

“BEING ALL THAT WE CAN BE”

I don't think about how a key works when I lock my front door on my way out of my flat every morning, I just do it because I need to make sure my flat and things in it are secure. But if one day, my keys were to snap off in the lock of my door it would render the key, as a thing, 'unusable' the thing that's there at my hand isn't there anymore. The same could be applied in the situation of literally *losing* my keys. In either situation the *context* in which I engage with the key changes and a new context will be illuminated, I would, for example, have to think about why and how I use my key, and maybe call someone who specialises in key cutting / locksmith. My front door key is no longer just a means to an end in this new light.

My key is now sealed, *safely* in the lock. Safe and unusable. Safe and *unfulfilled*. Ducking the blame, the key didn't *make* the door, it exclaims, so of course it is *not responsible*. Who is in *charge* of an individual's contribution to available worlds (do they claim responsibility?) and what happens when something glitches or *appears* to be *newly broken*. Who *virtually* cares?

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We use the word 'care' to describe the act of support for a person, object, or situation. We talk about it in the same way that we talk about maintenance. A simple example would be that of maintenance allowance (external gesture of stability on personal finance) or structural maintenance (when a pipe burst in a block of flats specialist workers will be called to fix it to make sure everyone can continue to live normally in the flats) or a content creator for a social media page.

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Progressing a social situation requires communication. As we know from experience, speaking and language (IRL and URL) evokes response. Whether that be someone asking a question on a forum or calling your name in a street. In, *Sisters! Making Films, Doing Politics. An Exploration in Artistic Research* Petra Bauer recalls Susan Bickford's claims of speech's "predetermined direction"¹ Bauer discusses Bickford's position on speaking words further as:

"...whether they are spontaneous or planned, they already have a specific purpose. She places this in opposition to active listening."² This claim situates spoken words as a phenomenon for us to react to. When we go on to listen we in turn become *responsible* for what we have engaged with. Maybe.

Normally this kind of interaction is in reference to a first hand exploration of our shared situation with other people (call it community/society/lifeworld) through this we can begin to achieve a "critical perspective"³ which builds on the way we ordinarily encounter things. Will your second *lived* experience in a extend the potential for human criticality? Is an on screen lifeworld a site for deep listening? Or will hidden identities provide an alternate world for white, cis, patriarchal, capitalist power structures in synchronicity with off screen life, a stifled space for speaking only.

In *Phenomenology* Shaun Gallagher describes how a productive phenomenological perspective involves putting already present beliefs and judgements "out of effect"⁴ thus enabling us to understand how we are able to experience that thing, not what that thing is made from that allows us to experience it. In the same book Gallagher describes "intersubjectivity" as "a central theme and phenomenon of human experience"⁵. Perhaps like a life via avatars, a phenomenological practice in all its particularities is an encouraging example of a philosophy that reveals new perspectives and encourages engagement with other people in a growing shared understanding of *human experience*.

The phenomenological concept of "appresentation" exemplifies the positive and productive relationship with things out with the individual. Again in *Phenomenology*, Gallagher uses the example of an encounter with an apple:

"when I visually perceive the apple on the table in front of me, I literally see only one side of it... Nonetheless, I experience it as a whole apple, and not just as a one-sided façade of an apple... Accordingly, I have some kind of experiences of the parts of the

¹ pg 157, Bauer, Petra. *Sisters! Making Films, Doing Politics. An Exploration in Artistic Research*, Art and Theory Publishing, Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, <http://lup.lub.lu.se/record/83f32c5f-63a9-47d8-956c-0c6ab0e6f3e3>, 2016

² Ibid

³ pg. 42, Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012

⁴ Pg43-46 Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012
regarding Husserl's notion of epoche

⁵ pg 182 Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012

apple that I do not literally see – the apple as a whole is ‘appresented’ “my self experience asymmetrical with my experience of the other... The incompleteness of the other, in this regard, is precisely her presence *as other*.”⁶

If applied to experiences with others, this example would bypass acting- as influenced by stereotype- in acknowledging that the apple is more than what is immediately apparent. There are many examples of stereotypes corruption of experience. In a TEDtalk from 2009 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie talks on *The Danger of a Single Story*⁷

A hidden identity is an opportunity for many individually constructed single stories: being all that we can’t in actuality be - engulfing the identities of others even. Those engaging in the stereotyping oftentimes adopt a faux (or misdirected) empathy, a façade as a result of the ‘*flattened*’⁸ origin of the others experience and subsequently, the engagement with the other.

Because of this risk posed by empathy (due to how easy it is to manipulate and misplace through having false experiences with others read: *flattening*) I would argue that it is an insufficient yet necessary process in our engagement with the world around us. To return to Gallagher’s apple example in his account of the “apperception of the other as animate organism ...based upon a passive association”⁹. Gallagher mentions how this appresentation happens “before any voluntary decision or any interpretations happen[s]”

This space of *passive association* is occupied by our implicit behaviour or decision making¹⁰. This, although a challenge to our experience, highlights this as an occasion for development.

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Of these things I’m not sure : Who is all that we can be? Is second-self listening a more effective model for communication? & What do I do about my key?

Emma McCarthy

*essay title taken from interview with Philip Rosendale CEO. Linden in Jason Spingarn-Koff’s *Life 2.0, 2010*

±Sections of writing have been adapted from author’s undergraduate thesis : *Exposing Invisible Infrastructures with Care (and Contemporary Phenomena) Observations and Recommendations, 2017*

⁶ pg183, Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012

⁷ Mentioned in Bakita Kasadha’s, performance at the recent Youth Stop AIDS event held in Glasgow, that I saw screened at “It Ain’t Over” an exhibition at DJCAD a collaboration between the SCT and Youth Stop Aids, Dec 2016. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *The danger of a single story*: “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” (https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en) 2009.

⁸Ibid

⁹Pg 184, Gallagher, Shaun. *Phenomenology*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012

¹⁰Saul, Jennifer. *Implicit Bias - Philosophy Bites Podcast* <http://philosophybites.com/2013/12/jennifer-saul-on-implicit-bias.html> , 2015
“Collection of largely unconscious association that pretty much all humans are prone to.” That affect “how we perceive/ interact with and evaluate members of social groups in our societies”

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