Prosthetic Tim/ing: Selfhood and Ethics Amidst Technological Rationality

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Contents

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Abstract

This masters thesis examines the interplay between ethics and selfhood amidst contemporary technological rationality. I use *personal everyday photography* as a foil in my analysis of the ways in which temporality is both constitutive of consciousness and the subject of practices of domestication via technics. In chapter one, I define *personal everyday photography*, address the two interconnected registers of selfhood (embodied and psychic), and advance an argument for *mindfulness*. In chapter two, I assess the ethical aspects of memory, temporality and thinking as they relate to selfhood. In the final chapter, I relate these elements to contemporary technics, and argue that *everyday personal photography* supports and perpetuates the notion of static self-identity through time, and conscious self-making via practices of exclusion and elimination. In conclusion, I suggest we must exercise mindfulness in those practices that support *selfness.* Ultimately, ethical life might require less reliance on technological prostheses for remembering.

Cette thèse met à l'étude la relation contemporaine entre l'éthique et le soi, dans une période marquée par la rationalité technologique. Je develope le concept de « everyday personal photography » comme exemple centrale dans laquelle la temporalité est constitutive de la conscience et est le sujet des pratiques de domestication partechniques. Dans le chapitre un, je définis « everyday personal photography », je traite les deux registres du soi (incorporé et psychique), et j'avance un argument pour la pleine conscience (ou *mindfulness)*. Dans le chapitre deux, j'évalue les aspects moraux de la mémoire, la temporalité, et la pensée par rapport au soi. Dans le dernier chapitre, j'établie le lien entre ces éléments et les techniques contemporaines, et je soutient que « everyday personal photography » perpétue la notion d'une identité statique à travers le temps, et l'auto-création par l'intermédiaire des pratiques d'exclusion et d'élimination. En conclusion, je propose que nous devions exercer « mindfulness » dans les pratiques qui soutiennent l'individualité. Finalement, la vie morale pourrait nécessiter une dépendance moins élevée dans les prothèses technologiques de la mémoire.

Introduction

> The question of the archive is not a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might already be at our disposal, an archivable concept of the archive. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise, and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive; if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come, not tomorrow, but in times to come. Later on, or perhaps never.
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> <div align="right">- Jacques Derrida (2002)</div>

In late January 2008, the international press picked up a disturbing story from Bridgend, South Wales. Without warning, Natasha Randall, a popular 17 year old who was studying child care, hung herself. Within two days, two of Natasha's friends attempted suicide. Over the twelve month period prior Natasha's death, six young men from Bridgend and surrounding areas ranging in age from 17 to 27 committed suicide. Most of them knew each other. What appeared on the surface as a case of copycat suicides soon came to be interpreted rather differently, centering on a social networking website, Bebo. On this site, friends of those who had died erected memorial sites featuring glamour photographs of their friends (Britten & Savill 2008). Another journalist Kathy Brewis, reports:

> Randall's suicide attracted hundreds of comments before her profile was taken   down on Wednesday, most of which made reference to her looks and praised her. Even the negative comments alluded to the attention she was receiving after her death. "Chrissie" wrote: "R.I.P Like. . . But why?... Isit Tru She Wanted More Bebo Views? Hope Your Lookin Down On Your Family & Friends. They Must Be In Pieces Because Of Youu….No Need Too Do Some-thin Soo Selfish" (Brewis).

The glamour shot becomes the trace of the life lost for time immemorial, a durable object of attention, praise, and distinction. Death sets the stage for the display of the visage. Loren Coleman, author of the book *Suicide Clusters* (1987), was interviewed for the article in question:

> It is an unpalatable but undeniable fact that death attracts attention. "Reality TV means young people are constantly bombarded with instant

fame and instant success. A young person in a deprived area sees this and it's psychologically destructive. They think: if I'm a nobody but I commit suicide, I'll be a somebody. I'll get my photo in the papers, I'll have a memorial on the internet. How can I be a celebrity? Well, if I don't get onto Big Brother, an alternative is death. My friends are doing it" (*ibid*).

Such is the promise of the photograph, and indeed its power. In this case, suicide does not stand as a way out, but a way in: to fame, notoriety, esteem, enduring being. Virtuality supplants reality, as the suicide victim persists through time in cyber space, outside the bounds of corporeality and temporality. The photograph then plays a cruel trick on the victim, offering immortality in the fixing of a moment of utter presentability. The internet offers the promise of seemingly boundless dissemination and endurance. Herein we can identify the intention to orchestrate death rather than suffer it. In so doing, the 'victim' stages their exit for maximum dramatic effect (hanging in all these cases, one at the a highly public venue, the Coney Beach funfair at Porthcawl, near Bridgend). Their photographs portray them in their peak of youthful exuberance and beauty, yet to be fouled by the travails of adult life.

The Bridgend case gives pause to ask, what does the photograph mean for the youths involved? How do photographs that 'represent' them figure in their sense of selfhood and identity? How do photographs materialize being? In what follows, I will address these questions in general terms. Asking questions about photography in the digital age is vital to the construction of any semblance of an understanding of the conditions of contemporary life in Euro-America. This thesis attempts to establish a foothold on the shifting terrain of photographic practice, and its subject effects.

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Let me be clear: this thesis is and is not *about* photography. Rather, I address photographic practice as a foil for a philosophical investigation into contemporary practices of the self and ethics. Photography brings material experience to bear on my analysis of the intermingling of self, body, time, memory and ethics. Thus, everyday photography is the setting but not the object of this analysis. Consequently, when I ask, what does it mean to co-exist with

photographs, I attempt to engage photographic practice and its products in a dialogue with ethics, temporality, and selfhood. The question is how photography bears on ethical being where selfhood is an emanation of consciousness, broadly defined, not a locatable essence.

Identity, or selfhood, is something that is experienced through embodiment. This experience is not limited to the level of conscious thought alone; it also manifests at sub-levels of affect and unconscious 'thinking'. In chapter one I define *everyday photographic practice*, which centres my focus on the photography that touches each of our lives in a manner that directly relates to selfhood and identity. I then discuss autobiography theory and discursive selfhood, which is intended to elucidate the manner in which selfhood manifests at the conscious level. Next I compare and contrast Platonism and Epicureanism, which serves to establish the foundation upon which selfhood and identity are conceived in contemporary philosophical thought. Following this section, I draw from Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch's work on neuroscience, which encompasses issues of memory, identity, and techniques of the self. Memory is an integral aspect of both selfhood and this study. My primary concern with photography lies in its capacity to augment and reconfigure practices of remembering, thereby reshaping selfhood and ethical life.

Memory functions at different levels, sometimes directed by conscious thought, but often not at all. Techniques of the self can be employed to influence those levels of brain activity and memory that are not guided by consciousness toward nurturing a sensibility of pluralistic generosity. The question that concerns me then, is how photography figures in this process, what its subject effects are.

In chapter two I explore a positive political view that emanates from a creative combination of the revelations of contemporary neuroscience and ancient traditions like Epicureanism and Buddhism. In the first section I explain how thinking is very much an unpredictable, affect imbued, embodied process of interaction between different layers of cognition that constitute experience. This is important for the question of ethics.

Following this section I address the question of forgetting: what does it mean to forget, and how should we understand forgetting in ethical terms. This is a question of attachment, and in Varela et al's terms, *grasping*. We perpetually grasp for the solidity of an unchanging self-identity. The function of memory has changed through history, shifting from a positive to a negative ethical valence. Memory that is accessed at the conscious level is subjected to techniques of control. This section leads into an argument for ethical tim(ing), based on Rudolf Bernet's phenomenology. Perceiving time is always cognizance of the triad of the just-past, now, and the to-come. Memory thus figures prominently in temporality. I argue that *everyday personal photography* is implicated in the refusal of ethical time because it affords the individual the ability to manipulate remembering in an individualistic manner.

In chapter three I examine Celia Lury's theorization of *prosthetic culture,* and relate it to Bernard Stiegler's analysis of *technics* in relation to both 'human' existence and the manner in which technics configure perception of time. Following this section, I argue that photography can be considered a technological practice that has a core feature: the domestication of time. I offer a construal of photographic practice as an interaction with, production and archiving of, *prosthetic memory.*

Building further on my understanding of photographic practice so construed, I address the import of the classical scientific conception of time as linear for selves in the context of postmodernism. Here time is a *problem;* it ceaselessly carries us toward our death. In the absence of transcendental hope, death is terrifying. Thus, photography is embraced for its promise to domesticate time and therefore minimize terror. I examine this terror of death and offer an argument for the possibility and necessity of reconceiving death along less negative and pervasive lines in hope that this might in part undermine technological rationality at its root source.

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In what follows, I will advance an argument about a particular photographic practice, everyday personal photography. Again, photography is not

my primary concern; it simply presents itself as a tangible, familiar case study that offers multiple points of entry into matters that concern us all. I speak here of what I take to be a triad, composed of selfhood, time, and ethics. This requires explanation.

The world is, in effect, a closed, finite system. However, much of humankind has lived as though the system were open and infinite, since at least the scientific revolution. I need not explain how this has created our ecological crisis. We have the abstract ecological crisis on the one hand, and individual agents on the other. Some face harsh realities that do not afford opportunity to modify behaviour for the sake of ecological responsibility. For others, ecological responsibility is not a question of survival, but of convenience and preference. For this group, sacrifice becomes the operative term.

Suggestions of sacrifice tend to be avoided in the rhetoric employed by mainstream environmentalists that encourage 'regular people' to reduce their ecological footprints/carbon emissions/waste *etcetera*. In fact, many go further than avoidance and take the offensive, asserting that people *need not sacrifice* for the good of the planet; greening your life can be painless if you start small and work up slowly. In "2008 – A Year for Living Lightly," David Chernushenko, Ottawa Green Party representative, writes:

> Living lightly is not about guilt, sacrifice, or preaching to others. It is about choosing to embrace a way of life that is exciting, challenging, rewarding, humbling and is full of mistakes and dilemmas as it is full of achievements and certainty (22).

This dance around sacrifice exemplifies the fortuity of selfness, as well as its fragility. Suggestions of sacrifice are typically met with forceful defensiveness, as the self, and the centrality of its well-being is guarded tooth and nail. Skirting the problem of sacrifice is clearly a necessary strategy where individualism is prevalent; it is an effective short-term tact. But when ecologically responsible decisions hit the wall and come to involve sacrifice, people need reasons to put the good of others, human and otherwise, ahead of their own desire. I will argue that a decentering of the self is necessary at this point. The decentred self does not need to overcome sacrifice, for the good of the individual is bound up with the

good of others. Dualism does not inhere; it is a matter of what is good for 'us'. Living lightly is then desired, not an imposition. Sacrifice would not be part of the discussion if we were not self-centred in the first place.

Consider the conception of the self in market economics. Our present economic system is predicated on the assertion that self-concern is a universal reality. Is capitalism and the principle of willingness-to-pay not implicated in the ecological crisis? Indeed they are; one can clearly see how the ecological costs of conducting business as we do externalizes environmental damage from pricing mechanisms. An economic system that does not attribute self-concern to agents might reflect the fact that the good of any individual is always bound up relationally with the good of (interspecies) others.

The ecological crisis can and will only be stemmed by a reconfiguration of upper level economic systems *and* a distinct shift in ground level understandings of selfhood. In order for decision makers to find support for radical changes in policy aimed at mitigating climate change, for example, constituents need to *feel* that personal 'sacrifices' in lifestyle are both necessary and *right*. In my view, this will require a shift to conceiving the self as interconnected, relational, both contributing to and dependent on the good of others (including non-humans). The crucial consideration at the heart of this stance is that this kind of change and sacrifice requires ethical consideration for the good of others – both like and unlike us – in the future. That is, much of the compromises/sacrifices that need to be made now will yield no marked improvements in the immediate future. Natural systems do not change at rates of speed that are perceptible to the casual observer. This means sacrifice in the present is and will continue to be *for* others, future others. These others exist only in mind, in potentiality, and as such, cannot make demands; they are without voice.

I submit that we need a shift away from individualism. There are more and less obvious ways to enact this shift in everyday life. Some of our cultural practices are so deeply embedded that they become invisible to us. We don't tend to pause to consider *what it means* to engage in many of our practices. Photographic practice is a productive example. Digital cameras became

ubiquitous after over a century of chemical photographic practice. The ascendancy of the digital camera came riding on the back of a well-trodden tradition of everyday photography in Euro-America. Digital cameras both do photography 'better' (i.e. more, faster, lighter, smaller) and differently; it is both different in kind and degree. They make possible the extension of everyday photography to its extreme. I endeavor to ask both 'why?' and 'why not?' of this situation. Why are we pushing everyday photography to its limit (photographing constantly), and why should we not? Or, what does it matter? Indeed, what does any of this matter in relation to the question of selfhood, and just what grounds this 'should'?

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ONE

Embodied Selfhood

> We hold with Merleau-Ponty that Western scientific culture requires that
> we see our bodies both as physical structures and as lived, experiential
> structures – in short, as both 'outer' and 'inner,' biological and
> phenomenological. These two sides of embodiment are obviously not
> opposed.
>
> <div align="right">- Francisco Varela et al (1991 xv)</div>

§I Photographing Our Lives

What are the implications of everyday photographic practice for ethical life? In the following pages I focus on the temporal aspects of this interface, and the manner in which selfhood is bound up with temporality. I will discuss how photographs relate to temporality, and more specifically, assess autobiographical photography in relation to both temporality and ethical life.

We cannot help but discuss autobiography in this study, for everyday photographs 'reflect' our life stories back to us in a manner that parallels discursive narrativizing. While autobiographical writing cannot help but embody fictional elements, autobiographical photographs appear both more accessible and more 'true' than discursive recollections. Light cannot lie, so it is thought. For this reason, photographic life stories figure centrally in contemporary Euro-American life. It is thus necessary to address autobiography so as to build a foundation upon which we can address the questions I pose. However, I must first clarify just what sort of photography I will attend to.

My focus falls on what I call everyday personal photography, which includes snapshots and portraits. Both categories are fairly broad; I consider snapshots necessarily amateur, and include in this category photographs of sporting activities, which occupy a different status from those taken by professionals. The difference inheres in intention, the ends that motivate their creation. Journalistic photographs, photographic art and photographs destined for advertising share many characteristics, but I want to maintain a degree of specificity that excludes them. My project works out from an examination of selfhood and ethics and ask how photography figures. I believe everyday personal photography is the most salient

photographic practice in the contemporary context, and focus thereupon. Photography *as technological practice* carries a host of potentials that are either realized or not. Photographs *can* domesticate time, but they don't always.[1] I will focus on those contexts were it is taken up *because* it holds this potential, among others.

Motivations for memorializing experience do not exist in a realm distinct from that of interpretation. That is, we tend to photograph not for the now, but for the to-come - future encounters with the present. At least, this was the case until the advent of the digital camera, with the limited exceptions of its precursors in the photo-booth and Polaroid media. Yet these media, despite their reduced lag time between exposure and image presentation, still involve a temporal lag. That lag distances the now from the to-come.

To be clear, I am most interested in photographic practices that attempt to index our lived experience. I am talking about photographs of ourselves and those whose lives relate to ours in a perceptible manner. This is not to say that photographs of things outside the realm of personal experience are not part of technological practices, and don't retain philosophical significance. Images of Earth taken from space certainly do matter, as do high-resolution photographs of bacteria.[2] But photographs of this sort do not relate so closely to selfhood; they don't tend to be employed in practices of *self-making* or *techniques of the self.* This study will benefit from greater specificity, but this will not foreclose extending my arguments outside the specificity I employ. People imaged in photographs whom we've never met do not occupy the same status as those of people we have. Photographs of happenings we've been party to are extensions of our lived experience of those happenings. Those photographs that figure our selves and those that figure others we've photographed are central to this study.

Everyday personal photography is the most common and banal, therefore

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[1] In chapter three I argue that the main feature of personal everyday photography is the domestication of time.

[2] I implicitly refer to Heidegger's comment on the world picture: "I do not know whether you were frightened, but I at any rate was frightened when I saw pictures coming from the moon to the earth" (1993: 105).

taken-for-granted photographic practice. It is the photography that most of us engage in, even more so now that digital cameras are commonplace. It is the photography of our lives: those we take, those our family, friends, and others take that figure us and ours. We expect to see the exposures we take, and digital technology makes this even more likely. Digital photography and chemical photography differ both in degree and kind. We can identify an upsurge in everyday photographic practice since the advent of digital cameras. This technology lacks most of the monetary constraints associated with chemical photography. When photos can be taken and immediately deleted, the only limit on the number of exposures retained is storage capacity. One need not be well off (in Western terms) to retain tens of thousands of digital photographs. Digital photography thus extends the *I can* of the photographer and collector, and its ascendancy has enabled a proliferation in *everyday photography*. With it come questions of storage, loss, editing, and manipulation. Everyday personal digital photography elicits the question: How much is enough? Why, on what grounds? Are we taking and retaining thousands of photographs of our lives merely because we can?[3]

There are a number of general characteristics that apply to photographs and photographing. Some of these relate to time. Time is important when we consider both selfhood and ethics. This leads me to ask how the time of photographic practice (which encompasses both photographing and relating to photographs) matters for the time of selfhood and ethics. Instead of examining the importance of photographic time across all photographies, I focus on the photographic time that intersects with our own time. This is found most strikingly in everyday personal photography. Taking photographs matters because this practice is underpinned by a plethora of cultural factors that operate across different registers of consciousness. It is thus both a technological and a cultural practice. We shall come to understand how each implies the other.

No empirical evidence is required to support the claim that most of us feel compelled to photograph our lives; one must merely look around for

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[3] As I write this, sitting in a coffee shop, a group of women beside me take digital photographs of each other for immediate viewing. Here the digital camera functions as both mirror and recording device.

confirmation. I am interested in both the subject effects of this mode of mediated experience and what the compulsion to photograph suggests about selfhood and ethics. *Should* we resist this compulsion? In other words, if my positioning of selfhood and ethics is convincing, should it merely remain 'interesting' or is there necessarily a normative implication at work here? This is a question of bridging the gap between theory and practice, which I will address in the final chapter.

§I.I Autobiography

> We...know, without having to think about it, how to play the autobiographical game if we have to: "I was born," we say, "I did things...I felt feelings...and now I write these facts of my story." Use of the first person – the "I," autobiography's dominant key – compounds our sense of being in full command of our knowledge of our selves and stories; it not only conveniently bridges the gaps between who we were once and who we are today, but it tends as well to make our sense of self in any present moment seem more unified and organized than it possibly could be. But who is the "I" who speaks in self-narrations? And who is the "I" spoken about?
> – Paul Eakin (1999: ix)

Let us consider everyday personal photography an "autobiographical act [that] situates the body in some kind of material surround that functions as a theatre of embodied self representation" (Smith & Watson 2005: 5). That is, a trace of the embodied self is exteriorized, often durably, and made perceptible to the author. Either the self-as-other, or an "imprint of autobiographical subjectivity is registered in matter or light" (*ibid*). Thus, we might consider all photographs taken by persons autobiographical; however, I prefer to maintain the specificity established above in order to retain my focus on photographs that figure selves (in the specified manner) and are consciously interpreted as reflecting back our lives.[4]

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, theorists of autobiographical practice, undermine the assumption art critics and feminist art historians make in approaching visual self-representations as mirrors, "self-evident content to be 'read,' not as a cultural practice whose limits, interests, and modes of presentation

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[4] We might ask whether digital photography elicits *serial* self-representation/imaging, and by extension, serial self-inquiry? Might the practice press the impulse to a higher order, implicating self-inquiry as part of modern subjecthood?

differ with the historical moment, the conventions invoked, and the medium or media employed" (2005: 8). Autobiographical works are not windows into the lives of their authors as lived, their *bios* (biographical life). Rather, autobiographies fix "life narratives;" specifically, they are "enacted life narrations" – they materialize life-stories in the act of creation (Smith and Watson 2005: 9). As Smith and Watson point out, "autobiographical narration offers occasions for negotiating the past, reflecting on identity, and critiquing cultural norms and narratives" (*ibid*). These practices are carried out with attention to media as mediators, and for this reason, differ from everyday personal photography. Critical modes of self-representation play on the biases of the media that materialize them, in contrast to modes that articulate media in a mirroring, unreflective repetition, reflexive practice, culturally conditioned and verging on automatic. "In effect, autobiographical telling is performative; it enacts the 'self' that it claims has given rise to an 'I.' And that 'I' is neither unified nor stable – it is fragmented, provisional, multiple, in process" (*ibid*). This self is the autobiographical self, that which is constituted through discursive practices. As we shall learn, this is not the only 'self' that figures in experience: as I argue, there are pre-discursive selves as well.

