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ME, MY PREY, AND I: EMBODIMENT AND EMPATHY IN THE DIALOGICAL SELF OF A SIBERIAN HUNTER

ABSTRACT

In this article I examine the non-verbal dialogues between Siberian hunters and their prey in order to explore how empathetic relationships affect the integrity of the dialogical self. Based on the ethnographic accounts of the anthropologist Rane Willerslev (2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2007) I show how the hunter maintains his human identity while he imitates the movements of his prey and thereby “feels-into” the animal. Challenging the common idea that inner consistency and synthesis of voices holds the dialogical self together (e.g. Hermans and Kempen 1993), I argue that this case demonstrates how integrity can be maintained through inconsistent and discordant voices. In this discussion I emphasise the role of the body within the dialogical self and show how positions can be embodied in different parts and movements of the body. In order to clarify the significance of this case study for psychology, I then compare aspects of empathy and embodied positions in hunting with similar phenomena in Fogel et al.’s (2002) study of non-verbal dialogues in early infancy. Finally, this comparison invites us to re-consider the role of experienced-based, qualitative methods, such as participant observation, in studying the dialogical self.

Key words: dialogical self, embodiment, empathy, non-verbal dialogue, conflict, integrity

1. INTRODUCTION

”...we can experience union with something larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace” (James 1997, p. 406). In his lecture “The Divided Self”, William James (1997, pp. 143-159) examines the psychological processes behind states of inner discord and inconsistency of selves, which are often connected with melancholy. In reviewing biographies of religious individuals like Saint Augustine and Leo Tolstoy, he observed that “mystical” experiences of union changed these states into states of happiness, firmness, stability, and equilibrium (1997, p. 150). So we learn from Saint Augustine, for example, how he fought with himself at one point

during his life: “[t]he new will which I began to have was not yet strong enough to overcome that other will, strengthened by long indulgence. So these two wills, one old, one new, one carnal, the other spiritual, contended with each other and disturbed my soul. I understood by my own experience what I had read, ‘flesh lusteth against spirit, and spirit against flesh’” (quoted in: James 1997, p. 147).

So it seems that Saint Augustine’s inner conflict was not necessarily confined to his soul. The inner “voices” in conflict were the spiritual voice of his soul and the carnal voice of his body. This article, too, is about inconsistent voices expressed through different levels of intentionality and different aspects of the body, although in the very different context of an encounter between a hunter and his prey in Siberia. Using a case study of the hunting practices of the Yukaghir people I intend to show how complex non-verbal dialogues between human and animal affect the human identity of the hunter. William James assumed that an experience of unity is the remedy for inner conflicts. In a similar vein, Hermans and Kempen (1993, pp. 92-93) have argued that synthesis is the centripetal force in the dialogical self that brings positions striving for autonomy together.

In the following example, however, it is the conflict and inconsistency of voices that upholds the integrity of the self faced with the centrifugal force of “mimetic empathy”, that is a form of empathy initiated through bodily imitation. Based on the ethnographic accounts of the anthropologist Rane Willerslev (2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2007) I will show how the hunter maintains his human identity while he imitates the movements of his prey and thereby establishes an empathetic link with the animal. Willerslev has described this state as an state “in-between”, that is neither “the animal” nor “not the animal”. It must be noted, though, right at the beginning that this state of “in-betweenness” is not the rule but rather the “optimal intensity” (Willerslev, personal communication) that appears in myth, but also in many personal experiences of individual hunters. However, not every hunter has had such experiences nor do the ones who have had them experience states of mimetic empathy every time they go hunting.

The results of this analysis may provide new insights into the understanding of conflict and integrity of the dialogical self, power relationships within the dialogical self, and the role of the body in non-verbal dialogues within the dialogical self.

2. CASE STUDY: YUKAGHIR ELK HUNTING

The Yukaghir are a small indigenous group in south eastern Siberia, numbering about 1,000 people. While one part of this group lives from reindeer-herding, the Yukaghir Willerslev conducted research with, have remained hunters, fishermen, trappers and gatherers (the last three subsistence activities being mainly, but not exclusively reserved for older people, women and children). Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 they receive hardly any state subsidies and so they are now completely dependent on their own

subsistence activities. As a result, men usually spend eight or more months per year hunting for big game, especially elk, far away from any settlements, deep in the vast forests of Siberia.

