Nostalgia and the Displacement of Identity:
A Time-Based Analysis of the Unheimlichkeit of Nostalgia.

by

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ABSTRACT

Nostalgia and the Displacement of Identity: A Time-Based Analysis of the Unheimlichkeit of Nostalgia.

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The aim of this dissertation is to offer grounds for a revaluation of nostalgia. The thesis that I put forth and defend is that nostalgia, properly understood, is endemic to what it means to be a sovereign, self-responsible individual. In the experience of nostalgia we apprehend the temporal essence of our being; not merely of our subjective, empirical being, but of the being that appertains to us by virtue of being a sovereign individual that we are and that exposes us to the possibility of nostalgia. Put differently: in genuine nostalgia, i.e., where nostalgia is experienced by the subject who is capable of experiencing nostalgia, this subject becomes aware of her temporal essence. The notion of nostalgia's essential Unheimlichkeit serves as the guiding thread of the exploration of the topography of nostalgia's place in the history of ideas. I show that we fail to do justice to the ontological complexity of nostalgia if we reduce nostalgia as an experience and as a concept to the (marginal) psychological phenomenon of 'nostalgia proper'. By revealing the complex ontology that makes nostalgia possible, my dissertation seeks to prepare the ground for future engagements with nostalgia that will no longer be confined by the discourse of nostalgia proper, but will rather reckon that the image of such a "proper" place of nostalgia in the history of ideas is incompatible with the diffuse situatedness of nostalgia in the history of ideas.
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**Introduction**

In the preface to the first volume of *The Accursed Share* Georges Bataille makes a claim, a seemingly innocuous claim, that for reasons that will become apparent, can be considered a natural starting point for this dissertation. He writes, “[a work is] nothing if it is not situated, if criticism has not determined the place that belongs to it in the movement of ideas.” On the surface, the demand that a work, any work, and thus also a work on nostalgia, should be determined by its place in the movement of ideas is not too interesting a claim. After all, it seems that it is merely a general rule of scholarly decorum that one situate one's discourse within familiar and recognizable territory.

At the same time, however, this demand for such a place of belonging is linked to nostalgia not just externally, i.e., as a matter scholarly propriety, but also has a more intimate relation to the phenomenon of nostalgia itself. The *general* demand that a work on anything clearly identify its place in the history of ideas has a more *specific* significance for a work on nostalgia because it points to the very heart of the thing that nostalgia is about: the desire for the location that is one's ownmost place, along with a degree of normativity to this desire and its satisfaction.

To demand that a work on nostalgia be determined by the place to which it belongs in the history of ideas expresses both a *desire* for such a place and the expectation that this desire can be satisfied. At the same time, this claim is haunted by a latent fear: that if nostalgia itself cannot be shown to have such a place, then a work dealing with nostalgia is, in a sense, *nothing*, as if the inachievability of such a proprietary place would in a sense be lethal for a work on nostalgia.

As the study of the phenomenon of nostalgia has consistently revealed, the place of one's belonging is almost always an *imaginary* place. It exists only apparently somewhere in an objectively determinable location; yet in reality it *is* only in and for the indeterminate mind of the nostalgic subject. This is an insight that no study of nostalgia, nor any reflection on the “proper place of the study” of

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1 Bataille 10.
nostalgia “in the movement of ideas,” can ignore without becoming disingenuous.

The place of the idea of 'nostalgia', or rather the place of origin of the concept of nostalgia, i.e., nostalgia's home in the history of ideas is easily identified. Since it is a rather rare phenomenon that one is able to date the beginning of a discourse with such precision as is the case for the discourse of “nostalgia,” we will begin our analysis of nostalgia with a brief reconstruction of this beginning:

The historical beginning of the discourse of nostalgia in recorded Western ideas

In 1688 the young medical student Johannes Hofer submits his Dissertatio medica de nostalgia, oder Heimwehe to the medical faculty of the University of Basel. It is Hofer's “preliminary dissertation,” only 16 pages in length. It is meant as a “trial run that offered the opportunity to familiarize oneself with the customs of academic writing.”2 As such, the text is a kind of “exchangeable of almost utmost insignificance.”3 Hofer's full dissertation De hydrope uteri would follow a year later in 1689. His adviser was Jean-Jacques Harder.

The term “nostalgia” is a medical neologism that Latinizes the Greek words “nostos” (return to the native land) and “algos” (suffering, grief) in the compound noun “nostalgia.” Hofer defines nostalgia as “the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to one's native land.”4 Hofer himself points out that there already exists a term in the vernacular language of the Helvetians that denotes “the grief for the lost charm of the Native Land.”5 This term was “Heimweh,” which, as Simon Bunke notes, was first recorded about a century before Hofer.6 And Rosen points out that in the 17th century we find the term “mal de corazón” as the name for an illness that was observed among Spanish

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2 Bolzinger 26. [“galop d'essai qui donne l'occasion de se familiariser avec les us et coutumes de la rédaction universitaire.”]
3 Bunke 28. [“austauschbarer Prüfungstext von fast maximaler Bedeutungslosigkeit”]
5 Hofer 380. Hofer also mentions the French equivalent of the “Swiss-German” Heimweh, which is la Maladie du Pays.
6 See Bunke 35.
soldiers who had been dispatched to Flanders during the Thirty Years War and whose symptoms bear a
certain resemblance to the symptoms of “Heimweh.”

Nevertheless Hofer was without doubt the first
to give a “specific account of the psychological and physiological features.”

Hofer himself viewed his original contribution as the coinage of a “particular name in medicine, because from no doctor thus far
had I learned that it was observed properly or explained carefully.”

How does Hofer characterize this new disease? First off it appears that nostalgia occurs primarily in “young people and adolescents sent
to foreign regions.” These predominantly young men “do not know to accustom themselves to the
manners of living [in foreign lands] nor to forget their mother's milk.”

Unable to adapt to the new environment and “allured only by the memory of the sweet fatherland ... they mediate on the return to their homeland.”

If this return does not happen swiftly “little by little, they fall into this disease [of nostalgia.]”

Hofer goes onto to describe a number of symptoms indicative of the immanence of
nostalgia, of which the mind's constant attention on the “return on the Fatherland” which is thereby
“continually represented.”

While Hofer suggests that the distraction of the patient's imagination from
“that persistent idea” may provide temporary alleviation, the disease is likely to be “incurable and fatal” if the desire for the return is not satisfied. Hofer thus states that nostalgia “admits no remedy other than a return to the homeland.”

Hofer concludes his dissertation with the observation that “up to this time it has been proved by many examples that all those thus sent away had become convalescent either in the journey itself or immediately after the return to the native land.”

7 Cf. Rosen 341.
8 Rosen 341.
9 Hofer 380.
10 Hofer 383.
11 Hofer 383.
12 Hofer 383.
13 Hofer 383.
14 Hofer 387.
15 Hofer 387.
16 Hofer 389.
17 Hofer 388.
18 Hofer 382.
19 Hofer 390.
the curious anecdote of a person whose nostalgia appeared to have been cured by the mere prospect of returning home. As we shall see later, this anecdote of Hofer's dissertation contains more truth about nostalgia than its marginal position in Hofer's work would suggest.

In 1710 Hofer's dissertation is republished as part of a compilation of theses of the University of Basel. This compilation was edited by Hofer's former mentor and one of the people to whom Hofer had dedicated his dissertation: Theodore Zwinger, professor of philosophy of nature (who at the time of the re-publication held the chair of anatomy, the position formerly held by Harder). Hofer's dissertation of 1688 is not merely republished by Zwinger but “revised, amended, [auxit]” by the same. The new text has grown more than 50% in length: from the original 16 to now 25 pages, and includes Zwinger's own observations on the disease. Most significantly though, it carries a new title: *Dissertatio medica tertia de pothopatridalgia vom Heim-Wehe.*

In 1745 Albert Haller republishes Hofer's original dissertation but without Zwinger's additions, but he also amends the title: *De nostalgia, vulgo Heimwehe oder Heimsehnsucht.* This piece of editorial history turns out to be significant for us. Even though Hofer is widely recognized to be the founder of the discourse, the founding document of this discourse was radically altered by its editors. Between the original publication of Hofer's dissertation in 1688 and its re-release in 1745 we can witness several key lexico-semantic shifts: Hofer himself changed the emphasis on the home (*Heim*) when he medicalized “*Heimweh*” into “nostalgia,” stressing the importance of the “return” (*nostos*). When “nostalgia” became “*pothopatridalgia*” the notion of a return, which was so crucial to Hofer, had completely disappeared in favour of the 'love for the homeland'. Lastly, when the original 'nostalgia' was reinstated in 1745, a novel term was introduced: *'Heimsehnsucht'* which appears to be equivalent with *'Heimweh'* but, at least semantically substitutes the longing [*Sehnsucht*] for the home for the mental pain [*Weh*] caused by one's (insurmountable)

20 Literally: “Medical dissertation on the grief over the yearning for the fatherland, or homesickness.”
21 Literally: “Of nostalgia, commonly known as homesickness or yearning for the home.”
22 Zwinger's neologism “*pothopatridalgia*” was derived from the Greek words “*pothos*” (yearning, desire), “*patris*” (fatherland), “*algos*” (suffering, grief).
separation from the home. Although Hofer himself conceded some latitude in the naming, these variations in nomenclature are neither trivial nor benign. They constitute significant, one could even say, fateful terminological decisions that would shape the direction of an entire discourse.

For Hofer and many of his contemporaries the disease of nostalgia appeared to be exclusive prerogative of the Swiss. Even though this idea eventually came to be rejected in the face of growing scientific evidence that showed the occurrence of nostalgia among other nations, it is important to note that “nostalgia” is a “product of modern medicine” and a discursive product of the late 17th century Europe. Bunke argues that even though surely people felt a loving longing for their home before the 17th century, technically they did not and could not suffer from “nostalgia.” This point is generalized by Jean Starobinski in "The Idea of Nostalgia" (1966), “For the critic, for the historian, an emotion exists only beyond the point at which it attains a linguistic status.” Yet he argues that “nothing prevents us from applying the knowledge which we have at our disposal today to an exploration of the past, to an analysis of the emotions of man of another age. We have the right to speak of the sadism of Nero ... Only we must not forget that we word sadism ... forms part of our modern intellectual equipment.”

This extension of nostalgia was certainly facilitated by the terminological variations that followed Hofer's original coinage. Joseph Zangerl, whose Das Heimweh (1821/1840) constituted one of the most significant attempts to synthesize the various accounts and analyses of nostalgia in the first half of the 19th century, for instance argued: “Since the love for the homeland is ingrained in all humans ... it would appear that nostalgia is as old as the human race itself, and thus occurred in all ages and among all nations.”

23 He writes, “If nosomanias or the name philopatridomania is more pleasing to anyone, in truth denoting a spirit pertubed against holding fast to their native land from any cause whatsoever (denoting) return, it will be entirely approved by me.” (381)
24 Bunke 25.
25 Starobinski 81. “No facet of an emotion can be traced before it is named, before it is designated and expressed. It is not, then, the emotion itself which comes before us; only that part which has passed into a given form of expression can be of interest to the historian.”
26 Starobinski 82.
27 Cited in Bunke 205. [“Allein da allen Menschen Heimathliebe eingepflanzt ist ... so dürfte die Nostalgie wohl so alt als...”]
known mercenaries, literary precursors: Homer's *Odyssey*, Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex ponto*, Vergil's *Aeneid*. Even though from a strictly medical standpoint these literary inclusions must have appeared suspicious, they nevertheless played an important role in solidifying the acceptance of the “disease” of nostalgia. As Bunke writes, “Since the discourse on nostalgia grounds itself neither on older authorities nor on established discourses like the discourse of melancholy or of erotomania, literary texts prove to be an important strategy of legitimation. Literary texts, or better: short literary quotations are intended to produce discursive evidence and are at the same time intended to suggest a long tradition dating back to antiquity.” Despite the anachronism of such attributions from the point of view of someone like Starobinski it cannot be denied that these attempts to diagnose “nostalgia” prior to the year 1688 (for example in Homer's *Odyssey*) are part of the history of the discourse of nostalgia itself. This history begins with Hofer's coinage, which means that the extension of nostalgia into the past could only take its place in the history of nostalgia after Hofer. Discourses always produce the phenomena that they purport to (merely) describe. Insofar as discourse and experience condition and shape each other, the inclusion of precursors in the discourse has thus produced its own *ex post* justification.

The ambiguities that we encounter in the experience of nostalgia itself can at least in part be traced back to ambiguous developments in the discursive practices. One of the major ambiguities that we encounter in this thesis pertains to the seemingly innocent question: *What exactly is the primary object of nostalgia?* If we define nostalgia as *Sehnsucht* [yearning], then the object is either the native land, the homeland, or, later on, a former period in the nostalgic's life. If, on the other hand, we focus

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28 This backward historical extension is even more important in the case of nostalgia if we keep in mind that Homer's *Odysseus* has become a kind of archetype of the nostalgic individual to whom the study of nostalgia owes at least as much as it is indebted to the narrator of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

29 Bunke 198. [“Da sich also der Heimweh-Diskurs weder auf ältere Autoritäten noch auf etablierte Diskurse wie die Melancholie oder Erotomanie stützt, erweist sich die Literatur als wichtigste Legitimationsstrategie. Literarische Texte, oder besser: kurze Literaturzitate sollen diskursive Evidenz produzieren und zugleich lange Traditionslinien bis in die Antike zurück suggerieren.”]

30 Cf. Bunke 403.
on the pain of the nostalgic, then the object would rather appear to be the pain-causing separation from the object of the longing or the impossibility of a return to this object, i.e., of a true abatement of the pain. André Bolzinger suggests that some of the ambiguity of the discourse on nostalgia derives precisely from its early conceptual and nominal bifurcation into “nostalgia” and “pothopatridalgia”: the impossibility of a return versus the separation from the beloved native land. According to the former, the impossibility of a return is essential to the emergence of nostalgia. The separation or distance from the homeland alone is not sufficient.\footnote{Bolzinger draws a parallel to the experience of exile: “No one is truly in exile if he has not come up against this insurmountable obstacle … The exile is unhappy, not because of the distance that separates him from his country, but because of the primordial reason that it is forbidden or impossible for to return to it.” [“Nul n'est vraiment en exil s'il n'a pas buté sur cet empêchement insurmontable … L'exilé est malheureux, non pas à cause des distances qui le séparent de son pays, mais pour cette raison primordiale qu'il lui est enterdit ou impossible d'y rentrer.”] (263)} This linguistic and conceptual accentuation shifts nostalgia into the vicinity of the experience of loss and mourning rather than \textit{Sehnsucht}, i.e., yearning for. This is but one example of an ambiguity that we find in the experience of nostalgia. Further ambiguities will be examined much more substantially later in this thesis. As this exploration of nostalgia will show, 'ambiguity' is more than a merely accidental feature of the term "nostalgia" (as Bolzinger has it): it denotes a central, philosophically rich quality of nostalgia itself.

**Subsequent early philosophical engagements with the phenomenon of nostalgia**

We thus see that nostalgia was not born as strictly a philosophical problem but rather as one of military health. It is thus not surprising that early philosophical engagements with nostalgia are neither extensive nor conceptually complex. The earliest known engagement with nostalgia by a philosopher is that of the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau's contribution is important for our purposes not only because he was the first philosopher to contribute to the discourse on nostalgia but also because he shifts the phenomenon into a psychological register. Although Rousseau does not
explicitly mention the word “nostalgia,” the fact that he included the famous 'ranz des vaches' in his Dictionary of Music (1767), both as a separate article and in a paragraph of the general entry on “Music,” suggests that he was familiar with the discourse on nostalgia. As Bunke explains, the significance of the 'ranz des vaches', which nowadays might appear like an exotic footnote to the debates about nostalgia, cannot be underestimated: like Proust's later madeleine, it is an emblem of the affliction. In order to appreciate Rousseau's contribution to the discourse on nostalgia it is important to remember that the earliest accounts of nostalgia had to explain the seemingly exclusive occurrence of nostalgia among the Swiss. Is the Swiss mind such that it cannot tolerate the foreign? Or is it something about the physiology of the Swiss?

In his 1710 “amended” edition of Hofer's dissertation, Theodor Zwinger was the first to draw a direct connection between the ranz de(s) vaches or Küh-Reyen and nostalgia: Swiss mercenaries who heard the ranz des vaches, which evoked the images of the beloved homeland, abroad immediately contracted the fateful disease. The ranz des vaches gained its notorious reputation due to its widely-acknowledged nostalgia-inducing power. Writes Rousseau, “[it] was forbidden to be play'd in their troops under pain of death, because it made them burst burst [sic] into tears, desert, or die, whoever heard it so great as desire did it excite in them of returning to their country.”

This is not a semantic point about the possibility of “returning” but rather has to do with the observation that the ranz des vaches, this literally 'totsichere' [dead certain] trigger of nostalgia, had no comparable effect when played to those who did not know the tune. This led Rousseau (1767) to conclude that the effects

32 Rousseau's contribution, if we can even speak of such a 'contribution', is small, and we must guard ourselves against anachronistically putting ideas into Rousseau's mouth that he did not have or, even worse, could not have had.
33 As Bolzinger points out, in the 18th century there were hardly any scientific treatises on nostalgia that failed to mention the ranz des vaches. (See Bolzinger 45.)
34 See Bunke 256.
35 Rousseau 266.
36 In a way Rousseau paves the way for Kant's (1798) observation that the homeland that the nostalgic seeks is their homeland, understood not as a geographic entity but as it matters to the person who longs for it in its highly personal and intimate particularity.
“come alone from custom, reflections, and a thousand circumstances.” The effectiveness of the *ranz des vaches* is the result of a habituation. The music is not feared for its musical qualities but because it acts as a “memorative sign.” The music reminds the person who is familiar with this music of that which through habituation has come to be associated with the familiar tune. The notes of the *ranz des vaches* bring back “the idea of their country, their former pleasure, their youth, and all their joys of life, [and] excite in them a bitter sorrow for the loss of them.” The notion of 'habituation' indicates that nostalgia is to be blamed not on a natural characteristic, one that is perhaps exclusive to the Swiss soul or geography, but rather the outcome of a process of enculturation. Unlike many of his contemporaries, for Rousseau nostalgia is a psychological disorder. Not only does Rousseau de-nationalize nostalgia, he de-naturalizes it. An integral aspect of this de-naturalization is the psychological or mental notion of 'loss.' The homeland is not merely *not there*, one is *separated* from it. Separation is a relational experience and requires an object: the homeland, an awareness of the homeland, and a 'retention' of the homeland whilst one is away from it. The nostalgic is then pained by that retentive memory. They are pained by their memory as the mental faculty that stores images, a memory that is at the same time *of* the past without however representing the past as such. The nostalgic is away from the homeland. But Rousseau does not say that the nostalgic sorrows over the separation from the joys of the homeland but over their “loss.” Loss is more than absence, and more than separation. Is there a loss in the separation? Yes, if the separation is irreversible; if the separation is permanent. Loss not only implies a prior having of, and a retention of the memory of this prior having, but it entails a “foreknowledge” of the irreversibility of the loss. The distant homeland is the one from which one is separated. The homeland from which one is separated *and* to which one cannot return is lost. The category of impossibility occurs as *mental*. The truth of an impossible return is furnished by the mind. In Rousseau's view,

37 Rousseau 266.
38 Rousseau 266.
39 Rousseau 266.
nostalgia is not strictly caused by the separation, by the absence of essential “nutrients,” by one's “deracination,” – all of which have to be understood both in a literal and a figurative sense – but by the imagined lack of the prospect of reversing this situation. This proves that nostalgia cannot be explained strictly mechanistically, as Hofer had earlier. However, that one “cannot” return has nothing to do with what I will call “the pastness of the past”: it has to do with the particular professional situation, in itself entirely contingent, that is imagined to obstruct the physical return.

Even though Immanuel Kant's (1798) reflections on nostalgia comprise but one short paragraph in the *Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht*, this paragraph contains a crucial deviation from much of the orthodox conception of nostalgia to that point. Kant himself does not use Hofer's neologism “nostalgia” but rather refers to the “homesickness” [*Heimweh*] of the Swiss. As Edward Casey points out, Kant apparently follows Rousseau's idea that homesickness is caused by a “troubled imagination.”

By “imagination” Kant understands the faculty of the intuition of objects even without their presence. If we take power of imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] in the dual sense of the faculty of presentification of that which is past and that which is to come [*Vermögen der Vergegenwärtigung des Vergangenen und Künftigen*], then Casey's claim is correct. The nostalgic's “trouble” is as ambivalent as the faculty of the imagination itself: One the one hand the nostalgic is tormented by the images of the homeland that he recalls. Heimweh is an “effect” [*Wirkung*] of a longing for the native land that is caused by the recalling [*Zurückrufung*] of the “images” [*Bilder*] of the “carefreeness and neighbourly company” [*Sorgenfreiheit und nachbarlichen Gesellschaft*] that they have experienced in their youth.

The youth is not the distant youth but rather the youth of the person who has aged through the

40 We find another brief note on the homesickness of the Swiss in §43 of Kant's *Physische Geographie* (1802) (volume IX of the *Akademieausgabe*).
41 Casey “Nostalgia” 367.
42 Kant §28. (All citations refer to the *Akademie Ausgabe* of Kant's writings; all translations mine.)
43 Kant §34.
44 Kant §32.
experience of war. On the other hand, in a prospective manner the nostalgic imagines (concretely, sensually) the return to the homeland, that “which is to come.”

In the paragraph immediately preceding the one on homesickness Kant discusses what he sees as the deceptive power that inheres in the imagination: “that which he only has in his mind he believes to see and feel outside himself.” The “trouble” of the imagination is not that it imagines a homeland that is not there. The problem lies in the imagination of the moment of returning to this place. In the nostalgic's imagination, the moment of return will connect seamlessly with the life that is recalled in the form of images of the past. The Täuschung [deception] of the imagination will be revealed in the Ent-täuschung [disappointment] of the expectation of the eventual continuation of the life that the nostalgic left behind when they formerly departed from the homeland. The nostalgic not only remembers how nice this life was. The nostalgic's wish to in the future go back to the homeland is only plausible if she can assume that this same life could be recuperated upon the return. In other words, the nostalgic also imagines how nice it would be to be back, and to live her old life again. To paraphrase Nietzsche, to the nostalgic that which was possible once will surely be possible again. The “trouble” of the deceiving imagination is not that it imagines a homeland that is “better” than the actual one, i.e., one that is truly a figment of the imagination. It is rather the time frame of life that will ensue upon the return that is falsely imagined. Although Kant's assessment of nostalgia remains essentially wed to a psychological framework, within this framework Kant shifts the focus to the nature of the time of the imaginings, which is crucial for our own account of nostalgia.

Kant departs from Hofer the physician on at least two points: First, based on the testimony of an “experienced general” Kant rejects Hofer's claim that homesickness only affects the Swiss. We already saw in Rousseau's treatment of nostalgia that this “de-nationalization” of nostalgia is not an

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45 Kant §32.
46 See Nietzsche Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben 22.
47 See Bolzinger 215.
48 Cf. Kant §32.
insignificant marginalia. 2) In contrast to Hofer, who argued (based on the reports that he had studied) that only the return to the native soil would fully remedy the afflicted soul, Kant was pessimistic about Hofer's “cure.” Kant does concede that the return home can cure the nostalgia of the afflicted person, but this cure does not lie in the satisfaction of the nostalgic's desire but rather in the disappointment of the same. Upon the return home, the returnees realizes that their earlier expectation had been very much mistaken and, and this is crucial, “thus also find themselves healed [of their homesickness].”

For Kant, the “real cure” of the homesick individual would be twofold: to the individual herself (“in der Meinung”) the native soil turns out to have changed so much (“dort alles sehr geändert habe”); but in reality (“in der Tat aber”) the expectation to find the cherished bliss that were experienced during youth is disappointed because the individual is unable to recover the real object of their longing: her youth (“weil sie ihre Jugend dort nicht wiederum hinbringen können”). The nostalgic is cured of one illusion yet she remains even in this “cure” caught up in another: she remains oblivious to the fact that the true object of her longing was not a place but rather a period of her life (and thus, in principle, unrecoverable).

While Casey accords little to no significance to Kant's disagreement with Hofer, one must unequivocally accede that “the sedentary philosopher who never left Königsberg” shook the foundations of the understanding of nostalgia that prevailed at his time. With these remarks, Kant not only offers a new analysis of what makes for the particular charm of the homeland – namely its worryfreeness and the neighbourly sociability, thereby indirectly lending his support to Rousseau's anti-materialistic, anti-mechanistic etiology – but, more importantly, he argues that, the nostalgic's own opinion notwithstanding, the true object of nostalgia is temporal rather than spatial. What the nostalgic truly desires is a particular age (and the lifestyle that is connected with this age), an age that is spatially

49 Kant §32. [“[S]ich in ihrer Erwartung sehr getäuscht und so auch geheilt finden.”]
50 “It does not matter that Kant disagrees with Hofer regarding the cure for nostalgia” (Casey “Nostalgia” 367).
51 Bolzinger 215.
associated with the homeland where it took place. That is Kant's explicit contribution and the one that I will pursue here.

The temporalization of nostalgia does not merely change the “language” in which the phenomenon is couched. It also has a deep impact on the prospect of a remedy, which, as it were, was the (empirical) starting point of Kant's reconceptualization of nostalgia: Whereas as long as nostalgia was understood in spatial terms the remedy – a return to the homeland – seems obvious and unproblematic, once nostalgia becomes a temporal affliction, its object and remedy become inescapably unobtainable. The age that the nostalgic desires to return to insofar as it is a past age is “forever beyond reach.” Thus Kant's contribution to the discourse of nostalgia is sceptical: “there is no returning.”

We began our analysis of nostalgia with this brief sketch of the historical origins of the discourse of nostalgia because this historical perspective reminds us that nostalgia was from its lexicographic conception in 1688 defined as an abnormality, or even more precisely, as a pathology. The study of nostalgia along these conventionally accepted boundaries demarcates the place of nostalgia in the history of Western ideas with the help of an often unstated set of assumptions about the propriety of places, desire, identities, time, memory, etc. In addition, the discourse on nostalgia is from its very inception wedded to the promise and desire to produce a cure for what is perceived to be if not a lethal affliction then at least an undesirable condition. In a word, historically the nostalgic individual has for the longest time been considered to be an abnormal individual whose condition was such that it required a curative treatment from those who could consider themselves to be free of nostalgia.

The overall aim of this dissertation is to advance these grounds for the revaluation of nostalgia.

To "revaluate" nostalgia does not mean to provide a laudatory argument in favour of an experience that

52 Starobinski 94.
53 Starobinski 95.
even today is still largely treated with suspicion or derision, for example in the form of an argument to the conclusion that nostalgia is "good" (or at least "benign") or "desirable." If our revaluation of nostalgia is to be intellectually sound, we cannot content ourselves with the attempt to purge nostalgia "of its associations with sentimentalism and with a spurious idealization (i.e., reification!) of the past."\(^{54}\) It rather needs to engage in the laborious process of laying bare the hidden ideological roots of the concept of nostalgia. Although it is fair to say that over the course of the 20th century nostalgia has lost much of its negative connotation, this is not due to a deeper understanding of nostalgia but rather due to a "trivialization" of nostalgia. However, if the argument that we seek to present here is convincing, then it will show that there is nothing trivial about nostalgia at all.

The thesis that I will put forth and defend here is that nostalgia is misunderstood if it is treated as a marginal psychological phenomenon of limited philosophical interest. In my dissertation I show that we do not do justice to the full ontological complexity of nostalgia if we reduce nostalgia as an experience and as a concept to the psychological phenomenon of 'nostalgia proper'. Instead I argue that nostalgia, properly understood, is endemic to what it means to be a sovereign, self-responsible individual. The revaluation that we are offering here is meant to provide some much needed argumentative counter-weight to a discourse that is overwhelmingly hostile toward nostalgia. I believe that this hostility is at least in part due to a superficial understanding of what is involved in nostalgia. Our argument will move between two equally important argumentative poles: On the one hand, we will show that nostalgia's place in the history of ideas is not where we think it is. To justify this claim, we need, on the other hand, to gain a fuller understanding of what nostalgia is. In order to justify our claim about the non-marginality of nostalgia, it will be required to gain a deeper understanding of what is involved in nostalgia. Our account of nostalgia essence will itself be a multi-layered one. This is due to the fact that nostalgia itself is not a simple thing: "Nostalgia" denotes, on the one hand, a condition and

\(^{54}\) Ankersmit 206.
awareness of displacement or dislocation from a desired "place." As Frank Ankersmit puts it, "The subject of nostalgic experience is painfully aware of being where and when she does not want to be." As such, nostalgia has to do with a kind of Unheimlichkeit, i.e., an uncanny non-coincidence of me with myself, of where I am and where I desire to be. On the other hand, "nostalgia" denotes the desire for a return to the "place" from which one finds oneself separated and to which one longs to return. The question of the essence of nostalgia will thus serve us as the guiding thread for our exploration of the topography of nostalgia's place in the history of ideas.

Our exploration of the topography of "nostalgia" will take us to five different sites that nostalgia can be said to "haunt." In Chapter 1 we will engage with three philosophical engagements with nostalgia: those of Edward S. Casey, James W. Hart, and Vladimir Jankélévitch, to whose thoughtful work on nostalgia the author of this dissertation is very indebted. Some of the insights from this engagement (e.g., the insight into the "productive" character of nostalgia) will accompany us throughout the entire dissertation, so that the discussion of the ideas of Casey, Hart, and Jankélévitch will serve an important propaedeutic purpose for our account of nostalgia as a whole. Much of our discussion in Chapter 1 will focus on the specific temporal experience that figures centrally in nostalgia.

In the second chapter we will examine a concept that can plausibly be considered to constitute the conceptual backbone of "nostalgia": namely that of 'having a past'. To have a past means to inhabit a familiar world. To the extent that this world is an intersubjective world, being at home in this world requires that I make myself at home in this world as a person, i.e., as a being with a determinate, stable, recognizable identity. The main claim that I defend in second chapter is that the existence of a personal history (i.e., of a past that is mine) is not a timeless psychological given, but that it is rather an epiphenomenon of a social practice by which we attribute actions to individual agents. To have a

55 Ankersmit 199.
personal past means to be a centre of a practice of proprietary attribution and to have a distinct identity by virtue of the history of one's activity in the inter-personal world. The insight into the interdependence of personhood and (agentic) responsibility and the historical contingency of this practice as an identity-conferring practice has important implications both for our understanding of the nostalgia's place in the history of ideas and of the essence of nostalgia. We will examine these implications in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively.

In Chapter 3 we will show that that the mineness of "my past" that we examined in Chapter 2 holds the key to understanding the specific temporality of the object of nostalgia. To do this we will connect our insight into the non-experiential character of the concept of the personal (historical) past that we gained in Chapter 2 with our analysis of the specific experience of time that the nostalgic individual undergoes. We will argue that nostalgia presupposes a specific conception of the human subject: namely that of the modern sovereign individual. We will show what is involved in this conception and why it is implied in the specific conception of time that lies at the heart of the experience of nostalgia. In doing this, we will not only clarify the metaphysical truth of the claim that one can only be nostalgic for something “in one's (own) past” but also justify the thesis that the idea of nostalgia is a distinctly modern phenomenon.

In Chapter 4 we will connect our analysis of the concept of a personal past with the experience of nostalgia. We will advance the thesis, grounded in a Kierkegaardian reading of Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, that nostalgia is at bottom a symptom of an inauthentic historical existence. By “inauthentic existence” we mean a distinct manner in which an individual inhabits her history, namely the manner that involves the failure to *actively* fuse one's past, present and future. This failure is tantamount to a failed "appropriation" of one's history. By showing that the experience of nostalgia is directly related to a specific kind of innerworldly comportment of the subject, we will argue that the experience of nostalgia is something that the individual herself can either bring about or prevent from happening.
depending on her concrete engagement with her history. The plausibility of this conclusion will be pivotal for our overall revaluation of nostalgia in the personal domain and the domain of thought.

The concept of a “narrative account” lies at the centre of the fifth and final chapter. In the first part of the chapter we explain the ontological significance of the practice of account giving and the role that the concept of a ‘narrative self’ plays for the concept of authentic selfhood. Having established the significance of narrative for the constitution of historical selfhood, in the second half of the chapter we will analyze the specific temporality that belongs to the authentic historical self in virtue of the narrativity of its existence. We will show that the time of this narrative self is one that is intrinsically “disjointed” (“anachronous”). This, in turn entails, that the subject who constitutes itself essentially by way of a narrative is not one. To the extent that we have argued that the time of the authentic historical self is the time of the narrative self, our earlier claim about the supposed temporal difference between the authentic and the inauthentic individual (and the exclusivity of the experience of nostalgia to the latter) will thus be shown to be untenable. The insight into the fundamentally non-conjunctive time of the narrative self defeats nostalgia's essential association with an inauthentic appropriation of one's past and renders the idea that nostalgia's remedy could lie in the “right telling” dubious.

Against the background of the widely accepted account of the origins of the concept of nostalgia, and thus of nostalgia's apparent place in the history of ideas, we offer the sub-title of this dissertation – “A Time-Based Analysis of the Unheimlichkeit of nostalgia” – both as a provocation and as a programmatic statement. By linking nostalgia to the concept of Unheimlichkeit we will seek to challenge the ongoing idea that the concept of nostalgia even has a proper place itself, a kind of home, in the continuous history of ideas. The Unheimlichkeit of nostalgia can mean that nostalgia itself, whether as concept or experience, lacks a proper home (Heim), or rather that the place of any kind of nostalgia has an inescapably "unhomely" quality. But the Unheimlichkeit of nostalgia can furthermore
mean that there is an uncanniness to nostalgia, something “spooky,” “unsettling,” also “spectral.” As such, nostalgia's Unheimlichkeit might not just designate for us the lack of a proper place as much as it could also designate the peculiar manner in which nostalgia inhabits "its” place.

If the nature of nostalgia is that of an idea that haunts rather than inhabits "its place" in the history of ideas, then even though there is an obvious sense in which we, as historians or physicians of historical data, can assign nostalgia to a determinate place in the history of ideas that nostalgia inhabit, it is my claim that nostalgia involves the simultaneous inhabitation of other places, albeit without firmly residing in them. In this dissertation we will attempt to map these "spectral" places that nostalgia inhabits in the history of ideas.

The revaluation of nostalgia that we seek to motivate here will not pertain to the value that we ascribe to nostalgia as a positive or negative phenomenon but rather to the meaning and scope of it and to the meta-philosophical value of an engagement with nostalgia. By revealing the intricate ontology that underlies nostalgia, we hope to prepare the ground for future engagements with nostalgia that will no longer be confined by the discourse of nostalgia proper, but will rather reckon that the image of such a proper place of nostalgia in the history of ideas is itself already the result of a more diffuse situatedness of nostalgia in the history of ideas. As such, beginning this work with a clear demarcation of the place of nostalgia in the history of ideas, and, by implication, of this work on nostalgia in the place of my philosophy is a destabilizing move. We will map the complex topography of nostalgia critically over the course of the next five chapters, ending up aligning our critical analysis of the phenomenon of nostalgia with a critique of the phenomenal nature of ideas as stabilizable, locatable, and remediable.
Chapter 1: The Time of Nostalgia

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will survey three recent philosophical engagements with the phenomenon of nostalgia. We begin with that of Edward S. Casey's account of nostalgia in “The World of Nostalgia” (1987). This article is significant because it constitutes an explicit challenge to what Casey perceives to be a general philosophical bias against the concept of nostalgia. When philosophers have not “chosen to neglect nostalgia,” they have been “severely critical of it.”

Casey's originality lies at least in part in his return to the origins of the discourse on nostalgia as far as the object of nostalgia is concerned – Casey defends the object “homeplace” as the proper object of nostalgia – while at the same time giving this homeplace a very nuanced meaning. Our discussion of Casey's account of nostalgia will introduce us to two fundamental facets of the experience of nostalgia that will accompany us throughout this thesis: the first of these facets pertains to nostalgia's proclivity to produce its own object; the second to the essential ambiguity of nostalgia's aboutness.

Next we will discuss James G. Hart's “Toward a Phenomenology of Nostalgia” (1973). The strength of Hart's article is that while at the outset he appears to align himself with a number of commonly held ideas about nostalgia, thereby apparently signalling his support for the common criticisms that have been levelled against the phenomenon of nostalgia, he in fact demonstrates the intellectual poverty of these criticisms by means of a Husserlian analysis of the “nostalgic noema”. As the paper progresses he gives these ideas a subtle, new interpretation that allows him to re-evaluate nostalgia's significance for philosophy, which he locates in the particular temporality of nostalgia. Hart's analysis is pertinent to our account of nostalgia because it clearly shows that the notion of the past that is involved in the experience of nostalgia is a complex and dynamic one. Hart's analysis of nostalgia in terms of a distinct kind of temporal synthesis of our individual history as a whole will

56 Casey (1987) 362. Despite the sweeping scope of this remark Casey only mentions Emmanuel Levinas as “[o]ne of the most determined critics of nostalgia.” (Ibid.)
occupy us in much more detail in Chapter 4 and will play a central role in our analysis of the essence of nostalgia.

The bulk of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of Vladimir Jankélévitch's 1974 book *L'irréversible et la nostalgie*, which to date remains the most comprehensive, and without a doubt one of the most important, philosophical treatments of the phenomenon of nostalgia. Jankélévitch's analysis of nostalgia, which will serve us as a theoretical foil throughout this dissertation, radicalizes many of the insights that we find in other accounts that others have produced. Unlike both Hart and Casey, Jankélévitch is not intent on reevaluating the philosophical significance of nostalgia. In fact, his meticulous treatment of nostalgia does not lead him to any radically new insights into nostalgia as much as it highlights the stakes of the analysis of this phenomenon. Jankélévitch's analysis of nostalgia deserves the extended attention that we are giving it here because he addresses one of the riddles of the history of the concept of nostalgia: namely how the medical phenomenon of nostalgia, formerly considered to be a lethal affliction\(^57\) that befell those who were physically dislocated from their

\(^57\) Until the mid-19\(^{th}\) century, nostalgia was still considered to be at least potentially lethal. The fatality of nostalgia was attested by many medical authorities of the 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) century. To name just some of the most famous examples: Pierre-François Percy, chief surgeon to the French army, and Charles Laurent write in their article on “Nostalgie” for the *Dictionaire des Sciences Médicales* (1819), "When nostalgia has reached this degree it is one of the most severe diseases, and there is no shortage of examples that show that it is mainly lethal if insurmountable obstacles obstruct the return of the diseased person to his homeland or close to the things he loves." (273/274) ["La nostalgie, parvenue à ce degré, constitue une des maladies les plus graves, et nous ne manquons pas d'exemples qu'elle est essentiellement mortelle si des obstacles insurmontables s'opposent au retour du malade dans son pays, ou près des objets qu'il aime."]
In addition to examples of cases where an individual died from nostalgia, Percy and Laurent describe nostalgia as an important contributory factor in the death of patients who suffered from other ailments: "Often enough nostalgia spreads epidemically and becomes the terrible complication of the lightest symptoms. Ramazzini reports that according to a trustworthy observer this affection wrought so much havoc in a camp that of a hundred soldiers who were plagued by it hardly one could be saved from death." (275; translation mine) ["Assez souvent la nostalgie règne épidémiquement, et devient la plus terrible complication des symptômes les plus légers. Ramazzini raporte, d'après un observateur digne de foi, que cette affection faisait tant de ravages dans un camp, que, sur cent de soldats qui y étaient en proie, à peine pouvait-on en arracher un à la mort."] The famous 18/19th century French surgeon Dominique Jean Larrey (1766-1842) writes in his *Recueil de mémoires de chirurgie* (1823), “I have observed in a great number of persons affected with nostalgia during their lives, and after their deaths.” (157) Larrey describes the pathogenesis of nostalgia as consisting of four stages, of which the final stage is characterized as follows: “At least, life becomes a burden, and the patient gives up to death without reluctance, if the hand which should execute it be not already paralyzed; or the vital powers become gradually extinguished, and he dies insensible.” (158) For Larrey there seems to be no doubt that individuals were dying from nostalgia. (cf. 159) Joseph Zangerl (1840) comes to a similar judgment in *Das Heimweh*: ["läßt sich in wenige Worte fassen: sie ist günstig, wenn der
home(land), could become the phenomenon that we take it to be today: i.e., the generally harmless, often banal wistful longing for a period in one's life from which one is separated (i.e., that one has lost to the past). Aside from the clear exposition of the multidimensionality of nostalgia, one of the most important merits of Jankélévitch's study is his attempt at a metaphysical proof that all nostalgia, or at least all human nostalgia, is in essence temporal. The pertinence of Jankélévitch's discussion for our own account of nostalgia lies in the analysis of the distinct temporality that we find at the heart of the experience of nostalgia: namely that of the irreversible passage of time.

1.2. Edward S. Casey's “The World of Nostalgia”

1.2.1. Nostalgia's object: The 'world-under-nostalgement'

Casey's “The World of Nostalgia” opens with the question, *What kind of place(s) are we...?*  

Kranke nach Hause geschickt werden kann, ungünstig, wenn dies nicht möglich ist. Man achte diese Krankheit nie gering; denn sie geht manchmal schnell und unvermutet in Wahnsinn, Selbstmord oder Tod über.” For those who are unable to return home, Zangerl writes, the prognosis is “very unfavourable, for with very few exceptions they are all snatched away by death.” (79; translation mine; cf. also 92) “[sehr ungünstig; denn sie sind mit wenigen Ausnahmen Alle eine Beute des Todes.”] Peter Willers Jessen, director of the lunatic asylum of Schleswig, writes in his article on “Nostalgie” for the *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der medicinischen Wissenschaften* (1842), “When the yearning goes unappeased, nostalgia normally takes a lethal course. Sometimes death occurs very quickly, as though asphyctic, and one has seen cases where soldiers died on the same day that they were denied leave. Some end their own life by suicide. In these cases there arises an irresistible, blind urge to wrest oneself away from the desolate situation. The sick individual jumps out of a window, exposes himself to the greatest harms and dangers, commits acts of violence, arson and other crimes, so that they may return home.” (294; translation mine) “[Die ausgebildete Nostalgie hat, wenn die Sehnsucht unbefriedigt bleibt, in der Regel einen tödtlichen Ausgang. Bisweilen kann der Tod sehr schnell, wie asphyktisch, erfolgen, und man hat Beispiele gesehen, dass Soldaten an demselben Tage starben, an welchem ihnen der Abschied verweigert wurde. Manche endigen ihr Leben durch Selbstmord, in deren Fällen erwacht ein unwiderstehlicher und blinder Trieb, sich der traurigen Lage zu entreißen, der Kranke stürzt sich aus dem Fenster, setzt sich den grössten Beschwerden und Gefahren aus, verübt Gewalttätigkeiten, Brandstiftungen und andere Verbrechen, um dadurch wieder in seine Heimath zu gelangen.”] In contrast, in Victor Widal's 1879 article on "Nostalgia" for the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique des Sciences Médicales*, the reader still learns about nostalgia's lethality but is assured that "In our days the number of cases of death from nostalgia can be counted, because they have become rare." (574; translation mine) "[On compte de nos jours les cas de mort par nostalgie, tant ils sont devenus rares.”]

If there is a single red thread that can be said to connect the three accounts of nostalgia – Casey, Hart, Jankélévitch – is the problem of the supposed “inaccuracy” of the nostalgic representation of the past. In his great work on memory, Paul Ricoeur has claimed, “To memory is tied an ambition, a claim – that of being faithful to the past.”  

58 If there is a single red thread that can be said to connect the three accounts of nostalgia – Casey, Hart, Jankélévitch – is the problem of the supposed “inaccuracy” of the nostalgic representation of the past. In his great work on memory, Paul Ricoeur has claimed, “To memory is tied an ambition, a claim – that of being faithful to the past.” (Memory, History, Forgetting 21) Being faithful to the past means (a) not to forget the past entirely but rather to grant it the place (in the present, in the future) that it deserves; but furthermore it means (b) to be faithful to the past. It means that we must remember faithfully, accurately; or, in a word, to remember tout court. -- To remember inaccurately, is this not to fabulate? To remember inaccurately is this not to use one's imagination rather than one's memory – Based on Ricoeur's characterization of memory's propriety we find ourselves in a seemingly paradoxically situation where nostalgia is being criticized for that which appears to be its innermost essence: an (un)faithfulness to the past. Casey, Hart, and Jankélévitch all address this apparent paradox.
nostalgic about? According to Casey, “It is certainly a place from which we have come in some basic sense, and it includes not only our natal place but any place that has been of significance in our lives.”

Whether this place of significance is the place where we spent our childhood or the place where we experienced our first love or years that were formative in an educational sense, what interests us is never merely the bare geographic site. My nostalgic desire to return to Braunschweig is not the desire to return to the city of 250,000 inhabitants but rather to my Braunschweig, to a Braunschweig that is of course located in a specific objective space, but whose significance is highly personal. This Braunschweig signifies something very personal and specific. “'Ithaca' is for Ulysses less a particular geographical site,” writes Casey, “situated in some cartographically precise way on the Aegean Sea, than it is a world, a way of life, a mode of being-in-the-world.”

Casey's phenomenologically-inspired account of the homeland puts him instantly at a distance from earlier medical accounts of nostalgia that considered decidedly physical aspects of the homeplace (air pressure, temperature, etc.). Casey claims that it is not “the place's particularity as such that is at issue in nostalgia; it is the way that this particularity bears up a lost world and exhibits it to our poignantly needful apprehension in the present.”

Furthermore, the 'world-under-nostalgement,' as Casey dubs the object of our nostalgic

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60 Casey (1987) 363.
61 Casey (1987) 363/364. More than one hundred years before Casey, Auguste Haspel formulated an account of nostalgia that in a central respect bears a noticeable resemblance to Casey's account. In his essay "De la nostalgie," published in Mémoires de l'Acaademie de médecine (1871-1873), Haspel defines "nostalgie" as "the exaggerated regret caused by one's being distanced from milieux in which one has lived for a certain time, with the desire to return to them, which is sometimes so pressing that if it is not satisfied can turn into despair and lead to functional disorders and even cause, in the long run, a truly pathological condition." (475; translation mine, emphasis in the original) ["le regret exagéré que cause l'éloignement des milieux dans lesquels nous avons vécu un certain temps, avec le désir quelquefois tellement pressant d'y retourner qui, s'il n'est pas satisfait, peut s'élever jusqu'au désespoir et amener des désordres fonctionnels ou même déterminer à la longue un état véritablement pathologique."] Haspel substitutes the concept of a "milieu" for that of the homeland which had since Hofer's time dominated the discourse of nostalgia, thereby allowing for the possibility of nostalgia for any place where one has has lived for a certain time. Furthermore, Haspel's milieu is a similarly inclusive concept as Casey's world. Writes Haspel, "besides the native soil and the family [this definition of nostalgia] designates by the word milieux all those specific conditions in which man finds himself to feel, think and act: his affections, his pleasures, his habits, the places, the objects with which his existence was more or less intimately connected and which vary with the emotions and sensations whose influence he has experienced more or less vividly" (Ibid.). ["outre le sol natal et la famille, elle désigne, par le mot milieux, toutes les conditions particulières dans lesquelles se trouve l'homme pour sentir, penser et agir; ses affectations, ses plaisirs, ses habitudes, les lieux, les objets avec lesquels son existence a eu des rapports plus ou moins intimes et qui varient avec les émotions et les sensations dont il a éprouvé les influences plus ou moins vives"]
longing, is not only a world that is of an essentially personal significance, but it is also a “lost” world. It is lost because “it is a past world, a world that no longer exists.”

Having established the lost world-under-nostalgement as nostalgia's primary object Casey goes on to investigate the question, “Concerning what kind of pastness do we turn nostalgic?” As a first delimitation Casey argues that only the personal past is “directly constitutive of nostalgia.” For Casey it follows by semantic necessity that the past that we long for is one that the nostalgic “once experienced” but that we now “cannot reopen.” While this may appear to be a mere reiteration of the earlier point about the personal significance of the object of nostalgia, Casey’s point is actually a rather different one: We would indeed be misusing language if we were to liberalize the use of “nostalgia” to incorporate other worlds (places, times) than the one that we have personally experienced or with which we are personally acquainted. Of course I can long for all kinds of places and times, but the experience of nostalgia is marked first and foremost precisely by the intimate familiarity of the longed-for object. Casey sums up this point by saying, “When we are nostalgic, we wish to re-enter, per impossibile, the past of a world that has effectively vanished from our lives and of which we are painfully reminded by its extant traces.”

1.2.2. Nostalgia for an 'absolute' past

Casey's next move is at least terminologically idiosyncratic, even though at closer look this move is in essence a philosophical one that recurs throughout the literature on nostalgia. Writes Casey, “What makes the re-entry impossible is not only the fact that the world-under-nostalgement is past

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64 Casey (1987) 365.
66 In 1733 J. G. Hoyer first articulated the conceptual counterpart to “nostalgia”: apodemialgia (“Hinausweh” or “Fernweh”). (See Bunke 88)
(elapsed, over and done with) but past in the radical sense of being something that was never strictly present.” The past of the world-under-nostalgement is at the same time personal and familiar, and absolutely foreign. What can Casey mean by this? In a first rapprochement Casey writes that “the past about which we are nostalgic is not containable in any finite set of recollections.” That is to say, “we were never, in the past itself, aware of the world-as-such of which our particular (and in principle collectable) experiences formed part.” The past that we represent to ourselves and to which we desire to “return” is one that, strictly speaking, we never experienced in the first place. Of course I experienced different events, people, or places that I can now recollect or representify to myself in a more or less accurate manner. But these “objects” are never merely parts of a greater achievable whole that constitutes the object of my nostalgia when all the parts are gathered up. While this does not turn the object of my nostalgic reverie into a figment of the imagination tout court, it nevertheless acknowledges an imaginative element in the nostalgic noesis.

For instance, if I am nostalgic for my childhood, for the world of simple and innocent pleasures that I associate with my childhood years I spent in place x, Casey points out that this “world” is a construction rather than a reconstruction. Explains Casey, “we never once, at any exactly designatable time, experienced the world of our childhood as an isolable entity or event ... because it was never, and could not be, the proper content, the 'object,' of any experience of total set of experiences.” Of course certain moments or scenes from my childhood were directly experienced by me, and I may evoke these scenes in the nostalgic mood, but at least for Casey the true object of my nostalgia is always greater and more complex than any object of a particular experience that I could re-present to myself. As such, Casey argues, the world-under-nostalgement “has a past of another type, another ontic order, from that

of the recollected past – even if it is often cued in by remembrances of things past.”  

Although this move may at first seem capricious, it is instrumental in allowing Casey to liberate nostalgia from the charge of a mere “idealizing” or “romanticizing” of the homeplace.

1.2.3. Is Casey begging the question?

For Casey, the study of nostalgia is philosophically worthwhile because “nostalgia takes us forcefully out of our accustomed ways of thinking about memory and the past. By leading us into a past that was never given in a present, it liberates us from a preoccupation with the rigors of recollection.”

Before we look into this in greater detail, we have to ask one obvious question: Does Casey not have to presuppose the value of nostalgia in order to justify his claim that nostalgia's particular modality is more than a merely defective mode of relating to the past? In other words, are Casey's charitable analyses of nostalgia and his claim of nostalgia's liberating potential, which in turn would justify its reappraisal effectively begging the question? After all, to the nostalgic person the object of their nostalgia derives its value precisely from its (past) reality, the pain from the real loss, rather than the merely imagined loss of this so-called world-under-nostalgement. In a word, to the nostalgic person the recollection of the longed-for lost world purports to be at least in essence accurate.

I think this criticism might be a little premature: To say that a mode of relating to the past is “defective” presupposes a standard of a “non-defective” or “correct” mode of remembering (or use of memory). Once such a standard is laid down we can imagine a number of different ways in which a mnemonic act fails to live up to this norm. If I, for instance, attempt to recollect my last birthday party I could be correct about the location of my party and the guests who were there. However, I might mistakenly attribute a particular gift to the wrong gifter. If I have a visual memory of receiving the gift from the “wrong” person we would say that this memory is furnished by the imagination rather than by

my memory. At the very least the study of nostalgia as a malfunction of memory can help us to understand how 'proper' memory is supposed to work. But it is far from obvious that nostalgia is unequivocally and under all circumstances a misuse of memory. Writes Casey, “Of course, constituent features and parts of this world can be recollected; but no such recollection, however complete, goes to make up the world-under-nostalgement. This world is something of a different order than its recollectable moments: it exceeds them. Precisely in this regard, as exceeding the grasp of memory, the world-under-nostalgement calls for imagination.”

It goes without saying that the world-under-nostalgement “cannot be sheerly fictitious ... but must incorporate one's sense of being in a given place as conveyed by memories.” Nevertheless, the longed for homeland is not “the simple summation of these memories.” In other words, the idealization of the lost homeland is not to be blamed on the admixture of imaginative elements. Any representation of the world of one's childhood necessarily requires the help of the imagination whose productive power alone allows the nostalgic to forge the unitary representation of a previous, continuous complex entity like that of the homeland or childhood. That entails, insofar as one can be “faithful” to the past object 'one's childhood' this faithfulness will always require the help of the imagination. What remains of the idealizing charge that claims that under the guise of recollection the imagination “fabricates” a better-than-true representation of the homeland? To say that the longed-for homeland is a figment of the imagination tout court is as we have just established incorrect. In the nostalgic recollection of my childhood it is far from obvious that remembering and imagining are mutually exclusive acts of consciousness. As Casey has argued elsewhere, a number of mnemonic phenomena are in fact “complex combinations of imagined and remembered components.”

If we abandon the idea that memory, even where it incorporates factually representational (cognitive) elements, is for the purpose of capturing its object in an objectively

75 Casey (1987) 368.
76 Casey (1987) 368.
77 Casey (1977) 196.
verifiable way, we may open up rather than abandon “the possibility of retrieving the past in ways other than via an explicitly recollective modality.” And as Casey argues, nostalgia may well be one of these ways in.

But how exactly is the object of nostalgia “retrieved”? It would appear that I can retrieve the objects that I feel nostalgic about also without feeling nostalgic about them. I am able to remember my childhood without every time feeling nostalgic about it. However, I cannot be nostalgic about my childhood without feeling nostalgic. There is no experience nostalgia without the feeling of nostalgia. “Beyond nostalgia about or over a past world, there is nostalgia of such a world: a nostalgia not only appreciative of this world in its absolute pastness but belonging to it, indeed clinging to it.” Though this prepositional distinction between “nostalgia about” or “nostalgia over” and “nostalgia of” may appear as an overly nuanced distinction, I believe that it points to a basic aspect of nostalgia that is very familiar: The object of nostalgia, i.e., the homeland as it is experienced in the mood of nostalgia, derives its specific appearance (under which we must include its affective colouring and value) from the nostalgic mood itself. Nostalgia would be a mode of givenness that is inextricably linked to its object. This mode of givenness is an affective remembering. Nostalgia then is not about a factual object that remains unaffected by the act of nostalgic reverie itself. Nostalgia is a sui generis constitution of a past object, rather than merely the mnemonic idealization of a “neutral” object. Put differently, the longed-for-world is a product of nostalgia itself. Nostalgia as mood and the object of the nostalgic longing form an inseparable unit. Nostalgia so understood could never be “inappropriate” or “unfaithful” to its object because it is proper to this very object. It is only if we assume that all memory functions alike, namely always for the same purpose and always in contradistinction to imagination, that nostalgia then is “defective.” This is the important lesson that can be gleaned from Casey's study of nostalgia.

1.2.4. The ambiguity of nostalgia's object

While I believe that on a charitable reading Casey does not succumb to the charge of having begged the question of nostalgia's status as a non-deficient mode of relating to the past, on a second point Casey's treatment of nostalgia fares not as well. If the study of nostalgia can indeed give us a new perspective onto the past, can it also expand our understanding of the pastness of the past? After all, Casey writes, “In being nostalgic, we are moved by a past world that is the more potent for being absent or ‘vanished.’” The world that we long for is not merely one from which we are momentarily separated. It is one that we intellectually know we can never recover, because it has irreversibly receded into the past. This world, writes Casey, “is both determinate as having already elapsed (i.e., as past' in relation to the present moment) and yet undeterminable as never having occurred in a particular moment (i.e., as possessing an 'absolute past').” The concept of 'absolute' pastness then, does not describe a particular “amount” of pastness, like on the calendar the year 1921 would be a 'more distant' past than the year 2000, but rather another kind of pastness exclusive to a unique kind of object. It is the pastness of an object that in this form was never (a) present. What does Casey have to say about the pastness of this peculiar object? If the object of our nostalgia has never been a (datable) present, how can we measure the distance between its absolute past and our current present? If the past cannot be located on a calendar, if its distance does not admit of uniform units that we use to measure temporal distance, then the separation is not one that could be one of varying degrees of intensity but is rather an all-or-nothing quality: Out of all the possible aspects of time's passage, nostalgia seems to focus itself on that quality that the all pasts – distant, close, absolute – partake in equally: that of loss.

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82 It could be speculated that the separation from the homeland would be all the more painful the greater the distance between the homeland and once current location is. Yet, to be precise, the spatial distance itself does not so much impact the experience of separation in this measurable distance as it emerges from the possibility of a return.
Casey, “We are nostalgic about this passage [of time] itself, in its action of creating temporal distance and difference. But we are most of all nostalgic about the world that has vanished in this very passage, leaving not definite objects but traces in places.”  

This passage is important because Casey points out that nostalgia is never simply about or aimed at one thing, for instance, the homeland (even where the 'homeland' needs to be understood metonymically as the sum total of aspects of a mode of being-in-the-world that we associate with a certain locality that we consider 'home'). Casey notes that, on the one hand, we are nostalgic about the passage of time. But we are also, and according to Casey “most of all,” nostalgic about the lost world. Recall that Hofer described the phenomenon of nostalgia to comprise at least three elements: first, the physical separation from the homeland; second, the persistent thoughts of the homeland and the accompanying desire to return to the homeland; and lastly, the frustration of the desire to return to the homeland. Writes Hofer, “they meditate on the return to their homeland. When they are kept from it, little by little, they fall into this disease [of nostalgia].” Hofer had already made clear that it is the impossibility of the return that caused the algos, not simply the separation from the homeland; it is not the geographical distance per se but the fact that this distance “appears insurmountable.” To the nostalgic the pain over the separation from the homeland cannot be mitigated by the thought of an eventual return to it because for the nostalgic such a return constitutes either a temporary impossibility or, even worse, potentially permanent, that is an irreversible impossibility. The ambiguity of the object of nostalgia is grounded in the basic ambiguity of the 'aboutness' of nostalgia: Nostalgia is, on the one hand, the Sehnsucht for a particular place, which is a place to which we desire to return. At the same time though we would not be “nostalgic” for this place if we were not also nostalgic about

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84 Hofer 383.
85 Bolzinger 201; translation mine.
86 We must keep in mind that for the longest time nostalgia was first and foremost a condition that was prevalent among soldiers, for whom death was a much more acute possibility than an eventual return to the homeland.
something that in the experience of nostalgia is inextricably tied to the first object, yet that ontologically is quite distinct from it: namely the place's vanishing (closely related), or time's passage (seemingly quite a different kettle of fish). In the latter form, nostalgia is not first and foremost a longing, a Sehnsucht, but a kind of “mourning,” or the experience of an (irreversible) loss. Nostalgia is essentially desire or longing and pain. The pain stems from the frustration over the non-satisfaction of the longing.

Although Casey himself does not explicitly distinguish between the two semantic components of “nostalgia”: nostos – the return home, i.e., the object of nostalgia as longing for a return; and the object of nostalgia understood as algos, he helps us to understand then is that the question, What is nostalgia about? at least on an analytic level has several equally correct, though conceptually distinct answers: 1) It is about the homeland: the homeland that the nostalgic longs for. 2) It is about the impossibility of the return to the homeland: this impossibility causes the pain. 3) Indirectly, the algos of nostalgia is also about that which makes for the impossibility of the return. This insight is important for our entire analysis of nostalgia, and we will return to it throughout the upcoming chapters.

1.2.5. Appraisal of Casey's account of nostalgia

For our purposes the most insight of Casey's work on nostalgia is at the same time the most general one: namely that the study of nostalgia is philosophically worthwhile. It is worthwhile both for the study of nostalgia and for philosophy. What do we mean by that? – The philosophical study of nostalgia could be worthwhile because it enriches our understanding of the general phenomenon of nostalgia. The philosophical study of nostalgia can make a contribution to the study of nostalgia that either complements or corrects the findings of other previous studies of the same phenomenon. But the

87 As Bolzinger notes, all attempts to assimilate nostalgia to patriotism are bound to distort the particularity of nostalgia, which lies precisely in its potentially lethal suffering. (Cf. Bolzinger 43/44.)
study of nostalgia is also worthwhile for philosophy, especially for the philosophy of memory. Explains Casey, “Nostalgia need not be a matter of regret or of romance, nor is it adequately construed as a forced regression to bare fixation points. It is a unique mode of insight into a world that has become irretrievably past and that arrays itself, as we remember it now, in a plenitude of places.” While the word “insight” may suggest that Casey is reintroducing an epistemic perspective into the mnemonic retrieval of the past, the preceding reflections should have made clear that this is mistaken and that Casey's primary concern are not epistemological questions. Casey does not argue that the experience of nostalgia has a value, but rather that the study of nostalgia can produce significant insights into, for instance, the workings of our memory.

The charge of having begged the question still haunts Casey's account: Even if Casey is right and nostalgia is a mnemonic phenomenon sui generis, this by itself does not prove that nostalgia is benign rather than defective. This remains a question despite Casey's demonstration of the unique perspective that nostalgia offers onto the past. If we go back to the origins of the discourse on nostalgia, the accuracy (or faithfulness) of the representation of the homeland was of little concern. Whether or not the homeland was remembered accurately may have played a role in the administration of a cure for nostalgia, as we saw for instance in Kant, but etiologically (i.e., as far as the cause of the condition of nostalgia is concerned) it was at that point not of interest. The nostalgic was not delusional in an epistemic sense, but rather suffered from “too much” remembrance. They did not so much distort the past as they were too fixated on it. The nostalgic is not forgetful of the past but rather the opposite: they “live in” the past and thereby forget the present. The nostalgic thus does not violate the norm to be faithful to the past, which remains silent on the question of how much faithfulness would be desirable, but rather transgresses another norm not handled by Casey: one that lays down the appropriate amount

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88 Casey 380.
89 A sharp distinction between experience and study is to some extent artificial insofar as that what (experientially) counts as “nostalgia” depends on the changing ways in which the object is being studied, and vice versa.
of concern with the past.

1.3. James G. Hart's “Toward a Phenomenology of Nostalgia”

1.3.1. Co-implicated time

At the beginning his article, Hart makes a claim that can without exaggeration considered to express a “canonical” truth about nostalgia: “Nostalgia is not a remembering of better past times but a reverie of the past. The reverie is not an actual recollection of the past as it was experienced. Rather, it is an idealized constitution of the past.”\(^90\) However, he is quick to add that, “This is to say more than that the past good times were never actually experienced as they present themselves.”\(^91\) The remainder of the text is, to a considerable extent, an explication of this 'more.'

To say that nostalgia is “reverie” rather than “recollection” delimits nostalgia from those mnemonic acts in which “we have the past as past,”\(^92\) that is, those acts in which our consciousness of a particular scene is accompanied by a consciousness of what is being perceived “as having been perceived.”\(^93\) As Hart goes to show, the temporality of nostalgia's noema is actually more complex. Nostalgia does not merely reproduce a past present that is longed for due to its ostensibly greater happiness. Hart explicitly rejects the idea that the 'nostalged-about' past really was better: “The memory world has a significance which is not proper to it as a (former) original present experience. This significance accrues to it because of the standpoint of the present situation of the actual remembering I – not the I of the past world of memory.”\(^94\) This observation has generally been taken to entail that the nostalgic “romanticizes,” falsely “idealizes,” in a word, that the nostalgic “misrepresents” the past to themselves as having characteristics, namely the ones that make for its exceptional appeal, that it did

\(^{90}\) Hart 402.
\(^{91}\) Hart 402; italics added.
\(^{92}\) Hart 403.
\(^{93}\) Hart 403.
\(^{94}\) Hart 403.
not in reality have. If the significance is not intrinsic, this must mean that it was added to it from outside, at a later point.

While empirically this may indeed be true, ontologically the situation is much more complex. Hart offers two different responses: The first response pertains to our understanding of the workings of the faculty of memory. “All memory worlds,” writes Hart, “have a sense, founded in the actual present horizon, which makes their self-presentation different from the actual previous experience of the past.”

According to this common view, no act of recollection is a simple re-presentification. The past is never “mirrored” in such a way that the object of the recollective act is an exact replica of the original perception. There are several reasons why this has to be so, one of the being that every act of recollection is in some sense motivated by the present differencing circumstances under which it occurs.

Hart's second response is not only more complex but it is also more pertinent to us for the study of the phenomenon of nostalgia, namely insofar as it pertains to the human experience of time. If the past about which we are nostalgic derives its meaning from the present then we should in principle be able to infer some of the appeal of the past from the analysis of the present. We adopted a similar approach in the case of the spatial analysis of nostalgia: The nostalgic felt themselves “out of place” because their environment lacked the familiar, comforting, cherished qualities of the homeplace. In a word, the new environment was “foreign” in relation to the space of “home.” This entails that the present is not only the “space” in which the nostalgic experience takes place. From the vantage point of this past which is the object of the present “re-presentification” the present appears as the yet undetermined future! Since each moment is equally a past, present, and future one, a “triple time” as

95 Of course this is not to say that this never happens in nostalgia. Perhaps Hart's initial allusion to the possibility of a normative taxonomy of different forms of nostalgia could use this as one of its criteria. Perhaps nostalgia is “crude”, “inauthentic” to the extent that it is not sincere, i.e., to the extent that it is escapist.

96 Hart 402.
Philip Larkin's poem has it, in a sense the current present was “already” there at the time when that what I know remember was my lived present. From the point of my present nostalgic experience it is not only the case that what back when I was a child I considered my present has now receded into the past, but the future of my childhood days has now become a determinate present, namely this present. Writes Hart, “‘Then,’ i.e., in the present of the memory world, my future was not yet determined. ‘In the meantime’ the basic actual now moved into what was then the future. Thus from the standpoint of the remembering I the future given in memory appears determined up to the very moment of the present remembering.”

The past about which we feel nostalgic derives its meaning in several ways from the present. This derivation is before all an ontological one. This present must not be considered in a punctual manner because my present is never punctual. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out in Phénoménologie de la perception (1945), the notion of my present is highly polyvalent: while it can be “this instant, it is equally this day, this year or my whole life.” The present that can hold a meaning for me, which is the sole present that can interest us in our study of nostalgia, is not the infinitesimal small “vanishing point” (Augustine) but rather the present of the lived experience. This present has its own (intermediate) past and future. We properly understand nostalgia only if we keep in mind that every

97 “This empty street, this sky to blandness scourd, / This air, a little indistinct with autumn / Like a reflection, constitute the present ... But equally they make up something else: This is the future furthest childhood saw ... And on another day will be the past, / A valley cropped by fat neglected chances / That we forbore to fleece.” (“Triple Time”)

98 Hart 404.
99 Merleau-Ponty 481; translation Colin Smith. ["cet instant, mais c'est aussi bien ce jour, cette année, ma vie toute entière"]
100A very similar thing can be said about the place that one takes up at a given moment: Strictly speaking it is the chair that I am sitting on right now. But in another, though equally (if not more) intelligible sense, this place is my office, or even my home. How I conceptualize my whereabouts will to an important extent depend on the context. Yet, the fact that this context can make different conceptualizations equally intelligible shows that in a fundamental sense my location is always co-constituted by the possibilities of moving elsewhere, an elsewhere that is not simply the “not-here” but rather the “also-here.” For a being for who movement is essential, the place that we are “in” is always co-constituted by the place(s) that strictly-speaking one is not-in. This is even truer for the notion of 'home'. While 'my' home may be legally circumscribed by the boundaries of my property, the place where I am 'at home' does not obey the distinction between 'private' and 'public'. I am at home in my neighbourhood, or even the city of Toronto. As we will see in the next section, 'home' does not denote a space as much as a Befindlichkeit, an attitudinal, affective relation between a subject and its environment. Home is this environment in which one is at ease to move about within a certain radius.
present (the current one but also the past one) is always co-constituted by a past that is present in the form of a retention and the future which is present in the form of a protention\textsuperscript{101}. Even though in remembering the past we remember a particular scene in isolation, part of the scene's “positive” aura stems from that which we do not explicitly remember: the protention of the past present and the retention of the current present (in a word, the present's “distension”). Writes Hart, “there is always a horizontal, non-objective temporal 'more' in the background which is given-with but not expressly given.”\textsuperscript{102} That is why Hart claims it is never a particular scene that we are nostalgic about, but rather “times” or “periods.”\textsuperscript{103} We may recall a particular scene as a mnemonic representative of a particular period, yet the proper object of nostalgia is the period from which the particular scene is taken. Hart exemplifies this by means of the common phenomenon of nostalgia for our childhood. For Hart, our childhood is not merely the time without worries (as Kant had it), but also the time of hopes: “The nostalgic return to childhood is a return to the aura of springtime, the dawn of hope ... It is a return to the time when the wishes and hopes which constitute our present were fresh and before the wishes and hopes were battered and bruised.”\textsuperscript{104}

1.3.2. Nostalgia's affective synthesis

If the present is what motivates and determines my perception of the past, and this present in

\textsuperscript{101}By “protention” Edmund Husserl means the anticipatory intentional objects that belongs to every mental experience and that is co-constitutive of the consciousness of temporal objects in general (e.g., a musical melody), as described by Husserl in his *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1928). The perception of temporal objects requires a simultaneous consciousness of a “past” that is still retained and of a future that is already expected (that which Husserl calls the “primary expectation” or “protention”). The continual passing over of that which is not directly perceived into that which is momentarily given to perception requires the retention of that which has passed out of perception but persists as the “retentional tail” (398) of the temporal object that constitutes itself in duration and succession. According to Husserl, “every recollection contains anticipatory intentions whose fulfilment leads to the present.” (410) These expectations, i.e., the futural horizon of the recollected experiences, become renewed in the act of recollection where they can either merge with the retentional past of the present of the recollecting subject (which is the case if the past expectations became fulfilled) or clash with it (in those cases where the past future did not live up to what it was expected to be). For Husserl, that which is not expressly representified in the act of recollection nevertheless plays a co-constitutive role in the unique givenness of the representified object.

\textsuperscript{102}Hart 414.

\textsuperscript{103}See Hart 406.

\textsuperscript{104}Hart 408.
turn is co-constituted by its own past (a past which comprises both the distant past but also the past that we can locate between the distant past and the present, let's call it the “more recent past”), then it is not merely the present moment that gives the past its meaning but rather that which comes together in the present: namely my entire life. In this sense we can agree with Hart when he says, “In nostalgia the 'heart's desires' find a unique synthesis, and on the occasion of certain actual associations, these desires are called forth to an idealized past which brings together the present life-project.”

Hart refers to Max Scheler's idea in Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Werteethik (1966) that it is only in “particular situations and odd moments” that our temporally strewn-out self gathers itself. In these moments the past is no longer simply over and the future not yet there, but they both converge on the present moment, giving us a sense of being “truly at home with ourselves.”

Is nostalgia such an experience of being 'truly at home with oneself'? The answer to this question is again more complicated than a simple 'yes' or 'no': Writes Hart, “Nostalgia is an instance of one of these unique moments of gathering.' In it the dispersed projects of life find their unity and this life-project is not confined to the lost past but is the secret of the present protention of the future.”

Even though we do not “thematically have ourselves together” nevertheless in nostalgia my life comes to be gathered “more or less as a whole.” Nostalgia does not give me a complete picture of my life. Nostalgia rather reveals at and affective level that past and present are related in that they form a whole. The whole is one in which the past is the past of (or to) my present, which is this present. And this present in turn is the present that has that past as its past. At a purely formal level nostalgia does indeed gather together the different parts of my life. This is the basis for Hart's claim that the past that we feel nostalgic about was never actually experienced as we now recollect it: “[it] could not have included the

105Hart 404/405.
106Hart 405.
107Scheler quoted by Hart 405.
108Hart 405.
109Hart 405.
actual (then future) present in their self-presentation.” Yet, this actual present cannot be subtracted from the past about which we are nostalgic about without thereby altering the meaning of the past. This now-determinate past is not something that I can reproduce because it was not there originally. It rather needs to be contributed by the imagination which creates a new object: a past that is “enriched” by the determinate present that back then was undetermined. “[N]ostalgia transforms the meaning of the past by constituting a time which includes the present and thereby suffuses a past time with a super-actuality so that the past of the nostalgic noema becomes philosophically interesting: its self-presentation is more than being merely past.” In other words, Hart argues that nostalgia's philosophical particularity, which separates nostalgia from other experiences “of the past,” lies in the specific temporality of the nostalged-about past. Hart hence explains nostalgia's bitter-sweetness by means of its ambivalent temporality, a temporality which cannot be found independent of the affective aspect of nostalgia, which we will now discuss.

Of course as an act of memory we can “return” to a given period of our life without this return thereby necessarily being a nostalgic one. “Not all returns to childhood are nostalgic,” writes Hart. In a sense every “return” has a kind of unifying function insofar as it relates a past to the present as a previously experienced present, a point which we do not visit “for the first time” but rather return to.” In this sense whenever we engage in autobiography we have ourselves unifying in the Schelerian sense. Yet, in nostalgia we do not intentionally engage in an explicit act of autobiographic gathering. It is what Hart calls an “affective synthesis of 'the heart's desire.'” The unity is not a “thematic” one, but an affective one. It is not contemplative and propositional where the past is the object of my thoughts. Rather, in nostalgia the past “encroaches” (Proust) on the present. This is why Hart classifies nostalgia

110Hart 404.
111Hart 409.
112As we saw, Casey defends a similar conclusion.
113Hart 408.
114Hart 410.
among the acts of “involuntary” memory.115 “Our posture in nostalgia is that of historical-emotive involvement in the world.”116 Nostalgia is at the same time recollective and affective. The “affective comprehension of past, present, and future” reveals the discontinuity of the individual parts with one another, not as an insight but in the form of the “sting” that William James talks about.117 Nostalgia is the name of an affect that accompanies the recollection. Recollection only presents a past to me, something that “was” (and thus now “is over”). It is the affective response to the act of recollection that accompanies the nostalgic noema that makes for the peculiar unity of past and present. Of course the past is always there “in” the present as a part of it. Yet in nostalgia this co-givenness of present and past is felt with a certain quality of acuteness.

Whence this acuteness? The important thing to note is that the synthesis occurs under the category of a project: A project by definition includes an anticipatory horizon, a horizon which need not be articulated at all times yet which is the ground for our emotive responses to certain fulfilments or disappointments of these expectations. In other words, the crucial question for the emergence of nostalgia is: Does the present constitute the actualization of those plans for what back then was the open future? The “sting” of the world-under-nostalgement does not only stem from the fact that it has the formal quality of being past (in a calendric sense).118 We are also nostalgic about a period because it is past not in a calendric sense but in the sense that the present did not “live up” to the hopes that we had back then for the future. Therein lies its pastness. Those hopes must not have been explicit, and certainly do not need to be expressly part of the nostalgic noema. If nostalgia is a “gathering,” one that is not thought but felt, it is felt as a sharp pain, a pain that accompanies a unity which is the unity of a

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115See Hart 401. Hart adopts the famous Proustian distinction between on the one hand a voluntary (or intellectual) memory of the past which presentifies the past as “irretrievably past,” and an involuntary mnemonic experience “which gives the past back in a lively actual way.” (401)
116Hart 405.
117Cf. Hart 404.
118It has already been pointed out that the past about which we are nostalgic is not always datable in an unequivocal way. This is different from it not being “dated” in all cases: “my time in Montreal,” “the trip to the Bruce Peninsula.” Of course these events could be dated, yet it is not as events that they become acutely meaningful for us. (Hart will later introduce the notion of “aeonic time” to account for the particularity of nostalgia's time.)
disunity. “The poignancy of [nostalgia's] pain, its unique bitter-sweetness, lies in the fact that it at once discloses to us the most fundamental meaning of ourselves and, at the same time, shows us that we are ineluctably separated from this reality.”119 The bitter-sweetness of nostalgia is not that the past is lost; rather, what we mean by this is that *something came between* “the self and what the self [had hoped] for.”120 We are separated from ourselves; separated not by an empty homogeneous time, but by a time that failed to realize the hopes that we had when we were young, or when we were in love for the first time. This self from which we are separated is only superficially determined as a “past” self.121

1.3.3. Appraisal

Hart points out a number of philosophically interesting features of nostalgia. Firstly, Hart shows that even in its temporal guise nostalgia is a phenomenon of difference. This difference, however, is not simply one-dimensional. There rather exists a dynamic interplay between the present and the nostalged-about past. As Hart points out, the now-determinate present once was the indeterminate future of the past about which we now feel nostalgic. Present and past form a “super actuality” in the experience of nostalgia. Yet, the noema is not first and foremost a product of an act of cognition but rather an affective comprehension of a disunity-in-unity. Nostalgia is neither a form of reminiscing (which can both be what may trigger nostalgia and that which we might turn to in order to alleviate the sting of nostalgia) nor is it merely the longing for a “better” past. It is rather the complex affective pain over the irreducibility of a past and a present that nevertheless are implicated in each other's actuality.

While some of the details of Hart's account may not withstand a meticulous criticism, his general insight is nevertheless highly significant: Nostalgia does not romanticize a past that was in reality much less special. The relationality at stake is not merely one of a simple and static “better”

119Hart 410.
120Hart 411.
121In light of the preceding examples Hart's expression “estranged” seems to capture the temporal disunity-in-unity better than the underdetermined notion of “pastness.” (Cf. Hart 409.)
(past) against a “worse” (present). To say that the present failed to live up to the expectation that we had for it back when it was our (indeterminate) future precisely does not say that the past was better than the present, but rather that the present failed to fulfil the ontological potential\textsuperscript{122} that we (implicitly or explicitly) assigned to it. The intertwinement of past and present is thoroughly organic. Consequently, the past self from which we find ourselves separated and unable to return to is not a datable self. Neither is the past that we long for an “absolute” one in Casey's sense. It is not a datable self because “failure” (taken in an ontological sense) does not describe a particular moment but rather a \textit{Zusammenhang [nexus]} of temporally dispersed elements brought together in the unity of a disunity.

\subsection*{1.4. Vladimir Jankélévitch on nostalgia}

\subsection*{1.4.1. Introduction}

Looking at the history of the discourse about nostalgia and the evolution that the meaning of the term “nostalgia” has undergone we can offer different explanations for the changes that have occurred. One way of looking at this change is the one that Bolzinger offers. He argues that the “disenchantment” of nostalgia freed nostalgia of its rigid medical characterization and thereby opened up the possibility of a more liberal use of the term “nostalgia,” along with a more liberated capacity to “feel” nostalgic for other objects.\textsuperscript{123} An alternative view on the transformation of the concept of nostalgia regards the “temporalization” of nostalgia, as it were, as a teleological fulfilment of the discourse on nostalgia: nostalgia has always been about time. Previous generations were in fact mistaken to think otherwise. Whether Kant held a very basic, early version of this view is debatable. However, his insight into the temporal essence of the nostalgic longing clearly anticipates the general conceptual shift of nostalgia away from a spatial to temporal affliction. Whether this development is deliberate or accidental, our

\textsuperscript{122}All three terms – “fail,” ”fulfil,” ”potential” – need to be taken in an ontological sense.
\textsuperscript{123}Bolzinger 230.
understanding today of nostalgia as a temporal affliction appears to be more “informed” than earlier accounts of nostalgia. On this view, the nostalgia of Proust would be more “authentic” than that of Odysseus. For the scholar of nostalgia who is interested in the phenomenon from a systematic rather than a historical perspective the question can present itself as follows: How do we apply these insights to the phenomenon of nostalgia for a time? What, if anything, can we learn from the study of nostalgia-S for the study of nostalgia-T?124

Generally speaking two different hypotheses can be discerned: According to one hypothesis both nostalgia-S and nostalgia-T function in an analogous manner. If there is a clear distinction that we can draw between nostalgia for the homeland and nostalgia for the past, and the latter is modelled on the former, then we must be able to find equivalences throughout the different aspects of the former in the latter. We understand (or can understand) nostalgia-T by translating the insights that we gained by studying nostalgia-S. The clues that we have for the idea that we are dealing with two distinct phenomena, and thus not able to translate the insights won from the study of one phenomenon to the other, are first and foremost the different objects: here a distant homeland, there a distant time.125 There would be something like a shared essence that would make for nostalgia in general, and the specific difference between nostalgia-s and nostalgia-T would lie in the different objects and the implications that the different objects have for the noeses of nostalgia-T and nostalgia-S.126 At the extreme end of this hypothesis we could think that nostalgia-T really has nothing to do with nostalgia-S other than the shared name, that both phenomena are sui generis, and any non-historical study of the former can be conducted while ignoring the original discursive phenomenon of nostalgia-S. Outside the historic

124I am using the term “nostalgia-S” to refer to the spatial conception of nostalgia, that is, nostalgia as it pertains to the separation from the homeland; the term “nostalgia-T” will be used to denote that conception of nostalgia which is more common nowadays: nostalgia as a the wistful longing for and the pain over the separation from a period that has since receded into the past.

125If we do this we will soon see run into a number of conceptual impasses: What is the temporal analogue to the homeland? Is it the past? Is the past my ‘home’ in an analogous sense in which the homeland is my home?

126Hart, for instance, claims, without providing much content to, or justification for, this idea, that “nostalgia carries us to a region of our past where even the person who is permanently loosened from any sense of home feels uniquely at home. In contrast to typical homesickness one cannot go back to the world which nostalgic intentionality constitutes.” (399)
context, the study of the latter would at most have a heuristic value for the understanding of nostalgia-T.

A second hypothesis, in contrast, operates with a different fundamental premise, namely that nostalgia-S and nostalgia-T are relatable to each other not artificially (e.g., by means of an analogy) but more essentially. At the end of his historical study of the discourse of nostalgia, Bunke concludes that “there has always been a temporal dimension written into nostalgia [Heimweh], even if it was never actualized.”127 As we saw above, Kant fell just short of saying that nostalgia-S is but the veneer of nostalgia-T when he pointed out the inevitable disappointment that the returnees often felt upon their return home.128 A more fully elaborated version of this hypothesis can be found in Vladimir Jankélévitch's L'irréversible et la nostalgie (1974). According to Jankélévitch, “Nostalgia is a human melancholy made possible by our consciousness, which is the consciousness of something else, the consciousness of an elsewhere, the consciousness of a contrast between past, between present and future.”129 The nostalgic finds herself physically in one place, and yet “he feels mentally absent from this place where he is corporeally present.”130 At the same time, the place in which the nostalgic would rather be, the place in which he “is” in mente he knows he is physically absent from. The power which allows us to relate to that which is absent is the imagination. Jankélévitch makes no mention of Hofer as the first to have expressed the idea that nostalgia is “of an afflicted imagination.”131 At the same time, nostalgia is made possible by our non-imaginative attachment to a “here” or a “now.” It is in contradistinction to this concrete “here” and “now” from which we cannot escape except by means of

127Bunke 579; translation mine. [“So war dem Heimweh letztlich schon immer eine temporale Dimension eingeschrieben, auch wenn diese nie aktualisiert wurde.”]
128Indeed it should be pointed out that the disappearance of nostalgia upon returning home does not necessarily mean that nostalgia really was about this return home. This has to do with the general ambiguity or indeterminacy of the aboutness of nostalgia.
129Jankélévitch 280/281; all translations mine. [“La nostalgie est une mélancholie humaine rendue possible par la conscience, qui est conscience de quelque chose d'autre, conscience d'un ailleurs, conscience d'un contraste entre passé et présent, entre présent et futur.”]
130Jankélévitch 281. [“il se sent absent en esprit de ce lieu où il est présent parle corps”]
131Hofer 381.
the imagination that any relationship of “absence” is made intelligible. A being that is neither here nor there, or equally here and there, would not be subject to nostalgia in the same way as we are.

In the case of homesickness or exile the situation is as follows: the homesick individual is physically in a different place than the one that they desire to be in. The homesick individual is literally displaced from where she would rather be. As we will see, what we mean by this “displacement” is crucial for a proper understanding of nostalgia and will show that even nostalgia-S is at heart a nostalgia-T. However, this nostalgia-T is misconstrued if we think of it as a nostalgia for a (specific) period in one's past.

1.4.2. Nostalgia's ostensive groundlessness

That homesickness is not about the purely physical displacement of an individual can be gleaned from two observations: one empirical, the other conceptual. If homesickness was merely about the physical displacement, then a return to the longed-for place will “annul the expatriation 'without remainder'.”\textsuperscript{132} Hence writes Jankélévitch, “if nostalgia was a simple lack, a need or a tropism, the return would block up the void of the absence.”\textsuperscript{133} That nostalgia is not simply about a (spatial or temporal) displacement \textit{tout court} becomes evident by the universal answer that the “displaced” nostalgic gives when asked where they would rather be. The unequivocal answer is: \textit{home}. The home is not merely a place in time or space, but rather a place that has a particular significance to the person whose home it is. As Bolzinger and others have documented, in the history of the notion of nostalgia the notion of the “home” has for a long time played a central role, especially in the etiology of the disease. We pointed out at the beginning of this chapter that Zwinger found the nomenclature of 'pothopatridalgia' more suitable than 'nostalgia' because it would highlight more explicitly the patriotic

\textsuperscript{132}Jankélévitch 283. [“annulerait 'sans reste' (\textit{restlos}) l'expatriement”]
\textsuperscript{133}Jankélévitch 283. [“si la nostalgie était un simple manque, un besoin ou un tropisme, le retour boucherait le vide de l’absence.”]
attachment of the nostalgic or pothopatridalgic to their homeland. If nostalgia truly was
pothopatridalgia, and the *algos* was over the separation from the home, then this home could be
conceived as the place where one “belongs.”