The discursive self collects up the fragments of lived experience into a continuous narrative, binding multiple selves to a singular signifier: 'I.' Thus, self-referential texts tend to reduce selfhood to temporalized identity. This occurs at the moment of authorship in the case of written texts, and in the moment of interpretation in the case of visual texts such as photographs. That is, capturing 'me' in this moment photographically is not tantamount to positing an identical self through time, for a caption, spoken, or unspoken interpretation of the body imaged as 'me' follows the moment of fixing. In contrast, transcribing 'I' equates the present self with that/those 'I/s' of the past.

One might object by saying that the 'me' of a written autobiographical 'I' might be operationally defined in line with an understanding of self as fragmented, provisional, multiple, in process. Likewise, a photograph might be taken of an individual in cognizance of the discontinuous identity of that

individual's self through time. Yet these mark exceptions within autobiographical practice, and we are concerned here with everyday personal photography in which critical reflection does not tend to play a dominant role.

Smith and Watson identify five "constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity: memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency" (2005: 9). As we shall see, these are important because they help us understand the processural manner in which subjectivity is enacted; it is an unstable synergistic phenomenon situated in a complex matrix of relational and interactive elements. Memories are fragmentary perceptual traces of our past, and their meaning emanates from psychic conditions extant at the moment of recollection through active recreation of the past. In addition, the practice of remembering is culturally and historically structured, which means the manner in which we remember, and the sorts of things we remember, are not self-determined (Smith & Watson 2005: 9). Experience does not 'happen to' subjects; subjectivity is constituted through experience as a relation, not a location. Therefore, the manner in which autobiographical narratives are constructed is a function of the experiences they speak for. "Identities materialize within collectives and out of the culturally marked differences that constitute symbolic interactions within and between collectivities" (Smith & Watson 2005: 10). Yet none of the percepts that interface with identity are static; therefore foundations for identity are constantly shifting, thereby assuring they are always "discursive, provisional, intersectional, and unfixed" (*ibid*).[5] The body is one such foundation that is in continuous flux. "As a textual surface upon which a person's life is inscribed, the body is a site of autobiographical knowledge because memory itself is embodied" (*ibid*). Embodiment grounds an "essentially situated, relational, and symbiotic self rather than the traditional concept of an autonomous self grounded in an individual, monadic, indestructible, and unchanging soul" (Shusterman 2008: 8). Agency poses a problem as autobiographical subjects are constrained by the discursive

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[5] *Percept* is not to be confused with *precept.* Merriam Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1990) defines the former as follows: *percept* n. [back-formation fr. *perception*] (1837): an impression of an object obtained by use of the senses: SENSE-DATUM. A SENSE-DATUM in turn is defined as: *sense-datum* n. (1921): an immediate unanaylzable private object of sensation.

practices that constitute them. (Smith & Watson 2005: 10). This means action can never be reduced to the impetus of the agent; all action – including communicative acts – is situated in a culturally defined field of possibility. Creativity offers the potential to transcend what is perceived as possible.

As is the case of all autobiographical self-representations, photographs of selves do not figure 'true selves.' Autobiographical acts:

> cannot be understood as individualist acts of a sovereign subject, whole and entire unto itself. And the representation produced cannot be taken as a guarantee of a 'true self,' authentic, coherent, and fixed. The autobiographical is a performative site of self-referentiality where the psychic formations of subjectivity and culturally coded identities intersect and 'interface' with one another (Smith and Watson 2005: 11).

This may be persuasive in the abstract, but it is not self-evidently consistent with the manner in which everyday photography is actually conceptualized in the minds of its practitioners and audience. What sort of promise does photography offer with regard to autobiography? The moment I am most concerned with here is that where the potential photographer pauses, or does not, to consider the implications of taking a photograph. I endeavor to deduce the logic that regulates photographic practice in the digital age. In so doing I will attempt to come to terms with the apparent ethical imperative to photograph our lives. This will involve addressing questions of selective memorializing, serial archiving, the futurity of photography.

§1.2 Ancient Dualism

Photography as autobiographical practice clearly points to the need for an understanding of the concepts of self and identity. In what follows I provide an historical context for the current understanding of the self. At the core of every ethical framework lies a conception of the self. Contemporary understandings of selfhood are inflected with centuries old beliefs and concepts. Most accounts of selfhood posit an essential being, continuous or otherwise. Until the twentieth century, the essential self of Christian doctrine held sway as the prevalent account of selfhood in Euro-America. Meanwhile, in Asia, where Buddhism had been

practiced since before Christ, a contrary view inhered. Let us consider the Euro-American tradition by directing our attention to the ancient Greeks, Plato and Epicurus.

The difference between Platonist and Epicurean selfhood is best understood by considering their contrasting conceptions of wisdom. Just what, or who, seeks wisdom? Both philosophies take up the theme of death in articulating their views on the matter. For Plato, corporeality must be transcended in ascension to wisdom, which is apprehension of "the truth" (Plato 66b). Death (for a philosopher at least) is good for Plato, for it marks the greatest separation of the soul from the body. This releases thought from the latter's encumbrances and corruption (66e). Death is not good in itself; it is instrumental, for it marks a necessary transition to a reality where the ultimate end, wisdom, can be pursued and acquired (*ibid*).

Plato's account of wisdom belies a notable distrust and ambivalence for the body and its desires; it is an "evil" (65b-c, 66b). In refusing the body - and sensation for that matter - as the very foundation of thought, Plato espouses an ontological view that posits "things in themselves" as the stuff of "pure knowledge" (66e). Wisdom is thus the understanding of these things in themselves. Corporeality is a barrier or limitation on our ability to acquire pure knowledge, for "in truth and fact no thought of any kind ever comes to us from the body" (66c).

Socrates' very optimism about the reality he will confront in death is premised on the belief that a transcendent soul will have the same sort of capacities it does in the body - specifically reason - except better (65b-c). The transcendent soul will be a thinking thing, pure in its ability to apprehend, process, and synthesize *things in themselves* as data of experience. While 'bound' in *corpus*, the philosopher extends all efforts to maintain a dualistic existence by disdaining bodily pleasures, thus situating himself closer to wisdom and a transcendent state of being (64e-65a).[6] The soul is distinct from the body and isolated from others. Porphyry recounted that Plotinus, a Neo-Platonist, was so

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[6] In Plato's time philosophy was only practiced by males.

"ashamed of being in the body" and so keen to transcend it that he not only drastically limited his diet but even "abstained from the use of the bath" (Shusterman 2008: ix).

Epicurus' thought differs markedly on the status of wisdom and corporeality. An essential difference is that Epicureanism does not posit any separate metaphysical reality. In the absence of metaphysical existence, death "is nothing" (Epicurus 124). This is necessarily the case if one holds that good and evil are corporeal affects, not transcendental facts (*ibid*). If there is no existence after death, it is logical to enjoy the only reality we can speak of: corporeality (*ibid*). Life is thus lived in the present rather than for the future.

Like Plato, an Epicurean will not fear death. As I mention above, Plato's philosopher should not fear death because he believes he will ascend to a purer, higher reality. In contrast, Epicurean atomism yields no fear of death because there is nothing to fear in nothingness, no being to suffer (Epicurus 125). While Plato's wise man welcomes death as a release from the imprisonment of the body, Epicurus' wise man seeks no relief from embodied reality; corporeality is not an evil for him (*ibid*). He will not seek the greatest quantity of life, but the greatest quality of life, which will be the most pleasant, or blessed (Epicurus 125, 128).

Since all pleasures are good, and all pains evil according to Epicurus, prudence is necessary to help us differentiate between vain, necessary natural, and unnecessary natural pleasures, and our happiness depends on the avoidance of disturbance in the soul that arises from excess and discord between pleasures (Epicurus 128). Likewise, certain evils can be choice worthy if greater pleasures are derived from their endurance. Prudence is necessary to making evaluations of pleasures and pains that run contrary their nature (as choice worthy). Prudence is thus about understanding what one really needs to be happy, how to live a life of harmony and *autocharia* - self sufficiency (130*)*. In acquiring the ability to be free from unnecessary wants, one can live a happy life with the barest of essentials in harmony with nature (*ibid*). Pleasure/happiness will simply be "freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind" (*ibid*). Prudence is necessary to the realization of this, both in thought and practice.

From all this we can see that for Plato, wisdom is not possible in corporeality, but only in transcendence. In contrast, the Epicureans take up wisdom in a much more embodied sense; it is the ability to make the best decisions about how to lead a pleasurable life, in harmony with nature. This constitutes an acceptance of human 'nature' rather than a rejection.

Plato and Epicurus differ radically on their understandings of selfhood. For Plato, embodiment is an obstacle, while for Epicurus, it is what makes existence as we know it possible; it is existence. The tension between these two accounts parallel's the very tension, and indeed, torsion, of existence. We are our bodies, yet we often feel alienated from our flesh. Embodiment is central to this study, for it situates the body as both ground and medium of human Being; it has a "double sense: it encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms" (Varela et al xvi). Plato, influential as he was and continues to be, may have been mistaken, and we are, arguably, living the consequences of his error today.[7] Alternatively, one could conceive of thinking as inherent in bodily experience, not in transcendence. This was Epicurus' insight, but his view failed to take hold of the popular imagination in the Western tradition. We shall learn further on how Epicureanism aligns with contemporary brain science and carries a great deal of relevance today. But in order to get there we must attempt to think through *why* Plato's approach to embodiment is unsatisfying. The next section does this by examining the commingling of body and mind in the *body image*.

§1.3 Selfhood and Body-Image

Paul John Eakin provides a thorough account of competing models of selfhood in *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999), where he vies on the side of the emergent self - "awareness in process" (x). On his account, identity "is always negotiated interpersonally [and] relationally (40).

> We can never expect to witness the emergent sense of self as an
> observable event precisely because it is an ongoing process, taking place

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[7] Saint Paul (? - 64-67 A.D.) echoes Plato's lack of ease with embodiment: "nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (quoted in Shusterman xi).

mostly beneath our notice from day to day – and indeed, physiologically, moment by moment. We can never catch ourselves in the act of becoming selves; there is always a gap or rupture that divides us from the knowledge that we seek (*ibid* x).

He continues, "self, and self-experience…are not given, monolithic, and invariant, but dynamic, changing and plural" (xi). That is, there is no locatable essential self grounding subjectivity. Rather, the *body image* figures as the organizing principle for selfhood. The body image, *what it feels like to be 'me'* is typically experienced as continuous through time. As Elizabeth Grosz puts it:

> The body image unifies and coordinates postural, tactile, kinesthetic, and visual sensations so that these are experienced as the sensations of a subject coordinated in a single space; they are the experience of a single identity. This image is the necessary precondition for undertaking voluntary action, the point at which the subject's intentions are translated into the beginning of movement, the point of transition in activating bones and muscles (1994: 83).

The relationship between psyche (consciousness) and body is central to the question of selfhood. Am I my body or do I own my body? Or both? Understanding selfhood requires directing our attention to the corporeality of both the 'body' and the brain (indeed, the brain is body too). In his *neurology of identity,* neurologist Oliver Sachs defines the *body image* as composed of three elements: vision, balance organs, and proprioception (position sense) (1985: 46-47).

Eakin and Grosz both discuss the interesting case of Oliver Sachs' injured leg, as it elaborates the of centrality of embodiment and body image to very question, 'Who am I?' The connection between psyche and body can be interrupted, damaged, or disturbed either through trauma or degenerative processes, thereby altering the body image; it is dynamic and plastic. The body image can reorganize itself in order to cope with changes both within and without the flesh. This is commonly referred to as neuroplasticity. Sachs experiences such reorganization after suffering an injury to his leg that left it completely numb. His leg was excluded from his body image, making it alien to him, a "thing" rather

than part of what he experienced as "me" (*ibid*).[8] The injured leg became "not-self," because consciousness is "essentially personal…essentially connected to the actual living body, its location and positing of a personal space" (Sachs 1985: 199-200). "Personal" denotes that which is experienced as owned by the organism, the body, what is captured by evoking "me" (Eakin 1999: 29). Experience of embodiment, or rather, *experience per se,* thus grounds our conscious sense of self. In Sachs's case, "the injured leg is experienced as "not-self" precisely because the realigned body image that supports the sense of self no longer includes it; the body and body image are out of sync," and Sachs no longer feels as though he owns his leg (*ibid*). Psychosomatic breakdowns like that experienced by Sachs "indicate a 'fictional' or fantasmatic construction of the body outside of or beyond its neurological structure" (Grosz 1994: 89-90).

I want to stress the importance of this construal of the body image to the matters we are concerned with here. There are two registers of self in flux: one is somatic, while the other is psychic – discursive. I do not intend to suggest that the psychic self is opposed to the somatic self. Indeed, the psychic self arises in the embodied mind. The psychic self denotes that self we register discursively. The body image exists as the foundation upon which the psychic self is structured. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out, "interiority no more precedes the material arrangement of the human body than it results from it" (1964: 163). Consequently, the body is experienced as "mine" through time, a consistent being in time. Possessive individualism is predicated by this interrelation; it is *to own* rather than *to be* the body.[9] The possessive individual is a construct of discourse; referring to oneself linguistically involves positioning oneself in relation to others according to social norms bound up in discourse. This is, then, a question of the *who* versus the *what* of personal identity. Derrida brings this distinction to bear on the matter of love: do we love the other for *who* they are or *what* they are (2002)?

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[8] In her discussion of Sachs's case, Grosz uses the terms "phantom limb and agnosia (nonrecognition of a part of the body as one's own)" (1994: 89).

[9] 'Possessive individualism' is C.B. Macpherson's term for the proto-capitalist model of identity proposed by Hobbes and Locke, which posits an individual as "essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them" (Shotter 136).

Hannah Arendt also draws a distinction between the two in *The Human Condition* (1998):

> In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearances in the human world, while their physical identities appear without and activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. This disclosure of the 'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does, it can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this 'who' in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities. On the contrary, it is more than likely that the 'who,' which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man through his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters" (1998: 179-180).

An attentive observer will note the prevalence of self-descriptions that articulate the 'what' of personal identity. More often than not, we describe ourselves by referencing our accidental qualities (in the Aristotelian sense), many of which are earned competencies, material holdings, and physical attributes. It is far less common to describe ourselves in reference to our volitional principles, affiliations, and interests. As Arendt suggests, this might be explained by the *daimon* like situation of the 'who' with regard to perception and reflection. The 'what' is more readily accessed as an object of attention, scrutiny and evaluation. It comes as little surprise, then, that photography figures so heavily in contemporary life; the centrality of visual representation is manifest across the spectrum of cultural activity, from music performance to politics. Photography captures the 'what,' not the 'who' as "non-perishable traces" (Arendt 1998: 19). Yet, the qualities fixed in photographic practice are disposable. This is especially true of digital photography, which offers the option of manipulating the *what* as a reflection of the *who*. This dissociation from the flesh is deeply rooted in western science and one of the paradigm's most notable practitioners, René Descartes.

Since Descartes, the human body has been conceived as a mechanical assemblage, an automaton with a soul directing it.[10] Mechanical parts are not volitional. Analogously, human 'parts' are not volitional. Thus, we do not speak of certain bodily functions as directed by our will. We don't say, "I healed my finger," but "My finger healed". We speak as though our bodies were indeed assemblages of automatic mechanical components.[11] For Merleau-Ponty, it is not "a question of a mind or spirit coming down from somewhere else into an automaton; this would still suppose that the body itself is without an inside and without a 'self'" (1964: 163). We 'have' bodies that regulate, heal, and restructure themselves, and at the same time, we 'are' our bodies.

> Identity turns on the question of the organism acknowledging or "owning" what is proper to it; it is this sense of ownership that Sachs invokes when he speaks of the body "knowing" itself. The bodily knowledge is the basis of selfhood in organisms endowed with consciousness" (Eakin 29).

In *Descartes' Error* (1994), Antonio R. Damasio speaks to the interrelation of the body and psyche in a more thorough manner than that offered by Sachs: "the self, that endows our experiences with subjectivity, is not a central knower and inspector of everything that happen in our minds" (1994: 227). Yet "our experiences tend to have a consistent perspective, as if there were indeed an owner and knower for most, though not all, contents," because the experience of

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10 Long before he published his *Discourse,* and perhaps before he had become interested in theology, [Descartes] toyed with the notion of constructing a human automaton activated by magnets. One of his correspondents, Poisson, says that in 1619 he planned to build a dancing man, a flying pigeon, and a spaniel that chased a peasant. Legend has it that he did build a beautiful blonde automaton named Francine. But she was discovered in her packing case on board a ship and dumped over the side by the captain in his horror of apparent witchcraft (De Solla Price 1964: 23).

While many of his hypotheses died with him, Descartes' mechanicism continues to be influential today. The core of Descartes' mechanistic philosophy is that it is a "way to isolate systems, and within them mechanisms, as simple as possible, whose operation, even if not described by quantitative relations, was intuitively evident in just the way that the operations of everyday tools are evident. As in the practice of building machines, those mechanisms would be portable, reusable, interchangeable" (des Chene 2001: 87). In light of this understanding of *mechanicism,* we can see how fears associated with technologies overtaking and replacing human activities might creep into popular consciousness.

[11] "A Cartesian does not see *himself* in the mirror; he sees a dummy, an 'outside,' which, he has every reason to believe, other people see in the very same way but which, no more for himself than for others, is not a body in the flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 170).

corporeality remains constant as a "relatively stable, endlessly repeated biological state. The source of the stability is the predominantly invariant structure and operation of the organism, and the slowly evolving elements of autobiographical data" (Damasio 1994: 238).

For Damasio, the feeling of a continuous self is rooted in the continuity of the "background body sense" we all have (Eakin 1999: 31). "It is this nexus of feeling and emotions that we consult, he suggests, when we respond directly to the question "How do you feel?" (*ibid*).[12]

Like Roland Barthes does in *Camera Lucida* (1981), I see everyday personal photography as running parallel to autobiographical writing. Eakin links autobiography to the question of agency and individualism:

> Because autobiography promotes an illusion of self-determination: *I* write my story; *I* say who I am; *I* create myself. The myth of autonomy dies hard, and autobiography criticism has not yet fully addressed the extent to which the self is defined by – and lives in terms of – its relation with others (1999: 43).

Jessica Benjamin points to the paradoxical nature of individuation: "at the very moment of realizing our own independence, we are dependent on another to recognize it" (1988: 33 in Eakin 1999: 52). Thus, asserting autonomy is meaningless without the recognition of an other, thereby making identity necessarily relational and dependent on others (*ibid*). This recognition undermines the very foundation upon which possessive individualism rests. We will return to the question of possessive individuality later when we turn to photographic practice and prostheticity.

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[12] Damasio offers a speculation as to the adaptive value of the "neural self," which if we recall, is unique to beings who experience higher order consciousness: "If ensuring survival of the body proper is what the brain evolved for, then, when minded brains appeared, they began minding the body" (230 in Eakin 1999: 31). Later we shall see that Varela et al (1991) take a different angle on evolution, but this is not to say that Damasio's speculation should be ignored. On the contrary, we might speculate that the brain evolved in such a manner that allowed for higher order consciousness to manifest in response to both changing physiology and in turn environmental experience. Consequently, the neural self began to "mind the body."

§2 Buddhism and Selfhood

> The existential concern that animates our entire discussion...results from the tangible demonstration within cognitive science that the self or cognizing subject is fundamentally fragmented, divided, or nonunified.
>
> > - Francisco Varela et al (1991 xvii)

In the final analysis, the psychic self is not a continuous, identical entity, nor one that can transcend the body. Yet, we tend to feel as though we are continuous selves; we can attribute this phenomenon to the body image. What purpose, if any, does this sense of unity serve in social and ethical life? In a society sedimented upon Platonic terrain, displacing the continuous self from the centre of the frame creates an opening. The ground for ethical consideration, the self and self-interest, is thus removed, and a new foundation must be established. Buddhist philosophy, and its ethical system, is from the first structured upon a construal of the self as nonunified:[13]

> The concept of nonunified or decentered (the usual terms are *egoless* or *selfless*) cognitive being is the cornerstone of the entire Buddhist tradition. Furthermore, this concept – although it certainly entered into philosophical debate in the Buddhist tradition – is fundamentally a firsthand experiential account by those who attain a degree of mindfulness of their experience in daily life (Varela et al 1991: xviii).

