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A Review of D. Zahavi, T. Grunbaum & J. Parnas (eds.)
The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness

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REVIEW OF: Dan Zahavi, Thor Grunbaum and Josef Parnas (eds.). 2004. *The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness*. John Benjamins. 160 pp. ISBN: 1588115712.

The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness is a collection of articles on self-consciousness by psychologists, cognitive scientists and philosophers. In the preface Zahavi and Grunbaum state the two main aims of the collection as being, first, to demonstrate that self-consciousness is a complex phenomenon requiring an interdisciplinary approach and, second, to argue for the existence of a kind of self-consciousness which is primitive, implicit, pre-reflective and bodily. In this review I will first give a summary of each of the articles in the collection, and then give an evaluation of it with these two aims in mind.

The first article is by Philippe Rochat and is called 'The emergence of self-awareness as *co-awareness* in early child development'. Rochat argues for the existence of an implicit and primitive kind of self-awareness from the first weeks after birth. At 18 months a child can pass the mirror rouge test. At this stage the child can, therefore, definitely be considered self-conscious. The development of self-consciousness continues after this milestone and Rochat explains that it is not until the third or fourth year that the child gets a sense of her public self. The main point of Rochat's argument is, however, that we can also find evidence of self-consciousness prior to the passing of the mirror rouge test. At birth the baby reacts differently to tactile stimulation produced by someone else than to self-produced tactile stimulation. This suggests that the baby has a self-world differentiation. At 2 months the baby shows the beginnings of self-exploration, the social

smile, and the ability to share pleasurable experiences. The ability to intentionally mirror an adult's behaviour is also taken by Rochat as evidence of early implicit self-consciousness. At 5-6 month a baby shows more interest in a video of a strange baby than in a video of itself wearing a similar outfit. All this is taken by Rochat to show that the infant has a kind of self-consciousness already present at birth which develops gradually through its first years. He concludes that it is these early forms of bodily implicit self-consciousness that makes it possible for the infant to gain the kind of full self-consciousness that involves the sense of a public self.

The second article, 'Threesome intersubjectivity in infancy. A contribution to the development of self-awareness' is by Elisabeth Fivaz-Depeursinge, Nicolas Favez and France Frascarolo. This article discusses examples of primary intersubjectivity in early infancy and takes it as evidence for a pre-reflective, bodily self-awareness. The research involves *primary* intersubjectivity between three persons: the infant and her parents. In primary intersubjectivity the point of the interaction is the interaction itself: the sharing of attention and pleasure (this is contrasted with secondary intersubjectivity, where an object is the aim of the shared attention). The article describes an experiment done with a three month old baby called Manon and her parents, who were told to play with her both together and one at a time with the other one watching. One of the results cited is the fact that the child will check for both parents' reactions to a new and novel situation before embarking on a course of action. This is taken as evidence that the "infant's ability to 'interface minds' through intentional communication. Thus infants have a sense of a shared mental world, a primitive ability to take on the role of the other." (p. 24). When playing with both parents, the child will control her actions to fit the different feedback she receives from her parents on the game played. The article illustrates this with a game of imitation, which the mother engaged in willingly whilst the father refused Manon's invitation to imitate her actions. The authors suggest that the three-way interaction will help develop the child's sense of self as it gives her an example of 'like me' from playing with her mother (who would imitate her actions) and a sense of 'not like me' from playing with her father. (p. 31). The authors conclude that the evidence cited show that the infant is in possession of bodily self-awareness and is able to ascribe mental states to other people before she is able to reflect on her theory of mind. (pp. 31-32).

Dan Zahavi provides the third article: 'The embodied self-awareness of the infant. A challenge to the theory-theory of mind?' Zahavi argues that empirical evidence of infants' experience shows that the theory-theory is wrong in claiming that self-awareness and intersubjectivity require the subject to have a *theory* of mind—understood as a "folk-psychological theory dealing with the structure and functioning of the mind" (p. 36)—which allows us to *infer*, on the basis of theoretical knowledge, that people and ourselves have certain mental states and to predict the behaviour of ourselves and others.