Although Jankélévitch rejects the etiological reduction of nostalgia to the natural love for the
homeland (i.e., patriotism), in another respect he does liken nostalgia to love. He writes, “love, like
nostalgia, produces sacred sites.”\(^{134}\) We already pointed out the preferential, desiring element in
nostalgia. Furthermore, in Hart we heard of that nostalgia's essentially affective character. The close
relationship between love and nostalgia should not come as a surprise. Despite Zwinger's misguided
(and ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to change “nostalgia” into “pothopatridalgia,” in at least one
respect Zwinger did point toward an etiological dead-end: it is not the absence of the physical,
meteorological conditions of the homeland that cause nostalgia but rather the frustrated love for one's
homeland. Nostalgia is of the mind and of feelings rather than of physical pressures. On this account
nostalgia bears a closer resemblance to the frustrated love of the person who is separated from the
object of their desire than it resembles the situation of a tree or a plant that has been uprooted from is
native soil.\(^{135}\)

The juxtaposition of love and nostalgia rather serves a different purpose in Jankélévitch's
treatment of nostalgia, namely a critical appraisal of the sensibility of the experience of nostalgia. From
the beginning he seems to align himself with the generally-held view that nostalgia “romanticizes” (or
idealizes) the homeland or past. But he adds that nostalgia is “irrational” insofar as it is
“disproportionate to its cause.”\(^{136}\) We do not feel nostalgic for a time or place *because* this place is so
special. It is rather nostalgia itself that confers the aura of being special onto the time or place in
question. Nostalgia makes us feel that a certain place is special. It is *because of* our nostalgia for a

\(^{134}\)Jankélévitch 277. [“l'amour, comme la nostalgie, fabrique des lieux saints.”]
\(^{135}\)For an account of the historical significance of the “modèle végétal” see Bolzinger pp.113-115.
\(^{136}\)Jankélévitch 285. [“disproportionée avec sa cause”] On this point, cf. also Bunke 426.
place that this place “is” special. Nostalgia is “at the same time the cause and the effect.”\textsuperscript{137} In this respect, nostalgia is again similar to love: “the nostalgic loves his little village like the mother loves her child; and the mother loves her child not because her child is exceptionally beautiful but because the child is hers.”\textsuperscript{138, 139}

Far from being the cause of the Nordic nostalgia, the beauty of the Nordic village is hence the effect and not the cause ... And likewise if the mother vows a passionate love to her child she does not do this because this child is the most beautiful child in the world; yet [to her] this child will be the most beautiful child in the world because she loves it passionately and [thereby] transfigures it with the power of her love. Like love like nostalgia.\textsuperscript{140}

Love and nostalgia “transfigure” their objects respectively. The love that the mother feels for her child is grounded in the fact that this child is hers. The love for her child, in turn, gives the child his or her special beauty. It is important to see that for Jankélévitch the fact that the child is hers is not a “reason.” It is the cause, but not the reason. Or as Jankélévitch says, “it is a reason without reason.”\textsuperscript{141} None of this excludes the possibility that the nostalgic knows what they miss most about the homeland; what “is” in fact so special to the homeland, what they miss \textit{about it}. And yet, these reasons do not exist \textit{ab origine}: “Nostalgia, like love, comes first and the justifications that it gives itself are retrospective; but secondly these justifications, which are an effect of and an emanations of the love, confirm the feeling and confer legitimacy onto it.”\textsuperscript{142} In other words, the trajectory of both love and nostalgia is a circular

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137}Jankélévitch 285. [“à la fois la cause et l'effet.”]
\item \textsuperscript{138}Jankélévitch 285/286. [“le nostalgique aime son petit village comme la mère aime son enfant ; et la mère aime son enfant non pas parce que cet enfant est remarquablement beau, mais parce que cet enfant est le sien.”]
\item \textsuperscript{139}When we look at early attempts to cure nostalgia, it is striking that hardly any cures involved the attempt to persuade the nostalgic of the mediocrity of the homeland. Why was this cure not pursued? One needs to speculate here: The human ability to get attached to a patch of land was seen to be a wholesome and important (affective) dimension of human life. To “cure” man from an “excess” of such a capacity by means of amputating the organ of such an affective attachment would mean to mutilate man.
\item \textsuperscript{140}Jankélévitch 288. ["Loin que la beauté du village nordique soit la cause de la nostalgie nordique ... elle en est donc l'effet et non la cause ... Et de même si la mère voue a son enfant un amour passionné, ce n'est pas parce que cet enfant est le plus bel enfant au monde ; mais il sera le plus bel enfant du monde parce qu'elle l'aime passionnément et le transfigure à force de l'aimer. Tel l'amour, - telle la nostalgie."]
\item \textsuperscript{141}Jankélévitch 289. ["c'est une raison sans raison.”]
\item \textsuperscript{142}Jankélévitch 288. ["La nostalgie, comme l'amour, est prévenante et les justifications qu'elle se donne sont rétrospectives ; mais secondairement ces justifications, qui sont un effet et un rayonnement de l'amour, confirment le sentiment et lui donnent un statut légal.”]
\end{itemize}
one: “love begins with love and it ends with love.”

This also explains the (empirical) futility of the attempt to enlighten the nostalgic that their homeland is really not that great. It misses the point because in its attempt to “correct” an overly “romantic,” i.e., a “false” view, it effectively tries to impose a different lens altogether. Yet the nostalgic suffers not from a delusion but from a “broken heart.”

Notice that Jankélévitch's analysis goes beyond the criticisms that we are already all too familiar with, first and foremost the crude charge that nostalgia “romanticizes” or “idealizes” the homeland, that it makes the home better than it is (or was) by “exaggerating” its splendour. A conscientious thinker of nostalgia like Jankélévitch of course knows that the nostalgic, like the exile, “languishes always a contrario,” that is, in contrast or opposition to their current milieu. We saw above that others have described “phenomenon of difference.” While the princess may indeed only be beautiful from afar, the nostalgic's reverie is more complicated than that and consequently not a simple “idealization” because the homeland-to-which-one-wants-to-return exists as beautiful only from afar! As such one could make a case that the nostalgic is victim of an incoherent wish: She wants to “return” to a place that exists as desired only “from afar.” The glorious past is glorious only “in” the present, that is, from the vantage point of the now. It exists as value only “in” the past and “as” the past.

1.4.3. The familiar Befindlichkeit of the home

Nostalgia happens to us. It is a pathos. A particular object (e.g., the tunes of the ranz des vaches) reminds the Suisse soldier of the distant homeland and the joys that he was blessed to experience there. Yes, these joys are far away and long gone. In the early accounts of nostalgia the homeland is almost exclusively described in terms of its physical features. The focus on meteorological

143Jankélévitch 289. [“l'amour commence par l'amour et finit par amour.”]
144Bolzinger 196.
145Jankélévitch 287. [“languit toujours a contrario”]
146See Jankélévitch 297.
features in the etiology of nostalgia indicates that the relation between the (displaced) individual and their home is understood quite analogically to that of a plant and its “native soil.” Their illustrative value notwithstanding, botanical analogies cannot deny the fact that *homo plantae dissimilis.*\(^{147}\) The home is a place where one *feels* at home, it is a place that has what is named *familiarity.* Victor Hugo's description of the “place” of exile holds no less true for the “place of home: it is “not a material thing, it is a moral thing.”\(^{148}\) “Moral” in this context must be understood in its connection with the *mores,* i.e., with the personal habits and interpersonal customs that we experience in a special place and that make this place “homely.” “Home” does not designate the physical location of a place in which one could find oneself, but rather a *Befindlichkeit,* i.e., an existential orientation. The home is not merely the “natural milieu”\(^{149}\) of a person, it is a place that is first and foremost one that she has been to, the place where she has spent a significant amount of time; a place that thus has a very personal familiarity to this person. This is why Bolzinger says, “The decisive factor is not the space that could be described by a geographer or a tourist, but the secret landscape that is only known to private memory.”\(^{150}\) That is why the consciousness of the absent is not merely of an absent 'where' (yonder), but also of an absent 'when' (a *back* when). Nostalgia is thus never a mere lack. One is never merely “not” at home but rather “not anymore.”\(^{151}\) One once “was” at home, and now *no longer* is. What is the relation between the 'loss', the 'loss of familiarity'? The physical homeland is but the “substratum” of that quality of familiarity that for us only the homeland has. The nostalgic suffers not merely from a misadaptation but first and foremost from a sense of loss; this loss is not the absence of a place but rather the loss of the familiarity that used to be the quality of one's *Befindlichkeit* in said place. The desired return to the distant homeland would

\(^{147}\)See Bolzinger 102.

\(^{148}\)Cf. Victor Hugo, “Ce que c'est que l'exil”, III: “L'exil n'est pas une chose matérielle, c’est une chose morale.” Cited in Jankélévitch 293.

\(^{149}\)Bolzinger 114. ["un milieu naturel"]

\(^{150}\)Bolzinger 56. [“Le facteur déterminant n'est pas l'espace que pourrait décrire un géographe ou un touriste, mais un paysage secret qui n'est connu que de la mémoire intime.”]

\(^{151}\)While we do not want to categorically rule out the possibility of a home that one has “yet” to reach, in our present discussion the “eschatological” notion of a home that is “yet to come” will be bracketed throughout.
not merely return the afflicted individual to a now distant place, but it would restore a distinct
\textit{Befindlichkeit} that this person can only experience \textit{in} this particular place.

The distinct \textit{Befindlichkeit} of the home is related to the experience of time not only insofar as it is absent from the nostalgic's current location yet still remembered of having once existed (elsewhere): The distinct \textit{Befindlichkeit} of the home itself exhibits a particular temporality. Heinrich Heine's poem “Nachtgedanken” [Night Thoughts] (1844), though not written by a Suisse, captures the experience of the sting of exile and homesickness with great poignancy, and thus allows us to illustrate the distinct experience of time that figures in nostalgia:

Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht,
Dann bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht,
Ich kann nicht mehr die Augen schließen,
Und meine heißen Tränen fließen.

Die Jahre kommen und vergehn!
Seit ich die Mutter nicht gesehen,
Zwölf Jahre sind schon hingegangen;
Es wächst mein Sehnen und Verlangen.

Mein Sehnen und Verlangen wächst.
Die alte Frau hat mich behext,
Ich denke immer an die alte,
Die alte Frau, die Gott erhalte!

...

Die Mutter liegt mir stets im Sinn.
Zwölf lange Jahre flossen hin,
Zwölf lange Jahre sind verflossen,
Seit ich sie nicht ans Herz geschlossen.

Deutschland hat ewigen Bestand,
Es ist ein kerngesundes Land,
Mit seinen Eichen, seinen Linden,
Werd' ich es immer wiederfinden.

Nach Deutschland lechzt ich nicht so sehr,
Wenn nicht die Mutter dorten wär;
Das Vaterland wird nie verderben,
Jedoch die alte Frau kann sterben.\textsuperscript{152}

One of the most striking things in “Nachtgedanken” is the stark contrast that Heine evokes between, on the one hand, the “strong and healthy” [\textit{kerngesundes}] German homeland that will “ever stand”[\textit{ewigen Bestand}] and whose oak and linden trees the speaker will find as he pleases, and on the other hand the twelve long years that have “gone by” [\textit{vorbeigegangen}], twelve long years that have “passed away” [\textit{verflossen}] and have created an ever-wider distance between the last time the speaker embraced his mother. Not the mother who loves her child, but the mother who “may be called away” [\textit{kann sterben}]. What urgency would there be to the return to the homeland that will “ever stay” if it were not for this good old mortal mother?\textsuperscript{153}

The fact that one is not away from the homeland but that one \textit{has been away for too long} from someone in it. The fact that it's been so long that one last embraced the mother. Like the nostalgic, for the speaker of Heine's poem it is not the mere fact of being separated from the homeland that causes the wistful mood. It is the fear that this separation may be \textit{irreversible}. That does not mean that the speaker does not fear that he may never return to the homeland but rather that when he returns his mother will no longer be there; i.e., that even when the speaker returns "home," this return will not be the desired one. That is to say, the speaker's fear is precisely that the desired return will be impossible. The reason for the speaker's anguish is not merely the fact that the last embrace has been so long ago, but that this last time might have been the final time. While for the homesick Odysseus it may be the prospect of \textit{never} returning to the homeland that agonizes him, but for the speaker in Heine's poem the urgency is literally embodied in the ageing figure of the mother.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{152}See Appendix A for English translation.

\textsuperscript{153}Albrecht von Haller noted already in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century that nostalgia has a strong inter-personal dimension. In the entry for "nostalgie" for Diderot's \textit{Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des art et des métiers} (1751-1772) he writes, "[Nostalgia] is a melancholy caused by the vivid desire to see one's parents again & by the grief of being with strangers who we do not love and who do not have that intense affection for us that we have experienced from our family." ["[La nostalgie] est une mélancholie causée par le vif désir de revoir ses parents, & par l'énuui d'être avec des étrangers que nous n'aimons pas, & qui n'ont pas pour nous cette vive affection que nous avons éprouvée de la part de notre famille." -- Translation mine.]

\textsuperscript{154}A special limit case would be the desire to at least be \textit{buried} in one's native soil.
in it who embodies the flux of time that, whilst not moving the homeland ever farther away, still moves that last embrace into an ever more distant past and along with it the possibility of another embrace into an ever more precarious and less open future.

Heine's poem is significant for our purposes because he helps us to understand what it is that the mountains for which the nostalgic Swiss soldier longs signify. They are missed not because they are gone, but because they are gone for me. It is because I am here and they are over there; the knowledge that they are there somewhere is no consolation for one's inability to see, to smell, to touch. In other words, it is no their sheer physicality (or thereness) that evokes the wistful longing of the nostalgic but rather that which these mountains represent: Sure enough the nostalgic Swiss soldier longs for his beloved mountains, but those are precisely the mountains that he would see every day; he longs for the food, that is, the food that would feed him day in day out; and he longs for the friendly faces of the neighbours, that is, the faces that would greet him each morning. In a word, it is not the exceptional that the nostalgic longs for but rather the opposite: the mundane, the familiar, the daily, the habitual, that which creates the every-day life, not this or that aspect of the life at home but the life; a life that in its more-than-biological manifestations nevertheless exhibits a quasi-biological cyclical or continuity. The fact that certain mundane experiences, experiences that had an almost “timeless” quality due to their daily repetitiveness (experiences that like the rising and the setting of the sun) seemed like they would never come to an end, now that the appearance of a seemingly endless cycle has been broken appear just as fleeting as the most exceptional event. That which used to happen “every” day, thus withdrawing itself from a clear assignation to a place along a temporal vector, suddenly becomes clearly identifiable as “the first time, “the last time,” “twelve years ago” etc. The loss of the home(land) is the loss of the familiarity and that means of a distinct experience of time: namely one in which due to the repetitive nature of the mundane processes that take place every day the

155Though, as we shall shortly see, it is the exceptional as such that is the object of the nostalgic's algos.
passage of time is almost unnoticeable. For the nostalgic individual, this experience has now been
replaced by another. This insight goes significantly beyond our earlier claim that nostalgia arises from
the contrast between the present and a past whose very constitution cannot be separated from the
particular situatedness of the nostalgic individual in the present of her nostalgia: namely because
nostalgia additionally involves a contrast between not just two moments or periods along the same
temporal axis (i.e., the now-moment in which we feel nostalgic and the past-moment about (or for)
which we feel nostalgic) but rather between two “kinds” of time. The time that the nostalgic has lost is
that time whose very essence appears to be antithetical to the vectorial conception of the time. 156 There
is thus an ambivalence in the notion that nostalgia involves a longing for "a different time": The desire
for a return is not merely the desire for a return to another “period” along the same temporal axis, but it
is rather the desire for the restoration of another kind of temporality: it is the desire for the restoration
of a time that obeys different temporal laws. 157 Insofar as the idea that this other time is "past" belongs
only to one particular "kind" of time, the time for which we long does not so much lie in the past (i.e.,
"behind" us) as it coexists with the temporality that currently prevails. The restoration of this time
involves not so much a "going back" (along the same axis) as it would require a "leap." 158 It would be a
leap not into the past (of this present) but onto another temporal plane that (virtually) coexists with the

156 The events and actions that unfold in this time are continuous with each other and interpenetrate each other. The time
that the nostalgic longs for resembles the sense of time that Bergson in the Essai sur les données immédiates de la
conscience (1889) describes as "[a] succession without distinction, and as a mutual penetration, a solidarity, an intimate
organization of elements each of which represents the whole and which distinguishes and isolates itself from the whole
only for an intellect capable of abstraction." (75 ; translation mine) ["la succession sans la distinction, et comme une
pénétration mutuelle, une solidarité, une organisation intime d'élémens, dont chacun, représentatif du tout, ne s'en
distingue et ne s'en isole que pour une pensée capable d'abstraire."] By contrast, the vectorial conception of time
understands succession as a negation (passification, loss) of a preceding event through something new that arrives
momentarily to replace what had hitherto occupied the present of the subject. With Bergson we can say that the
displaced nostalgic individual painfully experiences the "spatialisation of time" (cf. Essai, 73ff.). If we tarry for a
moment with Bergson's notion of 'duration' we see, furthermore, that the potency of the ronz des vaches cannot be
reduced to its power to bring back (by way of psychological associations) images of the place(s) where we had formerly
heard these tunes. Beyond the psychological significance of the tune, there is also an ontological significance. This
significance resides in the fact that the tune qua melody shares the same temporal structure as the life that the person
whose longing for the lost life is evoked by the sound of the ronz des vaches. (Cf. Essai, 75.)

157 For a similar idea, cf. Svetlana Boym's The Future of Nostalgia, xx.

158 The concept of a leap plays an important role in Gilles Deleuze's reconstruction of Bergson's account of the process of
the actualization (i.e., becoming psychological) of pure recollections. Cf. Deleuze's Bergsonism, 56f. and 61ff.
vectorial and irreversible temporality.

One important conclusion that we can draw from this is that the temporal and the spatial axis of the concept of nostalgia in fact intersect in the notion of 'home', thus making a sharp distinction between a (purely) temporal and a (purely) spatial form of nostalgia conceptually untenable. This insight is highly significant: if no clear distinction can be drawn between nostalgia for/over the homeland and nostalgia for the past, even though it appears that the latter is modelled on the former, then the idea that we should be able to find equivalences throughout the different aspects of the former in the latter is a non-starter. For our original question, how homesickness could become 'nostalgia' as we understand it today, the insights gained here mean that this process of becoming is more complex than a simple conceptual reorientation of nostalgia away from a primarily spatial toward a primarily (or perhaps even exclusively) temporal one. To think that nostalgia's object was a spatial one, namely the home(land), and "later" acquired a temporal meaning rests on an incomplete analysis of the notion of 'home'.

1.4.4. Jankélévitch's conception of the time of nostalgia

1.4.4.1. Irreversibility

For Jankélévitch, the experience of an irreversible, linear progression of time belongs essentially to the experience of nostalgia, namely because regardless of what the concrete object of nostalgia is, this object is experienced as “lost to the past.” The experience of time that pains the nostalgic is that of an irreversible time, i.e., of a time that always “flows” in the same direction: namely away from that which one has experienced, known, loved toward that which is essentially indeterminate (and which can only be anticipated), and which therefore necessarily thwarts all hope for a "return." It is therefore perhaps not surprising that in *L’irréversible et la nostalgie* (1974), the
discussion of the concept of irreversibility takes up about 200 pages whereas the analysis of nostalgia covers barely 40 pages. While the explicit discussion of nostalgia proper is reserved for the final chapter of the book, the issue of nostalgia is there all along, because to understand nostalgia one needs to understand what nostalgia is in essence about: the irreversibility of time, i.e., time's temporality.

It is not only for the purpose of our discussion of nostalgia that we will approach the notion of irreversibility by contrasting it with that which “nostalgia” appears to be about in essence as the painful longing for a homecoming: the departure from and the return to a particular location in space. That which is foreclosed in time is possible in space: namely that we move back and forth between two determinate points. We said above that two of the conditions of the possibility of nostalgia are one's physical attachment to a particular location in space and one's ability to imagine oneself (to be) elsewhere. By virtue of the power of my imagination I can present objects to myself that are currently not perceptible. I can present to myself the Eiffel Tower. What I am doing when I present the Eiffel Tower myself is that I imagine myself in a position from which the Eiffel Tower could be seen. By means of the imagination I “transport” myself to a different location, a location that allows (or would allow) me to directly perceive the object that I now present to myself by means of my imagination. I do not need to be included in my presentation in order to “be there” along with the objects that I present; yet, I always co-posit myself along with the objects of my presentation. The view from nowhere is no view at all.

While our finitude makes it impossible for us to be in more than one place at the same time, our mobility allows us to travel from one location to another, or to go back and forth between different places. While I currently may only be able to imagine the Eiffel Tower, I can easily get on a plane, fly to Paris, and go toward the Eiffel Tower such that I can actually perceive it. Space is the field of our mobility, and thus of our freedom. But I cannot be in Paris and in Toronto at the same time. The

159See Jankélévitch 13.
spatial distance between these two places keeps me from physically being in both cities at the same time. Even though I can imagine being in Paris while physically being in Toronto, when I am in Toronto, Paris is necessarily absent for me. Having not been granted the “gift of ubiquity ... we must choose between here and there, and renounce the 'everywhere' of omnipresence.” And yet, thanks to my ability to move, thanks to my mobility I can travel from one place to the other, I can visit one city after the other. Time effectively eases the strict alternatives (the incompossibles “here” and “there”) that result from our finitude, i.e., from our physically being-tied to one particular location (as well as from the fact that we only have one body to perform the things that we would like to do). Things that cannot be experienced together become possible one after the other. The person who is not too impatient may, over the course of a lifetime, experience a little bit of everything. He cannot be in all 51 states of the USA at the same time, but at the end of his life he can have been in all 51. It is by means of alternating between alternatives -- first this, then that -- that we elude the alternative. Strictly speaking we do not overcome or transcend the either-or, because our finitude forces us to renounce the fantasy of accumulation: succession does not overcome finitude. It does, however, “fluidify” the experience of alternatives: “transformed into 'moments', contradictories that are incompossible in the same instant, become, while not compossible, at least possible one after the other, each at its time.” However, even the person who has been in all 51 states cannot at any point of his journey claim that he “is” in all 51 states. Likewise, the person who goes from Toronto to Paris is thereby not in Paris and Toronto. He is in Toronto even though before that he “was” in Toronto. Just like Paris and Toronto can never be given to the traveller at the same time, their being in Paris and being in Toronto can never happen to them

160Jankélévitch 13. [“le don de l'ubiquité nous est refusé ... il nous faut choisir entre ici et là, et renoncer au 'partout' de l'omniprésence.”]
161See Jankélévitch 18.
162See Jankélévitch 18.
163Jankélévitch 21.
164Jankélévitch 21. [“transformé en 'moments,' des contradictoires qui sont incompossible dans le même instant deviennent, sinon compossibles, du moins possibles l'un après l'autre, chacun à son heure”]
either, no matter how much they decide to travel back and forth between the two cities. The place that 
is absent is always the one that he either “was in” or “will be in.” Writes Jankélévitch, “[neither] the 
preterite nor the future is literally, or corporeally given with and in the present.” Of my past presence 
in Toronto all that remains are my memories of these past presences and my imaginary capacity to re-
present them.

The accumulation of my being that the passage of time makes possible for me is thus “only” a 
“spectral” one. Far from thickening our essence (be-ing), my memories of my past presents do not 
overcome the becoming but rather remind us of that which we have “lost”; they remind us that in 
becom-ing something else we always have to leave that which we were before behind. It reminds us 
that all becoming entails presence as much as it entails absence. We can never be in two different 
places at the same time, but thanks to our ability to move “between” places, or “from” one place “to” 
another and “back,” I can have been (past) in more than the one place to which I am confined at any 
given moment in virtue of my corporeality. And yet, in “having been” in a certain place I am ex ipso 
reminded that I am no longer in this place, that I have lost this place, that it has been reduced to nothing 
but my memory of (being in) this place. The place is lost, what remains is but a trace, a remnant. And 
yet, this trace is enough for me to recognize a place to which I “return.”

The ability to move from one place to another needs to be distinguished from the ability to 
“return” to a location. While both depend one's mobility the latter requires that one has previously been 
to the place to which one now “return.” The idea of a “return” implies a past presence in the location to 
which one now comes back. The person who “returns” to Toronto, “was” there at least once before. 
When they are absent from Toronto they are not simply “not” in Toronto but they are “not in Toronto 
anymore.” In a purely spatial sense the return annuls the previous departure: Once we have returned to

165Jankélévitch 20. [“ jamais le prétérit ni le futur ne nous sont littéralement, charnellement donnés avec et dans le 
présent”] By “preterite” Jankélévitch does not mean the tempus of the past tense but rather the metaphysical past itself. 
166Jankélévitch 20.
our point of departure we find ourselves in the same place that we were before we left; it is as if we had never left. By mere appearance the person who has left and returned does not differ from the person who has not left and thus has not returned but rather stayed in the same place all along. And yet these two people differ essentially: “Because from the point of view of time the return inscribes itself in the biography of the traveller following the departure, the traveller who was more or less transformed by his travel; even if nothing noteworthy or memorable happened to the traveller,”\textsuperscript{167} in other words, even if experientially the person might as well not have left at all, the person who left differs from the person who didn't leave. There nevertheless exists an ever-so-small yet all-important difference between the two: “both are in the same spot and find themselves in the same place, but the former is the one who will have experienced the detour of the departure and the return.”\textsuperscript{168} In a word, “Topographically the return annuls the departure, but chronologically it prolongs and follows it.”\textsuperscript{169}

Even though in space we can go back, temporally even the act of going back is always and necessarily a going forward. The possibility of returning \textit{insofar as it is a possibility}, something that I can do, always lies ahead, always constitutes a future possibility. We are powerless vis-à-vis time's course: all power, all ability, all possibility is always one that will achieve that which has not yet been achieved. That which has already happened cannot be made “unhappened.” I can only “return” because my return does not undo my past presence. If my “return” to Toronto undid my previous departure from Toronto I would never have left Toronto and thus would now not be “returning” to it.

1.4.4.2. No repetition: The concept of primeultimacy

Irreversibility exists only for a being that has a consciousness that is at the same time

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Jankélévitch 26.] \textit{“Car au point de vue temporel le retour s'inscrit à la suite de l'aller dans la biographie d'un voyageur que son voyage a peu ou prou transformé ; et même s'il n'est rien arrivé de notable ni de mémorable au voyageur”}
\item[Jankélévitch 26.] \textit{“l'un et l'autre en sont au même point et se trouvent dans le même lieu, mais le premier est celui qui en plus aura vécu le crochet de l'aller et retour.”}
\item[Jankélévitch 26.] \textit{“Topographiquement le retour annule l'aller, mais chronologiquement il le prolong et prend la suite.”}
\end{footnotes}
prospective and retrospective, that is, a consciousness that can present that which is absent to itself. For such a consciousness the absent presents itself under two fundamentally different temporal qualifications: that which is not-yet, and that which is not-anymore. To these two negations correspond two positives: that which is 'yet to come' (possibility) and that which 'has already been' (facticity). Because time is irreversible these two options are mutually exclusive: there is a 'future' that is 'yet to come' and a 'past' that is 'already over'. Past and future are irreducible to one another. We call that which has happened the past. The past “contains” that which has come to pass. It contains that which is over, that which has already happened. The future, on the other hand, is the site of that which has yet to happen. It is a mark of the future that it is novel. That which is “over,” that which as receded into the past, that which “is not anymore” will never again happen again. The negation that turns a being (“is”) into a past being (“is not anymore”) contains at the same time the verdict for all eternity: never again. That which has happened will never happen again. For if it did it would not be “over.” It would not even be “temporally absent,” because we could no longer make any sense of the “temporal” aspect of its absence.

The irreducibility of past and future entails that the attitudes that we can have to past and future are non-interchangeable. The future “is not only absence but uncertainty and unpredictability.” As that which is yet to come, the future is inescapably uncertain. I know that something will happen, yet I do not know when or what. This means the future is not only risk but also opportunity. It is my possibility. Everything that I can do I can only do in the future. And yet, there where the future is not merely a delayed present, not merely an extension of my current projects, but truly futural, the future entails always a splash of anguish, because “we know, at the heart of our projects, that the future of the mind [le futur pensé] is not the real future: the latter does not only depend on our prudence and the

170This connection between the past and the future is resonates also in the French “ne plus” and the German “nicht mehr”: both of which at the same time that something has come to pass and that it will (consequently) not come to pass again. Once something is a “not any longer” it is thereby automatically also a 'not again'.

171Alquié (1973) 42; translation mine. [“n'est pas seulement absence, mais incertitude et imprévisibilité.”]
future of our tendencies but on the future of the course of things, on the unfolding of a universe where we are not kings.” 172 And yet, the radical novelty of that which is yet to come is something that intrigues my expectation, my anticipation, my hope. While the thought of the future is inherently troubled by the uncertainty that pervades it in virtue of its inherently unpredictable character, the past is the very opposite: “[it] has been given, we know it, it is a stable image and the object of the certain sciences.” 173 I relate to the past in the form of memory, and since the past “is determined” it presents itself to me as a “thing.” 174 We can contemplate the past without risk, because as past it cannot harm us anymore. Where the past is a source of anxiety it is not because of the openness of this past, but because the past may or may not have consequences in the future. It is hence not the past but the future which relates in some way or other to the past (as an effect of it). Although our attitudes toward the past and the future are without doubt more multifarious than could be described here, in essence the following will always hold true: to hope for the past and to remember the future are oxymoronic belief sets.

The irreducibility of the 'not yet' and the 'never [again]', the antecedent and the consequent nothing, makes every event into an “Adieu pour toujours, ou à jamais.” 175 That which has been will have been forever, and will thus never be again. It is because time is irreversible that every time is eo ipso the first and the last time. Writes Jankélévitch, each and every “event or a historical happening is absolutely unique and odd ... every “time” happens only a single time in the entire eternal infinity of time, and due to this we call it *semelfactive*; every 'time' is at the same time the first and the last time, and therefore we call it *primeultimate*.” 176 Irreversibility means that that which has happened has

172 Alquié (1973) 44; translation mine. [“savons-nous bien, au sein de nos projets, que le futur pensé n'est pas le futur réel: celui-ci ne dépend pas seulement de notre prudence et de l'avenir de nos tendances, mais l'avenir du cours des choses, du déroulement d'un univers ou nous ne sommes pas rois.”]
173 Alquié (1973) 45; translation mine. [“a été donné, nous le connaissons, il est pour nous image stable et objet de science certaine.”]
174 Alquié (1973) 45; translation mine. [“il s'offre comme chose.”]
175 Jankélévitch 39.
176 Jankélévitch 37. [“un événement ou une advenue historique, est absolument unique et dépareillée ... chaque 'fois' n'arrive qu'une seule fois dans toute l'infinité éternelle du temps, et pour cette raison nous la disons *semelfactive* ; chaque
happened. It means that what has already come to pass will not pass again. It means that the past is the past, and the future is the future. There is no going back. When Odysseus is going “back” to Ithaca he is in fact going forward. The return to the familiar shores of Ithaca is in fact a going toward the unknown. Whatever happens to Odysseus upon his return to Ithaca will in this form never have happened before, because, defined with sufficient accuracy, nothing happens twice. This qualification is necessary because what the speaker in Heine's poem wishes for – to embrace the mother one more time – is of course possible. Insofar as we experience a second time of something it will only be of a “kind” of event. One can reasonably wish to experience another birthday with one's mother. However, the wish to experience the mother's 60th birthday that one has missed, or to re-experience the last birthday where the late father was still alive, these are patently impossible. Hence what has happened once is irrevocably over. The humble hope to experience that which we have experienced encore une fois would not only require a “miracle,” but it would render the distinction between 'past' and 'future' idle. Time is temporal because it has a past and a future.

Once Odysseus has departed from Ithaca for Troy, everything he does follows by necessity his departure from Ithaca because “[time] marches always ahead toward a future that is always to come.” When Odysseus is going “back” he is only going back to “where” he was but not to “when” he was. But this seems to be precisely what the nostalgic individual desires: to go back, to return to a when, to a moment or period on their past. The nostalgic desires to experience a part of their past encore une fois. Da capo! Yet, in order for something to happen twice it will have to happen in the same way as it happened the first time. But when an event happened the first time it was part of the event's determination that it had never happened before. In order for the second time to repeat the first time this first time will have to be undone: otherwise the second time is not a (exact) repetition of the first time.

177See Jankélévitch 9, 36.
178Jankélévitch 28. [“marche toujours de l'avant vers un avenir toujours à venir.”]
179And as we shall see even Odysseus would effectively desire this.
time but rather that which happened after the original happening. We saw this in the case of a “return”: a return presupposes a prior presence, yet this prior presence did not “know” of the return when it happened. Thus the experience of being in Toronto and being in Toronto again, even if one was only gone for the briefest moment, are infinitely different. Of course two events can resemble each other to the point where it is as if one was the repetition of the other. Even the concept of repetition implies the existence of a prior event that itself is “repeated.” Otherwise whatever the event in question would be, it would not be a “re-”petition. The recognition of a “repetition” requires the retro-conscience of the first time which would however lack this conscience. In other words, we would want to experience two things at the same time: past and present. But is this not like wanting to be in Paris and Toronto at the same time? Writes Jankélévitch, the second time, by reawakening the echo of the first time or evoking the resonance of the past, mixes with the previous time in order to form a new synthesis, an original past-present. He who has already experienced the first time encounters the repetition of this time not as if it was the former “time” or the original “time,” but as if it was a new first time. In the second experience he experiences the feeling of the already-seen or the already-experienced in the form an apprehensiveness, boredom or familiarity: but the feeling of the already-seen implies in its own right that the second time is not identical to the first time: the person of the second time is the one who knows the first time and therefore “recognizes” it in the second time. But the re-cognition is a completely novel cognition: a specific knowing, and not the invariant doubling of the first cognition.\[180\]

We can see from all this that the problem with nostalgia is worse than that its desire is incoherent to the extent that the object to which we want to return is itself first constituted by the desire for a return.

Even if this incoherence could be mitigated, there would still remain the insurmountable because impossible wish of “going back.”

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\[180\] Jankélévitch 46/47. ["la deuxième fois, réveillant l'écho de la première ou évoquant la resonance du passé, se mélange à la fois précédente pour former une synthèse nouvelle, un passé-présent original. Celui qui a déjà vécu l'expérience de la première fois accueille la répétition de cette fois non pas comme si c'était la 'fois' précédente ou la 'fois' initiale, mais comme si c'était une nouvelle première fois ; dans la deuxième expérience il éprouve, sous forme d'appréhension, d'ennui ou de familiarité, le sentiment du déjà-vu et du déjà-vécu: mais le sentiment du déjà vu implique lui-même que la seconde fois n'est pas identique à la première ; l'homme de la seconde fois est celui qui a connu la première fois, et par conséquent la 'reconnait' dans la deuxième: mais la re-connaissance est une toute nouvelle connaissance, un savoir spécifique, et non pas un redoublement ne varietur de la connaissance première."]
1.4.4.3. The concept of irrevocability

Although we have directly linked to concept of the past’s pastness to the quality of time's irreversibility, we should note that it is only in conjunction with a second concept – the concept of the irrevocable – that the past acquires its full meaning as that which is over. Time lapses, and in lapsing it “passifies” that which only a moment earlier was yet to come. Time passifies, makes “past” that which was not yet. It allows us a brief glimpse at that which is before it takes it away from us by turning it into that which was.\(^{181}\) We, for whom time exists only as temporal, that is, in the form of its irreversible flux, lose to the past in the movement of time's passification. There is a finality, a definiteness to the past. It is irreversibly over; gone for good, without any chance of a return. But there is more to it: “the past is not simply fleeting, it is also the thing that is completely done; as a thing already done, the past is something that is deposited and determined.”\(^{182}\) There is something timeless about the past: it is what it is. The past is, to use Jankélévitch's questionable spatial metaphor, “the universal depository of time.”\(^{183}\) That which was at the same time will forever have been.\(^{184}\) While for me the past may be over, in itself the past just is. It is done and a fact\(^{185}\) until the end of time. This "timeless" quality of that which is irreversibly over Jankélévitch calls the past's 'irrevocability'.

To say that the past is irrevocable means that that which has come to pass “cannot be annihilated.”\(^{186}\) If the past is that which has “ceased to be useful”\(^{187}\) it is not because it has become obsolete in itself, but only because at a more fundamental level it has ceased to be use-able for me.

That which has receded into the past constitutes in its “epochality” an essential counterpoint to my

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181Cf. Jankélévitch 57.
182Jankélévitch 304. [“le passé n'est pas seulement fuyant, il est aussi chose toute faite ; chose déjà faite, le passé est chose déposée et determinée.”]
183Jankélévitch 45. [“l'universel dépositoire du temps”]
184It is this atemporal co-presence of the past and the future of that Jankélévitch calls “semi-eternity” [demi-éternité] or “sempiternity” [sempiternité], that is, “an eternity that had a beginning” [une éternité qui a commencé]. (Jankélévitch 236)
185French “fait” ; Latin “factum.”
186Jankélévitch 211.
current power. We said before that the past presents itself to us as a thing. Yet it is a thing of the most peculiar kind, one whose immaterial permanence dwarfs that of the monuments that are supposed to remind us of precisely this past. But these aide-mémoires are not for the sake of the past, but for our sake. The past stands in no need of being remembered. It is what is. Even when all empirical traces, all effects, and all memories of an event have been destroyed or forgotten, there will nevertheless remain an “irreducible residue.”188 This residue that remains when all tangible content of the past has been destroyed is the pure thatness of the past. When we talk about an event we can distinguish that which happened, i.e., the event's content, from the fact that it happened: the event's having occurred. The event, that what happened (quiddity), and its occurrence, the fact that it happened (quoddity); the res facta, the thing, and the fecisse, the happening of the thing, its eventality. The mere facticity of the past is what is irrevocable. The irrevocable is the thatness of the past; the past's 'quoddity'. “One can undo the done deed,” writes Jankélévitch, “but one cannot undo the fact of having-done, which cannot be undone; one can annihilate or wipe out the thing, but one cannot turn into nothing its essence.”189 The fact of having-been-done, or its twin-brother the fact of having-taken-place190, that is the indestructible quoddity of the past. The having-been or having-done are definitive modifications of history which due to the irreversibility of time cannot be undone. “[W]ithout this having-taken-place the history that is would be a different history.”191

What is this fact-that? Jankélévitch concedes that unlike time's irreversibility, which we experience all the time, the notion of irrevocability is abstract and theoretical.192 It is literally abstracted from any palpable content and as such not something that we ever experience as such. We do

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188Jankélévitch 237. [“résidue irréductible”]
189Jankélévitch 241. [“On peut défaire la chose faite, mais non pas défaire le fait d'avoir fait, qui est indéfaisable ; on peut annihiler ou anéantir la chose, mais non point nihiliser son essence.”]
190Irrevocability is the mark of all events regardless of whether the involve human agency or not. In the case of the latter we speak of the “having taken place,” in the case of the latter we speak of the “having done,” yet in both cases we mean the same quoddity.
191Jankélévitch 242. [“Sans cet avoir-eu-lieu l'histoire serait une autre histoire.”]
192See Jankélévitch 243.
not experience it as such because whenever we do experience the past, its sense of irrevocability inheres in the particular content (e.g, this particular past event rather than that); yet it is attached to a “thing” [chose]. The “experience” of the irrevocable is a limit experience in a dual sense: it is a tangential experience of the finis of our finitude, of the limit of our power. Although when taken in isolation it would seem that the 'fact-that' is an exotic postulate of Jankélévitch's philosophy, essentially this “postulate” does not go beyond the common notion that even if every living person were to forget a particular past event, someone could remember it again someday. Someone could remember it because there is always something to be remembered. For us the past exists only insofar as we remember it.

But when we remember the past we attribute a reality to it that we do not attribute strictly to the objects of other similar mental acts (i.e., the objects of acts of the imagination). Even though the fact-that is not the content of a particular experience it “resonates” through every representation of the past. When we say that something “was” that something “happened” we are not merely making a claim about our minds and our subjective memories. No, we are saying that something factual is the case. The surprising conclusion is that statements about the past are no less factual and verifiable than statements about the present. The past as such bears the “accent of truth,” which gives it is particular sting that even the most vivid, the most cruel, the most beautiful content of an imagination cannot duplicate.

For all practical purposes forgetting, the destruction of all traces suffices to annihilate the past.

Empirically-speaking the past can be destroyed: the lasting effects or traces of the past, in other words,
all empirical content of a past can be wiped out. But the past itself cannot, because it is non-empirical. The fact-that is not an empirically given. To say that the past is irrevocable means that it does not depend on anyone's memory to be; all (our) remembering (and forgetting) is made possible by the past. That is the in-itself, the ipseity of the past. Even if everyone were to forget it, in virtue of the past's irrevocability someday it could facilitate anyone's remembering. To say that the past is irrevocable means that one day it could be remembered (again). No matter how radical and universal the forgetting of the past, “there always remains something! Irrespective of what happens, from now on nothing will be like it was before... The history of the world is forever marked by that which has come to pass. That which has happened cannot, can no longer not have happened; that which has taken place can no longer not have taken place.” That is the law of the irrevocable: that what is done cannot be undone.

If praxis pertains to our power, then the irrevocable marks precisely the limit of our power; and consequently it marks the limit of all “practical” concern with the past. The thatness of the past points towards the fact that for us the past transcends that which we remember or forget or can hope to return to even though it can exist for us only in and through memory. While the past is accessible to us only through memory (or its individual effects) there is something, namely the past in-itself (i.e., the past in its thatness) that marks the “limite infranchissable” [insurmountable limit] of our power.

1.4.4.4. Return to Jankélévitch's criticism, and nostalgia

For Jankélévitch, nostalgia would be inconceivable without the experience of the irreversible fleetingness of things, because it is precisely the realization of the evanescence of all experiences that makes us nostalgic. It is arguably this experience that figures most centrally in the experience of

197 See Jankélévitch 242.
198 See Jankélévitch 243.
199 Jankélévitch 272. [“il en restera toujours quelque chose! Quoi qu'il arrive désormais rien ne sera plus comme avant... L'histoire du monde est marquée pour toujours par ce qui est advenu. Ce qui est advenu ne peut pas, ne peut plus être inadvenu ; ce qui a eu lieu ne peut pas, ne peut plus ne pas avoir eu lieu.”]
200 See Jankélévitch 244.
nostalgia-T. To illustrate this we will look at another poem that thematizes the distinct experience of time involved in nostalgia even more explicitly than Heine's "Nachtgedanken": Alphonse de Lamartine's "Le lac" (1820).

Ainsi, toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages,
Dans la nuit éternelle emportés sans retour,
Ne pourrons-nous jamais sur l'océan des âges
Jeter l'ancre un seul jour?

... 

Un soir, t'en souvient-il? Nous voguions en silence ;
On n'entendait au loin, sur l'onde et sous les cieux,
Que le bruit des rameurs qui frappaient en cadence
Tes flots harmonieux.

Tout à coup des accent inconnus à la terre
Du rivage charmé frappèrent les échos ;
Le flot fut attentif, et la voix qui m'est chère
Laissa tomber ces mots:

"Ô temps! Suspends ton vol, et vous, heures propices!
Suspendez votre cours:
Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices
Des plus beaux de nos jours!

"Assez de malheureux ici-bas vous implorent,
Coulez, coulez pour eux ;
Prenez avec leurs jours les soins qui les dévorent ;
Oubliez les heureux.

"Mais je demande en vain quelques moments encore,
Le temps m'échappe et fuit ;
Je dis à cette nuit: Soi plus lente ; et l'aurore
Va dissiper la nuit.

"Aimons donc, aimons donc! de l'heure fugitive,
Hâtons-nous, jouissons!
L'homme n'a point de port, le temps n'a point de rive ;
Il coule, et nous passons!"

Temps jaloux, se peut-il que ces moments d'ivresse,
Où l'amour à longs flots nous verse le bonheur,
S'envolent loin de nous delà même vitesse
Que les jours de malheur?
Eh quoi! n'en pourrons-nous fixer au moins la trace?
Quoi! passés pour jamais! quoi! tout entiers perdus!
Ce temps qui les donna, ce temps qui les efface,
Ne nous les rendra plus! [...]²⁰¹

The first striking difference between “Nachtgedanken” and “Le lac” is that in the latter speaks of
nostalgia without any overt reference to a particular homely place. This omission of the homely place is
indirectly justified in the first stanza where the speaker casts aside the possibility of the kind of
temporal repose (metaphorically represented by the anchor [ancre]) that we found in Heine's poem. For
the speaker of “Le lac,” the experience of time is uniformly that of being “always driven” [toujours
poussés], always carried in the same direction (“emportés sans retour”). To the extent that time always
carries us into the unknown and foreign, time is literally that which affords no possibility of a home.
What we find in "Le lac" is the experience of nostalgia reduced to its purest temporal essence. Here it is
not the common and regular that is the object of nostalgia but rather the unrepeatable, that which
happened on a specific evening [un soir] which is remembered for the singular event that occurred just
that evening. This event floats like a buoy in the memory of the speaker who, while turning back
mentally to that one evening, continues to be “swept away on the river of time, which flows in a single
direction.”²⁰²

The constitutive difference that figures centrally in nostalgia-T is not that between a 'here' and
an 'elsewhere', but it is the pure difference of the irreversible passage of time. It is the incessant,
 inexorable process by which an ever-changing momentary present becomes irrevocably passified for
eternity. Accordingly, we must understand what is involved in the "desire for a return" of the nostalgic:
to go back in time to experience that which one has experienced one more time would be tantamount to
the destruction of the temporality of time. Consequently, what the nostalgic effectively wants is not to

²⁰¹Translation see Appendix B.
have this or that evanescent experience “back,” but rather the absence of all evanescence from his experience: “Ô temps! Suspends ton vol, et vous, heures propices! Suspendez votre cours” [Oh time, suspend you flight, and you, fortunate hours, suspend your course]. This wish expresses what the desire to "go back" to a moment that one has already experienced amounts to ontologically: namely, the de-temporalization of time.

According to Jankélévitch it is time's irreversibility which makes us susceptible to the experience of nostalgia in the first place (which we could describe as the affective awareness of time's irreversibility). This nostalgia lets the object which was originally only the “occasion” of our general nostalgia appear in the light that makes one nostalgic about “this” particular object. However, it is not the particular charm of the object of nostalgia that gives rise to nostalgia in the first place. Nostalgia rather creates the special aura of that which we become nostalgic about. If you will, it reminds us of the “rarity,” or as Jankélévitch calls it, of the “primeultimacy” of every experience, i.e., of the fact that what has been experienced will never be experienced again. But this special charm exists not outside of the nostalgic experience of this charm. The look back “transfigures” everything, especially if the person who is looking back is looking through the lens coloured with nostalgia. The latter has an almost unlimited power to transfigure even the worst experience into something that we come to feel regret for being separated from for. All looking back has the power to create “a retrospective mirage,” so that, in principle, nostalgia could be “triggered” by any past experience insofar to the extent that it “reminds” us of the fleetingness that affects all things equally.

This may still sound like a variation on what above we called the “crude” criticism of nostalgia, namely that it romanticizes the past; however, this is mistaken. Clearly one has to admit that empirically we are mostly nostalgic about a particular experience because this experience was special.

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203 Jankélévitch 289. [“mirage rétrospectif”]
204 However, in actuality we tend to only feel nostalgic about those past experiences whose pastness pains us the most; yet the nostalgia for these special experiences is grounded in a more universal nostalgia that remains neutral with regard to the particularity of its specific object.
For Jankélevitch the truth of and the key to this statement lie in the “was”: It is because something *was* special that we regret it (that is to say, we regret its pastness), but it is important to understand this in the double sense: It is because the experience in question is *over* that the experience that we perceive to be so special “appears” as being so positively special to us. But furthermore it is because this special experience *is over* that the nostalgic pains over it. The pastness of the past that we feel nostalgic about is the cause and reason of *both* our desire *and* our pain. On the one hand, we desire the *timelessness* of the irrevocable factum of the past experience. The idyllic past is idyllic because we can *tarry* in it. The remembered past has been purified of the flux which it was subjected to when we experienced it in the flesh. The past is idyllic because it is timeless (irrevocable for eternity). On the other hand, the pastness of the past is the cause of our pain: we agonize over "That which I was and will never again be! That which I had and will never again have!" 205

Of course Jankélevitch does not say that we “desire” the past as such, or the pastness of the past. Yet, it is the pastness, the “quoddity” of a particular past experience, as he calls it, that makes the “quiddity,” 206 that is, the given experience's content, appear desirable and capable of inducing the experience of nostalgia in us. 207 Empirically we may become nostalgic because we consider the past to have been “better” than the present. Yet, phenomenologically the past is capable of being assessed as “better” because it is past. Something is special because it *was* special and now no longer is (special): it is the tension between the fugitivity of even our dearest experiences, and their timeless "achievement," which, however, are ontologically two sides of the same coin. It is the pastness of the past that we mourn and that makes us wistful. Writes Jankélevitch, “In a word: it is not necessary that the nostalgic has been this or that, it is enough that he *has been* in general, and by this having been we

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205 Pessoa 173.
206 The terms “quoddity” and “quiddity” refer, respectively, to the fact that *quod* an event is past, i.e., the pastness of a particular past event, and on the other hand that what *quid* this past event was, e.g., the birth of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the 1990 FIFA World Cup final.
207 It is not the absolute uniqueness that interests us as empirical subjects but rather the significance that an experience has in relation to the interests, concerns, and values that are most important to us.
understand, depending on the example, experienced, loved, or suffered, like everything else that exists. The object of nostalgia is not this or that past, but it is rather the fact of the past, put differently, the pastness.” 208 It is "the quoddity of the past, that is to say, the indeterminate fact of the past in general – that is the impalpable object of our melancholy.” 209 He adds, “nostalgia inheres entirely in the bitterness over the fact of having been ... nostalgia has as its object the woes of the irreversible and of the primultimacy of that which will never again be.” 210 – But this (and that is Jankélévitch's criticism of nostalgia) alone is no reason, why we should feel nostalgic about the past. Writes Jankélévitch, “[nostalgia’s] object would justify just as well the contrary feeling.” 211 This object is of course not the “cherished” object but rather the pastness of this cherished object, nostalgia's ultimate object. The past as such could also evoke a different response in us, namely the relief that something is over; or the gratitude that one might feel for having been so lucky to have experienced a certain thing. Again, Jankélévitch uses the analogy of homeland, “the fascination of the birthplace does not derive from the intrinsic nature of this place but from the fact of having been born there,” a similar justification can be given for the “special charm” for a given past period: “it is not necessary that our past was particularly glorious in order to evoke regret and nostalgia.” 212 The thing that counts for the nostalgic is that a given period was experienced.

The nostalgic wants to return to a point in their past, and yet she knows that her wish cannot be fulfilled. There is a pain in the realization that is empirically often aggravated by the peculiar quality of the moment for which we are nostalgic, but underneath this peculiar pain lies a more general

208Jankélévitch 289/290. ["D'un mot: il n'est pas nécessaire que le nostalgique ait été ceci ou cela, il suffit qu'il ait été en général, et qu'ayant été il ait bien entendu, selon l'occasion, vécu, aimé et souffert, comme tout ce qui existe. L'objet de la nostalgie ce n'est pas tel ou tel passé, mais c'est bien plutôt le fait du passé, autrement dit la passéité.”]
209Jankélévitch 290. ["La quoddité du passé, c'est-a-dire le fait indeterminé du passé en general – voilà l'objet impalpable de notre melancolie.”]
210Jankélévitch 290. ["la nostalgia tient tout entière dans l'amertume du fait d'avoir été ... la nostalgie à pour objet la misère de l'irréversible et la primultimité de ce qui plus jamais ne sera.”]
211Jankélévitch 285. ["parce que son object justifierait aussi bien le sentiment contraire.”]
212Jankélévitch 289. ["la fascination du lieu natal ne tient pas a la nature intrisique de ce lieu, mais au fait d'y être né ... il n'est pas nécessaire que notre passé ait été spécialement glorieux pour éveiller le regret et la nostalgie.”]
realization: namely that no moment, no matter how trite or grand, will ever be given to us again. The nostalgic knows that the return is impossible; that it will not occur; that hoping for such a return is pointless. The nostalgic is in this way without hope. We said above that hope is unequivocally directed toward the future, yet the object of the nostalgic's hope is irrecoverably lost to the past. The impossibility of reliving the past, regardless of whether the past is recent or lies decades ago entails the impossibility to remake or redo, not even for just one more time, that which has already been done. It is the irreducible, incommensurable character of past and future, of possibility and facticity that the nostalgic runs up against. The nostalgic does not regret, nor does he feel remorse; the nostalgic mourns. She mourns the irreversible loss of a particular possibility: the possibility to experience that which she has already experienced again.

It is because something is over and (thus) will never be again (i.e., it is forever over, “passés pour jamais”) that the nostalgic suffers. In the experience of nostalgia lies an implicit knowledge or at least a certain expectation: namely that that which is over is over and will never be again. The person who experiences nostalgia aches over the truth of the pastness of the past fully understood as that which is (irreversibly) over. It is in virtue of time's irreversibility that the past is past (over) and the future is future (open, to come). While the empirical nostalgic focuses on a particular (part of the greater) past, the particular object of our nostalgia is in a sense contingent. Writes Jankélévitch, “Irreversibility is inherent to the pastness of the past. The pastness as such, that is to say, the pure and simple fact of being past – that is the only absolutely universal quality that all preterite events without exception have in common, and vice versa without any privilege.”

213 Jankélévitch 45. [“L’irréversibilité est inhérente à la passéité du passé. La passéité en tant que telle, autrement dit le pur et simple fait d'être passé, - telle est la seule propriétè absolument universelle commune a tous les événements du préterit sans exceptions, et vice versa sans privilege aucun”]
thatness (quoddity) of the past “is the non-repeatable and irreversible element par excellence.”\textsuperscript{214} nostalgia is best understood as a “reaction against the irreversible.”\textsuperscript{215} As such, however, the contingency of the object of nostalgia is only apparent: To the extent that the quality of pastness is the “real” object of the experience of nostalgia, the object of nostalgia is always the same.

1.4.4.5. Summary and outlook

In a nutshell, the explanations offered by Jankélévitch for the phenomenology of nostalgia are as follows: The real object of nostalgia is the pastness of the past; that something is past, rather than what this past was like. The pastness alone, however, does not explain why one should or do feel one way or another the past. It is because of the quality that we attribute to a particular past experience that we feel nostalgic rather than indifferent about it. Yet Jankélévitch says that this quality is always an effect of our nostalgia, which in turn is born from the insight into the fleetingness of things, that is, the indiscriminate non-permanence of all experiences. Time's irreversibility is time's essence. It is only in virtue of this essence, in virtue of time's temporality that we could experience that which we now want back in the first place but can never have. Furthermore, if it is nostalgia itself that “fabricates” the aura of the cherished times, then our desire to “go back” is incoherent for another reason: if we were to go to back to the place that we now feel nostalgic for, our odyssey home would never reach its destination, for there would be no such place. 

...Ergo, nostalgia as a therapeutic object seems to be doomed from all sides.

This, it appears, would be nostalgia's fate if it were not for the fact that the quoddity of the past alone does not establish nostalgia. It is this crucial fact that Jankélévitch does not pay sufficient attention to: It is not merely the past as such that I am nostalgic about but my past. We saw above that the homeland is not an entity that exists “out there,” but rather a place whose particular importance

\textsuperscript{214}Jankélévitch 45.  
\textsuperscript{215}Jankélévitch 290. [“une reaction contre l'irréversible.”]
derives from how I feel there. The “homeland” is not primarily a “land” to me but “home”; and “home” does not designate a place but rather a manner of being emplaced in the world. Analogously, the past that is dear to me is not the past in general. Nor is it my neighbour's past that I am nostalgic about. It is my past. I can long for other pasts, other periods in the past. I can even ache over the fact that I am separated from those pasts, that I cannot be there. But only my past can be the object of an algos that has as its cause the impossibility of a nostos, the impossibility of my returning to it. “My past” is the entity for which the concept of “not being able to return” is sensible. Even if the object of my nostalgia is the past's pastness, it is also only insofar as this past is mine that it could become the object of my nostos. The mineness of the past is, at first, a merely formal quality that pertains to all parts of my past alike; yet as far as the past in general is concerned my past is a qualitative distinction that only some parts of the past in general have. The quiddity of the past is only delimited in one respect: it needs to be my past. But this determination appears to pertain to the quiddity of the past rather than its thatness. In other words, even if Jankélévitch's claim that nostalgia is “groundless” [immotivé] is otherwise convincing, that which concerns the nostalgic is never merely only the pastness as such but the pastness of a particular past: namely the pastness of their own past.

Secondly, it is striking that neither Casey nor Hart raises the same kind of “concern” about nostalgia, namely that it is an incoherent desire, even though all three thinkers agree that nostalgia creates its own object. If we take the object of nostalgia, i.e., the thing to which we want to return to be a specific moment, experience, or period that precedes the moment of our nostalgia, then the nostalgic really does not know what it is that he wants. But it is not coherent if we make time itself nostalgia's object (which is, however, what Jankélévitch indirectly does when he claims that nostalgia's true object is the irreversible and he argues that irreversibility is the essence of time). This seems to be the same thing that Jankélévitch is saying, but in fact it is not. Jankélévitch is right when he says that the object of nostalgia is the past's pastness, i.e., the fact that the past is “over.” Nostalgia has indeed to do with a
distinct experience of time. But nostalgia also creates its own object. Jankélévitch's mistake is that even though he affirms each of the two claims on its own, he does not relate them to each other. For Jankélévitch, to say that the past is “over” is merely another way of saying that the past is past, and the latter is analytically true. But the experience of “loss” (e.g., of another kind of time) belongs essentially to the time of nostalgia. If nostalgia creates its own object, and this object is “a period in my past,” then it is this complex temporal object that is constituted in nostalgia. To say that we want this object “back” must be understood to express “the language of nostalgia” itself. The moment to which we want to return is only given as an (irreversible) “moment” in the experience of nostalgia. That is to say, it is not just the object of the desired return that belongs essentially to nostalgia (i.e., as the nostalged-about-object) but also the conceptual possibility of a “return,” i.e., of a going-back to where one has already been.

1.5. Conclusion

What has emerged in the preceding exposition of the history and discourse of nostalgia and its philosophical treatment is the central importance of two interconnected ideas, which we schematically assign to either one of the constituent semantic components of nostalgia: on the one had we noted the idea that nostalgia is intimately linked to something that belongs to or is at least perceived to belong to one's own past. On the other hand, the 'algos' of nostalgia is centred around the irreversibility of time's flow, particularly the distinct quality that this 'irreversible flow' confers onto that portion of the desideratum that constitutes the object of the 'nostos'.

There are a number of commonalities between the three different accounts of nostalgia that we have examined in this chapter. One of the insights that we gained is the “productive” character of nostalgia. Although Casey and Jankélévitch's differ in their assessment of this factum, all three thinkers agree that the experience of nostalgia involves a sui generis givenness, a givenness of an object that is
only there in virtue of the nostalgic affliction. According to Hart's account of nostalgia, the object that is given in nostalgia is a distinct “disunity-in-unity” that pertains to the (attempted) process of gathering our life under the category of a unified project. Secondly, we noted that the long-standing debate whether nostalgia is primarily a spatial or a temporal phenomenon. To the extent that the Heimlichkeit of the home and the Unheimlichkeit that we experience in nostalgia is itself inextricably intertwined with a distinct experience of time, this debate is badly put. Nostalgia has to do with an Unheimlichkeit that is at the same time spatial and temporal. As we illustrated by means of Heine's poem “Nachtgedanken”, the loss of the distinct Befindlichkeit that we experience “at home” is closely related to the loss of a distinct temporality. Thus, the desire to “return home” also seems to involve the restoration of this temporality.

All three thinkers agree that the experience of nostalgia has to do with a particular experience of time: one in which time's passage is experienced as irreversible. Time's irreversibility not only “takes away” and “passifies,” it also has the ability to “disperse” us: namely into a “youthful self,” a “pre-war self,” etc. According to Jankélévitch, nostalgia cannot be remedied because what the nostalgic really wants to return to is not a particular place but rather “the young man who he was when he lived there.”

To remedy nostalgia would require to be that person again, i.e., to return to that period in time when was that youthful self. In this sense, Bolzinger's claim that what the nostalgic individual desires would effectively be “tantamount to a restoration of self” seems to be on the right track. And yet, unless nostalgia is incoherent, as Jankélévitch claims it is, this “restoration” cannot simply be the past self from which we now experience ourselves to be disconnected, because the existence of this past self depends precisely on the impossibility of a return. The person who wants to be that self “again” is not only incapable of satisfying her heart's desire, the person does not really know what it is that she wants.

To say that nostalgia creates its own object means precisely that in nostalgia we do not glimpse

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216 Jankélévitch 300. [“mais le jeune homme qu'il était lui-même quand il l'habitait.”]
217 Bolzinger 222. [“Le retour équivaut à une restauration de soi.”]
something that has a static and independent existence, something that we could simply want “back.” If
nostalgia produces its own object, then that which nostalgia is fundamentally about is not this or that
“object” that we want “back,” but rather the im/possibility of a 'wanting-back'. In other words, what
interests us in nostalgia is not the specific content of the nostalgic experience but rather the peculiar
givenness of this object.

As we are going to show in the next two chapters, this sharp distinction between 'content' and
'mode of givenness' is untenable. If nostalgia's “object” is ambiguous, as Casey has noted, the insight
into nostalgia's productive character cannot be limited to nostalgia's object understood as the object of
the nostos. If, as both Hart and Casey seem to suggest, the object of nostalgia is itself a synthesized and
“meta-” temporal one, i.e., not merely an object that we simply find “in” time, but rather one that is
especially wed to a peculiar “crystallization” of time (or maybe even is this peculiar crystallization)
that is itself produced by or in the experience of nostalgia, then the object of our nostalgia is not just
something “in” time: the “in-ness” itself is part of the nostalgic object. On this account, Jankélévitch's
mistake lies in the sharp distinction between the nostos part of nostalgia and the algos part and the
suggestion that the object of our desire simply exists “in” time and that the cause of our pain is time
itself. Put differently, although Jankélévitch recognizes that the object of the nostalgic's desire is first
produced in the experience of nostalgia, he treats time's irreversibility itself as a given and not as
something that is produced in the experience of nostalgia. However, the possibility of the latter would
require that the empirical experience of nostalgia is not “all the nostalgia there is,” and that there is in
fact more to nostalgia than we are (or perhaps even could be) consciously aware of in the experience of
nostalgia.
CHAPTER 2: The Past that is One's Own

2.1 Introduction

In the first chapter we took a first, broad look at the phenomenon of nostalgia. The three philosophical accounts of nostalgia that we engaged with all shared the basic assumption that nostalgia involves a distinct experience of the nostalgic subject's past. Despite the differences in emphasis, all three thinkers agree that nostalgia is “about” the subject's past. One of the central facets of the concept nostalgia that our discussion of nostalgia has omitted so far is the normative character of the concept of nostalgia. With the exception of Jankélévitch, none of our interlocutors takes an evaluative stance vis-à-vis the experience of nostalgia. Hart, for instance, explicitly notes that he would abstain from deciding “which modern-nostalgic experiences are genuine and which are banal.”218 More importantly for our purposes, he expressly abstains from addressing the question “whether the nostalgic experience itself is infantile, politically reactionary, regressive, etc.”219 While this neutrality is non-optional for the kind of phenomenological description in which Hart engages, it runs the risk of obfuscating the fact that nostalgia was since its inception considered to be an abnormal condition. Even beyond nostalgia's explicit categorization as a pathology, the discourse of nostalgia has since its inception been implicated in normative discussions about questions like, What constitutes “faithful” recollection? and What is the appropriate amount (and kind) of concern for the past?220

To say that nostalgia is a “pathology” means that it is an issue of health. Curing nostalgia was a matter of restoring health to the nostalgic patient. Although historically it is true that nostalgia ceased to be of special medical interest around the middle of the 19th century, this does not necessarily entail that

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218Hart 397.
219Ibid.
220As Michael S. Roth points out in Memory, Trauma, and History (2012), “In late-nineteenth-century France, psychiatrists, neurologists, and philosophers joined in the task of constructing the image of a normal memory via conceptualization of memory disorders such as nostalgia, hypermnesia, and split personality. Through the classification of maladies de la mémoire they were forming the 'proper' connection between present and past.” (25) In other words, the experience of nostalgia only came into purview against a particular understanding of “normal” memory.
nostalgia suddenly became the opposite of a pathology. It rather means that nostalgia ceased to be an object of interest primarily of those who saw nostalgia's significance as it pertained to the value of health. While this development may have been instrumental in the emerging possibility of reassessing nostalgia, it did not in and by itself destigmatize nostalgia.\footnote{At any rate, if nostalgia came to be depathologized in a non-medical sense this was at least to some extent possible because nostalgia itself changed the meaning of “normal memory.” The concept of nostalgia is always implicated in a discourse on normal memory and on the proper relationship between past and present. Whether or not this is explicitly recognized, nostalgia is also always about the appropriate relationship to the past, a question which is ineradicably inscribed into the history and thus into the historical meaning of term “nostalgia.”} At any rate, if nostalgia came to be depathologized in a non-medical sense this was at least to some extent possible because nostalgia itself changed the meaning of “normal memory.” The concept of nostalgia is always implicated in a discourse on normal memory and on the proper relationship between past and present. Whether or not this is explicitly recognized, nostalgia is also always about the appropriate relationship to the past, a question which is ineradicably inscribed into the history and thus into the historical meaning of term “nostalgia.”

In this chapter we will argue that nostalgia's implication in normative discourses runs even deeper than its obvious connection to the medical discourses of the 17th, 18th, and 19th century and persists even after nostalgia has been sufficiently “neutralized” or “rehabilitated” as a non-pathological condition. Any attempt to “sanitize” the concept of nostalgia from all its normative connotations runs the risk of obfuscating the relation of the concept of nostalgia to the norm of personal identity to which nostalgia bears an essential, ineradicable relation. The question that will guide our examination of the normative dimension of the concept of nostalgia in this chapter is, What does it mean to “have a past (that is one's own)”\footnote{Two examples that illustrate this are nostalgia and crime, and nostalgia and immigration.}? We will argue that the concept of ‘having a past' should not to be treated as a simple given that can serve as an explanation for the phenomenon of nostalgia but does not itself stand in need an examination. Instead we will take the opposite route and argue that the concept of nostalgia can help us to understand what is at stake, metaphysically, in the concept of ‘having a past’, a concept that appears to be presupposed in the experience and concept of nostalgia. Specifically, I will argue that the sense of “having a past” that figures centrally in the concept of nostalgia is one way, but not the
only way of inhabiting time; in particular, it is a normative way of inhabiting time. In other words, if the experience of nostalgia essentially involves the concept of “my past,” and the concept of “my past” is itself a normative concept, then an adequate account of nostalgia cannot bracket the question of nostalgia's own normativity. To argue that the concept of “my past” is a normative concept entails that the past that is mine is not an psychological given, namely something that we become immediately aware of and gain access to by means of our recollections. The reality of the past that is “mine” is rather inescapably intersubjective.

The first part of our discussion will lead us into a phenomenological analysis of human temporality. The second part will engage with a classical philosophical discourse on personal identity that I pick up via the account that John Locke's present in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding. What we purport to demonstrate is that our having-a-past is only derivatively a temporal phenomenon. Primordially, it is a dimension of our existence that arises insofar as we inhabit a social world.

2.2. On inhabiting time “before” the emergence of the self

2.2.1. Memory of a “timeless” past

There are few philosophical works in the 20th century that have provided a more compelling analysis of the human experience of time than Martin Heidegger's Sein und Zeit. One of the central insights for this study is his that the human being-in-time cannot be reduced to one monolithic experience of time. Insofar as human existence, Heidegger's term Dasein, comprises a number of different “modes” of being, all of which have their own temporality, to speak of “the” human

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222The claim that the concept of 'having a past' is only “derivatively” temporal must surely sound counter-intuitive, to say that least.

223All translated passages of Sein und Zeit are given as they appear in Joan Stambaugh's translation, published as Being and Time (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). The page numbers for the German text refer to the Niemeyer edition listed in the bibliography. All other references are to the German original.
experience of time is misleading. When we say that it belongs to the essence of human existence that we “have a past”, the meaning of this 'having' needs to be understood differently depending on the particular mode of being.\textsuperscript{224} The vagueness of our language obfuscates the significant phenomenological differences that our experience of the past comprises and the varied manifestations that our relation to this can take on. Our analysis of nostalgia in the preceding chapter led us to adopt one particular conception of our temporality: When I remember what I did yesterday afternoon, I have no doubt that it was \textit{I} who was there yesterday afternoon; that the remembering self that I am right now and the experiencing self that I was yesterday in a sense are not only closely related: they are in fact the same self at “different” times. This \textit{linear} conception is not only well-supported by our experience of memory, it is an idea that is as old as Western thinking about memory itself. The view that “The remembered calls for the presence of the rememberer at its original happening,”\textsuperscript{225} can already be found in Aristotle's seminal account of memory: \textit{De memoria et reminiscentia}. Writes Aristotle, “whenever one exercises the faculty of remembering, he must say within himself, 'I formerly heard (or otherwise perceived) this,' or 'I formerly had this thought'.”\textsuperscript{226} The linear temporality that is implied by this view is the same that we diagnosed to underlie the phenomenon of nostalgia in Chapter 1. Yet, neither this conception of memory nor the implied linear temporality can lay claim to a primordial status: they are dependent on a more ubiquitous kind of memory, which in turn implies a sense of “having a past” that does not involve a linear conception of time.

My ability to recollect past experiences depends itself on the ability to retain these experiences; to “store” them and thus make them available for concrete acts of recollection. The retention of the past

\textsuperscript{224}Heidegger makes a similar remark about the commonplace claim that human beings have an environment in \textit{Sein und Zeit}: "The saying used so often today 'Human beings have their environment' does not say anything ontologically as long as this 'having' is undetermined." (54) ["Die heute vielgebrauchte Rede 'der Mensch hat seine Umwelt' besagt ontologisch solange nichts, also dieses 'Haben' unbestimmt bleibt." (57)] It will be our principal task in this chapter to shed light and to determine the concept of “having” as it figures in our different ways of inhabiting time.

\textsuperscript{225}Casey (2000) 42.

\textsuperscript{226}Aristotle 449b23. Compare Casey 67.
does not belong to the same linear conception of time but is rather that which “spans” the entire
duration from the moment of the original impression to the moment where the original impression
comes to be “revived.” It is our memory’s ability to retain and thereby prolong a given experience that
must be considered as ontologically primary, not only because it the basis of our ability to recollect our
past, but also because our explicit, conscious recollection of the past is not the most prevalent and most
basic form or our memory of the past. According to Paul Valéry, we easily forget the ubiquitous role
that memory plays in our being-in-the-world. It is especially because we forget how memories are
constitutive of countless phenomena that we commonly consider as taking place “in the present,” that
we think that memory’s primary function is the representation of a bygone past.227

As we saw in the previous chapter, we are wont to understand the past ab negativo from the
present: the past is that which “is not anymore.” The past is the (or a) present negated. In contrast, the
fundamental assumption behind this section is that even though the above account of the meaning of
the past is for certain purposes very instructive, it cannot lay claim to an absolute status. The
significance that the past plays in our lives is belittled if we understand it from a present that, in turn,
we consider transparent with regard to its own constitution. While in the previous chapter we
understood the past from the vantage point of the present, in this section we will attempt to show that
the present can only be understood from the past. In other words, “before” the past acquires a decidedly
temporal character it manifests in an altogether different guise: the primordial meaning of “having a
past” is to “inhabit a familiar world.” It is this notion that our analysis of the personal past must begin
with.

Even though the explicit recollective representification of the past has received the most
sustained attention within the philosophy of memory, phenomenologically it is far from being the only

227Writes Valéry, “Man constantly forgets this – his memory. Memory is the thing that of all the things in the world we
forget most easily.” (1220) [“L'homme oublie perpetuellement ceci – sa mémoire. La mémoire est la chose du monde
que nous oublions le plus aisement.”] (All translations mine.)
mnemonic attitude that we adopt vis-à-vis the past. According to Valéry, “Only the smallest part of our memory presents itself in the form of recollections; most commonly, memory is the matter of the present – everything that functions in a regular manner in the present.”\textsuperscript{228} The primary function of our memory does not consist in (occasionally) “bringing back” the past (for example in the form of a mental image of a past experience), but in constantly supplying the present with a arsenal of more or less suitable responses to the varying stimuli of the present. In other words, the primary function of memory is not to re-presentify the absent past – memory as representation but rather to prolong its effect, to keep this effect alive by keeping it from receding into “the past.”\textsuperscript{229} This form of remembering is not only much more pervasive, it is also more easily misrecognized as belonging to the faculty of memory: the vast majority of our acts of memory do not present themselves explicitly as acts of memory because they manifest themselves in ways that make no reference to the past as something that is past.

Valéry calls this form of memory “le fonctionnel” (henceforth rendered in English as “the functional”), which bears a close resemblance to Henri Bergson's notion of 'mémoire-habitude'.\textsuperscript{230} The functional has two aspects that are equally important: these aspects are that of decontextualization and that of detemporalization. Like a lesson that one has learned, the memory of this lesson does not present itself as the memory of a momentary event (or series of events) in which the knowledge of the lesson was acquired and that now “lies in the past,” but rather in the lived and acted application of the lesson to the opportunities for application that present themselves to the subject.\textsuperscript{231} “The word that comes to my mind, learned fifty years ago, plays the role of a constant organ. I acquired it – and it

\textsuperscript{228} Valery 1238. ["Ce qui de la mémoire se présente sous l'espèce de souvenir est le plus petit nombre ; dans le cas le plus général, mémoire est la matière du présent – tout ce qui est de fonctionnement régulier dans le présent."]
\textsuperscript{229} On this idea, cf. also Bergson (1988) 80.
\textsuperscript{230} Cf. Bergson (1988) 80ff. According to Bergson, the bulk of our past is “stored up in a mechanism which is set in motion as a whole by an initial impulse.” (80)
became independent of the original period [when it was acquired].”\textsuperscript{232} In order for such “annexation” (Valéry) to occur, it is important that the event or series of events during which we were exposed to an object becomes forgotten so that only the (non-temporal) object itself is retained, rather than the memory of the moment of our original exposure to it. By forgetting its “history,” the object becomes ours: it is now (permanently) at our disposal. Valéry therefore offers this bold definition of “memory”: “changement de l'événement en propriété.”\textsuperscript{233} Writes Valéry, “[M]emory that is no longer recognizable but annexed to the current life, to presence itself – as organs. That's the instrumentation of acquisition. That which was object becomes subject – That which was seen becomes an organ of seeing.”\textsuperscript{234} The content of the memory thus becomes a tool, an organ that from now on will be part of the apparatus through which the world is disclosed to us. This kind of appropriation is a taking possession of, as much as it is a being taking over by the “object”: the thing takes root in the subject. This appropriation is not the internalization of impressions, waiting to be recollected or representified but otherwise forgotten. Rather, they become part of the instruments through which we engage with the world.\textsuperscript{235}

The object that is thus passed over does not attach itself externally to a body that otherwise remains intact: it changes the very motility of this body, albeit ever so slightly. In other words, it transfigures this body. The past which is remembered in the form of becoming functional acquires a materiality that is not the materiality of a thing (e.g., an “image” that is stored “in” the mind), but rather the “materiality” of potential movements. It becomes a part of the body's hexis.\textsuperscript{236} The (repeated) past exposure to a particular phenomenon thus acquires a materiality in the form of the new functional reality that a body thereby acquires. As such it becomes part of the present, which is, however, not the

\textsuperscript{232}Valéry 1240. [“Le mot qui me vient, appris il y a 50 ans, joue comme un organe constant. Il a été acquis – et [est] devenue indépendant de l'époque initiale.”]

\textsuperscript{233}Valéry 1248.

\textsuperscript{234}Valéry 1252. [“[M]émoire non plus reconnaissable, mais annexée à la vie présente, à la présence même- comme organes. C'est l'instrumentation d'acquisition. Ce qui fut objet devient sujet – Ce qui fut vu devient organe de vision.”]

\textsuperscript{235}Valéry speaks of memory's power to change “accident into substance and perception into function [i.e., organ].” (1256) [“La mémoire veut le changement d'accident en substance et de la perception en fonction.”]

\textsuperscript{236}Habitus: Habit and way in which the world is inhabited.
present that could simply be opposed to a “past.” It continues to adhere in the body in the form of a permanent potential of this body rather than the representation of a recollectable image. It is a potential for action rather than the part of the stock of images.

It is by virtue of our memory that individual experiences can become part of our existential vocabulary; organs that we use to make sense of the world. Events thus come to shape (rather than to merely momentarily affect) us, which is only possible because what happens to us can affect us lastingly; because it can change us. The event is “remembered” insofar as from now on we do things differently. While memory is essential for the acquisition of the new element of the world, it is memory's other – forgetting – that is the catalyst for the becoming property of this element. It is to the extent that a given memory loses its memory-character (we forget that something is a memory, that a particular act is an act of remembering) that its content “merges” with us. Memory is both the force behind this merger and the receptivity that makes the merging possible.

On this account, our memory is not a solipsistic thing, something like a hidden treasure chest of private memorabilia. Memory is first and foremost the faculty in virtue of which we are not enclosed in our own mind, that thing in virtue of which we are open to new influences from the outside. “Memory” is the name of a permeability that not only allows for the passage from an outside to an inside but also, namely on a more fundamental ontological level, makes any definite distinction between “inside” and “outside” undecidable.237 Furthermore, the “functionalization” of memory not only problematizes the distinction between inside and outside but it also challenges the linear conception of time: By becoming permanent world-disclosing parts of ourselves, the object(s) of our memory “passes out of time.”238 Our memory no longer bears witness to the “past,” but rather produces the permanent.239

237As such, memory also allows for a mnemonic interlacement with other people of whom we keep and retain things after the direct encounter with them has long receded into the past.
239Cf. Valéry 1244: “Memory does not so much 'serve' the purpose of representing the past as it serves to constitute that which is permanent, that which does not belong to a specific period, the occasion, under the stimulation of the present.” ['La mémoire ne 'sert' pas tant a représenter le passé qu'a constituer le permanent, les sans-époque, l'occasion, sous
implies at the same time that my memory no longer bears witness to my past, to my having-been. The memory that has become organ has thus, in a sense, become not only permanent but also “impersonal”: namely insofar as it no longer refers back to the event of its original acquisition in the past of the person whose “organ” it has (now) become. Valéry himself writes that the annexed piece of past, the functional, is “outside chronological time.”

If this is true and the past does not present itself in terms of a chronological, linear conception of time, nor does the memory of this past manifest itself in the form of explicit (cognitive) representifications of a bygone moment or time, but rather in the competence that I display in my interaction with the world, then we ought to be very wary of basing our conception of the human being-in-time on it. Not only would this create a false impression about the prevalence of this mode of remembering, but it also runs the risk of imposing a particular temporality on phenomena that are governed by additional manners of being-in-time. Our having-a-past is tied to our faculty of memory, to an ability to remember, of which the act of recollection is an important manifestation. However, our memory of the past is much more pervasive and occurs, for the most part, in a much more innocuous form than it does in explicit linear episodic recollection. What holds for memory holds also for the past in general: for the most part, the past that we “have” does not present itself in episodic temporal terms, i.e., as past, but rather in the quality of familiarity that the world that I interact with has for me. This ‘familiarity’ must not be limited to the psychological experience of a familiar object, but, as we will see, is best described as the form of an enacted, practical recognition. It is this dual notion of competence and familiarity that I will expound in this first section as evidence of the most primordial manifestation

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l’excitation du présent.”

240 Of course this does not mean that I have to forget the moment or period during which I acquired the new “organ” in question. The important point of is rather that qua organ, “my past” has a different onto-temporal essence than the one that is implied by my recollection of the event of the acquisition of the organ in question.
242 Valéry 1257. [“hors du temps chronologique”]
243 See Heidegger 54.
of our having-a-past.

2.2.2. The absorption 'in' the world: The habitual “in”

Heidegger begins his analysis of Dasein with a discussion of what he calls “besorgende Alltäglichkeit” [heedful everydayness]. We are following Heidegger's lead here because I believe that the meaning of “having a past” understood as our inhabiting a familiar world via competence and familiarity is most apparent in this mode of being. In this everyday heedfulness, to have a past means precisely that: I inhabit a familiar world. In the besorgende Alltäglichkeit I am fully taken over by the world, I am fully absorbed [aufgehen] in this world insofar as my very being manifests itself in various modes of “heedfulness” [Besorgen]. By this Heidegger understands any kind of activity in which I am fully absorbed in the pursuit of the object of that activity. These activities can be of a wide variety: “to have to do something, to produce, order and take care of something, to use something, to give something up and let it get lost, to undertake, to accomplish, to find out, to ask about, to observe, to speak about, to determine... .”

The daily experience of driving home from work, for example, does not typically present itself as the activity of a separate subject that may or may not recall engaging in the activity of driving home on previous occasions. To drive home from work rather manifests itself in a multitude of highly habitual awarenesses, actions, concerns, that taken together constitute the activity of driving home from work. I “remember” myself and my past drives in the competence that I display in my driving, although this remembering of myself has “the form of a forgetting.” In fact I can only drive home with the skill and competence that I display habitually because I am not constantly distracted by the awareness of the history of the acquisition of this competence. This is not an accidental or undesirable obliviousness but rather points toward the general “impersonal” nature of our

244Heidegger 53. ["zutunhaben mit etwas, herstellen von etwas, bestellen und pflegen von etwas, verwenden von etwas, aufgeben und in Verlust geraten lassen von etwas, unternehmen, durchsetzen, erkunden, befragen, betrachten besprechen, bestimmen." (56)]
habitual being-in-the-world.

When Heidegger says that in the heedfulness of the everyday I am *absorbed* “in” my world, this is not be understood in spatial terms, because this interpretation would crucially miss the very nature of our manner of being-in-time of our everydayness. Heidegger famously explains the meaning of the 'being-in' as follows:

Nor does the term being-in designate a spatial 'in one another' of two things objectively present, any more than the word 'in' primordially means a spatial relation of this kind. “In” stems from *innan-*, to live, *habitate*, to dwell. “An” means I am used to, familiar with, I take care of something ... The expression “*bin*” is connected with “bei.” “*Ich bin*” (I am) means I dwell, I stay near... the world as something familiar in such and such a way.246

A spatial interpretation of my “being-in” would be misleading because it suggests a “stable constancy” of an object (namely a personal self) that is present [*vorkommen*] in different places in a world. However, my being-in-time in the *besorgende Alltäglichkeit* is anything but a stable constant. What Heidegger suggests instead is that my primary relation to the world is structured by habits. *That* I can at all be present “in” the world is the product of an impersonal inhabitation of time. It is due to and on the basis the latter that “I” can have a world in the first place. My pre-self-reflective being is always already organized by the various habits that I have developed and which taken together constitute the condition of the possibility of my presence “in” the world. To say that I inhabit a world means that the wordliness of my world is linked to the ongoing habitual character of my existence. This habitual existence is world-giving and only occurs “in” this world for a being whose pre-reflective being (i.e., competencies) is always already worldly in a non-episodic, non-linear mode.

### 2.2.3. Familiarity

Above we described 'having a past' as a particular way of inhabiting time. As a particular way

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246Heidegger 53. ["Das In-Sein meint so wenig ein räumliches 'Ineinander' Vorhandener, als 'in' ursprünglich gar nicht eine räumliche Beziehung der genannten Art bedeutet; 'in' stammt von innan-, wohnen, habitare, sich aufhalten; 'an' bedeutet: ich bin gewohnt, vertraut mit, ich pflege etwas ... Der Ausdruck 'bin' hängt zusammen mit 'bei'; 'ich bin' besagt wiederum: ich wohne, ich halte mich auf bei... der Welt, als dem so und so Vertrauten." (56)]
of inhabiting time, to have a past means to be “at home” in the world. Expanding our meaning of “familiarity” to “being at home in the world” has the advantage that it is likely to reduce familiarity to a quality that certain objects have for us. To be at home in this world does not only mean that I am surrounded by “familiar” objects rather than “strange” things that we always encounter for the first time. Of course it can also mean this. But it is important to understand that this “first time” is already a particular conceptualization of a quality that phenomenologically presents itself in a non-temporal guise. Far from having any explicitly temporal features, having a past manifests itself in the form of a certain Befindlichkeit [attunement]: a way of being in the world. To use Heidegger's terminology, it is a characteristic of the wordliness of the world.

