and manifestations of illness is hereby illustrated.

Leonard's unique characteristics of introspection and enforced introversion stimulate Sacks to comment that,

> this combination of the profoundest disease with the acutest investigative intelligence made Mr L. an 'ideal' patient, so to speak, and in the six and a half years I have known him he has taught me more about Parkinsonism, post-encephalitic illness, suffering, and human nature than the rest of my patients combined (204).

In contrast to Sacks's semi-amorous relationship with Frances (diffused in the film through the love interest with the nurse, Eleanor Costello), Sacks displays a mixture of identification with, and compassion for, Leonard which establishes a bond of companionship. The relationship is based upon mutual need. Leonard needs someone to interpret the signs of his illness, whereas, if he is to fully understand Parkinsonism,

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[32] There is not space enough here to consider the important bond between Leonard and his mother, a mutually dependent relationship that is sensitively dramatized in the film.

Sacks requires an articulate channel for personal experience. Although Sacks retains the privileged role of the framing author, more than anywhere else in <u>Awakenings</u> the reader has the sense that this narrative is jointly told. Indeed, when Sacks admits that, although he feels that Leonard "deserves a book to himself", he has chosen to "confine" himself to "the barest and most inadequate outline of his state" (204), he simultaneously realizes the inadequacy of his study for fully representing Leonard's illness experience and renounces the role of sovereign author to acknowledge Leonard's role as co-writer. However, this claim is weakened by the fact that traces of Leonard's written autobiography are only marginally included in the text.[33]

Leonard is described as having rigid and dystrophic hands, facial masking and a toneless voice, symptoms which imply that the neurological damage is mainly in the right hemisphere and lower parts of the brain. Although Leonard describes feelings of "mosaic" vision (206) similar to those described in <u>Migraine</u>, Sacks infers from the signs of Leonard's "rapid and sure" eye movements that his cognitive left hemisphere is virtually unimpaired, hinting towards an "alert and attentive intelligence imprisoned within his motionless body" (204). Here, the tension between the two conceptions of illness (as it affects the whole self and the imprisoning of a reflective self inside the body) is developed. The evocative image of the caged animal, taken from Rainer Maria Rilke's poem 'The Panther' (c.1903), serves suggestively to convey Leonard's feeling of entrapment in a bodily prison "with windows but no doors" (207) together with, what he

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[33] One example of the argument that Sacks has constructed the character of Leonard as a vehicle solely for probing the autobiographical nature of illness can be discerned in the marked similarity between Leonard's love of the post-romantic/modernist poetry of Rilke and the late T. S. Eliot and Sacks's own mystical quotations from Eliot and Herman Hesse later in the text (275).

calls, the simultaneous existence of an "awful presence...and an awful absence" (205). Leonard contrasts the presence of a "nagging and pushing and pressure" with a feeling of being "constrained and stopped." The alternative to this, "a terrible isolation and coldness and shrinking", is described as being less torturous, but is figured as a consequence of 'castration': a dumbness which is "something like death" (205). This severance echoes the "cut" which slices across Frances's balanced life, but is here couched in the terms of male sexuality which becomes a central feature later in the narrative.

Sacks quotes the first stanza of 'The Panther', followed by a prose translation (he neglects to cite the translator), while the film presents a translation of the whole poem as a central metaphor of the post-encephalitic experience.[34] The withdrawal of the panther's "gaze" (1) into the body ("a thousand bars") is seen as a retreat from the monotony and the confines of illness and institutionalization ("no more world" [4]). The motivating force of "some mighty will" (8) lies paralysed at a centre around which the panther's body erratically moves. The "supply powerful paddings" (5) convey the sense of a padded and locked cell and of a constrained, prowling energy which must find an outlet any way it can. The third stanza offers some relief from the monotony: "just now and then the pupils' noiseless shutter/is lifted" (9-10). Despite the utter interiority of the scene, an engagement with the outside world is retained ("an image will indart" [10]), implying that vision and cognition remain functional. In the last two lines of this final stanza the poem

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[34] Notably, in the film the poem is read as the Sacks figure sits alone in his place of pastoral meditation, hinting that it is as much his touchstone as it is a manner in which Leonard can grasp an understanding of his illness. Subsequent line references are from J. B. Leishman's verse translation of 'The Panther' (Rilke 1964: 33).

recited in the film differs radically from the Penguin translation. Leishman's translation

follows the implication that this "image" finds its way to the intact "heart" of the body

(the centres of will and emotion) and there "end its being" (12). In contrast, the film

version traces the "shape" of the image "through the silence of the shoulders", as it

"reaches the heart, and dies." In this version, the "heart" has been so long affected by

suffering and torment that it can no longer cherish this image of release, as it "dies"

within bodily interiority. The two interpretations of literary epiphany described by

Ashton Nichols - "in which an object...or experience reveals itself" which, in turn, is

"coalesced into a sudden disclosure of meaning" (Nichols 1987: 10) - are undercut in this

translation. As Frances found, there is no epiphanic uplifting, for the personal

significance of the "shape" is swallowed up and consumed by the disease. This rendering

(presumably one endorsed by Sacks, who was consulted in the film's making)

concentrates on the rigorous effects of the disease on the whole self (body, mind, spirit,

and the activities of perceiving and willing), rather than the retention of a stable and vital

inner core.

Despite prevalent feelings of entrapment and alienation, Leonard elsewhere finds the

capacity to acknowledge a kind of grotesque charm in his "disease and deformity." He

says that "they are beautiful in a way like a dwarf or a toad." Sacks sees this as a kind of

"Rabelaisian relish of the world", which, in the terminology of Mikhail Bakhtin, can be

interpreted as a celebration of the festive and carnivalesque disorder of the body (in this

instance, the individual body, but, also, the collective body represented by the community

of sufferers). Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have argued that, rather than the

controlling and ordering narrative of classical psychoanalysis, this celebration of the

"grotesque" body (contrasting with Frances's protest when she is rooted to the spot) signifies a liberation of the "second narrative fragmented and marginalized", a narrative which "witnesses a complex interconnection between hints and scraps of parodic festive form and the body of the hysteric" (Stallybrass 1993: 286). Here, Leonard finds the voice to speak of his condition in terms other than those of distress and decrepitude.

Leonard's initial reaction to L-DOPA is described in positive terms. He displays a "delight" in being "released from entombment or prison" and an "intoxication with the sense and beauty of everything around him" (Sacks 1991a: 208). Sacks describes his desire to visit the hospital garden, where he not only relishes his release from his prison-house, but reveals a pantheistic impulse to touch and kiss the flowers, reminiscent of Coleridge's Mariner who finds release from his life-in-death by embracing the sea creatures. Leonard figures this liberation in the terms of love, grace and a reading of Dante's Paradiso (1321). But, already apparent here, are the signs of a plentitude and fullness (soon to become an extravagant over-abundance), which "started to assume an extravagant, maniacal and grandiose form" (Sacks 1991a: 209).

The reactions of Frances and Leonard are similar, but clearly distinct, as their own personalities reflect the descriptions of their conditions. Frances describes her experiences as follows: "I'd done a vertical take-off...I'd gone higher and higher on L-DOPA - to an impossible height. I felt I was on a pinnacle a million miles high...And then...I crashed...I was buried a million miles deep in the ground" (54). In contrast, Leonard experiences a "pathological driving and fragmentation" (210) which leads, as he adopts the mantle of spokesman for the other patients, to delusions of messianic

grandeur: a releasing of "a Dionysiac god packed with virility and power" (211). The entrapped self is converted to a "wanton" dispersal, or out-pouring, spilling over into a promiscuous sexual drive of "libidinous and aggressive feelings" (211). His desire to kiss the garden flowers soon turns into a need to kiss and harass the nurses and masturbate "fiercely, freely, and with little concealment" (212).

In contrast to the balance and "suppleness" characterizing the account of Frances's childhood life, Leonard's psychic and physical energy at this stage lacks any kind of shape or structure. Sacks records that "all his reactions had become all-or-none. The 'middle-ground' of health, temper, harmony, moderation almost disappears entirely at this time, and Mr L. became completely 'decomposed' into pathological immoderations of every sort" (216). The liberatory "awakening" of the self turns into a kind of hyper-awareness of the prosaic reality of habit and the strictures of hospitalized life. Moreover, the awakenings no longer accompany a positive feeling of well-being, but, of "general" and "specific excitements" - "urge, push, repetition, compulsion, suggestion and perseveration" (212). Only his writing of a painstaking autobiography (typed with "his shrunken, dystrophic index-fingers") seems to give a coherence and pattern to this excess of bodily and psychic energy. Sacks relates that during his obsessive task of writing, Leonard "found himself free...from the pressures which were driving and shivering his being" (213). These pressures are manifested in the form(lessness) of "tics and distractions" which returned when he finished typing. Just as music grants Frances a moment of coordination, so typing presents Leonard with a creative channel for expressing his "floods of sexual phantasy, jokes, [and] pseudo-reminiscences" (213). But, unlike the sedate movements of Frances, these outlets often take the form of

"carnivorous and cannibalistic fantasies", indicating that Leonard's independence and autonomy does not coincide with the grain of Sacks's romantic outlook. Indeed, such are the violence of Leonard's "frenzied" movements and vividness of his "voluptuous and demoniac visions", visions in which, like Ellen West, he schizophrenically creates *and* denies reality, that Sacks records the necessity to use "physiological safeguards" and a "punishment cell" (216), precautions which he admits "in themselves were highly distressing or disabling" (214).[35]

At this stage, Leonard's reactions appeared to be entirely pathological. With the explicit request of his patient, Sacks relates his decision to discontinue the drug. Leonard returns to a "cool" state of "composure" and an "'elegaic' detachment of mind" (307), in which he appears to accept and accommodate the "violent feeling of promise and regret" (218). Like Frances, he, too, overcomes his violent psychic reactions to the drug (figured both as an "Elixir of Life" and "a deathly poison" [218]), and, although he admits that the situation is profoundly "sad", the narrative ends in triumphant self-affirmation: "I've broken through barriers which I had all my life. And now, I'll stay myself, and you can keep your L-DOPA" (219).

