

The Concrete State Continued

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I continue here to consider concretely the states of consciousness that are held to be the fundamental durational components of James's famous stream — my ideal purpose being to arrive eventually at a general description applicable to every one of them. I closely attend therefore to James's account of the sense of personal identity, not for its own sake but for what it further reveals regarding the specific states of consciousness that James called individually "the present, judging Thought." These states, which are the inner awarenesses, remembrances, and appropriations of other states of consciousness in the same stream, are supposed to provide us with a sense of our own diachronic continuity. According to James, they are the only "I" there is. I bring out among other things that, notwithstanding James's rejection of an entitative Ego responsible for apprehending and appropriating the states of consciousness and other components of our empirical "me," James in effect assigned this job to the total brain process. Embodying all the information required, it is this physical process that is proposed to produce each Thought full-blown.

Recently (Natsoulas, 2001), I sought to address the states of consciousness with something resembling a theoretically neutral attitude. Accordingly, these states would simply be equivalent to the basic durational components of James's (1890/1950, Ch. 9) famous stream, except that I would hold them to be occurrent physical states of the brain, whereas James proposed that they are nonphysical products of the total brain process. More "observational" than "theoretical," my discussion made use of as few technical concepts as possible and tried to consider the states of consciousness in what James would call a "concrete" way, rather than an abstract or inferential way.

As James (1890/1950, Ch.10) suggested, we can consider our stream in various ways, not all of them equally concrete. He spoke of the concrete way as follows:

Or we may insist on a concrete view, and then the spiritual self in us will be either the entire stream of our personal consciousness, or the present "segment" or "section" of that stream, according as we take a broader or a narrower view — both the stream and the section being concrete existences in time, and each being a unity after its own peculiar kind. (p. 296)

When we consider it concretely, we are at our most empirical with respect to the stream. The concrete way involves taking the stream on its own terms, its properties as these seem firsthand to be. Nevertheless, the purpose of my efforts was, as it continues to be in the present article, to make some progress in the development of a general description that is adequately applicable to every one of the states of consciousness.

Using claims of James's arising from his personal firsthand evidence, I expressed my points as though conversing with that most phenomenological and radically empirical of psychological authors. Inevitably, I disagreed with him on some of these points, but I also found much in his masterwork to be acceptable. Indeed, one of James's basic theses is central to my own view. I expressed that thesis as follows: "A stream of consciousness consists of a succession, one at a time, of unitary states and all of the other mental occurrences that are conscious (e.g., thoughts, feelings, perceptual experiences, or intentions) are features of such states" (Natsoulas, 2001, p. 427; cf. Natsoulas, 2000).

The stream is distinct from all faculties and dispositional states. To consider the stream with reference to faculties and the like is to operate inferentially. Some of our states of consciousness do include among their features thoughts regarding our faculties. Simply to have such thoughts, however, is not the same as taking notice of mental activity going on. By inner awareness alone, all that one finds firsthand is a succession of conscious states, although some of these states may give one reason to believe that one possesses one or another faculty or disposition.

We tend to identify with our stream of consciousness more than we do with the intentional objects of our states of consciousness that are not themselves a part of the stream. From James's (1890/1950, Ch. 10) perspective, our special identification with our stream must have to do largely with the states themselves, that is, with how they concretely seem to us in our firsthand encounter (see Natsoulas, 2001). And, probably because they present themselves to us in some way that distinguishes them as states of consciousness, we rarely conflate them with their objects that are not such states. However, in this connection, James comments, "The deeper grounds for this discrimination may possibly be hard to find" (p. 297). That is, he could not find firsthand any feature of a state of consciousness that could serve as evidence of its possessing a mental or spiritual — meaning a nonphysical — nature.

James (1890/1950, Ch. 10) thereupon waxes skeptical. He expresses doubt that states of consciousness are given to inner awareness at all, as opposed to their merely being occurrences postulated for explanatory purposes. However, the path whereby James arrived at this skepticism crucially involved his trying to come to "the closest possible quarter with the facts" pertaining to one kind of state of consciousness, which he described as being "more incessantly there than any other element of the mental life" (p. 298). In his chapter on the consciousness of self, James first distinguished between the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. Then, in discussing the latter, he picked out from the states that constitute any stream those widely distributed in the stream that make up "the self of all other selves."

One takes the stream in an abstract way when one singles out these states as such, but this cannot take place without "direct feeling," according to James. The states are not simply posited, or brought to mind from being heard about, when one picks them out of the stream. Thus, James describes them not merely in terms of their functions — states that welcome or reject, own or disown, other states of consciousness and their contents — but phenomenologically, as being the evidently "active" element in the stream, the evident "junction" between inputs and outputs. As are other states in the same stream, the states that come under the heading of the self of selves are "felt" analogously to one's feeling one's body.

Feeling one's body consists of one's undergoing states of consciousness that have the body among their objects in a special qualitative way; and a state of consciousness may similarly have another state of consciousness as its object. These two states are produced by the ongoing total brain process, according to James, in immediate or near succession. To have the second is to feel the first: this inner awareness being more than the exercise of concepts, a more intimate contact with a state of consciousness enabling one to have firsthand knowledge of it. Thus, for example, James has direct awareness of, witnesses firsthand, many "acts of attending, assenting, negating, [and] making an effort" that transpire in his stream of consciousness.

After providing a "general" description of the states of special interest, James (1890/1950, Ch. 10) questions what it is that he has been taking notice of, that is, the empirical grounds for his description. And he tries hard "to catch one of these manifestations of spontaneity in the act." Already, on an earlier page, James has told us that he is aware firsthand of a "palpitating" inner life wherein feelings of tendency occur that run along with or oppose specific cognitive contents. But he now finds he cannot detect "any spiritual element at all" belonging to the kind of state that makes up the self of selves: "When carefully examined, [it] is found to consist mainly of the collection of these peculiar motions in the head or between the head and throat" (p. 301).