The nonunified or decentered self is not a theoretical entity; it is an experiential revelation. Unlike Plato's transcendent soul – and all similar accounts – the nonunified character of the self can be verified by anyone capable of practicing mindfulness meditation. Plato was correct in positing that we do not see things in themselves, but he erred in thinking 'we' ever could, for his 'I' is a continuous and autonomous self that was, and is, an appearance, an illusion. If a transcendent soul were to see things in themselves, it would undermine its own existence, for it would realize that it was itself nonunified. This very scenario is impossible. If immaterial, what might the flux of a transcendent soul inhere in? We are indeed deceived by many appearances, but mindfulness, not death, allows us to reconfigure our perception and perceive more clearly. Let us delve further into this matter of mindfulness practice and the nonunity of the psychic self.

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[13] There are indeed Buddhism*s,* but they all agree on this point.

We have established that the body image changes through time. Trauma is not a necessary condition for this change, time is. The mere fact of existence carries the necessity of change, corporeal and psychic. Plutarch's Ship of Theseus Paradox exemplifies the flux of the human body, where cells are replaced at different intervals, ranging from five days for the stomach lining to about sixteen years for the body of the gut (Vince 2006: 15).[14] While philosophers grapple with the paradox that pertains to the flux of personal identity, science writer Gaia Vince poses a different paradox:

> It is clear…that a large proportion of your body is significantly younger than you are, and that raises a paradox. If your skin, for example, is so young, why don't you retain a smooth complexion even into old age? (15).

I am less interested in Vince's paradox than that posed by the question of identity. What sort of being is the 'you' Vince evokes? Her 'you' is an enduring identity, while the body is the site of change. What would it mean to ask how old 'you' are if we are not asking about that entity that answers to the name 'Pat' or 'Stacy'? What is at stake in positing a continuity of self, one self, through time?

§2.1 The Watchman Named Mindfulness

> *Thus shall you think of all this fleeting world:*
> *A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream,*
> *A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,*
> *A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream*
> - Thich Nhat Hanh (Johnson 2006: 31)

> Mindfulness is the key to the present moment. Without it we are simply lost in the wanderings of our minds…. Mindfulness is the unique quality and power of mind that is aware of what is happening – without judgment and without interference. It is like a mirror that simply reflects whatever comes before it. It serves us in the humblest ways, keeping us connected to

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[14]   The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned [from Crete] had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same (Plutarch 2001: 22-23).

brushing our teeth or having a cup of tea. It keeps us connected to the people around us, so that we're not simply rushing by them in the business of our lives.

- Joseph Goldstein (2006: 122)

Mindfulness practice is a point of entry into patterns of thought that reveal the nonunified self. Varela et al (1991) explain how mindfulness can be employed as a technique of the self to mitigate the temptation of egoistic 'grasping.' Mindfulness is integrated into "karmic causal patterning of experience over time," in that it interrupts and disturbs the unfettered flow of thinking by bringing attention to thinking itself (Varela et al 1991: xix).[15]

Thinking is not merely an activity of a mind of the sort Descartes posited. Thinking is an activity of the body; cognition is *embodied action* (Varela et al 1991: xx). Varela and his collaborators "situate this view of cognition within the context of evolutionary theory by arguing that evolution consists not in optimal adaptation but rather in what we call natural drift" (*ibid*). Natural drift refers to the manner in which mutations occur and become genetic traits not because they optimize the organism's function in an adaptive sense, but because *they can persist.* No *reason* drives mutations that stick, they simply stick because there is *no reason* for them not to. In this sense, the "evolutionary process as *satisficing* (taking the suboptimal solution that is satisfactory) rather than optimizing: selection operates as a broad survival filter that admits any structure that has sufficient integrity to persist" (*ibid* 196). We might think of this process according to the metaphor of *bricolage:*

> the putting together of parts and items in complicated arrays, not because they fulfill some ideal design but simply because they are possible. Here, the evolutionary problem is no longer how to force a precise trajectory by the requirements of optimal fitness; it is, rather, how to prune the multiplicity of viable trajectories that exist at any given point (*ibid* 196).

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[15] Karma tends to be misunderstood in Euro-America. It is not like a bank account, where contributing money yields interest while overdrawing yields fees. It is not a cosmic reward and payback system. Rather, karma refers to the manner in which thought and action in the present influences thought and action in the future, preconditions the future. We are always constructing our reality and perceptual frameworks in the 'now' and for the 'to-come.'

Considering evolution as natural drift contextualizes cognition as embodied action. That is, the account helps elaborate how cognitive capacities are not *for* particular ends. They develop in relation to changes in the rest of the body's functions. This process is like a path that is laid down in walking; the path comes about in the movement toward a destination. Once that destination is reached the path may appear as having existed for the sake of traversing the distance between points A and B, but in fact only came about in the traversal. Cognitive capacities develop as a response to bodily interactions with the lived world.

> Consequently, cognition is no longer seen as problem solving on the basis of representations; instead, cognition in its most encompassing sense consists in the enactment or bringing forth of a world by a viable history of structural coupling….such histories are not optimal; they are, rather, simply viable (Varela et al 1991: 205).

Human cognitive capacities are thus not developed as optimal responses to the world 'as it is,' but viable responses to the world as perceived according to existing cognitive capacities. Both cognition and perception are thus plastic and dialectically related to 'reality'.

Varela et al seek to reconcile contemporary cognitive science and everyday experience of existence as lived by continuous selves. The revelations of cognitive science hold deep ethical import in contemporary life. The key feature I will develop in the coming pages is *mindfulness*. I will explicate what is meant by this term, how it is practiced, and how it bears on selfhood. I will situate mindfulness as an ethical practice with a particular political resonance.[16] I use everyday personal photography as a foil to exemplify the manner in which we are typically swept up with the current of selfness.

Varela and his collaborators contend that rational arguments are insufficient means of bringing about a more hospitable, equitable, peaceful world. Human awareness needs to be transformed through "creative interpretation among research scientists, technologists, and the general public" (Varela et al 1991: 6).

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[16] I adopt a broad definition of politics as describing "all the important ways in which we live together as human beings" (McLeod 2006: 11).

But a particular view of cognition is required for this transformation to leave the ground: *enactive cognition.* On this view,

> cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is   rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs. The enactive approach takes seriously, then, the philosophical critique of the idea that the mind is a mirror of nature but goes further by addressing this issue from within the heartland of science (*ibid* 9).

Perception then is an *act,* a process whereby reality is constituted according to our biological capacities and histories. Perception is not a representation of a preexisting world; it is a constitutive enactment of that world.

A detour through Edmund Husserl's phenomenology highlights the necessity of embodying theoretical knowledge. All scientists ought to be reflective, but Husserl does not go far enough:

> Husserl…took the first step of a reflective scientist: he claimed that to understand cognition, we cannot take the world naively but must see it instead as having the mark of our own structure. He also took the second step, at least partially, in realizing that that structure (the first step) was something that he was cognizing with his own mind (Varela et al 1991: 16).

The naive world-view, also called the *natural standpoint,* consists in the belief that the world *is* as it appears to us; we do not constitute the world through cognition. This natural world is the world I appeal to as a "world of facts and affairs" when I endeavor in all acts ranging from applying the sciences to interpersonal relations (cf. Husserl 1931: 100). The structure of perception is only accessible through perception; an interpretive circle is the inescapable context. Hence, the problem arises: how can I take that which I create to be objective fact when the objects of my consciousness are subjectively constructed and defined? How might we move out of the natural standpoint to see *the things themselves* rather than ourselves in things? Husserl's phenomenological reduction brackets the natural standpoint but in doing so, disengages the "consensual aspect and the direct embodied aspect of experience" (Varela et al 1991: 17).

Bracketing is not an act of rejecting or doubting the data of the natural standpoint, for Husserl admits that there really is a world independent of our

perceptions. Rather, bracketing is a modification of the "general thesis of the natural standpoint" - the world is a 'fact world' of spatio-temporality apprehended by us. This modification is an attempt to doubt the way the world is constituted by our empirical ego, not that it exists outside our perception (Husserl 1931: 97). We "disconnect," or bracket the natural standpoint by acknowledging it and attempting to "[refrain] from judgment" of objects, or *filling in* links between objects. The goal is to "discover a new scientific domain, such as might be won precisely *through the method of bracketing,* though only through a definitely limited form of it" (*ibid* 99). We put aside the world as constituted by us while still admitting that it will continue to be there for us. A disconnection from all the systems of judgment founded on perceptions of the data of the natural world is meant to reveal the things themselves rather than the meanings we have imbued on things.

As Husserl would surely admit, it is impossible to withdraw from consciousness, since consciousness is constituted by its objects, its intentionality (about-ness). In addition, if we consider the self a phenomenon of consciousness, removing the self from its very condition of possibility, consciousness, is a logical impossibility. The act of attempting to bracket meaning is itself founded on reasoning that originates in the natural standpoint. We certainly can use bracketing as an analytic tool to probe the constructedness of perception/consciousness and meaning. However, it is impossible to perceive the world in a state of disconnectedness from the patterns of meaning making that we have intuitively formed and reinforced through our lives within knowledge systems that rely on, perpetuate, and affirm spatio-temporal reality as an identity. I suspect Husserl would agree that we cannot fully bracket the natural standpoint and empirical ego, but stress the usefulness of bracketing as a method of evaluating the meanings we take as existential truths.

> Phenomenology too must presuppose the life-world, even as it attempts to explicate it. Thus, Husserl was being haunted by the untraversed steps of the fundamental circularity…. [He] recognized some of this circularity and tried to deal with it in an interesting way. He argued that the life-world was really a set of sedimented, background *preunderstandings* or (roughly

speaking) assumptions, which the phenomenologist could make explicit and treat as a system of beliefs(Varela et al 1991: 18).

Indeed, Husserl attempted a purely theoretical project in turning to *the things themselves*. Consequently, his analysis did not speak to pragmatic concerns. I suspect we shall find it difficult, if not impossible to make explicit the sedimented, background *preunderstandings* that constitute the life world in consciousness. They persist underneath the layer of cognition we call *thinking*. They can, however, be influenced and subtly affected by embodied practice, which is precisely what mindfulness meditation is. This is not to say that preunderstandings become objects of consciousness. They need not be addressed in a direct manner; in fact, 'addressed' is likely too strong a word. It might be more appropriate to consider this a matter of manifesting awareness of the presence and influence of preunderstandings. Mindfulness practice is intended to bring this about.

Mindfulness meditation allowed ancient Buddhists to formulate their doctrines of no-self and of nondualism. It is a method, a manner of directing consciousness:

> Mindfulness means that the mind is present in embodied everyday experience; mindfulness techniques are designed to lead the mind back from its theories and preoccupations, back from the abstract attitude, to the situation of one's experience itself (Varela et al 1991: 22).

The method brings awareness to the link between sensory perceptions and thinking; rather than simply following currents of thought as they arise, we withdraw from the flow and assess the current from a metaphorical solid ground. "Why did that smell/image/sound/ sensation make me think of x/y/z? What happened between the perception and the thought? Do I want that to happen again?" "Hey, I'm thinking of my self again." This mode of meditation differs from other meditative practices prevalent in the West, where the term evokes

> a number of prominent folk meanings: (1) a state of concentration in which consciousness is focused on only one object; (2) a state of relaxation that is psychologically and medically beneficial; (3) a dissociated state in which trance phenomena can occur; and (4) a mystical

state in which higher realities or religious objects are experienced (Varela et al 23).

Each of these altered mind states pull consciousness out and away from everyday experience rather than confronting it. The Buddhist mindfulness/awareness practice is intended to engage experience head on, to turn the critical eye inward on thought itself and experience a sort of double consciousness, or a conscious presence upon consciousness.[17] It is common for mindfulness meditators to gain insight first into the degree to which consciousness is disconnected from experience:

> The meditator…discovers that the abstract attitude which Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty ascribe to science and philosophy is actually the attitude of everyday life when one is not mindful. This abstract attitude is the spacesuit, the padding of habits and preconceptions, the armor with which one habitually distances oneself from one's experiences (Varela et al 1991: 25).

A common mindfulness practice is to direct attention to breathing in order to gradually tame the mind's restlessness.[18] "One begins to be able to see the restlessness as such and to become patient with it, rather than becoming

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[17] Gerald Edelman distinguishes between two registers of consciousness: "primary consciousness" and "higher order consciousness," where the former is defined as,

> "the state of being mentally aware of things in the world – of having mental images in the present" and he believes that some nonlinguistic and nonsemantic animals may well possess it. Primary consciousness, however, "lacks an explicit *notion* or a concept of a personal self, and does not afford the ability to model the past or the future as part of a correlated scene" (Edelman 1992: 122 in Eakin 1999: 14).

Higher-order consciousness is structured upon primary consciousness, and considered unique to humans. It involves

> "the ability to construct a socially based selfhood, to model the world in terms of the past and the future, and to be directly aware" (Edelman 1992: 125 in Eakin 1999: 14).… With the movement from primary to higher-order consciousness, however, facilitated by the acquisition of language, the human individual becomes "conscious of being conscious," achieving "a conceptual model of selfhood" (Edelman 131 in Eakin 14). Edelman regards the capacity to formulate   concepts of the self and of the past as conferring a distinct evolutionary "value," freeing "the individual from the bondage of an immediate time frame or ongoing events occurring in real time" (Edelman 1992: 133 in Eakin 14).

[18] Joseph Goldstein explains how this works:

> We can start the practice of mindfulness meditation with the simple observation and feeling of each breath. Breathing in, we know we're breathing in; breathing out, we know we're breathing out. Its very simple – although not easy (2006: 122).

automatically lost in it. Eventually, meditators report periods of a more panoramic perspective. This is called awareness" (Varela et al 1991: 26).

There are two ways of discussing mindfulness practice. The first involves activity likened to physical exercise: performing mindfulness strengthens the mind little by little, building capacity for longer practice every subsequent time, akin to building muscle. This is a model of *overcoming* an extant disposition. In contrast, the other manner of conceiving mindfulness practice takes mindfulness as the default state of mind that has been "obscured by habitual patterns of grasping and delusion" (Varela et al 1991: 26). This manner of thinking of mindfulness will figure importantly in this study, for it allows us to understand the ego's influence across various registers of experience. *Grasping* is the central concept here:

> The untamed mind constantly tries to grasp some stable point in its unending movement and to cling to thoughts, feelings, and concepts as if they were solid ground. All these habits are cut through and one learns an attitude of letting go, the mind's natural characteristics of knowing itself and reflecting its own experience can shine forth. This is the beginning of wisdom or maturity (Varela et al 1991: 26).[19]

Mindfulness is thus a practice whereby experience is addressed from within rather than from without (as Husserl attempts). Theoretical reflection thus takes a different form from that practiced in the Western philosophical tradition because it ceases to be disembodied and abstract. Embodied reflection brings attention to the manner in which body and mind are united, where thoughts have bodily affects, and feelings elicit thoughts. Reflection is thus not *post hoc* but *ad sum*; it is experience.

> [If] one is guided by mindfulness, the transcendent is found no less in quotidian tasks such as serving tea, motorcycle maintenance, or the arranging of rock gardens than in the recitation of mantras; no less in washing dishes, writing [an] article, or actively participating in mercurial political affairs than in the oldest monastic rituals (Johnson 2006: 33).

 When we reflect with mindfulness/awareness, we break habitual patterns of thought and preconceptions that relate to who we think we are, and what we think

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[19] In chapter three we shall find how this ties into Simpson's concept of prereflective thought/prejudices.

is good for us. In so doing, we make *creative* thought possible as we cease to constrain ourselves with established thought patterns. Varela et al call this form of reflection 'mindful, open-ended reflection' (1991: 27). We shall learn further how creativity bears on the question of ethics.

Grasping is central to identity, and to the manner in which we engage photography as a technological practice of memory. Varela and his collaborators argue that theoretical reflection and embodied mindfulness are not mutually exclusive modes of experience. Rather, mindfulness meditation exemplifies a technique that offers the practitioner the opportunity to fundamentally change their cognitive processes by addressing the embodied fullness of thinking. This position constitutes the backbone of my critical analysis of selfhood in relation to temporality and ethics. In the next section I develop some of the ethical implications of grasping.

§2.2 SELFNESS

The common conception of the self as a unity of consciousness tends to be articulated in way similar to this:

> We typically suppose that consciousness unifies and grounds all the disparate elements of one's self – one's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, etc. The phrase 'unity of consciousness' refers to the idea that one understands all of one's experiences as happening to a single self (Varela et al 1991: 55).

What function is served by the insistence that there is a continuous self within the person, an essential identity? Surely morality figures heavily, for some sense of responsibility must persist in the individual if ethical action is to be expected. This is not to suggest that continuity is taught; rather, it is a default position. Responsibility is a temporal concept; it captures the past, present, and future in its scope. If what we perceive to be our present self is discontinuous with past and future selves, one might ask why we should be responsible for 'our' actions.

Varela et al advance an alternative approach to ethics that does not require the structural support of an essential self. Here, there is no entity upon which experience falls. This lack of an entity distinct from experience is called

selflessness or *egolessness*. Initial forays into mindfulness meditation tend to yield moments of struggle as the meditator grasps for solid existential ground, resisting the impermanence and lack of self. The mind clings to thoughts that offer the perpetuation of the sense of self (*ibid*).

> This undercurrent of restlessness, grasping, anxiety, and unsatisfactoriness that pervades experience is called *Dukkha,* usually translated as suffering. Suffering arises quite naturally and then grows as the mind seeks to avoid its natural grounding in the impermanence and lack of self (Varela et al 1991: 61).

Suffering is then the ground of ethics for Buddhism; it is not endured by an essential self in the sense of an entity being afflicted.[20] Rather, suffering is *enacted* in repetitive thought processes that relate reality as perceived to what is taken to be one's personal identity. This habit is called *egomania;* everything that is figured in the mind and body is judged in relation to interests of the self. Suffering always occurs where there is *egomania,* a state of mind where one is preoccupied with protecting and preserving (*ibid* 62).

> The slightest encroachment on the self's territory (a splinter in the finger, a noisy neighbor) arouses fear and anger. The slightest hope of self-enhancement (gain, praise, fame, pleasure) arouses greed and grasping. Any hint that a situation is irrelevant to the self (waiting for the bus, meditating) arouses boredom. Such impulses are instinctual, automatic, pervasive, and powerful (*ibid*).

There are many cultural reinforcements for this sense of self, not least attributed to the reverberations of Christianity in Euro-America. The self is prominent as the subject of much discourse, from self-help books, talk shows, and commercials. On the Buddhist view, all our suffering emanates from our preoccupation with our "vague feeling of selfness" (*ibid* 63). But suffering does not only refer to loss and

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[20] To be certain, translation is an issue here. 'Suffering' is the best approximation of the Pali term dukkha, but is a little misleading.

> The Pali term is meant to convey that even those who are wealthy and healthy nonetheless experience a basic dissatisfaction that continually festers. The fact that we find life dissatisfactory, one damned problem after another, is not accidental or coincidental. It is the very nature of the unawakened mind to be bothered about something, because at the core of our being there is a free-floating anxiety that has no particular object but can be plugged into any problematic situation….Our basic frustration is due most of all to the fact that our sense of being a separate self, set apart from the world we are in, is an illusion (Loy 2006: 45).

pain; it refers to their couplets – gain and pleasure – too. Suffering inheres in grasping for the self that is not there. The meditator tries to locate the self in distinction from h/er experiences and finds nothing (*ibid*).