Above and beyond the explicit recognition of individual objects as familiar, my habituated comportment toward the world manifests itself in my knowing what to do with the objects that I find in this world. To recognize a familiar object is not primarily a matter of being reminded of a previous encounter with this object (like, for instance, in the moment of a re-union). The bulk of our recognition manifests itself in a pre-reflective ability to use this object, or in the resumption of a specific activity involving this object.\(^{247}\) In other words, the familiarity of my world is not an epistemic familiarity but rather a function of my 'I can'.\(^{248}\) It is first and foremost a practical familiarity which manifests itself in my competent ability to engage with the world in ways that are meaningful to me. To say that the bulk of our recognition is enacted and lived is not a minor insight, because understanding the secondary (and limited) scope of recognition is the key to understanding the meaning of “habits,” which, as we already said, goes beyond what we commonly understand by this term. To have a past means finding oneself

\(^{247}\)As Bergson says in Matter and Memory, the bulk of our recognition “consists in action and not in representation.” (93)

\(^{248}\)Since the ability to recognize “a common object is mainly to know how to use it,” Bergson says that the corresponding loss of memory would be a form of apraxia rather than a cognitive amnesia. (See Matter and Memory 93) While a merely “amnesic” loss of memory would without doubt complicate certain forms of engaging with the world, a loss of memory that would affect our habitual memories (an apraxia) would pose a challenge to even our most basic ways of functioning in the world. Crudely put, amnesia is a greater obstacle to our inhabitment of the social world, whereas apraxia would affect even our pre-personal, pre-social ability to make sense of the world.
amongst objects that we recognize. We recognize these objects as means to the attainment of certain ends. “To recognize a common object,” says Bergson, “is to know how to use it.”

Familiarity manifests itself in the *competent use* that I make of the various objects that I find myself surrounded by. This competent use implies both an awareness of the possibilities for action that the world offers me, and a (successful) actualization of these possibilities. The person who is not familiar will neither know what to do nor see all the possibilities for action that lie latent in a given environment. Familiarity, then, means to make competent use of the possibilities that the world offers to me.

But the familiarity of the world does not only manifest itself in an indifferent know-how. It also manifests itself in my (growing) “excitability”, in my receptiveness to be “invited” by a given object to do such and such with it. For example, the board game on my bookshelf does not only present itself as an object that I have seen and used many times before, or as an object that I know how to use. Above and beyond these ways the board game also presents itself as a way to spend an evening, as a solicitation for pleasant action. I do not only know what to do with this object, how to use, but I also *have a use for it*. These objects present themselves to me in the form of possibilities (and opportunities) for determinate engagements with my world. The familiar world is not only one that is already known, but also one in which we are susceptible to be animated to ever new actions. Habits, far from merely repeating the already known, disclose ever more world to us by making us receptive to ever more “new” excitations; by presenting the world to us as the domain of concrete *possibilities*.

But, and this is key for our study of nostalgia, my familiarity with my world is not limited to the objects nearby. I do not only find myself (literally) amongst familiar objects but I am also “surrounded” by objects that are not in sight. The world that is familiar to me is precisely one whose familiarity does

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249 Bergson (1988) 93. As such the loss of memory is not the loss of memory is not *amnesia* as much as it is a form of *apraxia*.

250 In this sense Russon is right when he says that memory is primarily a feature of objects and not of subject. Cf. Russon (2003) 41f.

251 Writes Bergson, “Our daily life is spent among objects that whose presence invites us to play a part: in this the familiarity of their aspect consists.” (*Matter and Memory*, 95)
not depend on everything being immediately accessible to me. I do not know only what to do with the objects that are in reach, i.e., the objects that are simply present, but I also know ("remember") where to turn in order to accomplish certain things with objects that lie outside my field of vision, i.e., things that are absent. In other words, part of my competent know-how is a knowing-my-way-around. I know where to go in order to achieve that for which my immediate environment does not offer me any "tools." In other words, my knowing my way around is thus not only a knowing-what-to-do with whatever is "in reach" but also a knowing-where-to-find that for which I have a use. I do not constantly "stumble upon" familiar objects but I actively seek out certain objects in order to engage them to the attainments of particular ends. The spatial appearance of this aspect of our competence notwithstanding, the crucial point here is that the presence of my world, qua familiar or homely, is one where not everything needs to be "present" in order not to be "not-absent" from this world. I inhabit a familiar world not because I am "statically" surrounded by things that are already known, but because I am the kind of being that is able to disclose ever "more" world, ever new possibilities for further engagement.

The familiarity of a given object, then, is not of a separate object that I encounter for a second (third, fourth, fifth etc.) time. It is rather a quality implicit in the how of my interactions with this object. I do not just know what to do with these objects but I deliberately engage with these objects in order to achieve those ends whose attainment is facilitated by the object's competent usage. I experience my world as familiar insofar as I competently integrate the objects that I find in this world into my various activities: my (intentional, meaningful) activity is the co-ordinated integration of familiar objects. This knowing-what-to-do manifests itself in the factum that I am always already in the process of realizing certain goals. My activity is coherent, and what makes it coherent is its subordination to a unifying purpose. My dealings with the world are goal-oriented. I actively engage with the world, I make use of the world.
I have a past by virtue of remembering not myself *qua* (familiar) object – as appears to be the case in recollection – but in virtue of remembering what there is *still* to be done: I remember the *Ausstehende.* To remember the past is to experience a kind of restlessness. As Russon writes, this form of memory presents itself in the “experience of my surroundings as nagging me in some way.”

I remember my past to the extent that certain courses of action have a greater “compellingness” to them than others. I remember my past by *not* being equally free to all available courses of action in a given situation, but by feeling bound or “committed” to that course of action that *continues* that project that I have already been in the process of carrying out. My actions aim at that which is yet to happen, and in doing this they retain their *original* purpose. If my familiarity with the world is the competent manoeuvring in this world and this competence in turn requires goals in relation to which something like a competent comportment can be measured, then my familiarity is a function of my goal-oriented behaviour. I have a past insofar as I am always already underway with a number of projects. I am doing things. My present is always a present *progressive*. I do not yet rest in myself but find myself drawn toward a state of completion that I have yet to fully realize. The fact that I encounter the world as a domain of ever new possibilities is a function of the past that I have always had in the mode of inhabiting a familiar world.

### 2.2.4. Habits and their impersonal temporality

While we said above that the familiarity of my world is most of the time the manner in which my “having” a past manifests itself, we should note that this use of language is misleading. In do-ing...
the things I do, Heidegger emphasizes, I am lost to the world. In writing, I am fully absorbed by it. 'I' only exist insofar as the writing is happening. Once the writing ceases I am whatever activity I engage in subsequently. In either case, I am “my” activities. As Sartre says in Being and Nothingness, in watching a movie I do not experience myself as 'someone who is watching a movie' but “My attitude ... is a pure process of relating the instrument ... to the end to be attained ... a pure mode of losing myself in the world, of causing myself to be drunk in by things as ink is by a blotter in order that an instrumental-complex oriented toward an end may be synthetically detached on the ground of the world.” 257 The question whether or not I “experience” myself as such is inconsequential to the ontology and the temporality of the fundamental mode of being to which these activities belong: absorption, being-in, inhabitation of a familiar world, homeliness.

The reason why we opted for the broader term of “being at home” at the expense of the term “familiarity” is not only because of the small proportion of instances in which an object will appear as familiar. More importantly, when we speak of a familiar world, we must be careful not to confound the explanation of the familiarity with the phenomenology of this familiarity. Edward Casey, for instance, erroneously claims that “past experience of the recognized object is presupposed even if it is not manifest as such in the experience itself ... the reference to the past is built right into the presentness of the experience – is a part of its very content and is not inferred or posited, much less experienced separately.” 258 The truth of this claim would depend on an ontology that has yet to be justified. Whether or not a given object presents itself as an object that I have seen or experienced “before” is an empirical question. Beyond this empirical question there remains a more fundamental ontological question, namely whether or not this representation in terms of a 'before', 'after', 'first' etc. is not essentially alien, or at least irrelevant, to the mode of being that it tries to explain; whether the explanandum does not have a different ontological structure than that of a (stable) subject that persists through the ever-

257Sartre 348.
changing experiences that it undergoes.

The main problem with the reduction of the familiarity of the world to the cognitive experience of individual familiar objects, then, is not even that it imposes a “temporal” meaning on a phenomenon that in itself is not temporal at all. This distortion is admittedly aided by the way in which we commonly use the term “habit.” Our ordinary language is prone to obfuscating this world-giving function that our habits play. After all we commonly speak of the habits of a given person, like we speak of the preferences, interests, beliefs, etc. of said person. However, in the strict ontological sense in which we are using the term 'habit' here it is important to emphasize that our habitual being-in-time has a very different temporality/ontology than possession. Unlike the example of the explicit recollection, the phenomenon of “explicit” recognition should not be treated as a special case of the experience of familiarity rather than as its most exemplary instance: it should not be taken at all to reveal what is essential about the habitual mode of being-in-time.

When we opted to use the term 'familiarity' over the term 're-cognition', this choice was not only motivated by the fact that the latter implies a linear conception of time which is alien to this mode of being. This linear conception of time assumes that we go through time and leave behind the things that we once experienced. We may (and do) occasionally “recall” or “representify” some privileged moments from our past in the mode of recollection, but the bulk of our past is “lost,” “forgotten.” On the contrary, the bulk of our past is not lost even though it is “forgotten.” Much of the past accompanies us in an “impersonal” way.\(^{259}\) This is not only to say that it does not present itself in the form of 'my' past or in the form of 'the past of Niels Feuerhahn'; that is, as the articulatable account of this past of the individual Niels Feuerhahn. Rather, this “past” is built right into the present. It is the very substance of this present.\(^{260}\) That is what it means for the past to manifest itself in the form of habits. As habit the

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260 In a very similar vein Valéry writes, “That part of our memory that manifests itself in the form of recollections is the most rare; in its most usual occurrence memory is the matter of the present – everything that belongs to the regular operations in the present.” (1238) ["Ce qui de la mémoire se présente sous l'espèce de souvenir est le plus petit nombre ;"]
past is neither over, nor has it strictly been. It rather persists in the form of a multitude of open
“dispositions for action”261 (Bergson). The past that has been transformed into a habit is in its essential
ontological temporality distinct from the history of its acquisition. The past that has been “stored up” as
habit “passes out of time ... it becomes more and more impersonal, more and more foreign to our past
life.”262 The past that has become habitualized exists as an aspect of my 'I can'.263 As such it is a
(timeless) competence; and even though we may treat it as the quality of the person, its temporality
differs significantly from the temporality of the being of a person.

And yet, this is not to deny such goal-oriented behaviour would be unthinkable without a there
being a unity and a continuity to my behaviour. There is a permanence and continuity to this being that
I am, a steadiness. But there is no Ständigkeit (stable constancy) of a separate self over and above the
activities that I engage in. Despite the fact that in the alltägliche Besorgen of my existence lacks a self-
same subject that persists above and beyond these activities nevertheless have a coherence and unity to
them. Even though I am completely absorbed in my activities, I do preserve an integrity throughout the
pursuit of these activities. This integrity is not the integrity of a subject that exists over and above the
activities, but rather the integrity of an ongoing effort to execute projects of varying degrees of
interconnectedness. The world appears in the terms in which it has significance to me, and this
significance is played out in the manifold engagements that I have with my world. The coherence of
my world and my (temporally) stable identity are inextricably intertwined.264 I only have a stable
identity insofar as I enact this identity in my coherent interaction with the world. But when I do interact
with the world, I am fully taken over by it. I am what I do. I am not (yet) someone who does something.
I am not a stable someone. 'My' stable identity is not that of an entity that has a materiality over and

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263 "Ce qui fut vu," says Valéry, “devient organe de vision" (1243). [That which was seen becomes an organ of sight.]
above the activity that it is absorbed in. “I” does not yet refer to a self-same underlying subject, but rather to the unified form of the manifold of these experiences, which is at the same time the unified form of the execution of various interactions with the world. My identity resides in the coherence of my goal-directed activities, and thus ultimately in the familiarity and coherence of the world that I inhabit.

2.2.5. Nostalgia, recollection, and the return of the past

If the most fundamental (and also most ubiquitous) function of our memory is the suppression of the past as past, then nostalgia can indeed, in some sense, be described as a kind of “disorder” or “dysfunctionality” of memory. Nostalgia disrupts the “normal” functioning of my memory. At the same time, however, it is undeniable that nostalgia bears witness to my having been. In nostalgia, I become aware of the fact that there is a beyond to my present situation. I am aware of a past, of a world that I have experienced. By implication, nostalgia reminds me of the fact that I, the nostalgic subject, myself am part of this past. I am a part of it and this past is a part of me. As such, nostalgia bears witness to another kind of permanence: namely the permanence of the nostalgic remembering subject. This function is of course not exclusive to the experience of nostalgia: The fact that I have a past is as intuitively accessible to me as are my memories. In fact, it appears that the wealth of my memories bears witness to one and the same thing: my past existence; or, to be more precise, my memories bear witness to my persistence, to the fact that I have not only come into existence ten seconds ago but that I have literally existed for as long as I can remember. It has been argued that all memory is effectively about myself, because I can only be said to remember what I have perceived at an earlier point in time. When I say, I remember the FIFA World Cup final of 2002, is this not shorthand for saying that I remember seeing it? And how could I have seen the final unless I was there to see it? When I say I

remember what my first car looked like, is this not implying that I remember seeing my car, in fact seeing it numerous times? I remember the object, but the corresponding subject – myself – is implicitly co-posited alongside the object of this subject's memory. In fact it appears that all memory is “self-referential,” as the German and French locutions *ich erinnere mich* and *je me souviens* attest. All memory is effectively about myself, about my original experience of the corresponding event or object that I attempt to recall. To be clear, when I remember a past experience I usually do not “presentify” myself alongside the object of my memory. Sometimes I may, so to speak, be “part of the picture”, but in most cases my past existence is not something that we infer from the content of the memory but rather from the presence or occurrence of the memory itself.  

Sydney Shoemaker has called it a “logical truth” that “if a person remembers a past event then he, that same person, must have been a witness to the event, i.e., must have been present when it occurred.”

Of course there is no denying of the immediate awareness that we have of “our” past in the act of recollection. However, if Valéry is right, then the “awareness” of our past does not first and foremost present itself as an awareness of the past. In fact, it belongs to the proper functioning of “ordinary,” i.e., habitual, memory that it actively suppresses the notion of “the past.” It presents itself in the manner of a particular habitual immersion in the world. It is only where this “immersion” becomes disrupted and I become, as it were, “separated” from my past: this past becomes truly “past,” and thus I become capable of becoming aware of it as past (which happens primarily in the act of my recollection of the past). It is the reversion of the process by which “event becomes property.” In a sense, every act of (episodic) recollection effects such a disruption insofar as the rememberer becomes simultaneously aware of their immersion in the world and of a (temporal) “beyond” of this world, i.e., an “elsewhere,” to which the rememberer finds herself transported by virtue of the power of the imagination. It is the

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266 This occurrence can be both affective and or in the form of a cognitive representation.
267 Shoemaker in Perry 125.
268 Valéry 1240.
existence of this 'beyond' that “uproots” the recollecting subject ever so slightly from the center of its world. This disruption brings about the emergence of the past “as past,” but eo ipso this past as “my past,” i.e., the past of the recollecting subject: the past in which I encounter myself. The disruption must be such that it simultaneously brings about the experience of the past qua past and of “my past”: because the past that I recollect is always my past.

We saw in Chapter 1 that empirically speaking the “dis-placement” of the subject into a “foreign land” often brings about the loss of familiarity of their world. In such a situation the subject's recollection of the past does not “bring about” the disruption of the familiarity of her world but rather raises it to conscious awareness. However, if the familiarity of my world is grounded in a distinct functioning of my memory, then the physical displacement only explains what brings about the disruption of that functioning of my memory, but not what makes this disruption possible. We said above that my habitual immersion in the world is such that subject and world are for the most “one.” As we said above, the world is not a place “in which” the subject occurs. The familiarity of the world pertains rather to the quality of the world's worldliness. The individual's physical displacement within the world already presupposes the subject's “extraction” or “dis-placement” from the world (i.e., the negation of the subject's habitual emplacement “in” in the world). It is this “dis-placement” that first situates the individual in their world in a fundamentally “spatial” sense. Put differently, the displacement is not merely the movement from one location to another. What makes this movement a “displacement” is rather something else. To understand this metamorphosis and its metaphysical implications for the experience of nostalgia, we have to look at the concomitant process of becoming-person, i.e., the generation of the subject-object I. We will use Jean Paul Sartre's analysis in L'être et le néant (1953) to clarify this process.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹Sartre's work will be cited according to the English translation by Hazel E. Barnes (Washington Square Press, 1992). – There exists of course another prominent account of the role that the appearance of the other plays for the constitution of the self: namely Emmanuel Levinas's account of the ethical constitution of the subject. Although we should not assume that we already know where and how Levinas's challenge affects our discussion of the nostalgic subjectivity, it is
2.3. The appearance of the other as the condition of the possibility of my proprietary inhabitation of the world

2.3.1. Toward a past that is mine: The disintegration of the homely world

As long as I am fully absorbed in my activity, I still exist in a pre-personal way. To say that my existence is “pre-personal” entails that the idea that my activity in the world is “mine” strictly speaking is not applicable. Harry Frankfurt has pointed out that we often attribute activities to a “person” even though strictly speaking “there is no person to whom it can be attributed.” In this vein, to use the claim “I am driving home from work” is perfectly intelligible. It is perfectly intelligible despite the fact that strictly speaking the “I” does not refer to a subject that exists separately to the process of driving. As we said above, the activities that make up my competent heedfulness are “subjectless.” I have an identity but this is not the identity of an object (let alone that of a ‘person’) but one that manifests itself in the coherence and familiarity of my world. This identity is already determinate, yet the determinateness is that of “my world” rather than that of a self that exists over and against this world. My identity and my having-a-past go hand in hand with my homely inhabitation of the world. The question that we must answer is the following: What is responsible for the transformation from this “impersonal” identity-sense to the personal identity that allows me to treat and conceive the past that I have as mine, and the object of my act of recollection as me (or, “my past self”)?

Among the objects that I encounter in the homely (familiar) world that I inhabit is one particular plausible to assume that Levinas's thinking poses a significant challenge to the argument that we are presenting here. While we acknowledge that the following reflections will likely lend themselves to an “obvious” Levinasian critique, the attempt to “weave” this critique into the course of our ideas here would inevitably do injustice to the disruptive power of Levinas's philosophy. The development of and engagement with this critique with the appropriate depth and level of detail would require its own comprehensive treatment that would, without a doubt, constitute a very worthwhile project that could produce further philosophically fruitful insights into the concept and experience of nostalgia. However, since the proper execution of such a project falls outside the framework of the argument that we are presenting here, we choose to bracket Levinas's challenge at this point.

class of “objects” that resist their integration into my projects. This world is not only made up of objects that I recognize, but also of other people. The familiarity or recognition that I experience vis-à-vis other people is *sui generis*. It is not a mere visual recognition. The familiarity that I experience vis-à-vis these others is also not a competence of the type *I can*. Of course at times I recognize the other as a familiar face, but this recognition does not take into account the peculiarity of this particular “object” which is the other person. The ontologically primary recognition of the other, the recognition that precedes any recognition of the other as a “familiar face,” is the recognition of the other being the same as me. This is the most fateful recognition; it is a recognition that causes no less than the “disintegration” (Sartre) of my homely world. The reason for this is that I cannot experience the other who I encounter in my world as an object among others. In the words of Sartre, I cannot merely “add” the other to my world. To recognize the other as other means to sense the other as “an element of disintegration.” The presence of the other in my world “disintegrates” the unreflective unity of myself and my (homely) world. The world in which I am completely *absorbed* in my activity is “stolen” away from me insofar as it comes to be “grouped around the Other.” The Other appears as the object “which has stolen my world.” The appearance of the other sets off the “flight of myself toward objectivation,” which means that I experience myself as appearing to the other as an object in the space of this world. “By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing

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271At this point we will bracket the recognition of non-human others. An investigation into the specific ways in which their presence may (or may not) give rise to a distinct temporal constitution of the subject would require more space and time than we have available in this argument.

272It should be noted that in our lived experience we oftentimes do not treat the other in such a way and instead view them as merely additive element of my world. We will later see that this attitude prevails whenever I “make use” of an other to further my projects.

273For Levinas the “recognition” of the other is of course that which defies the classificatory “as-”structure. As such it cannot come in the form of the recognition that Sartre discusses.

274See our discussion of the experience of the ‘uncanny’ in the preceding section.

275Sartre 343.

276Sartre 343.

277Sartre 343.

278Sartre 345.
judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other.”

Through the look of the other a new facet of my being is revealed to me: that I am this thing that the Other sees, that this object is me.

As Sartre argues this disintegration of my world is not only destructive: The Other “has established me in a new type of being,” and this new type of being has its distinct experience of its own pastness (which we will later call its own “historicity”). The appearance of an Other thus makes possible a new relation toward my past; namely, a personal, proprietary relation. The ontological root of this possibility lies in the following experience: “To apprehend myself as seen is, in fact, to apprehend myself as seen in the world.” Through the look of the other I come to be “alienated” from myself: I come to recognize that I am that which I am in the eyes of the other. This alienation is not an affective alienation, but must first be understood as a kind of ontological doubling. I become other to myself. But this alienation from myself has wider ramifications: “the alienation of myself, which is the act of being-looked-at, involves the alienation of the world which I organize” and which I inhabit. The presence of the other constitutes a threat to the homeliness of the world. The familiarity of the world is disrupted because through the look of the other I encounter an object that I have in fact never encountered before; an object which will not allow itself to be familiarized in a straight-forward manner: myself. The intimacy of my word is replaced by the alienness of a world in which I exist as a most foreign object among other objects.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that I do not encounter the world as unfamiliar, let alone as

279 Sartre 302. Once again, the Levinasian story differs on this point. From this appearance of another we must distinguish an other who does not “appear” (in “my” world) but rather shatters any world-giving familiarity.

280 Sartre 302.

281 For the purposes of our argument, this is perhaps the single most significant difference between Sartre and Levinas. The ethical relation is precisely that “relation” that cannot be appropriated. The appropriation of the former would reduce the ethical to but an instance of the economical.

282 Sartre 353. Here, the “in” must be understood in a spatial sense.

283 Sartre 353.

284 As we will shortly see, this appearance of the other (the “Sartrean appearance”) gives rise to another world that offers its own possibilities of homeliness. In contrast, the experience of the uncanny would cut across both of these planes without the prospect of an “Aufhebung.”
“uncanny,” despite the presence of other subjects like myself. However, the operational familiarity of
the “public” or intersubjective world is not due world-giving power of the habits that structure my
being in the pre-personal world. It is rather because, as I will discuss in the next section, I have always
already taken up another relation toward the past, a relation which in turn facilitates my inhabitment of
the social world. What we will show in the next section is that the initial homeliness of my world can
only be recuperated by accepting that the world that I inhabit qua self that I am for the other is a
shared, public world. To make myself at home in the social world, to reconstitute the familiarity of the
world, a world of which I now (also) am a part, will require a different form of inhabiting time.

2.3.2. The (re)constitution of the world as a shared world

Through the appearance of the other my inhabitation of the world becomes more complicated. I
am no longer fully taken over by the world, but I come to acquire a distinct materiality and sensibility
within this world. The latter is neither my pre-self-conscious world, nor is it the world as an empty
space. It is the world of the Other. I have a different relationship to this world than the lost absorption.
Under the eyes of the other my activity in the world acquires a unique kind of “materiality”\textsuperscript{285}: through
the eyes of the other I come to recognize that “I matter in the world.”\textsuperscript{286} The other sees me not simply
as an object, but as somebody. Thanks to the other, my being no longer only has a temporally and
spatially continuous quality; instead, there is a lasting “materiality” to my activity that goes beyond the
tangible works that I may produce in the process of my active engagement with the world. I am no
longer strictly commensurate with this activity, but I transcend this activity as the “person” behind this
activity. – This transcendence is not the transcendence that Sartre talks about. In fact, it is the very
opposite of this transcendence in so far as the person is the objectivation of my being. – I can but

\textsuperscript{285}Of course even in the mode of the besorgende Alltäglichkeit my activity could “acquire” a different materiality insofar
as it could produce something, a work, and object. But in the shared, public world the materiality is inherent to activity
itself rather than invested in an object.

\textsuperscript{286}Russon (2003) 59.
inhabit the world of the Other as somebody. I am this somebody not on the ontic sense, but as a manner of being. In the public world I exist always already as somebody. I owe my public being to the Other who effects the mediation “between myself and me.”

My activity in this public world is not me but of me; it is mine. I am no longer absorbed in my activity but I persist throughout and beyond this activity. The other wrests my activity away from myself only in order to re-attribute it to me “as a given attribute of this being which I am for the Other.” The presence of the other is the origin of my being as a distinct entity (not my being a distinct entity): a person. Due to the other's intervention, I am no longer I, but I am somebody. This somebody necessarily has a determinate identity that distinguishes me from the other(s). The world in which I appear (as somebody) is always already an intersubjective, that is, public one. Accordingly we can call this “self” that I am in and in virtue of my being in a public space (which is to say, my appearing to an other) the “public self”, or the self-for-other. The objectivation that I undergo in the presence of the other does not reduce my existence to that of a mere object, but to that of a subject that experiences identity in the world through matter-ing. By being wrested away from my activity, that is, by becoming the subject that performs a certain actions in the eyes of the other, I acquire a different kind of subjectivity. I owe this subjectivity, which is the subjectivity of a person, to the action of an Other. As such, I am at the same time virtually distanced from the activities that I perform whilst still being recognized as being the one who performs these activities. This objectivated subjectivity is the being of a person. The public word is a space in which I appear to the other, and my activity comes to be understood as an expression of who I am (my identity, which is the identity of this self that I am). In

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287Sartre 302.
288Sartre 352.
289This has important consequences for the role that my physical identity plays in my personal identity: All too often we read that my personal identity is grounded in my biological-physical identity (that which Locke called my identity as a human being). What we see from the preceding observations that the identity of the body is a phenomenon of action. The unity of my physical being matters (acquires a materiality) first and foremost in so far as through this body I appear to an other. It is hence the unity of the person that the other identifies me as. It is an agentic unity.
the public world, my being is that of the persistent entity that expresses its personal identity, its whoseness, through its activities. The presence of an Other is hence not only a threat to the familiarity of my world, but it is the origin of my existence as a person (i.e., an objectivated subjectivity). Moreover, and crucial for our purposes, it is also the origin of the possibility of my acquisition of a past that is mine. Before encountering another subject like myself I inhabit the world in an “impersonal” way. In this state I have a past, yet this past is not yet mine. I have a past that is mine in virtue of the other whose presence is the condition of the possibility of my acquiring a past that I can consider “my own.” This past that is “mine” is the past of the person who I am in the public world. It is in virtue of my existence in the public sphere that I acquire a sphere of ownness and a past that is “mine.” I have this past only insofar as I exists as, what Sartre calls, “a pure reference to the Other.” That means that “my” past belongs only derivatively to me; onto-genetically it belongs to the other who makes possible my being-a-person, which in turn is the condition for the possibility of owning (up to) “my” past. This entity that I am for the Other, then, no longer “has a past” in the sense of inhabiting a familiar world; this entity that I am (now in the ontic sense) has a past in the sense of having a determinate history as the seat of its own, unique identity.

On the flip side, my previously uncomplicated, immediate relation with this world, my absorption in this world, needs to be renegotiated. The inevitability of my interaction with others makes it necessary that the world is not only familiar for me but that it becomes familiar for us. In other

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290 The temporal connotation of this term is misleading. The different modes of being-in-time that Heidegger discusses are not to be understood to follow each other in any chronological order, but can rather take place concurrently. My existence always comprises different modes of being, each of which has its own temporality. My experience of the world “before” the appearance of the other is thus better understood as the experience of the world outside the (objectivating) “gaze” of another. What complicated this distinction is the fact that the gazeful objectivation is something that can be delayed from the moment of the occurrence of a given event. As such, the distinction between these different modes of inhabiting time is one that can, for the most part, only be done provisionally.

291 Sartre 349.

292 This is not to say that my pre-personal (pre-objectivated) inhabitation of the world ceases to matter ontologically in my being-in-the-world. What we are describing here is not a distinct stage of a progressive complication of my inhabitation of the world that would, as it were, supersede an earlier stage as a result of the appearance of an Other, but rather a different ontological "layer" of being that as a lived phenomenon co-exists alongside (and that means, interacts with) my habitual, immersive being-in-the-world.
words, insofar as my interaction with the world inevitably involves my interaction with others, the familiarity of this world needs to be that of a shared world. That is to say, I must become at home also in the shared world. The renegotiation has to involve the Other. The disruption of the familiarity of my world that is effected by the appearance of an Other is not irreversible. But it requires that I constitute myself as a person “with a history,” which is the ontological equivalent of my having a past “before” the appearance of the Other. Insofar as I can but renegotiate with the other as the self that appears to this other, my renegotiation that has to involve the other will first require that I inhabit this self that I am for the other. (Of course we already established that I am this self in a sense of being-identical-to, but this still leaves open how I am this self in the mode of being.) To reclaim the world as homely I need to integrate the other's perspective into the shared world into my activity through “communication and cooperation.”

This cooperation hinges, among others, on my recognition that the other's perception of me captures an essential aspect of my being. Secondly, on top of the different projects that I attempt to realize, a new project crops up: to cut out an identity for myself that can be recognized by the other and that will be the foundation for our cooperation for the sake of (re-)establishing a homely world. The homeliness of the world is thus no longer the (by-)product of my concerted efforts of the totality of my 'inner-worldly' projects and activities. Rather, it becomes its own separate project; a direct object rather than merely a by-product. As we will see, this project is similar to (but conceptually significantly more complex than) the one that played a central role in James Hart's account of nostalgia discussed in Chapter 1, i.e., the project whose success (or failure) comes into view in our attempt to “gather ourselves.” By revealing the ground from which the “need” for such a project arises, our reflections here have allowed us to understand the stakes of this project of which, by implication, in the experience of nostalgia we appear to have an acute awareness.

294 We shall shortly name this aspect of my being my 'factuality'.
2.4. John Locke on personal identity

Above we identified the essence of the public self that I am as a 'somebody.' As such I am a ‘who’, an entity with a determinate identity. This identity differs crucially from the identity that I exhibit in my coherent activity in the zerstreutes Besorgen of the Alltag. In order to arrive at an understanding of the specific relationship that holds between our temporality (especially our having-a-past) and our identity we must first remind ourselves that we use the term “identity” equivocally: On the one hand, it denotes the relation between two objects or states: x and y are identical. We say that the man who is waiting for the bus with me is the identical man who lives in the apartment next to mine. This identity is clearly not limited to human beings: we already mentioned the blossoming tree which is the same tree that had no leaves in the winter. Identity, thus understood, has to do with repetition and persistence through time. On the other hand, we also speak of the identity of a certain object without treating this identity explicitly as a relationship between identical objects across time: we ask about the identity of a certain author, and we mean the essential features that make author x x rather than y. This sense of 'identity' is rather one of differentiating between distinct rather than identical entities. To distinguish these importantly different senses of identity I propose to refer to the former as 'that-identity' and to the later as 'who-identity'.

When I identify myself there are many different strategies that I can resort to: I can use my affiliation to a certain family, clan, organization, nation etc. This affiliation is essentially “timeless.”

I say that this man is “my neighbour,” that he “lives in the apartment next door,” that he “is a carpenter,” that he “is of Italian descent,” etc. But as Albright points out, “anyone who asks himself the question, Who am I? will offer not only social and physical information – I am so-and-so's husband and

\[ \text{This distinction corresponds roughly Schechtman's distinction between reidentification and characterization.} \]
\[ \text{Someone might object here that a temporal dimension is always already implied: I “am” only a German because I “was” born to German parents. This is an important observation: Causal story obfuscates the distinction between me the human being, and me the person: ’I’ was born in German, but I have no memory of this.} \]
\[ \text{These identifications can, at times, come in the form of group-memberships, e.g., I am a Holocaust survivor can mean I survived the Holocaust. There seems to be a transitivity between timeless and temporal identifications.} \]
I have a scar on my right hand – but also historical information, i.e., information regarding things that I have done or experienced. When we address the second identity question – Who is x? - we often use the past of x to define x: We say who someone is by recounting what/who this someone was. The practice of identifying oneself by means of one's past presupposes that one considers oneself the kind of entity that allows for the possibility of (still) being what it is not (i.e., no more). As a person my being/identity always already comprises a multitude of “past” experiences and actions. Being-a-person, i.e., “being the person who...,” is, as it were, the “super-quality” that makes it possible for me to “be” all the things that I “was” and “have done.” This gives us a first important definition of a person: a person “is” all the things that he or she has done, experienced, willed. In a word, a person “is” what she “has been and done.”

Based on the above characterization, one could be led to believe that who-identity is merely a special sort of that-identity: after all, when we characterize someone by means of their actions and experiences we seem to assume that the thus characterized person is the same individual as the one who had the original experience or who performed the original action. However, this view is mistaken; in fact, it is perniciously mistaken. A full answer to the question, What does it mean for an individual to persist through time as one and the same person? requires that we become conscious of the context in which our personhood comes to matter to us. In Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689), John

298Albright 21.
299Which information will be the most relevant in a given situation, will depend on the specific context. However, the fact that we do often use our personal accomplishments gives credence to my general thesis that the personal self is essentially a sovereign, self-responsible individual.
300As we will see shortly, the meaning of this “done” cannot be reduced to the positive sense of a factual accomplishment. Rather, it is linked to the category of responsibility. As such, the identity of a person will also include “negative” accomplishments, i.e., omissions, refusals, etc. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that by grounding person identity in the concept of responsibility, the “scope” of our identity (who-ness) as this particular person who we are differs significantly from the scope of the potential identities that present themselves to me under the category of regret (see section 1.4.7.5). Omissions are part of who I am to the extent that I can be held accountable for 'my' omissions; whereas the possibilities belong to another individual who I could have been. These are not possibilities of this me who I de facto am for the other, that is, the I who is defined by his/her factuality. Rather, these possibilities express an altogether different fact, one that is ontological rather than empirical in nature: namely, that I could have been an altogether different person.
Locke famously defines a person as thing that “can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places.”\(^{301}\) Sameness being a relation, a person exists only insofar as they exist as \textit{the same person}, and only insofar as they can consider themselves the same “thing” now that they were (or will be) at time \(t_n\). One only \textit{is} a person insofar as one can consider oneself to be the same person through time. What does Locke mean when he says “can consider itself as itself”? Locke himself provided the following explanation: “as far as this consciousness can be extended backward to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self [i.e., person] now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.”\(^{302}\) Thomas Reid suggested in his “Of Memory” that what Locke really meant where he speaks opaquely of consciousness’ capacity to “extend backward” is our faculty of memory: “personal identity consists in distinct remembrance; for, even in the popular sense, to say that I am conscious of a past action means nothing else than that I distinctly remember that I did it.”\(^{303}\) It is legitimate for me to identify myself by using things that I have done or experienced precisely because the person who did or experienced these things was no one other than myself. The proof that I have of this is the fact that I remember doing this. In other words, the common practice of identifying oneself by referring to past actions and experiences is well-grounded in the (metaphysical) fact that I am identical with my “past selves.”

Since Locke we have taken psychological continuity as one of the unshakeable proofs of identity. When I remember something, e.g., a past event, I appropriate the content of this memory to my self: I, who remember\(^{304}\) doing/experiencing this, am the one who did/experienced this. I, the rememberer, am also the agent who did..., and the thinker who thought... . Writes Reid, “The conviction

\(^{301}\)Locke 246.  
\(^{302}\)Locke 247.  
\(^{303}\)Reid in Perry 115.  
\(^{304}\)But this is only one of the many examples of remembering. I remember a phone number. I remember that my grandmother’s birthday is coming up. These are not representational acts.
which every man has of his identity, as far back as his memory reaches, needs no aid of philosophy to strengthen it; and no philosophy can weaken it, without first producing some degree of insanity.”\(^{305}\)

However, when we experience nostalgia, this “conviction” seems to be threatened. It is threatened not because we are unable to recollect ourselves, as it were, in a “punctual” manner (i.e., because we have forgotten what we did yesterday or last year, or ten years ago), but rather because we are unable to “gather” ourselves. Far from reassuring us of our identity, our memory raises a distinct kind of “non-identity” with ourselves to our conscious awareness. Rather than assuring us of our identity with the one who we were, it is as if in the experience of nostalgia we are reminded of another who we no longer are. As such, nostalgia appears to be not only a “disorder” of memory in the sense in which all recollective memory is a “disorder” of a more fundamental a-temporal, habitual memory is, but even among phenomena of recollective memory, nostalgia would stand out as a “anomaly” insofar as it “inverts” the certainty of my own self-sameness with the remembered subject. This creates the following double bind: either nostalgia really is a disorder of memory and therefore does not give us access to our past, or the past that is mine cannot be reduced to an experiential entity that I access through my memory (or at least not through all forms of my memory).

Locke had posited that a necessary requirement for being a person is that this person can consider itself the same person at different times and places. On Locke's account, what makes us identical to ourselves is the fact that we are able to remember\(^{306}\) our past. At least that is how Locke has been interpreted by many of his readers. Joseph Butler, for instance, interpreted this claim as follows: “when any one reflects upon a past action of his own, he is just as certain of the person who did that action, namely himself, the person who now reflects upon it, as he is certain that the action was done at all.”\(^{307}\) According to Butler, having a clear and vivid recollection is, \(prima facie\), strong evidence for the

\(^{305}\)Reid in Perry 108.

\(^{306}\) Of course, this use of “remember” is too restrictive.

\(^{307}\)Butler in Perry 104.
fact that whatever I recollect has indeed taken place. But not only that, the person who remembers
doing x is not only certain of the occurrence of x but also of the fact that he, the recollector, did x (or at
least that they were present when x happened). As a number of 20th century thought experiments have
shown, the presence of such memory may in fact in and by itself not be sufficient for personal identity.
308 But for Locke's earliest interlocutors the opposite was the case: Such memory is not necessary for
personal identity. On this view, what you remember about your past is inconsequential for the question
of identity, because memory is mere evidence for identity. Writes Butler, “though consciousness of
what is past does thus ascertain our personal identity to ourselves, yet, to say that it makes personal
identity, or is necessary to our being the same persons, is to say that a person has not existed a single
moment, nor done one action, but what he can remember.”309 Instead, Butler goes on, “one should
really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot
constitute, personal identity, any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it
presupposes.”310 Reid agrees with this criticism, “it is not my remembering any action of mine that
makes me to be the person who did it. This remembrance makes me to know assuredly that I did it; but
I might have done it, though I did not remember it.”311

It seems indeed that the role that memory plays is epistemic rather than ontological, as Locke
seemed to suggest. One of the proofs that Reid adduces for this absurdity charge is the observation that
while “memory gives the most irresistible evidence of my being the identical person that did such a
thing, at such a time, I may have other good evidence of things which befell me, and which I do not
remember: I know who bare me, and suckled me, but I do not remember these events.”312 What Reid
and Butler are saying is true, but it does not hold for me insofar as I am the same person but only

308For a discussion of some of the influential and intricate of these experiments, cf. Parfit.
309Butler in Perry 100; italics mine.
310Butler in Perry 100.
311Reid in Perry 110.
312Reid in Perry 110.
insofar as I am the same human being. Locke himself had admonished his readers that “we must here take notice what the word I is applied to.” Persons and human beings have different persistence conditions. While it would indeed be dubious to assert that the persistence of the latter should depend on my memory, the persistence of the former does indeed hinge crucially on the person's memory, which is precisely Locke's point.

Locke had charged Reid with the mistake of having glossed over the distinction between me understood as a human being (a physical-biological organism) and me understood as a conscious being capable of guilt and reward (and of nostalgia). Locke's distinction is important, yet for our purposes it suffers from a reductionism of my being qua embodied entity to my biological being. We saw before that my materiality must first and foremost be understood not as that of a lump of organic matter, but as that of an embodied conscious entity active in a public space. But we already said that the subject of memory is not the same as the public self that I am for the other. That means, if a person is that “thing” which can consider itself the same at different times and in different places, we have yet to grasp the primordial condition of the possibility of this ability to consider-itself-the-same. This sensed sameness is the sameness generated via the public self. My memory is indeed only evidence of the sameness of this public self. But Reid’s and Butler’s explanation of this claim is insufficient. It is insufficient because it fails to describe the distinct essence of this materiality that we call a person. If we call a person a kind of materiality, we should be able to define the way in which this materiality that we call a 'person' persists. In other words, what makes for the lastingness of the “mattering materiality”? It is the mattering materiality that is the essence of my being-a-person. The public self that I am, I am for the other. My memory can thus not play any constitutive role in the genesis of this self. This capacity is always already given over to the other.

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313 Locke 252.
314 Cf. Stokes 649.
315 Matter persists.
2.5. Attribution and “self-preservation”

Although there is strong textual evidence that supports the view that Locke grounded identity in psychological continuity, Locke himself recognized that psychological identity yields “personhood” only in a forensic context, which is why Locke calls a person a “forensic term.”\textsuperscript{316} Writes Locke, “[Person] is a forensic term appropriating actions and their merit, and so belongs only to intelligent agents capable of a law, and happiness and misery.”\textsuperscript{317} This forensic context points toward the practical, intersubjective origin of the concept of personal identity. As Paul Ricoeur has argued, “[The question who] is the question we preferentially pose in the domain of action when, in searching for the agent, the author of the action, we ask, ‘who did this or that?’”\textsuperscript{318} Since the personal identity that I have I always have \textit{for another}, what grounds the identity of a person is the person's exposure to another. Personal identity requires equally that I recognize myself as the same person (Locke's memory requirement) and that I “be publicly identified as the same individual.”\textsuperscript{319} For Locke, the memory of the subject indeed holds this person together across time. However, it does not do this as the metaphysical ground of the person's unique identity. Memory plays a co-constitutive role because the absence of such memory makes the category of responsibility inapplicable. In other words, my memory of myself is the criterion, the \textit{conditio sine qua non} for my inclusion in the practice of attribution.\textsuperscript{320}

\textsuperscript{316}Cf. Locke 256. As such we could say that the concept of personhood is a 'regulative idea/l' that effectively orders the commerce of individuals around the concept of accountability.
\textsuperscript{317}Locke 256.
\textsuperscript{318}Ricoeur (1991) 75.
\textsuperscript{319}Glannon 238.
\textsuperscript{320}A person who could regain no memory of an action would indeed not have done this action: because actions are done by persons, and persons can be held responsible in a defensible manner. The “person” who could not recall would be exempt from this; they would fall outside the purview of the law, like the animal, the deranged. Based on the above considerations, then, the following story is too simplistic: “Either I am the person I am said to be, or I am not the person who I am said to be. Either I did x, or I did not do x. My memory of having done x plays only an evidential role.” It would appear that for Locke both of these claims are false: There are more than two options here; the third option being that the distinction does not apply because I have no met the minimum requirements ... (Which is of course distinct from saying that I \textit{didn’t} do it.) Secondly, memory \textit{properly understood} is required for the constitution of personhood. Unless I remember 'my' past in a certain way, I have yet to become a person, and this past is yet to become 'mine'. In other words, I have yet to “earn the right” to claim certain actions as 'mine', as the actions of 'a/the same person'. If this is true, then the recollective evidence that we have of certain past actions is not enough proof for our identity. This has nothing to do
It is by means of the category of responsibility that we establish a link between the original action and the (ongoing) present: We say *this person here* (now) is responsible for the action that occurred way back when. This person *is* he or she who *did* such and such. This agent is responsible for their action. It is the category of responsibility, which is the foundation of the attribution, that ties the action to the agent and thereby gives the agent a lasting, continuous existence.\textsuperscript{321} Personal identity is therefore first and foremost a phenomenon of responsibility. A proper situation of Locke's cognitive theory in the “forensic” context from which it emerges shows that memory is neither (merely) evidence for identity, nor is it absolutely constitutive of it. That I have a distinct who-identity by virtue of the unique history of my actions and experiences is not the result of my ability to recollect the episodes or events that make up this distinct identity. What is constitutive of my being a person is not my ability to consider myself the same self at different times and at different places, but rather a practice of attribution that assigns responsibility for a past action to *me*. The reason for this is that “*being the person who*” is short for “*being-recognized to be the person who*.”\textsuperscript{322}

The self-same subject who can be individuated by means of her past is *not* an experiential subject that ontologically precedes the practice of attributing responsibility and of holding individuals with the fallibility of this evidence. We need more than mere recollective memory. Recollective memory only suffices within a causal framework. This framework considers the subject of the memory “always already” the same unified thing. For Locke, in contrast, memory is constitutive of (personal) identity. However, we need to understand what remembering means. Memory is not the mere occurrence of a mental photograph. When I remember, says Locke, I appropriate the corresponding action. Hence, there is an important difference between recollection and appropriation. This appropriation is a *sui generis* kind of remembering. Only when I appropriate my past “*am*” I really my past. Insofar as I appropriate my past I *come to* “inhabit” what would otherwise be mere facts *about* me. Memory *is* required for the constitution of personhood. But memory alone does not yield a person; only the appropriate (inter-subjective, interpersonal) context does.

\textsuperscript{321}Cf. Glannon 235.

\textsuperscript{322}The past that is mine contains my actions, though this past will always contain more. It will likely contain experiences without any significant agentic component: it will contain past hopes, past dreams, past plans, and all kinds of other things. But these entities can lay claim only to an “inauthentic” propriety. They are “mine,” without however having the mineness that would make them a part of ’my’ own past. In order for the latter to be the case, they would need to be attributable to *me*. For this past that is mine pertains to me only insofar as it belongs to the public self that I am. The public self is the only possible owner of attributes because it is only in the world of the other, the public sphere, that I come to be objectivated; and properties presuppose a stable possessor. Whatever happens hidden away from the gaze of the other, has a different temporality altogether. What makes a property truly one's own is not just the empirical question whether or not this property belongs to a given individual, but the ontological question as to whether or not the property in question allows itself to be appropriated, “owned” in a robust sense. The claim that I make here is that what is truly (authentically, proprietarily) attributable to a person in an ontological sense are actions. Only actions are truly *theirs.*
It is rather an “epiphenomenon” of this practice. As such it is product of a discursive practice that filters the becoming in the public world through a forensic lens. This intrinsically “public” self, understood as the lasting personhood that I am for the other, is first and foremost a figure of action. As a figure of action my being produces a lasting, identical self, the Ständigkeit of which Heidegger spoke above. Outside this practice of accountability/attrIBUTion of responsibility the notion of a self-same I is either grafted onto the unity of the body (and the person is confounded with the human being, the history of the individual reduced to the biological category of the individual's life), or it is the illusion of a unified, separate subject of experience. The practice of accountability, in contrast, singles out the 'agent', who is both 'one' and 'the same'. This self-same subject of action exists only relative to the practice of holding individuals accountable for their actions. Ontologically speaking, what makes something (e.g., an action or experience) a part of one's own history is not the identity of x and y, but an intersubjective practice of attribution that allows for the ownership relation to obtain.

Where such a practice exists, I become the subject of my activity in the world, and as such I become capable of “accumulating being.” Responsibility and agency are the ontological prisms that wrest my passing activity away from a lasting self who transcends the fleetingness of its innerworldly activity. My fleeting activity is attributed to me, the stable, self-identical agent, in the form of my “actions,” which in aggregate form my history. Actions are “mine” to the extent that only I am responsible for them. As a responsible agent (a pleonasm) my activity is essentially proprietary. Qua agent I am no longer absorbed in this activity. As such there is always more to me than what is immediately apparent. Even where this activity does not leave anything visible behind, it leaves behind

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323 This view has the advantage of grounding identity in something other than the consciousness (memory) of the subject, whilst not falling prey to a metaphysical non-reductionism: there is no metaphysical entity (substance) that perdures but an entity that is closely related to the experiential self that I am.

324 As we will see in the next chapter, in addition to this forensic lens, the practice of proprietary attribution also imposes a universal “economic” metric on the becoming of the intersubjective world.

325 It is the continuity of the responsible agent that allows us to “unite what dissimilarity might otherwise separate” (Cf. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 334).
an record of 'my' existence; a (inerasable) trace of that which has come to pass. As a person I am not only the subject of now this historical property and now another. I am the subject of all the properties that at some point or other have been attributed to me. As an agent I not only am the momentary subject of certain properties that I can consider my own. My identity rather transcends any momentary ascription. I am the ongoing sum total of these properties; and this sum total constitutes a history, which is the history of the agentic entity that I am. This history is the seat of my identity.

This “mode” of personal being, then, describes a different manner of inhabiting time, one in which time does not signify difference and change, but one where time can be said and made to add up. While there is still change, there is also, and for the person qua person primarily continuity. We thus suggest to call the person a “figure of self-preservation”: In contrast to the pre-personal, habitual level, where my identity is constituted by the coherence and integrity of my activity, my agentic, personal persistence manifests itself primarily in the accumulation of various attributes: I am the person who did x and y and z and much, much more. As a person, I retain the past in the form of the properties and attributions that have either been made already or that could be made in a defensible manner. These properties are the properties of a numerically identical thing; an ever-expanding substratum that “swallows up” the time that has come to pass through it. This personal subject is the things that it has done, ontologically insofar as its being is that of personhood, and ontically in the sense that the past that comprises these various actions for which the subject is responsible is 'his/her' It is in virtue of these (agentic) properties that I am the person who I am; that I am this particular, determinate self rather than another. The things that have happened have happened to always the same me. They are 'my' past. They are (identical to) me.326

326As a person, the facts of my past are my properties in an analogous sense in which my nationality, my profession, etc. are my properties. Ontologically speaking, the historical facts (i.e., the facts concerning what I have done) that exist about myself are grounded in my properties. The possession of properties does not describe an impersonal, a-historical fact but rather derives directly from a specific public practice of attribution. This practice is a public practice in a robustly metaphysical sense: I cannot attribute something to myself unless there exists a public sphere in which my being takes on the form that makes such attribution possible. Even self-ascription does not circumvent the sphere of the
2.6. Responsibility and the identity of a character

Responsibility involves a distinct notion of identity that is more “selective” than the “that-identity” of two numerically identical objects and that assigns a distinct role to the power of recollection. As Marya Schechtman notes in *The Constitution of Selves* (1996), there exist two conceptually distinct approaches to the problem of personal identity: Schechtman calls the first approach the “reidentification” approach and the second on the “characterization” approach. The characterizations question, writes Schechtman, “asks which actions, experiences, beliefs, values, desires, character traits, and so on ... are to be attributed to a given person. Reidentification theorists ask what it means to say that a person at t2 is the same person at t1; characterization theorists ask what it means to say that a particular characteristic is that of a given person.” As Schechtman points out, when it comes to attributing qualities to an individual we rarely proceed by “first” attributing an action to a past subject and then vindicating the identity of the past self and the present one. This observation is not merely of practical relevance that we attribute to personal identity (i.e., the identity of a person) but tells us something about the constitution of the entity whose identity we are concerned with. We misunderstand the concept of a person if we think of a person as the sum total of countless individual “time slices” or episodes. Rather, when we speak of persons we have something more holistic in mind, namely, an entity that persists through time whilst acquiring ever new qualities and (at times) losing others. What is decisive about the identity for persons is that we distort this concept if we construe it in terms of 'that-identity' (sameness). The identity of persons is, first and foremost, a certain qualitative characterization. Personal identity is misunderstood if we conceive of it solely in terms of a 'that identity', and the relationship of identity to hold in virtue of a particular temporal “adhesive” (e.g., the

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327 Schechtman (1996) 73.
individual's ability to remember themselves). A person is never only “identical to” or “identical with” its past selves, but it “has an identity” that is to a great extent determined by the person's past.

According to Schechtman, framing the phenomenon of personal identity in terms of the characterization approach has a number of advantages. One of these advantages is that it allows for a more nuanced view of the considerations that affect our identity judgments. If our personal identity does not precede the practice of attribution but rather results from it (i.e., if what I remember about my past is less decisive in determining who I am than what is attributed to me), then if we want to understand how the personal identity of a self comes to be constituted we cannot simply look at how the individual's memory establishes a relation to the past in question (which, as we said, by itself does not establish my concrete personal identity); we must rather ask how we assign culpability, or what makes an action attributable to a specific person. We already said that the agent's memory of a given action is, as it were, a minimal condition that needs to be satisfied whenever we impute an action to an agent. However, the satisfaction of this condition alone does not suffice to justify the imputation of blame or credit for a given action: To wit, when it comes to the attributions that we make, we can distinguish between an attribution that is true in a robust sense and one that is (merely) true in a “gross and literal” sense. In many different contexts, our decision to attribute a given action to a particular agent involves considerations of whether or how this action relates to what has already been established about this person, and not just to the empirical question of whether the agent in question causally brought the circumstance in question about. Schechtman reminds us that when we ponder whether or not we can attribute a given action, remark, etc. to a particular individual, we are not solely interested in the question of whether the person who is said to have made the remark “factually” made the remark, but how “telling” this remark was with regard to the identity of the individual who is said to

The experience of alienation that many theorists of personal memory discuss is not always a mnemonic experience. We are all too well familiar with experiences that we remember clear and distinctly yet from which we feel forcefully estranged. We feel like it was not really us who did, said, wanted such and such. Of course “we” did such and such, we clearly remember it, but the action in question seems noticeably incongruent with our usual comportment and strikingly disconnected from our sense of self. We could say that this is an aberration that does not affect our concept of personal identity. However, Schechtman explains why this line of reasoning is not convincing.

The core idea of Schechtman's account of personal can already be found in Locke's original account, specifically in Locke's insight into the “forensic” origin of the concept of personal identity. Although Locke does not (explicitly) mention that responsibility is more than an all-or-nothing quality, within the forensic context in which the concept of personhood has its origin the question how “expressive” a given manifestation of a person's identity is of this very identity is not a secondary consideration but figures centrally in the attribution of responsibility. Therefore, Schechtman, in my opinion correctly, emphasizes that “An account of characterization should tell us whether a particular action is something that merely occurs in a person's history (seemingly a minimum requirement for any kind of responsibility), something that is quite solidly hers, or something that flows naturally from features absolutely central to her character.”

A person has not only a brute (de facto) identity, but it...
has an identity of character. It is this identity that we are concerned with when we attempt to “gather ourselves.” The person who unsuccessfully attempts to gather themselves does not have to doubt his identity in a “gross and literal” sense. This identity not in question and as such does not directly figure in nostalgia and is therefore neither contested nor affirmed in nostalgia.

2.7. Properties and social power

We said that personhood allows for the accumulation of being by means of relating to the past in a proprietary form. The proprietary past of an individual whose identity is determined by way of their actions we call the individual's history. If we want to treat the person not as an object but rather as a manner of inhabiting time we need to understand how my personal existence, my being-a-person, the preservation of self manifests itself concretely. If we want to understand the specific nature of the personal manner of inhabiting time, we are well-advised to look at the space that the person “in-habits.” Based on what we said at the beginning of this chapter, we should construe the “spatiality” of the space by means of the specific habituality that our being qua personal being exhibits. “Whenever we engage with others,” writes Russon, “new interhuman spaces emerge that we can inhabit.” Our engagement with others creates a different space, an “interhuman space” that offers its own possibilities of inhabitment, which, in turn, are defined by a different temporality. I can inhabit this space only in the form of being responsible for what I have done. It is where we recognize others to be responsible agents and they recognize us that we inhabit this interhuman space. In other words, it is when and where I interact with others in an “accountable” fashion that I inhabit a space in which I am a person.

As a person my embodiment is never purely physical. What I, as a person, embody is rather the sum total of my properties, of the achievements that I can call my own. That is what it means to embody myself in the social world. My presence “in” the social world thus always already transcends

the immediacy of the 'me now'. This transcendence is inherent in my very materiality and substantiality as a person.\textsuperscript{336} Writes Russon, “to be such a responsible individual requires one to be 'self-possessed', to be individuated as a self-responsible body.”\textsuperscript{337} Being a person requires me to adopt a proprietary relation vis-à-vis the past. I take responsibility \textit{for} my past whenever I allow for the past to have a decisive reality for my present. The appropriation of our past does not have to come in the form of an explicit (verbal) taking responsibility (i.e., “I did such and such”). Most of the time we express our consent to the various (latent) attributions through our behaviour, giving rise to what could aptly be called a “performative appropriation.”\textsuperscript{338} I effect this appropriation by making myself answerable to the claims that are directed at me in virtue of my being identified as the determinate person who I am.

My ability to be at home in the social world depends on my ability to appropriate the past as my own. I can only appropriate this past that is my own by being the person who I am. Being this person, however, requires the cooperation of others (a co-witnessing, as Russon calls it\textsuperscript{339}). Explains Russon, “the very individuality of the person is itself something accomplished only through cooperation.”\textsuperscript{340} Since I \textit{am} me only insofar as this me is recognized by the other, since my identity as this individual is proper to me only by virtue of being recognized by another, I can inhabit the social world only in the form of “a habit of interpersonal interaction.”\textsuperscript{341} Insofar as any form of private ownership is “a phenomenon of our human behaviour toward each other,”\textsuperscript{342} my way of inhabiting time in a personal manner (that is, in a manner in which I contract time in the form of 'my history) is made possible by “a gesture of mutual endorsement in and through a thing.”\textsuperscript{343}

This thing is the past that I have, the past that is mine. Facticity, its impersonal appearance

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Russon (2009) 86.
\item Russon (2009) 98.
\item See Russon (2009) 93.
\item Russon (2009) 90.
\item Russon (2009) 107.
\item Russon (2009) 107.
\item Russon (2009) 108.
\item Russon (2009) 108.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
notwithstanding, is in fact the cypher for mutual recognition. The density of the familiar social world is directly proportionate to the amount of “collective support and recognition”\textsuperscript{344} for the self that I am in this world. As such, every property is in essence also always a “bond”\textsuperscript{345} between the one who has the property and the one who “grants” this property by recognizing it. What is at stake in my unity with myself, my diachronic unity (or continuity), is not a primarily problem of consistency, as one could easily think and as both Butler and Reid argued.\textsuperscript{346} It is a matter of giving or withholding one's support for the communal form of life. This aspect is completely overlooked when the relationship between 'me' and 'my past selv(es)' is understood as a bilateral relation, and all questions of the relationship between 'me' and 'my past' are seen to pertain to the subject herself.\textsuperscript{347} What this conception overlooks is the constitutive importance of the other to whom I 'owe' “my” past.

What it means for me to be me (i.e., to have the distinct who-identity that only I have) is, however, not exhausted by this phenomenon of accountability. Locke explicitly linked the ascription of actions with the appropriation of merit.\textsuperscript{348} “This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness; whereby it becomes concerned and accountable, owns and imputes to itself past action ... All of which is founded on a concern for happiness.”\textsuperscript{349} Personal being understood as a manner of inhabiting time is not exhausted by my acting with accountability or in a responsible manner. The latter are the conditiones sine quibus non for my “presence” in the social

\textsuperscript{344}Russon (2009) 107.
\textsuperscript{345}The reality of a bond requires a “co-witnessing,” which is why recollection alone is ontologically insufficient to establish the proprietary relationship between me and that which I recollect.
\textsuperscript{346}We already said that personal identity is not a mental Erlebnis but rather the product of a practice of attribution. The failure to recognize oneself in the public self that one is is not based on a mnemonic malfunction but rather on an unwillingness to accept the fact that our behaviour “leaks” into the public and congeals into a determinate self that we inescapably are. The alienation that one can experience from “a past self” can only take place in relation to the current self that one is. And this self will be a public self (because outside of this public self we do not exist in a self-like or personal manner). But the alienation from a past self then will effectively be a disavowal of responsibility for some of one's past action. As such, it would be more accurate to follow Kierkegaard and view these experiences of “non-recognition as moral failures” (italics added) rather than as mnemonic anomalies.
\textsuperscript{347}This bilateral conception is expressed whenever the individual's relationship to their past is framed in terms of the “remembering self” and the “remembered self.” See, for instance, Albright 35.
\textsuperscript{348}Cf. Locke 256.
\textsuperscript{349}Locke 256; emphasis added.
world, but this presence concretely plays itself out in a different kind of 'I can.' Being considered the-
person-who involves more than the backward-oriented ascertainment of my de facto and de jure culpability regarding a certain circumstance: the act by which an action comes to be imputed to me involves essentially “reward and punishment.”  

In other words, it involves a momentary or lasting modification of what I am able to do in the social world.

Mutual endorsement entails that I can not only exact a certain claim from the other in virtue of their past (I hold the other accountable for his/her past actions) but also in virtue of my own past. We said at the very beginning of this chapter that to have a past means to inhabit a familiar world. The familiarity of this world, we argued, manifests itself in our competent engagement with the world. The proprietary competence that we encounter here, an 'I can' that pertains to me insofar as I matter in the public, intersubjective world, differs significantly from the know-how that I exhibit in the pre-personal world. Lest we forget that the properties that I embody in virtue of being this particular self determine my being not merely in an ontic-identificational sense, but also, and for me perhaps primarily, as capabilities that I have in the social world that I inhabit. Russon explains that, “Property is that in which our identities are realized ... Something is my property to the extent that it offers to me its powers, to the extent that I realize myself through it.”

We already pointed out, that as a person I am essentially free. I must be free to become responsible for my actions. Freedom is the essential determination of the 'I can' in the social world. Freedom expresses itself in powers and gives rise to a facticity. Both freedom and facticity are always specific to the individual whose freedom and facticity it is. What I am free to do is determined by my concrete situatedness. This situatedness, in turn, is the specific facticity of my being. My facticity – the cypher for my socially recognized properties – is the source of a new 'I can'. Insofar as my freedom is determined by my identity, and my identity is determined by my facticity, my freedom-to (i.e., the social 'I can') is determined by my past.

350 Locke 252.
achievements. In the social world, my 'I can' is now determined by my 'I am'. Who I am defines my 'I can'. What I can do thus no longer depends on the abilities that I embody, rather that which I embody is determined by the properties that I have. My embodiment is the determinate identity that I have as this person who I am. As such my situatedness “in” the social world is the determinate identity that individuates me as this particular person that I am. While my "pre-personal" competence depends on my ability to retain the past (e.g., a skill that I have acquired over time retains the past only to the extent that I keep this skill; I only have “this” past insofar as I remain capable of exercising the corresponding skill), when it comes to the powers that inhere in me qua the particular individual who I am, the preservation of these powers is based in the other's recognition. That is to say, these powers inhere in me due to (past) merit (i.e., due to what I have done) rather than my present ability to (still) exercise these powers. I have the powers in virtue of being (ontically) the person who I am. What this means is that I have these powers only qua personal being, only when I am (ontologically) myself, i.e., the person who I am in virtue of having the determinate past that is attributed to me.

These powers differ from the powers that I have in the pre-social world insofar as the reality of these powers qua properties depends on a bond that exists between me and others. “In a bond,” writes Russon, “we give up our exclusive possession of our own reality: what we have is only 'ours,' not strictly 'yours' or 'mine'.” I have these powers in virtue of what I have achieved. Yet these achievements that are 'mine' are mine only because they are recognized to be mine, to be me. My competence is dependent on my presence in the social world, that is, only insofar as I am recognized to be part of this world. To be a part of the social world always means to be part as a particular individual with a determinate identity. My having the powers of this particular individual hence depends on my personal “integrity.” My loyalty to myself is the precondition for my having the powers that I have in virtue of being this particular person. My being this (same) person is never “up to me.” The powers

352Russon (2008) 90.
that “I” have are owed to the other who recognizes and thereby authenticates my power. In other words, the powers and properties that I have in virtue of being the particular person who I am are in reality owed to the other who recognizes me as the self who has these powers. My being this person manifests itself in the form of having the powers to do certain things that are the prerogative of the person who I am. These powers are the “projective” side of the properties that I have in virtue of being the subject of a certain past that is my own (which is the retrospective side of the propriety of my being-in-the social world). However, in order for me to be recognized as this me who only I am, I have to maintain my existence in the social world, and “we cannot be in the [social] world at all except insofar as we preserve and care for our own singular, organic determinacy, for ourselves as discrete individuals.”

Making myself at home in this public world requires that I recognize that this world is a shared world, that my being-in is essentially a being-in-with-others. More importantly for our argument, this entails that the preservation of my past is not optional. I can of course (at least to some extent) decide whether or not I preserve the past. However, I cannot decide whether I preserve the past that is mine. The reason for this is first and foremost conceptual: The past that is mine is a product of a practice of attribution, one that I am not free to reject or accept. There where I reject this practice I do it at the risk of losing a proprietary past altogether and thereby the freedom that I have qua agent or person. The preservation of self is at the same time made possible by my participation in the public sphere, but also demanded from me as the condition of my participation herein. It is at the same time the foundation of my freedom and its limit. I enact the former by making use of my socially-recognized identity within the public sphere, and I recognize the latter by remaining accountable, by answering for the totality of that activity which is made possible by the intersubjective endorsement that sustains my social being (both ontically and ontologically).

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2.8. The recuperation of my past as “mine”

We said above that in the public world I am no longer strictly myself in virtue of the coherent permanence of “my” activities, but rather insofar as I am this publicly identifiable (i.e., “recognizable”) “somebody.” My activity can have permanence only insofar as I, i.e., the person to whom this activity is always already attributed, has permanence, and that means insofar as I comport myself toward my actions in a responsible or accountable manner, which is the form of memory that is specific to my personal being. As a person my being-in-the-world has a distinct materiality. This materiality is not a pure physicality but rather a mattering to which implies the necessary existence of another. I am a person only for the other. As a “person” I dwell amongst others. My esse is inter-esse. It is to this me that all kinds of “properties” will come to be attributed (as “mine”), conferring a distinct and unmistakable identity on me and thus individuate me.

A person is an objectivated subjectivity that has a distinct temporality. How does this objectivated subjectivity recuperate that quality of the past that makes her world a familiar one? If this recuperation always needs to pass through the other, then “my past” as well has to “pass through” the other. Ontologically, it needs to become, as it were, a past that is no longer exclusively mine but rather a “shared” past. As a person, then, I also a distinctly different relationship to the past than the one I have in the besorgende Alltäglichkeit. In addition to my pre-personal habitual past, as a person I have a past that is mine (i.e., a personal past). This past that is mine belongs to me, i.e., to the objectivated subjectivity that I am for the other. This “having” of a past that is one's own has a distinct meaning that reflects the shared character of the past that is “mine.” Despite the fact that this past is my own, it is not my own in a purely private or even solipsistic sense (like for instance how my dreams are mine). On the contrary, insofar as my proprietary relation to the past depends on my being a person, which in turn I am only in the public sphere, the past that is mine is an inherently public matter. The materiality of this past is inherently intersubjective. As such my past, (i.e., the past that is my own) is no longer
contained or expressed in my concernful Besorgen (where “Besorgen” always presupposes a retention of the past) but is inherently of public interest. My past becomes a concern to the other (just as theirs becomes a concern to me), and as the other's concern it is returned to me.

And yet, despite its ontological sharedness, ontically “my past” is unmistakably mine. This past that is mine is the past of the public self who I am. It is to the public self that we direct the question, *Who are you?* And we answer this question by giving an account of the person's past. On the view that we are advancing here, what distinguishes two persons as persons is what they have done and experienced. I am (ontologically) this public self by recognizing that I am (ontically) this particular, determinate someone. As a public self I am not just any body, I am somebody. To be precise, I am this particular person. This account “presupposes” that the relation that the person has to their past is essentially “historical.” As the public is a 'who' which has a particular history. *Qua* person my past has the ability to individualize me: it is his/her history of experiences and actions.

At the beginning of this chapter we said that my having-a-past expresses itself in the distinct kind of activity that exhibits unity and continuity. If the presence of an other modifies my having a past, namely such that my past now becomes “mine” in a attributive sense, then this new sense of my “having-a-past” must be rooted in a distinct, new kind of activity. What unifies my activity is no longer solely inherent in the activity itself, but rather in the fact that (all) my activity is attributed to the same agent: namely *me*. A central requirement for my being a person, i.e., for my having a past that is mine (and, by implication, for the reconstitution of the familiarity of the world) is the presence of another who recognizes me as the (stable, continuous) doer of the activities that emanate from *me*, as the being who persists throughout and consciously expresses *its* identity (its being identical-to-self and its determinate who-ness) through its actions in the public world. The self-sameness of my activity rests on it being the activity of the same agent.
The past that is returned to me from the world of the other can presents itself as the source of a growing freedom in the intersubjective world (i.e., an increase of my I can), yet at any rate it necessarily present itself as a brute identificational I am, or what Sartre (and Heidegger) call my facticity.\(^{355}\) For me to have a past that is mine, means the concretization of certain facts about me.\(^ {356}\) My access to this past that I have as mine is always mediated by the category of the factual.\(^{357}\) As such, there is an objectivity/object-hood to my past which allows me to “have” a past that is “mine,” viz. the past as the object of my capacity for proprietary possession.

I can recuperate my past only as “my” past, and that means I accept responsibility for my activity in the world. To accept responsibility for my activity means that I identify with my objectivated self, with the being that I am only at the end of the Other’s look. When I say “I did this,” I adopt the perspective of the other who creates a rift between me and my activity. I accept not only the attribution of actions to the person Niels, but also the (additional) fact that I am Niels.\(^ {358}\) Of course we should not imagine this as two distinct actions that I perform. They are logically distinct, though phenomenologically they blend together. In accepting responsibility for my action, I have always already accepted the framework that structures my being in such an objectivated way.

In the preceding section we have departed from Locke’s cognitivistic account of personal identity primarily with respect to the ontological role that we assigned to the power of my memory or recollection for the constitution of the concept of my past. We argued that my memory plays only a secondary role in the constitution of a proprietary relationship that the subject takes up vis-à-vis the past. The act of recollection alone, even at its clearest and most vivid form, does not suffice to establish

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355We will return to this crucial issue in detail in Chapter 3.
356Put differently, I have this past that I primordially have for the other in the sense that certain (past-tense) statements about me are true.
357The concept of the factual comprises both the notion of the account and that of a history, and thus lends additional support to our earlier claim about the essential complementarity of the two concepts.
358With Sartre we could say that I accept my 'factivity'.
that relationship to the past which would prove that the past that I recollect is 'mine' in a robust sense.\footnote{The person without a past is often portrayed as the person who has been deprived of her memories. Our own argument has aimed at “diminishing” the importance of personal memories and recollection. A person (used in a non-technical, vernacular sense) could have the richest of memories and yet resemble Robert Musil’s Man Without Properties. This “person” would have countless memories and yet these memories would not stem from “her” past.}

The reason for this is that 'mine' is derived not from the nominative 'I' but rather from the accusative 'me'.\footnote{On this point, cf. also Judith Butler's Giving an Account of Oneself.} Although 'me' is the necessary counterpart to the 'I' that I always am, what makes a past experience (understood in a broad sense) “mine” is that they are attributable to me. Even when I attribute a past experience to myself this self is the “accused” self that appears to the other. In order for my memory to (re)produce the mineness of 'my past' (i.e., in order for me remembering “my” past) I need to remember my (public) self. I need to remember this other who I am. I remember this other not by means of (internal, self-referential, private) recollection, but by \textit{taking responsibility} for the other who I am, an other who is defined by a proprietary relation to the past. The proprietariness of these properties that constitute 'my' past is not grounded in the work of (personal) memory but rather in a social practice of attribution that relies on memory but is not reducible to it; especially not if by “memory” we understand the “private” act of recollection. The power to recollect my past is not that which is ontologically \textit{decisive} for my having of a distinct identity/history. The reason for this has to do with the complexity of the notion of “my past”: Fundamentally, my ability to recollect “my past” is not \textit{decisive} because “the past that is mine” is not a psychological concept but a forensic one. The reason for this is that my being acquires its personal quality through a practice of attribution and my participation therein. Secondly, the practice of attribution treats “my responsibility” as the criterion of identity, and not the latter as the criterion of the former. Responsibility (or accountability), in turn, is a quality that admits varying degrees. When it comes to attributing actions to individual agents, our attributions do not proceed by way of determinations of the “brute” identity but rather take into account how “expressive” a given action was of a person's character. Therefore, as far as my \textit{concrete}
(historical) identity is concerned my recollection is simply too “indiscriminate” to give me a reliable access to “my past.” To wit, that which I am still able to recollect with the utmost vividness, can in reality play a very small role in the determination of my identity. Lastly, we have seen that my identity in the social world is inextricably linked to the unique social ‘I can' that I have. “To be person x” means “to be able to do the things” that only person x can do. It is these three factors that determine the concept of “my past.”

To say that memory does not play the role that it is said to play, does not mean that memory plays no role. The public self that I am is essentially an agentic entity. Memory is not that in virtue of which I am the agent of my actions. I am this agent in virtue of an act of attribution by which a given action has been affixed to me. I am this public self by recognizing the special power that this (my) past has over me; I am this public self by recognizing (explicitly or implicitly) that I am bound by this past that is attributed to me. I can only be this public self by recognizing that this public self always already has a history, and that the fundamental modality of this having-a-history is being committed to the ongoing retention of this history. The moment I break away from my commitment I forfeit my identity as this particular being who I am. What matters for my who-identity is not that I remember the actions that are attributed to me, but that I take responsibility for them. This taking responsibility is for me linked to the private phenomenon of memory, but the (additional) step of taking responsibility, though linked to the private experience of memory, crucially takes me out of the realm of the private and into the public sphere.

2.9. Back to nostalgia

The preceding discussion has two yielded two important insights for our analysis of nostalgia: If our reconstruction of the concept of the “personal past,” i.e., the past that is mine, is plausible, then
personal identity and, more importantly for our purposes, the past that I have as the particular person who I am, is not exhaustively determined by my ability to remember myself. Locke's claim that "as far as [the person's] consciousness can be extended backward to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person"\textsuperscript{361} is, without qualification, mistaken. The mistake is due to Locke's omission of the essential role that the Other plays in the constitution of my personal identity. My past or my history never comprises everything that I remember. Ontologically speaking, "memory alone is not enough to constitute identity,"\textsuperscript{362} at least not if by "memory" we mean the ability to recollect a past experience, and by "my past" we mean the past of the person who I am for the other. Who I am for the other is always in part determined by the other; in this case, by the social practice by which actions come to be attributed to individual agents. "My past" is not an experiential (mnemonic) concept: it is an agentic concept. As we will see in the next chapter, this has considerable implications for the notion of a "desired return" that constitutes the very core of the concept of nostalgia.

We said at the beginning of this chapter that the primordial meaning of "to have a past" is "to inhabit a familiar world." In order to understand how we reclaim the familiarity of the pre-personal world that is "stolen away" from me by the appearance of the Other, we had to understand what the distinct past of the person is and what the "having" of this past involves. We argued that the past of the "personal self" is necessarily a shared past: namely insofar as it emerges from a practice of attribution and insofar as this attribution is mediated by the concept of my "facticity." Furthermore, when we say that a person has a particular past, we do not only mean that this person is able to recollect such and such episode in the past. Where we say that a person has a particular past, the primary function of this statement is not reidentification but rather characterization. That is to say, my past individuates me as a person who \textit{eo ipso} has a unique history and a unique set of powers in the social world in virtue of her history. The fact that I am a particular person with a unique past does not primarily point to a brute

\textsuperscript{361}Locke 247.
\textsuperscript{362}Schechtman (2005) 15.
identity across time but rather to a peculiar identity of a person. This identity is neither equally derived from “all” the things that this person has done, nor is it exclusively a “backward-oriented” identity: the 'having' of this distinct past signifies that the person whose past it is can do things in virtue of that which is past. In other words, the primary meaning of this past is not its “pastness” but rather its unique presence in the present of my possibilities.

This is not to deny the importance of my ability to recollect this past and to re-identify myself across time. But in light of what it means to be a person with a distinct identity and history, we held that my ability to recollect my past constitutes a limiting condition for the sensibility of the practice of attribution that is the ontological cause of my historical identity. Without the corroboration of my recollections, these recollections alone cannot establish me as the same person who I can still remember to have been. My recollection of having done such and such alone does not confer the distinct power that the 'having' of that past would normally have on me: While my “recollection” of how to sharpen a knife eo ipso confers the ability to sharpen a knife on me, my recollection of having lent James $50 does not allow me to claim the $50 from James if no one else recalls that I lent James $50. I only “have” the past in which I lent James $50 to the extent that someone else aside from me recollects that I let James $50.

The Swiss soldier who is displaced not only misses the sight of familiar faces, but is surrounded by strangers who are unable to confirm (or disconfirm) his identity that would allow the soldier to experience his environment as familiar. It is not only the absence of familiar sights that makes the place foreign, but rather the inability to act like one who has been in this place and who is recognized as a “familiar face.” As we showed at the beginning of this chapter, the familiarity of the world that I inhabit is not primarily that of an object that I passively stand over against. It rather lies in the distinct quality that my activity has in this environment. The displaced soldier remembers the homeland all too well; but precisely that is his curse: he remembers it “too” well, because he can now only remember it.
The Swiss soldier in the foreign land is not at home but is a stranger. The stranger is by definition one who is not recognized, or rather, who is recognized only “as stranger,” and that means not as anyone in particular. Thus, the Swiss soldier is, as it were, “cut off” from his own past (his history); or rather, he experiences his past as truly past. As we said above, to have a past that is mine does not merely mean that I remember certain past episodes but also that I have distinct “possibilities” by virtue of this past. Where the latter is missing, the crucial quality of my “having a particular past” is absent. The stranger is not only the one who does not recognize their environment but also the one who dwells on the periphery of the social world, i.e., whose freedom of action is drastically restricted. If the ontologically primordial meaning of my “having a past” is “to live in a familiar world,” then to the extent that this world becomes un-familiar, there must have occurred a modification of my relation to the past, i.e., to my “having a past.” When the world ceases to be familiar, the past ceases to be of use. It becomes literally “useless” and instead becomes exclusively the object of a “pointless” retrospective, recollective indulgence. From here it is only a small step to the “afflicted imagination” that Hofer already found to be characteristic of the condition of nostalgia which can be seen as an “overcompensation” of the practical uselessness (and thus) social irreality that the past has for the displaced soldier.

2.10. Conclusion

We began this chapter by examining the question, What does it mean to have a past? We argued that to have a past means to inhabit a familiar world. This sense of “having a past” is pre-personal. It manifests itself in the mostly pre-cognitive habitual continuity of my activity in the world. We said that this familiarity of the world is wrested away from me by the appearance of another who lays claim to “my” world and who transforms my being into an inescapable being-for-other. To this other I appear as the author or agent of specific actions. Personal being, along with the possession of a past that is mine,
as a manner of being-in-time is made possible by virtue of my exposure to an Other to whom I appear. I am someone with a determinate identity always for-the-other. We have said that the familiarity of my world depends on the continuity of my activity in this world. In order to reclaim the familiarity that the world formerly had for me it becomes mandatory that my activity has a continuity that is recognizable by an other. The continuity of my activity in the intersubjective world is sui generis, because what it means for two actions to be continuous is socially determined. In order for my activity to be continuous it is not necessary that I do the same thing over and over, but rather that I satisfy the social expectations that are directed to one who has acted in a specific way. As we will argue in Chapter 4, generally speaking, in order for my activity to have continuity it is mandatory that I act in an accountable manner, which is the sui generis form of memory by which the personal self remembers her proprietary past.

In this chapter we have largely treated the expressions “personal being” and “agentic being” as synonymous. While we said that only actions allows for what we have called “proprietary attributions,” we must remember that my personal identity is not necessarily determined by the history of my actions. In other words, personhood is not necessarily the agentic concept as which we have treated it in this chapter. That my personal identity is determined by my history, i.e., the agentic past that is mine, is a historically contingent fact. The identity of a person can be determined by means of other qualities, not all of which have to be agentic in nature. Even where my identity is defined in agentic terms, this does not have to mean that it is determined by the history of my actions.\footnote{Cf. Emmanuel Levinas's ethical concept of “individuation by election”; cf. his “Vocation by the Other” in Is it Righteous to Be (2001).} This finding is highly salient for our attempt to locate the concept of nostalgia in the history of ideas: If the concept of “my past” plays a central role in the discourse of nostalgia, as we have argued in Chapter 1, yet the concept of “my past” is itself historically contingent, namely insofar it is wed to a distinct conception of personal identity, we should be able to situate the origin of nostalgia at that moment where the individual becomes capable
of acquiring a distinct (social) identity in virtue of his or her unique history of actions and experiences.

That my identity is determined by my “history” presupposes, in practical terms, a practice of attribution. However, ideologically it presupposes a particular metaphysical conception of the subject: namely the subject who is sovereign over her own identity, i.e., free to give herself an identity through her actions in the world. Only where the human subject is metaphysically free in this sense does it become intelligible that my identity, i.e., my personal identity/who-ness (being-for-other), be determined by my history. Put differently, only when the human being is essentially a sovereign, self-responsible individual, does the equation of “personal being” and “agentic being” become defensible. Yet, that is precisely this agentic meaning that we have given to the concept of personal identity. This is, as it were, the transcendental prerequisite of historical being. Personal being that is made possible by a social practice that attributes actions to individual agents and that defines the identity of a person by way of their history (i.e., their proprietary/personal, agentic past: that which a person has done and said) can therefore be called historical being.

Ontologically, the proprietariness of the properties that constitute my agentic past, i.e., my history, is grounded not in the work of memory but rather in a social practice. My historical being presents itself at first in the crude form of my personal identity. That I am identical to this person whose identity I have is beyond my control. I am, as it were, expropriated from my identity insofar as I did not choose the norms or practices that determine my identity and thus produce me in my determinate being-for-other. But the fact that I am identical to this person at the same time affords me possibilities in the interpersonal world, that although I am not free to choose, I am nevertheless free to capitalize on. In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 we will see that there is thus another, equally important side to my historical being, one that places more emphasis on the subjective side and in fact on my “memory”, albeit not in the sense of Locke’s ability to recollect what I have done. The memory that is required for my having a history, for my exist-ing historically, depends on my ability to take responsibility for my
past. Having a history does not just mean that I have an agentic identity but that I also *appropriate* this identity.\textsuperscript{364} What this amounts to concretely and practically will be discussed in the next two chapters. By doing this, we will furthermore connect our analysis of the concept of a historical past with our wider discussion of nostalgia.

\textsuperscript{364}On the difference between “having” memories and “appropriating” them, cf. Stokes 648.
CHAPTER 3: Nostalgia and the Sovereign Individual

3.1. Introduction

In the Introduction we noted two competing views that can be found in the literature on nostalgia: on the one hand there are those who argue that there are certain essential features of nostalgia that makes it possible to identify instances of “nostalgia” even where the phenomenon in question is not and could not yet be designates as “nostalgia.” On this account, it is sensible to speak of Odysseus's nostalgia provided that Odysseus displays the symptoms of (our) nostalgia. Against this view Jean Starobink (1966) has argued that the emergence of the condition of nostalgia is inextricably linked to the emergence of the term “nostalgia.” On this account, to speak of Odysseus's "nostalgia" would be a (medical) anachronism. Starobinki's justification for this claim is not based in an analysis that is specific to the condition of nostalgia but rather the general view that for the critic or the historian of emotions "an emotion exists only beyond the point at which it attains linguistic status. No facet of an emotion can be traced before it is named, before it is designated and expressed." Our own account of nostalgia will follow Starobinki and will show that the phenomenon of nostalgia is indeed endemic to a particular historical period. To justify this claim, we will, however, adopt an approach that seeks to illuminate on what metaphysical grounds the universalist position has to be rejected. In contrast to Starobinki's argument, the argument that we seek to defend will thus be specific to the phenomenon of nostalgia.

In his article “Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity” (2001) Peter Fritzsche goes beyond Starobinki's “formal” pro-historicism argument and offers a substantive argument for nostalgia's historical contingency. Fritzsche argues that “nostalgia is a fundamentally modern phenomenon because it depended on the notion of historical process as the continual production of the new.”

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365Starobinski 81.
366Fritzsche 1589.
thereby of its place in the history of ideas that shares some of Fritzsche's basic ideas but that ultimately
goes beyond Fritzsche's account. We will defend the thesis that nostalgia only became possible when
the human subject became sufficiently attached to its time and thereby to its past. In this chapter we
will further develop the view that we expounded in Chapter 2: According to this view, whether or not
an individual is attached to their past is not an empirical, subjective matter but one that depends on
whether the human subject is conceived as someone whose past is theirs ontologically. What attitude
an individual human being adopts to the past that is theirs is an empirical matter that will occupy is
again in Chapter 4. In this chapter we will treat the concept of a past that is 'mine' (to which I can
become emotionally, psychologically attached, or not) as the product of historical processes which
allow us to locate nostalgia's place in the history of ideas.

In Chapter 2 we justified our examination of the specific 'mineness' of the past that figures
prominently in the concept of nostalgia by way of focussing on the claim that the nostalgic desires a
“return.” Our discussion was meant to lead us to the truth of the claim, “I can experience nostalgia only
for something 'in my own past'.” But our argument led us to the claim that the concept of the past that
is mine is not even primarily an experiential concept. In chapter 2 we have argued that 'the past that is
mine' is not an experiential concept, which at least prima facie would appear to be hardly compatible
with the claim that I can experience nostalgia only for something “in my own past.” Since this is the
claim with which we began our examination in Chapter 2, one could object that in the last chapter we
have lost sight of what is essential about that concept of the past that figures so prominently in
nostalgia. Perhaps, one could argue, we have taken the “mineness” of “my past” too literally.