Our inner awareness of our states of consciousness is presumably not illusory, nor is the direct approving or disapproving of the states or their contents an illusion. The illusion is limited to a state's being a kind of mental action that affects what happens in the stream: "to feel them as the birth-place of conclusions and the starting point of acts" (p. 303). Thus, James has not set the stream of consciousness aside at this point; he has only denied the spiritual activity commonly attributed to the stream firsthand. But before he returns to the view with which he works in the rest of his book, he contemplates that not only the self of selves but perhaps everything of which we take ourselves to have inner awareness is in fact objective, none of it is spiritual. That is, we suffer a general, systematic illusion: we think we are introspecting but, in every such instance, we are perceiving something objective or, at most, we are hallucinating something not actually there.

James's skeptical hypothesis does not deny thoughts, wishes, perceptions, and so on — only that states of consciousness as originally defined exist. No thought, for example, is a feature or part of a state of consciousness and, thus, no thought is open to inner awareness. Our mental life is closed to us, a matter completely of postulation; we have awareness of the environment and of our body, but have no direct awareness of the states of "sciousness" that make up our stream of mentality. An implication of James's tentative sciousness hypothesis would seem to be that the spiritual self cannot, after all, be considered firsthand and concretely. Rather, it must be inferred from something else, such as behavioral observations suggestive of its existence.

Resisting the Temptation to Skepticism

James (1890/1950, Ch. 10) moved on very quickly; he neither cited nor addressed specific objections to the skeptical position — such as the ones that I formulated in the preceding article (Natsoulas, 2001). He simply acknowledged that

spiritualists, transcendentalists, and empiricists alike admit in us a continual direct perception of the thinking activity [i.e., the stream of consciousness] in the concrete. However they may otherwise disagree, they vie with each other in the cordiality of their recognition of our thoughts [i.e., our states of consciousness] as the one sort of existent which skepticism cannot touch. (p. 305)

James mentioned in a footnote the only exception to this general agreement of which he knew: an article by M.J. Souriau who held that consciousness does not exist. James (1890/1950, Ch.10) too was evidently tempted to the same conclusion, but he did not adopt the view that we have no immediate access to our mental life. Instead, he went on,

I will therefore treat the last few pages as a parenthetical digression, and from now to the end of the volume revert to the path of common-sense again. I mean by this that I will continue to assume (as I have assumed all along, especially in the last chapter ["The Stream of Thought"]) a direct awareness of the process of our thinking as such, simply insisting on the fact that it is an even more inward and subtle phenomenon than most of us suppose. (p. 305)

What is this fact of inwardness on which James is insisting? It would seem to be that, in concretely considering our states of consciousness (i.e., by inner awareness) not as much about them is revealed to us as we commonly believe, especially not much with respect to how they intrinsically are. But we discover enough that allows James to proceed with phenomenological descriptions of them. If all we ever apprehended directly were nonmental matters such as motor states and events, there would not be a stream of consciousness toward which James could take, as he does continue to take, a direct empirical stance. This stance and its immediate epistemic gains makes it possible for James to restate at the end of his discussion of the consciousness of self, nearly one hundred pages later, that the nucleus of the empirical self is in all instances the "bodily existence felt to be present at the time" (p. 400).

The latter statement of James's implicitly refers to states of consciousness. For (a) any feeling that occurs is an intrinsic feature of one or more states of consciousness. Or, better to say, any feeling is one or more states of consciousness. To feel the bodily existence present at the time is to undergo states of consciousness. Moreover, (b) those very apprehensions of the occurrence of any feeling that is apprehended firsthand, they too are states of consciousness. The "I" that knows, whatever it may know, is no more than a "thought" (i.e., a state of consciousness). And it appropriates, to the nucleus of the empirical self, states of consciousness that preceded it in the same stream. Thus, the stream of mental life is a stream of consciousness, not a mere stream of consciousness.

I have just anticipated James's conclusions. I need to return to the question of the little ("inward and subtle") that is actually revealed to us about a concrete state of consciousness firsthand, by inner awareness. James (1890/1950, Ch. 10) returns to this question in effect, by implication, as he attempts to explain the sense of personal identity: "the most puzzling puzzle with which psychology has to deal" (p. 330). I shall not be focally concerned here with how we have that sense but with the phenomenological material that James, in his effort to answer this question, either mentions again, from earlier in the book, or newly introduces in Chapter X.

The Sense of Personal Identity

"Warmth and Intimacy"

James (1890/1950, Ch. 10) begins discussing the sense of personal identity by reminding us of something he brought out early in the preceding chapter:

The thoughts we actually know to exist do not fly about loose, but seem each to belong to some one thinker and not to another. Each thought, out of a multitude of other thoughts of which it may think, is able to distinguish those which belong to its own Ego from those which do not. The former have a warmth and intimacy about them of which the latter are completely devoid, being merely conceived, in a cold and foreign fashion, and not appearing as blood-relatives, bringing their greetings to us from out of the past. (pp. 330–331)

Throughout, James is speaking of states of consciousness. Each of these "thoughts" to which James has reference is a basic durational component of one or another stream of consciousness. As he stated in an early chapter, he makes use interchangeably of *thought* and *feeling* to refer to states of consciousness often throughout his book.

The states of consciousness have, each of them, a cognitive aspect. Some have reference to other states of consciousness in the same stream. And sometimes a state of consciousness is about a "foreign" state of consciousness: a past, present, or future component of a different stream from the stream to which the state belongs that has reference to it. This other stream belongs typically to another person.

But James allows that two streams may flow in a single person. And he would allow that, in cases where two streams flow in the same person, thoughts can transpire in one stream regarding states that take place in the second stream. For example, one of the cerebral hemispheres of a fully commissurotomed person may try to make sense of behavior emanating from the person's body of which that hemisphere had no awareness of producing. As a researcher might do, the hemisphere could infer that this behavior is connected to states of consciousness of which it has no inner awareness. The process of drawing such inferences involves states of consciousness that take place in the cerebral hemisphere trying to make sense of the behavior from outside it.