When a Yukaghir hunter spends day after day, week after week, killing animals, most often alone and without any human contact at all, then it seems no wonder that sometimes he feels himself on the verge of losing his human identity. Willerslev reports how he and a Yukaghir hunter became almost obsessed with trapping sables, spending days with nothing but eating, sleeping and setting traps: "...my companion said: 'Can't you feel it?' 'Feel what?' I asked. 'How we are turning into greedy predators, just like wolves. We have this need to kill more and more. Even if we had two hundred sables we wouldn't feel satisfied, would we? Just like the devil, you see'. He paused for a while. Then he added, 'I suggest we calm down... and stop hunting for a week or so' "(2004a, p. 635).

Now, that a hunter may become more and more like a predator might not seem too unlikely. But how is it that the hunter might also be in danger of becoming too much like his prey? In the case of the Yukaghir, this is a result of their hunting technique, so let me turn next to the hunting process as such. Several days before the hunt actually starts the hunter prepares himself by disguising his human identity and his intentions of killing. The hunter takes a sauna to get rid of his human scent and begins to speak about the hunt in a particular code that glosses his intention of killing, as well as the nature of his supposed prey. In the world of the Yukaghir each animal species is watched over by a "master spirit", whom the hunter must not offend. As he cannot be sure whether his conversations are overheard by the master spirit these measures of disguise are necessary. On the day of the hunt itself these precautions even extend to his hunting activities, and so he will neither sharpen his knife nor clean his rifle.

The hunt may be preceded the evening before by the "invisible hunt" (2004a, p. 643) that foreshadows the outcome of the "visible hunt" that begins the next day. The hunter offers vodka and tobacco to the master spirit by "feeding" it to the fire. Thereby, the spirit's senses are dimmed and the hunter's soul (*ayibii*) can begin his deception. Brought into a lustful mood through the narcotic effects of the offerings, the spirit perceives the hunter's *ayibii* to be one of his kind and longs for him. In the night when the hunter is asleep, his *ayibii* visits the spirit and seduces him in order to gain essential information about the location of his prey. A hunter describes one of his dreams as follows:

"They live in a wooden house. There is a barn too. I assume they keep the animals in the barn. They are always glad to see me, the three sisters. When I arrive, they are a little drunk. They start to play around with the front part of me [penis]. If I'm hunting at the upper part of the river, I'll take the oldest sister and we'll go to bed. If I hunt at the middle part, I'll pick the middle sister. And if I'm hunting at the lower part I'll go with the youngest one. When I wake up I know that I will have good luck (2004a, p. 643)".

In dreams like these animals assume human qualities and “culture”: they become “persons”. The change of perspective that is evident in these dreams has been described under the heading of “perspectivism” in a classical article by Viveiros de Castro. In regard to South American Indians – and increasing evidence suggests that this holds true for other hunting societies around the globe as well – de Castro (1998, p. 308) elaborates how

“[t]ypically, in normal conditions, humans see humans as humans, animals as animals and spirits (if they see them) as spirits; however, animals (predators) and spirits see humans as animals (prey) to the same extent that animals (prey) see humans as spirits or as animals (predators). By the same token, animals and spirits see themselves as humans: they perceive themselves as (or become) anthropomorphic beings when they are in their own houses or villages and they experience their own habits and characteristics in the form of culture...”

In this view, humans, animals and spirits are – on some level – all “persons” and perceive themselves as such (for example, in dreams or in a state of mimetic empathy while hunting). The common denominator for all three is their soul which is equal in every being. What introduces difference, de Castro (1998, p. 316) argues, is their habitus given through their bodies. It is not necessarily their bodies as such, as a material substance that introduces the difference but what one does with it and how it shapes the ways one engages with the world.

In relation to the dream just described this means that both the hunter and the animals seem to have employed the same bodily habitus and hence all perceived each other as “persons”. This interpretation is backed up by Willerslev’s finding that hunters also perceive themselves as having animal bodies in these dreams; that is, sometimes at least. Their body image switches several times during the dream, sometimes being human, sometimes being animal. As we will see later in the account of the “visible hunt”, it is essential for the hunter not to lose himself in his animal body. Only by switching back and forth can he maintain his human identity while tricking the animals to see him as one of their kind.