Before we address this objection head-on, we should note that the claim that it is only possible
(strictly speaking) to feel nostalgic about something that one has personally experienced (i.e., for
something that lies in one's own past) is a contentious issue among those who have studied nostalgia.
While some theorists argue that notion of a “return” implies (semantically, conceptually) an original
experience to which the nostalgic longs to return (either physically, or by way of experiencing the original experience encore une fois), others have argued that such an original experience is not necessary: Frank Ankersmit, for example, argues in *History and Tropology* (1994) that “it would be quixotic to deny the all-too-evident nostalgia in, for example, Petrarch's or Hölderlin's fascination with classical antiquity ... Feeling a nostalgic yearning for a historical period antedating our birth by many centuries is a fairly common phenomenon both for historian and nonhistorians.” The fact that such experiences bear some resemblance to more uncontroversial cases of nostalgia, as well as the fact that those who underwent the experience described by Ankersmit often conceptualize it in nostalgic categories is of course no demonstration that the phenomenon at hand really is best (or at least sensibly) described as “nostalgia.” Nevertheless, it is evidence that cannot simply be dismissed out of hand. Another objection is even more weighty: As we already heard in Chapter 1, it belongs to the idiosyncrasies of the experience of nostalgia that it constitutes its own object. The object of our longing is necessarily shaped by the uniqueness of this longing. As such, it literally only exists as this longed-for object. On this account, to charge nostalgia of “idealizing” or “romanticizing” the past (that which Steven Galt Crowell has called nostalgia's “cavalier attitude toward its presentational content”) would mean to miss the point of nostalgia. All three of the thinkers who we discussed in this chapter seem to agree that the desired return of nostalgia is never a literal “return-to.” The myth of the original experience is precisely that: a myth. The true object of our nostalgia is always a later reconstruction of a world that was never experienced like this before; its familiarity is thus always, in a sense, a false familiarity.

In this chapter we proffer an analysis that does not seek to resolve the contentious issue of what one can and cannot (sensibly) be said to experience “nostalgia” for but that, if it is correct, would show

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367Ankersmit 203f.
368Cf. Casey.
369Crowell 92.
370Cf. Lübbe 103.
that there is less at stake in this debate than it may seem. The reason for this is that both positions construe nostalgia and the “desire for a return” along lines which remain themselves largely questionless, which results in the obfuscation of some basic features of the concept of nostalgia that are key to a proper understanding of nostalgia's place in the history of ideas. In this chapter we are going to show that the discussion that we began the last chapter has not led us away from nostalgia but rather closer to its essence. Furthermore, we are going to show our focus on the mineness of “my past” was not a semantic pedanticism but, in fact, holds the metaphysical key to understanding the specific temporality of the object of nostalgia. What this chapter will show is that we have not taken the “mineness” of the past “too literally,” but rather that we are in the process of taking this mineness seriously. It is the opposite view, i.e., the view that seeks to understand the essence of nostalgia from the semantic analysis of the word “return” that “plays semantics” in the bad sense of the word. As we saw above, if we affirm that nostalgia is ineluctably tied to “things” that one has personally experienced because nostalgia is a desire for a “return,” it follows by logical necessity that I must have been there where I now want to return at least once. This is not to be taken as a grand metaphysical claim but rather the result of the semantics of the word “return.” But perhaps it is precisely this semantic analysis of nostalgia that sells the conceptual complexity of nostalgia short.

The suggestion that the account that we have advanced in Chapter 2 is incompatible with the notion that I can only be nostalgic for something in my past is mistaken. It rests on the unquestioned assumption that the truth of this notion resides in the fact that I can only desire to experience something “again” that I have “already” experienced. In other words, it is assumed that the truth of the claim is anchored in the nostos (return) of “nostalgia”; and, more specifically, in a particular interpretation of the concept of a “return.” It is in light of this assumption that our discussion in Chapter 2 seems to undermine the truth of the statement. However, in this chapter we will show that this impression is mistaken. To think otherwise is to fall prey to a prejudice that does not consider the possibility that the
truth of the claim that I can only be nostalgic for something in my past may in fact rooted in the “algos” part of “nostalgia”. It is precisely this thesis that we will defend in this chapter: Nostalgia is essentially linked to the concept of a past that is one's own because this concept is integral to that conception of subjectivity that gives rise to the distinct temporality that figures in the experience of nostalgia and that is the cause of the pain felt in the experience of nostalgia. In other words, in order to understand why I can only experience nostalgia for “my past,” we must understand what relation the concept of the past that is mine has to the distinct temporality that obstructs the satisfaction of the nostalgic's longing.

This has important ramifications for our understanding of the concept of a return that figures centrally in the concept and experience of nostalgia: If the idea that nostalgia is about an “original experience” is rooted in our understanding of the semantics of “return,” we can ask what happens to the concept of a return if the object of the desired return is no longer conceptualized as an original experience that is located in a personal past “to” which I want to return. If, however, our preceding discussion of the non-experiential character of 'my past' is sound or at least plausible, it would seem that is necessary to reappraise what is involved in the nostalgic desire for a “return.” We will do just that in the second half of this chapter. By doing this we hope to overcome the impasse that the debate over what one can and cannot be nostalgic about has reached, and which, as a result of this, has not been as productive as it could have been. It is our conviction that this is at least in part due to the fact that on either side of the debate the meaning of “return” remains questionless because it appears to be self-evident that what we mean is a “physical” return, or something sufficiently analogous to it. In all this, it is assumed that we know what this “return” is and the only thing that interests us the question whether such a return is indeed possible or not. If, in contrast, our own idiosyncratic account of the “desire for a return” that is involved in nostalgia is plausible, it will become apparent that the boundaries of the terrain on which the debate of nostalgia's proper object are drawn much too narrowly.
3.2. Nostalgia's ambiguous object: The past's pastness

To begin, we need to remind ourselves that the expression “the object of nostalgia” is ambivalent: it can mean the desired for object, i.e., that which we are nostalgic for; or it can mean that which causes the pain of nostalgia, i.e., what we are nostalgic about. In section 1.4.4.4. we argued that the particular object of our nostalgia is contingent. The apparent insignificance or interchangeability of the object of our nostaligic reverie could lead one believe that the nostalgic is not even concerned with this or that past at all. Following Jankélévitch we will say this claim is partly true and partly false: Nostalgia is indeed not interested in this or that past. The fact that nostalgia seems to be most easily evoked by that which did not leave a grand mark in our life seems to support the claim that it is not the quiddity of the past in question that arouses our nostalgia. As Crowell puts it, “Nostalgia 'sees through' the presentational content to something else.” But in another sense the statement is false because nostalgia is most radically concerned with the past, namely with the past as such: Nostalgia is about the pastness of the past, i.e., that universal quality that applies to the past in general. It is to the essence of whatever happens object happens to be “past” that nostalgia “sees through to.”

The object of nostalgia is not the positively valued object (e.g. one's childhood) but rather the pastness of the past, the past's quoddity. It was this insight that led to tie us nostalgia to the experience of the irreversibility of time, i.e., that which we take to be time's temporal essence. This is important because it explains why it is oftentimes banal and most fugitive moments that are particularly capable of triggering nostalgia even though these moments appear to have the least amount of the positive qualities that the objects to which we want to return have. Writes Ankersmit,

the events in our personal history that may trigger a nostalgic yearning are only rarely, and certainly not necessarily, the kind of events we hold to be of great significance in the story of our life. Thus we may nostalgically recall a certain atmosphere at a quite specific moment in our

371Crowell 92.
parental home or a holiday with our family; but we will seldom have nostalgic memories of having passed a particular examination or of having been promoted to a more responsible position.}

Although on the surface this observation flies in the face of common experience, according to Jankélévitch the fact that nostalgia is often triggered by the memory of seemingly insignificant moments is a necessary consequence of nostalgia's “true” object:

Contrary to what one could believe, the most characteristic irreversibility is not that of exceptional and solemn events ... because there are reasons, apart from the proper irreversibility, why we remember these unforgettable days all our life: no, the most characteristic irreversibility is not the irreversibility of these unique moments in which our heart beat so fast and so hard, the irreversibility of these minutes that happen only a single time in a human life, and whose evidence never occurs again ... the irreversible events *par excellence* are not always eminently sensational or glorious semelfactive events; the normative significance of these grand events withdraws them from the contingency of the primeultimacy by eternalizing their dates: here the event that is perpetuated in marble or bronze shares in the immortality of the classic authors and of the Latin versions. Paradoxically, the most heavy-felt irreversibility attaches itself to the most insignificant encounters ... An absolutely ordinary afternoon in spring or fall without any noteworthy particularity, empty and monotonous or even totally dull, or filled with futile and insignificant occurrences, that is the privileged temporal milieu for an experience of the irreversible.

For us, the experience of time's irreversibility is tied to the experience of loss. It signifies that what is “past” is not merely (momentarily) absent, unavailable, or inaccessible, but irrecoverably over and gone. The experience of time's irreversibility presents itself as a particular experience of difference.

This particular difference is, however, never perceptible for us. We can perceive change but the concept of an *irreversible loss* is something that our minds add to the absence of that which has ceased to be

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372 Ankersmit 210.
373 Jankélévitch 43f. ["L'irréversibilité la plus caractéristique n'est pas, contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait croire, des événements exceptionnels ou solennels ... car il y a bien des raison, en dehors de l'irréversibilité proprement dite, pour que nous nous souvenions toute notre vie de ces journées inoubliables : non! l'irréversibilité la plus caractéristique n'est pas l'irréversibilité de ces instant unique où le coeur battait si vite et si fort, l'irréversibilité de ces minutes qui arrivent une seule fois dans une vie d'homme, et de toute évidence ne se renouvellent jamais ... les événements irréversibles par excellence ne sont pas toujours de hauts faits sensationnels ou glorieusement semelfactifs ; la signification normative de ces grands événements, en éternisant leur date,les soustrait aux contingences de la primultimité : ici l'événement, pérennisé dansle marbre ou le bronze, participe à l'immortalité des auteurs classiques et des versions latines. Paradoxalement l'irréversibilité la plus lourde de sens s'attache aux rencontres des plus insignifiantes ... Une après-midi de demi-saison absolument quelconque et sans nulle particularité remarquable, des heures vides et monotones ou bien totalement plates, ou bien hérisées d'occurrences parfaitement oiseuses et insignifiantes, voilà le milieu temporel privilégié pour une expérience d'irréversible."
374 See Ankersmit 201.
perceptible for us. This has important consequences for Jankélévitch's claim that nostalgia is about the past in its pure pastness: If this pastness is to signify a 'loss' then we cannot simply abstract nostalgia from all content that the past might have. In other words, either nostalgia is not about the pastness of the past, or it must obtain the quality of loss from somewhere other than the specific quiddity of the past-under-nostalgement. My claim is that although it is true that nostalgia is about the pastness of the past, the fact that this pastness signifies an irreversible loss cannot be made intelligible without the commitment to a metaphysical idea that transforms the experience of the successiveness of moments into that of an irreversible passage of time.

3.3. “The continual production of the new” and the “ceaseless iteration of loss”

Although A.C. Frye may be right when he says that, “Man has doubtless always experienced time in the same way, dragged backwards from a receding past into an unknown future,”375 we know that the significance that man attributed to this experience is not a historical constant, and that our concept of time is not a timeless given.376 In his article “Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity,” Peter Fritzscne has put forth the view that the experience of nostalgia depends on the emergence of a particular, historically contingent sense of time, a sense of time that Fritzscne calls the “promiscuous sense of time.”377 For our purposes, Fritzscne's valuable insight is that the question whether or not it is possible to speak of nostalgic individual's before the late 17th century does not depend on the existence of the term “nostalgia” but on whether or not human beings experienced time as an irreversible passage in the same way as the nostalgic individual does. The reason that Fritzscne

376As Jean Delumeau explains in Conversations about the End of Time, "Hinduism, in particular, and Buddhism in its wake, harbour a belief in a sort of cyclical course of affairs. At the end of a certain number of centuries or eras there will be a return to the point of departure. This is also how the Greeks conceived of things. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, on the other hand, history has been looked upon as a vector. There is a beginning and an end. God has created the world, life and mankind, and thereafter mankind is subject to time. One day God will decide to bring the comic story, the story of terrestrial life, to a close, and that will be the end of the world, the end of history, the end of time." (46/47)
377Fritzscne 1589.
gives to support this claim that nostalgia is the product of specific historical conditions is grounded in an analysis of the particular temporal sensitivity (one that Fritzsche calls “modern”) that plays a central role in the experience of nostalgia and that is specific to particular historical conditions.

Fritzsche's main point is that there cannot be any nostalgia without the poignancy that the experience of irreversibility affords us; but this poignancy itself arises only against the backdrop of a particular “narrative” that gives a determinate meaning to (an) experience that could be interpreted otherwise. Writes Fritzsche, “Nostalgia requires both a discursive field in which discontinuity is given particular historical form and the material evidence of disruption [i.e., discontinuity, passification] in order to give historical forms the poignancy that allows them to be recognized over time.”

Fritzsche's thesis is that nostalgia is at home in a period when the “fleeting experience of the present” becomes more acute due to the heightened pace of modern life. Fritzsche associates this fast-pacedness with the rapid, radical social and political (i.e., material) changes that occurred in Europe around the turn of the 18th and 19th century, which was a time when it was possible to go to bed at night and wake up to a new world the next morning, and that – and this is crucial! – were accompanied by novel imaginative and discursive categories that gave a specific meaning to the growing evidence of the increasing incommensurability of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. In other words, for Fritzsche it is the increasing speed of social change (i.e., the increase in the speed at which established patterns of behaviour become out-dated) that makes the modern subject more susceptible to the experience of nostalgia. On Fritzsche's account, nostalgia is due to the rapidity of social changes that each time force the individual to leave behind the habits through which he or she had had hitherto constituted her world as a familiar one.

To begin, that there is “loss” in the first place has to do with the fact that the renewal or replacement is the arrival of something 'new'; that time's passage does not consist in just some form of

378Fritzsche 1617.
379Meaning that today not only differs from today because today happens to bear another date. See Fritzsche 1589.
change, some chaotic alternation, but that this change is directional. That what has been replaced is
*gone* depends on a number of factors. The past becomes that which is “gone,” “over,” “*vergangen,*”
and the passage of time a process of passification, to the extent that things become *obsolescent.* These
“things” must be taken in a very broad sense where it comprises material objects, skills, habits,
experiences, etc. Only when that which is replaced by the new thereby becomes *obsolete* – i.e., no
longer accessible, usable, relevant – has a genuine “passification” taken place. Only when that which
comes to replace what has been is *new* does the “old” become *old.* In other words, the process of
passification is a process of obsolescence. Obsolescence is a phenomenon of difference, of dis-
continuity, of in-commensurability. Obsolescence denotes the process by which something that was
hitherto *useful* now becomes *useless.* As a state, obsolescence denotes a kind of out-of-placeness, a
dys-functionality, a loss of validity of that whose functionality and validity is *now* a matter of the
past.

Time is experienced as an irreversible passage when that what we have experienced no longer
prepares us for what is yet to come; when there exists a (chronic) disconnect between experience and
expectation. The “ceaseless iteration of loss” entails concretely that what has been experienced
becomes decreasingly a guide with respect to what is yet to come. As Hermann Lübbe has it, “loss of
familiarity, the discrediting of recollection that takes place when instead of encountering that which the
image of our memory makes us expect we find something completely different and new in reality,”
these are the manifold concrete manifestations of the process by which that which we have experienced

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380It is of course possible to take this process in the most literal sense and take the soldier who is displaced from the
homeland as the purest exemplar of the nostalgic. This soldier is like the key who no longer fits the lock because the
door has been replaced. It has become a *relic,* something whose use value has disappeared and who now only serves as a
reminder of bygone times.

381Cf. Rosa 131.

382See Kosselleck 156.

383What Fritzsche allows us to see is not only what the quality of *penultimacy,* which figures so prominently in
Jankélévitch’s account of time (and of nostalgia), means in practical terms, but also that *for us* it is a quality that
becomes time’s essence only under specific historical circumstances.

384Lübbe 58; translation mine. ["Vertrautheitsschwund, die Desavouierung der Erinnerung, indem wir anstelle dessen, was
unser Erinnerungsbild uns erwarten läßt, etwas ganz anderes, Neues in der Realität wiederfinden"]
recedes into the past and becomes vergangen. Simultaneously, the passification of the present, i.e., the cleavage of present and past, manifests itself in the need to adjust one's expectations, to adapt to the new. It manifests itself in form of the variegated "compulsion to re-adapt our habits of sight and of movement."385 In contrast, where the mutability of the present does not in principle rule out the continued presence of what has come to pass in the (new) present, i.e., as long as the yesterday still remains the yesterday to today (and the past thus remains an integral element of the present, such that its designation as past does not do justice to its presence in the present), human beings experience the mutability of life without experiencing it as the kind of irreversible loss that the nostalgic experiences with such acuity.

Nostalgia is evidently related to the experience of difference, discontinuity, and incommensurability. But this difference itself has a specific meaning: that of an irreversible loss. Where the present of the subject starts to shrink and becomes bounded by a past that is over and a future that no longer affords the possibility of anticipation, the passage of time acquires the meaning of a constant Vergehen.386 This is the natural breeding ground for nostalgia. However, according to Fritzsche, the experience of life's mutability is not exclusive to the modern age. Therefore, if nostalgia is a modern phenomenon, then we cannot reduce nostalgia to this process of obsolescence. As Fritzsche says, the modern age did not only witness drastic changes (as previous ages had done before) but these changes were conceptualized in terms of a narrative that gave these changes the meaning of a permanent surpassing of times bygone; in other words, if it is only the concurrence of “material unsettlement ... with a new historical sensibility”387 that produces an existential environment – “disconnection from remembered life-worlds, the exhaustion of tradition, an irretrievable sense of loss, a fleeting experience of the present, and an often ominous anticipation of the future”388 – that would constitute the breeding

385Lübbe 58; translation mine. ["Zwänge der Umgewöhnung von Seh- und Gehgewohnheiten"]
386On the notion of “Gegenwartsschrumpfung” [shrinking of the present], cf. Rosa 184.
387Fritzsche 1594.
388Fritzsche 1590f.
ground for the nostalgic affliction; if this is true, then we must ask what accompanying narrative, what “new historical sensibility” gave the evidence of discontinuity and disruption the meaning that figures in nostalgia.

It is our thesis that a particular conception of the human subject cannot be ignored if we want to understand the experience of nostalgia, its theoretical underpinnings, and the concept of nostalgia and its place in the history of ideas. This narrative that makes nostalgia possible is the narrative of the modern sovereign subject. This modern subject not only experiences the passage of time as an iteration of loss; more fundamentally, the modern subject experiences time as scarce. It is only insofar as the modern subject experiences time as scarce that it experiences the passage of time as an iteration of loss. By this we do not merely mean the quotidian experience of time's scarcity, which is already a derivative scarcity, i.e., a consequence of one of the possible responses (namely the increase of the cadence of one's activity, i.e., the acceleration of the speed of one's individual life) to a deeper experience of temporal scarcity. The scarcity of time has only incidentally to do with increase of the speed of (social) life. Put differently, time could be experienced as scarce in the "deep" sense that interests us here even if its felt speed was significantly slower than what it now is for most individuals. The more fundamental reason for the experience of time's scarcity is that the modern subject experiences time as her own time (i.e., as Eigenzeit [proprietary time]), i.e., the time for which she is responsible and over which she is sovereign. It is this experience that furnishes the discursive field that allows us to interpret the process of obsolescence as an iteration of loss, thereby making possible the experience of nostalgia.

Throughout this chapter we will distinguish between two meanings of the term “individual”: On the one hand we will speak of “the human being as a (sovereign) individual” by which we mean a conception of what the human subject is. On the other hand, when we speak of the subject “becoming (an) individual” we mean the subjects distinct manner of being-in-time that achieves or actualizes of “individuality.”

I consider my argument to be more comprehensive than similar ones by Chase and Shaw (1989), Boym (2001), or Illbruck (2012) whose arguments for the modernity of nostalgia share some but not all aspects of my own argument.

We must be mindful of the fact that the modern subject's "experience" of time as her own time differs ontologically from a conscious experience like the experience of nostalgia. The former cannot be reduced to a unified cognitive state of an empirical subject but rather, like the expression “the subject's becoming sovereign,” designates a multitude of material
Fritzsche's one-sided focus on the speed of social change and his neglect of other (constitutive) elements of social acceleration result in a failure to get to the (metaphysical) bottom of the truth of which Fritzsche glimpses merely the empirical surface. As a result, although Fritzsche points our understanding of nostalgia in the right direction, his own analysis does not provide an exhaustive answer to the question of the origin of nostalgia.\textsuperscript{392} Nevertheless, Fritzsche's general insight – namely, that the experience of time's irreversible passage, \textit{in the sense in which it figures in nostalgia}, is no a-temporal given and that it is only when the mutability of life comes to be experienced as a “ceaseless iteration of loss”\textsuperscript{393} that we have reached the temporal sensitivity that could produce nostalgia – remains valid.

3.4. Nostalgia, mortality, value

To say that the modern, sovereign subject is the “subject of nostalgia” means that the concept and experience of nostalgia is rooted in a particular conception of the subject. The particularity of this conception resides fundamentally in the distinct understanding and apprehension of the fact of this subject's mortality. That the experience of nostalgia bears a significant relation to our awareness of our mortal finitude becomes apparent when we bracket our insight into the “productive” character of nostalgia for a moment and ask: \textit{What would satisfy the nostalgic's longing?} It is quite obvious that even if the nostalgic could experience what they have experienced already once \textit{encore une fois}, this

\textsuperscript{392}This is due to Fritzsche's failure to appreciate another important dimension of the process of social acceleration. The other element that Fritzsche completely neglects is the experience of time's scarcity. As we are going to argue, it is precisely this experience that holds the key to a more complete understanding of the nostalgic subject. Hartmut Rosa has shown that the process of social acceleration is in fact a great deal more complex than it is described by Fritzsche. Rosa himself distinguishes three forms of social acceleration: technical acceleration, the acceleration of social changes, and the acceleration of the pace of life. (Cf. 195ff.) Of these three forms, Fritzsche only discusses the second one. Moreover, acceleration involves not only the increase in the tempo of life (understood both as the increase in event density and the increase in rate at which things becomes obsolescent), it also manifests itself in the experience of the scarcity of time, which plays no role in Fritzsche's account of nostalgia. (Cf. Rosa 215.)

\textsuperscript{393}Fritzsche 1591.
would not so much remedy nostalgia as it would merely repeat it. It is not enough to return to the
desired time if we cannot *stop* the events that we have already experienced once to unfold once more in
the same manner. No, Lamartine's plea “Ô temps, suspends ton vol!” means just that: that time *suspend*
its flight. This, however, would be a very radical “solution” to the problem: one where we would cure
the disease by "killing" the patient along with his symptoms. The reason for this is that any therapeutic
experience of value is inextricably tied to the experience of the finiteness of our (individual) existence.
It is because we know that even the most ecstatic moment will *eventually* pass (i.e., that despite all it
remains a “moment”), that this moment is precious and able to induce a passion for it in us. 394 If it were
not (ultimately) fleeting, that is, if it were to last or if it could be repeated over and over again at will, it
would lose the special meaning that is has for the nostalgic. The reason for this is not that we would
*eventually* grow tired of what once was a *special* experience, but because we would not attach any
special importance to it in the first place. As Martin Hägglund argues in *Dying for Time* (2012), “The
mortality of life is both the reason why anything is precious and why everything can become
traumatic.” 395 The nostalgic's desire for time to suspend its flight would solve the nostalgic's affliction,
but it would solve it at a very high cost: If we could truly transcend time's flight, we would no longer
be capable of experiencing ecstatic moments that one would *desire* to experience again. What makes an
experience precious (and thus the object of a desire for a prolonged or renewed experience) is precisely
its fleetingness, i.e., its rarity in time. The immortal man's misery, so poignantly depicted in many of
Jorge Luis Borges's stories, does not stem from the infinite losses that they incur but rather from one
fundamental loss: the loss of our capacity to lose. Without the precariousness that envelops all temporal
possessions these would not be precious, their “loss” not be (potentially) traumatic; their “loss” would
not be a *loss.* 396

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394Cf. Hägglund 17.
395Hägglund 17.
396As Karen Houle argues in "Emendation, or When Have We Been "(2010), the possibility of the experience of loss also hinges on "the capacity of the body and mind, to stand steady (and yet move) in some kind of workable relation to those
While Fritzsche's account of nostalgia helps us to understand what is involved in the process of passification conceived as a process of (self-)obsolescence, he fails to explain the whence of the regret over the process of repeated obsolescence. Ferdinand Alquié has advanced a psychological explanation for our “preference” of the old over the new, stating that we value the old over the new because the old is familiar and because the new invokes uncertainty. However, axiologically this argument is inadequate: “loss” signifies value, and the experience of loss has to do with the experience of scarcity rather than with that of uncertainty or inconvenience. This scarcity is not the scarcity (or rarity)\(^{397}\) of the thing lost, but rather the scarcity of possibilities of renewal. The experience of value is tied to the finitude of our existence, i.e., to the certainty of our death. Our non-indifference to the corruption of the present can therefore not be reduced to the “inconvenience” that it causes us in terms of re-orientation and re-adaptability. Our non-indifference to the passage of time is rooted in the fact that the passage of time signifies not only the perpetual transitoriness of things but also that I get closer to my ultimate existential fate: my death. Time's passage signifies not just that this or that experience becomes passified and thus is “over” but that (soon) everything will be over for us. Put differently, we cannot separate the fleetingness of Life (the vanity of the passing world) from the fleetingness of our own life: Time's passage only signifies a “flow” that turns that which now is into that which was insofar as it takes us closer to our inevitable demise.\(^{398}\) Our non-in-difference to the corruption of the present, i.e., our experience of the alternation between renewal and decay as a process in which the present becomes

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\(^{397}\)The rarity of a certain experience can in fact invoke both regret but also appreciation for the special opportunity of having experienced something so rare. To regret its loss would be tantamount to a failure of its true appreciation.

\(^{398}\)Conversely we can say that when time is experienced as fleeting, it is because it brings us closer to our end. We may think that an immortal being would experience one loss after the next, but in fact the changes that s/he would experience would be no different from that which a being that is completely unaware of its mortality/finitude: it would be pure change. This is not to deny that an immortal time would not have the quality of primeultimacy. But this only shows that the experience of time's irreversibility cannot be explained by means of an abstract ontological principle of primeultimacy.
passified, is an effect of our mortality. It is because the process of corruption and renewal will eventually come to an end for us, and Corruption will have the final word, that we already “lose” throughout our life. The constant corruption of the present is, as it were, an ominous reminder of our own eventual Vergehen.

As we just said, the process of obsolescence does not have to become experienced (or conceptualized) as a process of passification. If we want to understand the origin of the past's pastness and the whence of our regret over the passing of time, we have to take into view the particular conception of time that is implied in nostalgia and, in turn, the distinct conception of our mortality that this conception of time depends on. As we said above, our experience of the past is importantly shaped by the experience of our future. The chasm between the present and the past grows wider the “more past” the past actually is, i.e., the less preparatory power it has to equip us for future challenges; that is to say, the “newer” (or more different) the future is from what we have already experienced. If our experience of the past is inextricably linked to our expectation of the future, then a second reason why it is necessary to investigate nostalgia's relation to our mortality is that our eventual demise constitutes the unsurpassable futural horizon of our experience of time. No matter what time brings now, we know what it will eventually bring: my demise. To be more precise, the experience of time that underlies the experience of nostalgia implies a particular conception of our mortality: namely the conception that our demise is the end. Only if our demise is conceived as the total negation of our existence, such that nothing in our life could prepare us for it, then in relation to my death all our life is always already

399By calling a thing “mortal” we do not just mean that this thing can die. For our purposes here, only “something” that is aware of the fact that it must die is mortal. To use Heidegger's terminology: the being of something that is mortal is always already a being-toward-death.
400I believe that this is the deeper truth about the insufficiency of “the next time.” The prospect of the new is no consolation for the nostalgic because it completely misses the point.
401To say that life is as much corruption as it is renewal (as Alquié seems to imply when he wonders why in the face of time regret so often triumphs over hope) will only bring comfort to a subject who would be indifferent about their eventual demise anyway, and to whom time's passage would thus not have much meaning either way and who would thus not need the consolation that of knowing that every decay is followed by a renewal.
402See Koselleck 266.
(virtually) past. This does not mean that my life is already over, and that I am “already dead,” but rather that my life itself is a constant Vergehen. If the past in general is “past,” then it is in virtue of or in relation to the “event” of our death for which nothing prepares us and in relation to which everything that we have already experienced is obsolete.

3.5. From finitude to scarcity

We must be careful not to equate (and thus conflate) two terms: that of the fleetingness of our life with that of the finiteness of our life (i.e., the fact that our life must come to an end). It is not just because we know that corruption is the ultimate quality of extant life that the process of time's passage is one of a perpetual loss. The finitude of my existence alone does not explain why we should experience the passage of time as loss. Although our finitude invests our experiences with value, it is not our finitude per se but rather a distinct experience of our mortality that is constitutive of time's flow conceived as a passifying loss. It is this experience of our mortality that gives the passage of time the meaning of an irreversible “loss” even if that which we “lose” is something that we did not hold particularly dear in the first place. What is needed is a particular investment in our life. A finite thing that is invested in their life is more than simply aware of its finitude; it experiences its own finite time as scarce, because it looks toward its own demise with dread. Regret or nostalgia are not simply

403This distinction is important because without it would be paradoxical to consider those experience to be “over” that we are happy to have left behind.

404After all, for an immortal being, the passing of time would have a decisively different quality and could not be experienced as an iteration of loss. However, the reason for this is not the thing's immortality per se but rather the fact that the thing would not be invested in its life. In fact it could not be invested in its life because only a finite thing can be invested in its life.

405It is worth pre-empting an objection that could plausibly be raised: The examples that we discuss will make it seem like what we're dealing with are in fact different “degrees of awareness” of our own finitude. It seems like the degree of our finitude (i.e., “how real” our death is, “how mortal” we really mean when we say “mortal”) is what is at stake. For example, the “collectivization of life” that we discuss below may be construed as a particular kind of mortality. As such it would be the awareness of the particular kind of mortality that would be the root cause of the experience of time's passage as X. This idea does have some plausibility. It is true that a person who thinks of the moment of their death as a transition to a more perfect existence, would not simply have a different attitude toward their own death, they would have a particular experience of their “mortality”. The person would be “less mortal” because they would not see their end as the end. The peculiarity of the attitude would in fact but be the awareness of the distinct meaning that their death has for them. While I think that this is a valid criticism, I believe that it is nevertheless useful to separate our finitude...
expressions of an irrational bias against the future in favour of an equally irrational bias toward the past.\textsuperscript{406} On the contrary, regret arises from our \textit{desire to be} and our \textit{fear not to be}.\textsuperscript{407} This desire is not the cause of regret but it makes regret possible.\textsuperscript{408}

Although the increased pace of modern life may cause empirical nostalgia, what makes nostalgia possible is the fleetingness of my own existence, i.e., the scarcity of my own time (or: my experience of my time \textit{as scarce}).\textsuperscript{409} The experience of the fleetingness of \textit{the present} is tied to the experience fleetingness of \textit{my present}, i.e., my presence in the world, i.e., my existence. It is the fleetingness of \textit{my existence as a whole}, i.e., the scarcity of my “existential time,” that makes the incessant process of corruption and generation that we call “our present” an omen of the fundamental truth about reality (i.e., my reality). This “fleetingness” denotes a particular experience of our mortal finitude. The “ceaseless iteration of loss”\textsuperscript{410} is an early omen and a constant reminder of my inescapable fate \textit{only because} (or \textit{only if}) I conceive of this fate itself as a \textit{loss}, i.e., only because I \textit{dread} this fate.

\section*{3.6. Nostalgia, time, and the value of the individual}

from our attitude toward our finitude. The reason for this is that it is indeed possible to adopt different attitudes toward the same sense that \textit{we} attribute to the fact of our death. Where I conceive my death as the end, it seems that one could with equal plausibility feel indifferent toward or fearful of the impending nothingness. To say that our life is “fleeting” would express such an attitude.

\textsuperscript{406}Any ostensive symmetry between the past and the future exists only for a being that is not invested in being (for whom there is no \textit{privation}). On this point, cf. Alquié (1973) 39.

\textsuperscript{407}Cf. Hägglund 11.

\textsuperscript{408}A second reason why immortal existence would not afford this possibility is that typically the things that we feel nostalgic about are situated in a specific time of our life, a time that is at the same time constituted by an “existential retention” (the horizon of my past) and a future the contrast against which gives it its distinct quality. But what would the meaning of the 'future' be if it would be an open-ended one? For one, the only future that I know is the one where it signifies possibility. The future is the site of my freedom. But freedom would be a meaningless concept for an immortal being. If my decision\textit{ for} something is merely a deferral of all the other things that this something logically precludes, then the notion of a decision is rendered vacuous. As Kierkegaard and Heidegger both have stressed, my decision for something\textit{ is eo ipso} a decision\textit{ against} a large number of things. Without the latter, the decision for... would be semantically hollow. Therefore, although there is undeniably some truth to Jankélévitch's claim that “le temps lénifie le choix”, it is important to note that the concept of “choice” places conceptual limits on this.

\textsuperscript{409}To be fair, the fast-pacedness of modern life that, according to Fritzsche, predisposes us to nostalgia is not fully described in terms of the rapidness of social changes; it also involves the experience of time's scarcity. As we will see later, the experience of time's scarcity that figures in the experience of social acceleration is linked to the experience of time's scarcity that interests us here in a non-incidental way.

\textsuperscript{410}Fritzsche 1591.
Nostalgia implies a distinct experience of the fact of our mortality. This experience comprises both the idea that our death is the end (rather than a transitory moment en route to an eternal afterlife) and the fearful apprehension of this anticipated fate. If we are right to say that the experience of my own finitude and the experience of my eventual demise as a loss are two conceptually distinct experiences, we have to ask under what condition it becomes intelligible that we conceive of our own demise as a loss? Asked differently, if the loss of the present is made possible by a particular investment in our life as a whole, what is responsible for and what is involved in this distinct investment in my life?

We can reasonably assume that humankind's discovery of its own mortality has at all times been traumatic: For something that “knows that it must die”, i.e., something that is “familiar” with dying and that does not just come to an end, death has a minimum degree of scandal/tragedy to it. That the full awareness of our mortality will likely have given rise to a personal crisis is to be expected, because “It's perfectly normal.”\footnote{Ionescu, Exit the King 36.} Some basic attribution of value to an individual person's existence (and a concomitant investment in this existence) derives solely from the basic disruptiveness of a person's death, and the unfathomability of our own death.\footnote{One of the exceptions to this general rule that we should name are those religions that reject the reality of individual existence altogether. However, even here is seems plausible to assume that this view must at some point have developed as a response to the traumatic experience of death and loss.} \footnote{Even if we want to agree that any genuine awareness of man's own mortality, no matter how it comes to be interpreted, gives rise to a crisis, the way that society responds to this initial shock deeply shapes what meaning we each give to our inevitable demise. Even those responses that ultimately deny the reality of our demise ought to be understood as responses to the initial shock of that the discovery that one must die will inevitably cause by virtue of its deeply disruptive nature.} But even if the scandal of my mortality is a historical constant, the intensity of the scandal of my mortality is proportionate to my investment in my life, to the significance that I attribute to my death. As Philippe Ariès writes in his magnum opus on conceptions of death in the Occident The Hour of our Death (1981): “The distance between death and life was not traditionally perceived as a 'radical metamorphosis' ... The idea of an absolute negativity, a sudden, irrevocable plunge into an abyss without memory, did not exist. Nor did people experience an}
existential disorientation or anxiety, at least these did not figure in the stereotyped images of death.”

Compare this to the words of the narrator-protagonist of Philip Roth's Everyman: “It's because life's most disturbing intensity is death. It's because death is so unjust. It's because once one has tasted life, death does not even seem natural. I had thought – secretly I was certain – that life goes on and on.”

The latter view is echoed by Eugène Ionescu's King Berenger in Exit the King: “When faced with death, even a little ant puts up a fight. Suddenly he's all alone, torn from his companions. In him, too, the universe flickers out. It's not natural to die, because no-one ever wants to. I want to exist.”

What lies between these starkly opposed assessments of one's own mortality is a fundamental ideological shift in the value that is assigned to worldly existence that began to take shape in the 14th century and that made possible a "passionate love of life" that would likely have perplexed pre-modern man and that throughout much of the Middle Ages was still considered to be sinful. Furthermore, and more importantly for our purposes here, whether the prospect of our personal extinction is perceived as a menace or tragedy (or neither of the two), i.e., whether (and how) we are invested in our life, depends on the value that we attribute to our individual life. The “fleetingness” of my life depends on the significance that I attribute to my death, which, in turn, is determined by my investment in my (personal) life. On a personal level, “investment in my life” denotes the contingent empirical concern for the life of a particular individual, i.e., how much an empirical individual happens to care about the fact that they will die one day). But the individual investment is necessarily shaped by what could be called my “ontological” investment in my existence, i.e., that which my life means to me in virtue of my being the kind of thing that I am, i.e., the specific metaphysical lens through which we perceive our approaching demise that gives us our perspective on our mortality.

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414 Ariès 22.
415 Roth 169.
416 Ionescu 56.
417 Ariès 128.
418 Cf. Ariès 131f.
Fritzsche is right when he calls nostalgia a distinctly modern phenomenon. However, the reason for the modernity of nostalgia lies in the distinct value that modernity assigns to the individual life. The individual's investment in her own life undergoes a radical change when the human subject comes to conceive of herself as a sovereign individual: i.e., as fully responsible for her own identity.\footnote{This conception is distinctly modern, and it is its emergence that precipitates the possibility of the empirical experience of nostalgia because it implies that conception of time that we find in the experience of nostalgia. What we mean when we say that the investment in our own life undergoes a radical change in the modern period can be illustrated by Alfred von Martin's remark that “In the Middle Ages it was possible to spend tens and even hundreds of years on the completion of one building ... for life was the life of the community in which one generation quietly succeeds another. Men lived as part of an all-embracing unity and thus life lasted long beyond its natural life span.”\footnote{In contrast, as the human subject becomes separated from the greater unity of the family, the clan, the village, etc., and ceases to be seen as the “prolongation”\footnote{of a kinship group, her individual death is no longer seen as a “moment” in the (much larger) collective life that continues beyond and despite the death of an individual human being, but rather as the end of this being, i.e., of a being whose disappearance marks the loss of a unique individual.}\footnote{When time becomes indexed to the individual who comes to think of time primarily as the “time measured out to him,”\footnote{the individual life-span gains enormously in importance, because now times becomes “scarce.”}\footnote{It is something that becomes precious and as such}} it is its emergence that precipitates the possibility of the empirical experience of nostalgia because it implies that conception of time that we find in the experience of nostalgia. What we mean when we say that the investment in our own life undergoes a radical change in the modern period can be illustrated by Alfred von Martin's remark that “In the Middle Ages it was possible to spend tens and even hundreds of years on the completion of one building ... for life was the life of the community in which one generation quietly succeeds another. Men lived as part of an all-embracing unity and thus life lasted long beyond its natural life span.”\footnote{In contrast, as the human subject becomes separated from the greater unity of the family, the clan, the village, etc., and ceases to be seen as the “prolongation”\footnote{of a kinship group, her individual death is no longer seen as a “moment” in the (much larger) collective life that continues beyond and despite the death of an individual human being, but rather as the end of this being, i.e., of a being whose disappearance marks the loss of a unique individual.}\footnote{When time becomes indexed to the individual who comes to think of time primarily as the “time measured out to him,”\footnote{the individual life-span gains enormously in importance, because now times becomes “scarce.”}\footnote{It is something that becomes precious and as such}}
something that is worthy and in need of careful organization.\footnote{In Das Leben als letzte Gelegenheit (1993) Marianne Gronemeyer describes this change as follows: “At the beginning of the modern period the duration of a life from birth to death becomes the determinative temporal unity. What the human being now considers to be of concern is the duration of her own dwelling in time. Medieval man was certain of his participation beyond his death in the time that remained for a world that had grown old. He did not have to fear to miss out on anything.” (91; translation mine) ["Am Beginn der Neuzeit [wird] die Neuzeit die Dauer des Lebens von der Geburt bis zum Tod zur bestimmenden Zeiteinheit. Was der Mensch jetzt belangreich findet, ist seine eigene Verweildauer in der Zeit. Der mittelalterliche Mensch war seiner eigenen Anteilhabe an der verbleibenden Zeit der alt gewordenen Welt über seinen Tod hinaus sicher. Er muß nicht fürchten, etwas zu versäumen."]}

While we do not want to suggest that the individualization of life is the sole factor responsible for the specifically modern investment in the individual life, it is undeniable that it played a significant role in shaping the individual's attitude toward their own life and their ultimate demise. A version of this view has been defended by Byung-Chul Han who argues in Der Duft der Zeit [The fragrance of time] (2014) that the atomization and singularization of life that is a central element of man's self-conception in the age of modernity has had a direct impact on our perception of our own demise. On Han's view, it is the individual's possibility to identify with, i.e., to be(come) a part of entities whose life-span goes beyond that of the individual human subject that confers (greater) duration on the life.\footnote{For a similar argument, cf. Lifton p.81.} As the life of the individual becomes increasingly bounded by the individual's natural life span, Han argues, “[it] loses the width that would confer duration on it.”\footnote{Han 17; my translation. ["Das Leben verliert immer mehr an Weite, die ihm Dauer verleihen würde."]} This has ramifications for the experience of our own mortal finitude, because the individualization and atomization of life makes life “still more finite.”\footnote{Han 17; my translation. ["noch endlicher"]}

On the surface this would suggest that it is the shrinking of the existential horizon of the individual that causes the increased investment in the individual's own life. Once the life of the individual human being comes to be singled out from the life of the community to which it had formerly naturally belonged, the life of the individual becomes “relatively short,” i.e., short in relation

\footnote{Another version of this view is espoused by Paul Ludwig Landsberg, who writes in Die Erfahrung des Todes (1973): “The consciousness of death marches lock-step with the process of human individualization.” (16; translation mine) ["Das Bewußtsein vom Tode geht gleichen Schritt mit der menschlichen Individualisierung."]}
to the greater life of the community, of which it is now no longer a part but to which it can be opposed. My time becomes scarce, i.e., relatively fleeting or short in relation of the greater life of the community, precisely because it is now reduced to the length of my natural life-span.

3.7. The radical mortality of the “individual”

Against the idea that time becomes scarce when the human subject becomes a “sovereign individual”: i.e., when her life is no longer subordinated to or incorporated into the longer (and more important) life of a collective subject of which the individual human being is (merely) a part or for which the individual human being serves merely as a momentary instantiation, it can be objected that the opposite conclusion is equally plausible: Can we not with equal right say that the singularization of life does not make life shorter but rather that in fact the individual gains time: namely time that is now exclusively hers? Even if we accept that time becomes “short(er),” it does not thereby automatically become scarce, because as we said before, scarcity has to do with my investment in my life, and it is not apparent why the relative shortness or length of my life per se should affect this. In other words, it cannot solely be because of quantitative difference that the individual is more invested in their life. Therefore, Han is right when he says that the singularization of life makes life not simply “more” mortal but “radically” mortal. It is, however, important to understand the full import of this notion of “radical mortality”: Although it may seem as if the primary effect of the subsumption of the individual under collective life is the “prolongation” of her life, in fact the collectivization also gives this life a fixed identity, i.e., a peculiar self-sameness that is temporally stable over the course of the individual's life-time. This identity is determined by the whole of which the individual life forms a part or which

430On this point, cf. Rosa's example: "What was decisive was not the individual Johannes Hoos, born in this year and deceased in that year. What was important was rather that there constantly existed a descendant whose name was Johannes Hoos who was ready to bear the role [that his ancestors had borne before him]." (180; translation mine) [“Nicht der individuelle Johannes Hoos, geboren in diesem und gestorben in jenem Jahr, war jeweils das Entscheidene. Wichtig war vielmehr, daß stets ein Nachkomme namens Johannes Hoos als Rollenträger bereitstand.”]
the individual merely instantiates. It is this whole that assigns the individual their place in the social world. In fact, it is only because the life of the individual also gains this stability by being subsumed under collective life, that it can be extended. Stability is, as it were, implied in the notion of extendability. (One can also say that where the life of the individual is conceived of as a moment of a collective life, the question of the individual's life stability/identity does not pose itself as a question.) Conversely, the singularized individual life is “radically mortal” because the formerly stable identity of the individual life disappears the moment this life comes to be extracted from the collective life. The time of the sovereign individual is no longer embedded in the time of the community, the nation, the family, etc. It belongs intrinsically to the one whose time it is. Where the individual's identity becomes the individual's sole responsibility, he is the sovereign of his own time and identity.\footnote{As such, the individual experiences \textit{in propria persona} what it means to be “work of indeterminate form”: “Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from they soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine.” (Pico della Mirandola, \textit{The Dignity of Man} 5)\footnote{I borrow the term “Eigenzeit” from Hermann Lübbe. Cf. Lübbe 334.}} The emergence of the sovereign individual does not primarily shorten the life-span that is the individual's object of concern, but it creates a new “kind” of time, a time that we will call “\textit{Eigenzeit},” i.e., proprietary time.\footnote{At the end of Chapter 2 we said that it is a historically contingent fact that the identity of the individual human being in general (i.e., not only of those human beings who stand out by virtue of the exceptional deeds) comes to be determined by their unique activity in the (social) world. As long as the social identity of a person is determined “externally” (i.e., as long as the individual is not sovereign of its own time and does not face his identity as a task because this identity is determined \textit{for} but not \textit{by} the individual), this identity is largely unaffected by the individual's specific historical activity. To the extent that it is the kinship group or community that assigns and determines the identity of its individual members, the stability of the individual's identity is affected by the individual's actions only}
in an accidental way. The individual's freedom of action takes place “outside” the parameters that determine his identity, which means that the individual cannot change the things that determine his identity, neither deliberately nor by accident. Put differently, barring extreme circumstances (which can be positive or negative in nature), the subject's identity is not affected by what the individual does. Whatever the individual does, these deeds will be the deeds of one and the same individual, namely the one whose identity is defined not by his historical activity (i.e., his deeds in time) but by its received (atemporal) social identity. The pre-modern “disregard” for individual life is not merely the disregard for the fate of the individual, i.e., a disregard for the individual's wants, desires, interests, conception of the good life, etc. (or at least their subordination to higher expressions of these). It has also the “positive” quality of relieving the individual of the responsibility of conferring unity on their existence. After all, one of the implications of the “a-historical” nature of the individual's identity is that the identity of the individual human being remains fairly immutable over time: who a person is determined by factors that have a life-time that is much longer than that of the individual whose identity they determine. In contrast, where the individual comes to have a past that is “his” in the sense that we have described in Chapter 2, the individual's identity is no longer a given but something for which the individual herself is (or becomes) responsible. When this happens the individual acquires a history that is truly his: both because he is fully responsible for it, and because this history...

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433This point is analogous to the one that Fritzsche makes when he notes that, “Europeans had known devastating upheavals before – the Reformation and Thirty Years' War – but these were not comprehended in terms of fundamental change and so did not drastically alter the temporal identities of contemporaries.” (Cf. Fritzsche 1594.) The question is not whether or not changes occur or whether actions are attributed to a particular agent but what significance is assigned to these! Our point is that it is only when the self becomes genuinely historical, i.e., when the self enters into historical time, that his identity becomes sensitive to historical changes.

434By this we do not mean to suggest that the subject's historical activity was, beyond its immediate practical exigencies, a matter of indifference. On the contrary, the medieval individual's activity was highly important because it determined the individual's fate in the afterlife. The significance of this activity pertained to this “elsewhere” but it did not determine who the individual was here and now. The latter identity was determined by impersonal factors. As such the individual's concern for their historical activity also did not involve a concern for the temporal coherence, unity, and stability of the earthly existence. (On this point, cf. also Gronemeyer 91f.) In contrast, the worldly activity of modern sovereign individual draws its significance not from its power to determine the individual's fate for a time beyond her worldly existence but from its immanent value for determining the worldly fate of the individual.
individualizes him and thus determines who he is.

The possibility of the individual's becoming “historical” in this sense depends on the conception of the self as the sovereign over his own time. Since “identity” implies not merely particularity but also (temporal) stability, what the individual does becomes not only more significant because it determines the particularity of the individual (as we discussed in the previous chapter) but also because it determines whether or not the stability, unity, coherence that we associate with the concept of “(an) identity” is achieved by the individual, i.e., whether or not the individual is “a someone.” Where the individual human being becomes sovereign over her own time and responsible for her own identity, the individual's identity across time becomes itself a project. The sovereign individual does not only face the unique particularity of his who-ness as a task but also the identity of this unique particularity across time. Where the individual must realize himself, i.e., his identity, in time, what the individual does with their life (i.e., what fundamental commitments they take on, which of them they fulfil, which of them they break, etc.) has a direct impact on their identity: namely because what the person does becomes their identity. The possibility of the individual human being's own dynamization, i.e., of the obsolescence not just of this or that part (skill, experience, etc.) of the individual but rather of the individual as such through and by the obsolescence of his achievements, discoveries, etc. is rooted in the individual's sovereignty over their own time and identity.

Most importantly for our purposes, the temporalization of identity entails that the individual becomes “radically mortal” in a second, and perhaps more fundamental sense: For the human subject who is responsible for their identity, “individuality” is no longer synonymous with “subjectivity.” Where the individual becomes the sovereign of his own time, the life of the individual necessarily becomes, as it were, “internally divisible.” The movement by which life shrinks to a punctiform magnitude is continuous with the internal fragmentation of this “point,” because “individuality” names

but one possible result of the process of self-formation with which the individual is charged as the sovereign of his own time: it names the “success” of the process by which an individual gives her an identity. I.e., it names the successful becoming in-dividual of the human subject. Only where the individual can (also) fail to give himself (an) identity is he truly the sovereign of his own time, and thus is truly the one who gives himself an identity. Where this happens and the human subject fails to give himself an identity, this failed identity is not simply the subject's peculiar identity, but rather signifies the absence of an identity; it is a “pseudo-identity.”

For the individual who must give himself (an) identity, certain events do not simply mark a drastic episode in one's life by opening up temporary impasses, but rather create a chasm that cannot be closed. Such events cleave the life of an individual into two, or, if these occur repeatedly, entail (at least at the very extreme) the becoming-episodic of a life. Such a life no longer has the unity that is expected from the life of an in-dividual. These events do not merely constitute failings of the (same) individual (genitivus objectivus) but rather entail a failed quest for individuality. Their effect is the failure of the identity project.

As Rosa argues, this project is according to its concept a one-time process that can accommodate only a limited amount of “reversals” without ceasing to be a project of identity. The failure of the identity project entails the

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436 Where the task is to find one's place in the world, the person who roams this world (figuratively and literally) does not inhabit a much greater place than the person who remains in “one” place; this person in fact does not inhabit any place. The entire trail of one's wanderings does not constitute the outline of an incongruous place but rather the absence of one.

437 The idea that the individual could be everything that they have done, no matter how incoherent, is based on the idea that the individual is the maker of his identity. But this "maker" identity is not a reality but merely a necessary postulate that is implied by the idea that the individual is his own maker. To say that the individual is his own maker does not amount to claiming that the individual is already "made," "unified" before his activity. It only means that no matter what the outcome, the individual is to "blame" for it. If the unity of consciousness would suffice for the individual to be his own maker, then the individual could not (easily) fail to make himself into a unitary being. (This would not be a possibility but rather a pathology beyond the individual's sovereign control.)

438 Cf. Waldenfels 15.

439 As Rosa argues, this process is “according to its idea a one-time process. Cf. Rosa 359.

440 It is of course true that identity was never secure from changes, even radical changes. However, the crucial change that occurs when the individual becomes charged with giving himself (an) identity is the following: Not only is the success or failure of one's identity now up to the individual herself. More importantly, where the individual becomes sovereign of his own time, some changes to the individual's identity have the power not just to change who one is but even that one is 'a who'. Rosa gives the example of the change of one's profession or of a divorce which, as he says, were a possibility in classical modernity "yet remain the exception and constitute evidence of a failed or at least endangered identity project." (Rosa 359; translation mine)

441 Cf. Rosa 359.
becoming differentiated from and non-identical to itself. How this comes about and what is involved in this process will be treated in detail in Chapter 4. What interests us here is that the possibility of the individual's becoming other to herself resides in a particular conception of the human subject: which is a conception according to which the subject remains a “work in progress,” which she is where the subject is her own maker.\textsuperscript{442}

What Han fails to mention, then, is that the “collectivization of life” not only “extends” my lifetime: first and foremost it confers (an) identity on my life. The so-called “atomization” of life, in contrast, does not only “shorten” my life: by making my own identity my task and thus a project, it radically temporalizes this identity.\textsuperscript{443} Since the sovereign individual must not only give himself a specific identity but must give himself (an) identity,\textsuperscript{444} it becomes conceivable that the individual subject may (also) fail at the project of giving itself (an) identity. The individualized human subject becomes \textit{radically} mortal because once she becomes the sovereign of her own identity she can no longer take her own persistence for granted. This expression must be understood both in a literal and empirical sense and in an idiomatic and metaphysical sense: in its literal sense the truth of the claim is built into the claim that the individual no longer \textit{receives} her singular particularity from another, but rather becomes his or her own maker; the idiomatic sense, on the other hand, expresses the resulting \textit{precariousness of the success} of the identity project. Where the human subject's is not yet sovereign of her own identity and her being is “simple,” her existence coincides with her biological life: the individual perishes when her life comes to an end. In contrast, \textit{qua} sovereign individual the individual's “perishing” designates not only the final (inescapable) perishing at the end of her biological life but also (the chronic possibility of) her “becoming divisible,” which is a kind of perishing that is \textit{sui generis} and specific to the sovereign individual. In order to distinguish these two senses of “perishing,”

\textsuperscript{442}This is the implication of Hägglund's claim that “what is indivisible cannot be altered” (3).
\textsuperscript{443}Cf. Rosa 357.
\textsuperscript{444}This notation is meant to highlight that identity not only means particularity but also stability/sameness/continuity.
let us call the perishing of the “in-dividual” her disintegration. This disintegration is tantamount to the "death of the in-dividual." On the other hand, we will call the specific "indivisible being," i.e., the persistence of the in-dividual, her "sur-vival." The in-dividual is a "sur-vivor" because her being transcends the "mere" life of the subject whose existence lacks the quality of individuality. The individual human subject is radically “mortal” because qua individual she will not only perish “one day” (in the future), but qua “individual” she may in fact undergo multiple "death equivalents" and thus perish more than once.

Han's claim that the collectivization of life confers greater duration on the individual life is sound. However, it ought to be understood not in the sense in which Han understands it, where “duration” means “length,” i.e., in purely quantitative terms. Rather, the process by which life becomes “atomized” is such that it precisely ought not to treat individual life as an “atom.” The duration that the singularization of life decreases must be understood as life's intrinsic quality. The life that comes to be singularized is threatened by a chronic deficit of intra-vital duration. The fact that the lack of intra-vital duration becomes experienced more acutely under circumstances where the conditions necessary for the attainment of genuine “individuality” become increasingly adversarial, e.g., where the speed of social changes increases, does not mean that we are dealing with a phenomenon whose existence depends on what Fritzsche calls the fast-pacedness of social life. It is rather a natural extension and ontological implication of the (misleadingly so named) “atomization” of life that takes place where the individual becomes the maker of his own identity.

3.8. A new form of Unheimlichkeit: The subject's doubtful situatedness in the world

This is highly important for our argument about nostalgia. If all this is correct, then we can say that the recognition of the mutability of life (which has always existed) as a tragic quality capable of

445Cf. Lifton 15, 81.
446Cf. Rosa 288.
inducing nostalgia (which emerges at a certain point in history) presupposes my self-consciousness as 
not being fully situated in the world: it presupposes that which Unamuno calls an awareness of my 
“doubtful situation” in the world. The notion that my situatedness in the world is “doubtful” means that 
my identity and my firm place in the world is not a given, but that it is incumbent on me to find my 
place in the world, to make myself at home in the world; i.e., to give myself an identity.\textsuperscript{447} Furthermore, 
the idea that it is incumbent on me to find my place in the world necessarily implies the possibility of 
me failing at this task and thus not finding a place in the world. It can neither be taken for granted that 
every individual will find their place in the world, nor that those who have found their place will be 
able to occupy this place until the end of their life. As Rosa has argued, this is literally a life-long 
project, i.e., a project that accompanies me throughout my life-time.\textsuperscript{448}

This is the deeper, metaphysical sense of the claim that nostalgia is “intimately related to 
awareness of displacement.”\textsuperscript{449} We encounter the most “literal” form of this displacement in the Swiss 
soldier who finds himself displaced from the beloved homeland. To the extent that the Swiss soldier's 
spatial displacement is in essence a temporal one, the metaphysical root of the Swiss soldier's 
displacement is the \textit{Unheimlichkeit} that we have described here: our doubtful situation in the world. 
Furthermore, the metaphysical \textit{Unheimlichkeit} of the sovereign individual explains how a subject can 
become “dis-placed” through events and actions (and even when no physical movement is involved). 
Where the individual's place first needs to be found, or rather, where it is in constant need of being 
constituted and re-constituted through the individual's ongoing activity, the physical displacement of 
the Swiss soldier is only the “literal” condensation of a process that can manifest itself in countless 
other forms.

Of course this does not mean that the person who experiences nostalgia must be consciously

\textsuperscript{447}Cf. Rosa 359. 
\textsuperscript{448}Cf. Rosa 359. 
\textsuperscript{449}Ankersmit 199.
aware of the connections that we have delineated here. To think this would mean to misunderstand the thrust of our argument completely. What our argument purports to show is rather that where the self-understanding of the human subject as an “individual” forms part of the human narrative, the condition that the Swiss mercenary experiences can be interpreted as “nostalgia.” If our argument is correct, then the empirical Unheimlichkeit that a nostalgic individual experiences is rooted in the doubtful situatedness (which is itself a form of Unheimlichkeit) in the world that becomes humanity's universal fate at a certain moment in history. As far as Fritzsche's analysis of the cause of nostalgia is concerned, we can say that it is not simply because the pace of life increases in the modern period that it becomes more difficult for people to become emplaced in the world. The pace of life would be quite inconsequential if one's emplacement was not related to one's ability to keep up with these changes. As long as one's place in the world was “externally” given, it is much more resilient: the upheaval(s) necessary to dislodge this identity would need to be of a much greater magnitude than where this identity is autonomously pursued and realized, and, as a result of this, the identity of the individual is on the line each time the individual acts.

3.9. Nostalgia and the desire for “survival”

What we have not yet explained is why the investment of the sovereign individual in their life is such that the prospect of its inevitable demise would give time's passage the meaning “iteration of loss.” If our analysis is sound and the time that the individual “has” is not just quantitatively different but, more importantly, qualitatively distinct, then it is the possibility of failure that explains why time becomes scarce for the sovereign individual. We said above that scarcity depends on my investment in my life: I am invested in my life to the extent and in proportion to the intensity of my desire to be and my fear not to be. Time becomes scarce for the sovereign individual because the individual who is existentially “on their own” discovers the precariousness of his own identity. The possibility of failure,
which is implied by the notion of the subject as his sovereign, entails that the human subject is
“alienated” from his (individual) identity. This alienation is itself complex: On the one hand, the
individual human subject is alienated from his identity because he encounters this identity as a task: it
is incumbent on him to give his existence (an) identity. We saw that the implication of this is that the
sovereign individual becomes ‘radically mortal’. This radical mortality, however, has its onto-logical
counterpart in the “timelessness” (i.e., duration, persistence) of the one who gives himself an identity. If
“identity” means more than “particularity,” then the identity of the sovereign individual must, as it
were, reside outside the identity that this individual actually manages (or fails) to give himself. Put
differently, the sovereign individual necessarily witnesses the success or failure of his own identity
project. The individual who can either succeed or fail at the identity project of which she is in charge
cannot be reduced to her successful or unsuccessful historical “individuality.” The individual is not
reducible to his “material,” i.e., agentic, historical, identity (or non-identity): beyond the
failed/successful identity lies an (impersonal) identity that is left “untouched” by the success or failure
of the “identity project.” This identity, which we will call the subject's “psychological identity,” must
be presupposed (conceptually, i.e., as a regulative idea) to make sense of the idea that it is the
individual himself who gives himself an identity. On the other hand, the possibility of failure
presupposes a unity that the individual cannot take for granted but must (re)produce by herself; that is
to say, it must be enacted. The psychological identity of the sovereign individual identity cannot be
ontologically determinative because if it were determinative, then per our argument above the
individual could not be said to “give” himself an identity. In other words, the human subject is also

450Locke recognized this fundamental importance of the individual's psychological identity. However, he overstated and
thus ultimately misrecognized its ontological significance he made the identity of consciousness not just a necessary but
also a sufficient condition for personal identity. In contrast, if our argument is sound, then Locke's account of personal
identity conflates the identity that is the prerequisite for the possibility of personal identity (i.e., the identity of one who
is defined by her activity in the world): which is the psychological identity of the subject; with that which achieves this
identity: which is the appropriately unified activity of the individual.

451This “maker identity,” i.e., the identity of the one who is the (unified) seeker of (an) identity is not a reality but merely a
necessary postulate that is implied by the idea that the individual is his own maker. To say that the individual is his own maker
does not amount to claiming that the individual is already “made”, “unified” before his activity. It only means that
alienated from its (psychological) identity. It is this alienation that allows the individual to witness the discontinuity of her active life (i.e., her historical existence) and to know herself to be the (unified) author of this disunity, i.e., to know herself to be responsible for it.

To say that the sovereign individual can no longer take “her persistence” for granted means, on the one hand, that the individual may fail at giving herself an identity; but on the other hand, it means that the identity that the individual is aware, or even certain of (and which allows me to witness to the success/failure of my identity project) lacks a historical counterpart. In the language that we used in Chapter 2 we can express this idea by saying that my (psychological) identity exists for me but not yet (or not necessarily) for the other. It is, as it were, only a “virtual” identity. The sovereign individual is alienated from this identity because the identity that he experiences directly is not a given but is given as a task. And that means that it is experienced as a lack. Qua individual I am not but desire to be.

Like the displaced individual whose experience of displacement is the result of the simultaneous awareness of an unfamiliar 'here' and a longed-for 'elsewhere', the sovereign individual experiences the incommensurability of the experienced self-identity and its (potential) lived non-identity. What the sovereign individual qua sovereign individual desires is the return to the temporal fullness that he experiences in foro interno. The 'elsewhere' that the sovereign individual desires does not lie behind but ahead of him. It is the identity that is, as it were, projected ahead as the ultimate goal of a historical trajectory on which the fullness with which I am always already familiar comes to be reconstituted in time. The life of the individual is a "return home": What the sovereign individual seeks to reclaim is is not the distant homeland or a time that lies behind her ("in the past), but rather a fullness that can only be "re-"claimed in the future: namely by means of its first constitution in time. The “return home” of no matter what the outcome is, the individual bears responsibility for it. If the unity of consciousness (i.e., Locke's psychological continuity) were sufficient, then the individual could not (easily) fail to make himself into a unitary being. (The latter would not be a possibility but rather a pathology beyond the individual's control.) If this identity were a given for him, he would precisely be freed from the responsibility to give himself an identity; but he who is responsible for their own identity can no longer take his identity of which he is always already certain for granted: he must (re)produce it.
the metaphysically unheimlich subject is the recuperation of that fullness and familiarity of the self; it is the vindication of my identity in foro externo, i.e., for the other.

The conditions of the (re)production of his (virtual) identity hold the key to our claim that the sovereign individual is invested in her life in such a way that her demise is that loss in virtue of which the passage of time itself becomes an iteration of loss. The sovereign individual is maximally invested in her life because the individual has everything to gain and everything to lose in her life-time. As the sovereign of her time the individual can gain “eternity” or melt away like a snail. That is to say, her being can acquire a temporality that “mimics” the quality of eternity by becoming a quasi nunc stans, or it can acquire the quality of the most fleeting evanescence. Furthermore, qua sovereign individual, my investment in my persistence is not just greater but also more complex than where the individual is integrated into a collective existence. The reason for this lies in the ambiguity of the notion of the individual's “persistence.” The being of the individual is not tantamount to his bare existence. “Individual being” does not name the being of a thing called “individual” but rather a particular manner of being-in-time. If the individual is indeed sovereign of his own time, then this (indivisible) unity of its existence cannot be taken for granted but must be produced. The condition of the sovereign individual is such that he is alienated from his identity which he can only recuperate in the form of the identity of a particular individual. For the sovereign individual, the desire to be is, on the one hand, the desire to persist, yet, on the other, the desire to not persist indefinitely. It is not a desire for an endless duration (i.e., a kind of “immortality”), but rather the desire for a special kind of duration during my life-time: namely "sur-vival." This being of the in-dividual is that existence that grows to ontological fullness from within. It manifests itself in the development of a unique individuality. This

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454 True immortality of the “individual”, understood as the individual's endless persistence, would in fact entail its death. This paradox is rooted in the essence of the unique (dual) persistence conditions for the sovereign individual. For the sovereign individual, being does not exclude non-being but in fact requires it. As live goes on, it washes out the intense colours in which the person's identity is painted. Instead of escaping death, it has, in reality, suffered many a “death” already or "death equivalents." And that means that it has witnessed its own perishing.
"development" describes the specific interrelation between the different parts of the vita activa of the individual. What unifies the life of the “individual” is its immanently unified activity. That which unifies activity, and thus makes it the activity of the same individual, is the appropriate interconnection of the different episodes that occur in the same life-time (or, which is the same thing, which happen to the same empirical human being). Where such an appropriate interconnection prevails, there exists a concord between the different periods or stages of a person's life. Qua individual my will to persist/be is the desire for "individuality," and that means the desire for an immanently unified (“indivisible”) existence.

Only the sovereign individual is invested in their being in such a way as to make its total disappearance the kind of loss that could generate time's irreversibility. The reason for this is that the sovereign individual is not but desires to be. For the sovereign individual a total disappearance and time's irreversible passification denote one and the same thing: The total disappearance of the individual is not the eventual death of the individual but rather his disintegration, his “living death.” Therefore, for the sovereign individual, time's passage effectively signifies the iteration of loss because it is the disappearance of the “individual.”

3.10. Recapitulation and implications for our account of nostalgia

In this chapter we have argued that nostalgia essentially involves the experience of time as Eigenzeit. To experience time as Eigenzeit is connected with a particular experience of our mortality. We said that the human subject is maximally invested in its life when it understands itself as a sovereign individual, i.e., when it becomes the sovereign over her own time and the maker of her own identity. As an individual the concept of my death is an ambiguous one: on the one hand, it denotes the ultimate demise of the person, i.e., her biological death; on the other hand, it denotes the permanent

455 As we will see in much greater detail in Chapter 5, the historicization of the self is ipso facto her self-historicization.
456 On the need for suitable end(ing)s and concordification, cf. Frank Kermode's The Sense of an Ending (1967) 58f.
possibility of the individual's *perishing*, i.e., of its specific demise as an “individuality.” Earlier we claimed that time's passage signifies the iteration of the loss insofar as time takes us closer to our “eventual demise” and because this demise is conceived of as a loss. We now see that our investment in our life is maximal when I must realize myself (as a self) *in* time. It is this need to realize myself that is the root cause of the “*Nötigkeit temporaler Selbstorganisation*” [necessity of temporal self-organization] that the modern individual knows so intimately and that ultimately rests on her essence as the sovereign of her own identity. Most importantly for our purposes, where the self is not given but must first be produced in time (namely by the right usage of *one's* time), time does not take us “closer” to our demise; time's passage itself signifies our demise itself: it signifies *our Vergehen*. This “*Vergehen*” no longer denotes a particular moment but rather the very movement of time's passage. The passage of time is not merely an omen of our eventual demise, it is our demise. What makes my life fleeting is hence not the scarcity of my time but rather the (constant) possibility of my own fleetingness, i.e., the possibility that my own being may consist in the evanescence that would not describe the quality that belongs to my life as a whole but rather the specific manner of my being; in other words, the precariousness of my own being-individual. If this sounds like a direct contradiction of a claim that we made earlier, namely that it is the fleetingness of my life *as a whole* (i.e., the

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457Lübbe 348.
458The loss of common time is the gain of *Eigenzeit*. But along with this gain in its own time, the sovereign individual receives the duty to organize its time autonomously. -- This development has its material analogue in the supersession of the canonical way of reckoning time, i.e., the organization of time around inherently meaningful events, by the “neutral” hour system (cf. Quinones 6). According to Quinones this invention of the mechanical clock, which made this development possible, had monumental consequences: “The tempo of life was increased ... [Time] was felt to be slipping away continuously – after the fourteenth century the clocks in the Italian cities struck all the twenty-four hours of the day” (22) thus reminding one not just of what time it was at a given moment but, more importantly, of the steady, inexorable progression of time. As people started to adapt their lives to the steady but dumb rhythm of the ticking clock, time was no longer the time structured by and around inherently *meaningful* events that gave a *shared* structure to people's day. Instead it now became incumbent on the individual to structure his or her own time by means of a metric that was as neutral and impersonal as it was infallible. The argument that calendric and official time itself creates a common measure that allows individual's to harmonize or synchronize their individual activity with each other (as Lübbe notes [cf. 374ff.]) does not change but rather proves the fact of the individualization of social activity. – Quinones's claim, “The need to exploit the available moments to the fullest and to see that no time is wasted accounts for the greater Renaissance interest in scheduling.” (22) is true but fails to mention that the “fullest” exploitation of the available moments can result precisely in their wastage.
fleetingness of my presence in the world) that “makes” the present an ever-fleeting moment of transience, this impression is mistaken: it is mistaken because the wholeness of my life itself can no longer be taken for granted once the subject becomes the sovereign over its own time, i.e., where the human subject becomes and individual.

With this insight we will return to the claim that our argument began with: namely that I can only experience nostalgia, properly speaking, for something “in my own past.” We said above that this is conventionally taken to mean that I can only be nostalgic for something that I have personally experienced. Above we claimed that the truth of this claim lay much deeper and could not be reduced to some supposedly necessary original empirical experience. In this chapter we have argued that nostalgia is necessarily the nostalgia of the sovereign individual. By “individual” we mean a particular sense of self (the human being as a sovereign individual), rather than the achievement of genuine individuality. It is the sovereign individual who is the true proprietor of the past that is his. The metaphysical truth of the empirical claim that I can only be nostalgic for something “in my past” lies in the fact that nostalgia is linked to individual being which, in turn, with respect to the individual's past denotes the self's special proprietary relationship to their past. The expression “my past” does not denote the past of an original experience but one that is tied to the absolute existential responsibility to find one's place in the world. This is the metaphysical foundation of the dependence of the existence of a personal past (history) on a practice of attribution described in Chapter 2.

It is only when (or where) humankind has developed a sense of self according to which the human being is essentially an individual (and that means, more completely, an individual with a proprietary past) that humankind becomes capable of nostalgia. As we have seen, the concept of this individual is essentially an agentic concept. It is the concept of a subject whose being is essentially

459 It is the (ostensive) mnemonic return of such experiences that may often trigger bouts of nostalgia, but nostalgia itself is not simply the desire to “undergo” such an original experience again. What we have established here is rather an ontological link between nostalgia and the past that is mine.
determined by his deeds. Such an individual is at the same time the owner of a past that is his and the
subject who experiences time's passage as a process of passification (irreversible loss). This loss
signifies first and foremost not the loss of this or that thing or experience but rather of the possibility of
wholeness or unity. It is this fundamental loss that repeats itself again and again. The process of
passification is not merely a process of obsolescence; it is simultaneously and primarily the perishing
of the in-dividual. Pace Alquié, our non-indifference to the passage of time cannot be reduced to the
inconvenience of the need for reorientation that the passification of the present brings along. The
sovereign individual cannot be indifferent to the passage of time (such an indifference would
necessarily be in bad faith): Where time passes, the subject is directly affected by it because he does not
merely witness a Vergehen but undergoes it himself. The individual does not stand apart from time's
passage; the latter penetrates the individual in his very being: the individual herself undergoes a
Vergehen. The loss that is experienced is the loss of the possibility of unity, which is thus not merely an
omen of the subject's eventual demise but the actuality of this demise as an individual. In other words,
the sovereign individual's non-indifference to the passification of the present is non-optional.

3.11. Return to the concept of a “return”

We said at the end of the last chapter that 'my own past' is not an experiential category, and that
therefore the “return” that figures so prominently in the discourse of nostalgia cannot essentially pertain
to an “original experience” to which the nostalgic subjects wants to return (i.e., an original experience
that the nostalgic subject could want to undergo “again”). Based on what we have said in this chapter,
we have to modify this statement in a crucial way: Nostalgia is indeed closely tied to experience, even
to an original experience. However, this “original” experience is not some experience that I once
underwent and now want “back” or that I want to undergo “again.” The “original” experience of
nostalgia is in fact more originary: and it is indeed an experience time, namely the experience of 'my
time', i.e., the experience of time as my time. Unlike the experience of 'my past' understood as the sum total of past (i.e., former) experiences, which at most can only explain the object of nostalgia understood as desire, the experience of 'my time' is the metaphysical “ether” that makes nostalgia possible in its full ambiguity.

If this is the original experience that is constitutive of nostalgia, it is clear that this experience is not one that we could simply want to “return” to. This experience is not one from which we are ever separated but one that makes the experience of separation possible in the first place. This leaves us with one crucial question: What sense can we give to the “desire for a return” that figures so prominently in all (i.e., regardless of whether nostalgia is construed in spatial or temporal terms) discourses of nostalgia? Asked differently: What is the meaning of “return” that would be compatible with the particular interpretation of nostalgia that we have given her?

In answering this question our analysis will effect a “reversal” of the orthodox relation between the concept of “my past” and that of a “return.” In line with what we have said above, we will not try to understand “my past” from a “return” whose meaning is considered as self-evident. On the contrary, we will try to understand the “return” from the complex meaning that we have given to the notion of “my past,” a meaning whose elaboration we began in the last chapter and that we concluded in this chapter. Having shown that the original experience in nostalgia cannot be inferred from the supposedly simple notion of a return, we will now try to infer the meaning of the “return” from the specific original experience that makes the experience of nostalgia possible.

In Chapter 2 we said that the specific mineness of the fact that I did such and such consists in the resulting qualitative modification of my individual Seinkönnen in the intersubjective world (i.e., of my “social” I can). What this means is that our purposeful engagement with the world is redeemed not only in the particular result that it produces. In addition to this, our active expenditure is returned to us in the form of the recognition that it was I who brought about the result in question. It is this
“economic” dimension of the process by which we make ourselves that will occupy us for the remainder of this chapter. To an extent the discussion of the economic dimension of our personal being is an extension of the discussion that we have had so far: the word “eco-nomic” is a compound of the words “oikos” [home] and “nomos” [law]. We spoke of the “oikos”, the home, in terms of the homeliness or familiarity of the world in which I am “at home”; we also spoke of nomos, the law, the “forensics” of our personal being-in-time, its relation to the notions of responsibility and accountability. It could be argued that our argument has not proven the “eco-nomic” sense of our having a past. It has proven an element of familiarity, and, separately, it has proven a lawful element, i.e., the human self as essentially a forensic subject (free, responsible, accountable). But this would hardly prove the “economic” (no hyphen) dimension of it. What we still owe to our thesis is a vindication of the synthetic notion of an “economic” dimension. We already laid the basis for this synthesis insofar as we argued that the homeliness of the public world, that is, the intersubjective world that I share with others, places me into an obligation to these others. My being-in (understood in the sense of an inhabitation) must be a being-in-with. The familiarity of this public world that I share with others, insofar as it requires a reciprocity, requires from me that I appear to the other(s) as a recognizable person. The familiarity of the shared world is a co-accomplishment that requires my “fidelity” to myself. This fidelity to self is, at least partially, enacted whenever I comport myself in an accountable manner. As we will see, this claim needs to be understood in two fundamentally different yet related senses. On the one hand it means that I must take responsibility for what I have done, which is something that we have already discussed in the preceding sections. On the other hand (and this is a new idea that we will develop in greater detail in Chapter 5), the claim that I must comport myself in an accountable manner means that personal being must lend itself to a narrative representation (an account). I exhibit fidelity to myself by relating to what arrives from the perspective of what has been. This means that I take the past into account, i.e., that I engage with that which has come to pass in such
a manner that it thereby becomes (i.e., is elevated to the ontological status of what is) account-able.

This portion of our argument takes its inspiration from Jacques Derrida's work on the economy of time. In *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money* (1992) Derrida writes, “economy implies the idea of exchange, of circulation, of return.” What defines an economy is the “circulation of goods, products, monetary signs or merchandise,” and this “circular exchange” is for the end of an “amortization of expenditures, [a] return on investment.” “This motif of circulation,” notes Derrida, “can lead one to think that the law of economy is the – circular – return to the point of departure, to the origin, also to the home.” This will sure sound familiar: after all, this is how we had understood nostalgia in Chapter 1. It would appear then that there might be a closer link between the economic dimension of personal being and nostalgia: namely that both involve a desire for a return. In the following sections we will need to adapt Derrida's account to our investigation because what interests us here is less the concept of time and more the manner of inhabiting time that we interchangeably named “personal being” or “having a personal past.” If economy indeed implies an exchange, a circulation, a dynamic of expenditure and return, the obvious question that will need to be asked is how are we to understand this exchange? What are the goods that get circulated? What are the expenditures, the investments on which we expect a *return*? And how are we to imagine this return?

### 3.12. The economy of the gift

In Chapter 2 we have linked personal being explicitly to a practice of attribution. This practice makes possible an appropriation that gives substance to my being. If this practice of attribution can be shown to obey the law(s) of an economy, then we should also be able to demonstrate that it has a circular structure. Before we focus on this we must gain a better understanding of the meaning of

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“economy,” and of the ubiquity of the law of this economy. In his introduction to his work, Claude Lévi-Strauss credits Mauss with the insight that “exchange is the common denominator of a large number of apparently heterogeneous social activities.” The economic is so ubiquitous that we can even find it where it may be the least expected. One of these examples is the 'potlatch', discussed by Georges Bataille in *The Accursed Share*. On Bataille's account, the seemingly self-destructive giving at the heart of the potlatch ritual is only, despite its appearance, a highly self-serving sort of exchange in which the giver acquires something that they could not obtain without the act of excessive giving. Writes Bataille, “Gift-giving has the virtue of a surpassing of the subject who gives, but in exchange for the object given, the object appropriates the surpassing.” The expenditure and apparent loss that the giver incurs is only superficial and temporary, because beyond the loss of the material gift the act of giving “brings a profit to the one who sustains it.” Although on one level the giver undeniably incurs a loss by squandering a significant portion of their material resources, this squandering belongs to a broader operation at the end of which the giver's expenditure is returned in the form of obtaining of *prestige*. The obtainment of this prestige not only compensates the giver for the original expenditure, it in fact requires an original expenditure. Through the externalization of a material good I put myself in the position where I can appropriate a good of a higher order. He who has all material goods in the world will still never possess the good of generosity unless they decide to part ways with their material goods. This is relevant to our account of nostalgia because the act of giving does not need to be limited to material objects but also holds for less tangible and even immaterial goods, like for instance our time. As we will see, it is because every action is “accompanied” by a gesture of *giving one's time* (at least under the historical conditions with which we are concerned here), that all actions, not merely those in which there is the expenditure of some tangible material good, implicate the agent in a circular

463Lévi-Strauss in Schrift 54.
464What matters is not what one gives but rather *that* one gives.
465Bataille 69.
466Bataille 70.

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economy of exchange similar to that described by Mauss and Bataille. To prove this claim it will be crucial to become clear about how this notion of giving one's time is to be understood.

The idea that Mauss's point about the economic essence of a broad range of our cultural practices can be universalized even beyond Mauss's own already broad application of it lies at the heart of Derrida's “Gift of Time”. In this work, one of Derrida's main theses is that any intentional activity of a self-conscious subject, even the most seemingly self-effacing forms of this activity, has the potential to be reappropriated as part of the subject's identity: I act and in return I receive the recognition of having acted (i.e., the recognition that it was I who did...). As such, every act of “giving” has the potential to be turned into a gesture of acquisition. Derrida's primary concern in “Giving Time” is to show how certain actions, e.g. the giving of a gift, if it is possible at all (i.e., if it is among the possibilities of the sovereign subject), that is, if it is something other than yet another gesture of exchange, cannot be a part of the economy of time. “For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt.”

Thus gifting is not something that can be done (intended, commanded), it can only happen. That means that the gift falls outside the time of the sovereign subject. It can only 'happen' because a gift “is annulled each time there is restitution or countergift.”

A similar point can be made about the attribution of an action to a person: the very fact that a person is given credit for an action (properly understood, i.e., with all that this crediting gesture entails) can change the meaning of the action for which s/he is given credit. The attribution would, as it were, destroy the very thing that it means to attribute. It is obvious how a gift for which I get a countergift does not constitute an act of mutual gifting but rather another kind of trade or exchange, but even a gift that is not returned still has its return if it is received with gratitude, i.e., the other's recognition of being the receiver of a gift. At the limit, the intention of gifting alone suffices to destroy the gift. Writes...

468By extension, gifting is something for which one cannot take credit either.
470Writes Derrida, “the one who gives [the gift] must not see it or know it either; otherwise, he beings, at the threshold, as
Derrida,

The simple intention to give, insofar as it carries the intentional meaning of the gift, suffices to make a return payment to oneself. The simple consciousness of the gift right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving-being who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude.\(^{471}\)

While Derrida's concern is to show that certain gestures need to be reconceptualized if we think that they are possible at all, our interest in this project does not lie with the exceptions to this rule but rather with the rule itself. All intentional activity has this potential for a return insofar as the “subject identical to itself” can always “reappropriate its identity: as its property.”\(^{472}\) Based on how we have defined identity, namely as the singular and determinate emplacement in the interpersonal world, which, insofar as this world is quintessentially a world of action, is my specific agentic I can, we need to add an important qualification to Derrida's account: Derrida's claim that the self-identical subject constitutes itself in a circular fashion, namely by way of a process of restitution, holds only where subjectivity is essentially constituted through a practice of attribution, i.e., it only holds where the subject is essentially a sovereign (forensic) subject.\(^{473}\)

My own consciousness (or memory) of having done such and such alone never establishes me as the one who has done the deed in question. Propriety is not a feature of consciousness but rather of the same practice of attribution that we identified as the condition of the possibility of personal identity.

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471Derrida (1992) 23. Robert Bernasconi sums this lesson up as follows: “The aporia of the gift as Derrida presents it takes the following form: if what defines the gift is its difference from the object of exchange, then any form of reciprocity or return to the giver destroys the gift precisely by turning it into an object of exchange. There is, therefore, a problem of how one accepts as gift, a question of whether one can even receive a gift without destroying it qua gift. It is not only that an exchange of gifts, is, one these terms strictly speaking not an act of giving. Even gratitude returns the gift to the giver and compromises its gratuitous character ... The problem is still more acute in the case of the giver: how can the giver not be aware of giving? Insofar as the giver is conscious of doing something good in giving, is not its gratuitous character compromised?” (Bernasconi in Schrift 256)


473The terms "forensic" and "sovereign" should be considered to denote complementary aspects of the same inclusive conception of the human subject: the former denotes the practical (agentic) aspect of the conception in question, whereas the latter names its ideological essence.
My auto-attribution is literally im-potent because my having a certain identity-property is nothing other than my ability to “employ” this quality in my actions with others. It is only to the extent that others allow themselves to be affected by this quality that I supposedly have that I can really be said to have the quality. The subject can never reappropriate its identity to itself as its property because we have stated that property and propriety are public/intersubjective phenomena. To appropriate the quality of generosity to myself as my property I have to attribute it to myself. But this attribution must in some way or other be authenticated and validated by an other to whom I appear in order to have the agentic effectivity that inheres in the properties of the self. Without such a validation, the (auto-)attribution is inconsequential and thus does not qualify my being-agent. What Derrida says about the reappropriatability of our activity holds true only under certain historically contingent conditions and within certain social practices. Under these circumstances, this economy indeed assures the subject the general possibility of a return on all its expenditures.474

3.13. Action, time, and economy

Within the public world my activity can always be returned to me in the form of my achievements or deeds. Thus, the practice of attribution, which makes possible the personal manner of inhabiting time, allows for the appropriation of “things past.” The process of my acting does not irreversibly disappear in the accomplished action, i.e., the specific circumstance that I intended to bring about. I am not simply completely absorbed in what I do, but my deed is returned to me in the form of my identity, which determines (i.e., is nothing other than) my singular place in the social world.475 And, this is crucial, this “reflux” is not an accidental side-effect of my action but is “conditioned by the very

474The operative term here is the possessive pronoun “its”: only that which is truly mine can be spend in the sense in which this expenditure constitutes a loss.
475Above, we have noted that the concept of an achievement is the nexus between the factual aspect of my past actions and its aspect as a modification of my (futural) Seinkönnen. That is to say, as a free agent my identity consists of the specific things that I can do, rather than what I have already done. The latter is relevant insofar as it determines what I can (still) do.
That is, if my action were not returned to me, the process that we now describe as “someone doing x” (i.e., performing the action of x) would be qualitatively different. Put differently, the action qua action would simply be incomplete without this “reflux”, which is the action's “complementary and final phase.” The time that it took to bring about a certain state of affairs, a time that is by definition irreversible, may be lost, but it is not lost without remainder. I give my time, i.e., there is expenditure, and what I receive in turn is the recognition that I have given my time for such and such a use, i.e., that I have acted in such and such a way. After all, is the recognition of my achievements not precisely this: the annulment of the pure, irreversible passage of time as it occurs in the process of accomplishing of that which I will eventually be recognized to have accomplished (i.e., the accomplishment)? Even if I cannot accumulate these achievements in a purely additive sense, it is not entirely implausible to liken this process to other processes by which I amass other forms of “symbolic capital.” As such it is surely tempting to construe this attribution of achievements in a manner that is analogous to Mauss' account of the accumulation of symbolic capital (prestige, character, rank). In essence this would merely be a further universalization of Mauss's model, analogous to that proposed by Derrida yet without the latter's focus on consciousness.