It is not a mistake to speak of having awareness, as well, of states of consciousness that belong to someone else. One does not imply an ability to have perceptual or inner apprehension of foreign states of consciousness. The states of consciousness that are one's awarenesses of those foreign states merely "conceive" them; they are merely thoughts about them. In contrast, according to James, there occurs a very different kind of awareness of the

“domestic” states of consciousness. These are apprehended in a special way, so that they seem to possess a kind of “warmth and intimacy.”

As argued elsewhere (Natsoulas, 1998), James held that every state of consciousness is an intrinsically qualitative occurrence, as well as being cognitive or having a cognitive dimension. However abstract or general the objects of a particular such state may be, the state itself is “a perishing segment of thoughts’ stream, consubstantial with other facts of sensibility” (James, 1890/1950, p. 474). Therefore, James appears to me to be saying in Chapter X that, by inner awareness, this qualitiveness of a state is *in itself* apprehended, that is, not merely apprehended as a fact about the state; rather, one has firsthand acquaintance with this intrinsic property of the state.

How this direct acquaintance occurs — which James does not attempt to explain — is for his view problematic. A state of consciousness and the separate state by which one is acquainted with it are no more intimately related to each other than their being effects, closely in time, of the ongoing brain process. They both come into existence as a mental product, at different temporal points, of a single physical process. One may be tempted to suggest that, owing to their being produced as they are, the two states of consciousness very likely resemble each other qualitatively, and so the second can intimately know the first just by knowing itself.

However, James rules out the latter possibility. For him, the knowing and that which it knows are perforce distinct. A state of consciousness cannot apprehend itself; its objects are always other matters, albeit sometimes other states of consciousness. Thus, unmediated (or absolute) immediacy, in Alston’s (1991) sense, is impossible. In the present connection, for James, only a mediated immediacy is possible: that is, the immediacy that consists of one state of consciousness’s apprehending another such state firsthand — just as the object of a perceptual awareness is always distinct from the perceptual awareness itself. The objects of neither inner nor perceptual awareness could be such objects in the absence of states of consciousness directed on them from outside.

This is not to question that acquaintance with certain properties of a state of consciousness can occur. It is just to bring out that acquaintance is a problem for James’s conception of inner awareness, of which he does not treat. Instead, he goes on to comment (a) that an occurrent conscious state of one’s own of which one is aware at the moment can be apprehended as being “the same” as a past conscious state of one’s own, and (b) that this apprehension of both states together as belonging together because of their sameness is fundamental to the sense of personal identity.

Of course, not just any apprehended sameness between present and past conscious states is pertinent to having a sense of personal identity. One may judge, for example, the existence of a continuity between states of conscious-

ness that one attributes to another person on inferential grounds or on grounds of the person's reports. Rather, according to James, to have a sense of personal identity, one must now feel the warmth and intimacy of both present and past states of consciousness. This can only happen with respect to one's own states, but not those states that one can only remember without apprehending their warmth and intimacy.¹

I suggest James's warmth and intimacy of a state of consciousness is to be understood as equivalent to the state's intrinsic qualitiveness as given to a second state of consciousness in apprehending the first state. According to James, a state's warmth and intimacy is of two kinds.

1. Each one of our states of consciousness has our physical body as a whole, as well as certain occurrent or non-occurrent parts of our body, among its objects, and not in the merely cold and foreign fashion of conceiving it or them. Thus, partly, the qualitiveness of each state is that of its being an instance of bodily feeling.

2. Also, there is a noticeable non-bodily feeling aspect to each state of consciousness. This aspect is "(adopting the universal psychological belief) . . . the pure activity of our thought taking place as such" (p. 333). Thus, the qualitiveness of every state is partly that of mental feeling or, from a physical monist perspective, one might say it is that of "neuronal feeling."

Although, as we have seen, James became skeptical, on introspective grounds, regarding the existence of mental or spiritual feeling, such feeling would nevertheless seem to be part of his general understanding of the states of consciousness. Every state of consciousness was proposed to instantiate both a qualitative aspect and a cognitive aspect, its qualitative aspect being identified as each state's own "sensitive body" (p. 478). Thus, even if conscious states were not, all of them, bodily feelings, they would all be such intrinsically as to be instances of feeling in the general sense of being qualitative.

Indeed, the qualitative aspect of states of consciousness would seem to be essential to any adequate explanation of the difference between one's merely thinking about one's body and one's feeling it. In the specific instance of James's account, the states of consciousness involved are qualitative no matter what: whether one is merely thinking about one's body or feeling it. But, although these two kinds of conscious states have the same body as their object, our inner awareness does not reveal them to be warm and intimate in the same way or to the same degree. This must be owed to differences in their intrinsic properties; although both are qualitative, they must be qualitative differently. To feel one's body is "warmer" than thinking abstractly about

¹On such past states, see the next subsection. See also, further on, the section titled "The Insulation Between Streams" for James's apparent going back on our having awareness of the warmth and intimacy of our own states exclusively.

it. But this difference can be lessened. Certain medical drugs, for example, make feeling the body more like having abstract thoughts about it.

Remembrances

Referring to the two kinds of qualitiveness that James distinguishes as above, he states, "We cannot realize our present self without simultaneously feeling one or other of these two things" (p. 333). That is, our inner awareness of our states' qualitiveness is an essential part of our awareness of our personal identity. Apprehending the warmth and intimacy of our consciousness, we are able to have a sense of personal identity, although there is more to our sense of personal identity than just having inner awareness.²

The sense of personal identity includes our apprehending a certain kind of sameness over time in our conscious states. Specifically, our present remembrances of past states of consciousness that are components of the same stream as the remembrances, apprehend the past states now with warmth and intimacy, as occurred originally. When we are apprehending past states again, in the form of having one or more remembrances of them, it is somewhat as though we are now having inner awareness of those past states of which we had inner awareness when they transpired.