This account of suffering marks the point at which political theorist and philosopher, William Connolly will distinguish his perspective from Buddhist doctrine. Connolly wants to maintain the positive value of pleasure within his modern Epicureanism, while pleasure is bound up with pain as elements of suffering in the Buddhist view. That is, Buddhists try not to grasp for pleasure. Regardless of whether we agree on what constitutes suffering, we can see how all that is required to apprehend the nature of the self is reflective meditation. Mindfulness meditation allows the meditator to understand the manner in which body and mind are inextricably coupled, that much of what we perceive as problems are of our own making. We have the ability to reconfigure our perception by thinking, and in so doing, we can change the way reality presents itself to us. But this manner of thinking is never *simply* thinking, it is always embodied action. In his memoir, *At Hell's Gate: A Soldier's Journey from War to Peace* (2004), Buddhist monk and Vietnam veteran Claude Anshin Thomas writes:

> [As a Buddhist], I cannot think myself into a new way of living, I have to live myself into a new way of thinking….Peace is not an idea. Peace is not a political movement, not a theory or dogma. Peace is a way of life: living mindfully in the present moment….It is not a question of politics, but of actions. It is not a matter of improving a political system or even taking care of homeless people alone. These are valuable but will not alone end war and suffering. We must simply stop the endless wars that rage within….Imagine, if everyone stopped the war in themselves – there would be no seeds from which war could grow (2004: 75, 109, 152).

Two

Memory, Time, and Selfhood

> Neither subject nor object can be conceived as cores, atoms, or nuggets of
> being, pure presence; not bounded entities, they "interpenetrate," mingle.
>   - Elizabeth Grosz (1994: 96)

§i Thinking Culture

I would like to take a moment to discuss how Connolly's account of
memory and thinking bears on photography as technological practice. My
working hypothesis is that photography is commonly employed as a prosthetic
memory 'device,' that is bound up with the domestication of time, of projecting a
reality to come, a better future.[21] When we think of our futures, we tend to
imagine what will be good for us along our personal time lines. We make plans
for ourselves, commit to particular paths and orientations. We also memorialize
the present in numerous ways. Photography is often used for constructing an
ongoing 'life story.' The photograph is taken with an eye to the future; we predict
we will want to have the image through time, and that it will conform to the
meaning we project ahead. We attempt to shape the future's recollection of the
past in the present; and fidelity is prized.

From Varela et al we learn how our sense of self inheres in thought
patterns. It is not a locatable essence, but an ever changing, shifting hermeneutic
circle of mind, body, and perceptual phenomena. The psychic self is only evoked
when thinking occurs, which leads us to question how thinking operates. If the
self is the *product* of thinking, how can we think ourselves out of the allure of
selfness? If selfness is problematic for ethics, we must ask how we can change
our manner of thinking toward creating a new ethical landscape. Does it matter
what we think? Connolly argues it does, and I will attempt to create a resonance
with his position by bringing a variety of theoretical perspectives into dialogue
with photography as technological practice.

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[21] I will develop this hypothesis in the next chapter.

William Connolly takes up neuroscience in order to ground his account of multidimensional pluralism, which he calls *nontheistic gratitude* "for the abundance of being" (1991: xx). Nontheistic gratitude is an ethical orientation rather than a mere denial of belief in God (atheism). In this case, "gratitude is…linked to the gift of being as a protean set of energies that enable various identities and exceed the existing pool of identities; it gives priority to a sensibility that affirms this world" (Connolly 2002: 72). Identity is taken to be paradoxical in nature, its very possibility secured by both interaction and interdependence with *difference.* Connolly captures this duplicity in the formulation: *identity/difference.* His spiritual orientation is nested within an ethos of agonistic respect of other existential faiths (for even secularists have *faith* in the efficacy of reason in consensus formation). "To embrace publicly a nontheistic source of ethical inspiration without claiming universality for it is to support an active *pluralization* of all ethical sources in public life" (1991: xxi).

A crucial component of Connolly's view is *agonistic respect,* "a civic virtue that allows people to honor different final sources, to cultivate reciprocal respect across difference, and to negotiate larger assemblages to set general policies" (1991: xxvi). This is linked to Connolly's conception of identity as bicultural.

In the postmodern (or late modern, depending on your lens) context, multiculturalism and diversity pose a host of challenges to civil life. When cultures interface, tensions arise. Since "culture is constituted in part by the perceptions, beliefs, and concepts in it," we might ask how these might be reconfigured so as to mitigate cultural conflicts (Connolly 2002: 18). A key point Connolly advances is that such change will not come about through rational discourse alone. Rational arguments to accept others for their differences are insufficient, for thinking is a never merely *rational.* Rather, thinking and explicit beliefs always feed off implicit beliefs and memories:

> Tension, dissonance, and discrepancy can arise not only between the beliefs of one constituency and those of others, but between dispositional tendencies and explicit beliefs in the same constituency. Much of the ambivalence, conflict, and mobility of culture is lodged in the latter

dimension….[S]edimented 'memory traces' – as intensive thought fragments in a self or culture – can affect thinking and judgment without themselves being articulable, and…the application of subtle techniques sometimes affects the shape and intensity of such traces (Connolly 2002: 17).

Photography has little in common with the physiological functions of memory systems. Much occurs beyond the purview of conscious perception, on the margins, while the surface of the photograph is the limit of its depth. Underlying memories, and those coupled with our conscious experiences, are affect imbued. Affect imbued memories are traces of our past that form the background to consciousness. The interplay of these different layers of memory is just what constitutes experience: "The past is folded into current perception as virtual memory, enabling the story line or the joke to proceed. That is, the past operates on the present below the threshold of explicit memory" (Connolly 2002: 24). Affective memory traces thus "shape the colour, tone, and direction of everyday perception" (*ibid)*. Note that Connolly, following Bergson, speaks of *perception* here, not thought. This is because there is a lag between stimulus and cognition, what Connolly identifies as the "half-second delay" (*ibid* 83). In this interval, "[t]here is an event you encounter, and the memory (without recollection) that helps to translate the encounter into a perception. The conjunctions of 'virtual' memory and sensory experience format perception" (*ibid* 25). Embodiment is central to this account; it allows for the constitution of perceptions and carries memories forward through time in the flesh.[22] 'Virtual' or 'motor' memories influence the definition of the percept during the half-second

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[22] Merleau-Ponty, in his late works, shifts the focus of his phenomenology to the *flesh,* "a term providing the preconditions and the grounds for the distinctions between mind and body, subject and object, and self and other" (Grosz 1994: 95). Grosz positions the flesh as an "ultimate notion," elementary or foundational term, prior to perception (*ibid)*. It is the "condition of both seeing and being seen, of touching and being touched, and of their intermingling and possible integration, a commonness in which both subject and object participate, a single 'thing' folded back on itself….What is described as flesh is the shimmering of a *difference,* the (im)proper belongingness of the subject to the world and the world as the condition of the subject" (*ibid* 96). "Perception is the flesh's reversibility, the flesh touching, seeing, perceiving itself, one fold (provisionally) catching the other in its own self-embrace" (*ibid* 103).

delay. At the conscious level it appears as though 'independent recollections' alone influence and shape thought, but far more is going on than we apprehend;

> Motor memory allows an encounter to be organized into a perception *because* it exists below explicit awareness as a repository of cultural life from the past. Perception is quick, as it must be to inform action. The human capacity of explicit image recall is far too slow to keep up with the operational pace of perception as we walk, ramble, and run through action-oriented contexts. So virtual memories are called up rapidly, but their vital role in perception is lost to the perceiver sunk in the middle of action. Perception thus seems pure and unmediated to us. But it is not. It is a double-entry activity guided by the concerns of possible action, not by a spectatorial quest to represent an object in all its complexity. And the action possibilities mobilized through the rapid conjunctions between event and memory often lead to the summoning of additional virtual memories, adding new layers to perception (Connolly 2002: 26).[23]

While perception occurs at a pace faster than "slow and linear" consciousness, another process, which Connolly calls *infraperception*, occurs faster still in moments of emergency or extreme stress. Connolly provides an example of a car driver having to make a rapid steering maneuver to avoid a collision:

> In this instance the relatively slow, complex process of perception gives way to the lightning-fast, crude processing of the amygdala (a small, fast, intense little brain nodule connected to other brain regions *and* to direct, crude perceptual experience. Lets call the emergency percept *infraperception,* because of its speed and processing of information without visual imagery (2002: 27).

Infraperception appears related to *flow states* of experience, where individuals do not consciously register their experience. Flow states exemplify embodied action to the exclusion of conscious reflection, and are highly desirable in many artistic and athletic activities where conscious thinking often hinders execution of the activity. I remark on *infraperception* so as to highlight the manner in which memory and thinking are intimately bound up together. When *infraperception* occurs, the ego/psychic self are left aside while motor memory and prereflective

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[23] This passage brings to mind Iris Marion Young's writing on feminine comportment (1990). Young argues that ideological gender differences are incorporated by female bodies and subsequently read off these bodies as 'natural'.

orientations remain in play.[24] While flow states tend to be desired, other situations that trigger *infraperception* are undesirable. I would suggest that violence is often enacted in states of infraperception, where prereflective orientations surface in unexpected ways. We tend to call this 'acting without thinking.' *Thinking* differs from *thought*:

> *Thinking* [is] an active process that essentially involves language but is not exhausted by it, and *thought* [is] past thinking stored in vocabularies, dispositions, and beliefs. The former cannot be without the latter, but is not entirely reducible to the latter (Connolly 2002: 99).[25]

There are two possible ways to act without thinking. The first is carried out according to what Varela et al call *mindfulness*. When I experience this state of mind, I am conscious of my mind's activities as an observer. A thought might come into awareness, be acknowledged, and released. This is a good state of mind for stressful situations where it is either difficult or unnecessary to enter into a flow state. If thinking is subverted, the brain is allowed to process information directly, *infraperceptionally*. Infraperception occurs when we find ourselves in demanding situations, where we do not have time to access much more than our motor memories. Affect is not felt during the experience, but comes into effect after the fact.

Connolly's elucidation of virtual memory as affect imbued opens up possibilities for techniques of the self. Working on ourselves at the level of embodiment offers the opportunity to reconfigure prereflective orientations and perception, our enactment of the world.[26] This is essential to ethical life, as reason alone cannot reconfigure memories of the flesh. Let us examine how virtual memories are affective.

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[24] Lorenzo Simpson's *prereflective orientations* figure in the hermeneutic circle of the self (1995: 58). They are reappearances of previously, unconsciously made judgments. Their repetition occurs later and is carried forth as *prejudice* (*ibid* 32). I return to Simpson's theorization in the next chapter.

[25] Stiegler writes, "since language is thought, since the will-to-say is the saying, language is the institution of society, and society is the institution of language" (1998: 127). That is, language *qua* language co-arises with societies. The will-to-say is always already saying, as language is always already bound up with society.

[26] "Every technique is a 'technique of the body.' A technique outlines and amplifies the metaphysical structure of our flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 168).

Every virtual memory is inflected with affect, ranging from "a surge of panic through a radiant feeling of joy to myriad other possibilities" (Connolly 2002: 28). The affective aspect of virtual memory allows sensory stimulation to be translated into experience; both thinking and judgment are guided into focus by affect-imbued memories. Thus, experience is mediated, and consciousness is always preconditioned by neural processes that involve 'judgment,' selection, and reduction (*ibid*). It should be clear that 'reason' does not stand alone; it is always inflected with 'unreason'.

> Perception is set in action contexts and organized through complex mixtures of sensory encounter, virtual memory, and bodily affect….As your affect-charged biocultural memory deems particular elements worthy or unworthy, they are subtracted from the myriad sensory materials rushing in. Virtual memory is crucial. It is memory because it is real and exerts real effects, and it is virtual because it does not take the form of an explicit image (Connolly 2002: 28).

We carry forth our personal and cultural histories across different layers of memory and registers of being. "What we call 'direct physical experience' is never merely a matter of having a body of a certain sort; rather, *every* experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions" (Eakin 1999: 35). Mindfulness allows meditators to direct awareness to the habits, feelings, and judgments that stream into consciousness, thereby bringing about the possibility of reeducation (Connolly 2002: 76). As Friedrich Nietzsche puts it, "a mere disciplining of conscious thoughts and feelings is virtually nothing…; one first has to convince the *body*" (quoted in Connolly 2002: 77).

For Nietzsche, conscious thought affords us the ability to "devise experimental practices and arts" for changing one's conscious thought patterns by altering the affect-imbued stratum of thought. Nietzsche's modes of *self artistry* were intended to change one's very fundamental aspects of identity, and as such, targeted layers of brain activity underlying consciousness. Yet the effects of those experiments could only be assessed in conscious thought. One's facility to experiment with thought *as* thought, says Connolly,

> turns in part on the existential orientation to life already installed in you by historical fortuity and institutional design. These previous interventions

shape and define, to some uncertain degree, visceral layers that enter into your judgment about how thinking works. In opening the intellect to think anew about the character of thinking, then *it is useful to run little experiments on ourselves* (2002: 77).[27]

If, as Connolly suggests, identity is always intertwined with difference, ethical practice always carries a risk for one's identity (1991: 176). The uncertain degree to which previous interventions shape the choices we make belies the fact that the practice of self-artistry and the process of thinking, for that matter, is unpredictable. This very unpredictability maintains an opening for change, for creative self-making. Embracing difference and uncertainty runs against egoistic efforts to quash the unpredictability of thinking enacted through practices that domesticate the strange, both spatial and temporal. What aspects of our personality do we take responsibility for, and which do we consider beyond our control? Where there is an ego to protect there is a motivation to recollect the past in ways that relate to core features of that ego. Herein lies the import of the personal photograph.

Perception is not a mere representation of a preexisting world, but the enactment of said world involving a process of subtraction, or narrowing, of sensory information in the constitution of perceptions. The process whereby memories are subtracted during the mediation of sense data is an unpredictable one:

> The brain probably cannot predict the exact landscape the body will assume after it unleashes a barrage of neural and chemical signals on the body more than it can predict all the imponderables of a specific situation as it unfolds in real life and real time (Damasio 1994: 158 in Connolly 2002: 37).

Connolly identifies *forks in time* as points where heretofore-unpredictable changes in the direction of one's life come into being. The metaphor can also be applied to the cognitive process whereby the field of possible thoughts made

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[27] Not all techniques of the self are alike in ethical terms. Nietzsche, Connolly and Varela et al advocate techniques of the self, which are intended to undermine the problematic ramifications of selfness for social life. In contrast, techniques of the self can be employed to forge or bolster an identity, thereby perpetuating selfness.

accessible to consciousness is narrowed. An array of affective memories that might be accessed at a given interval of experience is reduced to a set that 'make it through.'[28] This process occurs at the micro level; at the macro level, we make decisions about courses of action, or decisions are made for us. We do not tend to perceive forks in time, moments where we change trajectories in our life paths as we imagine them: "the forking points are often so imperceptible that they cannot be revealed until after their occurrence, to an attentive memory. It is a story that can only be told in the past" (Deleuze 1994: 50 in Connolly 2002: 96). This point brings Celia Lury's terms, *retrodictive prophecy* into the discussion at an opportune time, for it allows us to return to the question of photography.

In short, we do not tend to perceive forks in time as such. We don't know we are making life-altering decisions all the time. Only in hindsight do we (perhaps) acknowledge these 'turning points' in our lives. If we take ownership of these turns, we evoke a retrodictive prophecy. That is, we imagine that we knew what we were doing, that we are responsible for our present state of affairs because we chose our path knowing where it would take us.[29] In the next chapter we shall see how photographic practice manifests in this confluence of temporality and identity, and brings this forth to bear on ethics.

What has been established thus far? Varela et al and Connolly agree that there is no locatable self in the individual; identity is relational, and a product of thinking, which always embodied. Ethical systems structured upon this foundation, and associated techniques of self stand to bring us closer to mind states that make generosity and respect flow naturally from being. Four main points inhere: 1) Selfness is a construct of the mind; human preoccupation with selfness is the source of suffering; 2) Mindfulness meditation affords meditators

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[28] Picture a fan rake with multiple 'fingers' that meet at the shaft. Some fingers are removed while others remain, and their convergence at the shaft composes the affective tone of the perception in question.

[29] Lury "introduces the idea that we are seeing the emergence of a prosthetic culture, a culture in which *potential* is a defining relation of self-identity. However, the aim and direction of this potential are not defined in advance of the identity they make possible. Rather, the converse is true, that is, the aim and direction are determined in *retrospect* on the basis of a successful claim to some event or action as the outcome of potential" (1998: 218). This is the retrodictive prophecy.

the opportunity to apprehend how affect and conscious thought (these are not mutually exclusive concepts – both are embodied) are bound up together. In reflection, one can see how the mind grasps for the solidity of a discursive self and tries to relate experience to that self; 3) Mindfulness meditation offers the opportunity to affect both conscious and unconscious thought by revealing the self as a relational entity enacted in thinking. Thus, the question of what is good for the self becomes the question of what is good for all conscious beings. Thinking and thought can cease to be self-centred; 4) Understanding how memory structures and supports identity is central to understanding how selfness enters the conscious realm. It is also central to understanding how perception functions. Both thinking and mind are embodied. There is much we remember that is not accessible to consciousness. Altering perception and thought patterns involves working on those inaccessible embodied layers of memory and thought indirectly. Such practice may either be carried out with the intention to undermine selfness, or, short of that, to open the self to unpredictable possibilities and openness to otherness.

With Varela et al and Connolly we get a sense of how it is that memory and thinking are bound up with selfhood. However, we have yet to explore how remembering, forgetting, and the manner in which we experience temporality relates to ethics. I will now discuss David Gross's (2000) analysis of conscious remembering and forgetting, examine how strategies of remembering and forgetting have shifted through time, and how these strategies - and the motivations that drive them - relate to ethics. Following this section, I will address Rudolf Bernet's (1998) account of the ethics of time perception. In chapter three, I will elucidate how leanings toward and against remembering interface with the present technological milieu, and how photography stands as a ready aid to those who seek perfect control of both remembering and forgetting.

§2 Remembering and Forgetting

One is stimulated to be creative...when one has a creative relationship to the world, [which requires] some feeling of the inexhaustible richness and

variety of the life around one.... But in order to be attuned to the richness of life, one must have some awareness of temporal depth and be able to see other realities besides that of sensual immediacy...since memory gives one access to these other realities, it also deepens and broadens what one experiences, thereby setting the conditions that make it possible for an individual to have even the chance of being creative.

- David Gross (2000: 148)

David Gross joins Connolly in calling attention to the manner in which attunement to the richness of life is essential to formulating creative responses to and within the fast changing reality we enact and inhabit. Gross, who specializes in Modern European Intellectual History, provides a view into the psychological context in which photography makes its mark. In my discussion of Lorenzo Simpson in the next chapter I relate photography to the postmodern context; Gross establishes a context for postmodernity. What is the status of remembering at a time when photography takes hold as a technology with staying power?

Bernard Stiegler remarks on how photography came about when the speed of transfer from scientific discovery to technical invention was still rather slow:

'One hundred and two years elapsed between the discovery of the physical phenomenon applied to the photograph and photography itself (1727-1829)' whereas the transfer time was reduced to 'fifty-six years for the telephone, thirty-five for radio, twelve for television, fourteen for radar, six for the uranium bomb, five for the transistor' (Gille 1978: 39 in Stiegler 1998: 40).

What is happening in the field of psychology during photography's transfer phase? In other words, what is the status of remembering and forgetting as photography enters popular culture, and how does this context destine photographic practice?

Gross sets up a dyad by contrasting those who, in "some manner or other put remembering at the center of their lives…*rememberers,* [against those] who see little or no value in memory, but instead point to the gains that accrue when memory is expunged,… *forgetters"* (Gross 2000: 25). Forgetters and rememberers are then positioned in historical milieus via contrasting cultural values extant in premodernity and modernity. As conceptions of selfhood shift, so too does the valence of memory.

Gross's analysis of memory encircles the question of creativity; which strategy - forgetting or remembering - is more conducive to creativity? Implicit here is the supposition that creativity is valued in contemporary culture, whereas its value has shifted between ends of the pole through history.[30] The value of remembering will also shift with changing conceptions of the process of creativity, from active to passive.

For premoderns, character "was something that had to be achieved as a result of long years of rigorous self-formation. Once one had developed character, the task was then to remain steadfast and never deviate from the self one had become" (Gross 2000: 28). As Gross elaborates, during this period memory was coupled with habituation and the development and maintenance of character. Remembering was thus linked to spirituality, and it required both discipline and effort. Memory was also the key to creativity, the window to inspiration in the arts of poetry, painting, and music. But as the 17th century advanced, the value of memory began to erode as longstanding virtues, such as piety, ceased to be desired, replaced by new values: self-assertion and self-determination. Creativity remained desirable, but was disassociated from memory, instead becoming equated with insight and imagination.