3.14. The expenditure of time (or “Having time”)

It would appear that the applicability of Mauss' ideas hinges crucially on our ability to make sense of the idea that there is indeed something that the subject expends, invests, externalizes, gives away whenever it acts. The “thing” or “resource” “possession” that one can expend must be something that one has, something that (already) belongs to the subject. Based on our above hypothesis, this “resource” would have to be time itself. It is the following notion, a notion that will need some very substantial elaboration that holds the key to the application of Mauss' ideas to our own topic: I give my

476 Marx & Engels (1962) 164; translation by David McLellan.
477 Marx & Engels (1962) 164.
time, and in return I receive the recognition of having given my time for such and such a thing. To begin, it can hardly be denied that in everyday language we commonly treat time as if it were a resource that we could *verfüg*en over like other (material) resources. We speak of “saving” time; we worry about “wasting” time; and we also (elliptically) speak of something “taking [away from us]” various amounts of time. In our vernacular language we “economize” (or attempt to economize) time in a multitude of ways. What these different modes of economizing time have in common is the mostly implicit assumption that we “have” time; that time is something that can be and is *had*, that time is something that we (some more than others) “have.” The time that one “has” is the time that can be “saved” or “taken [away]” from us. This time which one “has” is furthermore the time that can be “given” or “devoted” to a certain task at hand. It is this time that one “loses” when one gets caught up in something. Only the time that is “had” can be (freely) “spent” or “taken [away]” from us in the many modalities that this expenditure can assume. Time, thus understood, is always already quantified, or at least quantifiable – namely because it seems always possible, at least in principle, to say how much time one has given or spent –, and this quantifiability is the condition of the possibility of our calculation of the most “economical” way of “spending” the time that we “have.”

The ubiquity of this manner of speaking notwithstanding, it appears to not only reify time but, worse, to involve an incoherent idea of what 'having time' involves: To start, what complicates the idea that time is something that we could “use” in a way analogous to other things over which we have mastery is that unlike other resources that I can, if I wish, spend all at the same time, I cannot do the same with time. It is not up to us how much of our time we spend, because no matter how much time we are willing to give, whether or not we manage to give this much does not depend on us. I am not free to use or spend my time as I please. I am free to decide how I spend my time, but I am not free to decide if I spend my time or not. Even if I were to resolve to “keep” my time, the keeping of this time

478To give “one’s” time in this sense means precisely the opposite of what it says: namely, to give the time of the They, i.e., chronometric time.
would still take time with the same inexorability as the most wasteful squandering of time. The paradox of time is that it takes time to keep the latter. In other words, the art of time keeping is, to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, at most an “ostentatious” one, a pretence of mastery where in fact we reach the very limit of our freedom. To treat time as a masterable resource means to forget that time is our being. But our critique of our vernacular usage of economic terms in relation to our being-in-time does not stop here. Even if the subject cannot spend time as it pleases them, it still can spend its time. And it can only spend its time. It is, as it were, doomed to spend its time. The subject that is said to be “able to spend his/her time as s/he pleases is a subject that 'can', that is, the subject who is free. For this subject to have time does not mean that one has a “stash” of time. Having time does not designate the possession of a quantifiable “good,” but rather something else entirely: it designates the actuality of my freedom. The quantification and reification of time comes as naturally to us as other manifestations of our inauthentic being, and yet nothing could be farther from the truth. We already said that the conceptualization of time as something that can be had, expended, and taken away from us rests on a quantified conception of time. This conception of time, however, is extraneous to the entity whose time we are concerned with here: the person. It is literally extraneous in that time is taken to be an object, a thing, something that I can expended, thus treating time as if it were a thing that could be "had" in the same or at least analogous sense in which one has other material resources. Yet, since time is our being, this implies nothing less than a reification of our own being. Understood as an agentic concept, we need to understand the time that this person “has” as it pertains to action: that is, as time for. On this account, “I have time” is shorthand for “I have time to/for.” The person “has” time not in the form of a

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479 Whether we spend time well or not depends on not how we spend time (wastefully or economically), but rather what we spend our time for/on.
480 See Bourdieu in Schrift 199.
481 Time as a quantifiable thing, on the other hand, is the time of another entity. We have said this before: There seems to be a recurrent risk of confusing our personal being with our human (biological) being. The time of the person is not the time of the human being. The human being “has” a certain amount of “quantifiable” time. But even this would at best describe an “inauthentic” way of speaking of time (see Heidegger).
quantity but as the essential qualification of its being *qua* agent: time as the time for; i.e., time as freedom. That is the reason why talk about “saving” time is essentially inauthentic: The time that we “have” is essentially “time for...”, i.e., time that “wants” to be spent. We only “have” time to the extent that we are unable to keep it, doomed to use it up. The subject does not have time to give in an objective sense (where the time that I give could be severed from me). To give time means to give oneself in one's entirety, rather than merely piecemeal, to now this, now that project. Giving oneself means that I do not stand outside the economy of time. To think of the time that one has given merely as the time that has lapsed, i.e., the time it took to do..., or the time that I spent as the time that I had, all this is the fantasy of an original or irreducible plenitude, which is the fantasy of a personal self that is forgetful of its dependence on another and of action as ongoing. To have time for the agent means to have time for..., which means to be free, not statically but as existing freely. Freedom is the manner of our being, and likewise does “having time” denote a particular manner of being-in-time. The truth that Dasein is always already concerned about its time is covered up by a veneer of untruth that gives time the semblance of a quantifiable and manageable resource. Incidentally, this cover-up can itself be seen as an “outgrowth” of the underlying truth itself: It is a kind of “hyper-economization” of a time that is always already that of an economical subject. It is because the essence of the subject is economical that this excessive economization can pass as the natural way of speaking.

482The time that I have to give must not be confused with the average life-time that I am born with. The time that I have (i.e., have to give) are not so many years that I have to live.

483To follow along with our previous point, the time that I gave is the substantive time of that which I filled with content. What makes for the appearance of an “empty” quantifiable time that I give to / spend on now this cause now that cause is nothing other than the recognition that the fact that I gave my time for this or that cause implies that I was free to do so, which entails that I must have been able to use my time otherwise. Time would thus “present” itself as an empty form, to be “filled” with now this and now that content. The apparent emptiness of the time that I had at my disposal to spend is thus but the other side of the coin of freedom: it is the positive freedom, the freedom that one could have done otherwise.

484This kind of reckoning with time is the inauthentic counterpart to the authentic accounting, which we will encounter in the next chapter.
If time is not something that is “had” in the sense in which one “has” money, then time cannot be introduced into the circulation of “goods” as easily as other “items”, which, it would appear, might jeopardize the applicability of Derrida's and Mauss's insights into the economy of the gift (along with the preliminary interpretation that we have given to this application-cum-analogy). But perhaps this impression is mistaken. Let us return to Bataille's example of the potlatch: As we said earlier, according to Bataille the explicit, social act of giving (externalizing) a material possession allows the giver to obtain an immaterial possession (i.e., the internalization of the externalization). Material wealth, for instance, is thus exchanged for the wealth of prestige, character or rank. I give something empirical that is mine, something that is of value and I get recognized for my “generous act”, my “generosity”, which is a value of a higher order. It is the quality of generosity, of being a generous person that is returned to me. As such, I exchange material (perishable) wealth for the richness of a good character, i.e., moral wealth. Thus, what appears to be an effacement or reduction of the subject's substance is in fact the opposite: The subject increases its “symbolic” capital by means of a surrendering of its material possessions. The appropriation of the disposssession is the negation of the (self-)negation that the act of generous giving seemingly entails. What appears like an expenditure is in fact an investment. It is an investment because in a system where actions are credited to particular agents the act of giving one's time is in fact an investment that repays itself “with interest.” Even if time is not introduced into the economic circulation like one introduces a thing, it does seem that we get “something” in return for our efforts, a term which I will use to denote any kind of (non-productive) engagement with the interpersonal world. I believe that Mauss's idea is applicable not because of a fundamental likeness of that which is “given” – when I “give” my time I don't give something that is merely a detachable, quantifiable object/good, but I give myself, which means that I come to externalize myself and get

485It is an expression that denotes a particular engagement with the world: ne in which I am changed in the process of giving myself.
myself back (albeit in a changed form) – but because of the likeness of that which is received in return. We said in Chapter One that one of the defining elements of our concept of time is that what is done is done. The essence of time is its irreversibility, yet built into this irreversibility, did we not say, we find a “remedy” for precisely this irreversibility? In the irrevocability of the factum does there not lie the germ of a “compensation” for my irreversible engagement with the world? Even though that which was spent in the pursuit of x is forever lost, by the same token the pursuit of x will forever have been! Once time has come to pass, its inexorable fleetingness comes to a halt; once something has come to pass it will forever have been. The timeless factum of the fecisse is literally my "viaticum for eternity." If I give myself to the realization of something I cannot get the time it took to realize this something back (meaning: I cannot go back to the time “before” the action, so as to undo my expenditure), yet the fact that I have thus expended my time can be recognized and credited to me. There is a kind of recuperation of expenditures because even though my activity in the world is inherently irreversible and evanescent, even where it does not produce any tangible results it produces a record of my achievements, which, to the extent that these are credited to me, are a kind of compensation or return.

That which amortizes my expenditure is not the fact that... qua fact. Even if the fact is returned to me, qua fact, it remains an essentially impersonal return. The fact that remains an impersonal mark even if I lie at the centre of the fact. In other words, if we are looking for the return at the heart of personal being, this return cannot simply be the fact that... If the time that was given to the pursuit of a particular cause is to be returned to its rightful owner, it must be returned in the form of freedom. Facts are not “mine”, and neither is factuality my being. The record of my past achievements is not itself the return on my investment. The attribution of the fact that... alone would not constitute a “return.” It would be a mere exchange such that the memory of... would serve the same purpose. The fact that... has an equally ambiguous redemptive force as our recollection: they both remind us at the same time of the

Jankélévitch 275.

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thing lost and of the loss itself. Just as the time that is forever lost is not the specific amount of
chronometric time that was spent but denotes my inability to undo my past deed, neither is the time that
is returned to me merely the elapsed time parcelled into the fact that... To say that I cannot “go back to
the time before...” is a spatialization for the inherent limit of my freedom in the intersubjective world.

Even though the accomplishment is tied to the factum, it is distinct from it and non-reducible to the
factum itself. If the fecisse alone would compensate me for my action, it would be a rather rotten
exchange because it would signify the reification of my being. If my achievements are merely
appurtenances to me, then this would be true. But time does not merely produce a factual record of
“my” achievements. It produces me in my unique, singular, determinate freedom, i.e., as a free agent
whose freedom is not empty but always concrete. Qua achievement an action that I have performed is
not only remembered as an event that occurred in the past. My achievements do not stand over against
me like objects. They are rather “invisible organs” through which new possibilities for further action
become disclosed to me. It is only because the fact is attributed to me and, in addition to this, the fact
that this attributed fact determines my Seinkönnen, i.e., my possibilities future that the action has not
simply slipped “into” the past and is now vergangen. Insofar as my achievement comes to be
inextricably “annexed” it has rather slipped out of chronological, linear time altogether. Qua
achievement, my (past) action no longer signifies a 'when' (an event) but a 'how': namely the how of
my distinct emplacement in the world. That is the meaning of my personal identity. 488

The question on which the analogy with Mauss's and Bataille's account of the economy of
exchange hinges is thus the following: Are the achievements that for my personal identity rightly

487Cf. Valery 1257.
488If I were merely to exchange “lived time” (the time of my doing) for the time of dead facts (the time of my deeds), then
the time of personal being would be no less linear that the time of inauthentic being. Remember what we said in Chapter
One: Vergangenheit is constituted by irreversibility and irrevocability. The latter cannot be a “remedy” for the
Vergangenheit, because it is a constitutive part of what it means for something to be “vergangen”. If I were to merely to
exchange “lived time” (the time of my doing) for the time of dead facts (the time of my deeds), then the time of personal
being would be no less linear that the time of. Remember what we said in Chapter One: Vergangenheit is constituted by
irreversibility and irrevocability. The latter cannot be a “remedy” for the Vergangenheit, because it is a constitutive part
of what it means for something to be “vergangen”.

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conceptualized as a sort of symbolic capital? On an empirical level it certainly seems true that achievements function as an important currency: they are something that allows and enables me to do new things. This impression has been confirmed by our preceding analysis: The return does work in the same way insofar as it implies a modification of my freedom, of my determinate agentic Befindlichkeit in the social world. This capital would always be the capital of the person whose capital it is. What changes are the specific properties of this capital, yet the propriety of personhood itself is not affected by this. The idea that the subject could remain outside the exchange and merely “make use” of it by introducing something that it could in principle sever from itself is, as Gasché has convincingly argued, a mistake.\(^\text{489}\) When we speak of achievements as the capital of a person, we must understand this expression not as a genitivus objectivus of the capital of the person (the person who is the “owner” of capital), but rather as genitivus subjectivus: the capital of personhood. With respect to the individual, personal, “forensic,” agentic subject Derrida is right when he writes, "One cannot discern the subject except as the subject of this operation of capital."\(^\text{490}\) To wit, by being “returned” or “ascribed” to me, I benefit from my actions/activity in a twofold sense. When actions are ascribed (“returned”)\(^\text{491}\) to me I do not only benefit from the action itself (i.e., my action not only has an immediate effectivity) but also from the (ontologically additional) fact that it was I who accomplished an action (i.e., the recognition of the fact that the change in the world was of my own making), which has its own effectivity.

Therefore, I both “benefit” from and “capitalize” on my actions. Insofar as every action has this secondary effect, namely that I also build myself up, my agentic engagement with the world transcends its immediate effectiveness that my action has qua engagement with the world and inscribes my achievement in a different ontological order: It is not a fact but a modification of my freedom which is, admittedly, mediated by a certain fact! As such, we have to agree with Derrida when he describes this

\(^{489}\)See Gasché in Schrift 110.
\(^{491}\)We will shortly see in what sense this “ascription” assumes the (economic) role of a 'return'.
operation as an "reappropriation with surplus-value, a certain capitalization." My engagement with the world is not a zero-sum game. The achievements that are credited to me form the *substance* of my being (ontologically conceived) as a public being (in the ontic sense). Insofar as the essence of my public being is freedom/accountability, this substance is my *Seinkönnen* (i.e., that which I *am* capable of doing rather than what I *have already done*). We can therefore say that my engagement in the world, when it is done properly increases my time (as paradoxical as this may sound). It is in this sense that personal being is economic and thus follows a circular rather than a linear time.

3.16. Objection

The preceding characterization, although fundamentally sound, presents us with one significant problem. This problem has, once again, to do with the fundamental concept of a return: The notion of a “return” implies that the return operation is *subsequent* to the original action. This is not an arbitrary fact about time but essential to the notion that the return is a return *for*: It is only if we assume that the individual *has acted* that the operation of crediting the action to the individual can plausibly be characterized as a “return”, i.e., as merited and adequate. In other words, we must assume that the original action, i.e., the action for/with which the agent is credited, precedes the crediting. The idea that the action is the (justifying) cause of the attribution is moreover implied in the notion that *I* make myself: If it is supposed to be my actions that determine my identity (as it was *ex hypothesi*), then the credit that I receive for my action must be causally and justificatorily related to the action itself. If this were not the case, then my action would at most be a contributing factor in the constitution of my (agentic) identity. Only if we assume that the action for which I receive credit precedes and

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493 It is only on the basis of the accumulation of the being that the person becomes capable of amass-*ing* other things that *belong to them*. If my past is the sum total of my achievements, and I *qua person* “am” my past, then the person not only amasses symbolic capital – it may do this too, but only once it has constituted itself as person – but personal being itself is the accumulation of being.
“necessitates” the crediting is that what is returned to me merited by my own deed. Only then is the self his own maker.

But this creates the following dilemma: On the one hand, it seems necessary that we assume a “prior” expenditure, and expenditure “before” the return, in order to make sense of the notion of a “return”. Any attribution of an action must always already assume that I had time to spend to begin with in order for the attribution to be deserved or legitimate. Or to use the idiom of freedom: If I was not free to accomplish x, then x cannot possibly be credited to me. Conversely, if I did x then I must by necessity have been free to do x. The very logic of this economy would require that the subject be in the possession of that which it would need to expend to make intelligible the notion of a “return for”. (NB: This is quite analogous to the idea that the notion of a “return to” conceptually presupposes an original presence.) On the other hand, if the subject of the return is already fully constituted as a proprietary subject (i.e., as an originary plenitude) prior to the return, then his/her constitution cannot be said to consist in the circular economic operation of expenditure and return. The latter would once again commit us to the image of a subject as a thing that gives itself (fully). This subject who “enters into the exchange believes himself to be outside with respect to the exchange,” i.e., a subject that is essentially alienated from its own activity and thus unaffected by that which it does because no matter what it does never gives itself. The subject who is credited is not one who has time to give in an objective sense (time being the object of my giving). In other words, the conception of the subject as one who now expends and now reaps the returns on its expenditures treats the subject as a thing and its time as a linear succession of discrete moments.

Against this, we held that there is something economic about the very actuality of the person, about my be(coming) person. The subject is not one that invests and receives in return but rather constitutes itself in its oneness (i.e., continuity) as a figure of the dynamic of expenditure/return.

494Gasché in Schrift 112.
The fundamental question that we need to answer then is the following one: How can we make sense of the idea of a return if on the one hand we said that this linear time is not the time of the personal self (which based on the preceding characterization is circular), yet the notion of a return requires a “prior” action to which the return is necessarily “subsequent”? In the next chapter I will argue that this problem is genuine and that the solution to this problem implies the recognition that the personal self is in fact co-constituted by two irreducible temporal orders. This is nothing new but will need unpacking: We already recognized at the beginning of Chapter 2 that there is no such thing as a monolithic human time. However, what is new in this case is that the two different temporal orders should pertain to the same aspect of the self’s being.

We already said that this notion of 'before'/'after' plays a crucial role in the justification: that the person did such and such is the reason why they are being credited with having done such and such. In contrast, the fact that the action preceded the attribution of this action is not explicitly emphasized because it is, as it were, “understood.” As such the 'before' and 'after' that qualifies the relation between the original deed and the subsequent attribution do not merely, and perhaps not even primarily designate moments on a continuum of pure succession. The relation of the two moments is not merely one of a formal succession of two disparate events. They both rather belong essentially to the time of the personal self who is given credit. The image of the preceding expenditure is inextricably bound up with the propriety of the return (its mineness and its adequacy!), which alone establishes the return qua return, i.e., as an adequate response to the occurrence of the original action. It is, as it were, the rationale of the return qua return. It is this rationality that qualifies the “succession” and separates it from the purely temporal relation of the two events. As such, the 'before' and 'after' belong to a different temporal metric, one that bears an undeniable similarity to the reckoning of chronometric time but is nevertheless distinct from it. As we will see in the next chapter, to the extent that individual attributable actions only come to be individuated in a broader context of a narrative history (i.e., what counts as
one's particular achievement depends on how can be situated in an ongoing narrative, which in turn affects how exactly the attribution modifies one's futural *Seinkönnen*, the chronology of the personal self in which the 'before' and 'after' are inscribed is the chronology of the self's own narrative account.

3.17. Conclusion

In this chapter we have made several important contributions to a better understanding of what is involved in the experience of nostalgia. In the first half of the chapter we have shown that the experience of nostalgia is essentially linked to a specific experience of our mortal finitude. This experience, in turn, is essentially wed to a metaphysical *Unheimlichkeit* that grounds the possibility of the empirical forms of nostalgia that we have encountered in the first chapter. This important insight gains further pertinence because it allows us to see that the long-ranging controversy over whether nostalgia is primarily a spatial or a temporal phenomenon, which remains a fundamental question for all engagements with nostalgia, is operating with a false dichotomy. The sense of fleetingness and irreversibility at the heart of man's *temporal* nostalgia is a symptom of man's “doubtful situatedness" “in” the world.

Secondly, we have shown how the human subject must conceive of herself before she can become susceptible to nostalgia. This conclusion was prepared in Chapter 2. Even though in Chapter 2 we have denied that “my own past” is primarily an experiential, cognitive category and have argued that the past that is mine is not a psychological given but rather the result of a historically contingent practice of (action) attribution, none of this proves the thesis that I can only be nostalgic about something in my own, personal past is simply false. In this chapter we have argued that the truth of this

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495What one has done, meaning what counts as one's achievement (i.e., futural *Seinkönnen*) depends on the context. Its proper *ratio* or conversation rate depends on the specific quality of the action. Yet, this quality is determined by the specific context of the action. This context becomes accessible to us only in the form of the account that we give of the specific action.
claim lies much deeper and is much more complex than is generally recognized: This truth is that nostalgia is necessarily of the sovereign individual. We have thus given an explanation of the *metaphysical* truth of the (empirical) claim that I can be nostalgic only for something “in my (own) past.” This is crucial for two reasons: On the one hand, even if identifying the concept of the sovereign individual as the ontologically pre-eminent subject of nostalgia does not (yet) yield the exact coordinates of the place that nostalgia occupies in the history of ideas, it has produced a philosophically robust argument that allows us to situate nostalgia in a broader ideological context and that substantiates the thesis that the experience of nostalgia is a distinctly modern phenomenon. On the other hand, if our argument is true, it would entail that nostalgia is not just a marginal (aberrant) phenomenon but rather the inescapable fate of the sovereign individual. It would entail that nostalgia is an “affliction” from which not only those “suffer” who suffer from it knowingly, i.e., those who *feel* nostalgic. Nostalgia is not the fate of this or that subject but rather of the sovereign individual as such. While the final proof of this claim will be delivered only in Chapter 5, in this chapter we have laid the foundation for our argument to prove this claim.

Lastly, we have given the notion of a return a new, “economic” meaning. The term “economic” must be understood in a very specific sense: which is a sense that comprises the full meaning of the term “eco-nomic”: On the one hand, it comprises the element of familiarity or home-liness (*oikos*). On the other hand it also comprises the dimension of accountability, attribution of actions (*nomos*). In addition to the constituent elements of “eco-nomic,” it also comprises the synthetic meaning of the term, denoting a “circular” movement that occurs wherever my activity in the shared world is returned to me. We said that what is returned to the individual is the individual's own time. Time becomes the individual's (exchangeable) resource where the individual relates to time as *Eigenzeit*. Insofar as *Eigenzeit* essentially requires the presence of another, the time that has become *mine* has always already also become the time that is mine “to give” and “to receive credit for.”
We arrived at this novel understanding of the “desire for a return” involved in nostalgia by taking the priority of the temporal meaning of nostalgia seriously. Those who have argued that nostalgia is in essence temporal – as we have argued in the “Introduction,” Kant was the first person to note the quintessentially temporal nature of nostalgia – have indeed discovered an important truth. Yet, they have, as it were, failed to think through the full extent of their discovery: As long as nostalgia continues to be construed to involve a desired “return to,” it is still in essence spatial. The fact that the object “to” which we desire to return is no longer a location in space but rather a period in time does not change the underlying commonality shared by both conceptions: which is that the return is understood as an essentially spatial movement. Against this we have shown that the temporal interpretation of nostalgia does not only change the object of the desired return, leaving the meaning of “return” intact, but rather also gives this “return” itself a novel meaning: which is an economic meaning.

The questionlessness of the meaning of the return has not only obfuscated a genuinely temporal meaning of the return. Along with the economic nature of the return that escaped previous thinkers, the failure to question the metaphysical meaning of the return, this return is also (still) conceived as something that the nostalgic individual himself wants to effect but cannot effect. In other words, the spatial conception of nostalgia implies at the same time a particular theory about the impossibility of the return. In contrast to the orthodox view of nostalgia, our economical interpretation of the concept of a “desired return” emphasizes that what is involved in nostalgia is not an “active” return (i.e., something that the nostalgic subject could at least in principle effect herself) but rather a “passivity” that is linguistically expressed in the passive voice construction of something “being returned to us.”

Where time has the qualities that figure so prominently in nostalgia, the return can only have the

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496 Against our “economical” interpretation of the ‘desire for a return’ one could object that the Greek word “nostos” does not have an economical meaning. However, this ultimately semantic objection can be held against us only if we assume that Hofer, who conceived of the term “nostalgia,” also glimpsed the full truth about nostalgia. Given the fact that Hofer's interest in “nostalgia” was very limited in scope, we have little reason to assume this.
meaning of “being returned.” If this is true, then nostalgia is never a strictly private experience, but essentially involves the individual's relation to others. The nostalgic subject as such is never alone. This finding jibes well with the insight into the other's constitutive role for the concept of a past that is 'mine' that we gained in Chapter 2, where we argued that the intersubjective dimension of the agentic concept of personhood entails that the process of the reconstitution of the familiarity of the world needs to “pass through” the other.\footnote{We will see in Chapter 5 that this means that the “account” that plays a pivotal role in for the return operation and the constitution of selfhood is of such a kind that the time of the individual does not add up.} The same necessary presence of another could also be observed with respect to the sovereign individual's expectation of the ultimate futural horizon of their being: this expectation is not that of the \textit{eventual} demise (that reduces the individual to nothingness) but rather the normative expectation to confer identity on their existence that is “incumbent upon persons if they are to count as persons [i.e., genuine individuals], and to not end in nothing.”\footnote{Houle (2009) 67.} Although the full import of the necessary implicatedness of an other in the experience of nostalgia will only become apparent in Chapter 5, our reflections in this chapter have allowed us to further flesh an idea whose first outlines we drew in Chapter 2.
CHAPTER 4: The Inauthenticity of Nostalgia

4.1. Introduction

In the last chapter we advanced the thesis that nostalgia is "of the sovereign individual," i.e., that nostalgia is essentially wedded to a particular conception of the human subject. If true, this statement would entail that nostalgia is a much more widespread phenomenon than it is ordinarily recognized to be. However, by linking nostalgia to a particular metaphysics of the subject, we have not yet established whether this metaphysics of the subject makes nostalgia merely possible or inevitable. Thus, we do not yet know whether our claim that nostalgia is of the sovereign individual requires qualification, or whether it is true in its general form. To answer this question, we will use the insights that we have gained in the last chapter and apply them to our discussion of the concept of a 'personal past'. We will do this for two reasons: Firstly, we have yet to understand what the process of obsolescence, which in the last chapter we have identified as central to the experience of the passification of the present, involves where the subject is essentially defined as an agentic entity. In other words, we have yet to answer the question: *What does the perishing of the in-dividual involve concretely?* Secondly, we said above that our engagement with others creates an “interhuman space” that offers its own possibilities of inhabitment, which, in turn, are defined by a different temporality. The way in which I inhabit this world depends on the manner in which I appropriate my personal past, i.e., the past that is my own, or fail to appropriate it.

This analysis will allow us to put forth and defend the claim that nostalgia can plausibly be construed as a symptom of an *inauthentic appropriation of one's own past*. Throughout this chapter I will refer to this view as the "inauthenticity thesis." The inauthenticity thesis, if true, would challenge our claim that nostalgia “is of the individual” in the following way: If it is true that nostalgia is the symptom of a failure to authentically appropriate one's past, then nostalgia is not of the sovereign individual *tout court*. Instead, it is of the one who fails to achieve genuine individuality. Even though
the scope of nostalgia may still be wider than is usually recognized, on this account nostalgia would remain an aberration and a marginal phenomenon. The inauthenticity thesis therefore implies what I will call the "marginality thesis." The marginality thesis states that nostalgia is a clearly delimitable phenomenon that resides on the margins of our discourse(s). For this thesis it is impertinent whether nostalgia is a mnemonic/psychological or an existential phenomenon.

Although the inauthenticity thesis restricts the scope of our claim that nostalgia is of the individual, it thereby shows that it is fundamentally compatible with it: The inauthenticity thesis does not challenge our general claim about the dependence of the experience of nostalgia on a particular conception of the subject, because authenticity and inauthenticity are different possible manners of being-in-time of the sovereign individual. However, only the person who fails at the identity/individuality project could experience time's passage as an "iteration of loss" (Fritzsche). The person who succeeds would not.

We have already said that the reality of "one's past" is not a psychologically nor an empirically established given but rather depends on an active practice of attribution. To understand this claim we must first recall the fundamental ambiguity of the expression "having a past." Where I exist for-another I can have a past by virtue of my having a certain identity. To say that I have this identity can mean that I am identical to the person who has a certain history, i.e., who is the subject of various actions that are attributed to them. We said that I can only appropriate my past by being the person who..., where whatever follows the relative pronoun 'who' denotes my history. In this chapter we will take up a thread that we first introduced in section 2.8, where we wrote that phenomenologically "my past" does not primarily "present itself an increase in the 'I can' but rather as a brute identificational I am." As we will show in this chapter, in order for a genuine increase of my Seinkönnen to happen it is necessary that my actions have a distinct "uniformity" or "continuity." Where my activity consists of me doing now this and now that, and "this" and "that" are internally disconnected, my Seinkönnen
likely remains unchanged even though the identity of my brute identificational *I am* undergoes of course a significant change. We have alluded to the reason for this at the end of Chapter 3: the increase in my *Seinkönnen* follows a different kind of accounting operation than its identificational counterpart. Furthermore, it also obeys different norms: While my identificational identity results from all my activity equally, the increase of my *Seinkönnen* requires a distinct, active appropriation of one's identity. In other words, it results only from *particular* actions, namely those which engage with and thus expand on previous actions of mine. The distinction between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' pertains to the manner(s) in which the past that we have in virtue of our being-for-other is appropriated by us. From this static or passive sense of 'having' – which in this chapter we will call “inauthentic” – we must distinguish an active – or “authentic” – sense of 'having a past', which involves the dynamic re-appropriation of what is already one's own in a purely static sense. As we will see, it is only where I have a past that is mine in this second, authentic sense that my having this past signifies that I inhabit a familiar world, and would thus not be susceptible to nostalgia.

Furthermore, unless I have my past in this active sense, the “accumulation of being” that we described in Chapter 2, which is made possible by my agentic being-for-other, signifies in fact the very opposite: namely that which, following Heidegger, we will call *scattering* [*Zerstreuung*]. Since we have said that “to have a past” means “to inhabit a familiar world,” the absence of a properly personal past, i.e., the inauthentic “having” of as past that is mine, must correlate with a kind of *Unheimlichkeit* of the intersubjective world. What exactly is involved in this will become apparent in this chapter. I thus argue that nostalgia signifies a kind of homelessness and estrangement in the interpersonal world (i.e., nostalgia is not about time or geography). The nostalgic subject is indeed not at home in the world; but the root cause of this homelessness is an inauthentic existence.\[499\]

\[499\]Such an inauthentic existence is fully compatible with the sense of familiarity and of being-at-home-in-the-world that we discussed at the beginning of Chapter 2. It is therefore of paramount importance that we keep in mind that when we speak of the individual's “having a past” we mean his or her *personal* past.
We have already heard that one of the most common charges against nostalgia is that the nostalgic seems to make some sort of “mistake”: At best the nostalgic individual “romanticizes” a past that in reality was not as paradisaical as they now seem to remember it; at worst his desire (properly understood) is completely incoherent. The argument that we are about to present is built on a Heideggerian analysis of nostalgia in terms of the distinction between an authentic and an inauthentic temporality grounded in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. The critical expansion of this analysis beyond the limits of Heidegger's own thinking constitutes the core of our analysis of nostalgia here. In essence, the Heideggerian sketch of the argument for this is as follows: *Vergangenheit* in the strict sense does not apply to human existence. Writes Heidegger, “‘As long as' Da-sein factically exists, it is never past, but is always already *having-been* in the sense of ‘I-am-as-having-been.”  

But he continues, “On the other hand, we call beings past that are no longer objectively present.” Which leads to the following conclusion: “Thus existing Dasein can never ascertain itself as an objectively present fact that comes into being and passes away 'with time,' and is already partially past.” In essence, Dasein is never *past* (*vergangen*) because *Vergangenheit* is the negation of *Vorhandenheit*, and Dasein is never merely present-at-hand.  

In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger himself does not directly link *Vergangenheit* to inauthenticity. However, I believe that such a link can be reconstructed out of other elements of Heidegger's account of Dasein's everydayness and the time of everydayness. Our argument will also draw on some ideas from Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, especially the distinction between the esthetic and the ethical form (or stage) of existence, which we will treat as paradigmatic personifications of the authentic and the

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500Heidegger 301. ["Solange' das Dasein faktisch existiert, ist es nie vergangen, wohl aber immer schon gewesen im Sinne des 'ich bin-gewesen.' (328)]

501Heidegger 301. ["Vergangen dagegen nennen wir Seiendes, das nicht mehr vorhanden ist." (328)]

502Heidegger 301. ["Dahefkan sich das Dasein existierend nie als vorhandene Tatsache feststellen, die 'mit der Zeit' entsteht und vergeht und stückweise schon vergangen ist." (328)]

503The notion that what is past is *vergangen* derives from a “vulgar understanding of being [which] understands 'being' as objective presence without further differentiation” (356). ["das vulgäre Seinsverständnis 'Sein' indifferent als Vorhandenheit versteht" (389)]
inauthentic appropriation of one's past.\textsuperscript{504}

There is a temptation to misread Heidegger's account as yet another critique of nostalgia as involving a kind of “confusion” or “mistake” about a supposedly “true nature” of our temporality. Against this I argue that the nostalgic, far from making a mistake or error in judgment, is in fact erring in a more fundamental sense. Nostalgia is the existential errancy and ontological nomadicism in the intersubjectively constituted world in which it is incumbent on me that I find my place. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to establish a connection between the experience of nostalgia, errancy or homelessness, and the inauthentic appropriation of one's past.

4.2. The time of everydayness: \textit{Ereignisreichtum} and essential poverty

The concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity play an important role in Heidegger's existential ontology. By “inauthenticity” Heidegger means “the kind of being in which Da-sein diverts itself and for the most part has always diverted itself, too, but it does not have to do this necessarily and constantly.”\textsuperscript{505} For Heidegger, inauthenticity is closely associated with Dasein's everyday mode of being (\textit{Alltäglichkeit}) which designates a \textit{how} of my existence, namely the \textit{how} that most commonly gives shape to my being-in-the-world.\textsuperscript{506} In the everyday mode of being Dasein is fallen to the They. As Heidegger says, “\textit{I myself} am not for the most part the who of Da-sein, but the they-self is.”\textsuperscript{507} This manifests itself in at least three different ways: First, Dasein says and does what \textit{one} (they) does. Secondly, and more importantly for our argument, Dasein adopts an objective stance toward its own death, whereby it effectively \textit{flees} from its death.\textsuperscript{508} And lastly, Dasein adopts the time of the They (i.e.,

\textsuperscript{504}We will use these Kierkegaardian categories despite the fact that there exist non-negligible differences between the different esthetic characters that Kierkegaard presents in \textit{Either/Or} I. “Our” esthete will be an abstraction that seeks to embody what we deem to be essential about those traits of Kierkegaard's different esthetic characters that are most pertinent to our account of the “inauthenticity of nostalgia.”

\textsuperscript{505}Heidegger 239. [“Uneigentlichkeit kennzeichnet eine Seinsart, in die das Dasein sich verlegen kann und zumeist immer verlegt hat, in die es sich aber nicht notwendig und ständig verlegen muß.” (259)]

\textsuperscript{506}See Heidegger 370f.

\textsuperscript{507}Heidegger 247. [“Das Wer des Daseins bin zumeist \textit{ich selbst}, sondern das Man-selbst.” (267)]

\textsuperscript{508}Cf. Heidegger 255.
the objective, chronometric time of Besorgen [concern]\(^{509}\) as its own. Since for our purposes the second and third way in which Dasein is fallen to the They is more important than the first form, we will concentrate only on the second and third dimension of Dasein's inauthenticity here. What we will show in this section is that where I mistake the time of the They for my own time, this inevitably leads to a diachronic scattering, which we will alternately designate as Dasein's “Unverweilen” (lack of tarrying) and which is the temporal analogue to the scattered being-with-others that characterizes Dasein's inauthentic everydayness.

As we explained in Chapter 1, the idea that the central temporal feature of the past is that it is vergangen (i.e., "past," "over") rests on a linear conception of time. On this conception, time's passage consists in the continual progression of a Now “which slides down the moments of time, endowing the events and things that occupy the moment it is visiting with reality.”\(^{510}\) Unlike Bergson, who had argued that the essentially chronometric representation of human time differs fundamentally from the lived experience of time so that it would be a mistake to take the symbolization of time to be ontologically isomorphic to time as it is experienced by us, Heidegger's criticism of the above model is more nuanced: He does not deny the validity of this view of time as much as he assigns it to our “vulgar” everyday understanding of time, an understanding that has always already identified “being” with “being-present”\(^{511}\). Writes Heidegger, “Lost in the making present [Gegenwärtigung] of the today, [the They] understands the 'past' in terms of the 'present.'”\(^{512}\) Where being is understood as presence, the future and the past derive their distinct meaning in relation to the present which alone is actual. In contradistinction to the present which "is," the past "is not anymore" and the future "is not yet."

\(^{509}\)Stambaugh translates “Besorgen” as “taking care.”
\(^{510}\)Dolev 7.
\(^{511}\)“The concepts of 'future', 'past', and 'present' initially grew out of the inauthentic understanding of time.” (300) ["Die Begriffe der 'Zukunft', 'Vergangenheit' und 'Gegenwart' sind zunächst aus dem uneigentlichen Zeitverstehen erwachsen." (326)]
\(^{512}\)Heidegger 357. ["In die Gegenwärtigung des Heute verloren, versteht [das Man] die 'Vergangenheit' aus der 'Gegenwart'" (391)]. Even though conceptually we seem to understand the past out of the present, namely as the 'not anymore' of the present, phenomenologically we understand any given present always only on the basis of what has come to pass. In the lived experience of time it is thus the “past” that discloses any given present in its concrete quiddity.
To the extent that in the mode of everydayness Heidegger says the who of Dasein is not I myself but the They-self, the time that Dasein lives by is for the most part the time of the They. Dasein does not just view chronometric time as an important tool to organize its daily affairs; it takes this time (and its temporal features) to be its own time.513

In the mode of everydayness Dasein's being consists in the being delivered over to the changing happenings and occurrences of the day. In the mode of everydayness, Dasein is said to “be” what it most immediately is; and it is said do what is most immediately does. That which falls outside the scope of the immediate present is either “not anymore” or “not yet.” (As we will see, where the subject has appropriated her past authentically, this delimitation is ontologically false.) Out of its fallenness to the They and the concomitant fallenness to the present Dasein acquires its understanding not just of the past and future but also its past and future: the Past is the sum total of former 'nows' (i.e., past 'nows') and the Future the sum total of 'future nows'.514 We can easily see that this is the conception of time that we have often identified to underlie the experience of nostalgia, in which it is precisely the quality of time's pastness, understood as that which is irreversibly “over,” or Vergangenheit (past) in Heidegger's terminology, is experienced to be the past's essence. It is this essence that allows for the past to become an object or motive of regret.

For Heidegger, the everyday understanding of time, according to which time's passage consist of the successive arrival, presencing and elapsing of that which “fills up” an ever changing "now," is inauthentic not only because it belongs to the time of the They, but also because it differs essentially from Dasein's own (i.e., proper and proprietary) time. Confined to the time of everydayness, Dasein's

513In Heidegger's view, the upshot of this is that, “Everydayness takes Da-sein as something at hand that is taken care of, that is, is regulated and calculated. 'Life' is a 'business'." (267) ["Die Alltäglichkeit nimmt das Dasein als ein Zuhandenes, das besorgt, das heißt verwaltet und verrechnet wird. Das 'Leben' ist ein 'Geschäft'" (289).]
514By contrast, as we will see, Dasein's authentic temporality is precisely an “undoing of the making present of the today” (357). ["Entgegenwärtigung des Heute" (391)] The present is no longer that which is opposed to that which is not anymore and that which is not yet.
being is a succession of ever new, ever different events.\textsuperscript{515} “Every day brings something new” to Dasein because \textit{qua} being-present-at-hand Dasein is completely absorbed in the ever-changing present: just as it practically tends to whatever concern is most pressing, and only that which it can immediately effect has reality for it, \textit{ontologically} as well the present comes to be the privileged meaning of “being.” In the mode of everydayness my being consists of a more or less rapid succession of \textit{happenings} or \textit{occurrent experiences}\textsuperscript{516}: what \textit{we are} (or are doing) is now this, now that, now that, and now that.\textsuperscript{517} My being is, as it were, dictated by the ever-changing content of the movable now of my present.

This does not mean that even in the mode of everydayness Dasein is confined its existence to a punctiform now, or that Dasein can be completely reduced to what it most immediately am, especially since we already acknowledged that Dasein \textit{has a past}. In addition to what I am (presently), my being also always comprises that which \textit{I have been}. Time's passage does not signify a pure negation of what momentarily is, because that which is 'not anymore' is not simply 'not'.\textsuperscript{518} Yet, insofar as everyday understanding of time understands the past out of the present, my past is the sum total of that which \textit{is not anymore}. Put positively, it is that which \textit{was}. With every day that has come to pass I ontologically acquire a bit more of what I \textit{am} not anymore. I acquire being, albeit being that is past. Yet, even my 'being everything that I was' is but true in the sense of a present-at-hand identity: “I am what I was” means “I am \textit{identical} to the one who once...”. The everyday understanding of time does not commit us to the absurd view that Dasein is without a history. However, to the extent that this having of a history presents itself to me in the form of a purely factual identity or in a purely identificational manner, the meaning of “being” remains at all times that of “being present,” only that by way of the identity

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{515}Heidegger writes that the They-self is \textit{inconstant}. Cf. 390f.
\textsuperscript{516}Cf. Heidegger 291.
\textsuperscript{517}Writes Heidegger, “Is the occurrence [\textit{Geschehen}] a succession of processes, a changing appearance and disappearance of events? (347) ["Ist das Geschehen eine Abfolge von Vorgängen, ein wechselndes Auftauchen und Verschwinden von Begebenheiten."] (379)
\textsuperscript{518}As Jankélévitch puts it poignantly, “a world lies between \textit{not being} and \textit{not being anymore}.” (164) ["il y a un monde entre \textit{n'être pas} et \textit{n'être plus}."]
relation we have bridged the temporal gap between two (or rather many more) "presents": the present one and former/past ones.

We can thus say that the wealth of experiences of Dasein's ever-changing present is directly linked to an essential poverty, which is a notion that must be understood in a dual sense: On the one hand, "essential poverty" denotes the scarcity of essence, of being; and in one with it (as we said in the previous chapter), the fundamental loss of the possibility of continuity and unity, i.e., the loss of duration and persistence. On the other hand, "essential poverty" denotes a poverty as one's essence: namely the “accumulation” of all that is not anymore. The ontological price of my ontological absorption in the present is that with every new experience that I come to undergo, the “stock” of experiences that I once had and now do not have anymore grows a bit more. The story of Dasein's continuous transformation is tantamount to the story of Dasein's constant loss. This is no coincidence: Dasein only exists an succession of experiences insofar as it retains traces of that which once made up its immediate present(s), which in turn entails that every day that passes through the momentary present not only brings a new occurrence within the purview of Dasein's daily Besorgen, it also means that every passing day brings it about that Dasein accumulates a bit more past. In other words, the notion that Dasein is now this and now that and now something else entirely cannot be separated from the concurrent process of Dasein's own (gradual, partial) passification. Heidegger poignantly designates this process as “cumulative placing together” (anhäufende Zusammenstückung) or “progressive piecing-on”519 (fortlaufende Anstückung). While my present is only ever occupied by that which is, “my past” becomes simultaneously populated by all the former presents indiscriminately, which is what we mean when we saw that Dasein has a history.

This, however, creates the following problem: If “being” means “being-present,” then it is not clear what the “accumulation of more past” and the “having been more and more” (i.e., Dasein's

519Heidegger 225f.
gradual passification) actually means. In Chapter 3 we have already explained what the individual moment of passification involves: namely the “loss of familiarity, the discrediting of recollection that takes place when instead of encountering that which the image of our memory makes us expect we find something completely different and new in reality.”\textsuperscript{520} What we have not yet sufficiently explained is what the \textit{cumulative effect} of the sovereign individual's continual passificiation and self-obsolescence is. Although we have argued that it amounts to the "perishing of the in-dividual," what this perishing amounts to concretely and practically has yet to be shown. In the following section we will undertake a first approximation to this: We will discuss three possible (at least on some level intuitive) senses that we can give to the notion of the "accumulation of more past." Of these three senses the first one will be shown to be implausible; the other two, the only plausible ones, will be shown to be wed to an inauthentic understanding of our own historicity.

4.3. Dasein's cumulative passification

We said in the last chapter my being-for-other allows me to accumulate being in a way that I would not be capable of if my being was not always already a being-for-other. We have little problem visualizing the notion of the accumulation of 'more past': One of the first images that comes to mind is the daily journal in which we keep a more or less detailed record of the \textit{Geschehnisse} of our days. With time, the person who meticulously records her days' events will become a most erudite archivist of her own life.\textsuperscript{521} Of course the archive is merely a stand-in for the past that we did accumulate: it is not the case that our past \textit{is} the words on the pages of our journal or the data that sits on some hard-drive. As such this image does not tells us what it means to accumulate more past unless we know how we are to understand that which the image stands for in non-figurative terms: that which I write down in my

\textsuperscript{520}Lübbe 58.
\textsuperscript{521}With improved technologies the extensiveness of individual entries has grown beyond anything that a person manually record; cf. 'life logging'. The recent surge in critical contributions around the issue of 'big data' also lends support to the wide acceptance that the archive is a meaningful image of our accumulated past.
journal refers to my past rather than being this past itself; because after all the accumulation of more past must be a process that is different from my keeping a (written) record of it.

We thus need a different interpretation. One prima facie plausible sense of the expression “accumulation of more past” is that we have had more experiences, have made (at least potentially) more memories. We are what we are not anymore in the sense that we have a greater capacity for recalling what we once were.\(^{522}\) Although this is a common enough interpretation, it is not a very plausible one: The fact that I have had more experiences, if it is to mean something other than that I have witnessed more days go by (which will be our second interpretation) can only consists in our “increased” capacity to invoke memories or recount the experiences that we have undergone. But insofar as we have always experienced more than we can remember or recount,\(^{523}\) the notion that each day we accrue “more” of these experiences, and that with each passing day we “accumulate more past”, turns out to be quite implausible after all. Thus, the notion of an “accumulation”, i.e., of an increase of a finite thing (like the number of units of memory) would be misleading because it seems more plausible to assume that we simply remember different things rather than “more.”\(^{524}\)

A more plausible interpretation of the notion that we accrue “more past,” and this will be our second option, is that more time has passed since the event of our birth. On this account, “has accumulated more past” would describe our relative position along the existential trajectory from our birth to our death. “Has accumulated more past” would mean that I have moved farther away from the event of my birth and thus a little closer to my ultimate demise: the event of my death.\(^{525}\) On this interpretation, to say that one has accrued more past would simply mean that one has “converted” more

\(^{522}\)Cf. Locke.

\(^{523}\)For the sake of this argument we will assume that the best way to individuate memories and thus the best way of comparing the relative scope of one's memory is by way of articulating these memories.

\(^{524}\)To this we can add a third point, namely that the person who is capable of accumulating being by acquiring a history is not an experiential but rather an agentic entity, without an explanation how the capacity to remember experiences relates to my agentic being, this interpretation would at the very least in need of further explanation.

\(^{525}\)On the significance of the fact of my mortality for the constitution of time’s irreversibility, see Chapter 1.
“empty” time (time to come) into time that has been stamped with experiential livedness. On this account, to say that I have accrued more past would mean that I have less time left, as for a finite being the relation of the two is necessarily an inverse one.  

If this interpretation is indeed the most plausible, then the notion that we acquire “more past” is thoroughly inauthentic. It is inauthentic because it is predicated on an inauthentic understanding of our death/birth. As Heidegger notes, Dasein's everyday attitude toward its own death is inauthentic for two reasons: First, it is inauthentic because it treats death as something that happens to everyone. Death signifies the fact that one dies. Dasein's apparent certainty of its own death – “Nobody doubts that one dies.”  

The inauthentic understanding of death sees death as a common fate that no one escapes. Yet, in doing so Dasein escapes from the certainty that I alone will die my death. Writes Heidegger, “[death] individualizes Da-sein down to itself.” This being-toward-death is inauthentic in the dual sense that resonates in the term “uneigentlich”: First, it does not appropriate death as essentially one's own death (i.e., as mine) but rather as the general condition of all. And secondly, it treats death as an event at the end of one's life rather than as a dimension of one's being (i.e., one's being mortal), i.e., as a genuine permanent possibility; permanent not because death is possible at any moment (e.g., by sudden accident or illness), but because “death,” my demise is my fate unless I stave it off by giving my being-in-time the appropriate coherence by consolidating my existence into the life of an authentic self. Heidegger sums this ambiguous attitude toward one's death up as follows: “One knows about the
certainty of death, and yet 'is' not really certain about it. The entangled everydayness of Da-sein knows about the certainty of death, and yet avoids being-certain.”531 As we will shortly see, this contrast between the 'certainty of' [Gewiss-heit] and the 'proper/authentic being certain' [Gewiss-sein] recurs in our attitude toward our own personal past, which is an attitude which can be either authentic or inauthentic and which shows itself in the condition of nostalgia.

The inappropriateness of the conception of my existence as a succession of occurrences, and the concomitant event- or fact-character of my being, can likewise be shown with respect to the “event” of one's birth. (Again “appropriateness” must be taken in the dual sense of “being adequate/fitting” and “expressing a proprietary relationship taken on.”) Writes Heidegger, “Understood existentially, birth is never something past in the sense of what is no longer objectively present, and death is just as far from having the kind of being of something outstanding that is not yet objectively present but will come ...

Both 'ends' and their 'between' are as long as Da-sein factically exists.”532 Although it is perfectly intelligible for us to use the concept that something was the case in relation to ourselves, this mode of talking is fact fraught with problems: when we frame our own existence as a succession of occurrences (of which some are already past and others are yet to come), we implicitly frame our existence as an succession of occurrences that takes place between the “events” of our birth and our death. These constitute, as it were, the two “ends” that delimit our existence.533

This is the result of our analysis of the notion of 'accumulating more past' which, we said, belongs essentially to the passage of time. Yet, if that fundamental premise implies an inauthentic understanding of our historicity – neither our birth and nor our death is properly described as an

531Heidegger 238. ["Man weiß um den gewissen Tod und 'ist' doch seiner nicht eigentlich gewiß. Die verfallende Alltäglichkeit des Daseins kennt die Gewißheit des des Todes und weicht dem Gewiß sein doch aus." (258)]
532Heidegger 343. [“Existenzial verstanden ist die Geburt nicht und nie ein Vergangenes im Sinne des Nichtmehrvorhandenen, so wenig wie dem Tod die Seinsart des noch nicht vorhandenen, aber ankommenden Ausstandes eignet ... Beide 'Enden' und ihr 'Zwischen' sind, solange das Dasein faktisch existiert" (374).]
533This is by no means a view that only non-philosophers hold. Cf., for example, Samuel Scheffler's Death and the Afterlife, 203.
“event” —, then nor can our being consists merely in a succession of experiences and happenings. Just as the description of our birth and our death as events is in some sense perfectly understandable, when we describe our being as a succession of occurrences we are not so much uttering a falsehood as that we are employing a way of talking that manifest an inauthentic self-conception.

A third interpretation of the phrase “accumulating more past,” which is the one according to which the meaning of the accruement of “past” is the establishment of ever more facts about oneself, does not fare any better. Although in a vernacular it is of course true that with time more empirical facts about me come to be established, as we just said, the fact-like character of my being is as inauthentic as the (concomitant) event-like character is. But the "fact" of my death does not mean above all that I will die one day in the future, but that I am mortal, i.e., that my being is a being-toward-death. As we said in the previous chapter, qua sovereign individual my perishing is a constant, not merely a distant possibility. Likewise, the "fact" of my birth does not denote the event of my birth, or the fact that I was born sometime in the past but the thatness of my existence (and that of death of the finiteness of that thatness). In other words the pastness of my birth, or the description of my birth in terms of a “past event” is necessarily inauthentic. The language of events and facts and the linear conception of time are connected and inauthentic.534

We can thus sum up our findings thus far: Event and facts belong to the time of the They. This time is episodic, chronometric time. Vergangenheit, as the essential temporal quality of the past, belongs to chronometric time and is thus an inauthentic determination of our having-been. It is “inauthentic” in the dual sense of (A) not belonging to the individual's proper time, i.e., the time that is

534This does not entail that no event in my life is ever properly described as a “past” event, i.e., as vergangen? On the contrary, the problem is not the conjunction of the language of events and the linear understanding of time. As Heidegger acknowledges, these two play a very significant role in our everyday life. However, whenever an event is properly described in those terms it means that it has a determination that belongs to the time of the They, which is not my proprietary time. This can even be a suitable description of the significance that any event has in my own life: namely that it is merely a fact about me. However, in that case the event lacks precisely the proprietariness that it could at least potentially have
specific to individual being; and (B) of not being the individual's proprietary time: it is the time of the They. The time of the They is essentially quantifiable. As such it is time that we (can) reckon with. It is the time by which we organize and manage our daily affairs; or, as Heidegger says, it is the time of *Besorgen*. From the vantage of the time of the They, the time that has passed can be measured in days, weeks, hours, years, etc. As such it is in principle possible to determine the exact amount of time that has passed since a certain event has come to pass. Yet, insofar as this time is not mine, any “event” in my past is always farther away (from the present) than it actually is insofar as it is belongs to me.

Although Heidegger acknowledges the important practical role that the time of the They plays in our lives, he locates this importance almost entirely outside the domain in which Dasein realizes its proprietary time. To the extent that Dasein's being-in is always a being-with-others, the existence of an objective temporal standard in relation to which different subjects can harmonize their individual identity projects with each other becomes a pre-requisite for the possibility of authenticity. As Lübbe writes, “The necessity of planning grows in tandem with the human-made decrease of the temporal constancy of the circumstances of our lives.” Where these plans intersect with each other (which in an intersubjectively constituted world is everywhere and thus an unavoidable) there needs to be a standard that allows for their successful coordination. As such, and *pace* Lübbe, the organization of time – which is an inter-subjective organization – is not just important because it allows for a more efficient exploitation of available possibilities (which would almost certainly lead one into incoherence and in-authenticity), but also becomes increasingly non-optional where the subject must make use of resources of chronometric time in order to salvage the possibility of preserving his or her own proprietary time.

Nevertheless Heidegger is right when he denies that the time of everydayness is our only time.

535 As we will see in the next chapter, this exactitude differs fundamentally from the inescapably vague (interpretive) nature of the increase in *Seinkönnen* [potentiality of being] that my authentic appropriation of my past makes possible.
536 Lübbe 320; translation mine. ["Der Zwang zur Planung wächst komplementär zur zivilisationsbedingt abnehmenden temporalen Konstanz unserer Lebenslagen."]
While the time is of the They is the time that we must live by – we cannot escape the language of events, facts, the chronometrics of time – we always also remain (potentially) alienated from it, because we can live by our own time as well, which is a time that is distinctly different from the time of the They. When Dasein understands itself and its own history in terms of a *succession of past events*, it has effectively adopted public/chronometric time as its only own time. We see this most starkly with respect to our inauthentic relationship to its own death (or birth), which treats death at the same time as a fact of life – “Everyone dies” – and as an event that will occur at some point “in” one's the future. The factuality and the event-character of my death go are two sides of the same coin and express an inauthentic being-toward-death.

In the same manner as the mineness of “my” future in which “my” death will eventually occur signifies something that is fundamentally at odds with the linear model of time, so does the mineness of “my past” “in” which many an event have always already occurred. Just as for me my death signifies my mortality, for me my past cannot be reduced to a set of (impersonal, dead) facts or past events. The concept of my past must thus be understood in such a way that this past concerns me in a singular way. My past is not the site of what I am “not” anymore, i.e., the *locus* of objective facts about the past, but rather the substance of *who I am*. As such, and this is crucial for our account of nostalgia, my past does not have the character of *Vergangenheit* but that of *Ge-wesen-heit*: It does not signify what I was (i.e., a sum total of past facts) but rather that I have been this particular individual.

4.4. How we make ourselves: The singularizing function of my past

When I speak of “my” history in terms of events and facts I am effectively fleeing the robust mineness of this history insofar as I fail to account for the unique way in which my history only concerns me. We can designate this “attitude” and the concomitant temporality as *inauthentic*. As mine

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537 The term “Gewesenheit” semantically combines a temporal determination, namely of that which *has been* as opposed to that which simply *was*, and it also conveys the essential ipseity of my identity as the particular individual who only I am.
the past does not have the character of a sum total of (past) events, not even events that I have experienced or remember. Likewise, the significance of the facts of my past supersedes their character as "facts." It is only to the conception of time as being “filled up by events” that the quality Vergangenheit properly applies. There exists a qualitative difference between 'my time' and the 'time of the They'. Insofar as Vergangenheit applies to the time of the They, and Gewesenheit is the essential quality of the past of my time, the Gewesenheit of my past must be closely linked to its mineness. We thus ask, In what sense does the fact that I did such and such make an important difference to me, a difference that it perhaps makes only to me? Every event makes a difference in a “cosmic” sense insofar as action creates a novel causal circumstance: actions bring about that something is the case. But it makes this difference to all, potentially universally; it makes an objective difference by establishing a new fact-that. But the events “in” my past do not just make a difference to History; they also make a difference to me. Actions in general do not just make history: actions make persons.

With every action I create a new fact concerning myself (e.g. the fact that on such and such a day I did x, and on such and such a date y), i.e., I make more things true about myself. All actions create such facts. Yet, insofar as we are the one who acts, through our own actions we not only create intersubjective facts, we also make ourselves. Through our actions we “make history” and insofar as I come to be recognized as the author of a determinate piece of history (I am the person who...), through our actions we eo ipso “make” our history, i.e., we make ourselves as the determinate being who I am in virtue of the unique history that only I have. The self-evidence of this practice can easily make one overlook that these are two separate effects. To be sure, Larkin's insight that “The circumstance we cause / In time give rise to us,” holds not just with respect to the identity that we have as an agent. We always already “store up” time in our body. One sense in which we “make” ourselves through our actions is that we come to be shaped by our experiences in mostly subtle and for the most part

538 Philip Larkin, “The daily things we do”.
uncontrollable ways. In this sense actions do not differ from experiences in general. Yet, when we become the *authors* and *owners* of our actions, then our actions make us as much as we “make” them. This is particularly true where actions come to be credited to individual agents in the form of 'achievements'. Actions make us the moment we receive credit for what we have done. We discussed the function of this credit-system in Chapter 3 and therefore will only repeat some general remarks here. We can easily imagine how actions might “make” us (i.e., influence our sensibilities etc.) without making us in this latter sense: namely if actions ceased to be attributed to individual agents. Actions only make people where there exists a practice of attributing actions to individual agents. My or another's memory of my having done such and such is inconsequential unless I am being recognized as having done such and such.  

I say “recognized” rather than merely “remembered” because there is more to being identified as the author of a past action than the mere equation of a past me and a present me. An achievement is not only the remembered fact that such and such happened and the additional fact of having what has happened credited to a particular person (i.e., the person who was/is responsible for such and such an event).

The concept of an achievement is the nexus between the factual part of my being historical and the agentic being because, as we saw in the last chapter, "achievements" are a kind of social currency that can be utilized by their owners to create further facts: to be recognized as the one who did... means to have a certain social standing which manifests itself in the quality of a distinct agentic *I can*. To the extent that our actions come to be attributed to us we make ourselves as this concrete individual with a *Seinkönnen* that is specific to us. That this should be the case is by no means necessary. We only make ourselves in this sense where there exists a practice that enables attribution of actions to individual agents *and* where the action of an individual decisively determine who they are; i.e., we only make

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539That is of course not to say that my deeds cannot shape me in the first sense. Yet, *qua* actions, actions only make us where another recognizes us as the author of specific deed. (As Nietzsche suggests in *Genealogy of Morals*, it is worthy questioning whether or not even we would give much significance to our remembered deeds if we did not receive credit for them.)
ourselves where what we have done determines the place that one inhabits in the social world. Actions
do not only make facts: insofar as actions are attributed/credited to me, thus becoming my
achievements, the fact that a certain circumstance was brought about acquires its own effectivity. This
is importantly different from an earlier hypothesis that we rejected as inauthentic: Insofar as the fact
that I have done such and such has a distinct effectivity in virtue of its being my achievement, it cannot
be reduced to its being a mere (impersonal) fact.

4.5. Authentic historical existence

We have argued that attribution is the source of personal identity: I am the person who... in
virtue of a practice of attribution that makes personal being possible. What we have yet to discuss is the
meaning of “personal being”. What does it mean to be the person who... concretely and practically? We
said at the beginning of the chapter that Gewesenheit is integral to my being-in-the-world. When I say
“I did such and such” I always already acknowledge my temporal extension beyond the present
moment (or as it is often put: the identity of my “present self” with my “past selves”, the subject of the
original experience that I report by means of the statement “I did such and such”). To say that I am the
person who... is to make a kind of meta-statement that encompasses all the things that have taken place
in a person’s history.540

To have a history or agentic past can mean that I am the kind of thing about which certain
statements about the past can veridically be made. This is the upshot of my temporal extension beyond
the present moment. To have a history can, however, also mean something quite different, namely that I
am the kind of thing to whom a history can be attributed authentically. Where I have a history in an
authentic sense, there would be something fundamentally untrue about any past tense statements about
this past. That has to do with the fact that the person who has a history in an authentic sense exists

540It is a sort of universal assembly of my past selves.
historically; they are not merely someone who has a history. If a person exists historically (i.e., has a past in an authentic sense), we obscure the fundamental significance of that person's past if we treat it as something that lies “behind” (i.e., not with) them in virtue of its not-being-anymore them. This holds true because (a) the linear model of time is misleading as a representation of the "structure" of historical time, but also (and related to this) (b) the past is not behind the individual as much as it constitutes the substance of their being.

"Gewesenheit" (having-been) and "Vergangenheit" name two mutually incompatible determinations of the pastness of our history. We can also say that they designate two conceptions of our historicity. Beyond the generic sense of Gewesenheit we can use the term to designate the specific quality that one possible form of appropriation confers onto my past. Rather than speaking of “historical” or “authentic” Gewesenheit, on the one hand, and “ahistorical” or “inauthentic” Gewesenheit, on the other, we will from here on reserve the term “Gewesenheit” to refer to the quality that the past has where it is authentically appropriated, and the term “Vergangenheit” to refer to the specific quality that the past has where it is inauthentically appropriated. In either case, Dasein acknowledges that it has a history, i.e., that it is the author of certain events in the past. The difference lies in the way(s) in which this acknowledgement figures in their lives, or what this acknowledgement amounts to as habit and pathology. What I argue here, following Kierkegaard and Heidegger, is that there exists a crucial difference between whether this history is had authentically or inauthentically, and this difference is intimately linked to the experience of nostalgia and the possibility of avoiding it.

4.6. "Inert possession" or "continual acquisition"

To explain what we mean by this, we will make use of an idiosyncratic distinction that Kierkegaard's puts in the mouth of the ethical individual Judge William in Either/Or II: namely the

541The expressions “having a history” and “being the person who (has done x, y, z, etc.)” are ontologically equivalent: 'Having a history' means 'being the person who...'.

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distinction between 'inert property' and 'continual acquisition'. We said above that I have a unique identity in virtue of the things that I have done and that have been attributed to me. At a bare minimum, my being this person this holds true in a purely factual sense as long as there is someone who is willing to recognize me as the one who has this factual identity. We already ruled out that this sense of “being all that it has been” can be understood in a purely identificational sense, because such an understanding of my having a history a history/past is compatible with an inauthentic understanding of time. For an authentic notion of my 'having a history', the possession of this history must be understood as a process rather than as a state: as the having of a history. As Kierkegaard puts it, to have a history in an authentic sense means to continually (re-)acquire one's possession, i.e., to continually acquire the identity that one “has.” The authentic appropriation of one's past “begins ... with the possession, and its progress is the acquiring of this possession.” It is the “continuous coming into existence” of the thing that the individual already possesses, and which thereby ceases to be a “thing.” My having a history thereby ceases to be a possession understood as a static relationship between a subject (that I am) and an object (that is everything that I am not anymore) and becomes a possess-ing, a having: an ongoing process of becoming. What this entails is that the recognition of one's history is not merely the recognition of the fact that I have a history (inert property). When I say that I “have” a past I am not, the appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, talking about a thing that I possess, i.e., past experiences or the memories thereof. Strictly speaking, the claim that I have a past is not even about the past but about the present. Albeit a historical present.

We can illustrate this point by introducing the auxiliary concept of '(historical) guilt'. In line with what we have said before, the bare minimum for my having a history is that at some point I have been found to be causally responsible for an occurrence in the interpersonal world: I have done such

543E.g. the state of being identical to.
545Kierkegaard (1987[2]) 137.
and such, i.e., I have been recognized to be the author of an action that has brought about an interpersonally recognized circumstance. Put differently, the minimum condition is that there is historical guilt. If my recognition of my historical guilt merely designates the insight into the nominal guilt, then my having accrued guilt (i.e., my having become guilty) must be understood as a kind of inert property. On the other hand, to recognize that I am guilty means that I appropriate my guilt authentically, and that means that I exist guiltily. This guilt and analogously the having of a history denote a mode of being: namely that of the ongoing acquisition of my possession.\textsuperscript{546}

As such, taking responsibility and the having of a history is necessarily more than an abstract recognition that..., i.e., the memory that one has done such and such in the past. In other words, taking responsibility involves more than the recollective insight into one's own specific historicity. It manifests itself in a multitude of little recognitional acts that are as diverse as the concrete implications of the preceding actions that they recognize. In other words, what counts as a recognitional act of an action x depends on what x is generally considered to entail, i.e., what latent "commitments" the person who chooses to do x thereby takes on. Taken together, these recognitional acts constitute the constant acquisition of one's possessions.\textsuperscript{547} Put differently, the robust recognition of one's guilt is not merely the affirmation of the fact of one's being guilty (something which I can do instantaneously) but rather the "inhabitation" of this guilt.\textsuperscript{548} \textsuperscript{549} It involves that one takes responsibility in a more immediate and more personal way: it involves not just that one remembers that one has done such and such, but that one remembers one's responsibility. It is the "lived" appropriation of my past by which I am taking

\textsuperscript{546}In German, the difference is between capital-S "Schuld haben" and lower case-s "schuldig sein".
\textsuperscript{547}It goes without saying that this constant acquisition of course involves the consciousness of one's history; but in addition to the reflective element it requires an active/agentic element.
\textsuperscript{548}Strictly speaking the act of taking responsibility for or recognizing one's guilt is always already an action, i.e., one of the many ways in which one exhibits one's inhabitation of one's guilt: because strictly speaking, I can only take responsibility for my actions before an other. As such, my taking responsibility is always already an action.
\textsuperscript{549}Heidegger's claim that "Being guilty is more primordial than any knowing about it." (264) is true not simply because I must first become guilty before I can become aware of this guilt, but because one's existence-in-guilt takes precedence over the mere consciousness of this guilt.
ownership of that which I already had in a purely factual (i.e., inauthentic) sense.\footnote{One can easily draw a parallel to Heidegger's description of the inauthentic attitude toward one's death which operates with the very similar binary distinctions as the ones that we have used here to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic having of a past: Above we quoted Heidegger's claim that "The entangled everydayness of Da-sein knows about the certainty of death, and yet avoids being-certain." (238) Just as Dasein in the mode of everdayness says that "death certainly comes, but not right now," (238) the same qualifying escape – "but" – is potentially always already applied to one's past when it is conceived in terms of its event-like character. It happens whenever I use an inauthentic feature of the thing in question to evade the thing's proprietary and continual specificity; for example when I acknowledge that I did such and such but that I did it yesterday. The reference to "yesterday" designates my action as a past event and a fact. As we said before, this is not so much a falsehood as it conveys an inauthentic understanding of one's historicity, which means that there exists a tension between one quality of the thing in question (the mineness of the action) and another (its inauthentic temporality, namely its Vergangenheit, which belongs to the time of the They). These qualities are taken from two incompatible ontological registers, thus creating a sort of "category mistake."}

In order to understand what it means to have a past in an authentic sense, or to properly appropriate\footnote{The term "properly" does not qualify the act of appropriation. It is used merely for emphatic reasons. "Proper appropriation" is as much of a pleonasm as "inauthentic appropriation".} one's history, it will be instructive to look at what it means to not appropriate one's past authentically, especially since it is precisely the inauthentic appropriation of one's past that Kierkegaard presents so plastically in Either/Or. In one of the most insightful rebukes of the esthetic individual, Kierkegaard's personified epitome of inauthentic being, Kierkegaard's ethical individual says, “Life is a masquerade [for you]... no one has succeeded in knowing you, for every disclosure is always a deception ... you are a nonentity.”\footnote{Kierkegaard (1987[2]) 159.} This rebuke will help us to illustrate what is involved, practically and concretely, in an inauthentic appropriation of one's past. It is telling that Kierkegaard's depiction of the inauthentic individual would pay special attention to the inauthentic appropriation's effect on others: the inauthentic appropriation of one's past has to do with one's practical comportment toward one's past, and thus with one's engagement with the expectations that others direct against oneself by virtue of one's having a particular identity. Those who fail to appropriate their past properly turn themselves into walking enigmas for those who encounter them: entirely unreckonable and unpredictable. Every disclosure is a deception because "normally" an individual would reveal their identity through their action by recognizing that every action implies a commitment to further actions (that can sensibly be said to be "entailed" by the original action and thus can reasonably be expected to follow). In contrast,
for the esthete every action is equally inconsequential. What such an individual has done does not allow for any robust predictions about either their past or their future conduct, because he chooses to live in “perpetual discontinuity.” At bottom, this entails that in fact the esthete never "acts," strictly speaking. “Action” entails the permanent elimination of other options (i.e., that which Heidegger calls the "bearing of the fact of not having chosen and not being able also to choose the others," rather than merely their temporary deferral. To view time as that which helps us “overcome” the moment of choice confuses individual freedom (and its possibilities of conferring duration onto our existence, which is our innermost possibility) with a fancy of omnipotence. Freedom is precisely our ability to prioritize, to choose one course of action and eo ipso to decide against all others, rather than to merely decide on the order in which actions that cannot all be actualized at the same time occur. In reality, such a person is not at autonomous agent but a player. The esthetic individual is a “player” to the extent that her actions lack (any) earnestness beyond the narrow situational context of the immediate present in which the esthete “acts.” Like a player in a game, for whom the seriousness of his or her deeds is fully contained in the context of the game, the esthete may well take her respective “role” quite seriously, but her identity is only ever situational and thus does not involve any lasting commitments beyond the respective episode. At the very limit we can imagine a subject whose activity is so variegated that he becomes a walking “chameleon”: perpetually unrecognizable to others as one and the

553Cf. Lifton 42.
554Heidegger 263. ["Tragen des Nichtgewählthabens und Nichtauchwählenkönnens der anderen" (285).]
555The esthete never decides and thus never acts (and thus never proves himself ontologically worthy of the credit that he receives for a given deed), because one only chooses where by opting for one thing one eo ipso decides against another, and thus does not merely defer the actualization of that which is momentarily incompatible with the chosen action. (Which options are effectively eliminated depends on how society construes “being serious” or what commitments are implied in a given action.)
556On this point, cf. Rosa 285 & 287. In a sense, there is something "god-like" about the elusiveness of Kierkegaard's esthete (especially if we think of such elusive gods as the Greek god Proteus or the Norse god Loki) insofar as the esthete's actions seem to be "beyond good and evil." It is an activity that can rightfully be described as a kind of "hubris." In less grandiose terms we can say that the person who, like Kierkegaard's esthete, fails to appropriate their past only pretends to act. The opposite view is defended by Koselleck who argues that it is precisely when we harness time's passage that we make ourselves into "worldly gods" (271).
557Cf. Rosa 235.
558Cf. also Kierkegaard's notion of "[playing] shuttlecock with all existence" (Either/Or I, 294).
same individual. To speak of the “identity” of such an individual would be semantically dubious at best, but more likely non-sensical: Such a person may instead be more accurately characterized as an “existence without identity” or as a kind of Musilean Mann ohne Eigenschaften [man without properties].

As Kierkegaard's character Judge William notes, human autonomy is not the ability to break away from one's past but the ability to overcome the flux of time and to acquire a history. Autonomy does not signify one's ability to not be defined by one's past but to define oneself by that which is not anymore, i.e., to give the past a lasting significance. Autonomy signifies the ability to negate the (naturally occurring) negation of the present that the passéfaction of the present entails ontologically. The failure to appropriate one's past can therefore also be called “inauthentic” because it perverts the notion of freedom and autonomy which lie at the very heart of the kind of sovereign, forensic subjectivity that we are concerned with.

The subjective inconsequentiality of the esthete's actions, i.e., the inconsequentiality of his actions for him, is not due to the esthete's inability to remember them, but because he chooses not to give this memory (and thus his past) any practical weight. “What does it matter to me what I said yesterday?” is the recurring chorus of the esthete's life. For the authentic individual, on the other hand,
that which she has said yesterday retains its significance today. The speaker remains bound by it. Not because she would simply repeat what has already been said (i.e., she would do/say the same thing again if they were given the opportunity) but because she knows that whatever can meaningfully be said by her has to take its starting point from what has already been said. The esthete does not deny the fact that such and such has happened. However, he fails to recognize that what has happened ought to make a difference to him in an ongoing agentic sense. As such, even though the esthete does not deny a particular fact that... (as would be the case if he would, for instance, assert that what has actually happened was something else), he ultimately denies himself as a sovereign, autonomous individual: i.e., as someone who gives himself an identity through their activity in the world.

One of the important insights that we have gained in the last section is that the linearity model of time that underlies the conceptualization of my history in terms of past events not only entails that my past is “behind” me. As the preceding remarks have made apparent the linearity of time facilitates the heedless turning away from what is (supposedly) behind me. The ontological feature of the past's pastness corresponds to an existential lack of concern for the past. Conversely, on this account it would seem that the fact that we do for the most part care about the past shows that the truth of the linear model of time cannot be the whole truth. This may, however, seem like a strange conclusion, especially in light of the thesis that we are trying to prove in this chapter: that nostalgia is a symptom of a failure to appropriate of our past, a symptom of an inauthentic historicity. If what we said it Chapter 1 is correct, then nostalgia undeniably seems to be a concern for the past that if anything is aggravated by the idea that the past is vergangen. Rather than repeating this discussion here, we will attempt to solve

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563 For Kierkegaard both kinds of existence have their specific form of remembering that corresponds to the essence of the respective manner of being-in-time. For the esthete, it is the sentimental episodic recollection of a past event. In contrast, the natural mnemonic expression of the ethical form of existence is epitomized by the memory of a promise or commitment. The memory of a promise differs essentially from the kind of memory that the esthete performs: To remember a promise does not mean that I remember giving the promise. It means keeping the promise. (Not only does my remembering a promise signify doing something other than recalling the promising itself, but in fact, remembering that one has promised only becomes necessary when one has already forgotten one's promise.)
this apparent tension between what we said about nostalgia in Chapter 1 and our claim regarding the ontological non-concern for the inauthentic past by making the meaning of said concern for the past more explicit. To do this we will take a second look at the role of recollection.

4.7. The role of recollection revisited

Pace Locke, we can thus assert that a good memory (i.e., the certainty that I have done...) is no guarantee for an authentic appropriation of one's past. Or conversely, I do not need to doubt that it was really I who did such and such last year in order for me not to be the person who did said thing last year, understood in the authentic/active sense of be-ing. In fact I can remember claire et distincte what I did last year around this time, and yet this does not have to entail that I am the one who did such and such in a more than purely factual sense: all that the latter requires is that this ostensive recognition is a largely inconsequential awareness. The self-distancing that we witness in Kierkegaard's esthetic individual is not only compatible with a good memory, it is, paradoxically, aided by the work of recollection without which, to make matters worse, there can be no appropriation. This has important implications for the role that is attributed to memory/recollection by orthodox belief: In general, it is held that my memories give me almost irrefutable evidence of my own persistence. As we already saw, the rationale behind this claim is that when I recollect a past experience I present this experience as a past one (rather than, for example, under the aspect of its significance for the present or future). I, the remember, thus effectively posit a distance between the moment of recollection and the moment of the original experience, only to overcome this distance by way of the self-certainty of the identity of remembered and remembering subject. But this identity judgment is by no means necessary, as

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564 What we mean by this are not extreme cases like Borges's Funes or Luria's patient “S,” but rather that authentic historical being provides its own standard of 'good' memory.

565 Just as it is one's own escape from one's death that makes death appear as if it were an event in the (distant) future, my escape from the mineness of my past, i.e., the merely inauthentic appropriation of my history, is the cause rather than the consequence of my past's lying “in” the distant past.

566 Cf. Chapter 1 “The role of recollection”.

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phenomenologically we are familiar with the opposite as well: namely that memory does not imply identity but non-identity. This has to do with the fact that memory as such always entails a distance from the “place” or “moment” of remembering.\(^{567}\) In fact, recollection is possible only where that which is remembered has “receded into the past,” i.e., when it has become useless and obsolescent. In other words, it is not identity but distance that is the primary quality that we find in recollection qua recollection. The kind of “appropriation” of the past that takes place in recollection is the exact opposite of the becoming-organ or that which in Chapter 2 we called the functional annexation of the past. The possibility of recollection (i.e., the becoming-memory of the past) depends precisely on the passification of the past.

Patrick Stokes has noted that Kierkegaard carefully distinguishes “between memory [huske] as the disconnected apprehension of past episodes and recollection [erindre] as the reflexive relating of these episodes to a normatively emplaced, eschatologically qualified ethical subject.”\(^{568}\) Kierkegaard's distinction between memory and recollection does not so much challenge the view that all remembering implies an awareness of one's identity with the thing that experienced the object of the memory, but it challenges the idea that this “identity” could give us any immediate directives for action. Memory and recollection name two distinct modes of apprehending the past: one under the aspect of its (personal, and that means for Kierkegaard, normative) significance, the other under the aspect of its (impersonal) facticity.\(^{569}\) Ontologically, the difference between memory and recollection pertains to how the memories “qualify” the subject of the remembering. Stokes argues that one fundamental difference between Kierkegaard's esthetic individual and ethical individual is that for the

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567Cf. Stokes 659.
568Stokes 658.
569A's memory of his past presents him with “facts about the biological life” of A (Stokes 656).
former the past has no *decisive reality*.\(^{570}\)\(^{571}\) On Kierkegaard's account, an esthetically lived existence is one that disintegrates. It does not disintegrate because the individual is unable to mnemonically relate past experiences to his current self, but rather because a particular kind of recollective relating is *the only* (or at least the predominant) way that the individual's past has any bearing on their present. The esthete does not have to be forgetful. The crucial point is rather that the *Erlebnisse* that he remembers have only sentimental significance for him.\(^{572}\) As Kierkegaard notes, whether or not I take the past to signify not just what *was* (i.e., is not anymore) but what *has been* is an existential choice. It is this existential choice that first makes the past 'mine' in an existential sense. It is this choice that first establishes the mineness of my past *for me*. The appropriation of the past signifies *eo ipso* its ontological transformation from 'that which is not anymore' to 'that which has been'.

Recollection signifies not a return to the past or the mnemonic reconstruction of a *past present* but rather a return of the past. To recollect the past is thus not primarily to "conjure away the present"\(^{573}\) but rather to give meaning and substance to the present. The present of the ethical individual is hence always a concrete present that is the cumulative and deliberate outcome of that which has come before. Thus, although the difference between the esthetic individual and the ethical individual pertains primarily to the past, by implication it shapes the particular manner in which each of them is temporally emplaced in the present: namely either historically or a-historically.\(^{574}\)

Applied to the distinctions that we have used here, we can say that the tense of recollection is

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\(^{570}\)See Stokes 658. I emphasize the word “one” here because Lippitt has made a very compelling case for the claim that one runs the risks of gravely distorting Kierkegaard's view if one reduces the different conceptions of life that he discusses to coherence and unity that they display, and that Kierkegaard present a very specific substantive account of the good life.

\(^{571}\)It has no decisive reality insofar as it does not (necessarily) affect future decisions. But this implies *eo ipso* that the actions that constitute the individual's past did themselves not involve any genuine "de-cision." The person who fails to assigns decisive reality their past thereby reveals himself as a player rather than an agent.

\(^{572}\)According to Stokes, this is first and foremost a failure to recognize oneself. It is as if one were to look into the mirror and instead of seeing *oneself* one were to see the mirror. Writes Stokes, "In such a case we see the image but not our relation to it" (Stokes 653).


\(^{574}\)Cf. Stokes 659.
the preterite tense: If to recollect a past event means to represent it as a past [vergangen] one, then I can only recollect what was but never what has been. This is a claim about 'recollection', insofar as recollection is defined as the representation of a past event in its pastness. The quality of 'having been', when it is not just taken as synonymous with 'past', is not a quality of difference but rather the opposite: it signifies the ongoing pertinence of that which has been. This ongoing pertinence is always a pertinence for or to or with the present rather than a difference/distance from it.

As such, recollection is a mode of engagement with the past that is wont to conceal the ontological significance that the past has for me. While it is easy to see how this may hold as an empirical truth, namely when the information that what I represent has happened in the past would be falsified by the actual significance that this past has for me, we can also give this claim an ontological meaning: Although I can only recollect what I have experienced, I can only ever recollect the past in its impersonal/inauthentic significance. The past that I remember is never mine. Put differently, when I recollect the past I can only ever recollect my past, yet that which I recollect I necessarily do not recollect under the aspect of its mineness, inasmuch as I present the past as vergangen. That which I recollect is not mine. Not because it is someone else's – it remains true that I can only recollect what I have experienced – but because it belongs to no one in particular; it belongs to the They. Of course this is not to deny that there is someone who is the subject of these experiences. But as we said before, what makes a portion of the past “my past' is not the fact that I experienced this portion: “mine” is not derived from I but from me, the person. The I does not have a past.575

4.8. Recollection's inherent propensity for nostalgia

One important consequence of this is that all recollection intrinsically opens up the possibility of nostalgia: whenever we recollect we open up (or expose ourselves to) a chasm between the I-now

575See Crowell 98. This may sound like a radical claim, but even Locke didn't argue that the conscious ego had a past but the person.
and the I-then and this distance allows for the possibility of nostalgia. This mode of representation is (potentially) at odds with the ontological significance that the past has. That is not to say that everything that I can remember has the quality of Gewesenheit and is thus mis-represented whenever I recollect it (i.e., represent it as something past). Which onto-temporal quality any particular “portion” of my history has depends first and foremost on how that event figures in my life, what significance that event has, what pertinence it has to me, to the other events in my life, and most importantly to my Seinkönnen (i.e., whether its event-status depreciates its actual ontological significance). That does not rule out that some, perhaps even large swathes of our history really do have the character of Vergangenheit. But recollection qua recollection represents the past as vergangen and thus indiscriminately attributes the quality of pastness to the past as such. Therefore, recollection, which is said to give us the most certain access to our past, also always has the potential to deceive us with respect to the ontological valence of the past.

Conversely, recollection is that form of memory that is most suited for the remembrance of a life lived inauthentically. For the inauthentic individual, all that remains of the past is precisely the (self-indulgent) possibility of its recollection. The subject's private memories of the past are the ontological counterpart to the disconnected and non-cumulative experiences of a life in which the past proved to be of no guidance for the future: i.e., in which that which came to pass did not already anticipate what was yet to come and which thus left the individual essentially alienated from its own history of experiences. Prima facie, a rich memory is always at least potentially evidence of an life that was rich in Erlebnisse but poor in genuine experiences, i.e., rich in things that we underwent but poor in transformations whereby that which we underwent became a lasting, integral element of an unfolding history. The memories of the inauthentic individual are her private mementos and souvenirs

576In reality, much recollection is in fact narrative and thus always already seeks to integrate that which we recollect in a narrative history that eo ipso links the past to the present, not as something that was but as something that has been. We will return to this in Chapter 4.
577Cf. Rosa 235.
of a past that has lost its validity and usefulness, and which therefore can now only be representified in its *past* liveliness. As such, even the most vivid memories constitute, ultimately, “dead possessions.”\(^{578}\)

The failure to appropriate one's past (regardless of whether this failure is deliberate or involuntary) leaves past experiences in the past, thereby making them prime candidates both for recollection and for the wistful (regretful) yearning that characterizes nostalgia.\(^{579}\)

### 4.9. Susceptibility, affirmation, retrieval, and taking responsibility

To have a past in an authentic sense denotes, on the one hand, one's disposition to respond to claims that are being made against oneself on the ground of one's “past” actions (one's achievements), and to recognize that these claims are, in principle, legitimate. Put differently: The fact it was *I* who did such and such yesterday trumps the fact that I did it *yesterday*. It is a kind of agentic susceptibility or excitability that is central to one's *Befindlichkeit* in intersubjective world. This answerability is not an optional or extraneous dimension of my action but an integral element of my agency: namely insofar as agency implies responsibility. It is "a second phase" that, *qua* action, is necessarily complementary to the causal phase of my deed.\(^{580}\)

On the other hand, the constant acquisition of one's past means the active (rather than merely *re*-active) re-affirmation or retrieval of one's past deeds. *That* is the meaning of the 'having'. To have a past does not merely mean 'to be the kind of thing that is temporally extended and about which certain past-tense statements can veridically be made'. In order for the ascription of

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579The ostensive “wealth” of subject's memories cannot compensate the fact that my memories preserve the past only *for me*. Yet, that which only is "for me" is cannot be “mine”: that which has reality only *for me* can thus never belong to "my" reality.
580The “incompleteness” of an action is obfuscated when we take the act of taking responsibility for an action to be empirically/conceptually detachable from the action itself. That is, if we think that we could have actions without subsequent acknowledgement of having acted. One only acts if one is also willing to recognize that one has acted. Or conversely, one only acted if one has also recognized that one has acted. As such, all attributions of actions remain preliminary. This is another argument in favour of the non-static interpretation of the having of a past: being guilty also always has to do with owing, with an outstanding debt that one has incurred against the Other who has attributed the action to me without any certainty that I will show myself ontological worthy of this attribution, i.e., without the certainty that I will live up to the credit that has been extended to me.
personhood to me to be/remain authentic, I must continually acquire that which I possess. It is this continual acquisition that validates the authenticity of one's possession, i.e., its belongingness to oneself in a more than merely factual/identificational sense.