When James asks which past states does one now so grasp, as warm and intimate, and he answers that it is only those that one so grasped when they originally occurred, does he mean that not all of one's remembrances of one's own past states are like one's having inner awareness of them? Alternatively, he may simply mean that all of those states that one can now remember were originally objects of one's inner awareness. But there would seem to be more to it than the latter. Namely, we now apprehend some past states of ours either coldly or as though it was not us to whom they occurred. Thus, only their cognitive content is apprehended, not their qualitiveness; or we do grasp their qualitiveness but, in some crucial way, it fails to resemble the qualitiveness of our present states.

In the previous chapter, James discussed someone (A) who, upon awakening, remembers, from just before falling asleep the night before, some of his or her conscious states at the time and some of the conscious states of B, with whom A was conversing before falling asleep. But it is only A's remembrance of his or her own states that is "like direct feeling; its object is suffused with warmth and intimacy to which no object of mere conception ever attains" (James, 1890/1950, Ch. 9, p. 239).

Before proceeding, it is important to note that the kind of cold and foreign fashion in which one may have awareness of certain states of consciousness

²See the subsection titled "Appropriation to What?" further on in the present article.

does not exclude the possibility of emotion pertaining to those states upon so thinking of them. Prior to falling asleep, A may have reacted emotionally to what A took to be B's thoughts. And A could be reacting emotionally to his or her present remembrance of them. Nevertheless, A's past and present awareness of B's thoughts is lacking in direct feeling; that is, A does not have awareness of those conscious states in their qualitiveness — as A has acquaintance with past or present conscious states of his or her own.

In Chapter X, James refers to this example again and asserts that A "recalling what both [A and B] had in mind before they went to sleep, reidentifies and appropriates the 'warm' ideas as his, and is never tempted to confuse them with those cold and pale-appearing ones which [A] ascribes to [B]" (p. 334). And James soon addresses relevantly one's own "dimly recollected experiences." One's remembrances of these experiences are like one's awarenesses of the conscious states of other people. James is speaking of past states of consciousness of one's own that are not remembered in their qualitiveness or with adequate vividness to be appropriated without doubt as belonging to the same stream or self with one's present conscious states. In one's present awareness of dimly recollected experiences, these experiences are not sufficiently like one's present conscious states.

Also, James allows that past states may be remembered in a qualitative way that is normally adequate for their appropriation yet something may have occurred in the meantime whereby the qualitiveness of present states of consciousness is now very different from the qualitiveness of the remembered states. This change is supposed to be, in the first place, an objective change. Present states of consciousness are now concretely different in themselves, not just subjectively different, than present states of consciousness were before this major change took place.

Thus, James speaks of someone (C) who awakens from sleep a "changed person." C has undergone during the night a dramatic change in all of his or her "bodily and spiritual habits . . . each organ giving a different tone, and the act of thought becoming aware of itself in a different way" (p. 336). Consequently, C's sense of personal identity is restricted to C's states of consciousness that have occurred since C woke up and does not apply to any of C's states of consciousness from the previous past notwithstanding their often intense qualitiveness and their qualitative similarity to and continuity with each other. I presume that, according to James, C's previous past states are no less warm and intimate to C's present remembrances of them, after C's "conversion," but nevertheless they are now as though they belonged to someone else — because C has become, as it were, someone else in C's own eyes.

James avers that such transformations are not rare in "mental pathology." But he postpones a concrete account of such cases for later in his chapter — except for one thing. James's abstract description of such transformative cases

would seem to raise some question regarding the qualitiveness that is the intrinsic property of the conscious states. Perhaps the simplest explanation for what occurs in such cases of self-conversion, if actual they be, is as follows:

Of the states of consciousness that occur after the purported radical change (in one's "bodily and spiritual habits"), a large number of them are simply new to the person. Individually, had they occurred before the great change, they would not have been any different than they are now. There is no qualitative difference of the new states of consciousness from the old except insofar as new flavors and thoughts, never tasted or thought before, have entered the picture. Analogously, one might feel oneself to be a changed person upon one's migrating to a society in which sights, sounds, smells, and mores, among much else, strongly contrast to those one is used to. There need be no change in how one's brain functions, as occurs when certain chemical substances enter one's bloodstream.

Objection and Response

Next James considers one kind of objection to his own analysis. Such an objection might take the following form:

A stream of consciousness must possess some objective property that unifies it, a property beyond (a) the qualitiveness in common of all of the states that constitute a stream and (b) the replacing by each of them, in the absence of a time-gap, of the one just before it in the stream.

This objection could be raised with reference to states of consciousness of a stream that this stream cannot recognize as belonging to it because of how different their qualitiveness is from that of the present conscious states. Thus, someone might pose to James,

Surely, conscious states belong to a certain stream whether or not they are qualitatively the same as others in the same stream, including the present states. Their qualitiveness in common is not what make them parts of the same stream, but their being parts of the same stream makes highly likely their possession of a common qualitiveness. A stream of consciousness is, throughout, the same stream because of how it is being produced. Consistent with your own account, conscious states belong to the same stream because it is the same ongoing total brain process that produces them. The same stream of consciousness continues even in the person who, owing to certain brain lesions, remembers his or her states of consciousness only for a brief time after they occur.

Perhaps James would reply that the unity with which he is concerned is, as befits any discussion of the sense of personal identity, a subjective unity. There are both objective and subjective facts about consciousness. On the one hand, there is an objective continuity of consciousness except for time-gaps in its course, when for physiological reasons the stream just stops. On the other hand, there always exists a subjective discontinuity of consciousness because, at the very least, no stream of consciousness can recall many of

the states of consciousness that have previously constituted it. And, nearly always, there is as well some subjective unity throughout a stream.