In Awakenings, the telling of narratives serves, at least, a threefold purpose: documentation of the patient's illness; scientific and theoretical speculation; and a reflection upon different modes of therapy. But, rather than remaining on these planes

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[35] Although Sacks does not usually condone such restraints, the instruments employed serve, in Goffman's phrase, to "mortify" or "curtail" Leonard's grandiose sense of selfhood (Goffman 1970: 50). Such "assaults" (24) or "encroachments", although they serve to typify the negative vision of "Total Institutions" and their staff, are sometimes necessary and may, as Goffman concedes, bring about "psychological relief" for the patient (50).

of generalization, Sacks argues that, in order to do justice to the individual patients, each narrative should be situated in its personal and, in the case of severe long-term illness, institutional contexts. There are also hints, particularly evident in the "elegiac" letters between Sacks and Mrs L. in the 1982 epilogue, that the narratives are, at least partly, constructed as tributes to the patients' ordeals. Sacks attempts to expand upon the traditional forms of pathography and case history, less for pedagogic reasons and more in an attempt to construct a vehicle which can crystallize these intentions. As with Sacks's idealized notion of relatedness, even if such attempts fall short of his optimistic goal, the radicalization of medical form displays an ethos of anti-institutionalism, which, in its refusal to finally categorize patients according to disease type, goes some way to opening up the possibilities of change and recovery. At times the narratives display perceptible inconsistencies: for instance, when Sacks takes on roles and voices which, elsewhere, he expresses his wish to discard. But, in spite of these problems, as David Flood and Rhonda Soricelli suggest, the development of the physician's voice is as crucial and as unfinished as the writing of narrative.

(4) Neurological Autobiography: A Text to Stand On

Sacks, writing in one of his more expressively romantic moods towards the end of Awakenings, considers the possibilities for his post-encephalitic patients "to re-feel the grounds of their being, to re-root themselves in the ground of reality, to return to the first-ground, the earth-ground, the home-ground, from which, in their sickness, they had so long departed" (Sacks 1991a: 275). The mythical motif of the journey, an arduous passage through the tribulations of illness before a circuitous return to health, is a well-worn classical, biblical and romantic allegory of death and rebirth, which provides an extended metaphor to express a radical accommodation by the patient ("a slower, deeper, imaginative awakening" [275]), which can be contrasted with the briefer and less substantial awakenings induced by L-DOPA. There are a number of latent rhetorical and theoretical issues evident in this quotation which can productively be interrogated in order to provide a framework for approaching Sacks's 'autobiographical' book A Leg To Stand On.

The ambiguity of "re-root" serves to indicate a semantic slippage between a conception of an originary self, which is rediscovered in a moment of enlightened introspection, and the notion that to "re-root" suggests the possibility that the roots are laid down elsewhere: that health and selfhood can be redescribed in order to accommodate the present condition. As such, it is possible to understand what Sacks describes as "*the sense* that something is going wrong", to the extent that the "wrong world" can be incorporated into the psychological landscape of the patient (249). This would initiate a cure which does not overcome bodily dysfunction, but which can interpret the execution of certain

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significant activities as indicative of a return to health. Of course, in a constantly worsening illness, such redescription may be precarious, but necessary in order to cope with prolonged disability or the imminence of death.

Although this second reading may be tenable, the rhetoric of "the first-ground, the earth-ground, the home-ground" implies a kind of transcendental consciousness which retains the ability to recover a mystical integration with itself: "a quality of nostalgia, recollection, returning to what one had somehow, always felt and known" (Sacks 1991b: 168). In this view, by finding a "voice" with which to express the experience of illness, the patient is able to reassimilate their altered perception of Being-in-the-world into a fresh pattern of figurative significance. Implied here is a description of an inner monologue, which is termed by Derrida, in his critique of Husserl in the first section of <u>Speech and Phenomena</u>, a "phenomenological voice." Derrida takes Husserl to task for privileging expressive language which "lies outside the empirical sphere" and, in doing so, bracketing off the indicative form of signification which, in its interconnecting network of associations, disrupts a pure sphere of ideality (Derrida 1973: xxxix).

Transferred into the scene of this debate, an understanding of health may be conceived as a purely expressive sign through which the self, in a triumphant moment of transcendence, can accurately express the phenomenal contents of consciousness and thereby recover the sense of itself, hitherto lost through the rigours of illness. Conversely, sickness would be defined as an inability to express this notion of self-referentiality (the self grounded in it*self*) and the inability to transcend the confusion of an inexplicable bodily condition. In contrast, like James and Binswanger, Sacks

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understands health and sickness to be integrally related to each other. Just as the conditions of the *post-encephalitic* patients in <u>Awakenings</u> oscillate between the poles of ebullience and withdrawal, so the signification slips between an excess (the dialectic of health/sickness being identifiable in every activity) and a lack of meaning (health/sickness being an inexpressible precondition of Being).

Derrida understands Husserl's theory of time to be self-defeating; his theory "dictates against any 'punctually isolated' moment, for time is a 'phasing', a continual movement of protentional and retentional traces" (xxxvii). Husserl privileges the present moment as a still point in which memories and past experiences can be organized. In contrast, Derrida argues that the present is mutable and unstable: "a moment compounded of manifold retentions and anticipations, never existing in the isolated instant of awareness" (Norris 1982: 47). From this perspective, embodied experience should be seen as perpetually in temporal flux. Any one attempt to understand it as an abstraction should be understood, not in or for itself, but in reference to other attempts to understand, or frame, it. This argument closely aligns itself with Cavell's notion of moral perfectionism. Only through a constant revisional *process* (that is, revision without progression towards a full, or self-present, sign) along a narrative plane (or planes) can temporal flux be adequately represented. Similarly, the British philosopher, Jonathan Glover discerns such a revisional process is a necessary one to "keep the person's behaviour coherent and intelligible" (Glover 1991: 81). As I shall argue later in this section with reference to the writings of Glover and Israel Rosenfield, neurological disturbances in the (usually) unproblematic awareness of body-image will necessitate, however fragmentarily and

incompletely, the patient's narrating his or her condition in a concerted attempt to cope with such interpretive confusion.

The expression of a unified self is also evident in Sacks's Emersonian tendency to refer to an idealized concept of Nature: "in the bosom of their causes" once more suggests a return to a grounded self. However, alternatively, rather than sinking into romantic reverie, Sacks can be understood to mean that, by engaging with this register of language, the patient is nevertheless able to imaginatively reconceive him or herself as (always) "real and alive" (274), like the *Umwelt* (the organic world) of which they are a part. One of the central commitments apparent throughout Sacks's writing is the idea that through a coming to awareness of the richness and multivalency of the human condition (or Dasein), that which cannot be reduced to one representational mode, the patient may be able to take the first steps away from the mortification of illness towards, as Leonard L. briefly expresses, a celebration of self-existence (*Eigenwelt*).

Sacks, identifying closely with the experience of his patients through the employment of the personal pronoun, suggests the journey of the patient is "endless", a quest with an always unreachable goal, the pursuit of which is figuratively rendered as a "homecoming" (Sacks 1991a: 168). The quotations from Hesse's The Glass Bead Game (1943) and Eliot's 'Little Gidding' (1942) imply, like Odysseus's circuitous voyage, that "home" (Ithaca) can only be recognized and appreciated through the leaving of it: that is, through the realization of what it is like to be away from home, whether it is the hostility of foreign lands for Odysseus, or, as Sacks would describe them, the strange distortions of neurological illness. As such, "home" can only be perceived from a vantage point of its

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opposite, just as "health" can only be understood from a knowledge of illness and dysfunction. While the symbols of health and home can be productively elided to encourage the patient to reactivate, or to newly learn, abilities, it is in the values attached to the execution and the accomplishment of these activities that the patient can initiate a renewed sense of selfhood. In these terms, the self is not to be conceived as a metaphysical entity, but an enabling device through which hostile bodily conditions can be dealt. Following this reading of Sacks, it is more productive to talk about ability and disability than health conceived as an abstract ideal.

Sacks makes the point of stressing that feelings of "homeliness" correspond to "knowing in the depths of one's being that one has a real place in the home of the world" (Sacks 1991a: 272). This home is conceived as being both corporeal (an awareness of a perishable body) and topographical (for the patients of Awakenings, Mount Carmel is the only home they can remember). Such an awareness of home-in-the-world allows a place which is not-home (Mount Carmel) to *act* "as a *home*", an understanding which, as Sacks suggests, is "deeply therapeutic to all of its patients" (272). But, to the extent that a chronic hospital is an institution, forcing the patients to follow the rules and restrictions which define their role as *patients*, "it deprives them of their sense of reality and home, and forces them into false homes and compensations of regression and sickness" (272). To use a Wordsworthian phrase, only through a rectification of feeling[36] (that is, the emotional values that are associated with home: familiarity, friendliness, compassion, comfort and care) can the notion of this figurative return to health be edifying or

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[36] See the discussion of Wordsworth's rectification of feeling in my MA dissertation (Halliwell 1993: 16-22).

conciliatory. By stressing the word "settle" (272), Sacks is able to suggest the simultaneity of pacifying (to settle down), active decision-making (to settle) and a notion of dwelling in the world (a settlement). As I will explore in A Leg To Stand On, the therapeutic potential of symbol and myth cannot work on the level of the miraculous and must, to a large extent, be mirrored by amenable conditions of living, which can propel the promise of the narrative into proximity with the patient's experience.