Let us pause to consider the linkages between religion, history, and memory. As we shall find further on, Rudolf Bernet calls for living time with openness to the strange rather than a reliance on the past. This is because the present is a time of relatively rapid change with respect to epistemes, media, science and technology; the contemporary period is marked by its bias toward speed. In premodernity, the past had a great deal of relevance with regard to the present. But in the present one could argue that much of this relevance is lost:

> Those who, despite the rapidity of change, choose to cling to the past like Don Quixote would seem to risk becoming, like him, absurd or risible figures. For once the past is superceded by new forces and developments, so the argument goes, its meaning and value change fundamentally. At the very minimum, the past stops being a source of wisdom and becomes a burden, a dead weight, an impediment to further growth. And once a

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[30] Earlier I argue that creative thinking and creative relations to the self are necessary for ethical being.

> climate of opinion hostile to the past takes hold, it is not surprising to find that forgetting is revalued as a good (Gross 2000: 31).

Indeed, the devaluation of memory was sanctioned by 19th century psychologists who doubted the veracity of memories (Gross 2000: 32). Memories were considered both unverifiable and burdensome to the rational faculties of modern individuals trying to make their way through the chaos of modernity. Room had to be made for up-to-date information to the exclusion of old, outdated memories. By the late 19th century, nostalgia was considered a moral weakness, a cowardly flight away from the realities of the modern age. Shifting theories of selfhood reconfigured the importance of memory, and for the most part delegated it to a bygone age of 'narrow' existence.

To some degree, postmodernists reengage memory later in the 20th century by playfully recycling the past:

> If this kind of recuperative activity qualifies as memory at all, it is memory entirely dismissive of the actuality of the past, since precisely that actuality is what postmodernists ask one to forget. Rather than try to retrieve the original spirit or context of residual things, it is better, they say, just to take them as they are, reassemble them in novel ways, or treat them in an ironic, playful manner (Gross 2000: 114).

But the ethos of 'personal development' lingers from the 19th century, and with it the task of 'becoming what you are'.[31] This form of self-making consists in a shedding of the residual qualities socialization sediments into and onto individuals so as to "start over afresh, free of the stranglehold of memory, to become whatever, at any point in one's life history, one decides one wants to be" (*ibid* 135). However, this technique, Gross asserts, alongside Nietzsche, will "almost certainly [create] narrower, emptier, and shallower" people (*ibid*). While this may very well bring about a more contented existence, we might see such a life, with Socrates, as 'unexamined' and thus lacking in depth and the richness of possibility. Photography stands as technological means to control memory by externalizing it.

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[31] Popular culture icon, Oprah, routinely encourages her guests and viewers to dig deep and 'become who they really are,' to find and embrace the 'real you.'

When photography became a lucrative commercial enterprise in the first half of the 19th century, capitalism was in full swing. The industrial revolution churns out commodity goods for mass consumption and modern free market economics is born. The pace of technological development quickens, transfer phases shorten. Gross identifies capitalism as the most influential factor in the devaluation of memory. That is, memory ceased to be inimical to moral worth, and was re-cast as a hindrance to being 'with the times,' free and easy adaptability. In this new reality, "most items or human relationships that could not be commodified were deemed to be of little real worth, at least be market standards" (Gross 2000: 99). It may come as no surprise, then, that the photograph begins its ascendancy into popular acceptance as a commodity: portraits and *cartes visites* afford the middle classes in Europe the opportunity to own their visage (and that of their family ensemble) and distribute it via the calling card. The most popular use for the photograph after it became commercially available was as a replacement for the painted portrait (Cartwright & Sturken 2001). Photographers were hired to take family and individual portraits, followed by a demand for their services at family events such as births, marriages and funerals. Calling cards became markers of social status rather quickly. I suggest photography finds wide acceptance in a culture that is ambivalent about remembering because it allows the consumer to exteriorize memory, to put it outside the self in order to rationally manage the archive more easily than one can manage the flood of memory. At the same time, the mind is left free to become, unburdened by the weight of the past. Or so it is presumed.

I will explore this line of argument in the next chapter. In addition, I will develop Bernet's perspective on hope and forgiveness. Facing one's past rather than forgetting is necessary because we cannot direct forgetting. We carry memories forth that we have no conscious awareness of or control over. The 'release' of being forgiven, felt as a weight lifted from one's shoulders, or an unclenching in the chest, indicates that forgiving operates on the level of embodiment, and thus reverberates through time in the layers of being that

underlie thinking. Let us now take up a thread yet to be explored, and examine
Bernet's argument for ethical time.

§3 Ethical Timing

> In general, I try to distinguish between what one calls the future and
> "l'avenir." The future is that which – tomorrow, later, next century – will be.
> There's a future which is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable.
> But there is a future, l'avenir (to come) which refers to someone who comes
> whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me that is the real future. That which
> is totally unpredictable. The Other who comes without my being able to
> anticipate their arrival. So if there is a real future beyond this other known
> future, it's *l'avenir* in that it's the coming of the Other when I am completely
> unable to foresee their arrival.
>
>   - Jacques Derrida (2002)

 I have advanced a construal of the psychic self as a mental construct
enacted in thinking, where thinking is always an embodied process. What we call
the self is bound up in the hermeneutic circle of both being and becoming. This
non-essentialist conception of selfhood allows for radical change and integration
of otherness. Indeed, as we learn from the Buddhist tradition, it allows the psychic
self to be altogether denied.[32] In contrast, the popular view of identity articulated
in essentialist terms allows for no such thing. Rather, the notion of selfhood or
identity is constructed and reinforced by the supposition that one is wholly
constituted by and through subjective experience – self-determination.
Underneath all the delusions, misunderstandings, confusions, pains, sufferings,
guilt, and 'baggage' is a true self, an essential self. This self is immutable, pure,
unique, and free. If this is accurate, or believed so, we can see what follows; a
desire to reveal, nurture, and preserve one's identity. Yet, a negative implication
inheres: "Built into the dynamic of identity is a polemical temptation to translate

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[32] The attentive reader will note that I limit my arguments here to 'interbeing,' coined by Thich
Nhat Hanh, as it pertains to the human species. However, I do not wish to suggest that
interbeing is only about human interaction. On the contrary, it is about interaction with all that
is in the realm of experience. David Abram, cultural ecologist, philosopher and performance
artist, writes, "the circular manner in which a nuanced sense of self emerges only [occurs]
through a deepening relation with other beings, [and] is regularly acknowledged in Buddhism
as the 'dependent co-arising of self and other'" (1996: 288). Abram provides a moving account
of the manner in which humanity has renounced the very phenomenological moorings of our
existence by disengaging and Othering the natural world.

differences through which it is specified - [because identity is always *relational* and *collective*] – into moral failings and abnormalities," strangeness (Connolly 1991: xiv). In the Buddhist tradition, this pattern is called grasping, and it invariably leads to suffering. Awareness is posed to break the link between suffering and domination: "When we are truly awake we are able to truly embrace diversity, to move past artificially-constructed dominator thinking that promotes fear of what is different, fear of the stranger" (hooks 61). To be awake, then, is to accept difference into our conception of self, both spatial and temporal. In these terms, awakening affords us the opportunity to address prereflective orientations that 'stick' to patterns of domination.

Phenomenology re-enters this study upon consideration of the relationship between time and the self. Rudolf Bernet argues for a shift away from self-centred time to other-oriented time. In what follows, I will attempt to elucidate a shift from the use of remembering as a strategy of *possessive individualism* – resistance against the *strange* and *other* in experience of both my/subjective time and historical time – to the appropriation of technologies that constitute extensions of the self and function to bolster opposition to strangeness and otherness, and indeed undermine the potential for a collective appropriation of ethical time.[33][34] I will draw from Celia Lury's analysis of prosthetic culture to support this argument in the following chapter. In so doing, I hope to provide ethical reasons for casting a critical light on our own desire to take up/in technologies as prosthesis. I propose we attempt to maintain a degree of conscientiousness in the oscillation between natural time and ethical time we continuously experience. Let us begin by directing our attention to Bernet's account of time consciousness.

Bernet states what we can take as fact: "other people co-determine our lives, and thus alter the time of our lives" (1998: 138). Both Connolly and Eakin advance positions that take the self as fundamentally relational. This observation

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[33] In order for a collective appropriation of ethical time/ing to occur, ethical time/ing must be lived at the individual level.

[34] Celia Lury defines the *possessive individual* as a "free, self-determining and self responsible identity...constituted as a property" (1).

introduces the distinction between two different – though not mutually exclusive – kinds of time: *historical* and *ethical*. The question at hand is whether historical time sufficiently grounds ethical being; is ethical time required? Bernet argues for the latter; ethical time goes beyond historical time in grounding ethics. How does time factor for ethical responsibility?

Zygmunt Bauman, a sociologist, argues "civil spaces" afford individuals the "ability to interact with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without pressing them to surrender it or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place" (2000: 104). Bauman's conception of civility interests me because it meshes well with the manner in which Rudolf Bernet theorizes the ethical aspects of how we perceive time, where strangeness is something we always grapple with in our inability to control forgetting. To admit strangeness into our own sense of self – that we are not self-determining but in fact dependent on others to co-create both our perceived pasts and futures through *forgiving* and *hope* – also means we must refuse to see the progression of time according to the conservative linearity of history*, historical time.* On conservative *historical time,* those that are alienated and strange do not fall under the conditions of ethical responsibility that apply to those who are part of the continuous community. We must broaden the scope of ethical responsibility to consider the good of future generations that will likely be significantly different than 'us'. Whereas Bauman is concerned with the possibility of civility in the *present*, Bernet is concerned with the possibility of civility in a *future* that does not resemble the present.

Bernet argues Husserl's and Bergson's account of time as *my time* does not ground ethical responsibility for others (1998: 137). Rather, *my time* names a mere moment in the transition that characterizes both our lives and our time. That is, we are not limited to our personal/subjective time(s). *My time* already refers to a moment of this transition that has left behind *natural time,* moving toward/transitioning into *historical time,* followed by *ethical time*. In leaving behind *natural time, my time,* and *historical time*, I find myself ethically responsible for others in ethical time. So why is ethical time the only mode of

experiencing time that grounds ethical responsibility? Let us consider *my time,* and then *historical time* in order to discern how they are insufficient in this regard.

My time can also be referred to as 'psychical time.' I experience *my time* as continuous and subjective. My continuity manifests in the flowing and interwoveness of past/present/future. This continuity requires both remembering/forgetting and anticipation. Remembering is an interior activity; I don't need anyone else to do it. In remembering I experience time *as* time. But as this occurs, remembering remains *strange* to me, since I cannot control what I forget (Bernet 1998: 140). Expectation is directed at the future. It is linked to remembering since we always remember with an eye to a *better* future. Expectation must allow for co-determination – the impact of others on our lives (*ibid*). But we need not consciously consider others lives in an ethical manner when we consider their impact on our lives.

Remembering and expectation together allow for the constitution and perpetuation of a personal identity. We want our identity to persist, to have a better future, which is why we remember with an eye to a *better* future (Bernet 1998:140). This is selfness. Bernet considers remembering with the intention to maintain the continuity of personal identity an *overcoming* of the threat of forgetting, disintegration, disunity (141). If we face this threat in an individualistic, egoistic manner and don't allow the time of others to interrupt our time, we face the burdens of life on our own, drawing from only that which is 'interior' to us. We have three options: we may either transition into historical time, ethical time, or a combination of the two. Transitioning into historical time might benefit us, but it will not mark a transition to a life of ethical responsibility. Why not?

The experience of time as *historical time* is not substantially different from *my time* in ethical terms: historical time is similarly characterized by continuity. This mode is taken up by communities, which are defined by inclusion, exclusion, and rejection of otherness. Certainly, the time of others – trans-generational others – are taken into account in historical time. However,

noncontemporaneous others are connected via traditions and some sort of essential qualities, group identity characteristics (Bernet 1998: 144). The self is situated within a collective self, or 'wego' (group ego) (Loy 2006: 46). This group is distinguished from those outside according to traces of "race, class, gender, nation, religion, or some combination thereof" (*ibid)*. More than anything else, historical time looks back through communal remembering so as to glean/expect what is to come in the future as a continuation of the past. This is like internally derived expectation for the individual in *my time*; the time of actual others, strangers, is not taken into account. Strangeness and otherness are disavowed by the conservative character of historical time. Thus, future generations that are significantly different are alienated, strange, and do not fall under the conditions of ethical responsibility that apply to those who are part of the continuous community. This occurs in part because the group "can never feel secure *enough*;" *dukkha* inheres in the group context just as it does for the individual (*ibid)*.[35]

Conceiving and experiencing time as *ethical time* does not reject the discontinuity and interruption of *my time*. Rather, ethical time is the time *for the other*, receptiveness to strangeness and plurality of being (Bernet 146). The other's consciousness penetrates mine, and a new consciousness emerges. My time is no longer mine; it is now intersubjective. This transition makes possible the release from independent confrontation of life's burdens because I open myself to the ability of the other to change both my past and future via forgiveness and hope. This mode of timing meshes with the intersubjective nature of identity discussed in Chapter 1.

As Bernet discusses, forgiveness is where the other releases me from the guilt associated with a transgression against them. The gift of forgiveness alters my past, which in turn alters my present and future. Hope is a gift from another that changes my future, and subsequently, my past and present. Hope is instilled when another promises to be there for me in the future when I need them. This

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[35] Recall, *dukkha* is the Pali term that is typically translated as suffering.

means I am not self-determined – the other will make sacrifices for me and vice versa.

My life is not simply a continuation of my past when another instills hope in me. Forgiveness and hope reconfigure the thinking that constitutes 'my' life in consciousness, and the affective charges of my virtual memories. These gifts carry an obligation to the other: reciprocity (Bernet 147). I am ethically responsible to make sacrifices for the other. If we are living ethical time, we must not limit our ethical responsibility to our contemporaries (*ibid* 148). While future generations are not present to provide the gifts of forgiveness and hope to us, we nevertheless have an ethical responsibility to ensure that their very existence remains possible.[36] Rather than leave the future to future generations, we must 'sacrifice' now for their sake. Future generations may very well be very strange to us, but this very fact grounds the necessity to ensure their different needs and ways of life are possible. What this means is that we stop living simply for ourselves, and start living for others, for their time.

Bernet's question of the relationship between timing and ethics draws out an aspect of time consciousness that relates to the recent shift Euro-Americans have made to a reality lived in and through the technosphere. My position constitutes a critical look at a particular kind of appropriation of technologies many of us have come to think of as necessary, natural, and even obligatory: the documentation of our lives via everyday personal photography. I will develop a series of connections between Bernet's account of temporality and common appropriations of technologies that constitute *prostheses* to personal memory. Crossing Bernet's theorization of time consciousness with ways in which people use photography to combat time's paradoxical structure reveals a prevalent desire to maintain control over identity. In order to support this claim, let me elaborate on the aforementioned notion of *documenting our lives*.

Before my daughter was born, my wife's parents gave us a digital camera for Christmas. Since nearly two hundred kilometers would distance them from us,

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[36] This relates to the UN's definition of *sustainable development* as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (United Nations 1987: 24).

they hoped to make up, to some degree, this separation through the medium of the photograph. This strategy is far from unique. Many people we know have documented their life's major events on film – either in, or abstracted from motion. Sometimes these records stand in for experiences one missed out on, as is the case for my in-laws. Other times, we document our experiences as we experience them – with a camcorder, still camera, helmet cam, webcam, or via any number of other means. Living life through the lens of a camera is, in a very real sense, quite different from unmediated experience; we select what we see via the inclusion and exclusion of the frame. In addition, referring back to photographs and videos of our life's events augments the way we remember those events. Many of us have difficulty distinguishing the origins of our memories; it is difficult to tell first-hand from second-hand experience. With the ready availability of photographic technology we come to rely less on our own capacities to remember and delegate the archival process, shifting the task of the flesh to the device . These are both manners in which we commonly use technological prostheses for/as memory. The question that arises is how or why this matters? I want to argue that Bernet's account of the transition between *natural time*, *my/subjective time*, *historical time*, and *ethical time* provides a framework upon which we can analyze the significance of tendencies to construct prosthetic memories. It seems this tendency is very much bound up in the experience of time as historical time. Let us turn to this matter in the next chapter, where I delve into further the question of photography.[37]

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[37] I wish to assure the reader that I do not think we can or should remember mimetically; this is not my concern. I am concerned with how changing practices of remembering interface with ethical being.

Three

Prostheticity, Ethics, and photography

§I Prosthetic Culture

A central question in this chapter concerns the manner in which photography solicits one to 'become what you are.' What does this popular refrain mean, and how is photography implicated? How does the call to 'become what you are' relate to the perspectives on selfhood advanced by Varela et al and Connolly? In this section I will elaborate the first aspect of this line of enquiry.

In her analysis of the emergence of prosthetic culture in Euro-American societies, Celia Lury suggests a transition of the subject as individual "beyond the mirror stage of self-knowledge, of reflection of self, into that of self-expression, what Barthes calls 'the advent of myself as other' (1998: 3). Lury takes personal identity to persist in biographical form, in thought. That is, identity is one's autobiography. This situates experimentation in the realm of thinking, specifically in narrative. *Experimental individualism* interfaces with what Lury calls *flexible* individuality, where multiple contexts are "put into people – both nature and society may be internalized in the individual as contexts or causes for action" (23). That is, in prosthetic culture, where that which is 'external' stands ready to be absorbed and 'internalized,' the *flexible* individual "may be able to choose his or her ground or context for motivation, select his or her cause as the basis or asserting the significance of a specific effect, for accepting or declining responsibility for his or her actions (*ibid*). But just how flexible is the flexible individual? One might question the degree to which such an individual 'actively chooses his or her ground for motivation.' Consciousness maintains a tentative hold over grounds for motivation. Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu elucidate this point with their concept of the *social habitus,* that "nonreflective' process of bodily self-regulation" composed of the "dispositions of a social class or group due to their common codes of conduct and the similar patterns of their upbringing" (Burkitt 20-21). Before Bourdieu and Elias, William James deployed a weighty metaphor to describe habit:

> Habit is…the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious
> conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of
> ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of
> the poor (1983: 125).

One might ask whether photography is bound up with the *habitus* of prosthetic culture? I submit that it is, which explains its inconspicuousness. As Jonathan Sterne argues, "technologies are essentially subsets of habitus – they are organized forms of movement" (2003: 370). Everyday personal photography is a habitual practice that appears to feed back into the habitus by contributing its weight to that of the flywheel James evokes. As Bourdieu states, photography is a "little crystallized set of operations incorporated into the habitus…" (quoted in Sterne 2003: 372). The momentum of the social habitus in which possibility is imagined thus stultifies motivation for creative action against the tide of contemporary culture.

In *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (2002), Connolly discusses a man who lacked affective memory, and thus only operated on the rational level. Simple decisions were debilitatingly difficult, for none of the possibly irrelevant data points required for the deliberative process were subtracted from consciousness. This exclusive rationality is a curse, contra the ideal Cartesian subject. *Flexible* individuals are different; they are "born with a 'more focused and flexible neurological environment', [and] are able to achieve an 'autotelic self,' a self in which the goals that one pursues *arise from within and are not fixed"* (Lury 1998: 23). Could it be that such a person is born without the intuitive tendency to *grasp* at self-defining thoughts? Consider the following description of an individual with an autotelic self:

> [H]aving a feeling of ownership of her [sic] decisions, the person is more
> strongly dedicated to her goals. Her actions are reliable and internally
> controlled. [Yet] she can easily modify her goals whenever the reason for
> preserving them no longer makes sense. In that respect, an autotelic
> person's behavior is both more consistent and more 'flexible'
> (Csikszentmihlyi 1990: 210).

Does the capacity of the flexible individual sound entirely unlike that of the individual who practices mindfulness? Both 'practice' non-attachment, but do both share a fluid contextual milieu? I think not, for the mindfulness practitioner maintains a host of (ethical) principles through time, which relate to mindfulness practice itself. Changing contexts and absolving the self of responsibility for past actions is not an option.

Flexibility is not limited to those who are born with the "neurological endowment;" it is also available through training, "culminating in a belief in 'earnable competence'" (Lury 1998: 23). It should not be surprising that such a strategy might find popular acceptance in societies that propagate the Horatio Alger myth: you can be whatever you want to be as long as you work hard enough. This myth finds its footing in material culture, wherein what one wants to be is located in the material, that which can be supported by consumption. and we all have the material means to achieve our good as equally as possible (Borgmann 1995: 87). In this context, the good is narrow, personal, individually determined and dis-embedded from the realities of the natural life-world. Indeed, this is the time of the "ideal individual for whom the possession of a resource-ful self is something to be worked at in the very serious role-play of…*experimental* individualism" (Lury 1998: 23). A salient difference between techniques of experimental individualism and mindfulness practice is that the latter is not part of a survivalist paradigm.