Subjective Unity

What is responsible for the subjective unity existing in a stream? According to James (1890/1950), the unifier from the first-person perspective is not to be found in the form of any Thinker or Ego but, rather,

the real, present onlooking, remembering, "judging thought" or identifying "section" of the stream. This is what collects, — "owns" some of the past facts which it surveys, and disowns the rest, — and so makes a unity that is actualized and anchored. (p. 388)

In the passage from which I quote, James would seem to be referring to the self of all selves, albeit by a different name: "the Thought." I commented on the self of selves in the introduction of the present article and in the article of which this article is the continuation. It was the self of selves, it will be recalled, that James defined as being those many conscious states that appear, "probably [to] all men," as follows:

Whatever qualities a man's feelings may possess, or whatever content his thought may include, there is a spiritual something in him which seems to *go out* to meet these qualities and contents, whilst they seem to *come in* to be received by it. It is what welcomes or rejects. It presides over the perception of sensations, and by giving or withholding its assent it influences the movements they tend to arouse. (James, 1890/1950, pp. 299–300)

The above is not James's complete phenomenological description of the self of selves, but it is enough to show that it and the Thought are one and the same.

The self of selves is not an Ego. It is no more and no less than a certain kind of concrete state of consciousness, widely distributed in the stream, that does the above job among others. Contrary to James's skeptical hypothesis, which James set aside, the Thought would clearly seem to function in ways (e.g., to produce subjective unity) that requires it to be an instance of inner awareness. The "facts" that the Thought (or self of selves) owns or disowns are states of consciousness and its owning them requires, according to James, their concrete apprehension, in the way of direct feeling or of remembrance that is like direct feeling.

The above material will give the impression that the Thought is active in that it evaluates other states of consciousness based on certain criteria and then, subjectively, gathers them together on that basis. James explains that this is not accurate. Rather, the production of a Thought by the ongoing total brain process is a production of it as, already and fully, the exact state and apprehension that it is. James (1890/1950) declares, with reference to

those conscious states that the Thought owns, "The Thought does not capture them, but as soon as it comes into existence it finds them already its own" (p. 338). That is, the Thought is itself the outcome, the act of recognition of past states as their being qualitatively the same as the most recent states of consciousness in the stream. Already, the previous instance of the self of all selves, the previous Thought in the same stream, was just such an act of recognition, as still previous Thoughts were too.

Let me briefly depart somewhat from James's explicit text in order better to explain it. His text may sound very different from what I am about to suggest. But, I hope that the reader will return to James and compare my understanding of him with the original. James claims to be substituting the Thought for an Ego that provides the continuity and unity, both objective and subjective, of a stream of consciousness. I believe that, in effect, James is substituting the ongoing total brain process for such an Ego.

Already, when it occurs, the Thought is all that it is, namely, James's required unifying apprehension. But the Thought and its content are a direct product of the brain process, the Thought coming into being completely formed. The Thought is a product of physical processes that embody information although these processes are not themselves cognitive or mental in any sense more than that they are able to produce conscious states, which are both qualitative and cognitive. The total brain process is supposed to produce such acts again and again, as an Ego would theoretically be expected to do.

Indeed, to secure the degree of unity that James believes empirically exists, he goes so far as to suggest that every state of consciousness, when it occurs, is the Thought in relation to its stream. The latter is how I read, perhaps too literally, James's following quoted statements. I read them as inconsistent with his distinction (in the section titled "The Empirical Self or Me") between the self of selves and the other states of consciousness in the same stream. He does say, you see, that each Thought is replaced by another Thought. Does he not mean that there is no other state of consciousness in the stream between each Thought and the Thought that replaces it? Does this not imply that every one of the basic durational components belonging to a conscious stream is the Thought when it occurs? Here is what he says in his section titled "The Sense of Personal Identity":

Each pulse of cognitive consciousness, each Thought, dies away and is replaced by another. The other, among the things it knows, knows its own predecessor, and finding it "warm," in the way we have described, greets it saying: "Thou art mine, and part of the same self with me." Each later Thought, knowing and including thus the Thoughts which went before it, is the final receptacle — and appropriating them is the final owner — of all that they contain and own. Each Thought is thus born an owner and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realized as its Self to its own later proprietor. (James, 1890/1950, p. 339)

However, I do not see that James's account requires that every state of consciousness be an instance of the self of selves; therefore, the above need not be taken literally. A state of consciousness that does not get apprehended by the next Thought is no less a member of the stream to which it belongs although, not having been an object of inner awareness, it will presumably never be the object of future remembrances; it will never figure in acts of subjective unity. How is it part of the same stream then? My answer has been that the objective unity of the stream is owed to the ongoing process that produces it and all of its predecessors and successors.

Appropriated to What?

"Thou art *mine*, and part of the same self with me." This apprehension that James attributes to the Thought requires attention because it could be taken to assert that the Thought has itself among its objects. I do not myself have any objection to such a notion, whereas James clearly does. It seems to me that if the total brain process can produce two states of consciousness one of which is awareness of the other, then it could produce a state of consciousness that includes awareness of itself.

I do not see why a total brain process has to wait, as it were, until it has produced a state of consciousness before it can produce an inner awareness of that state. After all, the brain process does already instantiate all the information needed for inner awareness when it produces the first conscious state. I am not saying that, instantiating this information, it must perforce produce self-conscious states of consciousness. Whether it produces such states or not may depend on other factors, such as the kind of conscious state produced (e.g., one involving pain), the state's relation to the immediately previous states produced (e.g., a great difference in content), and whether the ongoing total brain process is one that psychologists would describe as involving a set to introspect.

Nevertheless, James insists that the Thought cannot appropriate anything to itself because it "never is an object in its own hands" and "the present moment of consciousness is thus, as Mr. Hodgson says, the darkest in the whole series" and "nothing can be known *about* it till it is dead and gone" (pp. 340–341). However, the Thought has been proposed to recognize the qualitative sameness between past states of consciousness and present ones, both of them having the warmth and intimacy whereby they are sensed to belong to the same stream. Although this recognition could be well treated of with reference to the states of consciousness that make up the specious present — it would be to this small group of states that the Thought would appropriate earlier states of consciousness — James chooses a different "living hook."

Among the objects of each Thought are the body and certain motor occurrences in the head. James asserts that these objective matters are "the real nucleus of our personal identity." This is a somewhat surprising development of his line of thought. On its face, it suggests that all of those qualitative resemblances James has been stressing are between states of consciousness and objective matters. But these objective matters have very different properties from what is detected as present in the stream by inner awareness and the remembrances of past states of consciousness.