Many of Sack's critics have approached A Leg To Stand On as a text which, in the corpus of Sacks's writing, requires special consideration. Although Awakenings disrupts many of the conventions of classical science, it retains a recognizable structure in its assemblage of case histories through which Sacks's commentary is channelled. Conversely, the discursive narration of A Leg To Stand On places this "neurological novel" firmly outside the generic realm of scientific writing (Sacks 1991b: viii). However, this does not render it anti-scientific or anti-philosophical. In many ways it represents an amalgam of the *Bildüngsroman*, a novel of exploration and human growth, and the philosophical novel, characterized by the high modernist writings of Mann, Hesse and Musil. Because the Germanic feel of the novel aligns it closely with the tradition of romantic science, it is not surprising to find Sacks evoking Mendelssohn and Kant at crucial moments in the text. The history of the novel's composition indicates that the published version is a severely curtailed edit of a sprawling work which would probably have been more discursive than narrational. As it exists, the narrative dimension is clearly the focus and provocation for ideas and reflections.

The story represents an autobiographical account of a profound injury to his leg which Sacks sustained in the mid-1970s while mountaineering in Norway. Instead of merely documenting the medical complications which arise when he loses feeling and tone in his leg (sustained after an operation to his quadriceps), Sacks sees his "own story" has the "shape" of a "universal existential experience, the journey of a soul into the underworld and back, a spiritual drama - on a neurological basis" (Sacks 1991b: 146). As Teresa de Lauretis has commented in an essay on Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar (1963), the claim of a "universal existential" drama must be established by

> filtering a unique emotional and experiential content through the sieve of symbolic discourse...its success and forcefulness are due in large part to the author's ability to integrate the historical, diachronic self...with a synchronic, timeless mythic structure, the descent-ascent pattern...or from one state of being to another (de Lauretis 1976: 173).

This "theme of rebirth" presents a similar structural pattern to that used in Awakenings and, as such, can be understood as an attempt by Sacks, as physician, to complement his attempts to empathize with his patients. Here, he figures himself as a patient forced to contend with fear, pain, confusion and the slow process of rehabilitation which, in the autobiographical mode of the book, allows him insights into the experiences of other patients. William Howarth claims that this autobiographical mode "is a double form of retrospection in which the author plays both character and narrator, one to whom events happened and one who now relates the history" (Howarth 1990: 110).

This double perspective allows Sacks to shift between positioning himself as a protagonist (in many ways, an anti-protagonist to whom events happen) in a symbolic drama and also the commentator and committed, but detached, philosopher of illness.

The projection of two roles, "two selves, patient and physician" (111) indicates that here the self, rather than something originary, is a textual construction which enables modes of (always incomplete) understanding to cluster around different subject positions. The dual commitment of protagonist and engaged thinker indicates that this novel, despite posing many conceptual problems, is a project of "good faith" and not the "false book" which Ella Kusnetz believes it to be (Kusnetz 1992: 192).

Although she is generally hostile to Sacks's writing for patronizing his patients or overshadowing them with his own voice, Kusnetz is particularly critical of A Leg To Stand On. She has two broad, but connected, criticisms of Sacks. Firstly, she claims he is caught in a conceptual trap:

> although the very science he appeals to subverts any notion of a "self" or a "soul" granted by God or metaphysics, he is inclined to override his own logic with emotion. His books, in fact, talk about disease as though it were a falling-away from some pre-wired wholeness, a disintegration longing for reintegration (178).

Her second criticism stems from what she sees as Sacks's close, but troubled, allegiance with Freud. She claims Sacks scientific project, to "describe mental phenomena physiologically" (177), closely resembles Freud's, as does his role as "neurologist qua analyst, the analyst qua guru" (178). She views this identification to be misplaced, because cures for "intractable" diseases such as "organic brain disorders" are very rare (179, 197). It is for these very reasons that Kusnetz suggests that "these stories appeal to readers so powerfully": "underlying them all, more basic to the narratives than even the structure of analytic cure or spiritual conversion, is a much more irresistible, primitive fantasy of primal narcissism, of wholeness regained, of return to undifferentiated unity"

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(194). She claims that the text is merely a strategy on behalf of Sacks to gain his patients's confidence and, thereby, to fulfil a narcissistic wish for himself and the reader: "Sacks needs to lose the leg...in order to regain it" (194).

Whilst I would agree with Kusnetz's reaction to Sacks's tendency to "go mystical" (177) at times of romantic rapture, by interpreting Sacks's project to be, in her mind, a misplaced psychoanalytic one, she is reducing a complex body of writing to a predefined genre. His writings, instead of being little more than confidence tricks, may better be appreciated as artful attempts to move to the margins and between limited discourses in the Jamesian hope that more, rather than less, experiences are accounted for. Although Sacks periodically lapses into romantic reverie, this does not render his project defunct. As I have made evident in my reading of Awakenings, by harnessing his understanding that regular encounters with his patients are, to some degree, analytic ones, together with his piecemeal deployment of Freudian terms, he is able to appropriate psychoanalytic ideas without relying on them to the extent that they become the dominant explanatory discourse. Even if no cure is effected, the telling of stories can often be a lifeline when others have dissolved. As Martin Swales comments in his work on the German *Bildüngsroman*:

> the story, then, becomes the guarantor that one is living. Obliteration of the story may seem to promise the realization of human wholeness, but ultimately it is a wholeness brought at the unacceptable price of stasis, bloodlessness, death (Swales 1978: 33).

In other words, the telling of, and participation in, narrative may make the "contingencies" of bodily existence "acceptable" (33). Moreover, Sacks does intimate,

as I have shown above, that there is, in the words of Kusnetz, "no paradise regained, just as there are no transcendent consolations" (Kusnetz 1992: 195). The telling of narratives, which lead towards, but never finally reach, a state of idealized health, is a manner in which to organize data as it is experienced, in an attempt to find patterns of significance in illness. Rather than equating wholeness solely with the fulfilment of a narcissistic wish, stories serve to inform "the very flux of a character's life and experience" (Swales 1978: 36). This is not to deny that stories of recovery do, on one level, appeal to a primaeval wish to recover a feeling of lost wholeness, but it may be possible to incorporate this trajectory as part of the symbolic texture of narrative without it dominating and paralysing the other dimensions.

I detect an additional problem with Sacks's narrative which goes some way to vindicating Kusnetz's claim that the text is a kind of confidence trick to gain the reader's or the patient's trust. The injury occurred in the early 1970s, but Sacks writes his account nearly a decade later. The fear and uncertainty which accompanies the experience has, by the time of writing, receded to a point of temporal and emotional distance. Although the meaning of certain experiences are constantly revised and qualified (most profoundly, the shifting metaphors through which he attempts to describe the feeling, or lack of feeling, in his damaged leg), the story cannot be interpreted solely as a mode of self-therapy. If it is to be representative of such, the narrative should have been drafted during rehabilitation. In many ways, Sacks is able to "stand" outside the frame of the narrative and, in doing so, distances himself from the kind of engaged autobiography that would represent a lifeline for the patient. However, in his defence, Sacks claims that the narrative should not be read wholly in this manner. He states that the narrative

investigates wider neurological issues concerning "singular disorders of body-image and body-ego" (Sacks 1991b: vii), together with an ongoing "critique of current neurological medicine" (viii) and the concepts and taxonomies currently in use. As such, Sacks's journey is twofold: the recovery from illness, "the abyss of bizarre, and even terrifying effects" (vii), and the search for a scientific (but not systematic) understanding of neurological damage. Only from the "double-perspective" detected by William Howarth and asserted by Sacks in his Binswangerian formulation of a "clinical ontology" or "existential neurology" (166), can these issues be explored together.

Another pejorative charge which Kusnetz levels at Sacks, is that he poeticizes the experience of illness by projecting himself as the hero, or quester, of his texts. But, unlike the criticisms levelled at <u>Awakenings</u> and <u>The Man</u>, in which Sacks's rhetoric often obscures the voice of his patient, in his autobiographical novel he is, by definition, the protagonist. As such, his quest is both positive and negative. On one level, within the frame of the leg-story, his goal is to actively redescribe health in order that he can once more begin to *think* of himself as an active being. But, his is not a journey to discover a graspable object, for his grail also consists of the passive process of recovery.

Sacks figures himself as a specific type of quester. Following the spiritual strain of the story, Sacks envisages his illness and recovery as a "pilgrimage" which, he suggests, "fortune, or my injury, had forced upon me" (Sacks 1991b: 146).[37] Reacting to the

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[37] The religion that Sacks turns to "for comfort" in his state of "limbo" is closer to Jamesian mysticism than any doctrinal belief, for he claims that they do not demand the "blunt plain commitment that 'religion' involved" (Sacks 1991b: 81). He claims that through the descriptions, as well as the rituals and evocations, found in "art and religion" he is able find solace, "formulation and hope", in the respect that these texts "could communicate, could make sense, make more intelligible - and tolerable" (81).

predictable label of "uneventful recovery" (119) by which the doctors characterize his

case, Sacks describes his pilgrimage as,

> a journey, in which one moved, if one moved, stage by stage, or by stations. Every stage, every station, was a completely new advent, requiring a new start, a new birth or beginning. One had to begin, to be born, again and again. Recovery was an exercise in nothing short of birth, for as mortal man grows sick, and dies, by stages, so natal man grows well, and is quickened, by stages - radical stages, existence stages, absolute and new: unexpected, unexpectable, incalculable and surprising (Sacks 1991b: 124).