In a similar way, the Yukaghir hunter uses a small wooden idol that depicts his soul and is supposed to help him in establishing contact with the spirits, as well as to maintain his human identity. The idol is in humanoid form but with the horns of an elk sprouting out of his head. It can therefore be seen as a depiction of the hunter in his “in-between state” of the visible and invisible hunt.

What the dream “hunt” has achieved, apart from getting information about where to locate the prey animal, is that it established rapport between hunter and prey. When they meet again in the “visible world”, they will continue from where they left off and the act of seduction will begin anew. When the hunter goes into the forest and tracks the animal, he will eventually be in a position to spot it; usually from some distance and partially hidden in the undergrowth.

In order to be able to take good aim he has to lure it out into the open. To hide his human identity, he does not speak anymore and through the sauna he has covered his human scent. He wears decorated clothes and equipment, which is supposed to be so beautiful that it appears attractive to elks. He also wears his *kamus* skis that make the same sounds as an elk moving in snow. He approaches the animal, moving his body through the snow like an elk. The elk mistakes the hunter for one of its kind and remembers him from their dream encounter. They approach each other now, each imitating the movements of the other like in a choreographed and co-ordinated dance.

The hunter's task is to engage in what Willerslev labels "mimetic empathy" in order to hunt with a "double perspective":

"The hunter, we might say, acts with a dual nature: he is both hunter and animal. To act in-between these two identities is a highly complex task. If he lets his intentions as a hunter show through his actions, the prey animal will either run or attack him. If, on the other hand, he allows his intentions to merge with his bodily movements (which are that of an elk) he will surrender to the perspective of prey and turn into it." (2004a, p. 639).

In this state his point of view oscillates rapidly between his "embodied-elk-consciousness-in-movement" and his killing intention without becoming "locked" in any of these positions. Accordingly, he begins to see the elk - and himself - either as moving animal or moving person. If he is successful in maintaining this balance, his chances of shooting the elk are good. If he fails to maintain the balance, however, he will not only forfeit his chance to shoot the animal but will be in danger of losing his human identity and "turn elk".

The danger of losing one's human identity is considered neither unreal nor improbable. When it happens it closely resembles the dream experience from above. An elderly hunter describes one such incident, which is worth quoting at length:

"I had been following a herd of reindeer for some long time, about six hours, I believe. As I searched the track, I had a strange feeling I was being watched. I looked up and saw an old man, about twenty metres ahead of me. He smiled at me. I asked him who he was, but he did not answer me. Instead, he gestured with his hand, showing me that I should follow him. I thought he had a cabin close by and some food, so I did so. All the time he did not speak. I noticed his footprints were those of a reindeer. 'Strange', I thought, because the man was wearing *kamus* (skin-covered) skis. But then I thought I was just hallucinating because I was tired and hungry. We walked up a hill and behind it was a huge camp. There were people of all ages, children playing, old men sitting smoking, and women cooking. The old man took me to his tent. He spoke to his wife by grunting just like a reindeer, and she grunted back. I did not understand. 'Who are these people?' I thought. The woman served me food, and I saw it was not meat, but moss. I ate it

and it was not too bad. As time passed and we sat there in the tent, I started forgetting things. I thought, for instance, about my wife, who was waiting for me back home, but I realized I had forgotten her name. Then we went to sleep. I dreamt that I was surrounded by reindeer. Someone said to me, ‘You do not belong here, go away’. I do not know who spoke. I woke up and thought I had to get away. I sneaked out of the tent and started walking home. In the village, people were surprised to see me. They said they thought I had died. ‘What do you mean’ I asked them, ‘I have only been away for a week’. ‘No’, they said. ‘We have not seen you for more than a month’. It seems that the people I met were reindeer, and I should have killed them, but at the time I did not know” (2004a, p. 635).

We do not know how exactly he happened to get in such a state. We can only assume – but considering the information we have on Yukaghir hunting practices I think reasonably so – that a combination of factors led to this: being without human contact in the forest over long periods, being hungry, and being tired. The elderly hunter had spend a month in the forest, probably hunting every day, which means establishing empathetic rapport with animals over and over again. It is possible to suggest that the combination of factors mentioned before at one point – or rather gradually – resulted in his losing the balance between his hunter identity and his elk identity. Forgetting more and more of his human identity, he wandered around as an “elk-person” until his *ayibii* called him back in a dream.