I am reminded of the first few pages of Chapter X, where James comments relevantly with respect to what it is that people tend to call "me." He draws implicitly a relevant contrast in this passage:

The Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of "me." But it is clear that between what a man calls *me* and what he simply calls *mine* the line is difficult to draw . . . And our bodies themselves, are they simply ours, or are they *us*? Certainly men have been ready to disown their very bodies and to regard them as mere vestures, or even as prisons of clay from which they should some day be glad to escape. (p. 291)

And he draws the same contrast explicitly when he first states that our inner or subjective being taken concretely is "the most enduring and intimate part of the self, that which we most verily seem to be" and, soon after, "The stream as a whole is identified with the Self far more than any outward thing" (p. 299).

This would seem to contradict James's statement, later in the chapter, that for the Thought, "I" means "the bodily life which it momentarily feels" (p. 341). My point is that, although it can happen that we become alienated from the stream of our mental life, thus considering it to lie outside of who we actually are, alienation is far more likely to occur with respect to our body. Indeed, my survival here on earth (or later) is for me, for the Thought, the continuation of my stream of consciousness. To contemplate my stream's stopping permanently, whether my body remains alive or not, is to contemplate my death. At a different point, James (1890/1950) is arguing that the existence of a soul would not guarantee the kind of immortality that we care for, but he relevantly states: "The substance must give rise to a stream of consciousness continuous with the present stream, in order to arouse our hope, but of this the mere persistence of the substance *per se* offers no guaranties" (p. 348).

There is a further problem with James's conception. Being objective matters, the body and those motor occurrences in the head, which James asserts are "the real nucleus of our personal identity," do not themselves possess the warmth and intimacy that James has made essential to the process of appropriation to oneself. Recall that how we recognize past or present states of

consciousness as ours depends on their warmth and intimacy, which seems to amount to their individual qualitative aspect. In contrast, objective matters, that is, items external to a stream of consciousness do not possess qualitiveness that we are able to detect. Their possession of qualitiveness anyway is something that a panpsychist may claim, but that thesis lies outside the present issue. Only by inner awareness can one feel the respective objects' warmth and intimacy in James's sense, not by perceiving the environment or body.

Consider in the above light what, in his discussion of the sense of personal identity, James (1890/1950) says about other parts of the empirical self or me, that is, those parts other than the stream of consciousness:

Our remoter spiritual, material, and social selves, so far as they are realized, come also with a glow and a warmth; for the thought of them infallibly brings some degree of organic emotion in the shape of quickened heart-beats, oppressed breathing, or some other alteration, even though it be a slight one, in the general bodily tone. (p. 333)

Notice that all of the parts of the empirical self except for the states of consciousness are not said themselves literally to possess warmth and intimacy. Rather, they are considered to be a part of the empirical me only insofar as they are apprehended *and* this apprehension involves a certain kind of feeling.

My main question is whether anything can be "appropriated" to the body or motor activities in the head, that is, whether these can serve as James suggests. Consistent with James, the answer would seem to be as follows.

The Thought, unable to be its own object, would apprehend the warmth and intimacy of past and present states of consciousness in the same stream and, finding them similar in warmth and intimacy to present apprehensions of the body or motor activities, would assign the conscious states as belonging to these objective matters. Such appropriation to the body and head must consist of conceiving of states of consciousness to belong to them. Thus, James states that the bodily activity or tone and the central motor adjustments accompanying the conscious stream are "the kernel to which the *represented* parts of the Self are assimilated, accreted, and knit on" (p. 341). In answer to my question, James might well say it is the bodily feelings that provide the needed continuity because they are a feature of all of our states of consciousness, which strongly resemble each other over time with respect to this feature.

Two objections. One objection against James's thesis would raise against it the reliability of the sense of personal identity over time and under changing physiological and behavioral conditions. Drunkenness, for example, does not typically produce a loss of our sense of personal identity. How often have we heard the story of someone's life while he or she was in that condition. Nor do debilitating illnesses necessarily alter one's sense of being the same person notwithstanding that bodily feelings are modified as a result of changes in

body chemistry, muscular weakness, and the biological requirement for inactivity. Indeed, people who suffer general motor paralysis are not reported to be incapable now of appropriating past experiences to themselves. The latter would be expected, *ex hypothesi*, because their present experiences of their body differ so much from their experiences before paralysis.

Secondly, there is a great emphasis in James's account of the sense of personal identity on each Thought's appropriating its predecessor Thought and thereby appropriating the latter's objects, which are all of the states of consciousness that the predecessor Thought appropriated from its predecessor Thought, and so on. James writes as though each Thought passed its objects along to the next Thought. But recall that each Thought is produced just as it is by the total brain process. It is the brain process that, as it were, carries the past into the present.

In this context, James states that all of the Thoughts belonging to a particular stream of consciousness leave their mark on the same brain, but he cannot mean this as though these marks are effects of the Thoughts. The brain process is that which produces the Thought as an apprehension of past states of consciousness including its predecessor Thought. To what is the fact owed that a predecessor Thought is a remembrance with the same conscious states for its objects as a successor Thought possesses? It is because the same ongoing total brain process produces both Thoughts, rather than because the predecessor Thought is appropriated by the successor Thought. Thus, a successor Thought might fail to be an awareness of a particular predecessor Thought and still appropriate the latter's objects.

Assuming James's dualist framework, I am suggesting that the brain is already modified suitably to the Thought of the moment when the total brain process yields that Thought. James states, "When the brain acts, a thought occurs" (p. 345). By which I take him to mean that out of the activity of the brain as a whole comes into being a state of consciousness that is a separate, disparate, nonphysical existent yet fully determined by its proximate physical cause in its specific cognitive (and qualitative) aspect, including what its objects are.

The Insulation Between Streams

James began discussing the sense of personal identity by referring to a section near the start of the preceding chapter called "Thought Tends to Personal Form." He had stated there that the states of consciousness that he was addressing were occurrent parts of one stream or another and that each stream, so to speak, keeps its states to itself.

