Conceptual Personae of the “attentional self”

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1. Introduction

“Everything has to be rethought from the beginning” Mr. Palomar (Calvino 1985, 115)

In this paper I take attention as a constitutive ground of the self. I critically survey the claim of Metzinger that a subjective self, defined as the centre of awareness, is the possibility of being able to manipulate the focus of attention, thereby stabilizing subjective experience. Thus I propose an attentional self in which I will put Metzinger’s thesis of the “control of the focus of attention” and the resulting notion of the “attentional self” critically into perspective by approximating the concept of the self by means of conceptual personae of the “impossible” attentional self in Paul Valery’s dyadic conceptual personae “Monsieur Teste”/“Émilie Teste” and the “heautoscopic” attentional self in Italo Calvino’s “Mister Palomar”.

Philosophical Concepts, according to Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari in “What is philosophy?”(WP) can be personae – as explicitly as the appearing of “Socrates” for Plato or “Dionysus” and “Zarathustra” for Nietzsche that act from a constitutive plane of philosophy and create concepts on this plane at the same time. What


2 “There are innumerable planes, each with a variable curve, and they group together or separate themselves according to the points of view constituted by personae. Each persona has several features that may give rise to other personae, on the same or a different plane: conceptual personae proliferate.” (WP, p. 76).
Deleuze & Guattari call “A conceptual personae […] thinks in us”\(^3\) (WP, p. 69) is thus more complex than a specific representational model of thinking or of a represented narrative self in symbolic representation. Therefore we have to underline the importance of conceptual personae for the creation of different points of view by these personae that direct thoughts concerning concepts such as “self” and “attention” by giving these concepts not just certain names but also providing concrete concepts to consider, putting these conceptual personae into theoretical and practicable perspectives and into coherent conceptual constellations with the phenomenon of the self. Going towards the “self” and back over conceptual personae, the “self” becomes a diagrammatic feature on superimposed conceptual maps\(^4\) of concrete personae of the “self”.

Thus to state the first point:

1) **Complex concepts such as the “self” have personae with which we think.** With these personae of thinking we create plural conceptual maps with which we actively explore the complexity of the phenomenon.

The personae of the self may be extended into a conceptual space, but are always present as concepts that show their perspectives, connecting lines, strengths and weaknesses as well as their lines of flights by being superimposed on to and by others. The concept of the

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3 Hereby the expression “personae” is used in the sense of different instances of one being and “personas” as different beings.

4 “Maps […] are superimposed in such a way that each map finds itself modified in the following map, rather than finding its origin in the preceding one: from one map to the next, it is not a matter of searching for an origin, but of evaluating displacements. Every map is a redistribution of impasses and breakthroughs, of thresholds and enclosures, which necessarily go from bottom to top. […] Maps should not be understood only in extension, in relation to a space constituted by trajectories. There are also maps of intensity, of density, that are concerned with what fills space, what subtends the trajectory. […] A list or constellation of affects, an intensive map, is a becoming. […] We see clearly why real and imaginary were led to exceed themselves, or even to interchange with each other: a becoming is not imaginary, any more than a voyage is real. It is becoming that turns the most negligible of all trajectories, or even the fixed immobility, into a voyage; and it is the trajectory that turns the imaginary into a becoming. Each of the two types of maps, those of trajectories and those of affects, refer to each other” (Deleuze, 1998, p. 63.)
“self” is seen here as a relational entity and as such can be oriented within a diagrammatic map of concepts.

The self might be superimposed on to the concept of the “other”, or in distinction to the “Non-self” (as in Buddhist philosophy and psychology; see: Olendzki 2010, Engler/Fulton 2012) or even be integrated or opposed towards a representational “self-model” (Metzinger) or a virtual, “disembodied” entity of a “mind”. Another way to think the self is to think of it as basically embodied in between the body-image and the body schema (Gallagher, 1995) or described by a double aspect of an basic bodily embodied self and a personal, reflexive or extended self (see: for example Fuchs 2012b). In the terms of Thomas Fuchs there is a fundamental second-person perspective in the development of the self and thus in the development of the attentional self (from simple to dyadic attention) as well, suggesting a central