We will henceforth use the expression “taking responsibility for one's past” rather than the more common term “repetition” or the unwieldy “constant acquisition,” both of which have the disadvantage of sounding too much like a sort of personal “eternal recurrence of the same.” Yet we will understand this term sufficiently broadly and moreover leave out the difference between instances in which this taking responsibility is active or reactive. In either case what the notion of taking responsibility conveys is the element of continuity, i.e., the non-concludedness of that which has come to pass.

Heidegger has used the term “repetition”\textsuperscript{581} to designate an important element in the constitution of historical/authentic being. What we have called “continuing” is indeed a kind of repetition of an original action, albeit under novel circumstances, namely the specific circumstances at hand. Repetition here is at the same time a re-trieval: i.e., a bringing back, not “from” the past, but to the immediate urgency of the present; and a repetition, i.e., a renewed enactment of the original action, albeit under novel circumstances. Unlike the act of recollection, which also effects a kind of resurrection or recovery of what is chronologically bygone,\textsuperscript{582} the present in which the act of repetition takes place is not the private space of my mind, but the intersubjective space of the world. When Kierkegaard's ethical individual castigates the esthete's lack of a decision and others argue that responsibility/accountability is what gives a person's life the constancy appropriate to personal/historical/authentic being, we say that it is the continuity of our actions. It is the lack of continuity in the life of the person who now does this now that and that and thus ends up being neither this nor that nor that nor that ... this conjunction does not add up to anything because fundamentally it is a disjunction (neither...nor...) it “adds” up to the erosion of the power for adding up:

\textsuperscript{581}Cf. Heidegger 385f.; in the Stambaugh translation “Wiederholung” [repetition] is rendered as “retrieval” (352f.).
\textsuperscript{582}Cf. Sypher 8.
the unifying power of personality.\footnote{For the person who “has not been” any of these things, the claim “I did x and y and z” is not so much false as it is inauthentic. Meaning, it is true albeit in a merely factual manner. (And that means, it true only if we take the self(hood) to be a thing rather than a manner of being.)} \footnote{As we will see in Chapter 5, this power of adding up is the possibility of a narrative. It is the narrativity of one's life that is the measure of the unity of one's life.} \footnote{Although there are limits even to this: An individual who persistently shows great wantonness vis-à-vis their actions would likely be found to be a pathological case and on these grounds could be excluded from the category and the practice of action attributions altogether.} \footnote{Saying “I did such and such” can often perform the action of taking responsibility. When it does this the constative function of the utterance is secondary. But sometimes it does the very opposite: When the “pastness” of the action is stressed then the taking of responsibility is in fact subordinate to the distancing function of “stating a fact”. Saying “I did” or “I was”, far from signalling the identity of the speaker and the agent would signify their non-identity. It effectively amounts to a denial of responsibility insofar as “was” means “am not anymore”. This does not need to be the intention of the speaker (and oftentimes we do not pay close attention to the difference), but it is often the effect of it. As such, to say “I was” is part of that mode of representation that is not the one proper to personal being. “I have been”, in contrast, signifies the lasting actuality to what “has come to pass.” This lasting actuality of what has come to pass is not the timeless irrevocability of 'the fact that...'. (It is not 'the fact that...' which matters to me. Factuality is the impersonal/public/intersubjective mattering.) The lasting actuality of what has come to pass is the paradox that Kierkegaard describes in Either/Or II: “Like a true victor, the married man has not killed time but has rescued and preserved eternity in time ... he solves the great riddle, to live in eternity and yet to hear the cabinet clock strike” (138). In saying 'lasting actuality of what has come to pass' we recognize the compatibility of change and permanence.}

None of this of course has any impact on whether or not an individual has a (certain) history in an in-authentic sense.\footnote{For the person who “has not been” any of these things, the claim “I did x and y and z” is not so much false as it is inauthentic. Meaning, it is true albeit in a merely factual manner. (And that means, it true only if we take the self(hood) to be a thing rather than a manner of being.)} The conditions for the denial of an individual's having a certain empirical history are quite distinct from the conditions of the denial of an individual's having a history in an authentic sense. Where the former depends on the veracity of certain facts, the latter depends on something else entirely: the continuity of my activity in the intersubjective world. The term “continuity” also conveys the preliminary character of what is supposed fixed and inaccessible. The possibility of my taking responsibility for my past, and \textit{a fortiori} of my agency, depends on the past's not being fixed once and for all (“inaccessible” because “over”). Where I take responsibility for my past I introduce the element of continuity into my past which links the past directly to my present and my future. The past remains what it can never be for the inauthentic individual: very much alive, and both \textit{effective} and \textit{effectable}.\footnote{Saying “I did such and such” can often perform the action of taking responsibility. When it does this the constative function of the utterance is secondary. But sometimes it does the very opposite: When the “pastness” of the action is stressed then the taking of responsibility is in fact subordinate to the distancing function of “stating a fact”. Saying “I did” or “I was”, far from signalling the identity of the speaker and the agent would signify their non-identity. It effectively amounts to a denial of responsibility insofar as “was” means “am not anymore”. This does not need to be the intention of the speaker (and oftentimes we do not pay close attention to the difference), but it is often the effect of it. As such, to say “I was” is part of that mode of representation that is not the one proper to personal being. “I have been”, in contrast, signifies the lasting actuality to what “has come to pass.” This lasting actuality of what has come to pass is not the timeless irrevocability of 'the fact that...'. (It is not 'the fact that...' which matters to me. Factuality is the impersonal/public/intersubjective mattering.) The lasting actuality of what has come to pass is the paradox that Kierkegaard describes in Either/Or II: “Like a true victor, the married man has not killed time but has rescued and preserved eternity in time ... he solves the great riddle, to live in eternity and yet to hear the cabinet clock strike” (138). In saying 'lasting actuality of what has come to pass' we recognize the compatibility of change and permanence.}

With respect to the difference between the authentic and inauthentic memory of one's past, we can thus say the following: The memory of that which 'has been' differs fundamentally from the recollection of the past insofar as it does not seek to capture the past \textit{wie sie gewesen ist} [as it really
was/happened] (i.e., in its fixed factuality) but rather as it ought to be! This is not a wilful retrospective distortion of the past. It is rather a pro-jective commitment to a determinate transformation of the past by means of our actions. The memory of that which has been is an agentic memory and as such a forward-looking engagement with what has already come to pass.\[587\] In contrast, the recollection of the past, which brings the past so close for the remembering subject, amounts in fact to a re-jection of the past. It is thus not Locke, with his insistence of the capacity to recollect one's past, who is right, but Heidegger when he says that “In resoluteness lies the existential constancy”\[588\] It is not the unity of consciousness that fuses past, present, and future but the unity of my will, or rather of my will-ing. That what Heidegger calls “resoluteness” necessarily involves a kind of infidelity to the factual character of this past. The ontological faithfulness of the self is not undermined by the mnemonic infidelity to the facts of her past, but indeed requires it. It requires it because the truth of the self that I thereby enact is one that lies beyond the knowledge of the facts about the (my) past.\[589\] It is not the breadth or accuracy of one's memory that determines whether one exists historically, but rather the quality of this memory*: remembering and “forgetting” one's past are not opposites but rather play complementary roles in the constitution of a truly historical existence.\[590\]

4.10. Summary

To sum up: By the term Gewesenheit we qualify the historicity of a person's existence beyond a mere acknowledgement of the person's temporal extension “into” the past. Gewesenheit differs from Vergangenheit in that the latter is contrasted with the present (which alone “is”). Gewesenheit, insofar

\[587\] As such, it is also, as we will see, at some level narratival.  
\[588\] Heidegger 357. ["In der Entschlossenheit liegt die existenzielle Ständigkeit" (391).] On the difference between narrative memory and episodic memory and the latter's affinity to nostalgia see Ankersmit 212/213.  
\[589\] Following Alain Badiou (2013) we could call this truth that cannot be reduced to a knowing a “truth process.” (Cf. Ethics, 46f.)  
as Gewesenheit comes in the form “ich bin gewesen”, is not contrasted to a present but belongs to the present; a present which is not momentary but historical. In comparison to this historical present the inauthentic present is both a truncated and a castrated one. It is the former insofar as it is clearly conceptually delimited from the past and the future. When we describe authentic historical authentic existence, it would be more correct to say “I have been/done...” than “I did...”, because linguistically, Gewesenheit finds its proper expression in the perfect tense: “Have + Participle explicitly links an earlier or state with the current situation. It signals a significant persistence of results, a continued truth value, a valid present relevance of the effects of earlier events, the continued reliability of conclusions based on earlier behaviour.”

Ontologically, the meaning of the authentic having of a past is that of a constant acquisition which we realize in the process of taking responsibility for our past. By contrast, the person who stresses the Vergangenheit of the past distances themselves, creates a rift between what they are and what they were. This does not need to take on the extreme form where I deny my past altogether. We said that the affirmation of the Vergangenheit of the past is equivalent to the denial of the past's mineness. Vergangenheit itself contains an element of negation/denial: the non-plus (not-anymore). Where this does not effectively happen, the past is not treated as vergangen and the use of the preterite tense is, at least, misleading. The statement “I have been...”, in contrast, suggests the non-concludedness of a given act (i.e., its imperfect aspect), which is the opposite of “overness”: what is not "concluded" is still underway (which is not the same as to say that it is currently, i.e., at this very moment, going on – the historical/authentic present is always an extended and multilayered one in which not everything that is there is therefore also directly perceptible or underway).

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591 Stambaugh renders this as “I am have-been.”
592 W. F. Twaddell (1960) cited in Harald Weinrich's Tempus, 70.
593 Weinrich points out that the designation “perfect” (i.e., “Abgeschlossenes” [that which is concluded]) for the tense in which we express the Gewesenheit of the past “is the most unsuitable of all conceivable designations.” (Tempus, 64; translation mine.)
In order to understand that the difference is not only a grammatical one we must understand what happens when I say “I have done such and such.” On the inauthentic account I state a fact about the past, a fact whose specificity lies in that the past to which it refers involves me in a central way. We already said that factual being is a form of inauthenticity. But this is not the only thing that happens when I say “I have done such and such”: The primary function of the statement of the form “I have done such and such” is not to make a statement about the (distant or distanced) past (even ‘my’ past, i.e., a statement about the past that involves me in a central way) but to take responsibility for this past, an act that draws the past nigh. In other words, the statement is only superficially constative. In reality, it is a performative. Unlike the past tense statement, which posits the occurrence in question as one that occurred “in” the (distant) past (thus positing it essentially away from the present in which I make this claim), the act of taking responsibility establishes the significance of the past rather than its mere facticity. To say that this utterance is a performative entails that this recognition is not the recognition that the past matters (i.e., the recognition of the fact that the past matters) but rather the recognition by virtue of which the past comes to matter. In taking responsibility for a past action, the action is, as it were, retrieved from impersonal past and transferred into my past where it subsists as a potential motive for further actions. This retrieval is in essence analogous “bringing-back from the They” by which the individual modifies the They-self “in an existentiell manner so that it becomes authentic being-one's-self.” It is also the continuation of the first action. Thus, I cancel the pastness of the past and my action enters a “new phase.” This taking responsibility does not always have to be explicit and verbal. Perhaps most importantly, to verbally acknowledge responsibility is not a substitute for the work of being accountable for one's past actions, which is a laborious and serious process.

594Heidegger 248. ["die existenzielle Modifikation des Man-selbst zum eigentlichen Selbstsein" (268).]
595In the political arena one can often observe instances of mistaking saying that one takes “full responsibility” for one's deeds for the action of taking responsibility for one's deeds. The general confusion that underlies this practice is that there exists a “one size fits all” type of action called “taking responsibility” that would be unaffected by the specific nature of the deed in question and the context in which a person “takes responsibility” for it.
The recognition that the past remains to be completed does not only have to take on the form of a “waiting readiness” to respond.\[^{596}\] It is not merely that one remains answerable. There is also a (normative) expectation that one (actively) continues what one has begun; that one actively engages with what has come to pass.\[^{598}\] This involves, at a minimum, the expectation that an agent take responsibility for their actions. This does not entail that we are forever destined to repeat what we have once started. The upshot of the “preliminary nature” of what I have begun is rather that the meaning of the past is still-to-be-determined. While this may seem counter-intuitive, the openness of the meaning of the whole is not opposed to the continuity of that which has already come to pass. On the contrary, the two are intimately linked. *Pace* Kierkegaard, freedom is inadequately characterized as “either” one's ability to break away from one's past and start something new, “or” one's ability to *continue* what one has already begun: these two are in fact mutually compatible for the person who exists historically.

If we have chosen not to adopt Kierkegaard and Heidegger's term “repetition” this is in part to stave off the impression that authentic historical being entails a willed “eternal recurrence of the same” of sorts. Nothing could be farther from the truth. To take responsibility for one's past means precisely not that one merely accepts the past as existential dead-weight that one is doomed to repeat. *"Wiederholung"* is literally a *retrieval*. Taking responsibility for one's past opens up the opportunity to make amends and to thereby change what would otherwise have remained one's viaticum for eternity. By virtue of its continuation what one has started changes its meaning. As such it is the very opposite of a mere acceptance of the past in its factual fixity. Put differently, it is not the future that holds the promise of liberating us from the past but rather the past itself.

\[^{596}\]There is a normative to this: the past is part of a business that *is still to be finished*. This normative drivenness is what Heidegger calls *Entschlossenheit*. For the resolute individual time is not opposed to constancy, but it is the medium in which this constancy materializes. The constant change of presents is now no longer the essence of time.

\[^{597}\]The present proper gives us an incomplete look at what “is [going on]”. We only understand what “is” if we understand what “was” and is “still to come”. As such the present is defined both by what has been and by what is still to come. But this ‘what is still to come’ is not an amorphous, unknown future. It is the whereto, the specific *telos* of that which is underway. As such, *resoluteness* and the *undoing of the making present* (*Entgegenwärtigung*) go hand in hand.

\[^{598}\]This means that we don't just retrieve the past when prompted but also out of our own initiative and volition.
Authentic being implies the non-indifference toward my past. This demand follows the logic of the sovereign subject: Where our activity is (ontologically) for the sake of giving ourselves (an) identity, the fact that something 'has already been' does not entail that it must continue, but it constitutes a prima facie reason for continuing into a certain direction, i.e., of following the vector that one's past activity has already established. By contrast, the attitude “which clings to nothing and urges to nothing”\(^{599}\) is for Heidegger inauthentic insofar as it gives that which has happened no greater “say” in what should happen next as the things that have not yet happened, which is why above we described the inauthentic present as a "castrated" one. That is because the future is not seen to be already anticipated in the past and the willed conclusion of that which has already come to pass. For the person who exists authentically, the Vergangenheit of the past is at most as secondary feature of the past. Such a person recognizes the use-value of the mode of representation of their life in terms of an episodic succession of events. Yet, at the same time, they reckon with the limits of this mode of representation, along with the inherent danger of losing the unique opportunities afforded by the constant acquisition of their history: which is to capitalize on previous actions and to build oneself and one's Seinkönnen up.

4.11. The possibility of "harnessing time"

In addition to rendering himself into a walking enigma to others, the person who fails to appropriate their past also forgoes the opportunity to build themselves up and to capitalize on previous actions. If our preceding reflections are sound, then the point of recollection is not to remember the past but to take mastery of one's history and thereby to acquire a history in an authentic sense.\(^{600, 601}\)

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599Heidegger 317. ["die an nichts hängt und zu nichts drängt" (345)] The exact opposite of this indifference is what Heidegger calls resoluteness.
600Cf. Walter Benjamin, Über den Begriff der Geschichte VI.
601We overlook that recollection alone does not signify the mastery of the past. Recollection is a prerequisite for it but not the act of taking mastery itself. The fact that we are prone to overlook this may have to do with the fact that recollection rarely occurs in a vacuum, i.e., that we rarely remember “punctually” (as Barthes puts it in Lover's Discourse 217) and that recollection usually develops some causal force. But it is not the recollection alone but rather that which ensues from the act of recollection that determines whether or not we have taken mastery of the past.
This is an important aspect of harnessing time. To harness time's passage means to make time's passage subservient to our will. This means neither to turn away from time's flow nor to usurp time's flow in order to soften the need for choices. It is not time's never-ending possibility of renewal that is harnessed by the authentic individual (so as to exploit ever-new possibilities that present themselves), but the possibility that it provides to us to pursue an extended, complex project across time. It is the pursuit of such extended projects that are not threatened by the passage of time, but made possible by it. This, however, requires that I treat that which has come to pass not as something that is “over and done with,” but rather as the chronologically antecedent part of something that is yet to unfold in its entirety and thus has not yet (fully) taken place. Where I achieve this, time's passage no longer signifies a process of obsolescence and thus ultimately a process of destruction, but rather a gradual coming-into-being and the progressive expansion (or “maturation”) of my present. It no longer signifies the fragmentation of the “individual” but rather her growing to fullness. For the person who lives inhabits her life authentically, the passage of life's time is not a loss or a Vergehen but rather a gain. For the authentic individual the passage of time does not signify a progressive demise but an incremental coming-into-being. This is process that Heidegger calls the “Ent-gegenwärtigung des Heute” [undoing of the making present of the today] which constitutes the authentic counter to the inauthentic "Gegenwärtigung des Heute."

This does not mean that where we exist historically time “stands still” or that “nothing happens.” The time of authentic historical being is not a “timeless time.” What we experience here is

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602 Cf. Sypher 71.
603 Cf. Jankélévitch 18. This temporalization of complexity (Rosa 297), which Jankélévitch views as the redemptive feature of time's irreversible flow, in fact destroys the moment of decision that is essential for the action-character of one's activity in the (social) world. To think that it is through a masquerade of activity that we become reconciled with time's inexorable flow is as illusionary as the thought that the return to the longed-for home(land) could cure our nostalgia. 604 “[A] history,” writes Kierkegaard, “implies a development in the form of freedom.” (Either/Or II 242)
605 Lübbe speaks of a process of “successful aging” [erfolgreiches Altern], which is the authentic counter to the becoming obsolescent [Veralten] at the heart of the inauthentic appropriation of one's past. (Cf. Lübbe 370.)
606 Heidegger 357 [391].
607 Rosa 344.
not the suspension of time's flight, i.e., not an arrest of time's course. It is rather the suspension of time's "theft," i.e., the suspension of the "iteration of loss" that constitutes the essence of the time of nostalgia. By harnessing time's passage one eo ipso transforms its meaning. Where we succeed at this, the inexorable nihilation of the present and the concomitant accumulation of a dead past (which, as we said at the beginning, is in fact not a conjunction but a disjunction) that the nostalgic suffers from is transformed into a genuinely conjunctive experience of time. Time's passage no longer signifies a constant passing, i.e., a dispersal of being, but rather a genuine accumulation of being: that which arrives is not new; and that which recedes from the immediacy of the present has not ceased to form the substance of that which is in the process of unfolding. Where the individual appropriates their past and thus manages to give coherence to time, she has succeeded at suppressing the diachrony of present and past. Time's passage no longer signifies the negation of an ever-changing present but the negation of this negation; it signifies the prolongation of the present, which takes place not against time but in time. Authentic historical time is a time that allows one, to use Kierkegaard's emphatic phrase, “to live in eternity and yet to hear the cabinet clock strike.” For the authentic individual “eternity does not come afterward ... but he has had eternity in time, has preserved eternity in time.” Time no longer threatens to destroy our efforts: on the contrary, it consummates them.

608 We are of course alluding to Lamartine's already quoted line "O temps suspendus ton vol." The word "vol" means both "flight" and "theft."
609 For an earlier discussion of the significance of the relation between the “new” and the “old”, cf. Chapter 1.
610 This accumulation will necessarily be modest in scope than the inauthentic "accumulation" of one who does not appropriate their past authentically (i.e., it will necessarily involve a more limited number of distinct experiences), but it will have significantly more qualitative depth.
611 When contrasted with this prospect, the affliction of the nostalgic becomes all the more painful. Being fallen and scattered, the nostalgic resembles the erring Odysseus, not the heroic resolute Odysseus but the one whose fate is taken to be determined by the elements.
612 Time's passage does not distance the individual further from his past, but it de-distances the interval between that which has already come to pass and that which presently takes place by transforming it in a lasting meanwhile.
615 Cf. Joseph Joubert's Pensées: "There exists time in eternity; but it is not an earthly and mundane time that can be counted by the movement and the succession of bodies ... It does not destroy anything, it completes. Its changes are improvements, they are developments. It consumes evil for the good and erases the good for the best. It offers its spectacles up to God, and it will always do so." ["Il y du temps dans l'éternité ; mais ce n'est pas un temps terrestre et
To appropriate one's past in this way requires that we recognize that what has come to pass is not “the whole story” yet. What I take to be “fixed and inaccessible” is in fact neither. Although I can indeed not un-do what has already been done, it is within my power to decide what is happening right now and thus what at some point in the future will have followed (and thus co-determined) the meaning of a past that without my intervention would indeed remain fixed and over. The fact that this 'now' has a history entails that my ability to act is constrained (or at least that it has already been “given a direction” from which I can only deviate at the expense of distancing myself from what has already come to pass); but in positive terms it also means that there exists an ontological velocity that I can utilize if I choose to. Authentic existence, then, does not amount to a crude conservatism, as seems to be suggested by the term “repetition.” In fact, a conservation in time, i.e., the acquiring of one's possessions, is the very opposite of the past's reification: it requires a constant creativity. However, this creativity is never ex nihilo. It starts from the past and thus retrieves what has already come to pass. As a result of this incorporation the old is changed; it changes continually, however, without ceasing to be what it was: it “develops.” That is to say that it does not remain the same, yet that it neither becomes something completely different. It “grows.” The notion of “de-velopment” implies an unfolding: The essential is not immediately there. It takes time to unfold. As such it is dependent on time, it needs time. Time thus ceases to be the dreaded “thief” that threatens to steal our ever-precarious (momentary) happiness away from us. Instead it becomes our ally which helps us to actualize ourselves in the


We should qualify this strong statement in the following way: To say that the past is neither fixed nor inaccessible is not to say that these qualities that we so readily associate with the past are an illusion. What is important to understand is that the ground of the fixity of the past is not some metaphysical quality of time. The fixity of the past is not an ontological feature but has to do with the fact that I alone cannot change the past; that here as well I require and depend on the endorsement of others that would allow me to appropriate and transform my past in a given direction. I am not fully determined by my past not because I can simply distance myself from it, but because, on the contrary, I can continue it; not because I can start something novel but because I can give that which has already come to pass a novel meaning. Like the act of taking responsibility for one's actions, it is a laborious process, rather than something that could be accomplished instantaneously.
fullness of time.

But I can only do this where I recognize that there always remains something outstanding that is yet to be realized by me. This entails that I do not leave the past behind, but that I repeat and retrieve it. To the extent that what is outstanding is not given in advance, it is incumbent on me to bring what is outstanding into being, which is a creative process. As such it is thus incumbent on me to determine what exactly will want to already have come to pass.\textsuperscript{618} That this is a not a purely mnemonic or recollective process should be apparent. Not unlike the experience of nostalgia itself, it involves the imaginative constitution of an object that is rooted in the past but that is \textit{sui generis}. However, unlike nostalgia, this imaginative constitution only prepares the genuine appropriation of one's past, which essentially involves an active, or rather \textit{en}active element (and in its final consequence that means an inter-active) that is the very opposite of the sentimental, self-indulgent inauthentic appropriation of the "player" who chooses to give no decisive reality to his past.

4.12. The \textit{Unheimlichkeit} of inauthentic being

The practice of attribution makes it \textit{possible} for me to be 'the one who...'. As such, everything that I have done is potentially \textit{gewesen} rather than simply \textit{vergangen}. Nevertheless, whether something is adequately conceived of as \textit{vergangen} or as \textit{gewesen} depends on the concrete role it plays in my life: whether it persists merely as a fact about me or whether it continues to serve as an impetus for (further) action. We have a propensity to “mistake” public/chronometric time for our own time. This ostensive “mistake” is indeed facilitated by two virtually ineluctable factors: Firstly, the important role that chronometric time (the “time of the They”) plays in our lives, and secondly, the fact that in recollection we inadvertently represent the past in the same inauthentic manner. And yet, it would be a fateful error.

\textsuperscript{618}To the extent that what we are dealing with are \textit{actions}, i.e., entities that materialize in an intersubjective space/medium, to say that “it is up to me to determine what exactly has already come to pass” does not mean that I also control the \textit{success} of my attempt to (re-)determine the meaning of what has come to pass. After all, it is not my will to have a particular identity, or to be the person who has a particular identity, that produces this identity but rather my activity.
to reduce nostalgia to a simple “confusion” or “mistake” about the meaning of one's past. After all, whether or not we “mistake” public time for our own time is decided not by how we speak of the past but rather how we inhabit our past. When we “mistake” public time for our own time we are wont to overhear the imperative that emanates from that which “was”: namely that it is to be again, which is the true meaning of that which “has been.” Whether or not we “mistake” public time for our time depends on how we comport ourselves in the interhuman space that is constituted by our being-with-others and what role we concede to our history in the determination of our engagement with the world.

It is in virtue of the practice of attribution that we acquire a history. This practice makes it possible for us to be the things that we “once” were again. Where actions come to be attributed to individual agents it becomes possible for them to retain an intimate (because agentic) relation to that which has come to pass: it becomes possible for me to be the one who did everything that I have done. As such it becomes possible for us to abide in time. Yet, the very opposite of this happens in inauthentic historical being: the idea that I am the abiding agent of all my actions is belied by the inconsequentiality that my past actions have for me. In reality, my being is as fleeting as that of the momentary now which is now “filled” with this, now with that, and now yet another. The fact that my actions are nevertheless all attributed to the “same” me cannot hide the fact that this attribution is hardly reflected in my concrete activity in the world.

On one level of description, when I fail to take responsibility for my past, my existence has the continuity of a history only superficially. In reality, my life is a constant beginning, a "succession of agonizing instants, each a commencement deprived of the wonted context of the past." It is a life that, in Heidegger's words, “clings to nothing and urges to nothing.” Where the individual rejects her proprietary time, she is delivered over to the time of the They, which signifies precisely the impermanence that historical being holds the promise to overcome. Inauthentic historicity, then, does

619Sypher 67.
620Heidegger 317. The exact opposite of this indifference is what Heidegger calls resoluteness.
not so much attest to my persistence as it is a constant reminder of my continual passing, that is, of my inability to hold fast and to abide: of a life lived without ontological faithfulness.\(^{621}\)

We have said that our determinate personal identity is the place that we occupy in the social world. Being the one who... means being emplaced in the social world in a unique manner. But to the extent that we fail to inhabit this identity, our emplacement in the social world is in fact a constant Unverweilen [incapacity to tarry]. The person who exists inauthentically has not yet found their place in the world. Their existence lacks identity, because the particular identity that they “have” they have only in a static, reified and thus inauthentic (and for them non-binding) sense. Heidegger's claim that in the mode of everydayness Dasein is “everywhere and nowhere”\(^{622}\) must be taken to express the meaning of the “in(nan)” of “being-in-the-world.” But she who is everywhere and nowhere can only be scattered. That which Heidegger calls “faktische Anstückung” [piecing together of facts] is but the last fumes of the cohesive power of a personality whose “faktische Anstückung” designates in reality not the accumulation of a history but astückweises Vergehen [piece-by-piece passing].

The failure to appropriate one's past entails the failure to make oneself at home in an essentially intersubjective world. As such, my “having” a unique history is not experienced as the specific agentic emplacement in the social world that it is for the person who appropriates her past authentically. It is rather experienced as a distance: namely as that which lies behind me. The distance that the individual experiences from their past is not the result of the inevitable temporal progression that moves us from our birth to our death, thereby placing an ever-greater distance between our present and our past, but rather due to the existential rejection of my past as mine. The temporal distance is the result of an estrangement from ourselves as historical beings that we ourselves have effected. Ontologically, the distance that lies between my past and my present is grounded in my estrangement from my own time, and my own history. It results not from time's inexorable progression but from my rejection of my past.


\(^{622}\)Heidegger 319.
Only in the inauthentic manner of being the past is the trail that I leave behind, a figure left in the sand.

In reality, the ostensive extension beyond the momentary present of the one who “has a history” in an inauthentic sense is but the long shadow cast by one whose time melts away like the Biblical snail in the sun.

Furthermore, since this distance is essentially foreign to the temporality of the person who has a history, the person who fails to appropriate their past authentically (and thus treats their past as that which lies behind them) effectively acts as if they had no past. This past that is “not had” is my history that is attributed to me and that individualizes me and my Seinkönnen in the intersubjective world. Since the interpersonal world nevertheless continues to attribute “my” actions to me and continues to recognize me in that thing that I do not inhabit, my being estranged from my own (proprietary) time (and thus also my history), entails that I necessarily become a stranger to others as well. When I fail to appropriate my past authentically it is not my environment but I myself who becomes unheimlich. The Swiss soldier in the foreign land is a stranger in the most literal sense. Yet, it is not he who is unheimlich but his environment. It is an environment in which the soldier's 'I can' is greatly truncated. It is an environment in which the soldier is only marginally better off than the protagonist of Aki Kaurismäki's movie "The Man Without a Past," who is a stranger because he is unable to remember his past. But did we not say that the person who fails to appropriate their past authentically acts as if he were oblivious to his past? Does the 'man without a past' not resemble Kierkegaard's esthetic individual, who chooses to not to give his past any weight? Kierkegaard's esthetic individual is not estranged from his environment but rather from the identity that he embodies in this environment. He is estranged from the one who he is in the intersubjective world: he is estranged from himself. And that means that he is estranged from his history as his history. By being estranged from his history, by choosing not to give his (agentic) past any decisive reality, the esthete turns himself into an unheimlich

figure: he is strangely familiar, and yet due to the inconsequentiality that his history has for him this familiarity is in fact a “false familiarity.” The person who fails to appropriate their past authentically is also an "errant figure," a "drifter," a "player," in a word, an "unheimlich" character even when in a familiar environment.

Most importantly for our purposes, our argument shows that nostalgia can indeed plausibly be described as a symptom of an inauthentic appropriation of one's past. Inauthentic personal being, i.e., the inauthentic having of a history, has to do with a failure to properly appropriate my past. What the nostalgic's lament signifies is not the loss of this or that part of “their” past but the loss of a proprietary or authentic relation to their past. Where I exist authentically, that is, where I have properly appropriated my past, this past does not have the quality of Vergangenheit but of Gewesenheit, and it would thus be odd, to say the least, if I would suffer nostalgia. The temporal distance that the nostalgic individual experiences from their past and that manifests itself in the past's pastness is not the result of time's inexorable passage but rather is caused by the nostalgic individual's own (deliberate or accidental) rejection of the possibility to harness time by becoming historical.

4.13. Final critical reflections

One important consequence of the argument that we have presented is that such nostalgia would be avoidable. It is the individual's own actions that have brought about her obsolescence: the sovereign individual who has the power to make herself, also necessarily has the power to un-make herself, that is, to bring about her own becoming obsolescent. We already discussed the possibility of the failing of the individual's identity project in Chapter 3. In this chapter we have seen how the individual herself can bring about this failure. The nostalgic, though not in error about her affliction, would thus in a sense be to blame for it: after all, it belongs to an important extent to the individual's potentiality of being to live their life in such a way that it would forestall the temporal scattering, historical
estrangement, and inter-personal *Unheimlichkeit* that underlie nostalgia. To conclude this chapter we will add two further reflections to our account of the inauthenticity of nostalgia that we have provided. The first reflection is mostly a clarification, the second the anticipation of a possible objection to our appropriation of Heideggerian ideas.

### 4.13.1. First reflection

The first reflection is directed at the idea that nostalgia is in fact an avoidable condition. The aforesaid makes it seem as if one could remedy (or prevent) nostalgia by “re-affirming” our past, as if nostalgia were simply due to an “existential failure” on the part of the individual. If this were true, nostalgia could only befall those who made certain fateful choices, choices that would result in the absence of the temporality that would lack those qualities that the nostalgic experiences with such poignancy. This, however, is very different from claiming that nostalgia is “the (inevitable) fate” of the sovereign individual. Furthermore, can this account of nostalgia accommodate the widely experienced feeling of passivity and impotence with respect to time's fleetingness?

So far we have largely relied on Kierkegaard's fictional character “the esthete” to illustrate what a life lived inauthentically could look and feel like. We said that an inauthentic existence involves a kind of “agentic forgetfulness,” i.e., a forgetfulness of the fact (and the norm) that my having done something in the past constitutes a *prima facie* reason for continuing it. As we saw, the extreme agentic wantonness of Kierkegaard's esthete is fully compatible with the most acute and reliable memory. While a closer study of the details of Kierkegaard's depiction of the esthete would allow us to see what the esthete's inauthencity looks like *in praxi* and *in concretu*, what is more important for our argument is that we have aligned ourselves with Kierkegaard's thinking according to which it is (largely) up to the individual whether or not they appropriate their past and live an authentically historical existence. As we have said, this should not be imagined as a monolithic action. That which Kierkegaard calls
“choosing choice” is better understood to denote a particular attitude that would actualize itself in a multitude of “little” cognitive/responsible actions rather than a monumental action.

Although Kierkegaard's own characters offer the reader a plastic image of some of the choices and considerations that differentiate authentic and inauthentic being, it would be a grave mistake if we were to accept the wantonness of Kierkegaard's esthete as the only cause of an individual's incapacity to tarry in the intersubjective world. Just as the possibility of personal being does not arise from an individual's decision to “become a person,” neither does the ability to appropriate one's past authentically depend entirely on the individual's will to appropriate her past. We already said that the distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence is not one of a cognitive attitude. It is not a difference that pertains to how one thinks about the past but about how this past figures in one's life: to be precise, whether the past has decisive reality or not. While it is easy to describe in abstract terms what inauthentic existence is, it is harder to imagine what the life of someone who lived inauthentically would look like concretely. It is the plasticity of Kierkegaard's esthetic individual as the epitome of inauthentic existence that makes him a natural reference. However, the wanton misuse of our “freedom” is but one reason why our life can become scattered; “scattering” does not need to take on the wanton form that the life of Kierkegaard's esthete exhibits.

A more fruitful way of thinking about this is to view the individual's failure to unify her existence and to become what she had already potentially been as not resulting from wantonness or lack of effort, let alone from a character flaw or malignancy, but as something pathological that a certain stage of development of a particular form of social organization does to the “individual.” We ought to remember Adorno's forceful critique of Heidegger's concept of authenticity, which serves as an important and compassionate exhortation not to lose sight of “the real force of the splitting of the subject.” As Adorno compellingly showed, the hymn of praise of the individual's ability to adapt to

624Cf. Heller 34.
625Adorno 68. ["die reale Gewalt der Aufspaltung des Subjekts" (59)]
the changing circumstances of the world easily turns into the individual's swan song.\textsuperscript{626} The individual's ability to adapt itself to the changing circumstances of the world in order to take responsibility of her past and redeem her past in an uncertain future does not always stave off the loss of authenticity: sometimes it can even have the opposite effect of precipitating the loss of authenticity, namely when it is not the individual who adapts herself to the world but the world that adapts the individual.

The memories of the past by which the self reminds itself of its own identity are in fact often but empty reassurances of a self-constancy that has no currency in the world. As such they do remind the subject of his identity with a past self only by reminding him of the loss of this identity. The most powerful memory cannot compensate for the individual's impotence in a world that takes an interest in the past only where it can be turned into a profit.\textsuperscript{627} Adorno rightly criticized Heidegger's essentialization of what are in fact socio-historical realities. As we said above, it is a historically contingent fact that the identity of an individual comes to be determined by what this individual has done; i.e., that actions are attributed to individual agents who are thus held accountable for a determinate portion of social reality, and whose very identity as an “individual” is determined by that for which they are held accountable. Concepts like Unverweilen [incapacity to tarry], Neugier [curiosity; greed for what is new], Gleichgültigkeit [indifference], Interessiertheit [interestedness] need to be radically historicized in order to appreciate their full significance; to explain why they gain greater prominence under certain socio-economic and political conditions; but also to better understand why and how they relate to empirical nostalgia, and where and by what strategies they conceal their own ambiguous normative force.

To the extent that we have made use of some of the categories in our analysis of nostalgia, it would follow that Adorno's exhortation applies equally to us. Adorno already pointed out that it is the

\textsuperscript{626}For a similar point, cf. also Lifton 190.

\textsuperscript{627}On this point, cf. for instance Sighard Neckel's “Identität als Ware,” in his \textit{Die Macht der Unterscheidung}. 

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modern sphere of production that “trains individuals to disperse themselves” rather than the individual's own hubris or failure to will continuity. On this account, “individual discontinuity” would be a direct consequence of the dynamism of the socio-economic life world that controls the individual rather than being controlled by them. Adorno's scathing criticism that it is the socio-economic condition of late-capitalist societies that “is everywhere producing [and administering; NF] an ego weakness which eradicates the concept of the subject as individuality,” sheds a different light on the role that the individual plays in bringing about (or warding off) his or her own nostalgia. That which used to be the quality of extra-human reality – fleetingness – is now being reproduced (for an increasing number of people) in social reality, with the effect that “the life of individuals today does without wholeness.”

It would therefore be intellectually naive and dangerous to think that it is really up to the individual to choose their mode of being, or that authenticity and inauthenticity are equally available at all points and places (and to all subjects). In reality, the choice whether my past does or does not have this decisive reality for me is decreasingly “mine” to make. Today it is not just the incorrigible hedonist who runs the risk of “becoming legion.” The person who is forced to “get by” in increasingly precarious social and economic circumstances is exposed to the same danger. This seems to be one of the great weaknesses of both Heidegger's and even more so Kierkegaard's criticism: both crystallize the site of inauthenticity, thus providing only a one-dimensional etiology of inauthenticity. As Adorno says about Heidegger, “He chalks up mutilation to the fault of the mutilated,” as if the option of choosing choice was and is always still the individual's ownmost possibility of being. For our discussion of

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628 Adorno 71. ["welche die Subjekte zu ihrer Zerstreuung abrichtet" (61)]
629 Adorno 122. ["allerorten jene Ich-Schwäche produziert, die den Begriff von Subjekt als Individualität auslöscht" (102)]
630 Cf. Heller 34.
631 Adorno 145. ["das Leben der Einzelnen heute der Ganzheit enträt." (120)]
632 Adorno 112. ["Er bucht Verstümmelung auf dem Schuldkonto des Verstümmelten" (94)]
633 "What is doe to men by the world becomes the ontological possibility of the inauthenticity of men." (122) ["Was jedoch die Welt den Menschen antut, wird zur ontologischen Möglichkeit der Uneigentlichkeit des Menschen." (102)]
nostalgia this entails that we have not yet caught sight of the full scope of nostalgia until we have asked ourselves to what extent it is still possible (or rational) for us to “choose choice,” as Kierkegaard's ethical individual demands; to what extent the individual is still capable of action, of being serious, of avoiding being non-committal in her activity. On the other hand, we must ask ourselves to what extent and in what multifarious ways the “shapeshifting” (Lifton) that leads to scattering and inauthenticity (thus making the subject a nostagic subject even where s/he does not yet know it) is encouraged; by the promise of what kind of happiness dispersion is made palatable; and to what extent the norms of identity, autonomy, and accountability have been superseded by a new imperative not to tarry. Under these circumstances, where identity itself can easily degenerate into an oppressive norm against which it is once again opportune to militate, without a historical contextualization Heidegger thesis about Dasein's “propensity ... to be 'lived' by the world” obfuscates at least as much as it elucidates.

The apparent wealth of opportunities, each of them but a means of diversion, covers up the loss

634Cf. Rosa 389. For a discussion of one specific manifestation of this phenomenon, namely the disappearance of possibilities for properly human political action, cf. Paul Virilio's Speed and Politics (1977). What Virilio shows is that the impossibility of action cannot solely be understood as an aberration but is often rather a necessary consequence of the desire to make human action superfluous. On this idea, cf. also Gronemeyer 59.

635Cf. Lifton 45.
636Cf. Lifton 42.
637Rosa, for instance, notes the existence of a non-marginal “promise of salvation of social acceleration” ["Heilsversprechen sozialer Beschleunigung"] (cf. Rosa 287 & 291).
638Lübbe has advanced the thesis that Selbstüberholung has become one of the central duties of the post-industrial individual. (Cf. Lübbe 95)
639Are the praise of flexibility, adaptability, and our seemingly unending ability to “reinvent” ourselves not in reality nothing other than the celebration of the disappearance of the “individual”? Adorno recognized very early that under the socio-economic conditions of late capitalism the subject's need of a "liberation from the compulsion of identity" (Adorno 108. ["Befreiung vom Identitätszwang" (91)]) grows into a vital concern, because what used to be seen as liberating becomes itself increasingly an impediment of human flourishing: the idea(l) of a heroic individuality. We have entered a time where the sacrifice of individuality might not be the expression of human hubris or individual wantonness, but may have become a necessary means of survival (bare life). This is all the more ironic as historically the life of heroic individuality was seen as a victory over the fleetingness of bare existence. But under the circumstances human existence is once again being reduced to the fleetingness from which it once dreamed to have (almost) escaped. We can thus add to our account of nostalgia as a symptom of an inauthentic existence that the individual's homelessness, the individual's Unverweilen can be an effect contributed by the social world; a world that for many centuries held the promise to facilitate precisely man's transcendence over the fleetingness of his fleeting biological existence.
640Heidegger 182; translation modified. ["Hang von der Welt gelebt zu werden." (195)] This entails indirectly that we become (once again) created (and re-created) by our environment, i.e., by another (or others). As Lifton writes, the individual who appears to act is in fact made to “act.” (191)
of the fundamental opportunity to reject the administered *Unverweilen* that the economized social world forces on one. The colourful (“interesting”) individuality, “individuality” only by name, eager to put itself on display merely, camouflages the fact that reality has long dis-appropriated it of its supposedly ownmost identity. In Chapter 2 we spoke of the importance of bonds, reminding ourselves that my being-in-the-world is necessary my being-with-others. But as both Adorno and Levinas have noted, the Heideggerian 'being-with', which is the condition of the possibility of my possession any historical properties, is rarely a peaceful and equitable one.

Most importantly, in a world in which what one has done becomes increasingly inconsequential for what one will be able to do, one's properties become merely “accessories” or appurtenances rather than potentials for future actions. Incidentally the past tense thus becomes a much truer tense for the accounts that we give of our past. This effective disappropriation does not stem from the fact that actions are no longer attributed to individual agents but that the “field of application,” my *Seinkönnen*, is once again becoming less determined by what I have done done. In other words, what is becoming increasingly inauthentic is not the individual's appropriation of their past but rather the very *practice* by which an individual's identity is determined by “their” actions, and which first forces the “choice” between authenticity and inauthenticity on the individual. To the extent that the individual is deprived of opportunities to live up to the norms of individuality that the practice implicitly posits, the loss of the ability to appropriate its past predisposes the empirical subject to an almost inescapable nostalgia. The latter could no longer be explained by a lack of ontological integrity on the part of the individual subject but would arise from the disintegration of those structures and practices that have supported the individual in actualizing itself all along. As Lübbe has argued, the possibility of self-realization has

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641 On Adorno's social-critical account this certainly holds for one's positive achievements, i.e., those deeds that would be considered as “achievements” in a vernacular sense. (NB: The generic use of “achievement” that we have employed throughout is of course neutral with respect to the positive or negative value that we assign to the specific action.)

642 In this age of ostentatious pseudo-individuality language degenerates to *chatter* (a degenerative form of language), which models itself on the language of marketing and whose sole currency is the effect it can elicit.
from the beginning depended on the constancy and permanence of social institutions; their permanence has all along been the true source of the individual's self-made "identity" and persistence.

643Cf. Lübbe 95.

644It is perhaps a piece of historical irony that these processes are accelerating as our ability to record "our" past and to retain even the most trivial moments that we have experienced is growing beyond anything that we could ever have dreamed of. While the individual gains ever greater access to "their" past, she is at the same time being deprived of that power which would make this past truly her own.

645Yet another option that we have not considered would be a life that involves an "affirmation without recuperation" (Houle [2009]73) that would be "reckless" (i.e., lacking an authentic concern for one's past) without being ruthless (in the way Kierkegaard's esthetic individual's lack of concern for the past is ruthless). As we said during our discussion of the Derrida's notion of the "impossible gift," certain actions are inherently "unattributable": they are, as it were, destroyed by being credited to an individual agent. We would be thinking of actions that could not be credited or for which the individual could not accept any credit. The pursuit of actions that are sufficiently similar to Derrida's "event of
4.13.2. Second reflection

A second point that stands in need of clarification has to do with the process that we described as “making oneself.” We described this process in contradistinction to what Heidegger disparagingly calls “progressive piecing together” and “cumulative placing together.” However, it could be asked if the process of making oneself is not merely another form 'piecing (together)'? After all, could one not make the case that 'actions' are time parcelled into units, stamped with a content and a date, and as such gifting” would by necessity entail irrecoverable “losses.” Such a life would not produce a capital-M Meaning, but perhaps little vignettes of lower-case-m meaning that are as plural as the commitments that we undertake in the world. With Houle we can say that such a life is not necessarily “unhappy, not unjust, not unloving, not empty of beauty, not senseless, nor does it lack logic. It lacks a particular kind of logic.” (Houle [2009] ??) Such a life would not be immune against nostalgia, but this nostalgia would be a price that might be worth paying. In others words, it would be a nostalgia without regret.

We can imagine a reluctance to the appropriation of one's past that is not born from a lack of concern for an identity and a wanton disregard for one's past, but from the insight that the insistence of “my” place (i.e., my firm emplacement) in the world involves an ineradicable recklessness that cannot be expunged from my (exclusive) claim to “my past.” This recklessness is not the disregard for one's past. It is rather born from the very opposite: namely a myopic concern for one's own past. Quinones is undeniably right when he says that “it requires remarkable effort and grace to overcome ... the battery of change.” (The Renaissance Discovery of Time, 70) But this effort is often the privilege of the strong who can appropriate their “own” past only by dis-appropriating those others whose own efforts stand in the one's pursuit of an authentic historical existence. Perhaps the dictum that “The continuum of history ... belongs only to the oppressor,” (Leslie 135) can (or even has to) be applied also to the authentic individual. In the same vein, there could be a deliberate pursuit of “inauthenticity” that stems from a general suspiciousness toward the questionable value of success and advancement, and the economic logic that supports them; but also toward the hardness of the resolve of the individual who is determined to reap what they have sown. (On this point, cf. Houle [2009] 68, 76.) – In a dual sense it is a privilege to have a unified history, a privilege that comes at someone else's expense: For one, this history is the result of a uniform life, a life that is governed by one's own will; a life that is not disrupted by the arbitrary will of another; a life that is free from external coercion. As Kierkegaard puts it, this life gives itself its own law of motion. This privilege of autonomy is not only a rare commodity, but it is also often acquired at someone else's expense. To wit, the person who finds themselves in a network of conflicting commitments and obligations can achieve the unity (and continuity) only at the expense of breaking some commitments in order to honour others. And secondly, not everyone can appropriate their history as their own. We saw in the preceding section that the continuity/unity of the historical is in part derived from one's ongoing ability to re-appropriate one's past into one's present, and vice versa: the process of assimilation. But what if the past resists any attempt of being integrated into the present for the sake of an open future? We can think of examples where one's attempt to make a past their own is contested by another person's competing claim to that same past. Under these circumstances history itself becomes a resource over which people fight. What the notion of making “one's” past one's own (appropriation) overlooks is the fact that the question whose history it is that is supposed to be appropriated is itself at times contentious. Secondly, even where the question of ownership is not contested, the process of assimilation itself presents itself as more complicated than the scenarios from the previous section could admit. For instance, how does one make a past injustice that one has suffered one's own without allowing the perpetrator a lasting place in one's life? A life that is not forced to lose any sleep over the past is indeed a privileged one. The same holds true for a life that loses no sleep over the guilt that it has incurred. – As such, in addition to Adorno's critique of Heidegger's “subjectivation” of the forces of inauthenticity, we should also recall Emmanuel Levinas's admonition to consider, “is not my place in being, the Da of my Dasein, already a usurpation, already a violence in respect to the other?” (Levinas 224) If this argument “for” nostalgia” has some merit, then the ability to feel nostalgia and to bear nostalgia would be more important than the ability to render oneself immune to it. Such a nostalgia would be anything but self-indulgent.
an event that has, in principle, a clearly designatable coordinate in the time-space matrix? We even conceded that the process of making ourselves is mediated by our factual being. The reason why this is an important question is that Heidegger links this *Anstückung* explicitly to inauthenticity; and we added that which appears as a “making” of ourselves is in fact an “unmaking” (i.e., a *scattering*).

Although we may be tempted to imagine this process in purely additive terms, what *Anstückung* actually signifies cannot be represented in purely additive terms. “I make myself” means that I build myself up. But “I” and “myself” refer not just to a “persona” (or a collection of facts) but to an agentic self who is essentially defined as a being capable of acting freely and thus responsibly. I build myself up in virtue of my achievements, and these achievements, in turn, are themselves modifications of my *Seinkönnen*. My past gives a determinate shape to my freedom: it makes my freedom my freedom, i.e., the freedom of this concrete individual who I am. My actions do not just leave behind a trail of past facts. I literally build *myself* up: I make this particular human being who I am, a being with particular powers to act in a space shared with others. Since the process of making oneself is the “natural result” of my acting freely/responsibly, “making myself” cannot be understood in a “monumental” sense. That is to say, one makes or “builds” oneself not in the sense in which one builds a house: one piece is added at a time. The process of self-constitution follows a more complex arithmetic than the brute additive aggregation of what Heidegger calls factual *Anhäufung*. Put differently, the whole of my history is never merely the sum total of past events.

It is for this reason that the third possible interpretation of the notion that we accrue more past – namely that we establish more facts about ourselves – discussed in section 4.3 does not offer an authentic account either. To say that I am the sum total of my actions is only correct if we recognize that addition is not the only operation that produces this “sum” that is me. Even though we can say I have done this *and* this *and* this *and* this, there is no simple conversion to how the accumulation of facts determines my *Seinkönnen*. To wit, certain facts can be inconsequential because they do not add a
new facet to an already established personality. They are, as it were, “redundant.” In other instances, having done two contradictory things can neutralize the gain in Seinkönnen that one of the things has increased, even though it is also factual to say that one has done “x and -x.” Thus the attribution of an action to me can be veridical while at the same time being inauthentic (and thus largely inconsequential for my concrete being-in-the-world-with-others). As we said before, my actions create facts. With respect to these facts we can always adopt an either veridical or false cognitive or social attitude. But what interests us when it comes to actions is not the question of truth but the question of authenticity, i.e., not whether we have done x but what ontological significance my having done x has. Whether or not an action contributes to the making of myself or to my un-making depends on the quality of the action in question. Put differently an action can have a disjunctive ontological effect even though as a fact it can only ever be conjunctive (i.e., an additional fact about me).  

If authentic unity were a given rather than an achievement, i.e., if the authentic unity of my actions was presupposed by my actions rather than produced through it, then the charge that the practice of attributing actions were but another kind of fortlauflende Anstückung would be a serious one. But in fact the unity of my actions and thus the authenticity of their ascription to me follows a different logic. As we will show in the next chapter, this logic is in essence a narrative logic. Therefore, the process of building oneself up is not a simple “verrechnende Anstückung” even though it can be accompanied by a purely factual reckoning which, however, almost always (though not necessarily) is inauthentic.  

4.14. Conclusion  

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646 An act of betrayal, for example, may factually be only one episode in a long life of remarkable achievements, yet as far as my place in the intersubjective world is concerned it often has the power to undo a spotless record of achievements and thus set my historical Seinkönnen back by years.  

647 What we do determines how the various actions are “joined together”; but also conversely, how an action is joined together with others determines the meaning of any particular action.
In this chapter we have expanded on the thesis that we first introduced in the previous chapter: namely that the experience of nostalgia is intimately linked to the individual's activity in the world. In Chapter 3 we argued that the *possibility* of nostalgia is linked to the individual's activity insofar as nostalgia becomes possible where the individual's activity determines her identity. In this chapter we have further specified the claim that there exists an intimate link between the individual's activity in the world and the experience of nostalgia: We have argued that it is not just the possibility of nostalgia but also its *actuality* that depends on the individual's historical activity: whether an individual experiences empirical nostalgia depends (essentially) on whether the individual's activity is such that it involves an “authentic” appropriation of her own past or such that his past is appropriated in an “inauthentic” manner. In the latter case the individual is likely to experience nostalgia about this inauthentically appropriated past.

At the end of the last chapter we made our case for the claim that nostalgia is historically wedded to a distinct conception of the human subject: namely the human subject as sovereign individual. *Qua* sovereign individual I am fully responsible for my identity in the world. What individualizes me as the unique individual who I am are the actions for which I am singularly responsible. It is my having a distinct past, namely the history of my activity in the world, that individualizes and thus situates me concretely in the social world. I “have” this past in virtue of the practice of attribution that recognizes my past as mattering. From the individual's own perspective the “having” of a past can have two distinct meanings. Which of these meanings my having a past has for me depends on how I appropriate this past. We have adopted Heidegger's distinction between “authenticity” and “inauthenticity” to name the two fundamentally distinct manners in which this appropriation can happen. At bottom, this distinction pertains to fundamentally different ways of inhabiting our personality (or personal identity): whether we take it as a given that we “are” the person who..., thus taking our past and our identity factually and as inert property, or whether we recognize
that personal being is an achievement that demands a constant acquiring from us: it is something that
one is never finished with. Since the “site” of this personality that we can inhabit either authentically or
inauthentically is the intersubjective, social world, we can with equal plausibility say that the
distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity pertains to the ongoing manner of our emplacement
in the intersubjective world.

Nostalgia can plausibly be construed as a symptom of an inauthentic temporality. It is tied to an
improper appropriation of one's past, which is an appropriation that does not deny the existence of the
past but reduces my past to the sum total of past facts about me. To say that the past is “vergangen”
imPLICITLY opposes it to a present which alone is actual. The practice whereby my activity in the world
is attributed to me in the form of my personal achievements allows individuals to build themselves up
into an abiding personality. Where this happens, my past signifies not as that which is not anymore, but
rather has a decidedly positive value. Far from designating that which is “over,” the past constitutes an
integral element of the present, a present which can therefore no longer be opposed to a past (and
future). Where I properly appropriate my past, this past has the quality of Gewesenheit, which differs
fundamentally from the quality that the past has for the person who experiences nostalgia. Therefore,
the person who has managed to appropriate their past authentically would, as it were, be immunized
against nostalgia.

If the preceding argument is sound, it would seem that the only “remedy” against nostalgia
would be the achievement of an authentic historical being. Although empirically this may pose a
considerable challenge, the important insights that we have gained in this chapter do not, at least not in
principle, prove that nostalgia is inevitable; or that the difficulties that an empirical subject might have
in averting nostalgia are all of an empirical and contingent nature. Before we can ascertain that
nostalgia can be prevented by means of an authentic appropriation of one's past, we must look at a
matter whose treatment we have repeatedly deferred: which is the peculiar accounting by which the
sovereign individual realizes that specific temporality that would give her life a robust immunity against the experience of nostalgia.
In this chapter we are going to examine what at the end of the last chapter we called the specific “reckoning” by which our actions come to be attributed to us and we make ourselves and thus potentially build ourselves up. At the end of Chapter 3 we argued that the process by which we make ourselves and build ourselves obeys an “arithmetic” that is more complex than the crude addition of facts, that which Heidegger called “faktische Anstückung.” We said that our identity, on the one hand, is our singular, determinate Seinkönnen in the interpersonal world. On the other hand, we said that my identity is the unique place that I occupy in the social world. Where this identity is inhabited inauthentically, it designates not my (fixed) place in the world but rather a kind of Unheimlichkeit: not an emplacement but a constant out-of-(one)-placeness. What we have yet to explain is how one accesses this place. How does one know what one's unique place in the social world is? In line with the link that we have established between one's identity and one's place in the social world, the question What is my place in the world? is equivalent to the question Who am I? because by “identity” we mean “who someone is.” There are of course all kinds of ways we can answer this questions, as many as there are ways that determine what one's specific identity is. Where identity is essentially determined by one's action achievements the question Who am I? can however only be answered by way of a narrative account of one's history. We will call this the 'narrative identity thesis'.

The kind of accounting that underlies the process by which we make ourselves is a narrative but not an arithmetic accounting. The term “account” preserves the dual meaning of an “economic” entity with that of a narrative entity. The narrative of a life is the medium in which my historical being finds its most natural expression, because to have such an identity in an authentic sense means to be the protagonist of a narrative that expresses the unity of one's life.

In Chapter 4 we constructed an argument according to which nostalgia can be understood as a
symptom of a failure to appropriate one's past, a symptom of an inauthentic historical existence. We argued that nostalgia is due to the individual's failure to confer historical continuity on their life. This happens where the individual fails to take responsibility for their past. In contrast, where the individual does take responsibility for their past he or she gains the possibility of building herself up: authentic existence, we argued, effectively neutralizes time's diachrony and allows the individual to harness time's passage. It allows the individual to have a history in an authentic sense, i.e., not just to be someone with a history but to inhabit life historically. To have the identity of an historical being in an authentic sense means to be the protagonist of a narrative that expresses the unity of one's life across and in time.

The thesis that we will seek to defend in this chapter is the following: if my ability to confer historical continuity of my life depends on my ability to produce a narrative account of my life, then the very attempt to unify my life produces a dis-unity that is profound and irremediable. As such, the claim that nostalgia – the diachrony of time – would be avoidable (i.e., a pathological aberration) must be rejected as overly optimistic. We will argue that the reasons for the disappointment of my attempt to unify my existence lie in the basic topography of the narrative of a life. In essence we will attempt to show that the time of the historical self, i.e., the one who has successfully appropriated their past, is the time of the narrative self. The analysis of the time of auto-narrative will show that the time of the thing – historical being – that constitutes itself by means of the narrative account of its own past contains two irreducible temporal orders.648

648A note on terminology: The expression “to give an account of oneself” has the advantage that it highlights the fundamentally dialogical nature of the process by which we come to narrate our life story. It is often held that in order for my life to have the unity that can only be expressed in a narrative account of this life it is necessary that I am not only able to produce such an account but that I also (some would say, first and foremost) live it. What exactly this means is a matter of controversy. I believe that much of this controversy can in fact be avoided if we remember that to (auto-)narrate means to persuade. As Judith Butler argues in Giving an Account of Oneself (2005), I produce an account of my life because I am prompted by another! We spoke about this already in Chapter 2. To narrate one's life-story means to give a narrative account, which means to give a narrative account to another. This other can/must either validate or challenge my narrative. Tristan Todorov's claim that the point of narration is not “to tell the truth, but rather to persuade” (Todorov 80) when applied to the kinds of narratives that we are concerned with here, does not point to our (empirical) propensity to tell self-serving stories but rather to the fact that the essence of “my” narrative is dialogical. It

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In the first half of this chapter, we are going to prepare argument for the universality of nostalgia by way of an examination of what I take to be a plausible yet ultimately unconvincing argument, grounded in the Adriana Cavarero's work on narrative identity, that, if true, would have similar implications for the question of the avoidability of nostalgia as our own intended argument. This account will serve as an expedient to sharpen our understanding and highlight a number of important features of the 'account' that we are concerned with it. In the second half of this chapter, we will construct an argument that seeks to show that the attempt to confer (authentic) narrative unity on our life necessarily produces a diachrony that belongs essentially to the time of the authentic sovereign individual. If nostalgia thrives on diachrony and discontinuity, as we have been arguing throughout this thesis, it is not true that the experience of nostalgia is a symptom of an inauthentic appropriation of one's past. If our argument is sound, then nostalgia is the inescapable fate of the sovereign individual.

5.1.2. Narrative, selfhood, and the 'account of a life' 649 650

Today, the notion that narrative is an important cognitive human mode of making sense of our world is an intellectual commonplace. As Peter Lamarque notes, it is now widely agreed that

“narratives are prominent in human lives, not only in the obvious places like literature, history and

is this essential possibility of my narrative to be challenged by another that is the ontological truth behind the demand that a narrative must be lived. -- While this aspect of the concept of an auto-narrative will be crucial in the later stages of our argument, it will not play a very prominent role until our discussion of the time of auto-narrative. Until we say otherwise, we will therefore treat the expressions “auto-narrative”, “account of one's life”, “auto-biographical narrative”, “life-narrative” all as largely synonymous.

649 Peter Lamarque has pointed out within the discourse of narrative identity the term “narrative” is used in at least three different senses: “The product of narrative, i.e., the story told, is sometimes referred to as narrative, as when we speak of different versions of the same narrative. The act of narration, i.e., the telling of the story, can also be classed as narrative, as when we say that the narrative lasted over an hour. And sometimes the text of a story is called a narrative, as when we speak of reading a narrative.” (394) A similar ambiguity can be diagnosed in the usage of the term “story of a life”. The story of the life can I either be the narrative of the life, i.e., the narration of a datable sequence of events in time; or it can be something more “selective”, e.g. a recurring theme “in” a life. (E.g. I can say that being left by my partners after they come to see how ugly of a person I am is the story of my life. That, of course, is not to say that my life consisted of nothing but these experiences.)

650 Gérard Genette suggests the following useful distinction: Genette uses the term “story” for the signified, i.e., the narrative content, i.e., that which the narrative is about; he uses the term “narrative” for the signifier, i.e., the (written or spoken) narrative; and he uses the term “narrating” (I will use the term “narration”) for the “producing narrative action” (Genette 27). We often use the term “narrative” to refer to both the signifier and the signified.
biography, but in virtually all forms of reflective cognition.” Others have gone further and have advocated the thesis that narrative is not only one important cognitive mode, one way of understanding the world around us, but that human experience itself “has a quasi-narrative nature (prior to our ‘imposition’ of art on life).” According to this thesis, human reality indeed is inextricably intertwined with what appears to be but one human activity among many: that of making and telling stories.

Wilhelm Schapp, who was one of the earliest proponents of the narrative thesis, wrote already in 1953, that to be human means to be “entangled in stories” [in Geschichten verstrickt]. Human existence lends itself so readily to being narrated it is because human reality itself has an “inchoate” narrativity, i.e., that human reality has an inherently narrative structure. Human life does not only readily lend itself to being narrated, in fact it often “demands” to be narrated. Even when we do not narrate we cannot help but experience reality in “narrative terms.” To say that ordinary life in its everydayness has a narrative structure means that to the extent that we can make sense of our experiences we do this by situating them in relation to others events. “To understand” is to configure events into a narrative plot, e.g. to configure an event as a “consequence” of an earlier event. It means to make an occurrence intelligible by relating it to earlier (but also later) occurrences. Understanding is not just a simple process of assimilation, a process in which we integrate a new Erlebnis into an existing general narrative of our life. We are essentially story-telling animals.

Narrative is not only a cognitive tool that we use to make sense of the world, narrative is also inextricably intertwined with what it means to be self. Kerby has noted the etymological link between the English word “person” and the Latin “persona”, which denotes the character in a play.

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651 Lamarque 393.
652 Kerby 48.
653 Cf. Schapp 85ff.
656 As Kerby explains, “personal identity will depend upon the continuity of meaningful experience in this life.” (39) The continuity of meaningful experiences can only be captured in the form of the narrative of this experiential continuity.
657 See Kerby 37.
John Locke had already pointed out that to be a self means to be able to consider oneself the same thinking thing at different times. Narrative theorists like Kerby do not reject this characterization yet add the hermeneutic insight that self-knowledge is always already mediated through signs. Although Kerby agrees that “The self ... is essentially a being of reflexivity,” he adds that this self can only ever come to itself “in its own narrational acts.” In other words, the self is the kind of being that can consider itself the same thing at different times and it does this by giving a symbolic sequence, i.e., a narrative account of itself.

At its most basic, to give an account of oneself means to tell a story about oneself; not just any story but a story that seeks to capture what one's life is in essence about. To give an account of a life, of oneself, means not only to recount that as an arithmetic which one has done or experienced in one's life; more importantly, it means to articulate what the point of one's life was, or rather in what the unity of one's life consists; it means to articulate what one's life “was all about.” Although few of us ever attempt such an enormous task, according to the thesis of narrative identity, it is to the extent that our life lends itself to the giving of such an account that this life even has unity and coherence. Hannah Arendt makes the crucial distinction between what a person (e.g., a father, student, Canadian national) is and who a person is. What makes for the particularity (i.e., the who-ness) of a person is their unique story “of which he is himself the hero—his biography.” Who somebody is or was,” writes Arendt, “we can only know by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero.” As Schapp writes, “We encounter the self through its stories. The human being is the not human being made of flesh and blood. What forces itself on us instead is his story.” A particular self is always the product of a particular act of language. To the extent that this self is always a particular self with a particular identity which we

658Kerby 41.
659Arendt 186.
660Arendt 186.
661Schapp 105; translation mine. ["Durch seine Geschichte kommen wir mit einem Selbst in Berührung. Der Mensch ist nicht der Mensch von Fleisch und Blut. An seine Stelle drängt sich uns seine Geschichte auf als sein Eigentliches."]
can only access only through narrative Schapp writes (seemingly provocatively), “The story represents the person.”662 A similar thought is uttered by Kerby who argues that the particularity of the human subject (i.e., the Jemeinigkeit of Dasein) and the primacy of language entails that the substantial self “is no more (nor less) than a fiction.”663 While my physical body is “the permanent locus of my insertion in the world,”664 the world of the self is the wor(l)d of narrative. To the extent that the human subject is always a particular human subject with a unique identity, the human subject, is first and foremost (or maybe even just) the topos of a narrative. Thus, the human self is always a narrative self.

5.1.3. Narrative identity according to Arendt and Cavarero

5.1.3.1. The Other, my biographer

Despite the fact that I frequently attempt to adopt the narrative stance toward myself, it is a matter controversy whether I can ever adopt a genuine narrative stance vis-à-vis my own life. Even though to be self means to be the protagonist of a (true, coherent) story, the narration of this story is never the self's own prerogative. This is without a doubt a bold claim: Not only does it fly in the face of the great popularity that the genre of autobiographical writings enjoys, but it also seems to contradict philosophical orthodoxy: as we saw in Chapter 2, for Locke it was precisely the person's ability to recollect their past that made the a self. Yet, as Adriana Cavarero argues quite convincingly, even though we are the protagonists of our own narratives, neither are we the full authors of our own narrative, nor are we ever in the position to give an accurate narration of our story. For Cavarero, my biographer is always another.665 Cavarero's argument for this bold claim starts from the seemingly trivial fact that the stories that we tell are never just about us but are always about others as well. We

662Schapp 103; translation mine. ["Die Geschichte steht für den Mann."]
663Kerby 34.
664Kerby 39.
are never alone in our stories. We rarely do justice to those others who once played an essential role in creating the content of our narrative and relegate their role to phantom-like figures without much narrative depth. This is not a defect but a necessity of telling any delimitable story at all. We are reminded of Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* whose protagonist attempts to "do exact justice to every creature" (Ch. I.X.), with the result that the first two chapters of the supposedly autobiographical book mention the eponymous hero only in passing. A story that would do justice to all those who would "deserve" to be in it would be as much of an impossibility as Tolstoy's 'history of yesterday'.

Just as many others figure in my story, we also figure in the stories of many others. In fact, the stories that I tell in everyday life are often the stories of others. My role in these stories is often limited to that of a bystander or (distant) observer. The fact that we figure in potentially countless other stories (stories that are not primarily about us) and the fact that others figure in our stories is owed to the fact that the human condition is from the beginning a condition of plurality, i.e., the fact that "not one man, but men, inhabit the earth." The claim is not the obvious fact (too obvious to deny) that there exists more than one human being in the world, but rather that when it comes to the actions that define who we are, the other is *constitutively* there. Unless there were others, humans could not intelligibly be said to "act." Not all activities that human beings engage in are essentially require or presuppose the presence of another, but for Arendt, action has a privileged status when it comes to the question of identity: Identity, or the 'who-ness' of a person, becomes exposed in this person's actions, and action by definition presupposes the presence of others.

Following Arendt closely on this point, Cavarero argues that since human beings are corporeal beings...
they appear, they appear to other human beings “and are therefore destined to be seen, touched, tasted, smelled, to be perceived by sensing creatures.” And we need to add, they are also remembered. What is remembered is not the mere appearing of individual human beings, for instance in the form of a mental snapshot of a given person in a particular environment. Since “human beings appear to one another not as physical objects, but as men,” i.e., as acting and speaking creatures we remember them (insofar) as they appear to us in and through their actions and words. How we appear to others determines who we are. This 'who' is our personal identity, which is at the same time exhibitive – our identity results from our actions; it does not precede it – and relational. Exposition is always an exposition to someone else, i.e., an action with and to someone. Writes Cavarero, “Actively revealing oneself to others, with words and deeds, grants a plural space and therefore a political space of identity – confirming its exhibitive, relational, and contextual nature.” Who someone is, in the sense of what their unique story is, depends on how this person appears to other human beings in this political space of identity or, and this is the same thing, how this person reveals themselves to others through action and speech.

Given that the fundamental human condition is one of plurality and inter-human relatedness, personal identity is inescapably shaped by two factors: the irreversibility of our actions and the unpredictability of outcomes. Due to the fact that all action happens in space of plurality, “he who acts never quite knows what he is doing, that he always becomes 'guilty' of consequences he never intended or even foresaw.” Arendt justifies this strong claim by stating that, “[the] consequences are boundless, because action ... acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes. Since every action acts upon beings who are

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671Cavarero 20; cf. Carolyn Steedman 140.
672Cavarero 21; Arendt 177.
673Cavarero 22.
674Cf. Arendt 191f., 231ff.
675Arendt 233.
capable of their own actions, reactions, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others."\textsuperscript{676} The life story of any given individual interweaves with countless other life stories because every action starts a process that “is never consummated unequivocally in one single deed or event.”\textsuperscript{677} The in-principle boundlessness of the web of human relationships entails a non-closure of the consequences that an action can engender. The meaning of any given action remains mutable as long as there are people who affected by this action and who through their reactions/responses can give the action further meaning.

The shared past is not a momentary oddity but in fact the mnemonic norm. The bulk of our past is also someone else's past, and we are (potentially) part of countless other narratives besides our own. Since all action is by definition social, or “political” in the Arendtian sense, it “immediately involves us in various plots and subplots, many of which we are only passively entangled in.”\textsuperscript{678} The individual never fully belongs to themselves\textsuperscript{679} because a part of their identity is with another, because we are always caught up in more than one story. This in turn entails “We are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives.”\textsuperscript{680}

This has consequences that are important for our purposes: Since action takes place in a shared space of free individuals, a space that is no one person's space to own, if my identity results from my actions, then my identity seems to be unmasterable. The moment that we initiate an action in a space shared with other humans we forfeit the exclusive right to determine the sole or primary meaning of this very action. Insofar as our actions take place in a public, shared space, and insofar as our actions involve, require, and impact (implicate) others, the meaning that we assign to these actions is at best a partial representation of the “real” meaning. Furthermore, to the extent that the memory of actions

\textsuperscript{676}Arendt 190.  
\textsuperscript{677}Arendt 233.  
\textsuperscript{678}Kerby 52. The binary active/passive does not describe different classes of our role in a story but rather describes to interrelated aspects that befall all action.  
\textsuperscript{679}Cf. Dionne Brand \textit{In Another Place, Not Here}, 39.  
\textsuperscript{680}MacIntyre 213.
remains a “public good,” the meaning of my actions remains mutable: as long as they are remembered they remain capable of engendering new effects (and thus interpretations). If the meaning of my actions is mutable, then so is the meaning of (the narrative of) my past, which in turn entails that the meaning of an action can never exhaustively be recounted until the lives of all those who were in some way or other affected by this action have come to an end. Which is never. Although my unique story is the site of my identity, and thus my ownmost possession, “nobody is the author or producer of their own life story.” On the contrary, “the stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer.” The protagonist of a story is the person who “began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author.”

While many of our actions that we still remember vividly may not have had any direct, tangible impact on any particular person, or this impact was short-lived and overall my action was virtually inconsequential for this person, we ought not to assume that only those actions to which we attribute an exceptional significance as markers of our identity are the ones that in reality had such significance. The self can never be the measure of the importance of all its own actions; for we are, in Nietzsche's famous words, “necessarily strangers to ourselves.”

Although this may seem like a hyperbolic implication, it follows from what appear to be very plausible premises. While Arendt and Cavarero do not reject the idea that there is an authoritative story about me to be told, they argue that this story is in all likelihood quite different from the one that I

681 This point was already articulated by Wilhelm Dilthey who writes in Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften (1910). In its ultimately consequence this means that one would have to wait until the end of history before one (who?) could determine the meaning of anyone's actions. Writes Dilthey, "For that one would have to wait until life runs its course, and only in the hour of death could one survey the whole to ascertain the relation between whole and parts. Similarly, one would have to wait for the end of history to possess material sufficiently complete to determine its meaning." (253) ["Man müsste das Ende des Lebenslaufes abwarten und könnte in der Todesstunde erst das Ganze überschauen, vom dem aus die Beziehung seiner Teile feststellbar wäre. Man müsste das Ende der Geschichte abwarten, um für die Bestimmung ihrer Bedeutung das vollständige Material zu besitzen. “ (233)]

682 Cf. Schapp; and also Cavarero 35.
683 Arendt 184.
684 Arendt 184.
685 Arendt 184.
686 Nietzsche Genealogy, "Preface" I.
myself narrate. For Cavarero the preceding reflections entail precisely that “the meaning of [my]
identity remains patrimony of an other.”687 This is the general fate of all life stories: The meaning of a
person's life, their story, is always and necessarily discovered by another: “[like] the one who walks on
the ground cannot see the figure that his/her footsteps leave behind, and so he/she needs another
perspective.”688 On this account, the imperative to know oneself and its corollary demand to concern
oneself with one's past and to appropriate it fall prey to the illusion of an “atomic” self: i.e., of a self
that was a separate, clearly-bounded entity. If Arendt and and Cavarero are right, then the self is never a
separate entity that is ontologically sufficient onto itself, but is constitutively entangled in a web of
relations. It is therefore impossible to tell the story of one person without mentioning the stories of
others. The narrator of my story always has to be an other, namely one who knows also the relevant
parts of the stories of those others to whom I am tied through action and accident, particularly those
parts that elude my own grasp and that my own narrative omits neither deliberately, nor out of
carelessness, but by necessity. As we saw earlier, Cavarero argues that the biographer/historiographer
must use all these different (and at times differing) accounts in order to determine what my story is. In
contrast, all auto-narratives are inherently untrustworthy. While in everyday life we are most often the
sole narrators of our life-story, it follows from Arendt's and Cavarero's conception of identity that auto-
narration by necessity cannot achieve what it purports to achieve: namely to give an accurate account
of my past. My past is inextricably intertwined with past of others and these intertwined stories
necessarily co-determine each other's meaning.689 The impossibility of narrating my own story is
grounded not only in any given lack of knowledge, as other versions of the sceptical argument against

687Cavarero 22
688Cavarero 3.
689As Alexander Nehamas writes in Nietzsche: Life as Literature (1985), “whatever a thing is or does is itself not given: it
is constantly in motion, being changed, revised, reconstructed, and reinterpreted in light of new events, which are in
their own turn fluid and indeterminate. The character and nature of every event is inseparable from the character and
nature of every other occurrence with which it is associated. This relationship is holistic and hermeneutic ... There are
no isolated judgments.” (88)
the possibility of self-knowledge have affirmed, but also in the lack of closure of the past.

The boundlessness of the web of human relations as well as the fact that every human being equally partakes in the ability “to begin something new” while at the same time “not being able to control or even foretell its consequences” entails that the consequences of our actions are too vast to be known by the agent herself. Even if a person could recall every single thing that they had in fact done in their life, they would still not know what exactly it was that they had done: the fact that I “was there” when such and such an action happened would no longer be sufficient for my knowing what exactly it was that happened. To the extent that the meaning of my past continues to evolve, the past as the site of my who-identity is not the “sum total” of past presents. Who I am cannot be inferred from who I was at any given time in my life: to narrate the life of a person is fundamentally different from recollecting the constitutive parts of this life. Unlike the recollective self, the narrative self always encounters itself as an other, not just because the “two” would, as it were, be separated by the gulf of time, but because we inevitably inhabit our life as strangers to ourselves.

Due to the expositive and relational character of identity, one's identity is at best a precarious possession, namely insofar as it is based on a particular story that can always be contested and whose details can be altered not through my own doing but through the doing of others. While this position seems to follow from the preceding claims, neither of which appears to be scandalous, her conclusion is

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690Such an argument is presented for instance by Richard Wollheim who, using the insights of Freudian psychoanalysis, argues in *The Thread of Life* (1984) that self-examination often “[places] itself at the service of phantasy” and that the stories that we tell “will mask the archaic desires, which lend themselves to disguise because of their incomprehensibility.” (189)

691To the extent that narrative plays such a prevalent role in our lives, Arendt's model poses a powerful challenge to the Lockean model of selfhood: *ich-erinnere-mich/je-me-souviens* (inwardization [Jean-Louis Chrétien], appropriating interiorization) model of recollection. It challenges both of the fundamental tenets: It challenges the notion that recollection is an act of introspection (*ich-inner-n*), but it also challenges the priority of the singular mnemonic subject who relates to their (supposedly) own past in a closed circuit (*ich/mich; je/me*). One of Arendt's original contribution lies in her explanation why memory cannot work this way, at least not when memory pertains to the personal past of a given individual which this memory purports to recollect faithfully.

692On Cavarero's account, we share the same fate as Oedipus. What distinguishes us from the tragic king who does not know his true story is not his ignorance and our purported knowledge, but rather the tragic character of that which he does not know.

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certainly not beyond controversy and not without implications for our analysis of nostalgia. If Cavarero's argument for the claim that our identity is relational and exhibitive is sound, then the identity of every agent is ultimately unmasterable, which, in turn, poses a significant challenge against the possibility of one's authentic appropriation of one's past. If the meaning of my narrative (and thus the specificity of my Seinkönnen) remains as inconstant, changing, and open as we have described, then it is doubtful that even authentic historical being could avoid the incapacity for tarrying that we took to distinguish it from inauthentic being. This would not be due to my lack of fidelity to myself but rather because the very ground of this fidelity would be too infirm to allow us to remain faithful to ourselves. If my place in the social world is ultimately determined by my narrative, yet the meanings of the constituent parts of this narrative keep shifting, then my own emplacement in the world is no less precarious than that of the nostalgic individual.

In contrast to Cavarero, what interests us is not the question whether the sovereign individual is an illusion, but whether the authentic sovereign individual is indeed immune to the experience of nostalgia, which was the conclusion that we reached at the end of Chapter 4. We already argued in Chapter 3 that the sovereign individual is precisely not “a-tomos” (indivisible). It is precisely this non-indivisibility of the sovereign individual that can explain why the sovereign individual can become the victim of nostalgia. With respect to Cavarero's critique of the “atomic” self, it seems to follow that unless we can deflect the challenge that Cavarero's account seems to pose to our argument, the possibility of overcoming time's diachrony would be seriously undermined, and nostalgia might be inevitable and normal rather than avoidable and pathological.

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693 Edward Casey, for instance, asserts with equal vigour a diametrically opposed position: “What I shall have been is very much a function of what I shall remember myself to be, which is in turn a function of what I now remember myself to have been. And what I now remember myself to have been is by no means a fixed affair. It is once more a matter of freedom [!], specifically the freedom to decide which features of my previous life to honor or reject, celebrate or revile, in the future ... it is a freedom realized through assessing my own past as a prologue for my own future.”
5.1.3.2. Critique of Arendt and Cavarero's theory

The main weakness of Cavarero's otherwise very plausible position is that Cavarero herself fails to draw the right conclusions from it. The main reason why she undoes the full force of their impact of her insights is that she reduces these insights ultimately to the epistemological question, *Who is my narrator?* Based on the preceding reflections, it seems clear to Cavarero that I cannot be my own narrator. I cannot be my own narrator because the account that I can give of my life is at most a “conjecture” about the “real” meaning of my past. It is a conjecture because I cannot know how my actions have affected others; and I can even less know how they might still affect others. Cavarero reaches an important insight here, yet she mitigates the force of this insight by inventing the *deus ex machina*, the capital-B Biographer, who is the true guardian of my (narrative) identity. Instead of taking her insights into the expositive, relational, discursive nature of personal identity as a starting point for radically reconceptualizing the concept of “a past that is one's own” and the notion of the account of a life that we find in ordinary thinking, Cavarero falls short of actualizing the critical potential of her own analysis. In the end, Cavarero rescues the idea of a monolithic meaning of a life and the concomittant metaphysical realism about the past by way of the larger-than-life capital-B Biographer and the image of a “figure in the sand,” even though it seems that it is precisely this notion that is fundamentally undermined by the premises of her argument.  

This appears to be owed to Cavarero’s “conservative” endorsement of two concomitant ideas that are deeply rooted in our ordinary thinking about (auto)biographical narratives: 1) the idea that the narrative of my life is about something that exists outside the narrative; 2) the notion that the narrated/narratable existence that the narrative of my life recounts *precedes or predates* the act of narration itself. Cavarero herself signals her endorsement of these ideas when she says that every life “produces” a unique story and that the meaning of the story is like the figure “left behind” in the sand.

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694 For her the existence of the capital-B biographer is the guarantee that my story will be told accurately. The story is simply “there” for her, it is a given, waiting to be told.

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There are a number of problematic elements in this account of the narrative of the self. One of the key elements of Cavarero's argument was the idea that the meaning of my past cannot be reduced to the meaning that I ascribe to the events (actions) that make up my past. Although in a sense this is true, Cavarero's argument takes too atomistic of an attitude toward the life-narrative. As Alastair MacIntyre notes in *After Virtue* (2007), “a history is not a sequence of actions, but the concept of an action is that of a moment in an actual or possible history abstracted for some purpose from that history.”

Narratives are not the arithmetic conjunction of individual actions. On the contrary, we only understand an individual action from the narrative of which it is a part. The intelligibility of any action depends on our ability to situate it in a sequence of other events; and such a contextualization is essentially narrative. Whether and how an action that is attributed to me changes my *Seinkönnen* depends on what the action that is attributed to me is. The meaning of any given action depends, in turn, on the place that it occupies in a narratable sequence of actions. Therefore, whether an action that is attributed to me increases my *Seinkönnen* depends on whether this action fits into my narrative; i.e., how it is accounted. Although it may seem like the narrative results from individual actions that are “added up,” in reality the narrative in which the action is embedded is primary; it is from this narrative that an individual event first becomes intelligible. Cavarero's mistake is that she seems to conceive of narratives on the basis of individual actions and that this approach puts the cart before the horse.

On the other hand, Cavarero's argument seems to rest on a faulty assumption about what is involved in the concept of agentic responsibility. To say that a person is responsible for a certain action is to make a normative claim. Yet, the idea that the meaning of an action could in principle remain forever undecidable is inconsistent with this positivist concept of an (attributable) action. Any open-ended model of (agentic) causation is self-defeating: Unless we can consider the voluntary intervention

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695MacIntyre 217.

696As we will see, this, in turn, has important consequences for the possibility of being mistaken about one's past; to be precise, it raises the question what it means to “be” in error about the past.
of another human agent to break a causal chain, all talk of agentic responsibility is rendered vacuous. If causality continues \textit{ad infinitum}, then it no longer makes sense to speak of individual persons causing things. Insofar as the idea of human causation is tied to the normative concept of responsibility, and as such it is not plausible to also argue that the meaning of an action remains open to reinterpretation to the extent that it can engender ever new, meaning-altering consequences.\(^{697 698}\)

To be fair, Cavarero does not challenge the possibility of biography, so that for her there is indeed an ultimate meaning of my actions. However, Cavarero has insisted that autobiography is not among the possibilities of the human person, which means that this “ultimate meaning” remains necessarily hidden from the individual. Even if Cavarero's scepticism about the “epistemic” possibility of autobiography is justified, the most “damaging” implication of the “undecidability” of the (definitive) meaning of narrative would be that the credit that we extend to ourselves would be given without any sureties, i.e., without epistemic warrant.\(^{699}\) It would mean that the credit that we extend to ourselves and to others remains a precarious possession that remains revocable at any moment. While this is certainly a conclusion that is significant for our conception of the authentic individual, it is by itself not sufficient to claim the impossibility of the appropriation and to vindicate the thesis that the authentic self is in fact not immune to nostalgia. If our argument is to be convincing, we need to show that the function of narrative is not exhausted by Arendt and Cavarero's biographical account of narrative.