There is no giving or bartering between them. No thought even comes into direct *sight* of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own. Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law Neither contemporaneity, nor proximity in space, nor similarity of quality and content are able to fuse thoughts together which are sundered by this barrier of belonging to different personal minds. The breaches between such thoughts are the most absolute breaches in nature. (p. 226)

However, now arguing against the positing of a soul to which the states of consciousness belong, James mentions that a proposed reason so to posit has been to explain and to insure the insulation between streams of consciousness. And, evidently, he is now willing, as part of his case against the soul, to give up this insulation which he earlier insisted upon.

As for insulation, it would be rash, in view of the phenomena of thought-transference, mesmeric influence and spirit-control, which are being alleged nowadays on better authority than ever before, to be too sure about that point either. The definitively closed nature of our personal consciousness is probably an average statistical resultant of many conditions, but not an elementary force or fact. (p. 350)

To what sort of breaks in the insulation between streams of consciousness is James here referring?

Presumably, these are supposed to be causal effects whereby states of consciousness in one stream correspond to states of consciousness taking place in another stream. In order to move the present discussion along, let me assume that such causal effects are real and treat of them from the Jamesian perspective. A person's having a certain thought connects with another person's having a similar thought. Specifically, the actual causal connection is parapsychically between the two ongoing brain processes that are the respective proximate causes of the two streams of consciousness. Thus, there is an additional causal chain that we had not believed existed before between two separate brains. I assume the causal connection is parapsychical as described for the reasons that James holds (a) that one's stream of consciousness is the immediate product of one's total ongoing brain process and (b) that all of any state of consciousness's effects are limited to the furthering or hindering of that brain process. Thus, thought transference from one stream to another would perforce be mediated by effects produced by one total brain process on another total brain process.

Transference of states of consciousness from one stream to another stream would not mean necessarily that, when thought transference occurred, either stream would contain states of consciousness that were inner awarenesses of states of consciousness in the other stream. But, it would seem, James's kind of account of inner awareness would allow that there could be inner awareness across streams under the specified paranormal conditions. Recall that, in his account, inner awareness of any state of consciousness takes the form of a

separate state of consciousness. Therefore, *ex hypothesi*, the one total brain process might affect the other total brain process so that the second would produce a state of consciousness much like the inner awareness that the first total brain process produced.

And consequently, the second stream could apprehend one or more states of consciousness in the first stream and find them warm and intimate. This Jamesian theoretical expectation will remind us that the "direct feeling" that we were said to have of our own states of consciousness was not supposed to be any more intimate than a state of consciousness's apprehending another such state in a way that somehow enables the apprehending state to grasp not only the cognitive content of the apprehended state but also its specific qualitiveness. Moreover, this theoretical expectation causes us to realize that, insofar as the transferred state is a Thought that gets fully transferred just as it is in the original stream, the recipient stream of consciousness would, for the instant of that transferred Thought, be taking itself to be a different stream. However, it is a different total brain process that is producing the "copy" state, and the further expectation would well be that of a great variety of "copies," with a range of similarity to the respective originals. Indeed, it might be urged that conscious-state transferal would perforce be limited in faithfulness to the original because of differences in the brains involved.

Earlier in this article, I explained James's position as holding that other people's states of consciousness can only be conceived. They cannot be objects of what James called direct feeling or direct sight by a stream of consciousness to which they do not belong. Would the purported phenomenon of thought transfer, if actual, be contrary evidence to that thesis? Certainly, it would seem contrary if states of consciousness that are inner awarenesses are among the states that can be transferred. For the objects of these states would be states of consciousness in their stream of origin.

If, however, only states that are not inner awarenesses were transferable, then no inner awareness would cross streams. A copy, however perfect, of a foreign state would be apprehended, according to James, by another state of consciousness in its own stream and would be found therein to be as though it belonged to someone else. Although apprehended by direct feeling, it would seem qualitatively different, as it is, from the domestic states.

Return to the Thought

As he is raising objections to other, competing understandings of the sense of personal identity, James (1890/1950) returns to the Thought and says about the associationist writers,

As a rule [they] seem to have a lurking bad conscience about the Self; and that although they are explicit enough about what it is, namely, a train of feelings or thoughts, they are very shy about openly tackling the problem of how it comes to be aware of itself . . . As a rule, associationist writers keep talking about "the mind" and about what "we" do; and so, smuggling in surreptitiously what they ought avowedly to have postulated in the form of a present "judging Thought," they either trade upon their reader's lack of discernment or are undiscerning themselves. (p. 354)

Accordingly, (a) the stream of consciousness does have direct awareness of itself — it is not a mere stream of consciousness, and (b) the Thought is the firsthand awareness as well as its being intimate remembrance and appropriation of preceding sections of the stream. This does not mean that James knows how these functions are accomplished. His general account holds that the total brain process is responsible for every state of consciousness that takes place in the respective stream, and so it is the brain process that brings parts of the stream's past into the present by bringing the present Thought into existence.

At no point would James introduce an agent, either into the stream or externally to it, overseeing it, that is other than the perishing, transient Thought itself — which is a very frequent basic durational component of the stream. It is a pseudoagent, however, a conscious state that seems to do the appropriating but that actually comes into being as the apparent vehicle of appropriations already accomplished.

Curiously, James speaks of the Thought as something that he *posits* — as opposed to, I assume, something that is entirely evident as taking place in the stream. I believe he falls into such a terminological use because, for one reason, he is contrasting his position with that of other authors who postulate an Ego to do the work. Another reason may be that, as I have suggested, the work is actually accomplished for James by the ongoing total brain process, which is as it is now because of how it was previously to the present moment.