This description of sequential stages does not contradict the argument of Paul Churchill,

who suggests that story should be conceived as prior to any such divisions; rather, that

these "stations" or "advents" (119) are defined as ritualized exercises or "acts" (140)

defined *within* the frame of the individual's story. On a formal level these stages

represent ways in which the recovery process can be traced (for example, 'Becoming a

Patient' and 'Convalescence') through the breaks or discontinuities in the story ("the

unimaginable next step" [119]) and, on an existential level, attempts to render the

personal significance of the experiences ('Limbo', 'Quickening', 'Solvitur Ambulando').

Accordingly, a "new birth or beginning" becomes a conceptual strategy for refocusing the

mind on overcoming of bodily breakdown within a narrative of "healthening" (139).

Such beginnings and rebirths represent significant moments in a narrative which, like

Cavell, Sacks conceives as a one of self-becoming. Self-construction can be envisaged

as a strategy to activate the self in an attempt to deal with the situation at hand. Instead

of moving towards a *telos* where the self is fully realized, the process is revealed as

unending: in Sacks's words (but closely echoing the Emerson of 'Circles'), a journey

leading "both forwards and backwards" (168). Whilst his description of the story as

pilgrimage goes some way to distance the text from the criticism of quest-narratives as representing stories of male conquest, Sacks, like James's doctrine of the strenuous life, runs into the trap of equating activity too closely with masculinity. The "philosophical emergency" into which he is thrown after his operation forces him to seek a redescription of his identity (through an exploration of his disrupted body-image) in order that he might reconfirm himself as a human being. The enforced passivity of patienthood forces him "to relinquish all the powers [he] normally command[ed]": in other words, "the sense and affect of *activity*" (79). Sacks finds this mortifying because he claims it humbles his "active, masculine, ordering self", which he equates with "science", "self-respect" and "mind" (79). Illness and passivity are not only blows to a self defined as human, but, thus conceived, also rational, moral and masculine.

If Sacks figures his symbolic story as a "universal existential experience", following a mythic pattern of descent and ascent (the fall on the mountain into a condition of suffering, then from a state of wilderness and limbo to a reintegration back to health, bringing with it the joy of recovery)[38], but the text actually reveals itself as a male story, then Kusnetz's position may be strengthened: that the text is a duplicitous one which attempts to hide its own gendered foundations. Furthermore, the fact that it is Sacks's leg that is damaged, an organ commanding mobility (allowing action and movement) and

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[38] In a discussion of Coleridge's <u>Ancient Mariner</u>, Cavell quotes Robert Penn Warren who, in his essay 'A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading (1951), notes two important "qualities" of the Fall: "it is a condition of will...'out of time' and it is the result of no single human motive" (quoted in Cavell 1988: 57). In line with the existential story which Sacks narrates, Cavell's Heideggerian interpretation of Warren suggests that because "there is no (single) motive" which brings about the Fall, the motive is "the horror of being human itself." (57) When Sacks stumbles across the bull, figured both as "magnificent" and "utterly monstrous" (5), he is, on this reading, confronting the "horror", or the "nausea", of his own existence.

stability (the maintenance of the vertical, or phallic, human form) provides fuel for such an argument. Instead of writing a text which, in its interweaving of different narrative strands with other generic strains, is open and liberating, Sacks may be seen as merely relying on a narrative framework which conceals a masculinist myth. One response to such a claim would be that Sacks has written an example of what a neurological text might be and, in so doing, he may encourage other patients to write their own texts. He is not so much seeking to overlay every story with a universal symbolic pattern, but, in his drive to privilege individual subjectivity and unique phenomenological experiences, he outlines some of the investigative and therapeutic possibilities of narrative.

Rather than pursuing these problems in the direction of a feminist critique of Sacks's masculinist view of health and activity, I wish to acknowledge the importance of such a project (one which counters, in Donald Meyer's phrase, the 'positive thinking' of romantic science), but here I will concentrate on the concept of body-image and how it is figured in A Leg To Stand On, in order to return to my central interest in Sacks's larger philosophical project which seeks to explore various aspects of selfhood.

Jonathan Glover detects "at least three different things" to which the term body-image refers: a visual image of the body, a tactile sensation and an awareness of "size, shape and posture" (Glover 1991: 81). He argues that usually these three aspects contribute together to create a fully sensuous body-image, although, as James indicates in Principles. a person is rarely aware of each aspect in isolation. Unless conscious attention is focused explicitly on how the body feels or looks, the body-image retains a background awareness which constitutes, in Israel Rosenfield's phrase, "the brain's absolute frame of reference"

(Rosenfield 1992: 45). By this he means an equation between an objective body viewed from an Archimedean point and a sense that the individual body conforms to such a model. As such, Rosenfield suggests that the undisrupted body-image represents a self-referential space which provides a marker of corporeal and, by extension, mental continuity. If the body-image was not conceived as a sustaining, if evolving, entity then Humean attacks on the continuity of personal identity would seem more convincing. As Glover indicates, the elusiveness of the pronoun 'I', as an "indexical" (Glover 1991: 66) or an empty signifier, is given signification by the presence of the body which lends the 'I' an empirical context by which it is grounded and contextualized.

Rosenfield and Glover both consider the breakdown or distortion of the body-image in reference to neurological impairment. They claim that it is in the fleeting and insistent impressions of the body that value and significance are placed upon the confirmation of bodily continuity. When this confirmation is disrupted through a radical change in the impressions of the body-image, as it is for Sacks after his operation, an attack on the basis of personal identity and selfhood is initiated. In a similar vein, Rosenfield in recalling the case of Madame I who, in the 1905 account of Deny and Camus[39], is recorded substantially to have lost her sense of bodily awareness. She entirely loses the capacity to visualize her body as a self-referring entity and, consequently, can only affirm it as belonging to, or "that she *was*", herself "by touching her own flesh" (Rosenfield 1992: 41). Her disorder is not that her fleshy body has slipped out of existence, but that she has lost the ability to remember her body as part of a dynamic continuum:

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[39] G. Deny and P. Camus, 'Sur une forme d'hypocondrie aberrante due à la perte de la conscience du corps', Revue Neurologique, London, 1920, 32ff.

Madame I was desperately trying to recreate that reference to herself by touching her body, since she could not otherwise remember her past. Unable to know her body as part of her memory (her brain could not create a body image)...Madame I's existence was in doubt to her own self, and hence so, too, were her memories. Her attempt to create a sense of self, her constant touching and rubbing her own body, is a metaphor for memory; a brain isolate from the body has no memory (42).

In order to compensate for her inability to visualize the body as a continuing entity she attempts to refamiliarize herself with her body:

[by] creating momentary images of herself as she ran her hands through her hair and over her body. But the images were disconnected, referring neither to one another nor, as a consequence, to a continuous image of herself, and hence they were phantom-like. Her body existed only intermittently, in starts and stops; and so did her recognitions (42).

This quotation confirms Glover's claim that the three perspectives of body-image which he detects should not be conceived as a "unity", for "perhaps some of the distortions involve interference with one [aspect] and not another" (Glover 1991: 81). By privileging one of the aspects (in this case the tactile over the visual and the proprioceptive) it may be possible strategically to reintroduce the memory of a body-image and, emerging from this, a sense of selfhood. In Rosenfield's thesis this constitutes a relocation of the familiar in the strange and estranged.

After his operation, Sacks suffers more localized neurological damage than does Madame I, but to similar effect, resulting not only in a wasting of his leg, but an inability to recognize the leg as belonging to him: "the day before touching it, I had at least touched *something* - unexpected, unnatural, unlifelike, perhaps but nevertheless something; whereas today, impossibly, I touched nothing at all" (48). It is as if, in an attempt to cope

with the damage to his nervous tissue, Sacks ceases to recognize the leg as part of

himself, misplacing, or jettisoning, the leg-image and sealing the body in an adaptive

configuration of unity. Unlike Madame I, for Sacks it is the tactile aspect of the body-

image which is most profoundly impaired. He is able to see his leg, but he loses the

sense that it is connected to the rest of his body. In contrast to the heavy presence of the

cast which encases the leg, Sacks dreams that his leg is either inorganic ("chalk or plaster

or marble" [64]), "something friable and incoherent, like sand or cement" lacking "inner

structure or cohesion" (65), or lacking existence (mist, darkness or shadow).[40] Crucially

for my consideration of narrative, Sacks reflects that, "none of the dreams seemed to tell

any 'story'. They were fixed and static, like tableaux or dioramas, solely designed, as it

were, to exhibit their appalling-boring centre-piece, this nothingness, this phantom, of

which nothing could be said" (65). The breakdown of a coherent body-image is integrally

connected with the (in)ability to tell a cohesive story of selfhood and identity.[41]

Another example of this fracturing of everyday experience is dramatized in the "scotoma"

(67) or hiatus which Sacks experiences when he loses the left-side of his visual field. He

watches the nurse's gestures but does not see "her movements as continuous, but, instead,

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[40] Following Binswanger's emphasis on the mood of dreams in his analysis, when Sacks reflects on his condition, his experiential time, that which consists "solely of personal moments, life-moments, crucial moments" (Sacks 1991b: 8), 'thickens' in the manner of dreams.