Zahavi cites evidence similar to that discussed in the first two articles: infants react differently to self-produced and other-produced tactile stimulation and infants can discriminate between objects within reach and out of reach. On the subject of the infant's ability to ascribe mental states to others he cites the following evidence: infants react differently to people than to inanimate objects, infants can follow eye movements, that is, see people's actions as goal oriented, read their parents' reactions to new situations and act according to the advice they get (p. 47).

Zahavi holds that this evidence shows that there is an implicit, primitive and irreducible kind of self-awareness present from birth. Zahavi further argues that this self-awareness is not object awareness and he calls on people to consult the phenomenological tradition for an account of self-consciousness which is not object-consciousness.

The fourth article is by Marc Jeannerod and is called 'From self-recognition to self-consciousness.' Jeannerod examines our ability to see ourselves as the agent of our actions. (p. 65). He shows that vision plays a role primary to proprioception in this ability in that people will ascribe someone else's actions to themselves on the basis of visual clues and overlook or override the information they get about their actual action from proprioception. Jeannerod suggests an explanation for this misattribution by citing evidence that suggests that acting and watching someone else act are very closely linked. Someone watching an actor run will for instance start to breathe faster. Jeannerod also shows that acting and imagining or mentally acting out or calculating an action are very closely linked, for instance they take the same amount of time. He concludes by pointing out that schizophrenic patients attribute their own actions to others and other's actions to themselves, thus giving more evidence for the close interlinking of these two seemingly very different things.

The fifth article is also on the topic of our sense of agency. The article, 'Agency, ownership, and alien control in schizophrenia', is by Shaun Gallagher. Gallagher is concerned with the tendency in schizophrenics to misattribute their own thoughts to other people or things. He examines and rejects a top-down account of this phenomena based on the theory-theory. The top-down account explains the alienation as a second order problem; that is, as a problem that arises when the schizophrenic represents and reflects on his or her own thoughts. The account holds that the subject *infers* that she is not the agent of a thought because it does not fit into any narrative she can make sense of (p. 93). Gallagher criticises this account for not explaining why schizophrenics are not alienated from their own complaints about alienation. Instead Gallagher defends a bottom-up account that states that the thoughts in question are really *experienced* as being the actions of someone else. This means that the subject is not really misrepresenting the thought, but stating correctly how the thought feels to him or her.

The sixth article is by Jonathan Cole and is called 'Tetraplegia and self-consciousness'. Cole describes the experiences of people with tetraplegia, that is, spinal cord damage, which leaves them more or less paralysed. He describes how finding their self-respect involves finding a way to see themselves as embodied agents in the world.

The final article, 'Self and Identity', is by Arne Groen. Groen gives us the second philosophical contribution of the collection. He discusses self-identity as a problem of self-understanding. He argues that the real problem of self-identity is not to establish whether I am the same as someone ten years ago, but of understanding how I came to change in this way. The problem of self-identity, so understood, is part of being a self. Groen expresses this by saying that the self is self-relation. "Self is to relate to oneself and in relating to itself a self *is* self-relation." (p. 130). The question Groen discusses therefore goes beyond the kind of self-consciousness which is otherwise the focus of the book.

The collection is a good source of empirical research on self-consciousness. All of the scientific articles are easy to understand and describe their research in a way that allows one to focus on drawing philosophical conclusions from them instead of wondering about the details of the experiments. The first two articles discuss the development of consciousness in the first years of life and offer empirical evidence of the existence of a primitive bodily kind of self-consciousness in these early years. They do so by giving a clear description of the relevant experiments in developmental psychology and by relating this to philosophical and psychological theories. Jeannerod and Gallagher's articles also support each other well, and are interesting from an interdisciplinary viewpoint because they both describe empirical findings in an accessible way and offer an interpretation of these findings which will be relevant for philosophers interested in our sense of agency and our self-ascription of actions.