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5 On diagrammatic thinking and the map see: Gerner 2010a.
6 The extended, reflexive or personal self, according to Fuchs (2012b) is characterized by the aspects of (a) capacity of taking on the perspective of the other (Perspektivenübernahme), (b) the capacity of introspective or reflexive self-consciousness, (c) a capacity of verbalization of its own experience, (d) the creation of coherent narrative Identities and (f) a self-concept by obtaining conceptual and autobiographic self-knowledge.
7 The primary experience of self - in Fuchs account- is not a pure self-experience, but also includes a sense-motor relationship between the experiencing subject and the environment, – often expressed in spontaneous agency and in action-perception cycles – which is mediated by the body and its habitual capacity and later on leads to social inter-corporeity. Available through the senses, members and capacities the body is embedded in the surrounding space that presents itself to it as a field of possibilities and valences. By this structural pairing of the lived body and its complementary surrounding, the basic self becomes an embodied spatial “ecological self” (Neisser, 1988). This is expressed by the situatedness and attunement of the lived body as well as by the feeling of body related to potentialities of a situation, and specifically by bodily sensations implicit in world-directed attention. Thus a basic feature of the attentional self is a) the body as zero-point of spatial orientation and attentional coordination, b) sensory-motor cycles, the sensory-motor coupling with the environment and a basic bodily being-towards-the world and c) the experience of flexible enacted and transgressed boundaries of the lived body.
8 “From birth on, infants are attentive to external entities (call this ‘simple attention’) and are engaged in dyadic self-other interactions which involve dyadic attention where subjects are mutually attending to each other. Later, when the
ecological conceptual map (1-me [1st PP] & you-me [2nd PP]) of the self and its conceptual personae that then is able to socially share attention and intentionality (Tomasello & Carpenter, 2007). This developmental account of an attentional self, based on early mutual attentional engagements, are crucial for later shared triadic attentional relations (Me-You-object), which then become important for developing complex joint actions (Frith & Gallagher, 2012). These views will later on be explored in slightly different way in the responsive account of the dyadic self in between the conceptual personae of “Monsieur Teste” and his wife Emilie.

Each superimposed conceptual map of the self has to show how productive it acts and engages in the clarification of the phenomenon of the self. I wish to propose to superimpose the concept of the “self” on to the concrete working of “attention” (see Gerner PhD thesis 2012 upcoming) and propose to show how conceptual personae of attention, although being realistically “impossible” as in the case of a purely and isolated episodic attention function or a merely disembodied heautoscopic attention, nevertheless can help to elucidate how to conceive the “self” by its relations to the phenomenon of attention.

The officially “non-philosophical” fictional cases of “Monsieur Teste” (Paul Valéry) and “Mister Palomar” (Italo Calvino) can produce insights into the complex philosophical concept of the “self” – in our case of the self as an “attentional self” – before reviewing the philosophical position in Thomas Metzinger’s account of the self as “attentional self” that in his account has the main function of stabilizing subjective experience by controlling the attentional focus.

The possible/impossible and aesthetic/heautoscopic notions of the self relate to the constitution of modes of appearance and disappearance of a bodily episodic self, that seems more fundamental than a narrative or reflexive conceptual self. Thus an “attentional self” seems impossible as a permanently and constantly alert “hunter” that is permanently “on” as in the ideal of a perfectly and permanently alert man. Attention as I see it – pertains to a double movement in between “waking up” infant begins to follow the gaze of the other person, it may occasion a new form of attention (call this ‘shared attention’): the infant is aware of the adult being attentive towards the object and of herself being attentive towards the object” Fiebrich & Gallagher (2012, p. 7).
and “falling asleep” and therefore is exposed to modes of fatigue and change, and bound with it seems the notion of the self in the sense of an attentional self, that neither might be permanently “on”, although it might as well not be entirely “episodic” as conveyed by Strawson (2004) also make part of a diachronic temporal instances.