3. DISCUSSION

Let me start our discussion of this phenomenon by translating it into dialogical self theory. Taking Hubert Hermans’ model of the Personal Position Repertoire PPR (2001) as a starting point, what are the interior and exterior positions relevant to this phenomenon? How can the relationships between positions be described? And what happens to the I-position during the hunt?

Obviously, there are at least two positions involved: the internal position of the hunter and the external position of the elk. When we go back to de Castro’s idea of perspectivism – that Willerslev has identified for the Yukaghir as well – then we should describe each position as being comprised of a soul/person and an embodied habitus unique to its respective species. In the pages to come I shall first focus on an analysis of the hunting process in regard to the bodily aspects of the relationship between hunter and elk. I then proceed to an elaboration of the intentionalities involved, which brings us back to the soul. Both sections will shed further light on the process of mimetic empathy and how it can be interpreted with the help of the model of the PPR in particular, and dialogical self theory in general.

The hunter seems to see the elk in two ways, as material essence and as bodily movement. The hunter who is aiming for the kill sees the material body of the elk, while the hunter who tries to seduce the elk by imitating his movements sees the elk’s body-in-motion. In phenomenological terminology, we could speak of a focus on the *Körper* in the former case and a focus on

the *Leib* of the elk in the latter. In German, the word *Körper* (in its original meaning that developed from the Latin *corpus*) refers to the structural aspects of the body or the objectified body. In contrast, the *Leib* denotes the “lived body” (Leder, 1984) with its feelings, emotions, sensations and perceptions (see: Ots, 1994). Transferred to our case study I suggest that the elk presents itself to the hunter in two ways. The “elk-as-*Körper*” is no more than a material object to the hunter with the killing intention. It is merely his target and does not exist for him as a living being. Hence, the possibilities for dialogue are virtually non-existent. The hunter’s intention has to be hidden from the elk and catch him unguarded.

On the other hand, the “elk-as-*Leib*” is the moving elk, embodied personhood, that the (mimicking and empathising) hunter imitates and tries to “feel-into” (the literal translation of the original German word for empathy, *Einfühlung*). The hunter is interested in this elk-as-*Leib* with all its feelings and perceptions as it is the only means for him to move like an elk and hence to appear like an elk. To be a convincing seducer he must endow all of his movements with the right feel, that is, with the feel of the elk’s *Leib* that somehow has to become his own. The “hunter-as-*Leib*” and the “elk-as-*Leib*” engage in a dialogue on equal terms, in the choreographed and co-ordinated dance I mentioned before. Each movement of each person acts as an amplifier for the other, although in very different ways. The elk gets more and more interested in the hunter and more and more into a lustful mood, while the hunter himself turns gradually into an elk.

Interestingly, however, it is also the “elk-as-*Leib*” that supports the hunters killing intention. How is it that the hunter does not lose himself in his elk movements, in his own elk- *Leib*? The “elk-as-*Leib*” presents the hunter with a mirror of his own personhood (see: Willerslev, 2004, pp. 639-642). His own human identity being glossed by his elk movements, the hunter has to rely on the elk to re-connect him with his soul and therefore with his killing intention. Remember that for the Yukaghir movement is a sign for a living soul. As his gaze is fixed on the elk’s *Leib* – and the awareness of his own body thus diminished – the hunter’s body realises itself fully through the *Leib* of the elk. The phenomenological unity created through the synchrony of movements shows the hunter, that the elk’s movements are the movements of a *Leib* which in itself is a sign of a soul. This realisation is transferred to the hunter himself and so the elk’s body helps him to remind himself that he is more than a body. He also has a soul, a soul that intends to kill the elk.

To recapitulate in terms of dialogical self theory, we could say that the “hunter-soul” is in monological action with the “elk-as-*Körper*” (see: Hermans and Kempen, 1993, p. 106), i.e. the two positions do not work together towards an aim but the soul position acts upon the elk *Körper*. In contrast, the “hunter-body” position is in a dialogical relationship with the “elk-as-*Leib*” position. This relationship can be described as a) symmetrical and b) centripetal. It is, generally speaking, symmetrical due to its interactional synchrony. One could make finer distinctions in terms of turn-taking and argue that the first initiative

(both of movement and “seduction”) came from the hunter. However, this initial asymmetry soon dissolves and turns over into a symmetry as both dialogue partners imitate the movements of the other. And it is this imitation also that makes this interaction a centripetal one, as the synchrony inevitably draws the two positions closer together and thereby works towards their unification.