[41] It is important to note that the cohesiveness of the story may be entirely dependent upon the firmness of belief or the emotional involvement, with which the storyteller, or reader, engages with the story. Cohesion cannot be understood as the pregiven unity and continuity of a linear narrative; as Sacks indicates, after the initial mountain confrontation "there ceased, in a sense, to be any 'story', or any particular 'mood' to give tension and connection to the days that followed" (Sacks 1991b: 23). He realizes that the story that had been told and the story that is to be told are "essentially connected", in that Sacks, as narrator, makes these connections and unifies disparate experiences into a narrative whole. As such, the sense of a constructed story echoes the notion of a constructed self which is central to the narrative process of "healthening" (139).

as a succession of 'stills'...[a] mosaic world...[without] action" (70).[42] However, unlike the tactile and proprioceptive aspects of body-image, this aura, or Sartrean nausea (*la nausée*), soon vanishes and is replaced by a continuous field of vision. Sacks, like Madame I, emphasizes the confusion and consternation which accompanies his loss of bodily continuity:

> I could no longer remember having a leg. I could no longer remember how I had ever walked and climbed. I felt inconceivably cut off from the person who had walked and run and climbed just five days before. There was only a 'formal' continuity between us (58).

Sacks, the professional and attentive physician, knows of the "visual relation" (Rosenfield 1992: 54) of the leg to his trunk (that is, the 'formal' sense of bodily continuity), but Sacks, the fearful and experiencing patient, has no sentience of such a connection. Only by continuously casting around for language to describe his loss of feeling or "mysterious 'abeyance'" (93) can Sacks, as spectator, affirm this formal continuity and hope that the familiarity of wholeness will follow closely upon such Cavellian acknowledgement.

At this stage, Sacks comments that "there was no 'entering', nor any thought or possibility of entering, these purely sensorial and intellectual phenomena" (111). The gap between third- and first-person allows Sacks to affirm the leg to be "fine, surgically speaking" but to be "disquieted" and "shocked" (91) by the impairment of a integral feeling. As Rosenfield discerns, "seeing is not by itself 'knowing' and that the lack of inner self-

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[42] The description of a "mosaic world" corresponds to Sacks's discussion of "mosaic vision" which he detects often accompanies severe migraines. The close overlapping of categories documented in <u>Migraine</u>, disorders of visual perception, body-image distortion, speech and language problems, "states of double or multiple consciousness" and "elaborate dreamy, nightmarish, trance-like or delirious states" (Sacks 1973: 93-96), are all dramatized during Sacks's illness in <u>A Leg To Stand On</u>.

reference, together with the incontrovertible sight of the leg, therefore created a paradoxical relation to it" (Rosenfield 1992: 53).

Like the post-encephalitic patients of <u>Awakenings</u>, Sacks, through the faculty of his higher-order consciousness, is able to reflect upon an injury which, following the work of Edelman, is thought to effect the "identity, memory and space...[which] compose...'primary consciousness'" (186). The problematic in both books is that the bodily condition is unrecognisable (that is, unrepresentable in language) or, because it is so changed from that which was previously accepted as familiar, the patient wishes to deny a connection to, or equation with, his or her body. Thus, the activity of narrating the illness can not only connect the outlandish present to a familiar and known past but, through its revision and development, it can help clarify, or give expression to, disturbing phenomenological experiences. Like Heidegger's therapeutic philosophy which seeks to rescue Dasein from estrangement, this kind of therapeutic narrative can make the connection which may help recover the "immediate *thereness*...which no thinking could reach" (118). This "thereness" constitutes both a renewed sense of the self as coextensive with the body and an acknowledgement that the self has a place in the world through which, in the utopian words of Sacks, the patient can come to "*know* life, as never before."[43]

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[43] This is evident as Sacks comments on his recovery, he feels that his "leg had come home, to its home, to me" (Sacks 1991b: 111). This homecoming seems to correspond to Rosenfield's notions of self-reference as well as to the existentially inspired conception of "thereness."

Having insisted on the importance of narrative in making sense of bodily conditions, in which the disconnected and "fluttering frames" (106) of the body-image can be lent temporal significance and dynamic continuity, it is important to emphasize that neurological damage cannot be repaired in such a way (similarly, illness cannot be simply overcome by willing the body into action). Autobiographical narration is merely a strategy or a trick (like a mirror, a video-film, a rhyme or a piece of music used as a "'symbolic'...form of self-reference" [Rosenfield 1992: 58]), which works by interweaving a number of figurative levels. Narrative can thus lend a static image of the body (and an idealized version of self) a plasticity and a fluidity along its temporal axis.

I will discuss the failure of narrative in the next section, but here, as with <u>Awakenings</u>, an acknowledgement of the "uselessness of words" (107), rather than discouraging the patient to narrate, may provide the spur to write or tell a revisional narrative, in which the interweaving of different strands may help to contextualize notions of health and healthening towards which the patient can work. This multi-layered technique of construction and self-creation, in certain neurological disorders affecting primary consciousness, may help to activate a process of bodily rehabilitation.

(5) Defamiliarizing the Self: Narrating the Other

In <u>The Man Who</u> (1994), the English version of Peter Brook's dramaturgical development of Sacks's work, one of the patients, arising momentarily from his immobility and despair, expresses a realization that he has no habits, but only tricks and strategies with which to combat his disorder. Much of the strangeness which Sacks associates with the life-world of those suffering neurological impairments results from the disruption of habitual responses to the environment, previously either innately present (such as reflexive responses) or acquired subconsciously and gradually from an early age. When these background abilities are affected, the patient's phenomenological and physiological worlds are thrown into crisis. In an attempt to recover these lost abilities, not only do the patients have to reorient themselves in their world (through a process of strategic redescription), but they also have to learn different practical methods for compensating for impairments. If, in an existential reading of James, habit is associated closely with habitat (a place, or a home, in the world)[44], then the arduous task of the patient is one of more than just metaphorical relocation. As Joseph Thomas comments in an essay on 'Figures of Habit in William James' (1993), habit "is meant to perform a kind of midwifery, easing entry into a more secure, less 'uncanny' world" (Thomas 1993: 15). In cases when these habitual responses are undermined, the resulting uncanny world becomes one of estrangement.

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[44] For instance, James writes: "[Tolstoy's] crisis was the getting of his soul in order, the discovery of its genuine habitat and vocation, the escape from falsehoods into what for him were ways of truth. It was a case of heterogeneous personality tardily and slowly finding its unity and level" (James 1985: 186).

In this, my concluding section of this chapter (and the thesis), I outline some of these tricks and techniques deployed to combat self-estrangement as they arise in what has become Sacks's most popular book, The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat. I argue that many of these tricks, although ostensibly compensating for the loss of narrative coherence, often serve to recoup the importance and primacy of telling stories. By developing his clinical tales, Sacks continues his progression away from the institutionalized case history towards a symbolic structure in which he attempts to rescue something of the unique qualities and personalities of his patients. Unlike Jacqueline Rose's argument that The Man represents an extended and "unending joke" (Ross 1988: 238), or Dominique Goy-Blanquet's assertion that the text "arouse[s] more laughter than compassion" (Goy-Blanquet 1993: 20), I contend that if laughter is evoked from the reading of these tales, it serves to engage the reader more out of a sense of compassion and, often, the discomfort of identification, rather than arousing mockery and denigration.

It is helpful to view Sacks's moral scheme as a response to the model set up by Erving Goffman in Stigma (1963), where the outlandish appearance and behaviour of the severely disabled (defined as outlandish through normative social codes, which disqualify the individual "from full social acceptance" [Goffman 1963: 9]) marks them out, or stigmatizes them, as Other. In Goffman's view, these differences, whether "abominations of the body", "blemishes of individual character", or "tribal stigma", serve to reduce the stigmatized person "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (12). Instead of affirming such reduction and disqualification, Sacks wishes to depict each patient in a "fabulous" world which conveys the idiosyncratic impressions of their particular neurological disorder (Sacks 1986: xi). However, as a caveat, it is important

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to note that Sacks encounters a double bind. By framing his sketches with sensationalist titles and the rhetoric of fantasy (as can be detected in the title of <u>An Anthropologist on Mars</u>), Sacks is in danger of creating a series of stigmatized and grotesque freak-shows which invite a voyeuristic curiosity, instead of encouraging pathos. But, in Sacks's defense, perhaps this is a danger it would be hard to avoid if he is to engage with the often profoundly disorientating experiences of neurological impairment. I have traced the problematic of figuring the Other in Sacks's writing, from his early idealistic aspirations and the writing of case studies in <u>Awakenings</u> to the emergence of the self's Other in <u>A Leg To Stand On</u>. But it is in <u>The Man</u> that the difficulties of representation are foregrounded. Against the assertion that Sacks succeeds only in stigmatizing and dehumanizing his patients in order to make them interesting, it is more profitable to view such a technique as a wager, through which he risks the apparent integrity of the text in order to illuminate his interest in identity and selfhood.