One of the aims of the collection, as stated in the preface, is to point to the existence of a primitive, implicit, bodily self-consciousness. Taken together the three first articles offer empirical evidence which points to a kind of primitive self-consciousness. However, the empirical evidence offered proves, at the most, that infants *use* a concept of an embodied self when they act, that is, that they are capable of exercising a concept of the self as distinct from other objects in their actions. However, this does not show that infants are capable of being aware, even tacitly or implicitly, of this concept of the self. It is the latter that is required to show that infants are self-aware, not the former, and so the empirical evidence discussed in this collection does not show that infants have self-awareness.

Zahavi develops a philosophical argument for infant self-consciousness to support the evidence he cites. He argues that phenomenal consciousness and self-awareness are interlinked, so that we cannot deny that infants have self-consciousness, if we think they have phenomenal consciousness. Zahavi presents this argument specifically as an answer to objectors who claims that the evidence cited does not show that infants have an inner experience of self. His argument is that for a state to be conscious (for there to be something it is like for the subject to be in a state), the subject must be aware of this state. Zahavi takes this to mean that the subject is not just aware of the object in the world, but also of the *experience* of the object in the world. Secondly, he takes this to mean that the subject is self-conscious. To back this up he describes an inherent 'mine-ness' in phenomenally conscious states:

Most people are prepared to concede that there is necessarily something "it is like" for a subject to undergo a conscious experience (...). But insofar as there is something it is like for the subject to have the experience, the subject must in some way have access to and be acquainted with the experience. Moreover, although conscious experiences differ from one another (...) they also share certain features. One commonality is the quality of *mine-ness*, the fact that the experiences are characterized by first-personal givenness. (...) Unless a mental process is self-conscious, there will be nothing it is like to undergo the process, and it therefore cannot be a phenomenally conscious process. (pp. 55-56).

Zahavi presents the claim that conscious states are states that we are conscious *of* as self-evident. But in fact it is only one way of viewing consciousness. We can also think of conscious states as states that we are conscious *through*, that is, states that make us

conscious of other things, but that we are not conscious of. Furthermore, as is clear from the quotation just given, Zahavi does not here give any connecting argument between the claim that phenomenal experiences are experiences that the subject is conscious of as experiences, and the claim that they are characterised by a mine-ness, a first personal givenness. His argument is therefore purely based on an assumption about phenomenal consciousness, and so begs the question in favour of the primitive self-awareness he claims to argue for. Zahavi, therefore, does not deal with anyone who denies that there is a 'quality of mine-ness' in all phenomenally conscious states, that is, that all experiences with a phenomenal quality are (even tacitly) given as *my* experiences. One reason to reject the idea that the 'mineness' of an experience is itself experienced is the threat of an infinite regress that this poses: if the mineness of my experience is itself experienced, is the mineness of this experience also experienced? What about the mineness of this experience?

If we were to accept Zahavi's link between self-consciousness and consciousness, we would have to ascribe self-consciousness to infants who lack the capacities required for a *theory* of mind, as long as we think that infants enjoy phenomenal consciousness. However, this would not refute someone who is happy to deny phenomenal consciousness to infants.

Several of the articles argue their case for a primitive self-consciousness explicitly in opposition to the theory-theory. However, the problem discussed above means that there is an obvious line of defence open to someone who wants to deny that we can have self-consciousness prior to having a theory of mind (and the ability to reflect on it). Supporters of the theory-theory can deny that the behavioural evidence cited here tells us anything about the inner experiences of infants. Though infants use a sense of their bodily self when they act, they may not be aware of this self. Defenders of the theory-theory can deny that the behaviour documented in the empirical research is accompanied by self-consciousness.

In conclusion, even though I do not think that the collection is successful in *proving* the existence of a primitive pre-reflective self-consciousness, the articles provide a useful and challenging discussion of this view, both in the form of empirical evidence and philosophical analysis.