> In the terms of the last survivor policy, the individual, forced by the fear of death to in-fill or fall in upon him or herself, takes on the 'consuming task of transcending the technical capacity for living;' the individual is absorbed in the life long labour of the defense of health, construing life as a process of self-constitution. S/he does so by stretching the capacity to live, abolishing the future, which can no longer be colonized by planning, probability and responsibility, perhaps not even by what has been the guardian of life itself, the family, and replacing time with a multitude of individual occurrences, each with its own cause, the locus of individual experimentation (*ibid* 96).

In addition to this difference, Lury states the experimental individual with a *flexible* body has:

the ability to be disembodied and re-embodied at will, that is, to be disembedded from specific social relations, to be deracinated without gender, class, sexuality or age, and then to display a combination of such natural and social characteristics as required through an assertion of the claim to the significance of their effects: to turn the substitutability of the customized individual in a postplural society into the individual art of colouring by numbers….If successful, the individual may be reconstituted as such through the possession of individuality as a set of cultural or stylistic resources, the proprietor of a technologically mediated or *prosthetic auto/biography* (1998: 24).

One might ask, in taking up the enactive view of cognition, just how disembodiment and re-embodiment is achieved? Prosthetic technologies, like photography, afford individuals the ability to become disembodied. Indeed, it is the prosthesis – the extension of one's self, either perceptual or mechanical – that makes the very self extension possible (Lury 3). Lury makes an implicit connection to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in asserting that adopting/adapting prostheses marks a shift from self-identity based on continuity of thinking, "I think therefore I am," to "I can, therefore I am" (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1962). Here, the "I can" relates to the extended capabilities prostheses afford us. Without question, we can identify here a distinct shift in the manner of conceiving the self; one's capabilities are extended beyond previously experienced limits via technological means, and the interplay between consciousness, memory and the body "are experimentally dis and re-assembled" (Lury 1998: 3). Herein lies cause for concern. An ethics grounded in embodiment might be undermined if individuals can reconfigure perception through photographic practice.

§2 Prostheses and Time

Let us return to the question of temporality as perceptual phenomenon in order to address the question of photography from another angle. We seem to be always already living in ethical time even though we may very well not experience time as such. Perhaps we can take Bernet's claim regarding the oscillation in the following way: what I might at one moment think of as my time is always the time of the other. Derrida's trace of the other in the self-same

captures this paradox, as does Connolly's *identity\difference*. That is, in order for me to posit an 'I,' I must first acknowledge and distinguish myself from another, a *not-I*. If personal identity requires positing distinctness in the face of the other, we can see that otherness is always a constitutive part of identity. Indeed, Lury points out the "self-determined individual has been a [dis/en/abling] myth of [Euro-American] societies, a myth whose apparent universalism obscures its dependency on practices of exclusion and principles of hierarchical classification" (1998: 1). Operating in and through this myth of self-determined individualism, one might not in any way acknowledge the role the other plays in the constitution of the self.[38]

Returning to the matter of time, we can conceive how one may similarly experience time as subjective, owned, while it is always in fact strange, interrupted, and constituted intersubjectively via expectation. If remembering and expectation can be considered interrelated methods of resistance to the possibility of forgetting/loss (which is in fact necessary for remembering) and disunity of identity, it is fair to ask: how is identity constituted in the first place? This challenge does not seem to pose a threat to those who defend the essentialist view of identity. The counter-argument would run: I have a true/static/deep/immutable identity. If I have always been who I really am, others are just that, other. If otherness is not a necessary condition or a condition of possibility for the constitution of my identity, it need not be a part of *my* time. I may choose to insert myself into a community, but this will not change *who I really am*. Rather, I will make connections with others who have something in common with me, and I will allow their time - historical time - to modify the manner in which I experience time. But this will be up to me, my choice. Such a perspective reflects the positioning of one's temporality as owned. Yet this is a false supposition, as Bernard Stiegler points out:

> What Heidegger calls the already there, constitutive of the temporality of Dasein, is this past that I never lived but that is nevertheless my past, without which I never would have any past of my own. Such a structure of

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[38] Racism is a paradigm example of this phenomenon; a bigot would never acknowledge a trace of the other in the constitution of h/er identity.

inheritance and transmission, which is the very ground of facticity itself
since tradition can always conceal from me the sense of the origin that it
alone can transmit to me…(1998:140).

Indeed, time is never ours alone, and we are born into a social habitus that does not present itself as experience. It is that which conditions experience.

§2.1 Ethical Tim/ing Revisited

How is it that taking up/in prostheses constrains the individual's disposition to experience time as *ethical time*, and how does this relate to the potential for a collective shift away from *historical time* to *ethical time*? Both questions bear on the question of identity. At the level of the individual, Bernet tells us we are always living *the time of the other*, despite our best efforts to remain in *subjective time* in hope of maintaining our identity by overcoming the threat of loss and disunity associated with forgetting. Of course, forgetting is a necessary condition for remembering. We must forget in order to differentiate important fragments of our experience that have faded into our past from indifferent ones; total recall would not be a gift, but a burden.

From the dualistic view of mind and body we inherit a conception of personal identity as inhering in the mind, thought patterns, character, strategies, and memory. This view places emphasis on the conscious aspects of the self as constitutive of personal identity. It does not acknowledge the multiple ways in which personal identity is unconscious – bound up in our physiology, permeating every cell of our bodies. On the non-dualistic embodied view, the individual is never an identity, a static *in-itself*. Rather, in every moment the individual exists in a state of flux, sharing energy and matter back and forth through the flesh. Similarly, what we take to be our identity is never within our control, for we do not control perception. Recall how mindfulness meditation figures in indirectly guiding gradual shifts in perceptual processes. The contemporary popular view is that everyone has a unique identity, and that once it is discovered, it must be preserved and protected.

Bernet's account of remembering and expectation relates to the maintenance of *identity* on the individual level. In a parallel manner, communities

use traditions and histories in efforts to maintain their cultural identities through time. "The unity of the ethnic group is governed by the relation to time, more precisely, the relation to a collective future sketching in its effects the reality of collective becoming" (Steigler 1998: 55). As communities are collectives of individuals, we must ask whether communities can transition to *ethical time* if the individuals that compose them actively resist it? I suggest the answer must be no. We might instead consider the present trend of prosthetic culture a refusal of both historical time and ethical time.

I have linked Lury's *possessive individualism* to Bernet's account of *my time.* In the absence of the contemporary prosthesis I mention above, it does seem fair for Bernet to suggest the individual will always transition between the poles discussed. However, he does not consider the impact of technologies, specifically prosthetic technologies, on this process. The individual faces life's burdens on their own in experiencing time as *my time.* Forgiveness and hope are gifts from the other in *ethical time.* Bernet's argument hinges on the individual's desire to maintain personal identity, which is linked to remembering with an eye to a *better* future. Indeed, in the absence of prosthetic technologies, one only has their own memory to draw from in forming expectations. This is why both hope (and forgiveness, because it relates to a past, which is bound up with one's protention of their future) can only come from another. Yet, Bernet does not account for the contemporary Euro-American ability to de/reconstruct individual pasts through prosthetic technological means. For example, I can always carry a camera with me, and take photographs of myself in/against beautiful places and features of the cityscape. Later I can look back on these photographs and *see* what my home city was like – beautiful. Through this process, I selectively include and exclude objects from the frame. That which is beautiful is included, that which is not is excluded. Later, these photographs - now (autobiographical) prostheses to my memory - are more vivid, thus, more real, more reliable, truer, than what I can recall. I doubt my memories that contradict the beauty of my extended memory. I come to remember the city of years gone by as beautiful.

An example that bears more clearly on identity is the common practice of editing photo albums. People discard photographs of themselves when they don't conform to (ever-changing) representational ideals. This practice is all the more common when the photographs are digital, and assembled in a virtual album. This process of paring down images of oneself shapes one's self-image, and how one wants to be seen. Many take photographs of themselves as reasons for medical interventions to reshape their appearances.

From these examples, we can identify a theme of control over the past, present and future. Documenting our lives can be seen as a strategy of resistance to the threat of disintegration and loss. These are distinct examples of *grasping* cognitive patterns. Enabled by prosthetic technologies, one has less need for the other. That is, we can manipulate our prosthetic memories in ways that are impossible for our psychic memories. We might consider this a case of "techno-logical memory (language and technics are here amalgamated in the process of exteriorization)" (Steigler 1998: 177).[39] Forgetting can be intentional – we can discard or destroy photographs that capture moments we want to exclude from our *bios*. Reliance on this form of prosthetic memory diminishes our capacity to remember for ourselves, but this may be taken as a positive effect, since forgetting can be controlled on this model. But of course, once we are committed to documenting our lives, we may very well feel guilt when we fail to capture 'priceless' moments for posterity; they have been lost if not captured by visual media.

On this account of prosthetic memory, we seem more self sufficient in the maintenance of our identity than Bernet's account suggests. If we can erase moments from our past that cause us pain, we do not need the gift of forgiveness from the other. If we can shape and reshape our past in its extended existence, we do not need the gift of hope. We *can* be self sufficient, or at least believe this to be so. I make this qualification because it does not actually matter whether we are right about this. If we believe we are self sufficient we have no motivation to

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[39] Photography falls under the domain of *technics,* but is specifically a *technique.* I will elucidate this distinction below.

answer the appeal of the other, to accept *strangeness* into our being, even though otherness and strangeness are integral, constitutive aspects of being. There is no necessity for the supposed self sufficient individual to transition to historical time and then ethical time. Such a person can quite reasonably be expected to remain in subjective time.

Since we are considering a shift to prosthetic culture, rather than disparate cases of individual appropriations of prostheses, we can question the role of prostheses on a community scale. On the one hand, media that are used as prosthetic memories support a sense of possessive individuality. On the other hand, on a societal scale, these same media are used in ways that construct specific images relating to politics, ethics, sexuality, class, environment, spirituality, race, disability, and so forth. Nationality exemplifies a concept that is defined according to particular kinds of images, *and not others.* For instance, common images used to evoke Canadianness are the RCMP's mounted police, people playing hockey, snowy landscapes, and multicultural gatherings. Residents of Chinatowns, unemployed fisherman, and tree planters in northern Quebec *are not* figured in representations of Canadianness. The preferred images converge to constitute a community identity that tries to accommodate change while glorifying a history. In such a context, what would drive an individual to join a community that attempts to define itself, but cannot? There seems a great deal more stability offered by remaining in *my time,* where one perceives control over their past, present, and future via prosthetic memory. A shift to historical time is not necessary for such an individual. Thus, a nationally demarcated collectivity of individuals cannot transition from historical to ethical time. Let us now probe further into the question of prostheses, and the cultural context in which prostheses are desired and situated centrally in everyday life.

§3 Technics and Time

> Man invents, discovers, finds, imagines, and realizes what he imagines: prostheses, expedients. A pros-thesis is what is placed in front, that is, what is outside, outside what it is placed in front of. However, if what is outside constitutes the very being of what it lies outside of, then this being is *outside itself.* The being of humankind is to be outside itself. In order to make up

for the fault of Epimetheus, Prometheus gives humans the present of putting them outside themselves.

- Bernard Stiegler (1998: 193)

Is disembodiment new, or has it always been part of human experience *qua* human experience? From the point at which humans became humans, when 'we' began to walk on our feet, we have 'used' technics.[40] Doing so freed the hands *qua* hands; in manipulating matter, they transitioned from paws to hands, and "what hands manipulate are tools and instruments. The hand is the hand only insofar as it allows access to art, to artifice, and to *tekhne*" (Stiegler 1998: 113).

Before technics were adopted by the species, memory was isolated to living members, and learning was lost with the termination of individual consciousness. With the integration of technics into life, the human species began to conserve and accumulate what was previously lost. This carrying forth of memory reconfigured the milieu of the human, creating *technical ensembles,* and in turn, the "*process of selection of mutations,* notably those taking place at the cortical level" (Stiegler 1998: 177).[41] Stiegler asserts that technics are thus figured in the evolution of the species:

> [T]he individual develops out of three memories: genetic memory; memory of the central nervous system (epigenetic); and techno-logical memory (language and technics are here amalgamated in the process of exteriorization) (*ibid*).

Technical objects are not merely *used* now or in prehistory. They exact their own logics and use behaviors and thereby influence/structure human thinking by creating a feedback loop between thought and technological development (*ibid* 70). This insight interfaces with concerns about the interplay of photography and cognition in relation to ethics in contemporary culture. I am advancing the claim that photography is not merely a thing we use, without its own subject effects. It is, and does, more than that.

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[40] Stiegler states, "the human did not begin with the brain, but with the feet" (1998: 145).

[41] As he elaborates elsewhere, "There are technical elements, individuals, and ensembles. The elements are the tools, the separated organs; the individuals implement the elements; the ensembles coordinate the individuals. Industrial technics is characterized by a transformation of technical individuals, which allow for the comprehension of the genesis and breaking down of the present day relations of the human to the machine" (Stiegler 1998: 68).

What then, are technics (*tekhne*)? Technics encompasses "all the domains of skill," though most often associated with processes of transforming 'raw material' into 'secondary matter'" (Stiegler 1998: 93).

> All human action has something to do with *tekhne*. It is no less the case that in the totality of human action, 'techniques' are singled out....A technique is a particular type of skill that is not indispensable to the humanity of a particular human (*ibid* 94).

So Stiegler argues, technics are indispensable to *humanity,* because humanity comes into being at the moment when the species uses technics to move outside the limits of corporeality. Exteriorization, via prostheses, marks the transition away from a life of bodily sensations to perception of functionality, and a dependence on tools. Time, that is, the perception of time as time, is coupled with exteriorization: tools and artificial memory, prostheses, are *about* the future, about anticipation, just as the simplest communicative act, the gesture, is anticipatory. Thus, communication is bound up with anticipation, which is a function of exteriorization and prostheses (1998: 152).

In contrast to the common usage of *prosthesis* in discourse, Stiegler's *prosthesis* should not be thought of as replacing what once was; it does not stand in for that which is lost, it is:

> (1) Set in front, or spatialization (de-severance); (2) set in advance, already there (past) and anticipation (foresight), that is, temporalization (*ibid*).

This means the prosthesis does not extend a preexisting body; it constitutes that body as human (Stiegler 1998: 153).

> Prosthesis means 'placed-there-in-front.' Pros-theticity is the being-already-there of the world, and also, consequently, the being-already there of the past. *Pros-thesis* can be literally translated as pro-position. A prosthesis is what is proposed, placed in front, in advance; technics is what is placed before us (in an originary knowledge, a *mathesis* that 'pro-poses' us things (*ibid* 235).

The term *prosthesis,* then, captures a great deal about our experience of time. Its 'being-already-there of the world' refers to the manner in which prostheses afford us the ability to protend our consciousness into the horizon of the future. The

prosthesis carries an inheritance of the past as a technic that proposes a future, a use toward an end. One might suggest that we are thus always already technological ensembles, cyborgs.[42] Paradoxically, "technicization is what produces a loss of memory, as was already the case in Plato's *Phaedrus*" (Stiegler 1998: 3).

On Stiegler's account of technics and prostheses, Lury's claim that we are living prosthetic culture seems far from tenuous.[43] Stiegler provides an insightful critique of Barthes' work, whom Lury draws from heavily in her work on photography, which speaks to my suspicion that Barthes's account is, in his words, "radically identity-based and egological" (Stiegler 1998: 266). If this is the case, we can see how Lury's arguments speak to the common mode of being in Western culture, but not the way being *must* manifest. The question then, is what does photography mean for the individual who employs techniques against egoistic grasping?[44] Is photography *necessarily* what Lury argues it is? To answer this question, let us attempt work out just what photography is, then return the level of specificity we seek.

§4 WHAT PHOTOGRAPHY?

In Lorenzo Simpson's *Technology, Time and the Conversations of Modernity* (1995), I find a useful theoretical framework and a number of concepts that help address the questions under consideration. One of my initial challenges manifested in thinking about how to discuss photography in technological terms. Stiegler helps us refine our thinking about photography as both prosthetic and

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[42] Descartes' automatism suggested as much. *Traite de L'Homme* (1662), his most complete discourse on automatism, provides a sense of construal of humans as *automata,* self-movers. But unlike animals, humans had souls. Descartes automatism underpins the scientific rationality of the modern age. See Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), where she argues we are already cyborgs.

[43] Against his explication of the constitution of the human through technics, Stiegler provides an account of technological time that draws heavily from Heidegger, though I do not have room here to adequately address this material.

[44] We might ask whether such practices ought to be construed as *techniques*? That is, are efforts intended to undermine egoistic grasping in fact *indispensable* to humanity? In other words, is selflessness a necessary condition of a fully realized humanity? How do we define humanity with respect to interbeing? I'll have to leave these questions for future consideration.

technique. From Simpson's work I extract a manner of framing photography as a *technological practice* rather than a *technology,* which allows a way out of the false dichotomy of determinism and constructivism. Building on this foundation, photography can be considered a technological practice that has a core feature: the domestication of time. Working out from this distinction, I offer a more nuanced construal of photographic practice as an interaction with, production and archiving of, *prosthetic memory.*

On my understanding of photographic practice so construed, I address the import of the scientific conception of time as linear for selves in the context of postmodernism. Here time is a *problem;* it ceaselessly carries us toward our death. In the absence of transcendental hope, death is *terrifying*. Thus, photography is embraced for its promise to domesticate time and therefore minimize terror. I examine this terror of death and offer an argument for the possibility and necessity of reconceiving death along less negative and pervasive lines in hope that this might in part undermine technological rationality at its root source.

Our culture is obsessed with *Prometheia* "the anticipation of the future, that is, of danger, foresight, prudence, [which yields] an essential disquiet" (Steigler 1998: 202). Personal everyday photography promises to mitigate the dis-ease of s/he who is *promethes,* worried in advance. The difficulty that inheres in this situation is that the anticipation of Prometheia is inimical to consciousness itself. That is, anticipation is a necessary condition of temporality, and temporality of consciousness. Thus, the very problem of technological rationality is bound up with the constitutive elements of consciousness itself.

Taken in tandem, I consider the fear of death and the domestication of time key aspects of prosthetic photographic practice. Photographs, unlike moving images, posit a fragmentary existence of 'now points,' subject to a disembodied scrutiny of the *self as other*. I propose the term *photo-synthesis* to gather together the way photographs of selves, particularly *our*-selves, enter, are collected into, and combined with and therefore destine the hermeneutic circle of self-identity. Photographs do not merely represent a *delegation* of memory practices to a technological device; they do more (cf. Latour 1988). Photographs of selves

reinforce the postmodern sense of fragmentation and the ceaseless progression of 'now points.' They allow 'domestication of time' in a way that is of critical importance, for they transform remembering into a project of archiving, which entails editing, an additional framing of experience, and continued production of artifacts. They are implicated in technological rationality in the manner in which they *fix* time. Taking up Heidegger's manner of distinguishing modes of temporality – *phenomenological time; cosmic/physical time; technological time* – that constitute the temporality of Dasein, Steigler quotes,

> "What primarily the clock [technological time] does in each case is not to indicate the how long or how-much of time in its present flowing, but to determine the *durable fixing* of the now…What is the now" (Heidegger 1992, 5E my emphasis). This, then, is the true question of time: the now – here the now in its ability *to be fixed,* to be inscribed, to be considered in it's 'as such' (1998: 212).

We might then ask, in what sense does the photograph *fix* the now; does it make the now accessible to the future for purposes unknown in the now, effectively domesticating the now by preserving a trace of experience? We seem to address the unpredictability of temporality in this manner, operating on the belief that everyday personal photography will make the past more real, more accessible, more factual.