Many of the tales are concerned centrally with recognition and the disturbance of basic cognitive faculties. The title case study (7-21) introduces concerns which run throughout the opening section on neurological losses and defects. Sacks's patient, a musician, Dr P., has "wholly lost the emotional, the concrete, the personal, the 'real'", although his abstract and musical skills remain unaffected (Sacks 1986a: 5). In their initial encounter Sacks reports,

> instead of looking, gazing, at me, 'taking me in', in the normal way, made sudden strange fixations - on my nose, on my right ear, down to my chin, up to my right eye - as if noting (even studying) these individual features, but not seeing my whole face, its changing expressions, 'me', as a whole...there was just a teasing strangeness, some failure in the normal

interplay of gaze and expression. He saw me, he *scanned* me, and yet...
(8)

Dr P. suffers no impairment to his optical apparatus, but he incurs some damage in the parietal and occipital lobes at the back of his brain. As a result he is unable to relate details and "tiny features" to "the picture as a whole" (8-9). Dr P. thus "constructs the world as a computer construes it, by means of key features and schematic relationships" (14), but he fails to "behold" (12) or make any sense "of a landscape or scene" (9).[45] Because "he saw nothing as familiar" (13) Dr P. approaches objects and faces as "if they were abstract puzzles or tests" to painstakingly decipher (12), and, whilst he can easily recognize abstract shapes, he tends to explain a more complex object (like a flower) by reducing it to its constituent parts. But, whilst Dr P. continues to mistake people and objects, Sacks encourages him to nurture a kind of "inner music" to supply himself with a sense of bodily continuity (17). Thus, by focusing on his sensitivity to musical rhythm, Dr P. is able to provide an accompaniment to activities such as dressing and washing.

Another example of confused cognizance is found in the case of Christina, 'The Disembodied Lady' (42-52), who has lost her "sixth sense" of proprioception, and with it the automatic "sensory flow" and "body tone" (42) which lends a sense of three-dimensionality to the body. As a result she feels "disembodied", "pithed"; in Sacks's words, "she has lost...the fundamental, organic mooring of...corporeal identity" (50).

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[45] Dr P.'s story can be read as a parable of reductive interpretation. Just as the "key features and schematic relationships" which Dr P. is able to identify cannot account for faces or pictures, so too the identification of particular neurological mechanisms cannot do justice to a patient's experiences. Sacks hints at this interpretation when he claims Dr P.'s agnosia is similar to "a science which eschews the judgmental, the particular, the personal, and becomes entirely abstract and computational" (Sacks 1986a: 19).

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Like Deny's and Camus's 1905 case, Madame I, Christina has to continually stimulate her body to recognize it and to acknowledge that it is there.

Similarly in 'Hands' (56-62), Madelaine J., congenitally blind and suffering from cerebral palsy, cannot "recognize or identify anything" that is placed in her hands. Whilst her hands are "*mildly* spastic and athetotic" and felt like "lumps of dough", Sacks infers that her "sensory capacities...were completely intact" (56). But she is unable to perceive or recognize objects until, stimulated by hunger, she reaches out for a bagel. This moment induces her to "reach out to explore or touch the whole world...by a curiously roundabout sort of inference or guesswork" (59), as she begins to refamiliarize herself with the spatial properties of simple shapes.

These three examples reveal Sacks's ongoing concern with recognition and perception: how his patients conceive of themselves and their location in the world. He concentrates on the most basic of faculties and the most common of activities in order to unearth the confusions and incertitudes which characterize the recurring existential questions which preoccupy James and Binswanger. I do not wish to suggest that neurological concerns merely provide a vehicle for posing insoluble epistemological questions about identity, but I will continue to focus attention on how the questions arise from individual experience. As I have already argued, Sacks chooses to avoid a mimetic mode of writing which would tend to suppress these questions and, instead, he foregrounds figurative language in order to focus upon the manifold problems of recognition and acknowledgement.

Sacks's clinical tales can be read as versions of the uncanny. I do not wish unnecessarily to burden the cases presented in <u>The Man</u> with the critical baggage of the uncanny; but Sacks, echoing the theories of Binswanger and Cavell, responds to those qualities in his patients which exemplify idiosyncrasy and which serve to transform the familiar and the prosaic into the fantastic and the strange. A brief consideration of the uncanny indicates the unknowability which lies at the heart of identity; the acknowledgement of which, as I have demonstrated in the work of James and Binswanger, shifts the concerns of romantic science away from questions of epistemology towards forms of pragmatic narrative.

In one of the exemplary studies of structuralist poetics, Tzvetan Todorov outlines the generic parameters of the fantastic, positioning it between the categories of the marvellous (supernatural) and the uncanny (natural). Todorov suggests that the fantastic is characterized as the reader hesitates "between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described" (Todorov 1975: 31). He claims, the *"reader's hesitation* is therefore the first condition of the fantastic" (31). Todorov indicates central differences between the three terms, but he allows for their combination to create hybrid forms of writing; although, as Rosemary Jackson notes in her reading of Todorov, the "polarization of the marvellous and the uncanny leads to some confusion" (Jackson 1981: 32). Jackson characterizes fantastic narratives (which, as a mode of writing, rather than a genre, can encompass the uncanny) as transporting "the reader of the known and everyday world into something more strange" (34). Unlike the marvellous which tends towards a non-referential mode of writing, the fantastic insists on its "interstitial placing"

(65), in a way which can be used to question the categories of "real" and "imaginary" by "shifting the relations between them through its indeterminacy" (35).

Jackson's central thesis is that, rather than circumscribing an escapist fiction, the deployment of fantasy can serve to disrupt dominant forms of medical 'realism' (in the case of romantic science) and, as such, in Shklovsky's phrase, it can defamiliarize habitual channels of interpretation. This is not to devalue the importance that James places on the mechanisms of habit, but Jackson foregrounds the presence of a threshold between the two modes which helps to illuminate the devices at work in habitualized writing. As a result, the fantastic

> produces a feeling of estrangement, of being not 'at home' in the world...It uncovers what is hidden and, by doing so, effects a disturbing transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar....To introduce the fantastic is to replace familiarity, comfort, *das Heimlich*, with estrangement, unease, the uncanny. It is to introduce dark areas, of something completely other and unseen (Jackson 1981: 65, 179).

If Sacks is to envision the phenomenological experiences of his neurologically-impaired patients - experiences which cannot be adequately represented through mimetic modes of writing - he moves towards the fantastic in order to convey the coexistence of the familiar and the unfamiliar. But, unlike many fantasy writers, his fantastic is not other-worldly. Rather, the fluidity and expansiveness of phenomenological descriptions emerge to disrupt firm boundaries and categorical distinctions. With this "disturbing transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar" Sacks encroaches on the territory of the uncanny as described by Todorov and Jackson and outlined in Freud's classic essay, 'The Uncanny' (1919).

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In his discussion of E. T. A. Hoffman's short story, 'The Sandman' (1815), Freud, following his predecessor Ernst Jentsch, works through the notion that the *unheimlich* is to be found within the *heimlich*. By this he means that the foreign and the strange are to be found in, and implicated by, the everyday and the familiar, the dominant interpretation depending on the affect invoked in the reader and the depth and angle of his or her perception. Thus, the uncanny comes to represent a region within, or inside, the homely which disturbs. As such, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 1964: 17, 220). Freud rightly stresses that the uncanny cannot be completely equated with the unfamiliar; he indicates the tendency for *heimlich* to develop "in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite" (226). As Tobin Siebers has indicated, Freud's emphasis on ambivalence, linked with Todorov's notion that the fantastic arouses hesitation in the reader, indicates both the "importance of narrative perspective" and a disturbing, if incomplete, "identification between subjects" (Siebers 1984: 48).

Rosemary Jackson suggests that the uncanny should not only be understood as a domain, a place or "something one does not know one's way about in" (Freud 1964: 17, 221). It is primarily a literary effect, or a technique of representation, in which this sense of ambivalence is stressed. According to Jentsch,

> in story-telling, one of the most reliable artistic devices for producing uncanny effects easily is to leave the reader in uncertainty as to whether he has a human person or rather an automaton before him...This is done in such a way that the uncertainty does not appear directly at the focal point of his attention, so that he is not given the occasion to investigate and clarify the matter straight away (Jentsch 1995: 13).

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Freud wishes to force a distinction between the uncanny as it is manifest in "life" and fiction (Freud 1964: 17, 249), but Jentsch points to "devices" and "effects" which, along with his reference to the reader, emphasizes the primacy of representation. Importantly, Jentsch indicates that the effect of the uncanny cannot be easily reduced to its literary devices. Rather than trying to codify the uncanny as a specific reading operation, which, as in Jonathan Culler's reading of Todorov, "attempts to discover a central structure or generative device which governs all levels of the text" (Culler 1975: 172), an uncanny sensation often results from the indeterminacies and the discontinuities of the text. Experienced as affect, the uncanny has a dimension which cannot be wholly explained by reference to the formal technique used to produce it, or to the authorial intention which informs it: there is a margin of mystery which cannot be explained. This notion is akin to Paul de Man's conception of "hermeneutic understanding", which, as he comments in his essay on American New Criticism, "is always, by its nature, lagging behind" and, therefore, can never fully encapsulate the "mystery" of the text (de Man 1971: 32).