5.1.3.3. Two additional criticisms

\(^{697}\)Incidentally I also don't think that this is true of most actions. Most actions come to be forgotten or superseded after a much shorter period of time then Cavarero needs to assume for her argument.

\(^{698}\)There is a third aspect of Cavarero's account that we will deliberately bracket here: It is not quite clear to what extent the “figure” of my past is co-constituted by the figures of the figures of the pasts of others, i.e., to what extent a biography is always necessarily abstracted from a history, which is ontologically and epistemically primary. In order to find out who I am I cannot solely fall back on my own account of my past. This account is necessarily incomplete. However, \textit{that I} become a 'who' is essentially my own prerogative.

\(^{699}\)Cf. Nietzsche's remark on living on one's own credit in the "Preface" to \textit{Ecce Homo}. 

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There are two additional criticisms that we can level against Cavarero's account of the life-narrative which will serve us as a segue to another, more promising argument for understanding the inevitable nostalgia of the sovereign individual. According to Arendt and Cavarero, I can never know the meaning of my narrative because we can never know the “real” (or “full” or “final”) meaning of our actions. That is why my biographer – i.e., s/he who alone is able to tell my “true” story – is necessarily another. Arendt and Cavarero's subordination of auto-narration to hetero-narration appears to be predicated on the assumption that the primary function of narrative is the representation of an identity (meaning, “figure”) that is “there” independent of any attempt to “grasp” it. According to Cavarero, the reason why the biographer is another is that I can never assume the necessary “distance” to discern the “figure” that my life has “left behind.” I am, as it were, always too close to myself. Cavarero argued that this distance is important because narration cannot be reduced to recollection. This is indeed true. To narrate the life story is to discern the meaning that a given event/action has in virtue of being related to other events, albeit not in the sense that we first have an “original” (recollectable) meaning that later becomes altered. The “real” meaning is not the “ultimate” meaning that we can assign to a given event. The kind of meaning that we are dealing with here is rather precisely one that cannot lay any claim to finality. This has to do with the specific kind of account that the narrative of a life is (and not with a limited knowledge of the facts that is specific to our situation; the difference is one of degree). While the work of recollection can be “isolated” or “momentary,” the work of narration places a given event in the temporal, continuous context of other events. The meaning that narrative is interested in, then, is not an a “real” meaning that would “correct” the empirical meaning that we recollect. Narration does not “correct” recollection; it rather constitutes a different cognitive mode of comprehension altogether.

700This closeness ought not to be confused with the "closeness" of my immersive in-itself-worldliness. As we argued in Chapter 2, the appearance or presence of others in my life affords an ontological distance and a "focal length" (Houle) that allows me to see myself as a self. The closeness that Cavarero's speaks about does not designate the absence of this distance but rather the specific quality that this distance acquires wherever I seek to relate to my determinate who-identity narratively.

701Meaning: We can give two irreducible kinds of answers to the question What happened? One would seek to give the
To the extent that we understand the meaning of an individual event from its place in a narratable sequence, the “true” meaning is rather the significance – i.e., the “relational meaning” – of an event; and that means what a given event meant for and in connection with other events. The narrative of a life is precisely the expression of the events of a life in their interrelatedness. To understand an event is to place it in a historical context, i.e., to historicize it. To the extent that autobiographies are historical accounts of the past, they are not merely attempts to recall what has happened but to determine the significance of that which has happened. This “significance” must not be confused with the “real” meaning of a given event – i.e., that which “really” happened in opposition to that which we (truthfully) recollect to have happened. The term “significance” rather indicates that we are dealing with a different cognitive approach to the subject matter at hand.

Cavarero's postulate of the capital-B Biographer rests on the faulty belief that we could gain a non-perspectival, non-interpretive understanding of this past. For Cavarero this significance is a “historic given” and the “objective meaning” of a life. On her account, as long as we can get far enough away from the actual events, we can discern this meaning, i.e., the “real” story. I would thus contend that Cavarero's image of the “figure left behind” offers a “naive objectivism” and the belief that “events have, or had, a univocal meaning which constitutes the 'truth' of these events.” But this completely overlooks that what we are interested is the significance of events. The category of significance indicates that the object that we are dealing with is an interpretation. (Auto)biographies, like other works of historiography, are always interpretive. That which Cavarero frames as an epistemic problem is in fact not the problem at all but rather indicative of the hermeneutic nature of historical narratives. To the extent that even the capital-B biographer advances an interpretation of the facts, the difference

702Cf. Dilthey’s “Bedeutung”.
703It is not too far-fetched to say that Cavarero's Biographer is reminiscent of Rorty's “view from nowhere.”
704Kerby 31.
between my own account of my life and that of a biographer (even Cavarero's capital-B Biographer) is at most one of degree and not one in kind (as Cavarero has it).

5.1.4. Narrative and the unity of life

A more fundamental problem affecting Cavarero's argument is that it fails to appreciate that the problem of the “undecidability” or “precariousness” of the meaning my narrative that she describes as an epistemic one is in fact first and foremost an existential one. According to Cavarero's conception of narrative identity, the narrative of a person's life expresses the particularity of that person (i.e., their unique who-identity). As Lübbe writes, a person's narrative expresses “the unmistakable individuality of the history of our actions and sufferings.” In other words, the primary function of the account of a life is to give an answer to the question, Who are you? The reason why this position, though intuitively plausible, does not withstand scrutiny is that this conception of 'narrative identity' is still “pre-critical” in at least two important regards: First, it does not consider the possibility that a life may not be a possession of a self a 'who'; in other words, it does not consider the possibility that life may be lacking (narrative) unity altogether. In addition, Cavarero's account is pre-critical because it employs an underdeveloped concept of a narrative. While it is true that some form of verbal representation can be given of any life (even non-human life), the kind of agentic identity of a person that Cavarero (and we) are interested in demands a more robust concept of “narrative.”

Cavarero herself recognizes that “[b]etween identity and narration there is a tenacious relation of desire.” However, the desire for my story is not simply the “curious” desire to find out who I am. It is rather the desire for (an) identity, a desire for the certain knowledge that I am someone, i.e., that my life is not merely an existence without identity. In other words, my desire for a narrative is linked to my desire to be, i.e., to persist. As such, my desire for a narrative is of the gravest significance. As we

705Lübbe 180; translation mine. ["die unverwechselbare Individualität unserer Handlungs- und Leidensgeschichte"]
706Cavarero 32.
have shown in Chapter 3, the desire to be as an existential desire for persistence arises in tandem with the possibility of the loss of the unity of the personality. We have already seen that the loss of memory poses only one particular kind of threat to the unity of a personality and that a life can become disjointed for all kinds of non-pathological reasons: An individual may, for example, be unable to contain the “tensions of [a] complex and often contradictory personality” along with its “diverse longings,” or they are unable to integrate the different commitments to “conflicting standards of life” and their corresponding values and normative demands into the same unified life. Montaigne’s observation that “there is as much difference between us and ourselves, as between us and others,” may sound like a hyperbole, but one ought not to forgot that the opposite view, which affirms the essential unity of the person, had its fair number of detractors. Furthermore, even if this scenario is overstated as a real occurrence, its possibility belongs to the essential potentialities for being of the sovereign individual. The same fragmentation can happen to a life that is not synchronically fragmented, i.e., one where I find myself caught up in contradicting concurrent projects, but one that appears to lack diachronic unity, that is, a life in which the different phases or periods do not appear to hang together in any meaningful way. How could we forget Chateaubriand's emphatic discovery that, “Man does not have a single, consistent life; he has several laid end to end, and that is his misfortune.”

We have said that the concern for (diachronic) unity is a distinctly modern concern: not simply because the preservation of the unity of one's life becomes increasingly difficult in modern time, but because only the modern individual can become “undone” for non-pathological reasons.

According to Charles Taylor, under these circumstances, one of the fundamental human concerns is the question,

707Weintraub 113.
708Weintraub 113.
709Weintraub 135.
710Weintraub 187.
711See his Memoirs from Beyond the Grave, Bk III, Chap14, Sec1.
whether our lives have unity, or whether one day is just following the next without purpose or sense, the past falling into a kind of nothingness which is not the prelude, or harbinger, or opening, or early stage of anything, whether it is just 'temps perdu' in the double sense intended in the title of Proust's celebrated work, that is, time which is both wasted and irretrievably lost, beyond recall, in which we pass as if we had never been.712

The many-faceted ideal of unity implies that the expectation that our days not merely follow each other but rather realize some sort of “meaningful gain”713; i.e., that which in Chapter 4 we have called the act of building oneself up. We want to know if our life amounts to more than the sum total of its (disconnected) parts. Writes Taylor, “We want our lives to have meaning, or weight, or substance, or to grow to some fullness.”714 This means that “we want the future to 'redeem' the past, to make it part of a life story which has sense or purpose, to take it up in a meaningful unity.”715 To repudiate a part of one's life “as unredeemable in this sense is to accept a kind of mutilation as a person.”716 Taylor's image of the “mutilated person” is instructive if we remember Paul Valéry's notion that the successful integration of our past transforms that which would otherwise be a fleeting experience into a permanent (world-disclosing) organ, i.e., an integral part of ourselves.

In Chapter 3, we already saw that the desire for unity is linked to the fear of our own perishing in time which we called the individual's “disintegration.” Underneath our curiosity to know who this person is lies a much graver concern: the concern for unity, coherence, and (narrative) meaning. As we said in Chapter 2, we can only achieve a unified existence by existing as a particular individual. Personhood, prior to exhibiting an intended who-ness, involves existential unity. As we said in Chapter 4, without this unity the ascriptions of individual actions to one and the same agent would be inauthentic. Although we can only ever be a particular person with a particular identity, the more fundamental dimension of personhood which is that before all it is a manner of being. Put differently,

712Taylor 43.
714Taylor 51.
715Taylor 51.
716Taylor 51.
what is ontologically more fundamental than the question who we are is that we are a 'who' at all. Both
the Lockean account of psychological continuity and the Arendtian conception of the distinctive
personal identity of my unique story are largely mute on this the existential concern for unity. Yet,
where this unity of personhood is missing, the recollection of what we have done and experienced,
rather than reminding us of the fullness of our life, is a constant reminder of what we were unable to
sustain, carry on, or preserve (and therefore can or must now only recollect). As such, recollection is
always also a reminder of our own failure(s), and our account of the past is literally an account of that
which has receded into the past.

Although it is undeniably true that the narrative “contains” the proprietary peculiarity of a
person/individual in a vernacular or pre-critical sense, MacIntyre has argued that narrative, properly
understood, is the essence of in-dividuality, i.e., the essence of the human self considered as a
sovereign individual. As we saw in Chapter 3, for the sovereign individual the unity of existence is no
longer a given but something we struggle to realize. According to MacIntyre, the struggle for this
existential unity is the struggle for a narrative, because the unity of the life of an individual is the unity
of a narrative. Narrative plays a role in unifying the different parts of a person's life into a coherent
whole, i.e., into a narrative plot. MacIntyre therefore puts forth the claim that, “The unity of a human
life is the unity of a narrative quest.” Where a person's identity is determined by their action,
narrativity and unity/identity are two sides of the same coin: namely because only the life of an
authentic individual lends itself to a narrative representation; only this life has an internal unity.

In addition to the conceptual evidence that we have given for this connection, we have
empirical evidence that supports this connection: Kerby, for instance, has noted that identity understood
as the answer to the question, Who am I? becomes only rarely an explicit issue for us. When it does
become an issue it is when the unity of our life is under attack. This is the case when events no longer

717MacIntyre 219.
718Cf. Kerby 38.
“thicken to a more coherent picture,”719 In such situations, the pressing question is not *Who am I?* but rather “How can all this *add up*?” For Han, it is precisely our “incapacity of narrative synthesis ... [that] calls forth an identity crisis.”720 What comes under attacked in these situations is our ability to fuse the different parts of our life together by means of an overarching narrative. The identity crisis *is* a crisis of non-narrativity. In such moments we often realize that the narrative of which we thought ourselves to be the protagonist has broken down. It is in these moments, where the narrative of our life comes undone, that time as well gets “out of joint”: where before we saw meaningful continuity we suddenly find an aimless progression of a mere succession of disconnected moments. The search for this unity is thus the search for the narrative that integrates the various story-lines of one's existence into a coherent whole. It is the work of narrative that confers, *eo ipso*, coherence on our time. Our incapacity of narrative synthesis does not simply “call forth” an identity crisis, it *is* this crisis of identity: without such a narrative synthesis our activity in the world entails not our identity but our dispersal (i.e., our failure to acquire an identity). In contrast, it is the narrative/narratable meaning of our life that *binds time* into a continuous development.

Our desire for unity, then, is the desire for a narratable life, for a narrative in which we are the 'protagonists'. According to MacIntyre, we not only *grasp* the unity of a life in narrative but the unity of a life in fact *consists in* the narrative unity that this life can afford. Narrative not only plays an important role in finding out who I am but also in giving my life substantive coherence, which first makes the attribution of the various *Erlebnisse* that happen in the life of a person to one and the same person authentic. Therefore, narrative plays an ontologically more fundamental role than either Arendt or Cavarero acknowledge: namely insofar as the narratability of a life is the *measure* and *expression* of the unity of this life; and the unity of a life, in turn, is the measure of the authenticity of the existence of the person who can represent the unity of their life in the form of a narrative account.

719Han 32; translation mine. ["Ereignisse verdichten sich nicht zu einem in sich kohärenten Bild."]
720Han 32; translation mine. ["Die Unfähigkeit zur narrativen Synthese ... ruft eine Identitätskrise hervor."]
Since we have previously identified that temporality by which the passage of time does not signify a gradual progression to fullness (i.e., a continuous development) but rather a discontinuous becoming obsolescence of the bygone as the time of nostalgia, we can say that nostalgia is both the longing for a narrative, and the pain over our inability to construct a narrative from the various episodes that make up our life. That which the nostalgia has lost is not only her homeland but also the ability to narrate her story. The fact that she cannot tell anyone in the foreign land her story points to a deeper ontological loss of give a specific kind of account. The nostalgic has lost her speech, her logos: This must be understood not merely as the superficial inability to converse, but pertains, on a more fundamental level, to the individual's incapacity to produce a distinct kind of account.

5.1.5. The art of narration

Cavarero's failure to appreciate this existential dimension of our desire for our narrative is closely linked to her underdeveloped concept of a narrative. We began this chapter by noting the ubiquity of narrative. At the beginning of this chapter we noted the seemingly undeniable ubiquity of narratives in our lives. To say that humans are essentially story-telling animals tells us little about the many kinds of stories that humans tell each other. Peter Lamarque has noted that there is an inherent danger in using the term “narrative” indiscriminately as if it named always the same thing. Most importantly, the difference between the diverse kinds of accounts that we give cannot be reduced to Bernard Williams's distinction between “artful” and “artless” accounts. The key difference is not merely how we recount but what kind of account we give. This is not to prioritize one kind of account over others, but to recognize that a narrative account is a special kind of account. There are many instances of “narrative” activity that seem so trite that it is questionable what philosophical lessons we could learn from this. Writes Lamarque, “When I recount to you in prosaic terms how I spent yesterday

721Cf. Williams 306.
afternoon, I have presented a narrative.” While the ubiquity of narrative-like accounts of the past is undeniable, most of these accounts ought not to be called “narratives.” For example, if Lamarque was right when he writes, “‘The sun shone and the grass grew’ is a narrative,” it would indeed be questionable why narrative should ever have gained the philosophical attention that it has received. However, it seems more plausible not to assume that narratives exist along a continuous spectrum of increasing “complexity” or “artfulness” but that there are significant differences in kind between Lamarque's examples and the kinds of accounts that we refer to as “narratives.”

Most human beings are able to recount virtually countless events that occurred during their lifetime, and in principle there is nothing that bars us from “stringing” these different episodes together to form the account of the life in question. Such an account would not only yield a very unreaderly narrative, it would likely yield no “narrative” at all. The resulting story would be no more than a sophisticated (“aestheticized”) diary that “merely chronicles the 'chatter' of events without any coordinating reference to the person.” Even though such a chronicle undeniably conveys a lot of information about a person, it never gives us the person's story. Hayden White has noted that “[storytelling] is a highly complex art ... And its use is especially complex when it is a matter of representing real, rather than imaginary, events.” Even when we tell stories about our past, our “narratives” rarely embody the qualities that narrative theorists associate with (genuine) narratives. To call the account of a person whose live can only be “summarized” in the form of a chronicle (or another non-narrative form of representation) that person's “narrative” would be like calling the

722Lamarque 397.
723Stokes 657.
724Cf. Han 23.
726We should distinguish between “narrative” as the product of a certain narrative act and “narration” as the process of producing (telling/writing) a story-like text.
727This claim stands in stark contrast to Barbara Hardy's widely quoted claim, “we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.” (Quoted in MacIntyre 211.) As David Carr explains in Time, Narrative, and History (1991), "what is essential to narration is not that it is a verbal act of telling as such, but that it embodies a certain point (or points) of view on a sequence of events." (62)
disconnected historical qualities of the inauthentic individual their “identity.” This indiscriminate, overly liberal use of the term “narrative” risks to produce a similar semantic nonsense than the application of the term “identity” to a life in which nothing ever remains the same. To use Hayden White's useful distinction, while there can be no doubt that we constantly “narrate,” it is much rarer that we actually “narrativize.”728 729 The person who gives an account of the occurrence of a number of successive events in the past can be said to narrate this account. However, narratives proper have more stringent requirements. Going forward we will reserve the term “narrative” exclusively for those accounts that are more than a catalogue of the details of a person's life: namely those accounts that satisfy the formal requirements of a genuine narrative.730

As David Carr explains in *Time, Narrative, and History* (1986), “Narrative requires narration; and this activity is not just a recounting of events but a recounting informed by a certain kind of superior knowledge.”731 This “superior knowledge” of the narrator must not be confused to the first-hand knowledge that we have of the individual events that comprise our narration, i.e., the first-hand knowledge that we have in virtue of being (supposedly) the same person to whom the events happened in the first place. The narration of my life rather involves what Georges Gusdorf has called “a second reading of experience.”732 The person who narrates her life necessarily adds to the recollection of a given past event the consciousness of the significance of this event.733 As such, the “superior knowledge” of the narrator precisely transcends the knowledge of any particular event (or number of events) and pertains to the relation of significance that holds between some but not all these events.

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728See White (1981) 2.
729Williams himself mentions the (crude) distinction between “artful” and “artless” telling, yet his choice of words suggests that the difference is primarily an “aesthetic” distinction, whereas we argue that that difference is in fact grounded in an ontological difference.
730This is important because some of the claims that I will make in this chapter would seem to fly in the face of common, everyday practices if one do not keep in mind the “technical” meanings that these terms have for us here.
731Carr 59.
732Gusdorf 38. It is only in this second reading that we discover the dual meaning that each moment of our life has (i.e., its essential ambiguity). Cf. Dilthey 245.
733Cf. Dilthey 244.
What is essential about the act of narration is the configuration of separate events into a meaningful whole. This meaningful whole is the product of the act of configuration, i.e., a meaning that is conferred on a set of events, but it is at the same time considered to inhere in the set of events in question itself.

Even if a person can recount every single Erlebnis that happened in their life-time and have the most comprehensive mnemonic grasp of the individual parts of their life, this “person” may still have no story to tell. The fact that a person could be able to give the most comprehensive account of the events of their (scattered) life yet may be unable to produce a narrative account of this life has to do with the fact the events are not internally connected to one another; they have no significance for each other. That events have no internal connection to each other is not a statement about the events themselves but rather about the possible modes of representation of the events. To depict two events as being internally connected means to introduce a qualitative difference that singles out some events from the mass of others. To present events as “challenges” (to previous expectations) or “climaxes” (of a series of preceding events) or “fortunate turns of events” (that constituted a divergence from an expected outcome) means to ascribe to an event qualities which describe an event's relation to previous and subsequent events to which it bears more than an external relation (i.e., “external” because they are always related to one another only “via” the nominally selfsame experiential subject).

The person who (attempts) to narrate herself endeavours to become her own historian: she makes her own life the object of a historical inquiry. As such, her aim is not merely to produce a (factually accurate) historical record of her life but something that goes beyond such a record. As Wilhelm Dilthey has noted in Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften

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734NB: There is an obvious parallel here to David Carr's claim that a life can be full of activity and talk and yet display no coherence or meaning.
735Dilthey therefore defines “significance” as a relation. (Cf. Dilthey 240f.)
736Cf. Lejeune 71.
(1910)\textsuperscript{737} that the historical representation cannot be, nor does it purport to be, “a simple copy of the actual passage of a life of so many years.”\textsuperscript{738} The historian is not primarily interested in individual facts, but rather in the \textit{significance} that individual facts have for each other; she is not primarily interested in establishing \textit{that} events occurred but in determining \textit{what these events signified}.\textsuperscript{739} In order to produce a historical narrative of the events of the past, “The events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, reveal as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do \textit{not} possess as a mere sequence.”\textsuperscript{740} Of course the historian's inquiry requires a familiarity with the facts, but from this familiarity there is no direct route to an understanding of the facts in their interrelatedness.\textsuperscript{741} The significance that interests the historian/narrator was nowhere present at any \textit{one} point in time. Therefore, historical reality, i.e., reality that can be narrativized, cannot be experienced (recollected), it can only be \textit{imagined}.\textsuperscript{742} For example: No single person could have \textit{experienced} “World War II” because “WWII” is the name that historians give to a “total event.” The historian claims to have found a total event, something that reveals the change of happenings to be only “superficial.” In fact all these events belong to the same complex event. They are but parts of the same whole: this whole \textit{unfolded} through a series of events. Of course these events took place in time, i.e., one after the other, but the “meaning” of these events is precisely the unity of the events. We can only \textit{describe} the complex event by breaking it down into its sequential parts and by showing the relation between the events. Since WWII is the \textit{meaning} of a series of events, i.e., it is that which disparate events “added up” or “amounted to.”

\textsuperscript{737}All translated passages of \textit{Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften} are given as they appear in Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi’s translation, published as \textit{The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). The page numbers for the German text refer to the Suhrkamp edition listed in the bibliography.

\textsuperscript{738}Dilthey 222. ["einfaches Abbild des realen Lebensverlaufs so vieler Jahre" (247)]

\textsuperscript{739}Cf. White (2010) 230.

\textsuperscript{740}White (1981) 5.

\textsuperscript{741}Put differently, it is not by gathering ever more information that we acquire “understanding.” Understanding is a different kind of cognitive act.

\textsuperscript{742}Cf. White (1981) 20.
In an analogous way, the person who seeks to give a narrative account of her life is not interested in this or that event of her life but in the question to what her life as a whole added up (and if it added up to anything at all). It is the attempt to understand what her life was in essence all about: What was the essential thing, i.e., that which abided in and throughout the manifold events that occurred one's life? The question that interest the person who makes his own life the object of a historical inquiry is, What is the fundamental project, that “mysterious essence” that I have realized through these various episodes of my life and that constitutes the unity of the totality of the episodes of my life? In other words, the person who seeks to narrate or historicize herself is not interested in the facts of her life as facts but in the “subjective truth” of these facts: it is the significance of these facts for the individual who narrates her own life. The kind of unifying meaning that the historian/narrator searches for is the product of his or her own act of configuration: the meaning that the historian “finds” in history is always a “poetic” meaning, the truth of the narrative always a poetic truth, i.e., a meaning and truth that is not merely discerned (as Cavarero's image of the “figure in the sand” suggests) but that is produced by being con-figured. That which is configured is precisely the totality of those historical events that add up to form one interrelated “total” event, an event that, in turn, can be narrated.

This subjective truth is the person's own, unique narrative. All narratives are human artefacts, because stories are made, not found. Writes Tristan Todorov, “No narrative is natural; a choice and construction will always preside over its appearance; narrative is a discourse, not a series of events.” To construct a historical narrative means, first, to separate those events that have the This view is seconded by White: “any representation of history has to be considered a construction of language, thought, and imagination rather than a report of a structure of meaning presumed to exist in historical

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743Gusdorf 38.
746Todorov 55.
events themselves.” The historian and narrator's “special knowledge” is precisely the ability to imagine a structure of meaning that inheres in a sequence of events but that is not reducible to the sequence itself.

Insofar as the act of configuration is a poetic rather than a “re-”productive act, it is false to assume (as Cavarero theory of the capital-B Biographer suggests) that “there is a single truth to be told about ... the historical past.” Individual claims in a narrative can be true or false. But the plot of narrative, i.e., the interpretation of the individual events in terms of a particular meaning, is not “true” or “false.” Writes Lamarque, “The structures that historians impose on clusters of events ... are markers of significance not inventions of fact.” The emplotment of the narrative as a whole does not pertain to a particular fact but rather to an interpretation of several facts, i.e., to their arrangement into a meaningful whole. This meaningful whole is the narrative account of the various events that it comprises. This arrangement can be “plausible” or “acceptable,” but it cannot be “true” or “false.” What the reader encounters in the narrative of a life are not the events of the person's life but a certain discursive account of these events. And that means: an interpretive representation of the meaning that these events had for and with one another.

5.1.6. The account of a disunified life

There is of course nothing that bars us from giving some form of verbal account of the various episodes that happen even in a dis-unified life. After all, narrative is only one form of several through which temporal sequences of events can be represented. E.g., instead of producing a single narrative of the life of Niels Feuerhahn we could also produce a chronicle of this life. In both cases our accounts of the past would nominally have the same subject matter: the life of Niels Feuerhahn. Despite their

749Lamarque 400.
nominal sameness, the two accounts differ dramatically in the mode in which this life is represented. The chronicle and the historical narrative are only seemingly 'about' the same thing. The narrative of the life is about the life taken as a meaningful rather than merely a formal or nominal unity.\textsuperscript{750} In the case of the chronicle, the life of Niels Feuerhahn is presented in the form of a chronological succession of distinct experiences (\textit{Erlebnisse}), held together by the unity of consciousness. While in a chronicle the only requirement that we have is that the events that are being recorded did indeed take place in this order, in order to give a narrative account of the past one must go beyond the representation of distinct events as a “mere coordination”\textsuperscript{751} and must instead recount the past in terms of story-lines that do not merely depicts \textit{what happened} but seek to capture what the \textit{significance [Bedeutung]} of that which happened was.\textsuperscript{752} What distinguishes narratives proper from narratives improper (e.g. chronicles) cannot be reduced to the difference between artful and artless narration (all narration, strictly taken, is artful, insofar as it requires an emplotment rather than the mere reproduction of a series of event), but that the former have more than a merely thematic (or “nominal”) unity. For the sovereign individual the “veracity” of the “nominal unity” of her life is precisely that which is in question: it is not a given but something that must be proved. The individual who seeks to give a narrative account of her life does not start from the premise of a unified subject but only from the possibility of such unity. The attempt to give a narrative account of one's life is precisely the attempted proof that this unity is not a “prejudice” (i.e., that which precedes the assessment of the life as a whole in terms of its unitary character) but that it can be substantiated by the judgment of the individual's life as a whole.

Narratives proper are distinguished from other narrative-like accounts of events in that only narratives have the unity of a plot, and this unity of a plot is the unity of action. It is this unity of action

\textsuperscript{750}That which fuses the disconnected episodes of a non-unified life together is not an internal cohesion but rather the brute force of the “narrative” act.

\textsuperscript{751}Dilthey 256. [“bloße Nebeneinander” (249)]

\textsuperscript{752}E.g., a chronicle account would describe the events of August 23, 2003 as Niels Feuerhahn's arrival in Canada. The narrative account of these events would represent them as the beginning of a ten-year sojourn in Canada.
that gives authenticity to the self-same I of the narration. Narratives have a plot, i.e., a unifying story that subsumes the different parts of the narrative under a unified plot of which the parts are its parts.\textsuperscript{753}

The unity of the narrative account is the unity of a plot. The internal unity of the subject's life is precisely the unity the plot. The account that lacks a plot is not a narrative, and the life that it depicts lacks (internal) unity in all but a formal or nominal sense. The account that one could give of a dis-unified life would differ fundamentally from the account that we can give of a unified life. What a dis-unified life does not allow us to do is to \textit{emplot} the various episodes. The plot is what separates narrative accounts of the past from other (non-narrative) accounts of the past. A life that fails to achieve unity a life is a life that yields a “defective” narrative (i.e., what Williams calls a “failed or broken narrative”) in virtue of its lack of a single \textit{plot} rather than a narrative of an unsuccessful quest for identity. A “broken” narrative is a story that does not satisfy the essential \textit{formal} requirements of a “narrative”; more specifically, the account of the dis-unified life would be lacking that which is the distinguishing mark of a narrative: the plot. The narrative of a life, then, is not simply any account of a life, understood as the sum total of \textit{Erlebnisse} that happen to the same person. It is not merely the verbal representation of life in its manifold experiential richness. \textit{That} life is not the referent of the narrative. That which the narrative of a life is about is the \textit{narrativizable} meaningfulness of this life. The narrative of a life constitutes the \textit{meaning} of a life and represents life in its meaningfulness. This meaningfulness is the internal unity (or inner coherence) of a life, i.e., the internal unity of the various \textit{Erlebnisse} that occurred in a life-time.\textsuperscript{754}

\textsuperscript{753}As White explains, “the plot of a narrative imposes a meaning on the events that comprise its story level by revealing at the end a structure that was immanent in the events \textit{all along}.” (“The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” 19.)

\textsuperscript{754}According to MacIntyre's fundamental thesis, a \textit{scattered} life is the epitome of a non-narratable life. If by “hero” we mean the protagonist of a \textit{genuine} narrative (i.e., the protagonist of a coherent story), then we can say that the subject of the representation of a non-narratable life is an “anti-hero.” What makes the protagonist/subject of a non-narratable life “anti-heroic” is not the lack of moral heroism in her actions. To call the protagonist of a non-narrative life account an “anti-hero” indicates that here the different life-events that are encompassed by the account do not hang together to form a successful quest for coherence and continuity in time. It is the onto-temporal quality of the actions of the “anti-hero” that matter: they no longer add up one comprehensive quest in whose pursuit the protagonist succeeded in taking mastery of time’s irreversible passage. Thus, their life can “in no way be described as a quest\textit{full} odyssey towards ...
The absence of unity of action, i.e., the non-continuity of a person's life activity is tantamount to the individual's inability to configure the temporally dispersed activity into a narratable plot. If narrative unity could be reduced to nominal or thematic unity, the distinction between unified and non-unified lives would no longer be reflected in the narrative differences. This unity necessarily excludes many things that occurred in the same life-time and that cannot be reconciled with the emplotment of this life, i.e., that do not belong to the unity of the life in question. In line with what we have said before, these unforgotten but un-narrativizable episodes would lend themselves especially well to nostalgic reminiscing; i.e., to their representation as past and thus as differentiated from (i.e., without positive significance for) the present. Conversely, we can also say that nostalgic reminiscing is precisely that form of recollection that is not animated by the desire to understand the past, i.e., of discursively assimilating a past event to a fundamental, time-spanning project. The desire for my story, i.e., my narrative, is thus closely related to nostalgia. Empirical nostalgia is always also the desire for a narrative, and the pain over the absence of a narratable existence (or the incommensurability of a particular episode in our life with the narrative of our life). Empirical nostalgia would arise in the absence of a narrative that represents the passage of time not as a diachronic process of Vergehen but rather as the element in which the constitution of a meaningful existence materializes.

meaningful gain." (Houle [2009] 75) Kierkegaard's esthetic individual is a prime example of such an anti-hero. This moniker has nothing to do with the moral quality of the esthete's actions (even though in the case of Kierkegaard's esthete these two happen to coincide): it rather describes the narrative incoherence of the different episodes of the esthete's life. The esthete is an “anti-hero” because the account of his life does not amount to a narrative and thus lacks a “heroic” protagonist.

755The poignancy of much episodic memory (especially where recollections are coloured with nostalgia) derives from its unassimilability to a narratable story; an unassimilability which nevertheless does not entail a lack of significance of the episode in question.


757The plot that gives unifies the narrative of my life can as well be a story of reckless yet “successful” selfishness as it can be express the story of a noble quest. The type of a life account does not necessarily allow us to make inferences to the content, let alone the moral value of the content of the account. This designation of one account representing one's life as “meaningful” and the other as “without (coherent) meaning” is insofar misleading as what is at stake here is not a value judgment (e.g., a meaningful life vs. a life of caprice), but rather the distinct temporality that comes to be expressed in the respective account.

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5.1.7. Dilthey's concept of **Besinnung**

Even though few human beings undertake the project of giving a complete account of their life, the intellectual operation at the heart of this enterprise is one that we perform often, albeit in smaller and more humble forms. Wilhelm Dilthey has called the essence of the narrative act “*Besinnung.*”

Dilthey uses this term for the comprehensive grasp of the individual parts of one's life under the category of their significance for the realization of an all-encompassing purpose. “*Besinnung*” names the understanding of one's life as a meaningful whole. It is the attempt to view one's life as a *development*. It is the specific development that Dilthey calls the “*Sinn*” [meaning] of a life. That which we recollect in “*Besinnung*” is not the value of a past experience in isolation but rather its “effective force” [*wirkende Kraft*]: we contemplate the past under the aspect of its lasting value as a contributing factor to the actualization of something that transcends the individual components yet which can only realize itself through these individual parts. The *significance* of the past lies precisely in its relation to the present and the future. The work of “*Besinnung*” seeks to create a nexus between the past, present and future. It does not contemplate the past at a distance (and isolation) – which, as Stokes notes, is often effectively an active distancing from the past! – but derives the instruction for further actions from an understanding of the stories in which the subject finds itself a part of. It is the attempted elevation of the experiential continuity into an existential continuity. *Besinnung* signifies the attempt to view one's life “uno tenore”, i.e., “expressible in one breath.”

The “adequate representation” of the development that constitutes the meaning of my life is essentially in the form of a narrative. *Besinnung* signifies that I view my life in narrative terms, i.e., as

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758 The English word “reflection” is not the most fortunate word choice as a translation of “*Besinnung.*” The semantic root of “*Besinnung*” is “*Sinn*” which means “sense” or “meaning.” “*Besinnung*” is the becoming mindful of the sense of one's life, i.e., of the meaningful coherence of the various parts of one's existence.

759 See Stokes 663.

an unfolding plot; it signifies that I represent myself to myself as someone whose identity is inextricably intertwined with the narrative account of my life, i.e., that I represent myself to myself as the protagonist of my life-narrative. To inhabit one's life historically means precisely to act in such a way that one's actions lend themselves to be represented in a narrative of which I am the protagonist. Such a narrative account of the past can also give a better account of the unique way in which we are invested in our past; an investment which is inadequately explained in terms of an “identity of.” Persons not only “have” a past but they are emotionally invested in their past, namely to the extent that they actively identify with this past.\footnote{A person who feels completely indifferent toward “their” past can be said to have a past only in the same “administrative-official” sense is the person who could have all kinds of memories yet we would not say that they “recollect”.} This is not a specular moment of recognition but rather the active identification of an ongoing effort to carry on that which has been begun.\footnote{Cf. Stokes 653.} The past that we are invested in is never but “a summary of what has taken place or has happened,”\footnote{Kierkegaard (1987[2]) 250.} nor our version of this summary. It is always a particular narrative of the past replete with drama, strife and fortunate and unfortunate turns of events, which are all names for the relationships between select events of the past. It is always a certain narratable version (i.e., an interpretive, selective account) of the past that shapes our sense of self, namely because the narrator is never simply the person who experienced such and such a series of events but the person who \textit{became who he is} due to these events. As such the narrative of such a life would be inappropriate if it did not represent a development that “culminated” in the narrator herself.

The work of auto-historical narration is essentially a work of \textit{'Besinnung'} and involves the attempt to construct a meaningful whole out of the parts, which means to imagine what a given whole would be like based on the parts that are so far available for contemplation, and what kinds of future choices the existing narrative would require. The story that I implicitly project in the process of...
Besinnung is not yet a finished story but rather the script of the story that I am in the process of realizing. To see one's life as displaying this unity presupposes one's ability to represent oneself as the protagonist of this life's narrative. Unity is not an empty, formal given, (e.g. the fact that all the different episodes occur “in” the same life-time, i.e., present themselves to the same consciousness), it is the internal cohesion of the various episodes that took place over an extended period of time, it is their subsumability under an overarching “goal” or “project” that is being pursued through the various stages of this realization. To see a unity and coherence across one's actions means to see one's life as an unfolding plot; it means than that the different episodes can be integrated into a story that can encompass a large number of these episodes without thereby becoming unrecognizable as one and the same story. It is to the extent that the past can be shown to be integral to the present, that is, to the extent that individual events can be shown to have been parts of bigger events which in turn can be shown to have been parts of even bigger events that we can say that the individual actions did not constitute “loose ends” but were the individual steps through which an overarching goals was realized. In this sense, an episode is meaningful precisely to the extent that it can later be shown to have significance (i.e., to be an episode in/of a bigger story/line). Where this is the case, the life of the individual exhibits an inner unity to the effect that the individual's existence does not just amount to “one darn thing after the other” (and the process of time's passage did not signify a Vergehen) but rather an “expansion from within.”

When MacIntyre says that the unity of life is the unity of a narrative quest this means that when we seek unity in our life then we want the different parts (episodes) of our life, which we can only recount and experience successively, to add up; and that means, we want the various events that we experienced to lend themselves to a sort of representation that does not merely depict them as they happened – i.e., one after the other – but also conveys what they signified (i.e., what they meant for 764Of course, the unity of such a life is not an all-or-nothing matter. Lives can exhibit more or less of this unity to the extent that the various episodes of a life can be shown to have a place in the “story-lines” that make up the narrative of this life.
each other). We want the events of our life to lend themselves to an emplotment, which is to say that we want for our life to lend itself to a genuinely narrative representation. The unity of a life, then, does not rest on the psychological continuity of a conscious being that is antecedent to the life. It is rather the other way around, the self is a character of a life that exhibits the unity of a coherent narrative. To the extent that we are able to integrate the various experiences of our life into a coherent narrative, we recognize ourselves as the unified, singular subject of this life. To be a self, therefore, means to be the protagonist in the narrative of a life. Even where the act of Besinnung does not manifests itself in the form of an act of narration, it is nevertheless integral and instrumental to the production of the kind of life that ultimately lends itself to a narrative representation.

5.1.8. Conclusion of Part I

How does this affect Cavarero's epistemic objection against the possibility of auto-narratives? Cavarero does not merely argue that I can be mistaken about my own narrative but that I am necessarily mistaken. On Cavarero's account, my own narrative necessarily escapes me. My who-identity is, as we said before, the patrimony of another. For Cavarero it is not my ability to give an account of myself that matters (and which necessarily) escapes me, but the ability to give an accurate account. By contrast, what we have argued here is that nostalgia arises from the individual's inability to produce a particular kind of account of her life: a narrative account. What matters for us is not first and foremost the factual accuracy of my own narrative account, but rather the fact that my narrative represents my life as having a distinct inner unity and coherence. However, the question remains whether one could not say that just as I can be (and for Cavarero am) mistaken about my identity, I can also be mistaken about the unity of my life. Our short answer is that for the experience of nostalgia, it is inconsequential whether my life “has” a narrative unity or whether it merely “appears to have” this unity. Nostalgia does not pertain to existence of a narrative but to my ability to narrate myself. Where
the latter is missing, time appears to have the meaning of an irreversible, passifying passage. For me, the absence of a narrative manifests itself in my inability to narrate. From the perspective of the nostalgic subject, the two are one and the same.\textsuperscript{765}

Furthermore, even though we rarely engage in explicit, comprehensive auto-narrational exercises, the essence of this exercise – i.e., work of \textit{Besinnung} – nevertheless figures prominently in our lives. In this sense narration is indeed a prerequisite for a life inhabited historically: not as the telling of grand narratives but rather as the more humble task of trying to understand how new experiences fit into an existing plot. If we understand narration along these lines, then the auto-narrational requirement seems robustly defensible. Most importantly, we have established that the time of the authentic historical is the time of the narrative self: i.e., of the self who can represent her life to herself in the form of a genuine narrative. The narrative articulation of the work of \textit{Besinnung} deserves our special attention because it allows to clearly discern and study the temporal specificity of a life that is unified around a sense and that thus lends itself to being narrated (even if in reality we rarely make use of this possibility). It is this temporality that explains why our desire for our narrative is as strong. Since the temporal essence of \textit{Besinnung} is best examined in the study of narrative time, we will now turn to the question of the specific temporality of the narrative self. The larger question that we will pursue in Part II pertains of course to nostalgia: more specifically, to the possibility (or impossibility) of making oneself immune to nostalgia by means of an authentic appropriation of one's past. In Part I we have shown that the time of the authentic historical self is the time of the narrative self. Since we have argued that the time of the authentic historical self is such that it lacks the qualities that we experience in nostalgia, we have held that nostalgia is a symptom of an \textit{inauthentic} historical existence, i.e., of that existence that does not lend itself to a narrative account. By examining the time of the narrative self we will now seek to judge the supposed truth of this claim.

\textsuperscript{765}We will return to this question and provide a more detailed answer in section 5.2.3.3.
Part II – The time of narrative

5.2.1. The time of autobiography

In the preceding section we explained why Besinnung is integral to authentic historical being. Dilthey gave the name “Besinnung” [reflection] to the activity of taking account of one's life during which it comes into view as if a meaningful whole. Besinnung is essential for the emergence of that kind of existence/being about which a narrative account can be given. The possibility of Besinnung presupposes that I adopt at the same time the position of the narrator from which alone my life can come into focus as a narratable, meaningful whole in whose narrative representation I figure as the protagonist. To view oneself as the protagonist of one's life presupposes one's ability to adopt a narrator's standpoint vis-à-vis one's past. Narrator and protagonist belong together, not because they are one and the same but because either one presupposes the existence of a narrative through which the two are constitutively connected.

According to Dilthey, “Autobiography is merely the literary expression of the self-reflection [Selbstbesinnung] of human beings on their life-course. Such self-reflection renews itself to some extent in every individual. It is always there and expresses itself in ever-new forms.”\textsuperscript{766} Authentic historical being depends on the possibility of being historiographical in this way: That I inhabit my life historically, that my being is historical is (in part) made possible by my ability to conceive of my life historiographically, and that means in terms of an autobiographical narrative. Auto-narration plays an important role in the achievement of narrative identity and historical being: namely it ensures that the unity of life is lived before we become (fully) mindful of it.\textsuperscript{767} If Dilthey is right, and an autobiography

\textsuperscript{766}Dilthey 222. ["Die Selbstbiographie ist nur die zu schriftstellerischem Ausdruck gebrachte Selbstbesinnung des Menschen über seinen Lebensverlauf. Solche Selbstbesinnung aber erneuert sich in irgendeinem Grade in jedem Individuum. Sie ist immer da, sie äußert sich in immer neuen Formen." (247)]

\textsuperscript{767}As we have stressed before, it is not simply by virtue of my being able to produce a narrative account of my life that my life has this expressed unity. To live this unity means to be able to be recognized by the other “in” our narrative.
is only the most detailed, articulate (and thus “most instructive”\textsuperscript{768}) expression of an operation that we perform in a deflationary manner much more frequently and whose (successful) performance is a prerequisite for the achievement of the historical being that we strive for, then the study of auto-narratives can serve us as a “magnification” or large-scale model of the temporal structure that is inherent in the authentic historical existence that is the prerogative of the self, which is a structure that we may risk overlooking in the more rudimentary forms of auto-narrative \textit{Besinnung}. By focusing on autobiography as a kind of narrative (i.e., by focusing on the structural elements of autobiography as narrative), we seek to acquire an understanding of the time of autobiography, which, if our preceding argumentation is sound, is the time of the authentic historical individual.

Auto-narratives have a special status among narratives: they are historical (i.e., they seek to represent reality); and they are “authored” by the same figure that is (also) the subject of the narrative. We often shorten this complex relationship by saying that the autobiography is “about” the life of its author, where “life” is the name for the historical reality that is taken to predate the moment of narration and that constitutes the referent of the narrative itself.\textsuperscript{769} According to the sceptics of auto-narratives, the image of the past that we construct when we try to construct a narrative is always a retrospective mirage. This criticism is analogous to a criticism that has traditionally been levelled against nostalgia proper: namely that the nostalgic subject represents a past that has never existed, viz., that it presents the past not how it really was but in a highly estheticized manner. We argued that just because the narrative act seems to “impose [the] significance on life retrospectively”\textsuperscript{770} it does not automatically follow that the unity of meaning that is thus posited is a mere fabrication. After all, the same argument could plausibly be made against other kinds of historical narratives. To the extent that

\textsuperscript{768}Cf. Dilthey 246.
\textsuperscript{769}One of the most often quoted definitions of autobiography is that of Philippe Lejeune who defines autobiography as “Retrospective prose story that a real person relates about his or her existence, in which he or she gives emphasis to his or her individual life and to the history of his or her personality in particular.” (cited in Smith 53)
\textsuperscript{770}Lippitt 19.
auto-narratives are authentically historical though, autobiographical narratives need to meet the requirements of historical understanding in general, and in line with what we said above this means that auto-narrative is not the attempt to recall what has happened but to determine (and inhabit) the significance of that which has happened. The narrative of the life is the articulation of this significance. Qua narrators we are not confronted with life but with the story of this life (i.e., life in its meaningful connectedness), and the self that we “are” by virtue of the definition of the genre “autobiography” is not the self in its experiential richness but the self as a character in a narrative representation. In other words, the figure who is the protagonist of our narrative, is a textual rather than a substantial I. To the extent that this character/protagonist belongs to the narrative, and the narrative itself is not a mere Abbild [copy] of life, the character who represents 'me' is only a category of understanding, i.e., as figural representation of the self-reflective reality at the centre of my world.

In this section we will examine the temporal-ontological constitution of the auto-narrative account. Our approach to this constitution will be guided by the following question: What does it mean to say that the narrative unity is a “retrospective mirage”? More specifically, what kind of understanding of the time of narrative is assumed to be in place when we make this claim? The idea that auto-narratives “look back” is an essential aspect of our conception of these narratives qua historical narratives. The posteriority of the historian with respect to the events that they seek to understand is built into the very concept of historical cognition. The argument that we have built up to this point has relied heavily on the notion that autobiographical narratives are a kind of historiographical narrative. In the final section of our chapter we will go beyond this similarity and focus instead on an important, and for our argument crucial, difference between auto-historical narratives and other historiographical narratives. What interests us is the question whether the act of narration can justifiably be said to occur on the same temporal plane as the events that are narrated, so

that the claim that the narrator looks back would describe an objective fact about the time of auto-
narrative.

The idea that narratives *re-* count that which has happened, and the concomitant idea that the
narration of the narrative itself is but one event in the (ongoing) story, is an ontological prejudice that
can be said to be integral to our understanding of autobiography. Carolyn Steedman expresses this
common view with the following image:

> In the autobiography, or in the telling of a life story in public, there is in operation a simple
variant of this narrative rule. The person there, leaning up against the bar, or in another place,
writing a book, is the embodiment of the something completed. That end, that finished place, is
the human being, a body in time in space, telling a story that brings you (wherever the teller
actually ends the story) to this place, here and now; this end. And written autobiography has to
end in the figure of the writer (which is why you have to see that the good woman is me). I am
talking about the simple physicality of writing, nothing more than that: that the story is told by
someone here, now, in time. And of course, I do know that life goes on after the writing, that
other tales will be told, and that there is a more permanent ending. 772

Despite the intuitive appeal of this image, we will argue that it misrepresents the ontological
significance of the event of narration. A closer analysis of the time of narrative will show that the
narration of one's life does not mark its (temporary, preliminary) end point and that the narration is not
that which fills up a “present” in which the narrative trajectory is bound to culminate. The narration
rather always lies at the beginning, yet a beginning that is not the beginning of the narrated series of
events but the beginning of the narrative. It is this narrative beginning that constitutes “the place from
which life will be recited.”773

Our argument will proceed in two stages: In sections 5.2.2. and 5.2.3. we will bracket the
specific relationship between the act of narration and the narrated story and focus only on the narrated
events themselves. By doing this we will examine whether the idea that the narrative "leads up" to the
moment/point of narration withstands scrutiny. In the second part of our argument (section 5.2.4.) we
will then examine if the relationship between the narrated events and the act of narration would *in*

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772Steedman 47.
_principle_ allow for the possibility of one "spilling over" into the other.\textsuperscript{774} We recognize of course that these expressions need to be put in quotation marks. As Lejeune has said, “we are dealing with a figure, with a 'manner of speaking' that does not fool us: everything happens _as if_ the story were becoming contemporaneous with its narration.”\textsuperscript{775} These tropes may indeed be instances of what Ludwig Wittgenstein has called “a picture holding us captive,”\textsuperscript{776} yet I think that it the grip that they exert on our thinking is undeniably firm. If the idea that the narrative _culminates_ in the moment of narration implies a moment of transubstantiation, an instance of the “word becoming flesh,” I take this not as an argument against this trope but rather as evidence for the complex ontology that underlies what appears to be a very mundane practice: the practice of giving an account of ourselves.

The overall aim of our argument is to show that the idea that the time of the authentic individual is _conjunctive_ is mistaken. If Dilthey is right and auto-biography is but the most complete form of this mindfulness, then the time of the historical self is the time of auto-biography. If the time of the latter can be shown to be diachronic or dis-continuous, then the time of the historical self is not a conjunctive but a _dis_-junctive one; and that means, it is a time that does _not_ add up. If my ability to appropriate my past and to confer historical unity onto my existence is mediated by the narrative account that I give of this history, and the time of this narrative account is necessarily dis-jointed, then purported continuity at the heart of authentic historical existence would be shown to be illusionary. The continuity of a unified life would be made possible by a dis-continuity that would lie so deep that it would be an inescapable part of authentic historical existence. Unlike the epistemological argument for the

\textsuperscript{774}We recognize that these expressions need to be put in quotations marks. As Lejeune has it, “we are dealing with a figure, with a 'manner of speaking' that does not fool us: everything happens _as if_ the story were becoming contemporaneous with its narration.” (Lejeune 59) I believe that this manner of speaking, this trope, is indeed a powerful one. And while I recognize that it might be one instance of what Wittgenstein has called ‘a picture holding us captive,’ I think that the grip that this picture exerts is firm. If the idea that the narrative ‘culminates’ in the moment of narration were to entail a moment of “trans-substantiation”, an instance of the ‘word becoming flesh’, I would take this not as an argument against this trope but rather as evidence for the complex ontology that underlies what appears to be a very mundane practice: the practice of giving a narrative account of ourselves.

\textsuperscript{775}Lejeune 59.

\textsuperscript{776}Wittgenstein, _Philosophical Investigations_ §115.
inescapability of nostalgia that we have examined in the first part of this chapter, the temporal-ontological argument would show that “nostalgia” names a general, rather than merely a marginal condition of the being of the sovereign individual. Nostalgia is not merely of the inauthentic sovereign individual, but of the sovereign individual as such.

5.2.2. Superficial (discursive) vs. deep time (time of narrative)

The first aspect of the time of auto-narrative pertains to the narrative qua narrative, i.e., irrespective of the specific subject matter of a given narrative. Louis O Mink has described the paradoxical nature of historical narratives by saying that “temporal order is not the essence of historical judgment.” To give a narrative account of the past means to recount a series of past events. This seemingly trivial claim is in fact one that, according to Mink, obscures the essentially atemporal nature of historic understanding. The historian's prerogative is to see things together in a “synoptic judgment”. To understand a series of events that necessarily took place in time means that “in an act of judgment [we] hold together in thought events which no one could experience together.”

Analogously, to understand one's life as a meaningful whole requires that we think it as “a single complex whole.” The individual parts that make up this complex whole are “bound together in an order of significance.” Time that has become comprehended is “no longer the river which bears us along but the river in aerial view.” Comprehended time is no longer the river as movement but the river as a body of water. The sequential nature of the description of the results of historical understanding is “an accidental consequence of the fact that language is discursive” and that we can

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777Mink (1966) 43.
778Cf. Mink 91966) 43.
779Mink (1966) 44.
782Mink (1970) 554.
783Mink (1966) 38.
describe a complex event only by describing the constituent events and their interrelationship one after the other. As Mink notes, the sequentiality of a narration belongs to the “accidental features of the way in which it [i.e., the object of understanding] is described and illustrated rather than ... the act of judgment to which it refers.” What is essential about this kind of understanding is thus ironically obfuscated by the only way in which it can be presented: the sequential narrative account, so that Ricoeur thus notes the paradox that “narrative activity ... participates in the dissimulation” of that which it seeks to represent.

If the most complete and instructive manifestation of Besinnung is the autobiography then the discursive account of the meaningful unity of a life can represent this meaning only seriatim and thus requires the ability of the reader to grasp the whole meaning in a new synoptic act of understanding. Even though we can describe the meaning only sequentially, the meaning of a life is always “exhibited” (Mink) by the entire narrative of this life.

Mink's reflections reveal a first important feature of the time of narrative: if narrative is the form that is most suited to represent the object of historic understanding, then the time of narrative cannot be reduced to the time of narration, understood as the chronological/sequential telling of a story. This idea is echoed by Ricoeur who argues that “every narrative combines two dimensions ... one chronological and the other nonchronological.” The first of these two dimensions Ricoeur names “episodic”, “which characterizes the story as made out of events.” The non-chronological or

784Mink (1966) 38.
786If we apply this to the story of a life, we can say that the most common question “What happened next?” is indicative of the wrong kind of attitude toward the narrative. This kind of Neugier [curiosity] is what for Heidegger leads to scattering, which is diametrically opposed to the unity that is afforded by the narratability of one's life. It leads to a story that is full with events yet devoid of any overarching (unifying) meaning. The richness of the life disintegrates into the poverty of meaning and a plenitude of interesting details. That is not to say that a meaningful story needs to be boring and poor in action. However, for the perceptive reader this action will exhibit a meaning that will make the outcome of the various events perhaps not predictable but at least “acceptable” (cf. Ricoeur [1981] 170). For the attentive reader a story will hence be “boring”, for it is as if he has read it already, yet this boredom is directly related to an ontological quality of the existence that is represented in a narrative.

“configurational” dimension of a narrative describes the fact that “the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events.”

It is in virtue of this second dimension that narratives consist not only of a collection of events that are being recounted but that these events add up to form a story, i.e., a sequence of interrelated events that has a separate meaning and its own time above and beyond the individual events and their conjunction. Using the classical poetological terminology of Aristotle, Ricoeur calls these dimensions the “theme” or “thought” of the narrative (dianoia) and the “plot” (mythos). The time of narrative is not merely that of a pure succession or sequence because a narrative does not consist of a series of narrated events but of the plot, which means that the different events do not simply follow one another but form a unified whole, a whole which is not the totality of narrated events but rather that which the totality of these events signifies (only) as a whole. That the narrated events form such a whole is not due to the narration of these events, i.e., to the fact that a narrative comprises a contingent number of events, but rather the inverse: what justifies the narration of just these events is the fact that they form a self-contained unity. This difference is important because it entails that in order to understand a given narrative we must grasp not just “the whole of it [i.e., the narrative]” but rather “a whole in it.”

According to Ricoeur it is precisely “the correlation between thought and plot supersedes the 'then' and 'and then' of mere succession.” The unifying thought limits the intelligibility (or “followability”) of the plot in such a way that each subsequent event of the plot must be “acceptable” given what we already know about the plot. As such, the end of a narrative is always already prefigured in the beginning which in turn entails that the end of the narrative qua narrative is never merely the

791“The word narrative or mythos,” explains Frye, “conveys the sense of movement caught by the ear, and the word meaning or dianoia conveys, or at least preserves, the sense of simultaneity caught by the eye. We listen to the poem as it moves from beginning to end, but as soon as the whole of it is in our minds at once we 'see' what it means ... we have a vision of meaning or dianoia whenever any simultaneous apprehension is possible.” (Anatomy of Criticism, 77/78)
792Frye (1957) 78.
793Ricoeur (1981) 175.
final moment of the narrated sequence of events. It is rather latently present throughout the entire narrative. This becomes particular apparent in fictional narratives where after having reached the final line of the story we can ask the non-redundant question, “What was the point of all that?” Every (fictional) narrative allows for the question of its interpretational end. This end is not present at any given moment of the narrative, even “the last,” but rather names the signifying quality of the narrative as a whole. To “understand” a narrative is thus not just to follow the account of the individual events that make up the plot but to grasp the overall significance of the narrated events, to grasp the thought that carries (and unifies) the narration of these events. If this point or thought is not a moment or event in the narrated sequence of events, then the end of a narrative is never just the last chapter of the narrative. The actual ending, i.e., as the final event in a series of events, is as “accidental” as all of them insofar as it belongs to the sequential rather than the configurational dimension of the narrative. This ambiguity of the “end” of a narrative is lost if we think of it merely as the moment in which the story is resolved. The genuine “end” of the story is the thematic point of the narrative from which all of its episodes are equidistant (and equally meaningful) and thus comes out to the same degree at any moment. This point is not located anywhere “in” the narrative but constitutes the totality of the narrative as such. It is the thought that unifies the episodic dimensions of the narrative. It is to this point that the narrator is most intimately related, rather than the end point of the sequence of the narrative that ostensibly “borders” on the narrator's present. The point of narration is the point from where the plot is discernible and thus the only point from which narration is possible inasmuch as the quintessential narrative act is the capacity of emplotment of discrete events. The narrator thus belongs to the interpretive (i.e., atemporal) end of the narrative rather than the ending of the narrative's sequential, episodic dimension.

For example: If we asked a person who has read The Sound and the Fury what the book is about and they could only tell us what the plot is, we would not say that they “understood” the book, namely because question, “What was the narrative about?” is not answered by retelling the events that make up the plot of the narrative. (In fact many narratives are written in such a way that the sjuzhet can only be “disentangled” if we understand what the point of narrative is.)
Yet, to understand a narrative requires at the same time that we do follow the plot and that we identify the "point" of the narrative as a whole.\textsuperscript{795} In historical narratives, by contrast, the thought, point, or "significance of it all" can only logically be distinguished from the plot itself. Phenomenologically the two coincide. The "thought" is not that which an author communicates to a reader but it is the immanent meaning in the events themselves (and it is the narrator's role to make this meaning manifest). Yet, insofar as historical narratives are interpretive, the plot always already depicts a series of events in their significance for each other. In the case of literary narratives the distinction between thought and plot allows for the possibility of discerning a narrative meaning above and beyond the narrated plot, i.e., not just as a unified story but as a story that has a further irreducible meaning. In historical narratives, in contrast, the difference colours the entire narrative as an interpretation of facts about the past. When we construct a historical narrative we must ask ourselves what the significance of the various events is. The historical narrative begins with the discernment of a pattern. That means that pattern/thought is constitutive of the historical narrative even though it is not constitutive as an independently perceptible part of the narrative itself. The "thought" is the principle of selection of the historical narrative and the motivating factor of the emplotment of the historical events as this particular narrative. This has important implications for our discussion: The co-presence of plot and thought entails that the time of narrative is never purely chronological. Put differently, the time of a historical narrative is irreducible to the time of a chronicle. That means that the end of narrative is incompletely characterized as the "moment" or "point" where the plot concludes. Since narrative is "both sequence and pattern" and "the humblest narrative is always more than a chronological series of events,"\textsuperscript{796} even on the plane of the narrated events we have a temporality that is more complex than a

\textsuperscript{795}In \textit{Anatomy of Criticism}, Frye expresses this idea as follows: "When a reader of a novel asks, 'How is this story going to turn out?' he is asking a question about the plot, specifically about that crucial aspect of the plot which Aristotle calls discovery or \textit{anagnorisis}. But he is equally likely to ask, 'What is the point of this story?' This question relates to \textit{dianoia}" (52).

\textsuperscript{796}Ricoeur (1981) 174.
mere chronological order, which in turn entails the claim that the act/event of narration borders on the “end” of the narrative obfuscates the fact that the “end” of the narrative is, according to its essence, always an ambiguous one.\textsuperscript{797}

This is not to belittle the importance of the episodic dimension of the narrative. After all, the (nonchronological) configurational dimension of narrative is not opposed to the episodic (chronological) dimension of the narrative. Ricoeur explicitly admonishes against a one-sided reading in his claim that narrative consists of both pattern (though, theme, configuration) and sequence. Just like a narrated sequence of events does not amount to a narrative without the unifying thought, “we cannot overcome the episodic dimension without suppressing the narrative structure.”\textsuperscript{798} Just like we misrepresent a river if we describe it solely as a body of water, we also misrepresent narrative time if we ignore the episodic dimension altogether which allows us to speak or conceive of “time” in the first place. According to Ricoeur, the hyphenation of the two in fact produces a time that is “more deeply temporal than the time of episodic narratives.”\textsuperscript{799} In the next section we will take a closer look at this “more deeply temporal” chronological dimension of narrative.

5.2.3. Teleological time

5.2.3.1. From chronology to teleology

The preceding reflections have allowed us to identify a first important dimension of the “complex” time of narrative, which is afforded to us by “the narrative matrix constituted by the plot.”\textsuperscript{800} That which narrative “represents” is never merely a succession of events. Although this dimension is integral to narrative it does not yet distinguish the narrative representation of time from other forms of

\textsuperscript{797}It also does not help if we say that the act of narration borders on the end of the narrated sequence of events (rather than the “narrative” as a whole). The interpretive end of the narrative cannot be divested from the sequential end because the sequential end only is the end of the narrative (rather than an afterthought to it) insofar as it expresses the same theme.

\textsuperscript{798}Ricoeur (1981) 175.

\textsuperscript{799}Ricoeur (1981) 175.

\textsuperscript{800}Ricoeur (1981) 167.
representation. There is without a doubt a sequential dimension to the time of narrative, and this
dimension is not merely superficial. Our goal in this section is to understand the specific nature of the
sequential dimension of narrative time. According to Ricoeur, the time of narrative cannot be reduced
to the “dialectic” of succession and stasis because narrative does not simply represent the past
chronologically but teleologically. 801 The narrative representation of my life must, qua narrative, treat
the events of my past as if they “had to” lead up to this present moment. This is not an (additional)
substantive claim that the narrative makes about the narrated events but rather derives from the very
mode of representation of historical narratives qua historical narratives. The present is no longer the
contingent moment of narration, it is the “destiny” of the narrative. This second temporal feature of
narrative is closely related to the first. We said above that narrative combines sequence and pattern.
Teleology is the essence of the part-whole relationship understood in temporal terms: To identify two
events as forming a whole means to understand that their subsequent occurrence is not merely
contingent but that the occurrence of the first event eo ipso signifies the beginning of the second event,
namely insofar as the distinction between the two is merely a superficial one. Conversely, the
belongingness of the two events entails that only the actualization of the second event actualizes the
full event. To the extent that the sequence is the unfolding of a total event, the final “chapter” of this
sequence is already prefigured in the beginning, and the totality of thus-related events constitutes a
development. This concept of development marks the intersection of historical being and narrativity.
The concept of development is implied in the definition of a narrative as the account of a coherent plot.
As Mink notes, “to follow a story is to follow a series of events across a series of contingencies to a
conclusion.” 802 The final chapter of such a story is not just the last chapter but the chapter that
concludes that narrated series of contingent events. Following a plot requires “understanding a series of

802Mink (1968) 683.
events *as* a development."^{803} This is a general feature that pertains to all narratives if we take 'narrative' in the strict sense of the term.^{804} All (auto)biographical narratives depict a life necessarily as teleological, not because the events that they depict could only have happened as they did happen but because the narrative is *constructed* with a particular end in mind. This end is the end of understanding what the unity of this life consists in. The narrative of this life therefore includes in the narrative only those chronologically earlier events that played a significant part in bringing about the final outcome, and the narrative itself proceeds (for the reader) as if the events were meant to lead to the outcome. It is because the narrative is constructed from its end that "the story's conclusion is the pole of attraction of the entire development."^{805} The events that are narrated *in sequentio* do not just follow one another (as so many others of which the narrative makes no mention did too)^{806}; what is essential about them is that they bear an internal relation to each other. This has significant implications for the phenomenon of auto-narration that we are interested in: it entails that the representational content of the narrative always marks the "destination" of the developmental trajectory that the life of the protagonist embodies, such that the protagonist thereby reveals herself to be her own destiny. "Destiny" (or "fate") is the proper name of that relation which we are loathe to represent as a static relation of abstract "identity" between a 'past-me' and a 'present-me'. In the following sections we will show why the latter characterization is misleading.

803Mink (1968) 686.
804 To see two events to be *continuous* with one another (rather than just *sequential*, and even where they are *not* sequential) is to see them as belonging to a bigger event of which these events form sub-parts. The part-whole relationship describes a static relation between two entities. To see two events as being "continuous" is not just to see that one came after the other but that one *had to* come after the other insofar as there were two parts of the same unfolding event whose unfolding *began* when the first event took place (i.e., that there is an inner necessity to the unravelling of the events.) To tell a story of X is precisely to trace X backwards through time, through the contingencies to its beginnings. To mark an events as "the beginning of the process that would lead to X" is to identify a process (a "total" event) that, for analytic purposes, we can break down into its constituent components, yet which we only understand if we grasp these different events together.
806 The directedness cannot be reduced to an objective datability that would constitute an external standard against which the proper sequence discerned....
5.2.3.2. The paradigmatic heroic quest of Odysseus\textsuperscript{807}

Critics of MacIntyre's (alleged) prioritization of literary (“fictional”) narratives have noted that the “lives” of its protagonists make poor role models for “real” people.\textsuperscript{808} However, this criticism rests on a fundamental misunderstanding that Ricoeur can help us to uncover. The paradigmatic (auto-)biographical narrative is the narrative of the heroic quest. And Odysseus's return from the battlefields of Troy to Ithaca is the paradigmatic example of such a heroic quest.\textsuperscript{809} The \textit{Odyssey} is the story of a heroic quest because it gives the account of an individual who is wholeheartedly dedicated to a single objective: the return to Ithaca.\textsuperscript{810} The eponymous hero of the \textit{Odyssey} manages to realize this end through the various adventures that he encounters. The events that make up the narrative of his voyage each tell the same one story: the story of Odysseus's return home. Each of the different “chapters” of the story tells but another one of its episodes. The various adventures that Odysseus victoriously passes amount to Odysseus resolutely keeping his ship on track to Ithaca.\textsuperscript{811} In order to understand what the exceptional story of Odysseus has to do with the historical account that the average person can give of their life, it is important to understand that the story of Odysseus presents the heroic topos in its most “external” form: it projects the heroism onto space and emplots the heroic quest as the literal journey to a desired place in time and space. Nevertheless, Ricoeur argues that the epic of Odysseus's exhibits an “existential deepening”\textsuperscript{812} of time that is the same deepening that we find in many other autobiographical narratives. “Repetition” (\textit{Wiederholung}), a concept that Ricoeur borrows from Heidegger, is what gives the passage of time a new meaning. This meaning is no longer that of impermanence and constant change but of an expansion of the present, i.e., of a “deep unity of

\textsuperscript{807}NB: The following reflections regarding Homer's \textit{Odyssey} are highly schematic. It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to prove the applicability of its major thesis to Homer's epic in all its detail.

\textsuperscript{808}Cf. Lamarque 405f.

\textsuperscript{809}NB: Odysseus, nostalgia's most famous son, is also the epitome of the narrative hero.

\textsuperscript{810}Cf. our remarks on Odysseus in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{811}Margaret Atwood has offered an alternative reading to Odysseus's supposedly indefatigable steadfastness in the \textit{Penelopiad}.

\textsuperscript{812}Ricoeur (1981) 180.
future, past, and present." Writes Ricoeur, “With the Odyssey, the character of repetition is still imprinted in time by the circular shape of the travel in space. The temporal return of Odysseus to himself is supported by the geographical return to his birthplace, Ithaca.”

For our purposes Ricoeur's most important insight, however, is that this return, which in the case of Odysseus is still only taken in its most external manifestation, does not need to manifest itself externally. To the extent that repetition becomes interiorized it becomes the essence of historical subjectivity as such. This interpretation of the Odyssey is reminiscent of Adorno and Horkheimer's interpretation of the same story in Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947), in which Odysseus is conceived of as the proto-typical modern subject. Adorno and Horkheimer's classification of the Odyssey as a story of “self-preservation” directly supports this reading of the heroic homecoming of Odysseus, according to which the plot of the homecoming is closely linked to the themes of personal identity and the unity or coherence of life. “In the multitude of mortal dangers which he has had to endure, the unity of his own life, the identity of the person, have been hardened.” What makes Odysseus's life “heroic” is his ability to resist the constant threat of losing himself in each of the new adventures that he has to face. On Adorno and Horkheimer's account, the fundamental danger to which Odysseus is (repeatedly) exposed on the voyage is the loss of self. According to Ricoeur, we can witness the interiorization of repetition in Saint Augustine's Confessions, a work widely considered to be the first major autobiography in Western literature: “Here the form of the travel is interiorized to such a degree that there is no longer any privileged place in space to which to return. It is a travel 'from the exterior to the

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815 Adorno & Horkheimer 25.
816 The threat of the loss of self – or as Heidegger puts it: of becoming “scattered” [zerstreut] – is present whenever by overcoming the manifold of distractions that “has no place in the functional context of self-preservation.” (Dialectic of Enlightenment, 22) Translated into the spatial terms (which, on Adorno and Horkheimer's account needs to be understood in its allegorical meaning), it signifies that Odysseus manages to keep his ship on track to Ithaca. At no time does he abandon his return home. In retrospect, i.e., in the narrative of his return to Ithaca, all the moments in which his homecoming seems to be finally derailed only bear witness to and exemplify the hero's unwavering resolve. As such, the narrative of the hero's life becomes a monument to his triumphs.
interior, and from the interior to the superior' (Ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab interioribus ad superiora). The model created by Augustine is so powerful and enduring that it has generated a whole set of narrative forms down to Rousseau's Confessions and Proust's Le Temps retrouvé ... The quest has been absorbed into the movement by which the hero—if we may still call him by that name—becomes who he is.\textsuperscript{817} According to Ricoeur, the stories of Odysseus, Saint Augustine, Rousseau and Marcel are all equally “heroic” narratives. St. Augustine, Rousseau and the protagonist of Proust's A la recherche all recount their life in such a way that the narrated events belong together and constitute a development toward an end point that was already prefigured in the very beginning. Through repetition one's life acquires “substantive continuity” (Kierkegaard). What distinguishes these stories from the ostensibly more “literal” story of Odysseus is that “[memory] is no longer the narrative of external adventures stretching along episodic time. It is itself the spiral movement that, through anecdotes and episodes brings us back to the almost motionless constellation of potentialities that the narrative retrieves. The end of the story is what equates the present with the past, the actual with the potential. The hero is who he was.\textsuperscript{818} Note Ricoeur's language: The hero “is” who he “was”, and this is to be understood in the sense that the present is but the actualization of what in the past we already were potentially. The post-Odyssean hero does not lose himself\textsuperscript{819}, this hero reaches his “destination”, which is no longer conceived of as a determinate place but rather as the hero's own unified self. The post-Odyssean hero “fulfils his destiny,” which means: the post-Odyssean hero recovers his past as the beginning of a development that culminated in the present. The hero “returns” to himself; or, to put it in colloquial terms, the hero stays true to himself.\textsuperscript{820} In the terminology that we have preferred in Chapter

\textsuperscript{817}Ricoeur (1981) 182.  
\textsuperscript{818}Ricoeur (1981) 182.  
\textsuperscript{819}This must not be understood in the sense in which the expression “to get lost” is meant. The “oneself” is rather the object that one loses. The person who has lost himself no longer returns to his previous endeavours, he no longer connect with that which has been; thus turning what 'has been' into that which 'is no more'.  
\textsuperscript{820}Applying a Kierkegaardian lens to this, we can take this again in a dual sense: empirically it means that Odysseus does not abandon his plan to return to Ithaca. It means that Odysseus resumes that which he has set out to achieve. Metaphysically, it means that Odysseus stays true to his true self as the being whose existence finds its highest expression in being an in-dividual, in becoming the kind of being that is capable of acquiring a history. (See Either/Or
we can say that the hero takes responsibility for his past.

The surpassing of a now past present (its “passéification”) for the sake of the next adventure is in fact the re-affirmation of that which appears to have been surpassed. The pastness of this “past” can consequently not be conceived of as a negated (former) present, i.e., a “not any more”, but as an abiding (resolute) orientedness toward the same fixed goal. The hero not only pursues a single goal; he abides by this goal. All the undeniable apparent differences notwithstanding, the narratives of Odysseus and of Marcel tell fundamentally analogous stories: the stories of a life that is unified around a single purpose; the story of a genuine in-dividual.

Like Odysseus, who leaves Ithaca only to return to it, the (auto)biographical hero does not “leave behind” the earlier stages of his life but manages to discover the germ of his ultimate destiny in his earliest days, thereby recuperating these from the impersonal past. This is what makes this life “heroic” and his narrative “epic”: whatever the protagonist experiences either directly contributes to the attainment of his final goal or indirectly bears witness to the firmness of his resolve to not lose himself during the pursuit of this goal. While this may sound like a summary of the hero's accomplishments, the narrative qua narrative does not (indiscriminately) testify to what the hero has done and experienced but rather to the firm resolve that the hero displayed throughout their life, which at the level of the representation of this life makes possible a maximally thickened plot.

5.2.3.3. Heroism as an effect of narrative self-understanding

To say that the heroic individual reaches the destination of their quest or that the heroic

III.)

821 Odysseus as well finds himself in ever-new adventures, yet he encounters all of these adventures on the same journey. This journey does not merely connect the different adventures externally. The adventures do not happen “on” the journey home; they are the “journey home”.

822 Perhaps we should better say, around a “unifiable” purpose. This allows for the possibility of the pursuit of several goals that can nevertheless be integrated into the same coherent narrative.

823 Cf. our remarks on ‘retrieval’ in Chapter 3.
narrative tells the story of the hero's return to himself does not commit us to any metaphysical claims about a predestined outcome of our lives. It rather means that if narrative first produces rather than reproduces life in its meaningfulness, then the narrative of our life (understood as a meaningful totality) is always a narrative that must conclude where it concludes.\textsuperscript{824} The fatefulness of our existence is an effect of the narrativity of this existence; or as Ricoeur says, “Fate is recounted.”\textsuperscript{825} It is a foregone conclusion that the final chapter of the narrative must be the chapter with which the narrative concludes.\textsuperscript{826} To give an account of the life that concludes with the final chapter means to reconstruct the development of the protagonist that culminates in the present which thereby becomes the protagonist's destiny (or “fate”). Our narrative heroism and the concomitant fatefulness of our existence have their origin in the specific narrative mode of representation, which is tantamount to saying that the teleology of narrative time is not a substantive claim about the narrated events. If we took the claim “I am my destiny” to mean that I, the narrator, had to become who I am, i.e., if it meant that what the narrative is “about” could not have been any different, we would thoroughly misunderstand the narratological nature of the claim. This claim would only entail a metaphysical determinism if the (past) 'I', whose destiny I am, referred to a past experiential 'me', i.e., if the claim about the subject of the narrative was in fact a claim about the subject of the original experience.\textsuperscript{827} ‘Destiny’ is an effect of the narrative understanding of the past, more specifically of the past of a human self (i.e., their history),

\textsuperscript{824}This is certainly one of the claims that a critic of the narrative thesis like Lippitt would consider to support his claim that narrative falsifies the reality of human time. To this we respond that it does not falsify lived time but rather reveals the asymmetry between a life as it is lived and a life that is understood. In light of the previous reflections, this claim needs qualification. Since we always already comport ourselves understandingly toward our life, the clear distinction between life as it is lived (“forward”) and life as it is understood (“backward”) is at most an analytic distinction. Our actions are for the sake of something that is yet to be realized. We understand our actions from the vantage point of what they are intended to realize. We are, as Heidegger puts it, always already ahead of ourselves inasmuch as our activity is purposive.

\textsuperscript{825}Ricoeur (1981) 184.

\textsuperscript{826}The contrast to this lies not in a different kind of narrative (i.e., an “unheroic” narrative) but in a life that resists the attempt to be narrativized, or: a life that is falsified by its own narrativization.

\textsuperscript{827}This may sound like the subject of the auto-narrative is never the subject of the original experience. In reality, no autobiography will only contain material that is auto-biographical in the strict sense that allowed us to clearly distinguish it from a chronicler's account of the past. Above we already alluded to the fact that much of the time we do not narrativize our past. In any actual autobiography, the autobiographical will be mixed with the anecdotal.
to the extent that historical understanding is narrative and narratives consist of intelligible plots. We misrecognize the poetic nature of narrative if we merely treat it as a medium through which I talk “about” something that has a reality outside of the narrative and that the narrative merely copies. The dramatic view of life is always a productive seeing. It is therefore indeed somewhat misleading to say that narrative merely “re-counts”, if we take the “re” to indicate a “recapitulation”, a second time. On the contrary, the past that we narrate is a past that was never present. 828 829

The “re-” indicates the direction of the narrative mode of understanding. The intelligibility that historical narratives afford is always a retrospective intelligibility. Narrative traces backward and, as Mink notes, in going backward, “there are no contingencies.” 830 After all, what interests us in the narrative are the events in their significance for each other. That which the narrator “re-counts” she had to construct (i.e., emplot) in the first place: “when we tell the story, we retrace forward what we have already traced backward.” 831 And thus the auto-narrative does not recount the life of its protagonist as it could ever have presented itself to the protagonist himself and the narrative is not a reconstruction of a proto-narrative past (even though the narrator “is” the protagonist). 832 When we say that the claim “I am my destiny” is narratological rather than a metaphysical claim we mean that this notion is exclusively applicable to the subject of the narrative. The referent of the (auto-)narrative is not any past experiential subject, one that by virtue of the unity of consciousness would be “identical” to the present subject who does the narrating. 833 The “protagonist” is not the experiential self. If the narrative were about the

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828 On this point, cf. also Mink (1968) 690. That is not to say that it is not real but rather points to the fact that the historical real comprises res factae and res fictae. (Cf. Koselleck 281.)

829 Here we notice an interesting parallel between historical narratives and the experience of nostalgia: As we saw in the first chapter, one of the charges that is commonly levelled to discredit nostalgia is that it represents the past in an idealized form, that it represents the past not how it “really” was but only how it appears to us now. If our preceding reflections are correct, then this feature is not exclusive to the experience of nostalgia but always affects the narrated past as such.

830 Mink (1968) 687.

831 Mink (1968) 687.

832 The narrator is hence not committed to the claim that their understanding is also that of the protagonist of the narrative. In the auto-narrative it is admittedly sometimes difficult to tell whether the narrator speaks from his “memory” or whether he gives a more thoroughly narrative account; which could be used as an argument in favour of Cavarero’s claim that my biographer is always another.

833 The claim “In 2003 I left Münster because I was fed up with my life, especially with my relationship at the time,” does
experiential self, then we could not explain why any experience of that self could legitimately be excluded from the narrative of this self's life. As we said above, the narrative of a life does not recount the totality of a life in the entirety of its details but rather the totality of this life, i.e., it finds a whole in it and thus represents this life as a narrative unity.\textsuperscript{834} The subject that we encounter in the narrative in fact refers always already to the character in an (auto-)narrative, i.e., it is a figural embodiment of a stage of the (plot-)development, which is the product of the (auto)narrative representation of the self's past. This 'past me' that my narrative talks about is essentially distinct from the non-narrative 'me' who we can posit as the ontological subject of a past experience, a subject whose experiential world is infinitely richer than the narrative account of its life could ever capture.

To the extent that I seek to understand what my life has amounted to (i.e., what makes for the unity of my life), the “true” account of my past is not the account that gives the most factually complete account of my past experiential self. To talk about my past, then, is not to talk about the 'past-me' that I was at a given point in time and to give the most “accurate” depiction of this 'me' at said point of my life. The 'past me' that we encounter in the narrative, is literally a figure of understanding, the 'character' in the narrative of the person whose narrative it is. It rather means to talk about my past insofar as it determines me as the subject of my own (life-)narrative.\textsuperscript{835} The referent of the narrative is always the (present) narrating self who in answering the questions What did my life amount to? and How did I become who I am? discovers the difference between significant and insignificant past experiences and thereby constitutes itself as a person, i.e., as the subject of the narrative of its life. The past mes that we encounter in the narrative are inextricably connected to the present me of narration,

\textsuperscript{834}The same thing could be said about any historical event: One can argue the same point about the events of the French Revolution and the “inexhaustive” account that Thomas Carlyle gave of it. The processes of understanding a historical event and of representing “it” in the greatest possible detail are diametrically opposed.
not because they are identical (i.e., the “same” consciousness), but because they “emerge” only in the narrative of my life. Inasmuch as the narrative of my life represents a teleological development, the past me that we encounter in this narrative only figures in the narrative. The past 'me' is solely a category of understanding. I am not primarily the person who did and experienced the things that my narrative recounts. I am, qua historical understanding, first and foremost the person who is the destiny to the past me: and that means that those 'past mes' to whom I am not this destiny differ essentially from the ones that we encounter in the narrative.836

To sum up: To the extent that we are able to construct an (auto)biography, this autobiography likens us all to Odysseus, namely because the law of the genre of autobiography “signifies a heroism however ordinary.”837 Autobiography makes everyone the “hero” of their own narrative not merely because they are (by convention) the main character in their own narrative (the “protagonist”). Our personal heroism does not derive from the centrality of one's character in or for the narrative but rather from the possibility of a teleological account of this life, i.e., an account of a life that unfolds toward a destination that thereby comes to be prefigured in its beginning. To understand one's life as a (meaningful) totality (an expression that is all but pleonastic) means to understand it in such a way that that the final chapter of the narrative of this life concludes the story. If this life is shown to have unfolded in a “fateful” manner, it is not because it was guided by the “hand of fate” and could therefore not have unfolded differently but because it was constructed by the “hand” of the narrator who has

836The narrative conception of identity does not deny that the person who gives a narrative account of her life always did and experienced much more than is captured in the narrative of her life. Yet it is a misunderstanding to say that the narrative “excludes” other past episodes (of other identical past mes) and thus cannot lay claim to giving a "complete" account of my life. The narrative conception of identity, as it were, reverses the role between past and present as it is commonly understood: I am not determined by my past (i.e., who I am is not determined by the cumulative outcome of my past actions); I determine what this past is. (To say that the narrating I determines what his or her past is is not to say that I am “free” to “choose” my own past. It is because we understand the narrator's past from the present and this understanding seeks to discern the unifying development that culminates in the present moment that the past is, as it were, determined from the present.) This holds for the individual who has lived historically. The unhistorical “individual” is paradoxically all the things they have experienced and done, which amounts to saying that they are none of them in a robust personal sense.

understood what the immanent meaning of the manifold of events was, and who recounts this life only in its meaningfulness. The represented/recounted time of autobiography is historical-teleological. The idea that auto-narrative “spills over” into the present of the narrator misrecognizes that the time of auto-narrative is of a different temporal order altogether. The narrated (“heroic”) events are of a different time than the event of narration. To the extent that the act of narration is not a substantive part of the narrative (i.e., that it does not belong to my history, though other, earlier narrations of my life belong without a doubt to my past), it is as “extraneous” to the narrated story as those events that were completely left out of the narrative.³³⁸ To the extent that we represent the two “temporal orders” as continuous we lose what is an essential aspect of the time of narrative: its teleology.

5.2.4. Narrative anachrony

In the two preceding sections we looked at the time of narrative under the aspect of the temporality peculiar to the narrated sequence of events, the plot. At the beginning of the section we noted that narrative plots combine sequence with pattern. We said that the time of narrative cannot be reduced to the time of narration. The question that will occupy us in this final section is the following: Do we capture what is essential about the relation of the moment or event of narration and narrated story by saying that the events of the story took place prior to the narration of the story? Much will hinge on our answer to this question: If the events of the narrated story cannot be located along the same line at the end of which we “run up” against the narration of these events where the protagonist will, as it were, “meet” the narrator, then the time of narrative is not a unified thing but rather disjointed. And to the extent that we are the kind of being that gives an account of itself, i.e., the being whose essence comprises narrative and narration, the time of this being would be such that any attempt to gather ourselves up and to unify our being, i.e., any attempt to authentically appropriate our past, ³³⁸This is not to say that they are extraneous in the same sense. The next section will shed light on the exact nature of the event of narration.
would inevitably produce and reproduce an irremediably dis-unity.

5.2.4.1. Gérard Genette

The distinction between the time of the thing told (‘story time’) and the time of the telling or of the narrative (‘narrative time’) is well-established in narrative theory. The fact that this is not a peripheral issue for narratologists is attested by the fact that the discussion of the ambiguous temporality of narrative frames Gérard Genette's influential *Narrative Discourse* (1980). According to Genette, “our (Western) literary tradition ... was inaugurated by a characteristic effect of anachrony.”

By “anachrony” Genette means a “[type] of discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative.” Narrative scales down the time of life: events that took several years to happen are being recounted over the course of a single evening. That which took five full years out of one's life becomes but a chapter in one's story, capable of being read on an extended subway ride. In the final chapter of *Narrative Discourse*, where Genette discusses the topic of the (spatial, temporal, logical) relation between the generating instance of narration and the narrated story, he writes, “The chief temporal determination of the narrating instance is obviously its position relative to the story.”