The possibility of a pluralistic politics is constrained if not precluded in the domestication of time at the level of selfhood as manifested in *self-making.* In contrast to self-making preconditioned by a false sense of autonomy, I suggest we consider undertaking practices of revealing, repetition, and resolving to *be* a certain way: critical and self-reflexive in the face of strangeness, otherness, and unpredictability. I submit that *becoming* is always also a form of *being.* From this understanding of *being* and *becoming,* photographs are problematic because they interrupt repetition in their lack of *difference* through time; "the photograph is mendacious, for in reality, time never stops cold" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 186; cf. Butler 1990). They represent the same as time passes, and suggest that repetition

can be replaced with intentional making, self-making.[45] In such practices, where the photograph is used to reinforce an autonomous, self-determining identity, the change inherent in being is effaced by atemporality. I suggest this technological practice undermines the recognition of the ethical aspects of *being in common*.[46] However, the scope of this critique is limited to celluloid photographs. In contrast, digital photographs are readily manipulated via common computer programs like Photoshop. Now the common medium, digital photography solicits the practitioner to capture 'everything.' Even more than the celluloid photographic practice, digital photography facilitates mistaking the 'who' for the 'what.' Ease of manipulation of the 'what' – the surface of the individual – provides the promise of reconfiguring the 'who' in bolstering one's self image via enhancements in presentability. But alongside these practices of manipulation are practices that call attention to the mode of representation itself via dynamic maneuvers of alteration and (re)combination. Such practices suggest creative ambivalence about digital photographic practice. If this sort of practice was prominent in contemporary culture, I would direct more attention to the matter. However, my interest falls on everyday personal photographic practice, the sheer magnitude of which makes manual digital manipulation prohibitively time consuming. Let us turn to the technological materiality of the photograph and photography.

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[45] By 'the same' I mean that photographs, in celluloid form, only change minimally through time. While these photographs are in effect static representations, their meaning changes from one interpretation to the next.

[46] Jean-Luc Nancy also speaks of *being* at the level of the human species. For Nancy, there is no essential being that can be attributed to all those who fall under the umbrella term, 'human', just that human being consists in *being in common* – togetherness and intersubjectivity. Individual existence is not necessarily bound to inter-human sociality, but (some form of) togetherness is a necessary condition of individual existence. Thus, *being in common* is not essential to existence at the level of the individual. Rather, *being in common* refers to a state of affairs that has always been and will always be as long as humans persist as a species. Being in common captures the majority of human experience (Gibson-Graham 2006: 85).

§4.1 Photography as Technological Practice

Lorenzo Simpson offers a way to assess photography as a *technological phenomenon* rather than a *technology,* and a way out of the false dichotomy that assesses technology according to either the hypostasized or instrumentalist view.[47] The hypostasized view of technology considers technology an autonomous determining force (Simpson 1995: 14). In contrast, the instrumentalist view holds that technology does not have an 'internal logic;' it is what we make of it. Rather than take a side according to the line drawn on this construal, Simpson, in poststructuralist fashion, takes the 'a bit of both' view and provides a dialectical account of the instrumental and essential aspects of technology. But he wisely avoids speaking of a "substantive 'technology' in favor of the adjectival 'technological'" (*ibid*). This approach is preferable over taking a side on the false dichotomy, because

> 'Technological'…[refers] to those *aspects* or *dimensions* of a practice that can be characterized in certain specific ways. This…draw[s] attention to the features of practices, including styles of cognition, that we can isolate as being characteristically technological (*ibid*).

Simpson later develops an argument that takes a feature of technological practice – the domestication of time – and posits this feature as characteristic of technological practice *in toto*. It is when this feature pervades practice that we are "faced with something very much like a 'runaway' or autonomous technology" (*ibid*).

Defining the key feature or aspect of technological practice is rather helpful because it offers a way to examine photography as a practice that can potentially 'runaway' into an autonomous state. This approach allows me to focus on the features of the practices, perhaps most importantly, its 'styles of cognition,' which are characteristically technological. Within this frame, we can ask: Has photographic practice entered and reconfigured the hermeneutic circle of the self to the point where it is an autonomous force with effects? Does it carry its own logic? This term is meant to capture both phases of the practice. *Photography as*

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[47] By 'hypostasized' I take Simpson as referring to an essential, extra-social characterization of technology, which might be articulated: "Technology is 'x'."

technological practice captures both 'photography' – the doing, the actual practice of taking photographs, and future relations to/with the products of that practice.[48] I am concerned with both the manner in which photographs come to be and what that being means for identity and ethics; I do not wish to sever their being from their production.[49] Photography is similar to technological practice itself:

> Important features of technology come into view when we understand it to be a response to our finitude, to the realization that we are vulnerable and mortal and that our time is limited; technology has been a response to our finitude from the beginning. The earliest instances of tool using in foraging societies were 'to increase the reliability and productivity of…subsistence strateg[ies] by using time-saving devices.' This suggests a theme that will be of central importance… namely, the conception of technology as timesaving (Simpson 1995: 14).

By characterizing everyday personal photography as technological practice, we gain access to the experience of living with and through the material technology of the camera and its product, the photograph.[50] This experience is constituted in the mediation of vision by the camera's lens, and the mediation of the past by the photograph. However, as I will argue, the photograph also mediates *the future.* In addition, experience is reshaped by the very presence of a camera. Below I aim to work through the manner in which everyday personal photography, as technological practice, is implicated in the "domestication of time" that figures centrally in Simpson's argument against technological rationality.

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[48] Some aspects of photography, then, are technological. I speak of photography as technological practice, but *photography* is to be understood as referring to that practice which occupies a prominent position in contemporary Euro-American life.

[49] I could refer to *photography and its products,* but this would create an artificial distinction. From the first, doing photography has entailed both setting off a chemical reaction, and developing the effects of that process. The practice was one of creating and then interacting with photographs, from exposure to development to sale. In the early years, cameras were far from ubiquitous. Thus, many who owned photographs never *did* photography. They may not have ever been party to photo shoots. Their relation to photographs would then have differed from that of the contemporary individual who owns a camera, takes photos, and relates to them through time. This situation is more and more commonplace as time passes; it is difficult to buy a cellular phone without a camera built-in these days. Cameras are ubiquitous in Euro-America, and photos are no longer mere objects/media we encounter in our lives. We participate in the production of photographs more than ever.

[50] Again, not all photography is *for* this. But this is the sort of photography I am interested analyzing here.

§4.2 The Domestication of Time

According to the anthropological evidence Simpson cites, technology has from the first been *for* saving time, but saving time has not always been a good in itself.[51] Rather, time saving has been instrumental to ends such as subsistence. Yet, in the postmodern context, saving time is an end in itself. This means technological developments that increase efficiency and effectiveness are self-justifying according to the internal logic of technological practice. The question, *why* the primary logic of technological practice is to domesticate time, must be examined in the context of a post-metaphysical moral landscape (where God is dead), which is, in turn, related to modernism and postmodernism.

In *The Clockwork Universe* (1980)*,* Klaus Maurice & Otto Mayr discuss a number of important shifts that occurred after Rene Descartes. Most noteworthy, is the manner in which the clock became associated with figures in power in Europe. Maurice & Mayr write, "after the living organism succumbed to the clockwork imagery, the state was bound to follow, because the state had traditionally been viewed in analogy to the human body, with its different branches of society corresponding to the various organs" (1980: 5). Maurice & Mayr cite an example of the clock metaphor employed in reference to figures of the state from 1529, *Horologium principum* (*Diall of Princes*), "an instruction manual for young princes in morals and manners" (6). Later, speaking directly to this metaphor, Cristoph Lehmann wrote:

> A Prince and Ruler is the Country's clock,
> Everyone directs himself after the same in his actions.
> As though after a clock in business (*ibid*).

Here both the ruler and the clock assert power over the movements of others.[52] It was common for rulers and other dignitaries to be represented alongside clocks in Descartes time (*ibid*). This invocation of the power to command order contrasts

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[51] To 'save time' is to reduce the duration required to carry out a task via methods that increase efficiency.

[52] See Michel Foucault's 'techniques of the self*', in *The Care of the Self* (1988), for an account of the manner in which time became an instrument of power in the 17th century.

the likening of the clock to the state in terms of function, where the state is considered "a complex interacting clockwork" (*ibid*). Taking up the metaphor of state as clock, Diego & de Saavedra Fajardo, in 1638, wrote:

> The wheels of a clockwork move in such secrecy that one can neither see nor hear them;…such harmony should likewise prevail between the prince and his councilors…. A monarchy is distinguished from other forms of government in that only one commands, others however, obey…. Therefore in the clockwork of government the prince should be not only a hand, but also the escapement that tells all the other wheels the time to move (Maurice & Mayr 1980: 6).

The prince directs the motions of the gears, but he too is part of the machine; he is not a steersman. This metaphor is made possible by Descartes' move to cast the human body as machine. As such, it is compatible with the clock metaphor of the state. What becomes of moral responsibility on such a conception of the state as machine? I would argue that the 'capitalist machine' that structures our existence exemplifies the amorality Descartes attributes to automata. Indeed, many of the CEOs that govern corporate business (and more), operate as parts of machines, not ethically motivated steersmen. There is much more to say about the impact of Descartes' *mechanicism*.[53] But let this suffice to contribute a degree of context to the question of efficiency in modernity and beyond.

In short, *modernism* names the stage in European culture where the Christian grounds for morality and its totalizing worldview loses its purchase as unquestioned truth and becomes merely a matter of faith. In a world that has lost its order and meaning a void is born out of a sense of fragmentation. This is filled by another system of organization: rationality (Simpson 1995: 136). The failure of Hegel and Kant's projects of rationalizing the world creates another void; this time postmodernism fills in. *Postmodernism* names the sensibility where any quest for wholeness, unity, totalizing worldviews, is undermined by relativity and contingency; we are left with a *meaningless* void (*ibid)*.[54] The postmodern

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[53] Descartes conceives time as *linear,* in accordance with the theological account.

[54] Thus, a void is filled with another void; perhaps this is the prototypical postmodernist irony.

attitude, or *sensibility,* is constituted out of a virtually inescapable cynicism in the wake of critical rationality turning on itself and undermining its own foundations. It is constituted by irony, detachment from the life-world, "structures of meaning, and to canons of rationality" (*ibid*).   The postmodern sensibility, since it does not maintain hope for spiritual transcendence of the finitude of the body, can only consider life according to the linear model of time that science and technology articulate and perpetuate. That is, one's existence has an end-point, this is assured. The question will be, as Jurgen Habermas asks, "What should I do with the time I have to live?" (2003: 1). Time, then, is finite and *to be spent.* On such a view, time can be 'lost,' 'wasted,' 'misspent,' 'given,' 'taken,' and so on. The linear model spatializes time, and this spatialization allows one to posit a series of 'now' points extending into the future, already 'ahead of us,' and thus, to be used well or not. The subject then is placed in an already elapsing 'time line'.

One might ask why this matters? Is time not in fact this way? The question of whether time is in fact linear is one that concerns physicists, but is time actually experienced as a linear progression? What does it mean to consciously consider time linear if it is not actually experienced this way? Simpson does not so much address this question, but that which pertains to what the supposed linearity of time has to do with the revealing of meaning in one's life. While he argues we need to stop trying to domesticate time through technological practices, he does not provide a phenomenological argument to this end. This is because such an argument cannot be made. That is, while internal time perception is unlike the linear model of time science uses, *we need linear time* in order to plan our futures. It is impossible to talk about life in time according to the way in which time is experienced. Once temporality enters the realm of language, it takes the form of linear progression. Yet, while it seems unavoidable, and probably undesirable to stop talking about time as linear, when we reflect on our lives and ethical being in the world, the linearity of time becomes a problem. For Simpson this is a problem for the possibility of leading meaningful lives. Linear timing also presents a problem, for the way in which it influences the manner individuals consider temporal existence is in tension with Edmund Husserl's

phenomenological analysis of time as flow. This is important because understanding human perception of time as a *flow* grounds a nuanced understanding of *being* and *becoming* as *dialectical* rather than a dual opposition. I will explain this claim below. The import of the linear conception of time for selves in the context of postmodernism is that time is a *problem,* it ceaselessly carries us toward our death. In the absence of transcendental hope, death is *terrifying.* One might ask how reconceiving death then, might alter subjectivity in the postmodern, post-metaphysical context, and thus, what this might mean for ethical being in the world.

§4.3 Is Death *the* Problem?

Time is *terrifying* because it is utterly out of our control (Simpson 1995: 24). But this terror hinges on a particular understanding of death as *bad.* What if death is not bad, as Socrates enquires? What if death, one of the few certainties in human existence, is reconceived? A reorientation might require a new metaphysics, or the adoption of an existing framework such as Buddhism, or a modern Epicureanism. Perhaps interpretations of quantum physics will yield a new kind of relationship with the certainty of death. Is there a need for *technology* as Simpson defines it, or understandings of death that are not based in Judeo-Christianity or other theisms that posit a distinction between the divine and the mortal, and judgment? We might approach the fear of death as a problem of protention - extending present consciousness into the future and assuming that a future self will loathe death as much as the present self. Perhaps this is again a problem of believing that the self persists as it is; to be certain, it often *feels* like a continuity. But are there ways to deal with the certainty of death without being burdened by it or consumed with taking up technological means to inhibit, ward it off, or delay it? My tentative line of argument would be that reconceiving death along less negative and pervasive lines (meaning death would not be 'on our minds day-to-day'), might undermine technological rationality at its root source. I believe this strategy is certainly practicable and worth considering. Again the social habitus comes to the fore, and we must consider how we might think and

act our way out of the habitus that is biased toward death rather than life. Consider Connolly's position on the matter of destining different ways of thinking:

> There are…experimental practices that we can employ to reeducate ourselves, to convince our bodies to adopt fundamentally different attitudes 'that we intellectually entertain as belief,' thereby producing new affective relations with the world (2002: 78).

Gibson-Graham continue this line of argument, adding,

> We can work in the conscious realm to devise practices that produce the kind of embodied, affect-imbued pre-thoughts that we want to foster. And in the daily rehearsal of these practices we can hope that they will become part of our makeup, part of our cell memory that will increasingly assert itself without resort to conscious calling" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 7).

If there is possibility of working in the conscious realm to destine beliefs/prejudices/ prereflective orientations, we stand to re-figure death a problematic.[55] Perhaps mindfulness practice offers such a possibility. Whether such a re-figuration of death might alter our relations with technological practices might be a question of whether technology has already 'run away.' We might ask, is the question of technology a question about selves, and what we think they are? While an adequate analysis of the problem of death is outside the scope of this study, I think it is nonetheless acceptable to consider the fear of death an important motivating force behind domesticating time. Taken in tandem, I consider this fear and the domestication of time that follows key aspects of prosthetic everyday personal photographic practice. Simpson's distinction between 'external' and 'internal' history will help us understand this connection.

§4.4 Inside/Outside: Intersubjectivity and Time

Does time exist outside of perception, or is it constituted in and through perception? The scientific view considers time a linear continuum extending from a "minus infinity to plus infinity" (Simpson 1995: 191). Events occur *in time.*

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[55] I will explain my use of 'prejudice' and 'prereflective orientation' below.

This understanding infiltrates common consciousness in the constitution of a notion of *external history,* where:

> time is that through which we must move in order to achieve a goal or realize a moment of significance. Time is that which stands between us and our goal. In being that which alienates us from the end of our striving, time is at best dispensable, at worst, an obstruction. As a consequence, time is not constitutive of goals, and the goals can be conceived of and *represented* purely spatially. The focus in external history is on the moment of satisfaction, that is, on the achievement. External history, for Kierkegaard, can be represented artistically, hence spatially and synchronically, because within it time can be contracted without loss. Its time is in principle capable of abbreviation. Indeed, given that time is for external history a source of alienation, we cannot but wish it to be contracted. Through external history time is spatialized as a quantifiable other with which we can only reckon, or at which we can only gnash our teeth in rancor (*ibid* 50).

Time thus takes on a negative qualitative character: it is something we are always *against.* Technology stands as a remedy - though a paradoxical one - for while its promise is to control the "constant change, uncertainty, contingency, loss and irretrievability" of the 'march of time,' it can never be successful; time will always run on (*ibid* 51). Despite this paradox, we nonetheless attempt to master, or even 'annihilate' time. Time is distinct from the realm of value and meaning on this view.

In contrast to external history, 'internal history' is characterized by an embrace of immanence instead of transcendence (Simpson 1995: 51).[56] Significance and meaning is here conceived as occurring *in* and *through* time, rather than separately.

> Time is constitutive, and internal history defies spatialization, eschews representation. The passage of time brings us no closer to the thing of significance, for it is, in a sense, already in our possession (*ibid*).[57]

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[56] If we consider this point in relation to the post-metaphysical context Simpson takes as established, 'immanence' refers to the way meaning is made in human sociality (and embodied), in contrast to 'transcendence,' where meaning would be imposed from 'above,' from a divine origin.

[57] Again, in the post-metaphysical context, we do not 'move closer to' meaning (in the Platonic sense) as we approach death. Meaning inheres in living time. By this I mean we do not experience meaning in external history/time, but in internal history/time, because this is the time we live through in the now.

Husserl's analysis helps us understand that time is constitutive because it is only in time that experience is *experience*, that is, conscious. The recollection of the just-past as ever fading away, and the horizon of the 'to come' is exactly what allows for a sense of *now*. This flow, best referred to as *timing* in light of the active constitution of time in perception, is perhaps most clearly understood through the analog of a stream.[58]

A stream is never self-identical; it is perhaps more accurately called a *streaming,* for streams, while bound spatially by their banks, cannot be reduced to those banks. They do not *contain* water; they channel it, let it pass. In a similar sense, time cannot be represented spatially if we are concerned with describing the manner in which it is experienced, because it is always a flow, an active process both oriented backward and forward. In this sense, the now always carries with it the past, and is already in the future. Time then, *is not* experienced as a sequence of now points, in contrast to photographic time, which is necessarily a succession of now points. Thus, meaning can only manifest in this temporal triad, for meaning is necessarily backward *and* forward looking.[59] For Connolly, the temporal flow that contrasts linear time ('chrono-time') is 'durational time':

> We can usually endure it; we can often intervene in it; and we can periodically make this or that flow seem intelligible in retrospect. But we can't know it, master it, or draw it into a linear trajectory rolling along without twists, turns, or backflows, because of limits in our capacities as actors in the world, the involuted course of the world, and the dissonant conjunctions between them. Duration is time as becoming (2005: 111).

While Connolly focuses on *becoming*, Simpson attends to *repetition.* For Kierkegaard, *repetition* names the manner in which internal history is lived. Thus, if one asks: How do we live in accordance with internal time?, the reply will be, through *resolve.* In Simpson's words,

> repetition moves through time, where it is at home, grappling with time and exposing itself to the latter's flux; its task is to preserve in time and to maintain its singleness, identity and continuity within the flux (1995: 51).

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[58] I would also contend that this analogy can be applied to self-identity in a limited sense.

[59] From the Latin *trinitas,* I evoke the triad of temporality to capture the 'three-ness' of each aspect, because past, present, and future are actually all experienced at once in consciousness.

While I would rather suggest, in line with my discussion of *timing* above, that repetition does not so much 'move through time' as it coincides with *timing*. That is, from an experiential perspective, repetition does not occur in a linear time line but is constitutive of *timing* as time. This is a little confusing, since Simpson plays repetition off linear time. The "grappling" he refers to is only intelligible if we accept a tension between existence and the flow of time. On the external history conception, time torments us in its ever 'running out'. If we do, in fact, live time this way as postmodern subjects, it is plausible to assert that repetition is a 'grappling' with the flux of time. There are two registers at play: 1) time as experienced (*timing*); 2) time as rationally considered (linear). At the phenomenological level (1), the perception of time as a flow is what allows selfhood to come about and persist. The constitution of the self parallels consciousness itself; both require a pastness, presentness, and futurity in order to *be.* To posit an 'I,' one must have a sense of the three-ness of experience, what I refer to above as the *triad* of temporality.

At the level of experience, we do not grapple with time, for time is nothing to us in-itself. It is instead at the level of reflection that time presents itself as something to be grappled with. Repetition occurs whether we will it or not. Simpson says as much when discussing the manner in which *prereflective orientations* figure in the hermeneutic circle of the self. They are reappearances of previously, unconsciously made judgments. Their repetition occurs later and is carried forth as *prejudice* (Simpson 1995: 32). They are affect-imbued memories, charged with particular bodily sensations.