In the case of Sacks's tales, although his efforts to figure his patients in the "mythical" and "fabulous" worlds (Sacks 1986a: xi) in which he believes them to reside, there is always "the inaccessibility of a secret" (Derrida 1981: 71): a fund of inexplicability which is discernable from his reading of his patients and, in turn, is mirrored in the reader's efforts to read Sacks's tales. This inexplicability turns upon the nature of selfhood and how it might be represented. This notion is contrary to Freud's interpretation which, as Hélène Cixous observes, reduces the ambivalence and suggestiveness of 'The Sandman' to what he perceives to be the "thematic economy of the story" (Cixous 1976: 534). Thus, Freud undermines his conception of the uncanny by underwriting the story with a primary

reading of the castration complex. Sacks resists falling into this trap of reductionism. Although he utilizes the language of neurology in order to organically root his patient's conditions, their experiences remain fundamentally irreducible. Sacks chooses not to prune "all 'superfluous' detail" from his text (534), but lets it float on an indefinite level of signification. He is quick to acknowledge areas where his professional learning can do little to unravel the mysteries of illness or to provide therapeutic aids for his patients. Although Sacks is in possession of the interpretive tools which his patients lack or have lost, like James and Binswanger, as a committed reader of illness he does not avoid acknowledging areas of doubt and incertitude.[46]

I wish to argue that there is one particular strain of the uncanny infusing Sacks's tales which moves beyond a simple admission of their strangeness. Freud understands Jentsch to be interested in the manifestations of acute illnesses ("epileptic fits, and of manifestations of insanity") because "these excite in the spectator the impression of automatic, mechanical processes at work behind the ordinary appearance of mental activity" (Freud 1964: 17, 226). Although the reader of Hoffman's 'The Sandman' has little doubt that Olympia is an automaton when her passivity is contrasted with the strength of Clara's character (despite Nathaniel's pathetic fallacies), there is an uncertainty as to what the symbolic significance of the characters represent. Similarly, although Sacks maintains his faith that on a hidden level all of his patients remain animate and human, many of the illnesses he describes not only attack the personality of the experiencing patient, but also serve to question the very substance of selfhood: the loss

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[46] Jackson attributes such a scenario where "the narrator is no clearer than the protagonist about what is going on, nor about interpretation" (Jackson 1981: 32) as another characteristic of the fantastic.

of a feeling of selfhood constitutes a crucial disengagement with a 'healthy' life. Taken up as a central theme in The Man, the limits of selfhood serve to question the boundaries between heath and sickness and, by implication, between life and death. The insistent question of how far the life of a person can be stripped away before he or she ceases to be alive haunts the reading of the book.

Once more, this kind of hesitancy and incertitude represents a feeling of uncanniness. As Cixous comments, "the phantasm of the man buried alive represents the confusion of life and death: death within life, life in death, nonlife in nondeath...Hence, the horror: you could be dead while living, you can be in a dubious state" (Cixous 1976: 545). This horror spills over into a reading of The Man and tempers any laughter evoked in the portrayal of stigmatized patients. Sacks's depiction of selfhood as friable and elusive serves to implicate the reader through an identification with the philosophical dilemmas of the patients and neurologist. This identification is, however, always incomplete. The scientific filter of classical neurology reverberates through the text to distance the reader; at times moving beyond the personalities and the experiences of the patients to questions of neural organization. In order to shuttle between these levels of intimacy and explanation, Sacks devises a literary method which encourages the reader to focus upon the peculiar coexistence of familiarity and strangeness. Viewed as a study of the "phenomenon of the 'double'" (Freud 1964: 17, 234), The Man can be situated as a text which seeks to develop the themes of the animate and the inanimate interwoven with those of the habitual and the strange.

In his preface to The Man, Sacks indicates that the coupling of these themes invites a dual perspective through which he figures the subjects of the tales. He claims that he is committed to conceiving humans both as a "what" and a "who": both a machine and a person (Sacks 1986a: x). Thus, following the role of Binswanger, classical neurology should be complemented by an "'existential' science" (142) which can account for the "representations...which are the very thread and stuff of life" (140). As such, Sacks understands neurological conditions in the abstract (a series of interlinked components which have ceased to function by design) and also as experienced by an individual who is undergoing a disorientation and is forced to adjust to perceptual or motor disorganization. By concentrating on disorders affecting the right cerebral hemisphere, Sacks wishes to focus on illnesses which disrupt the "crucial powers of recognizing reality" (Sacks 1986a: 1): powers which are both perceptual and hermeneutical.

Closely linked to the recurring questions concerning ownership and selfhood (and their loss) is a series of implicit, but vital, concerns with reading: how the patient reads his or her condition; how Sacks reads and represents the patient; and how the reader interprets the text. The reading of selfhood leads back to Rosemary Jackson's understanding of the fantastic as questioning the presuppositions of reality, which, together with the interpretive oscillation between the levels of the mechanical (inanimate) and the personal (animate) help to lend these tales uncanny qualities.

Sacks articulates his interest in "neurological disorders affecting the self" by focusing much of his attention on patients who have incurred right-hemisphere damage. He complements his research with an understanding of the adaptability of the body-image.

He claims that "there is always a reaction, on the part of the affected organism or individual, to restore, to replace, to compensate for and to preserve its identity" (Sacks 1986a: 4). The rhetoric of recuperation once again confirms Sacks's working model that there is a fundamental regulative structure, or survival instinct, which maintains a balance (often a compensatory one) even in those suffering from the most profound of illnesses. I have argued that one of the fundamental tools for the structuring and ordering of chaotic impressions is through the narration of a condition, which explains how the illness arose and its ongoing significance for the patient. In The Man, Sacks presents a variety of sketches in which he seeks to describe the many dimensions germane to an understanding of illness. However, if a patient is to invest emotionally in a narrative, then he or she has to have the ability to recognize and connect phenomenological states with one another: the patient has to be able to maintain a basic level of cognition and memory in order for narration to be beneficial or, indeed, possible. In other words, the patient has to maintain an ability to read his or her condition in order to represent it in a significant form to him or herself.

The texts I have previously discussed in this chapter present narrative as having distinct therapeutic possibilities. However, the worlds of many of the patients portrayed in The Man are distorted in a manner for which narrative no longer has the potency to connect the perceptual fragments. The redescription and reconstruction of the self, crucial for Sacks in A Leg To Stand On, becomes prohibited, or barred, due to the physiological effects of neurological conditions. This can be linked to Nietzsche's and Foucault's description of aesthetic self-creation (as described in the previous chapters) to indicate

that neurological, or constitutive, damage can result in the retardation of an ongoing process of self-realization.

One of the patients presented in Awakenings, Rose R., reappears in The Man in the short study, 'Incontinent Nostalgia' (143-45).[47] After the privation of her torpor, Rose's awakening is characterized by an increase of liveliness and exuberance, an "increased libido", "nostalgia, joyful identification with a youthful self" (144) and the singing of "innumerable songs of astonishing lewdness" (Sacks 1991a: 82). Despite the unequivocal renewal of Rose's life-force, Sacks comments that she appears entirely transfixed in her youthful world of the mid-1920s (at the outbreak of the *encephalitis lethargica* epidemic). Sacks conjectures that Rose experiences "her 'past' as present...perhaps it has never felt 'past' for her" (83). Although Rose acknowledges a formal present through which she is passing, her feeling for life corresponds to her "ontological age", a twenty-one year old (87). One explanation may be that Rose cannot bear to identify herself with her formal, or chronological, age and so seeks to immerse herself in an idealized world of her past. Sacks suggests that the "uncontrollable upsurge of remote sexual memories and allusions" (Sacks 1986a: 144) which Rose experiences may be due either to an increase in nervous excitation induced by L-DOPA or the provocation of "disinhibition" (145). He contrasts "incontinent nostalgia", or "fossilised memory sequences", with "forced reminiscence" which mnemonic stimuli may bring about (144). Sacks concludes

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[47] It is notable that in Rose's case history both she and Sacks use the term uncanny, but in different senses. Firstly, in describing her transfixed torpor, Rose says, "It was uncanny...My eyes were spellbound. I felt I was bewitched or something, like a rabbit or a snake" (Sacks 1991a: 81). Here Rose's expression is marked by uncertainty, her human form undermined by the animal imagery. Subsequently, Sacks is surprised by the vivid nature of Rose's memory "considering she is speaking of so long ago" (82). He calls it "uncanny" because it seems to run against rational expectations.

that "an almost infinite number of 'dormant' memory-traces" remain as "subcortical imprints" and "archaic traces" which are released due to disinhibition (145).

His short commentary on Rose R. provides a touchstone for the book: the blurring of the patient's subjective realities (marked variously by the loss of proprioception or of memory) with the categories of time and space. On one level Rose is a living being who expresses her disinhibition through the language of her youth, but on another level she remains asleep or dead to the biological and neurological changes in her life. She seems to recognize her condition, but chooses to immerse herself in another, more vivid, psychological world in which she can express her exuberance. Thus she has the ability to read her condition, but, because she has no powers to compensate for the time lost during her catatonia, she chooses to erase it (although it is doubtful as to whether this is a conscious decision). She not only exemplifies the inability to cope with present realities, but also the problems of reading an illness.

Jimmie G., the patient presented in 'The Lost Mariner' (Sacks 1986a: 22-41), suffers from a severe loss of episodic and short-term memory "due to alcoholic degeneration of mammillary bodies", which characterize Korsakov's syndrome (28).[48] Whilst Jimmie finds no difficulty with abstract problems or games that can be quickly achieved, he cannot retain the continuity of a conversation with Sacks for longer than two minutes. He occasionally has hunches that he is forgetful ("I do find myself forgetting things, once in a while - things that have just happened" [25]), but he is largely unaware that his

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[48] Another of Sacks's studies on profound damage to memory is to be found in 'The Last Hippie', one of the "paradoxical tales" in An Anthropologist On Mars (Sacks 1995: 39-72).

participation in the present (that is, Sacks's present) is minimal: "Jimmie both was and wasn't aware of this deep, tragic loss in himself, loss *of* himself" (34). Moreover, Jimmie is unable to read (or write) his condition in any conventional way. When Sacks suggests that he keeps a diary he not only continually misplaces it, but he "could not recognise his earlier entries":

> his entries remained unconnected and unconnecting and had no power to provide any sense of time or continuity. Moreover, they were trivial - 'Eggs for breakfast', 'Watched ballgame on TV' - and never touched the depths. But were there depths in this unmemoried man, depths of an abiding feeling and thinking or had he been reduced to a sort of Humean drivel, a mere succession of unrelated impressions and events? (34).