That this unification is never achieved in the end (or at least not when everything goes well) is due to the relationships between the positions of the monological action and the positions in dialogical relationship. To start with, the “elk-as-Körper” is closely related to the “elk-as-Leib”, given that the elk’s body is not only a visual, material target but also a moving target, with everything attached that movement implies. In a similar way the “hunter-body” is related to the “hunter-soul” as the latter needs the support of the “elk-as-Leib” position to realise its personhood. Put differently, the “elk-as-Leib” becomes the me position for the I position of the hunter’s soul, the mirror in which the hunter’s own personhood becomes apparent to himself. Hermans and Kempen (1993, p. 73) have argued: “In Mead’s terms, people make use of a broad array of gestures, words, and sentences to let children [and every other person in general] know how they perceive them in the various positions occupied”. It is therefore through other people’s actions and words that one is able to reflect upon one’s I position as a me. In our example, it is the “elk-as-Leib” that – through its movements – shows the hunter that it perceives him as a “person” the elk can interact with. The elk willing to engage in this dialogue of seduction is thus the amplifier for the “hunter-soul” position; it strengthens his perception of himself as a person rather than an animal.

Whereas the dialogical relationship between “elk-as-Leib” and “hunter-as-Leib” is centripetal in regard to these two positions, it can be considered centrifugal in regard to the “hunter-soul” and “elk-as-Körper”. This centrifugal force seems to lie within the movements of the former positions and threatens at any moment to overpower the “hunter-soul” with its killing intention. This is what happened to the hunter who spent a month with the elk without realising it and this is why he protects his *ayibii* with the small idol that is both human and elk. On the other hand, the monological action of the “hunter-soul” is centrifugal as well. The hunter has to rein in his killing intention by disguising it – by not sharpening his knife nor cleaning his rifle, and finally by not letting his killing intention show through his movements in the final stage of the hunt. If the “hunter-soul” shows through the actions of “hunter-as-Leib”, the spell of seduction will be broken and the elk will recognise the hunter for what he really is.

From these elaborations it should have become clear by now that the problem of the hunter stems from the conflicting intentions that are present within him. It is perhaps necessary at this point to examine these intentions more closely and I would like to suggest to define “intention” in a very basic, phenomenological sense as a “directedness towards” something. In a recent paper on the motor theory of social cognition, Jacobs and Jeannerod (2004) distinguished the following levels of intentionality: a) motor intentions,

b) “prior” intentions, c) communicative intentions, and d) social intentions. Let me explain what they mean by these terms by applying them to our example right away. Intention is commonly understood as a conscious act of the mind. However, there is an embodied “directedness towards” that can be found on the motor level like in the “waddling” and “swaying of the body” of the hunter who imitates the elk (Willerslev, 2004, p. 639). His “prior” intention to move like an elk influences his motor actions of particular movements of his legs and whole body composition. On the next level, we find the communicative intention of seducing the elk; communicative, because this is the message that the hunter wants to convey to the elk through his elk-like movements. But as seduction is not an aim as such the communicative intention already points to the hunter’s social intention of mating. Now, this last level is barely noticeable during the “visible” hunt but eminent in the “invisible” dream hunt in which the hunter aims to sleep with the elk spirits.

In both hunts, however, he follows a rather different set of intentions as well. In the dream his real aim is to extract information from the spirits about where to find his prey. In the visible hunt his final aim, that is his social intention, is to kill the elk. Now, if we try to distinguish this set of intentions in the way I described the levels of intentionality above, we will find that it works alongside the first set although along different parts of the body; with one exception, however. The intention of killing is a monological action, that is one without any communicative intention, as the hunter has to hide his real aim. It is, in turn, one with his “prior” intention of shooting expressed in his arms and hands holding and positioning the rifle. These lines of intentions can best be understood with Bakhtin’s concept of ventriloquism as a “process in which one voice speaks through another voice” (Hermans and Kempen, 1993, p. 77). Analogously, the killing intention is given a voice through the movements of the arms and hands holding the rifle, and a voice is given to the mating intention through the movements of the lower body.