Where narratives purport to recount events that have actually occurred, “[i]t seems evident that the narrating can only be subsequent to what it tells.” The very use of the preterite tense for the narration indicates a “temporal interval between story and narrating.” and suggests to the reader that the events of the narrated story precede their narration. The anteriority of the narrated events in relation to the moment of their narration implies that as the story unfolds, this temporal interval becomes (gradually) shorter as

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839 See Genette 33.
840 Genette 36.
841 Genette 36.
842 Genette 212.
843 Genette 216.
844 Genette 217.
845 Cf. Genette 212.
the narration progresses. The narrator, as it were, takes the reader deep into his or her own past and gradually leads him out this past and closer to their own present. Genette notes that certain narratives, first and foremost first-person narratives, appear to narrow the temporal gap between the narrated events and the moment of their narration to the point where this may even lead to a “final convergence” and a “temporal isotopy.”846 Where the narrative in question is historical rather than fictional, this moment of final convergence is precisely the moment in which the difference between the past and present self, i.e., the protagonist and the narrator, is neutralized. It is precisely the presuppositions afforded by the possibility of this temporal isotopy that auto-narratives appear to have that we question here.

_Pace_ Genette et al., I believe that this conception in fact misrecognizes what is essential about the relation between the narration and the content of the narration, and that misrecognition is particularly fateful in the case of historical narratives. We said earlier that the function of historical narrative is not to state what happened but to express the significance of that which happened. To recall the words of White, “a given emplotment of historical events is in the nature of a _performative_, rather than a _constative_, utterance.”847 Historical narratives do not merely purport to report what happened but rather have the claim to provide a plausible act of interpretation of the events that happened. “A historical interpretation,” writes White, “cast in the form of a narrative belongs to an order of locution to which characterizing, diagnosing, grading, ranking, rating, and so on belong.”848 If that is true, then the logically primary mark of the narrated events is not their facticity, i.e., _that_ they occurred (i.e., prior to their being narrated) – which is a mark that does not single out a given event from the mass of historically unimportant other events – but rather a relation, i.e., a quality, of significance to other events that becomes manifest only from the standpoint of the interpreter/narrator. On this account the

846Genette 221. Genette is not the only one who defends such a view. In fact, Hamburger makes a similar case for the idiosyncrasy of first-person narratives.
event of narration constitutes the uninterpreted\textsuperscript{849} site of interpretation. It alone would be a factual act in its purest form. In other words, the temporal interval between the narration and narrated events does not name what is the essential difference between the two. Genette is hence mistaken when he writes, “[in] the common practice of 'autobiographical' narrating, we could expect to see the narrative bring its hero to the point where the narrator awaits him, in order that these two hypostases might meet and finally merge.”\textsuperscript{850} He is mistaken if by “autobiography” he understands something different than “memoirs” or other less narrativizing accounts of person's life. The mistake then consists in misrecognizing the fundamental ontological difference between the event of narration and the narrated events.

To be fair, Genette argues that even in the case of fictional narratives, when narration and narrated story \textit{appear} to converge, what we have is the event of the story “catching up” with the narration of it but rather the \textit{convergence} of two “narrative levels.”\textsuperscript{851} By framing the phenomenon that we are examining as a convergence of levels, Genette treats the narration as if it were fully concurrent with the narrated events. However, the notion of different “levels” is a spatialisation that seems to reduce what we tried to explain as an ultimately temporal difference to a spatial “metaphor.”\textsuperscript{852} If the difference is not a measurable temporal distance, by what right then do we continue call that which “sets apart” the narration from the narrated events a “temporal” interval? The conceptualization of the two in terms of different spatial “levels” does not so much elucidate the distinctly temporal difference between the narrative and its narration as it reconceives of it in non-temporal terms. Against this we assert the claim that the time of the narration is indeed not the time of the narrative. Our justification for this is that the difference is an interval that is temporal in nature, even though it is not one that

\textsuperscript{849}Above we have noted the significance of the fact that the narration itself can never include itself amongst the significant events of a life, even though how a life is interpreted by the person whose life it is is an important consideration for another person. 
\textsuperscript{850}Genette 226.
\textsuperscript{851}Genette 228.
\textsuperscript{852}To be fair, Genette's book deals primarily with \textit{written} narratives in which any kind of temporalizing distinction seem inherently inappropriate.
merely describes a homogenous space that is now wider and now narrower. The temporal difference between narrative and narration always remains the same, because it is a difference in kind. To say that this is a difference “in kind” implies two things: First, it implies that the difference is not temporal in the sense that the narrated events and the event of narration constitute two moments along the same temporal plain. Secondly, it entails that whatever the difference is it is not an a-temporal difference (e.g., a difference of “levels”).

5.2.4.2. Käte Hamburger

We just heard that the most obvious sign for the apparently diachronic difference between the act of narration and the narrated events is the use of the past tense, which situates the narrated events in the past of the narrating subject. As Genette himself acknowledges, albeit only in a footnote, this claim has been famously contested by Käte Hamburger. In her The Logic of Literature (1973), Hamburger argues that in fictional narration “the preterite loses its grammatical function of designating what is past.”

The principal reason for this is that fictional narratives are essentially productive.

The argument that I am proposing here is the following: if auto-narratives can be shown to be sufficiently similar to those narratives in which the preterite does not have the function of designating the past, then we have reason to assume that the narrated events are not “past” in relation to the moment of narration (assuming of course that Hamburger's analysis of the logic of the epic preterite in literary narratives is sound.) If this is true, then the narrative does not gradually narrow the temporal gap between the narrated events and the moment of their narration, and even as a 'matter of speaking' this trope becomes dubious.

In non-fictional discourse the function of the past tense is to indicate that that which is reported in the past tense has taken place sometime in the past, i.e., that is past in relation to the here and now of
the person who reports these events. The function of the past tense is the presentification [Vergegenwärtigung] of things past. Fictional narratives, by contrast, make no claim to the actual occurrence of that which is narrated. “The preterite in narrative literature no longer functions to designate past-ness solely because literature does not presentify in a temporal sense.”

Even though the statements of a narrative appear to be about something past (and that always means past in relation to the moment of narration), in fact they are not statements at all. Writes Hamburger, “As a sentence in a novel it does still have the form of a declarative sentence, but nevertheless it does not represent a declaration, since it no longer has the structure of the statement.” That means, the narrated content is not a grammatical object in relation to the narrating subject.

Although Hamburger herself explicitly identifies this as a dividing mark between fictional and historical narratives, I think that her ideas can help us to shed more light on the complex time of auto-narratives, even if that means that we have to read Hamburger against her own words. If we want to apply Hamburger's insights to the category of auto-narratives we need to find a sense in which historical narratives are productive without thereby becoming “fictional”, i.e., the “mere” product of the imagination. This is not only a concession that Hamburger exacts from us but is necessitated by

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854 Hamburger 185. Throughout The Logic of Literature Hamburger demonstrates by means of numerous examples that the past tense in fictional narratives can perform various functions and that the manifold of these functions cannot be reduced to the reporting of what has happened in the past. Hamburger thus concludes that the past tense “is merely the substratum in which the narrative must proceed. As a past tense per se it is just as unnoticed as the canvas in a painting; and of the verb ... there remains only the semantic content.” (109) This, Hamburger argues, is not merely a psychological phenomenon but “the behavior of language itself” (71). – It should be noted that Hamburger exempts first-person (fictional) narratives from this characterization, or to be more precise, she reserves a special status for them: “The phenomenology of the first-person narrative ... reveals that this narrative is a non-fictional literary type occurring within the epic-fictional sphere” (337). Hamburger argues that in these narratives the use of the preterite mimics that of historical narratives, which Hamburger uses as a justification for bracketing the fictional status of these narratives. Without a doubt, this classification flies in the face of how we generally think about first-person narratives, which could be taken as further evidence for my claim that the distinction between the two cannot solely be based on the logico-temporal differences between the two. Furthermore, the distinction is predicated on a monolithic understanding of “historical” narratives, which the category of auto-narratives effectively challenges. In short, it is not clear that the exemption that Hamburger creates for (fictional) first-person narratives withstands close scrutiny. Of course we are not in a position to perform the required close analysis to make the case against the exemption. Instead we must suffice ourselves with noting Hamburger's analysis of these narratives (which would likely affect her assessment of the use that we make of her ideas here).

855 Hamburger 135.

856 I take the word “mere” to distinguish between other “fictive” ways of speaking that make a general truth claim and those that make no such claim whatsoever. (See Hamburger 56f.)
our own understanding according to which historical narratives (including auto-narratives), despite all the caveats that we have introduced against any simplistic account of the meaning of this notion, purport to depict events that did actually take place.

One undeniable difference between the narrator of historical narratives and the narrator of fictional narrative lies in the cognitive attitude that each one assumes vis-à-vis the content of the respective narrative. The narrator of a historical narrative purports to know whereas the narrator of fictional narratives imagines the narrated events. All auto-narratives purport to take on a fundamentally recollective attitude toward their object. However, from a phenomenological perspective, the notion that recollection could be sharply distinguished from imagination is a positivistic pipe-dream, and is all the more dubious when the object of narration is an object of understanding. It is therefore of little help to say that the difference between factual narratives and fictional narratives rests on their respective cognitive “genesis,” i.e., on the assumption that one is recollected and the other is imagined. The difference rather lies in the general claim that either one makes respectively: either to recount what happened or to imitate this act of telling what happened by narrating what could happen. All historical narratives as such make a general truth claim and purport to advance claims that can be verified. Historical narratives can do this irrespective of the question what ‘truth’ is supposed to mean. In other words, the distinction between historical and fictional

857 We should note that Genette uses this difference precisely to challenge Hamburger’s “abolition” of the fictional narrator. Writes Genette, “The narrator of Père Goriot ‘is’ not Balzac, even if here and there he expresses Balzac's opinions, for this author-narrator is someone who 'knows' the Vauquer boardinghouse, its landlady and its lodgers, whereas all Balzac himself does is imagine it; and in this sense, of course, the narrating situation of a fictional account is never reduced to its situation of writing.” (214)

858 Above we noted that recollective attitude toward the past does not represent the past as past (as would normally be required for a properly recollective act) but that the historical recollection seeks to retain the past's significance for the present.

859 As Edward Casey writes, "Even if the historian writes as if he were himself remembering the events he recounts, such quasi-remembering is highly imaginified; it is in fact the product of an extensive collaboration between imagination and memory." ("Imagining and Remembering," 195.)

860 This general characterization goes all the way back to Aristotle's famous distinction between poetic and historical accounts that we find in Poetics: “[the difference between the historian and the poet] consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been and the other a kind of thing that might be.” (1451b4)
narrative is not dependent on any particular theory of truth. It is *this* difference (rather than the
supposed “realism” of historical narratives) that also explains another major difference between the
two, namely the pragmatic difference of the “purpose” of the narration of either narrative.\footnote{As Schapp notes, there are all kinds of things that we can “do” with the stories that we tell. If that were not the case, we would like tell our stories much less frequently than we commonly do.}

Furthermore, to the extent that historical narratives as such are less preoccupied with what
happened than with what the meaning/significance of that which happened was, the sentences of which
a historical narrative consists are not “statements” in the sense that Hamburger gives to this term. They
are not *primarily* “about” something. To the extent that historical narratives are *interpretive*, I would
contend that what Hamburger says about fictional narratives in fact also applies to historical narratives
(in the Whitean sense): “Only here does narration have the character of a productive function and not
that of a statement.”\footnote{Hamburger 137. Moreover, the reception of a historical narrative *in an economy* is also not a mere transfer of
information but has a poetic/productive function.} \footnote{Against this interpretation it could be objected that Hamburger deliberately and explicitly restricts the productive
function to fictional narratives. Her entire analysis of the epic preterite rests on an understanding of the function and
structure of the preterite in historical narration that we reject here. It could thus be objected that our argument does not
prove that the difference between historical and fictional narratives is less clear-cut than Hamburger seems to
acknowledge but that *therefore* her account of the function of the narrative preterite needs to be *radically* rethought. To
this our response is the following: The argument presented here does indeed challenge the sharp distinction between the
statement character of the sentences that we find in a historical narrative and the non-statement character of the
sentences in a fictional narrative. However, we challenge this distinction on the basis of a particular conception of
historical narrative (namely as interpretive). In no way do we challenge the claim that the general function of the
preterite in historical/factual discourse is to make a statement about an occurrence that took place prior to the moment of
its being-recounted. Our argument does not apply to any individual sentences but rather to the function of historical
narrative as a whole.} In the case of fictional narratives the act of narration is itself productive: it
connects and brings forth the objects of the narrative. While we may be tempted to call these objects
(persons, actions, events, etc.) the object “about” which the narrative is, for Hamburger this would
fundamentally distort their character as fictional entities, i.e., as entities that are produced by the
imagination of the poet-narrator (Hamburger). If this is true, then Hamburger's definition of “fictivity”
as signifying “that it does not exist independently of the act of narration, but rather that it only *is* by
virtue of being narrated, i.e., by virtue of its being a product of the narrative act”\footnote{Hamburger 136.} is *by itself*
insufficient to set fictional narratives apart from historical narratives. We ought to amend Hamburger's
definition to include at least one additional feature that is lacking in fictional discourse: a general truth
claim.

If historical narratives purport to advance an interpretation of events and this 'interpretation of'
is what is primary, then historical narratives are “fictive” in Hamburger's restricted sense of the term:
they produce an object – namely an interpretation of real events – that exists only by virtue of the act of
its narration. The narrator narrates the interpretation (which is just another way of saying that the
historical narrative is interpretive) even though s/he narrates at the same time about the events that s/he
interprets.865 This is easily overlooked if we conflate the events that the historical account interprets
with the interpretation itself. We can call the interpretation the specific mode of narration of the
historical narrative, which sets it apart from other accounts of the past that are not interpretive (e.g. the
chronicle). The interpretive nature of all historical narratives does not undermine the general truth
claim that all historical narratives as such make, but rather names very meaning that "truth" has with
respect to historical entities.

If our preceding remarks about the extendability of Hamburger's notion of fictivity to a least
some historical narratives is plausible (rather than a contradiction in terms), then the following remark
by Hamburger deserves our very special attention: “Its [i.e., epic fiction's] fictivity, that is, its non-
reality, signifies that it does not exist independently of the act of narration, but rather that it only is by
virtue of its being narrated, i.e., by virtue of its being a product of the narrative act.”866 Narrated reality
is not simply reality that is narrated. It exists only as narrated reality.867 This in turn entails that the
relation between narration and narrated is “not a subject-object relation, i.e., a statement structure, but

865 Writes Hamburger, “the unique 'creative act of the novel's narrator, not to narrate about people, but to narrate them, i.e.,
by means of narration to produce them in the 'subjectivity' of their existence.” (163)
866 Hamburger 136.
867 Cf. Hamburger 159.
rather a functional correspondence.” And this precludes the possibility that we can in any plausible way say that the moment of narration is where the narrative ends. The qualification “as if” will not help us out here.

The narration is not the end point of the narrative but rather its sustaining ground: its beginning in the Heideggerian sense. The narration does not constitute the endpoint of the narrative but rather the being-narrated of the narrative. It names the essence of the narrative. Narrator and narrative belong to the same ontological Gefüge [structure]. We misrepresent the relation between narrator and protagonist if we represent it as sequential or consecutive. Their relation is always a correlation. Between the situation/position of the narrator and the protagonist there is not a variable distance that is now bigger and now shorter depending on “where” the narrative begins. We cannot draw a straight line between the site of narration and the topos of the narrative. The topography of the narrative self cannot be flattened out like this because between the two logical poles we have in fact an onto-genetic relation. It would therefore be misleading to say that the narrative leads from the past to the present, i.e., to the moment of narration. The “distance” between the two is like the distance between the person in front of the mirror and the person “in” the mirror: we are now closer now farther away from the mirror, but not from what is “in” the mirror. A seemingly similar point is found in Paul De Man's theory of autobiography: “The autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution.” While this may sound like Steedman's claim about the temporal continuity of life and narrative (or narration and story), De Man explicitly states that “the specular moment is not primarily a situation or an event that can be located in a history”

In fictional narratives, the narrated world, writes Hamburger, “is there only because of [the

868 Hamburger 136; italics removed.
869 De Man 921.
870 Ibid.
narrator], i.e., by virtue of the fact that it is narrated.”

It would seem that we cannot assert the same claim with respect to auto-narratives if we want to maintain that auto-narratives are historical and that they purport to refer to events that actually took place. The entities that the auto-narrative posits are not fictional. However, auto-narratives do not primarily posit objects, which has to do with the unique feature of auto-narratives which is that they do not primarily represent “things” (events and occurrences) that have an independent existence. All this is not to deny that in any given empirical auto-narrative the preterite tense indicates the statement-character of the sentences, just like it does in other historical narratives. If we take the event of narration as the event that can be located in space and time, i.e., as the empirical event of narration, then it is indeed “from here” that the recounted events have a measurable temporal distance. But our claim is not falsified by the empirical fact that we may well have posited the narrated events in the past or that our narrations of events in our past is accompanied by our consciousness of their pastness. What we are describing here is not an experiential but rather an ontological quality.

Both Genette and Hamburger have argued that the surest prima facie indication that would suggest that the narrated events occurred before the act of narration is the use of the preterite tense, because we generally use the preterite tense to talk about events that took place in the past. Yet even in the case of empirical narratives, the idea that the preterite indicates a quantifiable temporal distance between narrator and narrated events is misleading. According to Hamburger, insofar as fictional narratives are productive, “The grammatical past tense form loses its function of informing us about the past-ness of the facts reported.”

The epic preterite has an atemporal meaning that effectively reduces all temporal relations that narrative represents to logical rather than substantive relations.

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871Hamburger 162.
872Hamburger 71. The preterite tense thereby becomes “merely the substratum in which the narrative must proceed.” Even the narrator can still draw on what Hamburger calls the “connotative valeur of facticity” (120), the function of the verb is mostly reduced to its semantic content. (See Hamburger 109.)
873Cf. Hamburger 167.
I believe that we can observe a similar “neutralization” of the ‘when’ and thus indirectly of the function of the past tense in auto-narratives: To the extent that the auto-narrative seeks to capture what is essential about the life of the narrator (i.e., that which abides), the past-ness of the reported events designates primarily not their (ontological-temporal) difference or distance from the present (i.e., their not-being-anymore) but rather the opposite: namely their co-presence and “eternal validity” (Kierkegaard) for the narrator who narrates his “past”, albeit not as something past but as a way to give an account of who s/he is as a historical being, and whose past is thus the site of her Ge-wesen-heit: her abiding essence. In this form of narrative it is less essential when something happened than that it happened. Pastness does not indicate an inactuality (the extent of which would be measurable in terms of the days or years that have passed since the event in question occurred) but rather its timeless significance for the subject whose identity is most intimately determined by these events. It is on the basis of their timeless relevance for us that the distance (which is first and foremost a distance that the event has for others, namely the datable/measurable distance of intersubjective time) acquires the unique significance that this distance has exclusively for us. As such, temporal relations within the auto-narrative play a similar role in auto-narratives as they play in fictional narratives: in either one it is “only a matter of a conceptual awareness of such relations and not of these relations themselves.” That is the case because in the auto-narrative it is precisely not the negative relevance of the narrated content for the narrator (that this is no longer “effective,” i.e., that it is past) but rather, on the contrary, its essential (lasting) pertinence to them.

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874 See Hamburger 81.
875 The “when” refers to the impersonal time that is datable; the “that” signifies that this event concerns the person to “whose” past it belongs it is in a unique because individualizing manner.
876 “Time” must here be understood in the sense of “chronological time.”
877 It is only on the basis of the timelessly relevant events that are constitutive of our self-hood that inter-subjective (public) time becomes possible, namely to the extent that this time is a time of selves (i.e., it is a political time, in the Arendtian sense of the word).
878 The measurable distance of an event that we have experienced is never identical, nor can it be made identical, to the distance that this even's existence has for someone who did not experience it. They are different in kind.
879 Hamburger 167.
In this respect auto-narratives do in fact resemble “fictional” narratives more than historical narratives even though they have the same claim to truth as historical narratives. We can explain the ambiguous nature of the auto-narrative and its difference from other historical narratives (in comparison to which they are more fictional than historical narratives) by the pivotal fact that while the historian may indirectly speak of himself never speaks about himself, and most importantly never narrates himself. What this means is that, again, the temporal distance of the narrated events from the moment of narration is not denied but that its significance is subordinated to a conception of the relation between the narrator and their past that elicits precisely the non-temporal (non-chronological) meaning of this past.

5.2.4.3. Objections

We will end our discussion of the time of narrative with two related objections that can reasonably be expected to be raised by the attentive reader and which this author, in anticipation of the occurrence of this, will thus attempt to address prophylactically. The discussion of this objection will furthermore prepare us for the ultimate conclusions that our discussion of narrative leads to.

The first objection that one could raise is that the account of the discontinuous/diachronic nature of the time of (auto-)historical narratives is self-defeating. It is self-defeating because what we have said about autobiographical narratives would have to apply to biographical and thus any other historical narrative as well. But if the preterite tense always has an atemporal meaning, namely in virtue of the interpretive nature of all historical narratives, then the distinction between historical and fictional narratives on which Hamburger's account is predicated is in peril. This objection, if we could not successfully respond to it would seriously undermine the plausibility of our argument. The second objection pertains to the possibility of being mistaken about the narrative and, by extension, the unity of one's life, which figures prominently in the discussion of the narrative identity thesis. We already
briefly engaged with this question in the conclusion to the first part of this chapter, but will now provide a more comprehensive answer to the question whether or not the possibility of my being mistaken about my own narrative threatens our general thesis of the temporal dis-unity of the narrative self.

5.2.4.3.1. First objection

Since we have built our argument for the extendability of Hamburger's account of the atemporal meaning of the narrative preterite on the interpretive nature of autobiographical accounts, it would seem that our conclusion must be extended to all historical narratives, provided that the latter are interpretive. However, based on our above characterization, most (if not all) historical narratives are in fact interpretive, which would entail that what we have said about the atemporal meaning of the narrative preterite applies to most, if not all historical narratives. In order to be able to utilize Hamburger's insights we are committed to accepting the distinctions on which her ontology is predicated. But if our argument required us to extend our insights to historical narratives in general, it would become highly questionable if the distinction between fictional and historical narratives would remain sufficiently robust to yield the conceptual and logical distinction that our appropriation of Hamburger's theory implicitly presupposes. One of these is precisely the fundamental distinction between fictional and historical discourse, a distinction which is grounded in Hamburger's specific analysis of discursive time.

What this entails is that we cannot solely ground our claim about the atemporal meaning of the narrative preterite in the interpretive nature that auto-narratives have in virtue of their belongingness to the class of historical narratives. In responding to this objection we can draw on the work of Harald Weinrich who in *Tempus* (1985) has attempted to universalize Hamburger's important insight into the temporal meaning of the epic preterite. According to Weinrich's view, “Not only the 'epic preterite', i.e.,
the German preterite tense, has when it is used in fictional literature the properties described by
Hamburger. The tenses in general have a signalling function that cannot be adequately described as
information about time.”

Weinrich himself acknowledges that this entails that we cannot draw an a priori distinction between literary and non-literary texts.

To understand why this is not fatal for our argument we have to remind ourselves of the general theoretical framework in which our account of auto-narratives has been situated all along: My narrative is my identity which, in turn, is my social Seinkönnen. There where my identity is determined by what I have done, that which I can do is determined by what I have already done; but also what I have done is conversely determined by what I can still do and that I still can do it. (We said that this describes the condition – social, political, ideological – in which the human being is essentially free.) Our argument about the interpretive nature of historical narratives applies indeed to all historical narratives as such. To the extent that I take autobiographical narratives to belong to the general class of ‘historical narratives’, autobiographical narratives are interpretive and therefore “poetic” or “productive” in the described sense. However, the claim that auto-narratives are “historical” captures only a part of the truth about auto-narratives.

We can illustrate this point by focusing on the unique authorial situation of auto-biographical narratives. Pace Olney, an “auto-”biography is not simply a biography whose author happens to be the “identical” with the “subject” or “protagonist” with whose life the biography deals. If the specificity of the autobiographical account lay solely in the fact that it is I who does the narrating, and if this same narrating could in principle be performed by another, then autobiographies would not have the special general and philosophical significance that they have. The fact that we may “know” certain things about ourselves that “no one else” knows would make autobiographies only valuable for someone who

880 Weinrich (1985) 27; all translations mine. ["Nicht nur das 'epische Präteritum', d.h. das deutsche Tempus Präteritum, sonfern es in fiktionaler Dichtung verwendet wird, hat die von Käte Hamburger beschriebenen Eigenschaften, sondern die Tempora haben insgesamt Signalfunktion, die sich als Informationen über Zeit nicht adäquat beschreiben lassen.”]
881 See Olney 236ff.
is oblivious of the fact that my identity is exhibitive (and instead believes that my “true” identity is something that is necessarily hidden from view and is accessible only through introspection), i.e., that we are as much strangers to ourselves as we may be our most informed biographer. Epistemologically, auto-biographies must always seem deficient in comparison to hetero-biographies.

We are mistaken to think that we obtain the concept of an “auto-biography” by adding the element of “self-referentiality” ("autos") to the concept of “biography.” The fact that I narrate my story changes the meaning of my narrative crucially. Put differently, when it comes to the difference between auto-narratives and hetero-narratives, we would make a critical mistake if we acted as if it did not matter who is speaking.\(^{883}\) This has to do with the fact that I can never take myself as an object. Whenever I appear to be talking “about” myself, I am in fact narrating myself, and the account that my narration gives has a crucially different function compared to situations in which another is telling my story. Autobiographical narratives are not just poetic, which is something they have in common with other historical narratives, but they are also performative. The function that auto-narratives perform is that of giving an account [Rechenschaft ablegen]. It is precisely this function that makes for the specificity of the auto-narrative.

To say that the function of all auto-narratives is to give an account means that when I narrate my life I necessarily narrate it for and to an other.\(^{884}\) The “giving” of my account must be understood quite literally as a gesture that is necessarily transitive. Ontologically this has to do with the fact that my personal identity is always the identity that I have for another.\(^{885}\) To give an account means to “justify” oneself before another, to answer the other’s question Who are you? As we have first shown in Chapter 2, even when the other appears to be absent from my concern for self (and the question that I seek to

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882If needs no detailed proof that this view is incompatible with the conception according to which “identity” means not just particularity but persistence and coherence. The "introspective" or "confessional" view of identity is precisely a view that does not question the possibility of my (coherent) identity.

883Cf. Michel Foucault’s "What is an Author" (1969).


885Cf. our remarks on this in Chapter 2.
answer is, *Who am I?*, it is the other who forces me to concern myself with myself.\(^{886}\) Secondly, the reason why the narrative that I give of myself is an account [*Rechenschaftsbericht*] has to do with the fundamental metaphysical premise that we discussed in Chapter 3. Once the question *who* someone is is no longer decided as a matter of fate but is answered through the free activity of the individual herself, there arises a need for justification (which is built into the very answer of the question “Who are you?”). It is precisely the non-inevitability of the identity of the individual that creates the need for a justification. As Georges Gusdorf has put it, “The man who recounts himself is himself searching himself through history [not who he is but before that *that* he is someone, that his life added up]; he is not engaged in an objective and disinterested pursuit but in a work of personal justification.

Autobiography appeases the more or less anguished uneasiness of an aging man who wonders if his life has not been lived in vain, frittered away haphazardly, ending now in simple failure.”\(^{887}\) The question of failure or success is not a question of fact but a question of interpretation: it is the question whether we can produce and defend an interpretation, i.e., a *narrative* account of our life, that shows the life of its protagonist in its interconnectedness. This work of personal justification necessarily involves another who bears witness to the success or failure of my very own identity project.

Although someone else can tell the story of my life or write my biography – arguably, Arendt and Cavarero are even correct to say that another can tell my story more *accurately* than I – no one can give an account of myself for me. To give an account of oneself demands that it is *I* who does it. That is why despite all the epistemic limitations of the auto-account, the account that *I* give of myself has an ontologically privileged position among possible narratives about myself that trumps its (inevitable) epistemic limitations. It is “privileged” not because I ostensibly know myself best, but because only *I* can take responsibility for the totality of my personal being and find a ‘whole’ in it. In other words, the apparent “privilege” is in fact tied a responsibility that is ineluctably mine because it is constitutive of

\(^{886}\) Cf. Butler 11.
\(^{887}\) Gusdorf 39.
my very being. My claim is hence that when we narrate ourselves we always also give an account of
ourselves.

For our purposes, this performative quality of all auto-narratives entails that in addition to their
being interpretive (which auto-narratives are by virtue of their historical quality), there is a second
reason why the “temporal distance” between the narrative and its narration is diachronic.\footnote{888We should mention that Weinrich himself does not talk about a diachronic relationship. What matters to us here is not
which of the relata is subsequent and which antecedent but rather that temporally they cannot be located along a
continuous line.} It is this additional reason that allows us to successfully deflect our first objection. The performative aspect of
auto-narratives is the specific difference that sets autobiographical narratives apart from other historical
narratives. As Weinrich notes, when I give an account of myself, “The facts are not reported but are
discussed. To give an account is a kind of discussion. It is at the same time a retrospective ... But the
account proper does not report, it discusses.”\footnote{889Weinrich (1985) 76. [“Die Tatsachen werden also nicht erzählt, sondern sie werden besprochen. Rechenschaft geben ist
ein Besprechen. Es ist zugleich ein Zurückschauen ... Aber die eigentliche Rechenschaftsgebung ist nicht erzählend,
sondern besprechen.”]} To call an autobiography a “retrospective prose story”
is thus only partly accurate. What makes this “definition” defective is that it fails to take into account
that the meaning of an auto-biography varies with the kind of being that the one who gives an an
autobiographical account of himself is. As such, it is not even possible to give a “timeless” definition of
“autobiography”. That all auto-narratives perform this specific function is a historically contingent
fact.

What evidence can we give that would support our claim that all auto-narratives are
performative in the delineated sense? When I recount an event that has occurred in my life-time, e.g.
my departure for MTL in 2003, I am necessarily relating myself to the past. Earlier, we already noted
that we do different things with the stories that we tell. Since this certainly holds true for the stories that
we tell about ourselves as well, the self-referential relation can assume a range of different qualities, for
example, “depending on whether [the narrator] narrates a course of events or whether he assesses it

\footnote{888We should mention that Weinrich himself does not talk about a diachronic relationship. What matters to us here is not
which of the relata is subsequent and which antecedent but rather that temporally they cannot be located along a
continuous line.}

\footnote{889Weinrich (1985) 76. [“Die Tatsachen werden also nicht erzählt, sondern sie werden besprochen. Rechenschaft geben ist
ein Besprechen. Es ist zugleich ein Zurückschauen ... Aber die eigentliche Rechenschaftsgebung ist nicht erzählend,
sondern besprechen.”]}

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under the aspect of guilt and innocence. 890 This idea, which we borrow from Weinrich, must be amended in two important ways: First, Weinrich makes it seem as if it was up to the narrator to determine whether s/he “reports” the events in question and/or whether s/he discusses them under the aspect of guilt or innocence. On this account, the quality of one's narration would vary depending on the empirical intention of the speaker or narrator. The term “account” \[ \text{Rechenschaftsbericht} \] describes the social function of an auto-narrative. 891 What function my auto-narrative has is not only determined by my individual, empirical intentions that I may have when I undertake to factually narrate my story. What the function of my story is does not depend on my intention because my account giving is always already situated within a framework of social norms that determines the specific “thatness” of my narrative activity. It is the existence of these norms that allow us to judge and evaluate any given narrative in terms of criteria that transcend the factual accuracy of individual claims made in the narrative. The awareness of the existence of these norms may guide my own narration. But regardless of whether it does so or not it gives always the same meaning to the \textit{act} of narration. The norms that determine the function of my account determine this function \textit{via} the determination of what kind of thing it is that does the narrating. My self-reflection necessarily leads to the Other not just because my identity as this self is exhibitive. I am “ex-propriated” from my very identity at an even deeper level, namely insofar as it is the Other who determines what counts as a recognizable form of being. 892 As Butler explains, “one finds that the only way to know oneself is through a mediation that takes place outside of oneself, exterior to oneself, by virtue of a convention or a norm that one did not make, in which one cannot discern oneself as an author or an agent of one's own making. "The individual is disappropriated of “its own” narrative not merely because the meaning of any individual acts escapes
its own recollective grasp, and not just epistemically because it is false, but because the norms that determine what kind of thing its self is are always received/inherited. Even where the self is its own maker, this self can nevertheless never ground itself as its own maker.\footnote{Put differently, even where I am free to make myself as the one who..., I am not free to make or not make ourselves as the one who make themselves as the one who...} As such the story of the self begins a long time before the “birth” of this being.\footnote{Cf. Butler 37.} The "pre-history" of a given individual always impinges on a narrative that has always already determined the essence of the particular story that is yet to be told. This pre-history is an absolute past that no narrative account of myself can recollect because it always already shapes the expectations of what can count as a narrative account of myself.\footnote{That is also why the subject who hopes to understand who she is cannot content herself with charting her own life. As Butler has it, she must necessarily “become a social theorist.” (8)} In other words, what determines the meaning of my account is rather the kind of 'who' that gives this account, i.e., it is what kind of entity it is that narrates itself.

The proof that we can adduce for the claim that all auto-narratives give an account cannot be reduced to the contingent empirical/individual intention of the one who narrates their life, who gives an account of herself, because the proof transcends the intention of this individual to the extent that it pertains to ethical and economic norms that constitute the individual who (empirically) may or may not have this intention. But the norms that Butler discusses are not the only ones that govern my auto-narrative activity. We must not forget the most axiomatic of axioms of the theory of autobiography: which is the identity of the narrator/author and protagonist. Since we said that my identity is my Seinkönnen, we must ask: How can one account for the fact that the one who is giving an account of himself not only was a free and accountable agent but still is, i.e., that the person who gives an account still acts as a free agent even in the moment in which he takes responsibility for what has happened? If my auto-narrative deals with my history, then it thematizes me in my (agentic) freedom. This freedom is completely misunderstood if we think that it is the "freedom" to make and re-make my narrative ad
libitum. If my auto-narrative thematizes me in my agentic freedom, then the act of giving my account must itself be seen as an action and to “give an account” means to affirm a certain narrative. To “affirm” a narrative does not merely mean to say that such and such is “true” because it “really” happened the way it is being reported. The truth of affirmation here is rather of a different kind. It is through my affirmation of a particular narrative that I become the one who my narrative is about. It is through my auto-narrative efforts and awareness that I partially constitute myself as the protagonist of the narrative in question. The account-giving does not posit the truth of the narrative; it rather effects it.

Of course that does not mean that a certain narrative is true because I say that it is true. The 'saying that something is true' belongs to the narrative/reportive dimension of my account; but not to the performative dimension of it. The truth of my agentic-being is that I could always have acted otherwise; that another account is (equally) possible because the act of giving my account falls under my possibilities. The fact that I could have narrated otherwise cannot be reduced to the epistemological quality of the perspectival nature of historical truth, i.e., the fact that my present standpoint determines the specific significance that the past has, a significance that is always relational: always a significance for a concretely situated someone. It is of course true that one can always narrate otherwise for precisely this reason. But the metaphysical non-inevitability of my narrative, the fact that I could have narrated otherwise has to do with the metaphysical fact of my freedom, and not with the content of a particular emplotment.

Above and beyond the fact that all historical truth is perpectival, the fact that another narrative is always possible, has its deeper truth in the fact that my narration is an act of freedom; that is to say, in order for my auto-narration to be a free act it is necessary that I could have narrated otherwise, i.e., that I could have affirmed a different narrative. The fact that another narrative is always possible does

897There is of course a way of out this, namely if we want to deny that my narration is an action in the robust sense of the word. However, after everything that we have said, this would be a rather implausible argumentative move.

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not undermine the possibility of auto-narrative but is rather a necessary condition for it *qua* action. This important fact is obscured by Weinrich's choice of terminology, which is why instead of using his concept of “discussion” of the facts of one's life we think it is more fitting to say that one *affirms* a particular narrative. Weinrich's point about the temporal essence of this kind of engagement with the past remains valid.

All this also explains why the idea that our narration is but articulation of an “implicit” narrative is fundamentally flawed. The alleged “problem of the selectiveness” of my narrative is likewise not a problem but a necessary condition that determines my auto-narration is an act of affirmation. That means if the auto-narrative subject is a “historian of the self”, she has to be a historian *sui generis*. What we can never produce is the objectivity or impartiality toward ourselves that we take to be constitutive of the historian's stance toward its object. The reason for this is that we cannot help *being* ourselves. Furthermore, such “objectivity” would not even be desirable because it would undermine the act-essence of our narration. I can indeed be an object to my biographer. This entails that it is logically possible that my biographer could get my entire biography wrong. In contrast, when I narrate my own life story, I am *eo ipso* narrating myself. As such it is logically impossible that I could get my entire autobiography wrong. It is through my affirmation of a particular narrative that I *am* the person; because *being* a certain person means, among others, affirming a determinate narrative about this person.

To conclude: Since auto-narratives are *essentially* accounts that the author gives of herself to another, the claim that we made about the temporal meaning of historical accounts holds even more fundamentally with respect to auto-narratives than it holds for historical narratives in general. As such, we can vindicate Hamburger's insight into the meaning of the narrative preterite for auto-narratives without undermining the very distinction on which her account is predicated. We can do this because we have shown that the claim that autobiographical narratives are a kind of historical narrative needs
crucial qualification. This qualification, however, does not diminish the validity of Hamburger's point but strengthens it.

5.2.4.3.2. Second objection

Our argument about the essential diachrony of the narrative self presupposes that the act of narration belongs essentially to my narrative, because it is precisely the nexus of narration and narrative that contains an inescapable because constitutive diachrony. However, our argument hinges on the notion that my ability to give a narrative account of my life belongs essentially to my the narrative of my life: only where I am able to give a narrative account of my life does my life have narrative unity.

We said above that the unity of my existence is the unity of a narrative and that my inability to give a narrative account of my life is correlated with the absence of such a unity. We already said that in one sense the existence of all narratives depends on an act of narration, namely insofar as all narratives are human artefacts. The “artificiality” of narratives does not have to entail that there is something “untrue” about narrative accounts of historical events. For White, the skilled narrator makes apparent a meaning that is immanent to the separate facts yet which cannot be reduced to them taken in sum. On White's view, historical narratives reveal the narrated events “as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do not possess as mere sequence.”898 In other words, although narrative reality is indeed a “fiction” it is not just a useful one but one that allows us to rationally arbitrate between competing truth claims.

The question is if we can conversely say that if I am able to narrate myself, then my life has unity. In other words, does the unity of my life really depend on my ability to give a narrative account of my life?899 The reason why this might seem like an unacceptable position becomes apparent if we

899NB: This does not entail that the unity of my life does not consist in a narrative unity; but this unity is independent of my ability to narratively synthesize my life.
consider the following: If we accept the genitive in the expression “narrative of a life” is not a *genitivus objectivus* but a *genitivus essentialis*, i.e., if we accept that the narrative of a life does not simply *reproduce* its object and that the “unnarrated” life as it is lived serves at most as a limiting condition of the narrated life, there still remains the question whether or not the narrative thesis does not inadvertently deprive us of the possibility of making sense of the concept of a *dis*-unified life. We said above that a *dis*-unified life “does not lend itself to being narrated” and that the difference between the unified and the non-unified life manifests itself in the difference of the kind of account that we can give of the respective life. However, we also said that that which makes up the narrative of a life is always selected, which means that “every narrative, no matter how seemingly 'complete', is constructed on the basis of a set of events which *might have been included but were left out*.”

If the narrative unity of a life is always the outcome of an act of narration, it would appear that whether or not my life is unified depends ultimately on my narrative skills, i.e., the unity of my life depends on my ability to *imagine* and *construct* such a unity. While this may seem to follow from our remarks so far, I think that we have a strong intuition that the unity or disunity of a life has to be an objective fact about this life. The unity of a life depends not on one's ability to narrate the life but rather that the latter is constrained by the former. Writes Kerby, “[S]torytelling is a mode of comprehension (of grasping together) that necessarily takes second place in relation to the experiences comprehended.”

Put differently, whether or not a life can be narrativized cannot (solely) depend on the “skill” of the narrator to collect a narrative unity out of this life, i.e., it cannot depend on whether it actually *is narrativized*. Lippitt succinctly sums up this objection with the following question: “Why should we consider that my ability

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901 Kerby 41.
902 I believe that this has to do with the fact that the unity of a life always presents itself to us only in the form of a particular (unified) narrative. If my narrative can be shown to be seriously flawed can be shown to be false, *eo ipso* the unity of my life becomes questionable (at least for me). If the unity of a life is always a particular unity, then the question of the adequacy of the narrative representation can hence not be sharply distinguished from the accuracy of a particular narrative. Since this accuracy in turn is restrained by certain material facts, it is indeed a plausible belief to hold that the unity of my life has to be an objective fact about this life.
to give a 'structure' or a 'unity' to my life by telling myself (or you) a story about how its component features hang together mean that the unity thus imparted is in any way genuine?"  

I think that we indeed have a strong intuition that the question whether my life has unity cannot be decided solely by my ability to construct just any narrative. In theory it seems conceivable that in some cases the narration of a life effectively obfuscates the fact that the narrated life in fact lacked the unity that is imparted in it in the act of narration, and that in a specific case, the imposition of a narrative structure on a life may in fact mis-represent this life by suggesting a unity that was in fact absent. In such instances a genuinely narrative representation of a human life would “mythicalize” the reality of this life which is more faithfully represented in non-narrative form. According to Philippe Lejeune, our expectation that auto-biographical narratives "resemble" the actual life of their authors involves not one but two normative demands. Writes Lejeune: "The 'resemblance' can be found on two levels: in the negative mode – and at the level of the elements of the narrative – the criterion of accuracy intervenes; in the positive mode – and at the level of the whole of the narrative – what we will call fidelity intervenes. Accuracy involves information, fidelity meaning." The crucial question is, what do we mean when we say “a unity that was in fact absent”? The thrust of Lippitt's objection is that even if the unity of my life consists in the unity of a narrative, what matters is not my ability to give a narrative account of my life but rather the existence of narrative unity in my life. It is my life that dictates which narrative emplotments (selections) are defensible ("faithful") and which are not. Whether or not I am able to narratively synthesize the different parts of my life is not decisive for the question whether my life “can be narrated,” because what “can” or “cannot” be narrated is not determined by the individual's actual ability to narrate but by that which “constrains” this ability: the life of the subject. As Lippitt points out, “I can offer you an account of my life that contains not a single

903Lippitt 27; italics added.  
905An example of such a non-narrative autobiography would be Roland Barthes's Barthes by Barthes.  
906Lejeune 23.
falsehood. And yet the overall narrative can still be false and dishonest, insofar as it offers a bowdlerised version of events.\textsuperscript{907} In either case, it would seem that what matters is that I \textit{live} a narratable life; the question whether I am able to articulate this narrative is secondary.

This has important implications for our argument for the temporal diachrony of the narrative self: If it is true that my own ability to give a narrative account of my life does not determine whether my life \textit{is} narratable, then the diachrony that exists between the act of narration and the narrative itself is an accidental feature of the narrative self but does not belong to the essence of the time of the authentic individual. In other words, our thesis that nostalgia is not due to the im\textit{possibility} of an (auto-)narrative, but, on the contrary, integral (even) to the narratable existence of the authentic individual would, at least potentially, be in trouble.

I believe that the idea that the unity of a life needs to be an objective fact and that only that life can be narrated that has (previously) been lived in a unified manner is plausible. However, I do not think that the idea that the only way to accommodate Lippitt's objection is by relegating my ability to narrate my life to an ontologically secondary position. Lippitt's objection rests on a misunderstanding of what is involved in my giving a narrative account of my life. To wit, Lippitt overstates the theoretical possibility of constructing highly self-serving narratives and forgets the practicality of it.\textsuperscript{908} To the extent that our narratives are situated in many practical contexts in which the veracity of our accounts matter, it is highly questionable how self-serving the kinds of “bowdlerised” narratives that Lippitt fears would actually be in reality. Lippitt puts great emphasis on the rampant imagination of us as authors of stories thereby artificially isolating the narration of my life from the other aspects of this life through which a particular narrative is affirmed. In other words, it is questionable to what extent a life could actually be \textit{lived} in terms of such a narrative, and that means upheld against the inevitable

\textsuperscript{907}Lippitt 27.

\textsuperscript{908}Another question that we will not discuss further is whether just \textit{any} unity would satisfy our desire for unity, or whether our desire for unity is not always the desire for a specific unity such that the absence of that unity would by itself suffice to make my life disunified (for me) even if another kind of unity could be shown to have inhered in my life.
challenges that the presentation of the account would likely evoke. There is nothing in our argument that makes it inevitable to deny that the material facts of life limit the plausibility of certain emplotments, and it does not commit us to positing quasi narrative-like entities to rule this out.

This is not merely an empirical matter, but points to the essence of my ability to give a narrative account of my life. This ability belongs indeed essentially to my life having narrative unity. However, we must understand is involved in this ability: The narration of my own narrative cannot be reduced to the alternative of either being the production of meaning or being a discernment of meaning: to give a narrative account of my life means neither to discern a narratable meaning that is “there” independent of my attempt to give it, nor does it mean that I confer this meaning on my life solely by virtue of the act of my narration. It is true that the unity of my life cannot simply depend on my ability to produce a unity, at least not if we equate this ability with the subjective ability to imagine a possible plot for the events of my life. We would indeed not think that such a narrative unity would be genuine unless it had been “lived” prior to being narrated. But this is the crux: To say that the unity of a life must be “lived” means that it must be “en-acted,” i.e., it must be produced through the activity of the subject. Now there it cannot be denied that the narrative activity of the individual belongs to to that same life that is at the same time thematized in the narration. Unlike the hetero-narrative account, an autobiographical undertaking necessarily takes place at a particular moment of the history of its author/subject. The person who narrates does not momentarily cease to be himself: he still acts even when he narrates. As such, the narrative that the individual produces of her life is not merely an account of this life, but it is itself a part of this life. The narration of my life is an essential dimension of this enactment: because it is itself an action, namely that action by which we seek to vindicate a specific claim of narrative unity. Admittedly, this action is not like other actions to the extent that my narration “thematizes” my life as a whole. But this does not entail that the act of my giving an account of my life is not an action.

909Cf. Gusdorf 43.
Ontologically, the difference between “being” (or “living”) and “telling” (“giving an account”) is therefore too crude: it is a false dichotomy because giving a certain account of who I am is part of being this person. Of course this does not mean that my saying that I am such and such a person eo ipso makes me into said person. It is true that the unity of my life cannot be reduced to my ability to imagine it. But we misunderstand “my ability to give a narrative account of my life” if we equate the act of narration to the imaginative construction of a plot. Giving an account of myself is an action, not merely a reflective exercise. Dilthey's term “Besinnung” names the essence of the process – the recognition of a meaning/sense –; it does not mean that the essence of giving an account can be reduced to a reflective exercise. 910 The speech acts in which we “re-”count who we are are in reality not mere “reports” of an identity that is simply communicated through these narrative acts but remains otherwise unaffected by it.

The narrating of my story is an important part of the self-fashioning of myself as the particular individual who I desire to be. 911 That I narrate my own life is itself an action that reveals something about my identity, namely how I view myself and how I want others to view myself as well, rather than who I "really" am. The measure of our success is a quality of intersubjective life. In order to achieve this goal which is essential to my giving an account of myself what we mean when we say that the unity of our life depends on one's ability to give a narrative account of this life is that this narrative be acceptable. The notion that my narrative must be “acceptable” does not entail that my ability to narrate is secondary to the existence of an “acceptable narrative.” On the contrary: what can or cannot be “acceptable” is always the act of narration, not an independently existing narrative.

Lippitt's concern arises because he completely ignores the importance of the Other's endorsement of my narrative, and thus overlooks that the problem of overly self-serving narratives runs

910 Which is in part why “reflection” is a rather unfortunate translation for “Besinnung.”
911 On this point, see Ricoeur in Kerby 41: “Our own existence cannot be separated from the account we can give of ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories that we tell about ourselves.”
aground on the fact that just as we are answerable for our other actions, we are answerable for the narrative accounts that we give of our lives (and that the contestation of certain key facts of my narrative cast a doubt on my narrative on the whole). That which Lippitt construed as a problem for the narrative identity thesis is in fact not a problem at all but a very mundane requirement that applies to all our actions. If we recognize that the act of narration is itself an action, then Lippitt's objection ceases to pose a serious threat to our claim of the belonging-together of narrative and narration.

If the act of my narration is an action, and thus social, my ability to perform this action cannot be reduced to my factual ability to produce a narrative account: I am only “able” to narratively synthesize the events of my life if this synthesis is acceptable, which means, if the result of my synthesis can be endorsed by another. It is that which we mean when we say that the unity of my life depends on “my ability” to give a narrative account of it. In this sense, it is true that my life has unity if I am able to narratively synthesize the disparate events of my life. The ability in “my ability to give a narrative account” must be understood not as my de facto ability to construct some account, but my ability to affirm and defend this narrative against possible challenges. Only when I am also able to do that am I “able” to give a narrative account of my life.

If narration is a prerequisite for the emergence of narratives in general, and if auto-narration is in addition a pre-requisite for the actuality of the unity that, like the unity of any other narrative, can only emerge with the narration, needs to be enacted, then the concept of the narrative self needs to be understood both in the sense in which the self is the subject and the object of the narration. The narrative self is at the same time a narrat-ed self and a narrat-ing self! We can concede that unity is always imparted without thereby committing ourselves to the view that all emplotments are equally valid just because they exist as the narratives of some empirical subject. By saying that the narrative unity is always imparted in the act of telling we do not deprive ourselves of the means of distinguishing between an adequate emplotment and an inadequate emplotment, and of determining whether the
specific unity that is thus imparted is genuine or not. Since every emplotment is always a specific emplotment, we can indeed tell if that unity is genuine regardless of the fact that it is the product of a creative act of narrator or not. As far as the life of the narrative self is concerned, the “creative” act of narration is at the same time the “en-active” act by which the unity of the life is being lived. We said above that “non-narrated” life constitutes a limiting condition for the narrative of this life. A narrative that ignores or distorts the “material facts” of a life will fail not on formal grounds but because it purports to be the narrative of a particular (unified) life. The dictum “accuracy is a duty, not a virtue” holds true for autobiography just as much as it holds true for historiography.

The assumption of the narrative “posture” is a precondition for the emergence of the self. If we take the claim, “Through the story we encounter the self,” not simply as a trivial claim of ordinary thought but as a more radical metaphysical claim, then we cannot reduce the role that narrative plays to the representational content of a narration (i.e., Cavarero's story). I am only the protagonist of my narrative (i.e., the subject of a biographical narrative) to the extent that I am also always already the narrator of my narrative. Someone who would be unable to produce a narrative account of their life would simply not be the person whose life the narrative recounts. It is the dialectic of proximity (of being the protagonist of my narrative) and distance (of narrating ourselves) that defines our being. That which Cavarero describe as the problematic “lack of distance”, i.e., the fact that I am, as it were, “too close” to myself, loses its negative significance if we leave behind the idea that this closeness has anything to do with knowing best who I am (or its opposite: my inability to truly know who I am). The closeness signals that it is incumbent upon no one but myself to ensure that I am a 'who', i.e., it is incumbent on no one but me to give my existence a unifying purpose and to realize this purpose in and

913 Schapp 105; translation mine. [“Durch die Geschichte kommen wir mit dem Selbst in Berührung”]
through time. 914 915 916

5.2.5. Conclusion of Part II

Much of what we have said in this chapter presupposes that the conceptual tools that are derived from the analysis of “fictional” narratives can be applied to the analysis of “historical” narratives. Rather than addressing the question whether this presupposition is defensible at the beginning of our argument, we will address this question at its very end. We do this because the preceding reflections have shown that the notion that we could draw a sharp line between historical and fictional narratives rests on a premature understanding of what either type of narrative is. What is important to keep in mind is that fictional and historical narratives differ in more complex ways than can be captured by saying that one recounts what happened and the other does not (but could happen). It is particularly with regard to the time of narrative that we have attempted to show that auto-narratives take up a middle position between historical and fictional narratives. The special status of auto-narratives has to do with its unique narrative situation: that the subject of the narrative is at the same time the subjection on of the narration. What the preceding reflections have made abundantly clear is that this “sameness” cannot be reduced to a simple relation of identity. I thus believe that the conceptual tools of the analysis of fictional narratives can intelligibly be applied to that of auto-narratives and that this application is not only defensible but that it can moreover yield important new insights.

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914 As Carr notes, the notions of coherence and unity are quite distinct from that of originality and distinctiveness, which incidentally played a very prominent role in Cavarero's conception of the narrative of a life. (See Carr 93.)

915 According to MacIntyre, the unity of a life is generally speaking a much more pressing concern for me than the question of my who-identity, particularly because “modernity partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behavior.” (After Virtue, 204) This partitioning not only occurs synchronically but also diachronically. Synchronously, unity is threatened insofar as “work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal” (ibid.), and diachronically unity is threatened to the extent that constancy, integrity and growth become replaced by rupture and forcible change.

916 In line with what we have said about the relational character of our identity, to say that it is “incumbent” on me to give my existence a unifying purpose does not mean that the success of this is solely up to me. It is part of the ambiguity of our situation that we are at the same time fully responsible but that we are nonetheless dependent on the other's endorsement.
And yet, the type of auto-narrative that we have discussed here cannot be reduced to the soul's dialogue with itself. Lest we forget that the starting point of our argument was the practice of action-attribution that necessarily exposes the narrating self to another. There are at least three reasons why the discussion of the practice of attribution should lead to the discussion of narrative (these reasons go beyond the linguistic ambivalence of the term “account”). To begin, narrative undeniably plays a central role in the formation of identity. I answer the question “Who are you?” by giving a narrative account of myself. I identify myself by way of the story of my life. Secondly, the meaning of any (attributable) action depends on the narrative in which it is embedded. This is the point that both Ricoeur and MacIntyre stress. Secondly, the possibility of my becoming responsible for any action that can be attributed to me in the first place rests on my ability to give an account of myself. This is the fundamental insight of Butler discusses at great lengths in her *Giving an Account* but that ultimately can be traced back to the simple fact that I am always already exposed to another; that identity is exhibited rather than merely expressed, as Arendt and Cavarero have stressed. What this entails for the role of narrative is that narrative is required for the attribution of actions both individually – because the meaning of any specific action depends on the place that this action has in a narrative sequence (plot) – and globally, namely because my becoming agent (i.e., my acquisition of a personal identity by virtue of my deeds) depends on my ability to give an account of myself.917

We said in Chapter 3 that historical being, i.e., the existence of a personal past, is made possible by a practice of attribution. But my historical being is also made possible by my ability to give a (narrative) account of my being. The practice of attribution, which is the source of the possibility of authentic being, thus necessarily passes through the narrative self for its realization. This narrative self is at the same time the self who is able to give an account of itself by means of a narrative account of

917Implicit in both reasons is the general point that actions can only be attributed by means of language: To attribute an action to someone means to say “You did such and such”. As such, the attribution of actions takes place in language. The distinction between *res gestae* and *historia rerum gestarum* is not applicable here. One only has done something to the extent that this deed is attributed to one, i.e., to the extent that someone is willing to endorse the claim “X has done F”.

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its life, and it is the self who first encounters itself “in” the narrative of its life, the self who is the protagonist of a narrative. The historical self is the narrative self: understood both as the narrat-ing and the narrat-ed self. This, in turn, entails nothing less than that the time of historical being – i.e., the proper/authentic appropriation of my past – is in essence the time of (auto)narrative, a time, which we have shown in this chapter, is not one.

If we now keep in mind what we have said about the possibility of authentic historical being and its ability to confer continuity on the life of the individual, we must reckon that the very attempt to unify our existence produces a diachrony/disunity that is inevitable insofar as it is constitutive of the attempt to achieve the kind of unity that would (supposedly) make nostalgia avoidable. In contrast to the optimistic view that we expressed at the end of the preceding chapter, the preceding reflections have led us to a different conclusion: namely that the very attempt to appropriate one's past necessarily produces its own disjunctive time. Our attempt to master or take control of our past is thwarted by the fact that that our auto-narrative is always an account, i.e., it is given to another. The fact that my narrative (i.e., the narrative that I give of myself) is an account [Rechenschaftsbericht] introduces a temporality into our being that is necessarily diachronic. This diachrony is much more radical than the one that we discussed when we talked about inauthentic historical being such that it is less likely to give rise to the empirical form of nostalgia. However, the absence of the latter cannot be taken as an indication that we are dealing with a temporality that differs fundamentally from the time of nostalgia. The radical, disjunctive time of the narrative self belongs essentially to the sovereign individual as such. The idea that the time of the authentic historical individual has a fundamentally conjunctive quality that differs essentially from the fundamentally disjunctive time of the inauthentic individual has thus been shown to not withstand scrutiny.
Conclusion

At the outset of this dissertation we promised an inquiry in the place nostalgia in the history of ideas. We projected that this place (or these places) would become apparent over the course of the five chapters. In conclusion, we will briefly recapitulate the different stages of our argumentative journey:

We began our analysis of nostalgia by way of analysis that part of nostalgia that seemed to be the least questionable: namely the claim that nostalgia centrally involves the past of the one who is nostalgic, i.e., the nostalgic's "own" past. In Chapter 2, we analysed the concept of the past that is one's own (i.e., one's history) and found this concept to be wedded to a practice of action attribution by virtue of which the individual's particular place in the intersubjective world comes to be determined by the history of her activity. The insight into the historical contingency of the practice of determining an individual's personal identity by way of the history of her actions gave us a first important indication of where we had to look in order to find nostalgia's place in the history of ideas. In Chapter 3 we turned our analysis of nostalgia to an examination of the conditions of the possibility of the particular experience that underlies the phenomenon of nostalgia. Nostalgia, we argued, grows out of a heightened sense of temporal awareness, a kind of “temporal nonchalance,” which is born from a particular experience of the finitude of our existence. We defended the view that nostalgia is an affliction of the sovereign individual, i.e., the human self who is aware of his doubtful situation in the world, and who out of this awareness is called upon to give herself an identity. We argued that this individual is the human being as an essentially free agent, i.e., as a sovereign individual. In Chapter 4 we introduced an important qualification to our general claim that "nostalgia is of the sovereign individual": namely that the experience of nostalgia belongs only to those individuals who have failed to confer temporal coherence on their life (i.e., it belongs only to "failed in-dividuals"). By contrast, where the individual's efforts to give himself an identity in the world are successful, this individual enjoys a general immunity to the experience of nostalgia. On this view, we argued, the experience of nostalgia is a symptom of failed
identity project. Put differently, nostalgia is a symptom of an "inauthentic" appropriation of one's history. The implications of this conclusion were not only that nostalgia is *avoidable* but also that it is largely up to the individual herself to arrange her life (and that means first and foremost to inhabit her history) in such a way that she would not become susceptible to the experience of nostalgia. To show this we first noted the "economic" meaning of the 'desire for a return' at the heart of the agentic essence of the sovereign individual's identity. Finally, in Chapter 5 we have attempted to show that the economic operation through which the individual acquires her unique identity does not proceed by means of a crude arithmetic but by a more complex metric of *narrative* accounting. We concluded that the nostalgic longing is essentially wedded to the desire for our unique narrative. The nostalgic longing is the search for meaning, a meaning that would transform the essence of time's passage.

For the individual who is responsible for giving herself an identity, "the task of autobiography is first of all a task of personal salvation." This salvation is an *immanent* salvation: it is a salvation that does not seek a 'beyond' but that would reconcile us with our inescapable temporal being. To the extent that nostalgia is tied to the possibility of personal salvation, i.e., to the extent that personal salvation is the hidden stake in nostalgia, nostalgia has nothing to do with self-indulgence, sentimentality, or reverie. Nostalgia is indeed a "lethal" affliction, albeit one that does not lead to the physical death of those who are afflicted by it, but it is rather an affliction that is tied to the existential disintegration of the one who must give himself an identity through time.

What we have attempted to show is that this desire for our narrative is unsatisfiable *in essence*: That which my story is supposed to achieve, namely a "reconciliation" with time's flux, is in fact not achieved even – or perhaps *especially* – when there *is* a story, i.e., when I am able to narratively gather my life. As such, our analysis of the time of the narrative self has shown the untenability of nostalgia's clear assignation to a particular (namely inauthentic) manner of inhabiting our history by means of a

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918Gusdorf 39.

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critical analysis of the time of the authentic self. The time of narrative was shown to be such that an original heterochrony is unavoidable because it belongs constitutively to the achievement of an authentic (i.e., "unified") existence. We argued that in his essential quest to give himself an identity in the world, this individual inescapably becomes subject to a form of temporal diachrony that is older and that reaches deeper than any of the individual's attempts to overcome it. In other words, the time of the sovereign individual never adds up. That which appears to be a conjunctive temporality is in fact only a deeper kind of disjunctive temporality.

One general consequences of our argument is that it would be intellectually wanton to continue to treat nostalgia as a marginal phenomenon. If the analysis that we have put forward here is even just mostly correct, then nostalgia's roots grow very deep and cut across any clear divide between the normal and abnormal, the authentic and inauthentic, the proprietary and the foreign. Nostalgia's own conceptual marginalization would precisely obscure the ubiquity of the (temporal, ontological) qualities that we associate with the concept of nostalgia.

These are undeniably significant consequences. However, instead of accepting these consequences one could raise the question whether our account of nostalgia has not gradually moved away from nostalgia as we know it, i.e., from the lived experience of nostalgia that constituted the starting point of our investigation. At the limit, it could be objected that our discussion has moved too far away from the lived phenomenon of experience and that therefore it would be unwarranted to refer our results back to what has so little to do with what we have set out to investigate. This objection does not come to us as a surprise and we have made a concession in this direction when we argued at the end of the last chapter that dis-jointed time of the authentic individual may lie "too deep" to give rise to the empirical manifestations of nostalgia. Even if the thesis that we have defended here has transformed our understanding of what nostalgia is, to the extent that we did not claim to advance a radically new understanding of the essence of nostalgia, but only of the scope of nostalgia based on a deeper
understand of nostalgia's essence, we cannot ignore this objection.

Our first line of defense against this charge has to be erected around the ubiquity of narrative in our lives, a point with which we opened the last chapter. Given the manifold and multifarious roles that narrative plays in our lives, the difference between “lived” time and “narrated” time is one that we should not gloss over but that we should also not consider to denote an absolute distinction. To hold the ostensibly non-experiential character of what we have said here about the time of narrative against our characterization of this time would thus overlook the extent to which our experience of time is mediated by the categories of language both conceptually and grammatically. As we said at the beginning of Chapter 5, the nostalgic longing is (also) the longing for a narrative, i.e., for a story that gives the passage of time the meaning of a development. The distinction between authentic and inauthentic being can of course not be reduced to a distinction between different manners of relating to the past linguistically: i.e., whether we bring what is past into the present by discussing it, or whether we let it be past by narrating or reporting it. Whether or not the past is an integral element of our present, a present which transcends the immediate present, or whether the past is vergangen, is not solely decided by how we speak about the past. However, to the extent that our history, i.e., our temporally unified becoming, can become accessible to us it can do so only in terms of the concepts that raise that which has come to pass to the status of our consciousness of what has come to pass, and if, furthermore, my historical existence requires my ability to give an account of this existence to another, then the distinction between the “event” of my historical existence (res gestae) and the account of my historical existence (historia rerum gestarum) cannot denote an ontological difference but rather two aspects of the same thing: my historical-narrative being.

If it is true that our history becomes accessible to us only by way of a mediation that makes me “substitutable,” then to the extent that this mediation is a narrative one and thus will not only involve

919 Weinrich (1985) 86.
concepts but also grammatical categories, including tenses and their logical relations to each other, then these categories necessarily establish a diachrony that is “older” than any of my attempts to overcome the diachrony of my existence. We must recognize that my attempt to gather and unify my existence always already comes “too late.” I am not only ex-propriated of “my” unique narrative, and thus of my particularity, by the social language that I must use to tell “my” story, the “gathering” of my time into the persistence of an identity is also disrupted by the logic of the grammatical categories that make my story possible.

However, the claim that my (subjective, experiential) time is to a great extent narrative time cannot be reduced to the empirical fact that narratives figure prominently in our lives and that therefore "lived" time is to a great extent "narrative" time. In addition to those moments where I relate to my time narratively, my time is also narrative time in the essential sense in which the time of the sovereign individual is narrative in essence. The fact that 'my time' has the qualities of narrative time falls under the same kind of constitutive conditions as the exposedness and the account-nature of my narrative: Even though they may escape my (conscious) awareness, they nevertheless structure the space of possible experiences. Any sort of experience, qua event, is always already made possible by certain (atemporal, relational, interpretive) structures. To say that these conditions make certain experiences possible does not mean that they make these or any experiences inevitable. And yet, even though these are not experiential but rather transcendental elements of historical being, this does not rule out the possibility that they may manifest themselves phenomenologically after all.

We began this chapter with the hypothesis that the time of the authentic individual does not lend

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920When I tell my story I tell the story of this thing that is always already exposed to another. But this does not mean that I must tell the story about “someone else”, namely the one who is exposed. (The claim that I cannot really know what my story is because this 'me' whose story it is is not accessible to me, is misleading.) It merely means that my story is open to contestation by another; that I cannot claim ultimate authority when it comes to “my” story. The I is exposed, it is a 'me'. “My” is derived not from “I” but from “me.” This 'me’ is not a different "entity", one that is ontologically distinguishable from the 'I'. The 'me' does not denote another entity, one that is separate from the 'I; instead it signals the disappropriation of my identity. As such the exposedness creates the space for experiences that are not experiences of exposedness but are made possible by it. The experience of having our narrative contested by another would be inconceivable if identity was not exposed.
itself to nostalgia. At the beginning of this chapter, we first established that the time of the authentic individual is the time of the narrative self. As our analysis of the relationship between the time of the narrated self and the narrating self has shown, the time of the narrative self involves constitutively a hetero-chrony such that an insurmountable temporal difference affects even (or rather: especially) the successful attempt to confer temporal unity/continuity on our life. In other words, the time of the narrative self does not add up either. If diachrony is an inescapable part of narrative time, and narrative time is the essence of historical time (i.e., the time of the authentic individual), then I can no longer convincingly claim that the experience of nostalgia is exclusively a symptom of inauthentic existence, i.e., of the failure to confer temporal unity or continuity on my life. Nostalgia may just as well be a symptom of authentic temporality as it is a symptom of inauthentic temporality, because the temporal essence of nostalgia is such that it undercuts this very distinction.

Furthermore, if this is true, then nostalgia would not only not be a symptom of a failure to properly appropriate one's past, nostalgia, far from being a kind of sentimental reverie, would in fact involve a sightfulness of the general (temporal) condition of the sovereign individual. The whole question, how we can immunize ourselves against (or cure) nostalgia would become the question how we can desensitize ourselves to an experience in which we become aware, painfully aware, of the fundamental temporal reality that belongs inescapably to the sovereign individual. Even though the experience of nostalgia would not be inevitable, the temporality that we glimpse in the experience of nostalgia would be the unavoidable underside of the individual's sovereignty over her own time and identity. If this is true, then it is not the nostalgic individual who suffers from a troubled imagination but rather the non-nostalgic individual who "imagines" that he has managed to master time's irreversible passage. All pretence to the contrary notwithstanding, our attempted mastery of the past must necessarily fail. If the account that we have presented here is correct, then nostalgia belongs essentially to the sovereignty of the modern individual. If the latter's aspiration to give himself his own
place in the world can be shown to be unsatisfiable, then nostalgia is the logical consequence of an existential calling that, in the most literal sense, was from the beginning doomed to "failure."

Admittedly, we have not shown that the experience of nostalgia itself is inevitable. Rather, we have shown that the time of nostalgia cannot exclusively be that of the inauthentic individual. And yet, where time is so fundamentally and inescapably “out of joint” as it is in the case of the time of my auto-narrative, one has to wonder how this out-of-jointness could pass completely under the radar of our consciousness. Although this is an interesting empirical question, we do not need to occupy ourselves with it here. Why a particular person actually experiences nostalgia is a question that is better left to the psychologist than to the philosopher. First of all, we have not argued that empirical nostalgia could be reduced to an inauthentic temporality. We said that the experience of nostalgia is "a symptom" of an inauthentically inhabited history. But that does not mean that every person who inhabits their past inauthentically automatically experiences nostalgia. What a philosophical analysis of nostalgia can contribute to this question is necessarily of a very general (or fundamental) nature. The lives of most human beings are replete with experiences that could induce nostalgia. These are the moments that do not allow themselves to be assimilated to the "success story," i.e., to the narrative of our life. Whether or not the memory of a given moment becomes capable of inducing the experience of nostalgia in us also always depends on the mnemonic mode in which we relate to the past. In Chapter 4 we spoke of recollection's inherent propensity for nostalgia. As far as our remembrance of things past is concerned, nostalgia is always possible where we remember "punctually" rather than "discursively," i.e., as Barthes describes it, "[where] I remember in order to be unhappy/happy—not in order to understand." Conversely, the absence of nostalgia could also point to the implicit attempt to recollect the past "understandingly," and that means, not for its own sake but under the category of its significance (i.e., its lasting value) for the present (which, as we have shown in Chapter 3, always involves

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921Barthes (2010[1]) 217.
"economic" considerations). Whether or not we allow ourselves to experience nostalgia is another question, one that will also always depend on our ability to resist the economic imperative to not be wasteful, and free ourselves from and envision alternatives to the norm of success and the logic of gains and advancement.

More important than these empirical questions is that the upshot of our analysis of the time of the narrative self is that the manner in which we comport ourselves in the social world (i.e., whether we inhabit our history authentically or inauthentically) is not determinative for the possibility of the experience of nostalgia. That which is responsible for the non-emergence of nostalgia in those who have supposedly (and for all social and practical purposes) succeeded at "harnessing time's passage" and thus at conferring temporal coherence on their existence must be sought elsewhere. To the extent that even the life of the person who inhabits her history authentically would be capable of the experience of time that lies at the heart of the experience of nostalgia, one has to wonder what blockages are responsible for the non-emergence of nostalgia in the authentic individual. In addition to the psychological considerations that will figure in the answer to this question, we should note that at least a contributing factor is that the category of "nostalgia" is not available to experiential household of the authentic individual. Whatever range of experiences an authentic individual may undergo, we know a priori that none of them is "nostalgia": Nostalgia's clear designation as an abnormal form of memory (and by extension its belongingness to the inauthentic forms of temporal existence) guarantees that what the authentic individual experiences is not "nostalgia." Nostalgia's conceptual location beyond the boundaries of "normal," "healthy," "proper" (and "proprietary") memory, i.e., its unequivocal assignation to a precise place is itself a mechanism by which we discredit the experience of our time that we have in nostalgia, by which we designate it as "inauthentic." Yet, it is precisely from here that nostalgia comes to haunt us. It is not what we do that determines our nostalgia but rather what we say about what we do. "Nostalgia's" place in the history of ideas would be a place that guarantees, by way
of its "abnormal" status, the possibility of normal, good, successful, proper forms of memory. This, however, only becomes apparent upon a close analysis of the concept and experience of nostalgia. On this account, the concept of nostalgia would thus block the experience of nostalgia. The latter would, as it were, be the fate of the sovereign individual whose time never adds up.

This, in turn, has important consequences for our concept of nostalgia: if the claim that nostalgia is due to a displacement from the intersubjective world has at least some plausibility, as we have argued in Chapter 2 and as we continue to believe, yet the emplacement in the intersubjective world is itself not free of nostalgia, then “nostalgia” cannot be reduced to “Unheimlichkeit” understood in the way that we have understood it. In other words, one major upshot of the preceding investigation is that we must extend our definition of “nostalgia” in order to accommodate our findings here. This 'must' is largely a “programmatic” must, rather than one that we can fully cash in here ourselves. We have already argued in favour of a broadening of the expression “desire for a return” to encompass what at the end of Chapter 3 we have described as a 'desire for a return on', which broadens the spatial/temporal notion concept of nostalgia – the 'return to' – to also include an economic one.

That we need a new definition of nostalgia is not an arbitrary demand but follows from a careful philosophical analysis of our conventional concept of nostalgia. Such an expanded definition of “nostalgia” can at most be initiated here. What we have attempted to do in this dissertation is to provide the grounds for a revaluation and redefinition of nostalgia. Such a redefinition could produce a concept(s) that might do more justice to a range of experiences of time than the present concept of nostalgia with its largely negative connotation is capable of. If this were true, the charge that our account would ultimately lack the phenomenological evidence that could substantiate the claims that we have made here beyond their argumentative cogeney, would no longer be problematic for us. Indeed our “new” account of nostalgia cannot lay claim to describing present experiential realities but rather realities that may currently obstructed by a vocabulary that is itself in need of significant revisions.
But this entails a more fundamental flaw in objection with which we began this conclusion: What our argument challenges is precisely the idea that nostalgia is a clearly delimitable phenomenon, such that it would be sensible to say that from “here” our argument would have “moved away.” The objection begs the question about what nostalgia actually is and where it is to be found in the history of ideas; which is precisely the question that we have tried to answer throughout this thesis. What we have tried to show throughout this thesis is that “nostalgia” cannot be reduced to the conscious experience of that sharp and acute wistful longing for a portion of our past from which we are irreversibly separated. That experience is already a symptom of a more originary nostalgia (a metaphysical Unheimlichkeit, as we said in Chapter 3) that first makes the empirical nostalgia with which we are most directly familiar possible. By showing that what makes nostalgia possible is itself a phenomenon of nostalgia, we have not only not moved “away” from the empirical phenomenon of nostalgia, we have in fact tarried with this phenomenon in order to gain a deeper understanding of its precise location.

Another important criticism that we have not directly addressed yet is that our account has very little to say about the formative influence of the past. Lasch, for instance, argues that the nostalgic only knows his self-indulgent, sentimental appreciation of the past, evoking the latter “only to bury it alive.”

As such, nostalgia constitutes the worst form of memory. Genuine mnemonic appreciation of the past, in contrast to nostalgia, “is less concerned with loss than with our continuing indebtedness to a past the formative influence of which lives on in our patterns of speech, our gestures, our standards of honor, our expectations, our basic disposition toward the world around us.” On this account nostalgia is not only self-indulgent in its idealization of the past. It also makes no effort to understand the multifarious ways in which the past persists in the present. By doing this the nostalgic ignores the primary way in which the past figures in our life: as the substance of the presence. The nostalgic professes to mourn the “loss” of the past, yet in fact it is his own a-historical attitude that denies the

\[922\] Lasch (1991) 118.
\[923\] Lasch (1991) 83.
past's hold over the present. This disparaging view of nostalgia needs to be rigorously rejected. Our account of nostalgia is absolutely compatible with the recognition of the formative influence of the past. Sure enough the nostalgic individual could find some traces of the continued presence of the past in the present. Nostalgia is not a denial of the presence of the past in the present, but rather a reminder of the unique “absence” of the past not “from” the present but “in” the present. It is an awareness of the “spectral presence” of past in the present. Far from supplanting the narrative of the multifarious ways in which the past persists, our account of nostalgia adds to this narrative of plenitude that, the formative influence of the past notwithstanding, the past also does not persist. As such, our account of nostalgia does not deny the presence of the past in the present, but it challenges the hegemony of the notion of the past's presence. The experience of nostalgia, far from being a blindness, would in fact be a “sightfulness.”  

The nostalgic does not see the present as a cumulative plenitude but as populated with spectral remains of times that have irreversibly receded into the past. The nostalgic is no more oblivious to her continuing indebtedness to and the formative influence of the past than the person who appears to be immune to experiential nostalgia is necessarily in denial about the fact that the bulk of the past is irreversibly lost. Our claim about the ubiquity of nostalgia does not deny the existence of a habitualized or corporealized continuity which, as we have shown in Chapter 2, is not even what is at stake in nostalgia.  

In Chapter 2 we have shown how the past that nostalgia is most directly concerned with, namely the personal past, is not the past that the subject becomes immediately aware of in the act of recollection. The concept of the personal/historical past was rather shown to have its ontological ground in the practice by which the place that an individual occupies in the social world comes to be determined by the history of her activity in the world. As we have stressed several times, there is another largely impersonal past which is ontologically prior to any of our attempts to carve our

924Fritzsche 1592.
925Cf. Rosa 374.
personal history out of the common stock of human experiences. It is on the basis of this timeless, habitual dwelling-with-others that we may conceive of other forms of making ourselves recognizable to each other that would not be as vulnerable to the “threat” of nostalgia.

In *Der Duft der Zeit* (2014), Byung-Chul Han envisions the possibility of “a time of life that is neither narrative nor vegetative, one that is located beyond theme and trauma.” Such a time would not involve the attempted flight from the possibility of nostalgia by becoming ever less attached to life's manifold richness, nor would it seek to conquer nostalgia by means of the incessant drive to make time's passage subservient to our will. A genuine reconciliation with our inescapable temporal finitude would involve the possibility of a "nostalgia" that could be purged of the regret that makes nostalgia as we know it so dreadful. It would be a reconciliation with the passage of time that does not seek mastery but accepts this passage without resignation or regret. Such a "nostalgia" would involve an *Unheimlichkeit* that nevertheless makes sense. If our analysis of the metaphysical (pre-)conditions of nostalgia is correct, then nostalgia's fate is intertwined with the fate of the (modern) sovereign individual, i.e., of a subject who is by default dislocated from the world. For the modern individual the experience of time stands *ab origine* under the norm of identity. This identity is one that is *essentially* opposed to and thus threatened by the passage of time. The primary means by which the modern individual surmounts the passage of time is the work of narration. In narration, the modern subject gathers time, gathers himself up and thus represents himself as a victor over time's decay. But time's decay is not a grand, impersonal, metaphysical force (capital-T Time), as Jankélévitch argues, it is rather the non-descript moment that beckons us to an entirely gratuitous action: a gesture beyond the possibility of a return, assimilation, or meaningful gain. In such a moment where we let go of all pretence of a mastery over time, we become absolutely non-identical to ourselves. And yet, this must not be perceived as a threat. It does not have to be a grievous moment. Derrida's discussion of the

926Han 57; translation mine. ["eine Zeit des Lebens, die weder narrative noch vegetativ ist, die jenseits von Thema und Trauma angesiedelt ist."]
"event of the gift" would be such an unassimilable moment (as would Emmanuel Levinas's "little acts of goodness"). It is a moment that refuses to factor in any account of a life, but that is all the more substantial precisely for its economic wantonness. It is a moment that is strangely freed from the passage of time, albeit without having been sublated into a moment of something else. It stands on its own. In a strange (unheimlich) way the memory of such moments is free of all regret. It does not remind us of a "loss" or of a "failure," but rather of a moment in which we liberated ourselves not from the passage of time but from the imperative to make oneself absolutely identical to oneself. Is the refusal to "harness time's passage," with all that is involved in it, not also a refusal to view the world as the site of one's own immanent salvation?

In his poem “The Importance of Elsewhere,” Philip Larkin speaks of a strangeness that makes sense. In Chapter 5 we have linked the experience of time's irreversible passage to the experience of the loss of meaning. But perhaps nostalgia is precisely that: an Unheimlichkeit that does not so much disrupt our being-in-the-world as that it adds a slightly wistful tinge, a hue of sepia to a world that we can only ever inhabit against the backdrop of an imaginary elsewhere. The experience of an elsewhere is only superficially that of another place or of another time. Fundamentally it is the experience of an insurmountable difference. This experience that figures so powerfully in nostalgia is also the experience of an impossible totalization. This impossible totalization became most apparent in Chapter 5, where we argued that it is precisely the (seemingly) successful attempt to unify our temporal existence by means of a narrative account of it that produces the most radical dis-unity. As such, nostalgia could be understood as a resistance against the totalizing attempt to reduce life to "the essential." The nostalgia that would, empirically, attach itself to the unassimilable, fleeting moment, would in fact involve a sightfulness, a synopsis of that which can never be held together. That which we see in the experience is precisely the very opposite of a "syn-opsis." It would involve the search for a meaningfulness beyond a comprehensive narrative meaning.
If the empirical phenomenon of nostalgia is tied to a range of commitments that make it possible (and perhaps even inevitable), perhaps a much greater threat than the experience of nostalgia itself is the possibility of our becoming incapable of nostalgia. What our account of nostalgia has shown is that the absence of overt forms of nostalgia cannot solely be explained by the successful, i.e., authentic appropriation of our past; that is, by the neutralization of the pastness of the past. The absence of nostalgia could also be due to a more fundamental loss, namely the loss of the capacity to lose, i.e., by the loss of the possibility to either gain or lose our own past. The idea that we “must” live with nostalgia could thus also be read as an admonition to guard ourselves against the demise of our commitment to those norms, ideals, and values that make nostalgia inevitable.

If the experience of nostalgia cannot be blamed on the individual's personal flaws or failures, then it is still not inevitable that we accept nostalgia as an inescapable given. Moreover, an “acquiescence” of nostalgia must not be mistaken for a resigned acceptance of nostalgia in all its forms. Perhaps a deeper understanding of nostalgia can also help us unmask the ingenuity of knee-jerk condemnations of empirical nostalgia as self-indulgent sentimentality (but also trivializing celebrations of nostalgia). Only our deep seated nostalgia helps us to understand what fundamental commitments we implicitly (re)affirm when we decry time's inexorable passage. This is not to belittle the seriousness that the phenomenon of nostalgia has for those who experience it. After all we have said here, it is worth reminding ourselves of what it means to feel nostalgia. We will cede the final word on nostalgia to the narrator of Fernando Pessoa's "factless autobiography" *The Book of Disquiet*:

I sorely grieve over time's passage. It's always with exaggerated emotion that I leave something behind, whatever it may be. The miserable rented room where I lived for as few months, the dinner table at the provincial hotel where I stayed for six days, even the sad waiting room at the station where I spent two hours waiting for a train – yes, their loss grieves me. But the special things of life – when I leave them behind and realize with all my nerves' sensibility that I'll never see or have them again, at least not in that exact same moment – grieve me metaphysically. ... Time! The past! Something – a voice, a song, a chance fragrance – lifts the curtain on my soul's memories... That which I was and will never again be! That which I had and will never again have! The dead! The dead who loved me in my childhood. Whenever I
remember them, my whole soul shivers and I feel exiled from all hearts, alone in the night of myself, weeping like a beggar before the close silence of all doors. 927

One thing that our analysis of nostalgia will certainly have done is that it will have made it harder to brush sentiments like the one expressed by Pessoa's narrator aside as mere sentimentality. Regardless of not we are susceptible or prone to nostalgia ourselves, the metaphysical seriousness of nostalgia cannot be denied. Even if this were the only practical consequence that our discussion of nostalgia would have, it would not make it any less important. As Michel Foucault said, "Criticism consists in ... showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy." 928 Whether the discussion that we have attempted here has been successful at this with respect to nostalgia will have to be decided by the reader.

927 Pessoa 173.
928 Foucault 172.
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Appendix

Appendix A

Heinrich Heine – Night Thoughts

At night I think of Germany,
And then all slumber flies from me,
I can no longer close mine eyes,
The hot and bitter tears will rise.

The years pass close upon each other;
And since I last beheld my mother,
Full twelve years long have come and gone,
And ever has my yearning grown.

My wistful yearning e'er has grown,
For o'er my soul a spell she's thrown;
From her my thoughts I cannot sever,
The dear old dame—God bless her ever.

...

My mother's in my mind always;
Full twelve years have passed away,
Full twelve long years have joined the past
Since to my heart I clasped her last.

Oh! Germany will ever stand.
It is a strong and healthy land,
And with its oak, and linden trees
I'm sure to find it when I please.

I should not thirst for Germany so,
Did I not there my mother know;
The fatherland will ever stay,
The mother may be called away.

(Translation by Frances Hellman)
Appendix B

Alphonse de Lamartine – The Lake

Thus ever drawn toward far shores uncharted,
Into eternal darkness borne away,
May we not ever on Time's sea, unthwarted,
Cast anchor for a day?

...

One eve--remembering thou?--in silence drifting,
'Twixt deep and sky no sound had echo save
Afar the rowers dipping oars and lifting
Over thy waters suave.

When all at once a voice that made earth wonder
From the charmed shore drove all the echoes wide,
And rapt the wave, not fain as I nor fonder,
And with sweet words did chide:

"Stay thou thy flight, O Time! and happy hours
Trail by with laggard feet!
Let all the savour of your delight be ours
Of all our days most sweet!

"Too many grieving souls to thee are praying;
Nay, leave not these immune;
Bear off with thee their sorrows undelaying;
Leave happy souls their boon.

"Nay, but in vain I ask one gracious hour;
Time flies and will not hark.
I bid the night abide and dawn doth shower
His splendour down the dark.

"Ah! let us love, my Love, for Time is heartless,
Be happy while you may!
Man hath no Heaven and Time's coast is chartless.
He speeds; we pass away!"

Churl Time, and can it be sweet moments cherished,
Wherein love fills our lives with teeming bliss,
Speed far away and be as swiftly perished
As days when sorrow is?

Nay! Ere we go may we not leave sure traces?
Nay! Passed for ever? Beyond all reprieve?
What Time bestows on us, what Time effaces
He nevermore shall give? [...] 

(Translated by Wilfrid Thorley)