Repetition need not be willed. However, in light of the fact that we simply do not carry forth all of our past experiences, including thoughts and affective states into the future, just what experiences inform our experience in the 'now,' and are accessible in the positing of the 'I,' is unpredictable and uncontrollable. Recall that Connolly makes the same observation. Thus, when the question is posed, "What sort of a person do I want to be?" whatever we reply must be followed with a repetition of particular intentions, a particular *resolve* (Simpson

1995: 51). For example, if I, in a moment of self-reflection, decide that I want to be a compassionate person, I must *resolve* to remember this commitment through time, to repeat acts of compassion. This repetitive resolve stands against the flux of both time and identity. In order for a particular resolve to be maintained, memory, both psychic and embodied, is our tool. This consideration reintroduces my particular interest in photographic practice, for, as I discuss above, photographs stand as extensions of memory *outside* the mind, outside the flux of consciousness and identity; they are memory tools.

One of my primary concerns is the static representation of both experience and time that photographs represent as prosthetic memory devices.[60] They tend to be *devices,* not *things:*

> [A] thing has an intelligible and accessible character and calls forth skilled and active human engagement. A thing requires practice while a device invites consumption….Things constitute commanding reality, devices procure disposable reality (Borgmann 1995: 90).

A paradox inheres in photographic practice. On the one hand, it invites consumption and procures a commodified, disposable reality (especially digital photography). As devices, they - unlike moving images - posit a fragmentary existence of 'now points,' subject to disembodied scrutiny of the *self as other*. Yet photographs are also potential *things*. This is true for photographs that are imbued with deep meaning. These are not objects of disposable materiality for those who develop focal practices around them.[61] The paradoxical element of this dichotomy is that the practitioner who photographs cannot know whether their photographs will become devices or things. The future cannot be disclosed. Herein might lie a manner of understanding an element of the compulsion to photograph everything: by capturing all, we miss no opportunity to retain a *thing* for the future, which

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[60] Every photograph has the potential to supplement memory. This does not mean that photographs always do. For example, surveillance photographs that are taken under the control of a computer and never viewed by a person clearly do not stand as prosthetic *memory* devices.

[61] For Albert Borgman, focal practices "engage us in the fullness of our capacities. And they thrive in a technological setting. A focal practice, generally, is the resolute and regular dedication to a focal thing. It sponsors discipline and skill which are exercised in a unity of achievement and enjoyment, of mind, body, and the world, of myself and others, and in a social union" (1995: 219).

might become a device. Let us now focus on the significance of externalizing memory, what I will call *photo-synthesis*.

§5 The Photographic Image

I evoke the term *photo-synthesis* in an effort to gather together the way photographs of selves, particularly *our*-selves, enter, are collected into, combined with and therefore influence the hermeneutic circle of self-identity. This occurs at the level of everyday personal photography. My assertion is that these photographs do not merely represent a *delegation* of memory practices to a technological device; they do more than that.[62] They do not merely *do* memory better, more efficiently, more effectively. Rather, photographs of selves reinforce the postmodern sense of fragmentation and the ceaseless progression of 'now points.' They allow 'domestication of time' in a way that is of critical importance, for they transform remembering into a project of archiving, which entails editing, an additional framing of experience, and continued production of artifacts.

Like other technological practices, photography is *for something*. What is it for, then, and is its instrumentality subsumed or superceded by the emergence of an internal technological logic? I shall now turn to these questions.

I have established that the postmodern subject lives in terror of time, and that this terror motivates the pursuit of technological developments and practices that are supposed to domesticate/master time. This is the problem of the doubleness of time. The dialectic of internal and external time (or 'history' as Simpson discusses it) is augmented in technological society, where technology takes on an internal logic, and pursues 'progress' for its own sake. The conjunction of a post-metaphysical and postmodern situation creates a void, a pervasive meaninglessness of experience. To make matters worse, the time of scientific and technological rationality spills out into common consciousness and reduces the dialectic of temporality – the flow of temporality within the linearity

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[62] I evoke Jim Jonhson/Bruno Latour's (1988) sense of delegation here. While we might see the photograph as a distribution of skill, of memory and memorizing, I am trying to argue that photographs influence *meaning*.

of scientific time – to linear time. As a result, linear time becomes the way in which we think of temporality. But linear time is at odds with the constitutive nature of *timing*.

A point of clarification might help orient the reader with regard to my reference to the dialectic at play here. If we understand that internal time - which is constitutive of consciousness - is one register of temporal existence, while external time as linear progression is another, we can see how there is a dialectical relationship at hand in *living* time. A turn to subjectivity and internal time grounds an ethics of intersubjectivity - being for others and becoming. Habermas asserts ethics must come before morals (2003). That is, rather than beginning with a determination of how humans ought to live together, we must first establish what it is that we share in common *qua* human beings, and what this means for living with others. I take the same stance in my resolve to begin with embodiment and work outward. Temporality is a central issue because it is exactly what makes consciousness possible. Memory is also at the core of understanding what *self-identity* is, what its limits are, and what the answers to these questions might mean for living with others, *being in common.* At stake in this matter is morality itself and political organization.

What possibility is there for a pluralistic politics of becoming if otherness at its most familiar level – the self – is scorned and subjected to the technological imperative of complete rational control? I submit that the possibility of politics of becoming is unequivocally constrained if not precluded in the domestication of time at the level of selfhood as manifested in *self-making.* While on a somewhat different track, Simpson also speaks against self-making, and expresses a shared advocacy for self revealing as a function of repetition:

> '[R]epetition' connotes a steadiness, even a steadfastness. To choose repetition is to resolve to accept in earnest the challenge thrown down by time. The time of internal history is a testing time, a time through which who we are is forged and revealed. Repetition is an act of *constitutive discovery* (Simpson 1995: 58-59).

Heidegger suggests, "technology is a way of revealing;" thus, we might ask, as he does, what it reveals in its present situation (1977: 12). Heidegger responds:

> The coming to presence of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealedness of standing-reserve (*ibid* 33).

This is the core of the problem with technology in the contemporary context; it is an enframing of the world as *standing-reserve* – waiting in readiness to be used as means. In blunt terms, the earth is only valued insofar as it is a resource.

Heidegger thus problematizes revealing in technological enframing. Technology reveals in a manner that inhibits human *becoming*. This is Heidegger's main issue.[63] I want to make a similar claim about photographs, for the manner in which they *reveal* selves is best considered according to technological rationality.[64]

Returning to Simpson's insistence on revealing, we must ask how his view differs from that which I have presented from Heidegger. This question provides access to an important aspect of Simpson's argument, which is also rather illuminative of the character of self-identity: prereflective orientations. We thus return to the hermeneutic circle, where prejudice and self-understanding (prereflective orientations) condition our perception and interpretation of the world/other/different, which in turn conditions prejudice/self-understanding/prereflective orientations. This is a perpetual cycle of constantly confronting the world against our self-understandings and judgments. For Simpson, *revealing* is not a matter of uncovering, or bringing into consciousness our *essence* – the "who we really are" of popular discourse. However, revealing is not entirely unlike this sort of discovery, because it is a reflection of *prereflective orientations*; those prejudices we carry forth unrecognized in our lives through repetitions. What Simpson calls for then, is an intervention into the hermeneutic

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[63] This is, however, an anthropocentric interpretation of the problem. A non-anthropocentric interpretation would consider enframing the world as standing-reserve and the instrumentalization of all non-humans problematic for human *and* non-human becoming.

[64] The question of ethics does not resolve in human subjectivity, but extends beyond the 'human sphere' to the life-world. While this is not the occasion to develop it, in future work I will argue that *politics of becoming* must reconfigure human/non-human relations in addition to interspecies relations.

circle of becoming and a critical examination of those prejudices. Such an activity allows us to create and perpetuate *new* orientations, as I would argue, *ethical* orientations:

> [A]s our prereflective orientations are projected forward into action…they can be brought from 'behind our backs' and made objects of focal awareness, thereby enabling and furthering self-understanding and self-critique.…[T]he thematization or explication of our prereflective meanings occurs in action guided by, or in experience shaped by, those meanings. So critical experience…is at the same time recollective experience.…[R]epetition can be understood as mediated self-relation. The implicit or latent self is brought forward in action and experience, which render it explicit or manifest. The explicit 'presentation' allows self-recognition which, when appropriated, effects a 'return to self,' but a self that has been transformed by its newly appropriated self understanding. Repetition is productive of this growth, of this self-transformation (Simpson 1995: 58).

It would be a mistake to construe this *self-transformation* for the sort of self-making commonly considered egoistic and self-centred. On the contrary, this transformation, which I would also call *becoming,* is *for others*; it is an ethical practice. Rather than disclosing the future in the present, we instead aim for openness to possibility, and what Simpson calls *creative* continuations (*ibid* 57). He articulates this point well:

> [T]he productive temporality of repetition grants us new and 'deeper' ways of looking at the world and ourselves in it. Further, given that what gets recollected (and can thereby be criticized, relativized or *consciously* adopted) is action-orienting, the retensive intentionality of repetition also functions protensively as it enables forward-looking action. The conscious interception of such a repetition can generate interventions leading to renegotiated futures (*ibid* 58).

As I argue, revealing and repetition *retain* a resolve to *be* a certain way: critical and self-reflexive in the face of strangeness, otherness, and unpredictability. This retention is protensive in that it is future looking; it keeps the future open; thus open to constant renegotiation as we live in and through time.[65] In light of this construal of revealing, we can see how *becoming* is always also a form of *being.* I want to highlight this point to as to avoid being read as privileging *becoming* as

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[65] To clarify, when I say we "live in and through time" here I refer to the dialectic of internal and external time.

live and creative over *being* as static and dead. Instead, I want to understand *being* and *becoming* as dialectically connected. *Being* is never static, nor is *becoming* ever entirely creative and new; neither stasis nor utter creativity are possible or desirable. But there are pressures and imperatives in the postmodern, post-metaphysical context that pull individuals toward maintaining static self-identities against the experiential chaos of postmodernity. And as I argue above, everyday personal photography offers the promise to domesticate time toward this end in the face of the loss inherent in temporal life.

§5.1 Refining the Problematic of Photography

The key importance of photography is its ability to externalize the past as fixed and knowable. It refigures what we take to be our historical pasts. As Simpson suggests, time is the field of action; it is not to be overcome. To act outside of time is to be unconscious. This is why meaning is found in living time, not despite time. To think the human could *be* outside time is also to suggest that humans are simply in the world rather than constituted in, by, and through it. There can be no interruption of time outside the body while consciousness continues within, for consciousness is only possible when time is perceived, apprehended. A sense of before/just-past, now, and to-come is essential to any form of action. To accept the time of the other is to accept repetition rather than overcoming as a way of dealing with time. Photographs are problematic because they interrupt repetition in their lack of *difference* through time. They are indeed mendacious in the manner in which they represent the same as time passes, and suggest that repetition can be replaced with intentional making, self-making. Repetition *with difference* is how *being* is also *becoming*. It is the carrying forth of a particular resolve, which itself changes in the hermeneutic circle of becoming. One may resolve to allow becoming to structure self-reflection; acceptance of loss is absolutely required. This resolve is an acceptance of the strange, but only from the now, since what might seem strange from here will not seem so strange 'there,' in the to-come. Furthermore, past selves often end up

being strange to us. The self is always an entity that has one foot in the past, and another in the future.

The promise of technology in general, and everyday personal photography in particular, to control the 'march of time' is a promise that cannot be delivered. However, this implicit failure does not inhibit subjects from *hoping* that it will help them constitute a meaningful life amidst the messiness of postmodernity. The following assertion Simpson offers rings true for photographic practice:

> [W]hile technology promises a satisfaction which is ideally linked to autonomy, where I mean freedom from determination by blind natural and social forces, it issues in new constraints in a new set of renunciations (1995: 55).

One renunciation is *togetherness,* another is *becoming.* These are interrelated, for togetherness, or intersubjectivity, is central to becoming. Everyday personal photographs posit a whole subject in situating the body as boundary, and thus definitive of identity. Indeed, "the idea of self-monitoring and self-correcting systems…captures the direction of technological development," and it also captures the meaning of everyday personal photographic practice (*ibid*). Everyday personal photographic practice holds out the future as *telos* in one's attempt to construct the future out of an intentionally directed historicizing process of archiving. In such a practice, where the photograph is used to reinforce an autonomous, self-determining identity, the change inherent in *being* is *effaced* by atemporalized identity. Critical self-reflection would address prereflective orientations, and understand the manner in which *being becomes*, as I suggest above. In contrast, photographic self-making figures as a readily accessible strategy of controlling the self in/through time. What is lost then, is the recognition of the ethical aspects of *being in common.* One's life is subject to the neo-liberal edict: 'You can achieve anything as long as you work hard enough.' Ethics are thus about self-interest, which reduces human sociality to economic transactions. As grounds for ethics, I find self-interest a terrifying proposition. But I must leave this matter for later consideration.

CONCLUSION

The 'who' versus the 'what' is the dichotomy this thesis circles around. "Who am I?", "What am I?" – these eternal questions ground epistemes through history. As we have learned, the body image links mind and body as one. To ask "Who am I?" is to actualize a thought process that is distinctly embodied; the query is posited from a 'here,' a spatial situation. This 'here' grounds the thought as emanating from a particular affective and somatic state, a me-ness. The question is also posited *in* temporality; the temporal 'here-ness' of the query is predicated on a phenomenological process that makes past and future present to consciousness. Indeed, perception of past and future is constitutive of consciousness *per se.* Thus, temporality is prefigured in the very question, "Who am I?" The question is ambiguous at best, for it fails to capture the very flux of time that makes its articulation possible. We always already have one foot in the past and the other in the future.

Things change, everything changes; flux characterizes our cultural milieu, as it always has. Amidst this flux we grasp for stability within, an 'I' that endures. The 'who' becomes the 'what,' for the psychic self is nothing in itself, and requires external moorings upon which enduring *being* can fasten. On the Buddhist tradition, this is called *attachment,* and it portends to both psychic and material trappings.

In lieu of a 'who,' a 'what' is the contemporary site of investment. Accidental attributes, material possessions, social status, and accomplishments define the 'I,' distinguishing the self as unique, often oppositional to the Other. The Bridgend case I began with exemplifies the manner in which the 'what' confounds the good of the 'who.' Natasha Randall, 17, purportedly committed suicide for social gain. Who or what gains? She erred in taking her visage to be 'her,' to capture her existential being, or thought this to be the only valuable aspect of her self. Her photograph was indeed mendacious. The Bridgend case exemplifies the manner in which the terror of time manifests in the contemporary milieu of technological rationality and mediation. Randall, and others like her, face a problem: how to distinguish oneself in celebrity culture, to mark one's

special-ness (where value is equated with special-ness)? The photograph, currency of celebrity culture, offers enduring being while it conveys the accidental features of the subject/object, the 'what.' Yet the photograph carries a doubleness in its (in)ability to (re)present our selves back to us.

Starting from this playback effect, I use photography as a foil for a philosophical examination of the interplay between ethics and selfhood amidst technological rationality. In postmodernity, time is terrifying. It ceaselessly passes, carries us toward otherness in the to-come, and death, that which is utterly strange. We experience temporality in different ways, individually or collectively. Resistance to the strange structures experience; we seek that which is familiar to us and supports our sense of self as enduring Being. We grasp for such reinforcements by way of contradistinction: 'He is cruel,' 'She is hasty.' Who we think we are tends to be defined in negative terms, but the who is cast as a 'what': 'I am not…."

Photographs capture traces, they evoke affect and convey 'fact'. Early uses of the technology suggest more about the constraints of the technology's materiality than its appeal for capturing one sort of object over another. The portability of cameras today probably says more about what we want from them. We want them to be unobtrusive, while highly portable into every context; their absent-presence is often preferable so as to minimize posing, and discomfort – toward *reality* of representation. Photography is about domesticating time, finitude, and loss – both material and memorial. In addition, it allows the carrying forth of past selves for the sake of remembering and being remembered. These are *social values* bound up with distinctions, both material and immaterial, of class race, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, ethnicity and faith. To have been beautiful, and to *prove* it in a photograph is to reconfigure present and future evaluations of oneself by others. To capture images of physical feats of athleticism is to prophesize that such images will be valuable later, once one can no longer display what they portray.

We are concerned with our future selves for many reasons: we think, in a pragmatic sense, that our identity persists as the same (or close enough to it)

through time; or we acknowledge that we are not self-identical through time, but want to 'keep our options open' by photographing our lives and leaving the future to unfold as it will. It is not enough to *be* in the present, we feel an imperative to be more. Photography stands as ready aid.

I argue photography is *about* domesticating time, but surely it is more than that. I need not list the myriad ways in which photographs serve struggles for social justice in their ability to *affectively* motivate political action. This can be seen as a rather problematic situation. On the one hand, photographs seem essential to enabling social struggle in a variety of ways. On the other hand, the logic of photographic practice is implicated in these struggles at the ideological level. This is clearly a tension that cannot be resolved through an injunction to cease photographic practice and destroy all extant photographs; this is no solution. But at the very least, I hope to have offered grounds for thinking or rethinking our own relationships with the practice/s of photography.

I also hope to have provided the grounds for a personal critical analysis of the role prosthetic technologies like photography play in our ethical lives. I have attempted to elucidate a shift from the use of remembering as a strategy of "possessive individualism" – resistance against the *strange* and *other* in experience of both my/subjective time and historical time – to the appropriation of technologies that constitute extensions of the self and function to bolster opposition to strangeness and otherness, and indeed undermine the potential for a collective appropriation of ethical time. While Bernet's account of the experience of time is a useful analytic framework, his suggestion that we are always transitioning between *natural time* and *ethical time* does not capture the impact of prostheses on our experience of time. I suggest we should see resistance to the urge to document our lives as a condition of possibility for the experience of time as *ethical time,* which is a necessary condition for a collective shift to *ethical time.* If we are to answer the appeal of Others, to accept the strangeness that is so integral to living experience, we must divest ourselves of notions of unified identity and abhorrence of disintegration. It is only in accepting these as constitutive of our being that we can experience time as, and hope for a collective

transition to, *ethical time*. In addition, living time for the other, opening oneself to that which cannot be controlled by the will, makes true creativity possible. Creative thinking and action draw from the wellspring of unpredictability, fragmentation, and uncertainty. To exert conscious control over the process of remembering and forgetting is to disclose in the present what is both significant and salient for the future. Experience is always already about remembering and forgetting; thus, manipulating memory in consciousness is tantamount to manipulating experience itself, which is ethically precarious.

Interdependence is central to experience. Both who and what we are *qua* human beings is predicated on co-dependent arising. Human beings are co-dependent on others, human and otherwise. The very air we breathe is produced through the 'labour' of organisms that carry out photosynthesis. Their good is bound up with and connected to ours. Yet, as a species, we don't tend to act in accordance with this insight. Heidegger's *enframing* illustrates how all of nature is cast as standing reserve; my issue with *enframing* diverges from Heidegger's, for his concerns remain human-centred. Borgmann discusses why liberalism and Marxism are both complicit in *enframing*, just as Heidegger does. But enframing is not a problem simply because it is bad for humans. It is bad for all life, all beings. Liberalism and Marxism both rest on moral foundations that reject unjustified domination. *Enframing* is just this, which is why it is wrong at root. It glosses the reality that we are organisms who interact with ecosystems as others do - to a greater degree – but just as co-dependent as every other species. All organisms exist *relationally* with others rather than participating in a zero-sum game. As Borgmann points out, the project of modern science is to break these bonds, to establish man as master of his destiny, master of nature. This is a difficult position to uphold, as ecology – especially deep ecology – has come to reveal that nature is a chaotic rather than a linear causal system. Many maintain the dream (or nightmare) of modeling nature to the point of utter predictability, and in line with that, to create a complete ontology of the world. One of the ways photography relates to this project is in its cataloguing status, its ability to frame

and make static, scrutinize, objectify, commodify things as individual, discreet, bounded, singular.

As Buddhist scholars argue, the allure of domination emanates from selfness. The 'I' – distinct, discreet, autonomous – finds its definition in its not-ness, its difference from the Other. As the 'I' is difficult to maintain in its purity, the Other needs to be continuously perceived in negative terms. Domination finds justification through this process of projection. Domination is thus what is at stake here, for everyday personal photography is complicit in the perpetuation of self-identity through time, of conscious self-making via practices of exclusion/elimination. Domination requires the fixing of terms, and the photograph's forte is the durable fixing of time and space. If we oppose domination in all its forms, we must exercise mindfulness in those practices that support selfness. Personal everyday photography is such a practice. Thus, living time for the Other, human and non-human alike might just mean we ought to act on our ambivalences about photography, and leave remembering open to the flux of possibility.

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