Until now, I have described the characteristics of the two conflicting lines of intentions, but how are they related? Should they engage in a symmetrical dialogue, the hunter would not be capable of killing. He would be torn between these intentions, not knowing which to follow. Therefore, the killing intention must be in a superior position, although it must not be too dominant to shine through all the hunter’s body movements. However, the killing intention does certainly not lead to a synthesis of positions either. Instead, it can be conceived as a metaperspective (Hermans and Kempen, 1993) that – from the background – regulates the synchronic interaction between the hunter and the elk in all its facets. This meta-position does not interfere directly with the dialogue between “hunter-as-*Leib*” and “elk-as-*Leib*”, but is effected by it in two ways. On the one hand, the meta-position is inhibited by this dialogue as its centripetal force draws the external position of the elk and the internal position of the hunter together to become one moving unity. In this process, the hunter engages with the elk increasingly as a person like himself and thus it becomes more difficult for him to perceive the elk as prey and to kill it. On the other hand, the

meta-position is supported by the same dialogue as the moving elk mirrors not only the movements of the hunter but mirrors the soul of the hunter as well (remember that movement is a sign for a living “person”). Paradoxically, the meta-position relies on the elk in order to function and finally expropriate the “hunter-the-elk body” position when he is about to shoot. This meta-position is not located outside the encounter of hunter and elk, supervising it from a somewhat objective position, nor is it a position assumed after the event, as it is often described in dialogical self literature. It is an intrinsic part of the ongoing dialogue.

In the final paragraphs of this article I would like to bridge the gap between the hunters of the Siberian forests and the concerns of the reader of a psychological journal. As I see it, this case study provides new means of understanding the embodiedness of I-positions, both within the own and other people’s bodies. It shows that I-positions are not only expressed through one’s posture, mimics, gestures, gait, etc., but that they can even be located in different parts of the body working together or against each other; not as a whole but as a fragmented body, regulated by an embodied meta-position. While it has been quite common for psychotherapists to examine dialogical relationships within the PPR of clients, often conceived of as a collection of roles, the potential link between these positions and their physical embodiment in the clients’ and their significant others’ bodies is largely absent from the literature with the exception of research in non-verbal dialogues of infants and the development of the dialogical self in early childhood. One of the best examples within this field is Fogel et al.’s (2002) analysis of the development of verbal and non-verbal dialogues in the first two years of infancy, as illustrated by the dialogues between a mother and her child, Susan. If we read the description of the following dialogue, we can easily see the rudiments of what has been presented above as mimetic empathy:

“Susan sits in the high chair with mother opposite her. As mother taps the table, Susan turns her head to watch mother’s hands. Mother says, ‘Show mama how you pound.’ Susan looks straight into mother’s eyes. Mother repeats the same sentence in a rhythmic fashion, as if she is pounding. The infant starts to pound the table with a faint smile on her face. Mother exclaims, ‘YEAH! That’s a good girl!’ and starts smiling too. Susan starts to alternate between looking at her own and at mother’s pounding hand. She starts hitting the table more and more vigorously while looking intently at her hands. Again, she alternates between looking at mother’s hand and her own hand. Then, she grabs mother’s hand and watches it closely. She looks at its palm, turns it upside down, puts it palm-down on the table and turns it back up. Then, she drops it. She lifts up both arms, hits them forcefully on the table and shouts, ‘Ah!’ Mother smiles while she softly repeats the infant’s ‘Ah’. (Fogel et al., 2002, p. 198)

According to Fogel et al., this episode shows how Susan begins to learn to compare her mother's experience with her own. She finds out that her mother is somehow the same as herself but also somehow different, which is clearly puzzling Susan. Her gaze wanders back and forth from her own hand to her mother's and, after scrutinising her mother's hand while pounding it on the table, recognises that – although the hand and the movement looks similar to her own – it does not feel like her own hand. In other words, she seems to experience a phenomenological unity of their hands through her visual sense, but her senses of proprioception and kinaesthesia make her aware of the difference between these two hands. There is a muscular feeling accompanying the pounding of her own hand but not her mother's pounding. Whenever Susan's gaze switches to her own hand, she seems to check the visual information of similarity against the visual information of her own hand. Her whole perception, however, is different as the visual becomes mixed up with her bodily sensations of the pounding.

