

B5. 'I'

I was born of my mother resulting from her sexual contact with my biological father: born into a natural living world, on an earthly planet - a primate among a variety of living species. My mind and personality developed, as my brain matured within the environment around me. I am a functioning biological creature among many, who lives in a natural world, subject to the prevailing realities evolved by human action. Genetics gives me a framework for my behaviour as a survival machine and my personality is at least an imitation of those around me, including my family and my community or tribe. A ruling ideological human structure will reinforce those attitudes and values that are deemed most useful for society by the existing structure of that society – by force if necessary. I am largely controlled by power relationships within my society. There is little or no case for anything more than that, such as an independent subjective identity or a transcendent being. I will live and die as an animal within the confines of my species' determination to exist, experiencing a material existence - conscious when living and unconscious after death. My common sense tells me this to be the truth.

If a philosopher should look into this natural order of things, they might doubt that there is anything actually there 'in nature'. The radical notion that we can only perceive things: existence is only in our mind. Should I listen to these skeptics and doubters, and accept there may not be any actual evidence for the above common sense view, and that it is only a perception of reality that cannot be strictly proven, then I am acknowledging Descartes' grand idea. By doubting, the only thing I *can* know is that I think and therefore I must be. So now the I is all important with no proof in material reality. Here, I may jump into immaterialism and look for God as my necessary provider of being as Descartes so much wanted to do. But when Hume says he looks into his mind and sees thoughts drifting through it like a flock of birds we are asked to abandon the self as a real thing and only depend on what can be empirically established.

Then I want to say that I (Hume's I) observing the flock of birds is still an I. Or else, who or what is it that is observing the mind? This observer is an I. This observing I might well be Kant's 'organising principle'. We design ourselves from our biography. This designer can then only be done from outside all of those perceptions. Not a homunculus sitting at the back of our head. Not a thing or anything objective. Not a soul or seat of consciousness. Not even an entity. What is it then? This awareness of a self. The reflecting voice asking who I am. Who am I? I am a subject of experience. I am a single sort of entity. I am not a property of something. So this entity is not a thing. I am no thing. There is no thing to exist. It is present only in the now and without purpose - endlessly. Now now now now. Like space and time this I is immaterial? I is independent of that real world described in the first paragraph.

So I am back to a duality. The world out there which includes my material self and that includes my brain and my thoughts and memories, and this I which reflects on all this, which must be an immateriality. There is I and non-I. There is the objective world and a subjectivity

of it. There is nature and nature's unconsciousness. It is both contingent and necessary. I exist as a contradiction.

I might attempt to reconcile these dualities and grasp for transcendence. Then can I overcome the objective and subjective, the conscious and unconscious, nature and intelligence, even idealism and materialism – overcome duality to achieve the absolute by necessity. A place where Science cannot go. But it is no place I can describe or identify. It is what I must do to be one.

Only through the grasping of a unity in myself can I find freedom and will and therefore agency - for my perspective is all I have. Philosophers might not be able to describe this consciousness in ways acceptable to logic – words are never enough it seems. But we may be able to access this knowingness in ways other than with words. Not a thing or an idea but something that can only be expressed through abstraction, possibly most closely achieved through what we call art: glimpses into the place where I resides.

Trying to make sense of it all is taxing. There is no consensus. The philosophy of mind feels like being lost at sea, with moments of navigational hope, only to be lost again, with a desperate yearning to be back on land, because you have to be grounded in materiality. When I delve into the real material world I am alive. I have never been so alive as when putting in a tackle on a football field, gorging on fine food, diving into deep water, experiencing the sensual material world. A place I want to inhabit with Samuel Johnson; a place where I will not go mad. This does not mean that I necessarily believe there is only a material world. Time and space are structures that appear to have no materiality at present. I am willing to accept there is much I cannot see or experience but this does not deny that there is a 'materiality' to be experienced. And once again I am back to mind/body duality.

I cannot deny this real objective world and yet I have to spend time in a mental world. But, thankfully, I have others. *Self awareness only exists alongside others through a common objective world.* This means much to me. A subjective I is useless to me without the realisation I am a social being. I cannot exist without a you to be with. I am reflected in you. *Loneliness*: the worst of all states, where I does not exist. Loneliness: the real reason we fear death. This real world where I am with others does not have to be somewhere else. I am not willing to accept that I exist without myself because *that* is where psychopathy lays: in the belief that I is separate from the real world and that suffering is not really harmful.

In creating things, dealing with situations, relationships, power in society we have the possibility to change. Through our understanding of objective and subjective and the possibility to overcome these we are able to be free and influence the world. It may be difficult and unpleasant and painful that we know we are free to choose and in making choices we will be vulnerable, but only in attempting to reconcile contradictions can we realise ourselves and this has to be with others. Avoiding this realisation can be more harmful – that you do not live a life but hide from yourself.