This quotation displays those qualities of uncertainty and hesitancy which are characteristic of the uncanny: does Jimmie just exist as a neurological machine or does he continue to live as a sentient being?

Like Rose R., Jimmie's pre-1945 past is coherent and vivid, but he struggles "to make sense" of recent historical events (for example, the filming of the earth from the moon and the building of new aircraft carriers). Sacks suggests he is entirely disconnected from a continuous sense of selfhood which would enable him to root any "single moment of being" in his own autobiography (28). However, whilst Sacks acknowledges the crucial importance of memory, rather than finally turning to a model of "Humean dissolution" (37), he maintains his belief that Jimmie consists of more than just memory. Sacks detects ingrained practical skills (morse code and touch typing), together with qualities of "feeling, will, sensibilities, moral being - matters of which neuropsychology cannot speak" (32). He encourages Jimmie in his typing, employing him for "real work" in the

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hospital, but he goes on to claim that "this was superficial tapping and typing; it was trivial, it did not reach the depths" (35).[49] Once more affirming his romantic sensibilities, Sacks observes a calmness and attentiveness in Jimmie when he communes with a larger Being in the chapel or in the garden: he "was absorbed in an act, an act of his whole being, which carried feeling and meaning in an organic continuity and unity, a continuity and unity so seamless it could not permit any break" (36). Whilst Jimmie cannot express himself through phonetic or graphic means, Sacks detects that this incommunicable communion is expressive of a survival of Jimmie's integral self.

But the question remains of how this integral self can be known or represented without wandering into vague metaphysical territory. Richard Rorty comments in Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979) that "the way things are said" or expressed is more "essential" (that is, useful) as a method "of coping with the world" than talking about a world of factuality (Rorty 1980: 359). In this sense the patient does not necessarily have to grasp the technicalities of their disorder, but, just by virtue of expression (whether in words, pictures, music, dance, touch or gestures) they can reaffirm themselves. Rorty, however, privileges the language of rational thought in a manner which subordinates other modes of expression: "the events which make us able to say new and interesting things about ourselves are, in this nonmetaphysical sense, more 'essential' to us...than the events which change our shapes or our standards of living" (359). Here, Rorty addresses his comments to his fellow "relatively leisured intellectuals" and not to people whose very lives (both existential and physical) are determined by the "change" in their "shape"

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[49] However, here Sacks seems to underestimate the application and cultivation of skills for renewing a sense of health and well-being in his patients.

and constitution. Rather than asserting a continuous memory or a notion of rational expression as the essential, or primary, constituent of selfhood, it is Sacks's hope that other less canonized modes of expression can be found to encircle a sense of selfhood. This returns his attention to an emphasis on reading and narration: what it means to tell and retell a self, without relying upon the fully functioning capacities of cognition and memory. This line of thought may provide fuel for the sceptical reader, but Sacks retains a faith that expression and the barest hint of narrative (fractured and barely coherent) may be detectable in even the smallest gesture.

In an excellent paper on the failure of narrative, Richard Allen suggests that the condition of William Thompson, the patient presented in 'A Matter of Identity' (Sacks 1986a: 103-14), exemplifies such a disassociation from the structuring potential of narrative. This loss has little to do with any moral failing on the subject's behalf, but is a direct result of the neurological damage caused by his Korsakov's syndrome. Like 'The Lost Mariner', his syndrome causes extreme loss of short-term memory, but leaves "archaic" memories unimpaired. William's syndrome appears to be more severe than Jimmie's, because he cannot maintain his attention for more than a few seconds at a time. Thus William lives in a world of simultaneity: a continual present. Like Jimmie, because he has lost connection with an immediate past, William also loses any sense of a continuous or coherent identity. For Sacks, it is this very lack of self-awareness that serves to wholly implicate William in his illness. The reader is told that William frenetically and "continually" (105) creates a series of worlds and selves through the telling of "ceaseless tales, his confabulations, his mythomania" (106).

Sacks begins the tale with fragments of a dialogue (if it can be called that) where William continually "misidentifies" Sacks. William projecting himself into his habitual, but mistaken, role of a grocer (mis)recognizes Sacks as a customer, a butcher and a mechanic within a few moments. Sacks, as a reader of William's world, confirms that,

> he was continually disorientated. Abysses of amnesia continually opened beneath him, but he would bridge them, nimbly, by fluent confabulations and fictions of all kinds. For him they were not fictions, but how he suddenly saw, or interpreted, the world....there was...this strange, delirious, quasi-coherence, as Mr Thompson, with his ceaseless, unconscious, quick-fire inventions continually improvised a world around him (104).

Sacks shows an understanding of how William might experience his world, or, in Thomas Nagel's phrase, what it might be like for him: "for Mr Thompson...it was not a tissue of ever-changing, evanescent fancies and illusion, but a wholly normal, stable and factual world. So far as *he* was concerned, there was nothing the matter" (104).

Unlike the illnesses presented in Sacks's previous books, severe Korsakov's syndrome can be seen to strip away *all* sense of self-consciousness, or the interpretive faculty through which it is possible to read the illness experience. Like Rose R.'s retreat into a resplendent past, William's "shimmering, iridescent, ever-changing" world represents a simulacrum of life: a storyteller who is unaware how fractured his narratives have become. There is no stable world (nor home) in which to locate the self because "the world keeps disappearing, losing meaning, vanishing" (106). His continual reinvention in scraps of conversation and turns of phrase is almost a caricature of the myth of self-becoming. As Allen discerns, William "ceaselessly invents and reinvents his self and world in a parody of narrative" (Allen 1993: 27). There is no development, no sense of

growth, nor an imaginative movement towards a redescription of health. For William, there appears to be no consciousness of his predicament: he is totally consumed by the illness. However, Sacks detects a pervading anxiety and a look of "ceaseless inner pressure" which suggests that on some level William is aware of the "meaninglessness, the chaos that yawns continually beneath him" (Sacks 1986a: 106).

Finally, Sacks turns his attention to a brief consideration of the importance of storytelling and recollection:

> If we wish to know about a man, we ask 'what is his story - his real, inmost story?' - for each of us *is* a biography, a story...To be ourselves we must *have* ourselves - possess, if need be re-possess, our life-stories. We must 'recollect' ourselves, recollect the inner drama, the narrative, of ourselves. A man *needs* such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self (106).

It is possible to interpret this passage either as a therapeutic homily or as an affirmation of a type of reflective, or introspectivist, narrative in which the self (situated in a privileged position outside the finished narrative) retrospectively narrates itself. However, Allen detects two other important aspects at work here. Firstly, he reads Sacks to mean "there is no separation or distance between self and narrative. A person's identity is the narrative she or he embodies" (Allen 1993: 28). That is to say, the self is written *by* the narrative as a point of reference: a space, a home, an indexical. Secondly, Allen comments:

> Sacks recognizes that one's life narrative - that is, the narrative one is - is more than the enactment of a script...a life narrative is more than a structured sequence of words; it is told in part "unconsciously", and it collects within itself both the nonverbal and the verbal - image, emotion, act and word (28).

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Both insights move away from the type of omnipotent narrative of redescription that Rorty appears to advocate (and which is evident in Binswanger's work), and moves towards a fragmentary, hesitant and uncertain narration over which the narrator only ever has partial control.

However, this notion of living (and reading) as narrative leaves two important questions unanswered. Firstly, although authorial control is unnecessary and sometimes restrictive, the patient has to have some capacity to reflect upon the narrative in order to modify it or tell it anew. Secondly, if the narrative is to be therapeutic and lead away from a condition of illness towards a different home (the Cavellian narrative tracing the route rather than the goal), then the narrator has to be able to restrict the range, rhythm and complexity of the narrative in order to follow it. Both questions indicate that the self (that which is written or told) is also the writer or teller who exists outside the frame of the story. Narration taken to the limit, so that the writer of one story becomes the written of another, leads either to the kind of restless metamorphosis characteristic of William's proliferation of narratives, or to an infinite regress where the 'real' self is lost from view in a constantly diminishing perspective. In this sense the recognition of the self is always an uncanny one because it is split: at one and the same time, it is the very point of locational reference (the 'I' which is read) and something that always lies outside the narrative frame (the 'I' who reads).[50]

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[50] This idea has an analogue in Jacques Lacan's notion that the self should be conceived as fundamentally split between *je* (the speaking subject) and *moi* (the subject that speaks). For him *moi* is the source of disruption in *je*'s unified discourse which occasionally surfaces in the speaking subject and throws its apparent, although, for him, illusory, unity into question. Thus, the recognition of the *moi* surfacing through consciousness is also a recognition of Otherness (Lacan 1977: 292-325).

As one of the latest manifestations of romantic science, Sacks's neurological tales indicate the imaginative possibilities as well as the actual limitations of this tradition of inquiry into selfhood. Indeed, his tales reveal both the proximity of self ('I' can only ever be myself) and the emptiness and vacuity which lies behind such tautology. Nevertheless, as I have argued throughout this thesis, James, Binswanger and Sacks, as practitioners of the incomplete (and incomplete-*able*) project of romantic science, all indicate that, when illness strips the certainty and familiarity from the platitudes of self-identity, the resulting philosophical emergency demands that the assumptions which underlie the areas of the known and the habitual are radically requestioned. In conclusion, then, these three practitioners of romantic science make evident the formal limits of medical knowledge as much as they stress the therapeutic possibilities of individual self-creation (within the parameters of the communal) in their narratives of healthening.

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