I suggest that this is how we may understand that the hunter sees himself alternatively as animal then as human being in his dreams. He sees the elk and himself either as animal or person during the visible hunt, and finally this accounts for the constant oscillation between positions within his dialogical self. When I noted that the visual becomes “mixed up” with bodily sensations I invoked the image of perception as a “Gestalt”. What I want to suggest here is that the switch of the I-position, from killing intention to mating intention, is supported by a change of perceptual focus or attention, not unlike the effect obtained when looking at the famous image of the Rubin vase. In that case, one sees either two dark profiles against a white background or a white vase against a black background. Although the image as such stays the same, the Gestalt one sees depends on what one perceives as the figure, and what as ground. A simple switch of focus achieves the perception of something completely different. In a similar way, the hunter sees the elk either as person or animal according to what he deems to be the figure in focus. When the hunter follows the movements of the elk with his eyes, he perceives the elk against the background of his own bodily (i.e. kinaesthetic and proprioceptive) perceptions. On the other hand, a switch of focus to his own body (especially the upper part that holds the rifle) as figure pushes the visual perception of the elk in the background. Accordingly, the I-position is with the “elk-as-*Leib*” when he focuses on visual perception and with the “Hunter-Soul” when he focuses on his bodily sensations.

There is one other situation of Susan and her mother that is reminiscent of the hunter's mimetic empathy with the elk. Here, Susan “empathises” with a lion which is impersonated through a hand puppet:

“Mother and Susan are sitting on the floor. Mother hides the lion and Susan follows the lion, looking for it. Suddenly, the ‘lion’ comes out of his hiding place and ‘roars!’ Susan screams and steps back. She stares at the lion for a few seconds. She then abruptly grabs the puppet from the mother's hand

and tries to pull it off. The mother resists and makes the lion move and scream, 'No! No!' After a short and playful fight, Susan is able to slip the puppet off mother's hand. She smiles and explores the puppet. She turns it around looking for the opening to put her hand in. The mother comments, 'Oh, you are gonna do it!' Mother helps her to put the lion on her hand. Susan smiles and says, 'Roar!' Mother laughs and comments, 'Scare mom'. Susan then carefully observes the lion. She turns the lion toward her own face and makes it open its mouth. She first smiles and then watches the lion, astonished. She looks surprised and a little confused. The mother intervenes: 'Ahh! You scared me!' Susan then moves the lion toward mother and says, 'Roar!' while smiling. Mother pretends to be scared, screams, and then comments, 'Scare mommy'". (Fogel et al., 2002, p. 200)

Again, we see that different positions are expressed through different body parts. Susan impersonates the lion with her hand holding the puppet and her mouth saying "Roar!", while being Susan with her smile, for example. She has to scrutinise the puppet and then connect it to her own bodily sensations by opening and closing the lion's mouth with her hand. This being her first time, she takes this role from her mother. Her ability to take on the role of the lion depends on her bodily sensation of being the lion. Likewise, the hunter dons on his elk head gear, his elk fur, his skis, imitates elk sounds and movements. His visual perception of his own elk-like body and voice becomes mixed up with the visual perception of the elk before him, its body and movements, and his own bodily sensations while imitating him.

Neither in hunting nor in a child's playing are these conflicts of voices resolved by uniting them. It is the dialogicality of the body, in both cases, that makes it possible to explore these "in-between" states without losing one's human identity. The body, therefore, is a place where we can experiment with the boundaries of interior and exterior fields of positions. What is most important, in both Susan's and the Yukaghir's case, the "dialogicality of the self" is guaranteed and maintained through the physicality of their bodies, while movement between positions become linked with different modes of perception. It seems that through the experience of the lived body, or *Leib*, the positions of the dialogical self may be felt and acquire meaning.

I firmly believe that a study of the embodied dialogical self and its modes of perception may advance our understanding of people's life-worlds. Unfortunately, psychotherapists who work with dialogical self theory seem normally to rely predominantly on verbal conversations with clients. Ethnographic fieldwork, such as done by Rane Willerslev and other anthropologists, is not feasible in a therapeutic context. However, given the immense interest in ethnography that I have encountered in dialogues with psychologists and psychotherapists over the past few years, I wonder whether there is not more room for experience-based methods such as participant observation in psychological research and therapy. Withstanding critiques about environmental validity, psychological research in general, and research on the dialogical self in particular, is still largely confined to the space of the laboratory and praxis. My hope is that this

article has shown a direction of dialogical self research that has not been fully explored and utilised; a direction that acknowledges the whole person, beyond words and thoughts; a direction which includes both what is said and what is done; a direction which opens up new levels of empathetic dialogue, the sharing of perceptual life-worlds and the sharing of bodily experience.

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