In response to the associationist school, which James (1890/1950) characterizes at some length, he mentions at one point, in a footnote, this school's taking for its basic phenomena "feelings unaware of each other" and he objects as follows:

No shuffling of unaware feelings can make them aware. To get the awareness we must openly beg it by postulating a new feeling which has it. This new feeling is no

"Theory" of the phenomena, but a simple statement of them; and as such I postulate in the text the present passing Thought as a psychic integer, with its knowledge of so much that has gone before. (p. 359)

James introduces the Thought as a statement of the phenomena; the Thought does not explain the phenomena. Which suggests that James's is a firsthand report or an abstraction from many such reports. That is, it is not a postulation of something like an Ego — which, as one of the associationists describes, "ever eludes cognition though ever postulated for cognition" (James, 1890/1950, p. 355). The Thought possesses a rich content but is, nevertheless, an integral, unitary state of consciousness, rather than its consisting of a number of apprehensions and remembrances distinct from each other. Evidently, this is how the Thought seems firsthand to James to be, and the postulation that he has in mind must be a move from how it seems to how it is. It is like postulating that something one perceives actually exists, whereas one could attempt to explain the appearances away.

Note, too, that what is thus postulated lies beyond the merely phenomenal. Both the present Thought and a physical object so postulated cannot be reduced to how they seem. Yet James believes, of course, that his postulation of the Thought and its features does get these matters right, including the Thought's owning past components of the same stream. However, James recognizes that error is possible in inner awareness as it is in perception. For example, the Thought may seem to have effects directly on subsequent states of consciousness or behaviors but, according to James's postulation, all such effects are indirect, mediated by the only part of the world that the Thought or any state of consciousness can affect directly, namely, the ongoing total brain process.

Conscious-State Simplicity

James (1890/1950) contrasts his view to Kant's. Whereas Kant conceives of the stream of consciousness as a product of the higher faculties acting upon and synthesizing together the chaotic materials of sensibility, James holds that the Thought or any state of consciousness is simple, in the sense of not consisting of parts. He refers us to his discussion of this point in Chapter X, where he insists,

There is no manifold of coexisting ideas; the notion of such a thing is a chimera. Whatever things are thought in relation are thought from the outset in a unity, in a single pulse of subjectivity, a single psychosis, feeling, or state of mind. (p. 278)

And James suggests that the assumption of individual-state complexity derives from our tendency, when speaking phenomenologically of one of our

states of consciousness, quickly to drop it and to describe something else. In place of the state, we describe the *objects* of our state and even, as well, how our further states of consciousness apprehend those same objects, that is, what these further states reveal to us *about* those objects.

In a footnote, James acknowledges that some readers will remain unconvinced. They will maintain that a state of consciousness possesses as many parts as it discriminates in its objects. Addressing those readers, James adds,

Well, then, let the word parts pass. Only observe that these parts are not the separate "ideas" of traditional psychology. No one of them can live out of that particular thought, any more than my head can live off of my particular shoulders. In a sense a soap-bubble has parts; it is a sum of juxtaposed spherical angles. But these triangles are not separate realities; neither are the "parts" of the thought separate realities You can no more make a new thought out of "ideas" that have once served than you can make a new bubble out of old triangles. (p. 279)

James is not saying that a state of consciousness does not possess distinguishable aspects. Indeed, a typical state of consciousness has many objects, including especially the body but also, at the same time, part of the environment and other states of consciousness, not to speak of abstract and nonexistent objects. But its being a remembrance, a perceptual awareness, an emotional state, an imaginal awareness, an inner awareness, and so on, are all features of the state that cannot exist except as the features of a state that they are. There exist no thoughts, feelings, perceptual experiences, and so on, except as they belong as aspects to a particular state of consciousness (see Natsoulas, 2000).

James argues against Kant's notion of a synthesizer of data, an Ego, by whose efforts a unified state of consciousness comes to be, suggesting that this constitutes no explanation for the facts of consciousness. James believes it is better description to speak of the Thought as the vehicle of cognition, as that which knows many things simultaneously. As I have previously mentioned, it seems to me that the complexity of function that brings the synchronic unity of conscious states into being, has been assigned by James to the total brain process of which the Thought is a product. To say, as James does, that it is the Thought that is the vehicle of simple and complex cognition is to inspire questions concerning how this could be. However, what is valuable is his phenomenological descriptions of the states of consciousness as unified wholes possessing features typically reified as being themselves separate mental occurrences — when, actually, one does not find them to be separate firsthand, but finds them to be features rather of a molar, concrete state of consciousness.

The Me and the I

In the final part of his chapter on the consciousness of self, James explicitly distinguishes the empirical, objective person, which he will now call "the me," and the judging, subjective Thought, which he will now call "the I." I would say that both I and me are empirical for the reason (a) that the I, too, can be recognized as part of the specious present, as occurring now, by its near successors in the stream and (b) that the I, too, can later be an object of remembrance. Also, although the I is the vehicle of all knowing, feeling, and so on, I would say that the I is no less objective than the me from the Jamesian perspective. The I is, after all, a real product of the brain process and has its properties independently from how it may seem. Indeed, I believe that many of our states of consciousness, including those that qualify as being the Thought at the moment of their occurrence, take place without our having any awareness of them.

However, James also speaks of the me in ways that suggest it is subjective, that is, a matter of how the body feels. But at the core of his understanding the me is objective, independent of how it is apprehended. However, admittedly, the me is selected or abstracted from the totality of apprehensible items and is of special interest because it is apprehended as being "me." In this respect, it is like the self of all selves, which is an abstraction from each stream of consciousness and consists of a kind of state of consciousness.

The components of the me according to James are actually objective notwithstanding his running them together, as in the following passage, with the feelings of apprehending them:

The central part of the *me* is the feeling of the body and of the adjustments in the head; and in the feeling of the body should be included that of the general emotional tones and tendencies, for at bottom these are the habits in which organic activities and sensibilities run. Well, from infancy to old age, this assemblage of feelings, most constant of all, is yet prey to slow mutation. Our powers, bodily and mental, change at least as fast. (p. 371)

The remaining parts of the me consist of everything else that one would call "me," such as the stream of consciousness or sections thereof, and other people with whom one has identified, all quite objective matters in the sense of being independent of how they may seem. Thus, it would seem clear that the items mentioned in the above passage as being central to the me are those bodily properties and parts, occurrent and nonoccurrent, that are apprehended and felt.

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