Alertness has been studied in empirical psychology and cognitive (neuro-) science, being termed “vigilance” or “sustained attention”, to hold on to something for a longer amount of time, as distinct from the shorter rhythmic structure of spatial orientation in turning towards and turning away in attention. This vigilance function of attention has to be distinguished from the conceptual personae of the “hunter” as the attentively alert self, that – as Ortega y Gasset (2007) underlines – is not necessarily programmed for successful hunting, by catching the prey

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9 Vigilance was first studied on the empirical level by the neurologist Henry Head (1923) in patients with brain injuries in the 1920s. Norman Mackworth (1948, 1950/61) started the “systematic study of vigilance during World War II in human factors” (Warm et al., 2008, 433). Later Parasuraman (Parasuraman, 1976; Parasuraman & Davis, 1977; Parasuraman, 1986; Parasuraman et al., 1986) dedicated his studies to the taxonomy and utility of vigilance (Parasuraman et al., 1987) and sustained attention (Parasuraman, 1984a) in detection and discrimination (Parasuraman, 1984b), in human factors and automation (Parasuraman & Reiley, 1997) as well as monitoring and search (Parasuraman, 1987) and the topics of the brain systems of vigilance (Parasuraman et al., 1989) of how the brain is put to work in the sense of “neuroergonomics” (Parasuraman & Rizzo (eds.), 2007; Parasuraman & Wilson, 2008). Vigilance may not be automatic and “effortless”, but may involve stress and “hard mental work” (see: Warm et al., 2008).

10 It should seem almost “natural” to start any kind of exposition about human attention with the traditional figure of the attentive “hunter” that besides the monitoring of other animals seems a classical conceptual persona of creature attention as different from machine attention and thus contains consequences for the self in its development. New et al. (2007) recently proposed an ancestral animate monitoring hypothesis that is confirmed by imaging studies (see Böttger et. al., 2010) by comparison with stimuli of moving animals in comparison to optokinetic stimuli. Attention is captured more easily by ancestral animals than for instance by equivalent contemporary moving computer stimuli: “For ancestral hunter-gatherers immersed in a rich biotic environment, non-human and human animals would have been the two most consequential time-sensitive categories to monitor on an on-going basis. As family, friends, potential mates, and adversaries, humans afforded social opportunities and dangers. Information about non-human animals was also of critical importance to our foraging ancestors. Non-human animals were predators on humans; food when they stayed close enough to be worth pursuing; dangers when surprised or threatened by
but might give us hints to understand how attention and the self could have co-evolved and differentiated over time.

2) Moreover, we can state that conceptual personae of the self give us the possibility of accessing something subjectively phenomenal even if the phenomenon in question shows itself to be difficult to be measured empirically and thus has to be combined and superimposed

virtue of their venom, horns, claws, mass, strength, or propensity to charge; or sources of information about other animals or plants that were hidden or occluded; etc. Not only were animals (human and non-human) vital features of the visual environment, but they changed their status far more frequently than plants, artefacts, or features of the terrain. Animals can change their minds, behaviour, trajectory, or location in a fraction of a second, making their frequent reinspection as indispensable as their initial detection. For these reasons, we hypothesized that the human attention system evolved to reliably develop certain category-specific selection criteria, including a set designed to differentially monitor animals and humans. These should cause stronger spontaneous recruitment of attention to humans and to non-human animals than to objects drawn from less time-sensitive or vital categories (e.g., plants, mountains, artefacts). We call this the animate monitoring hypothesis.” New (2007, 16598).

In animals the application of attention is crucial for survival. “Although attention is an efficient filtering mechanism, limited attention may be a major cause of mortality in nature.” (Dukas & Kamil, 2000, 502). As hunting or predation as well as predator avoidance (for example through the fear of snakes that catches attention in mammals) are principles of the animal kingdom, attention can be seen as a strategic biological mechanism that has evolved also in relation to survival in between predation and prey. On predation see Langerhans, R. (2006) “Evolutionary consequences of predation: avoidance, escape, reproduction, and diversification.” In A.M.T Elewa (ed.). Predation in organisms: a distinct phenomenon. Heidelberg: Springer, 177–220. See Isabell (2006, 2009) on the category of the sensitive evolution of the mammal brain (including vigilance or strategic attention) towards those animals that have provided a recurrent survival threat from an evolutionary perspective (such as snakes) and those which have not: “Snakes have a long, shared evolutionary existence with crown-group placental mammals and were likely to have been their first predators. Mammals are conservative in the structures of the brain that are involved in vigilance, fear, and learning and memory associated with fearful stimuli, e.g., predators. Some of these areas have expanded in primates and are more strongly connected to visual systems. However, primates vary in the extent of brain expansion. This variation is coincident with variation in evolutionary co existence with the more recently evolved venomous snakes.”(Isbell, 2006, p. 1). On the fear of snakes as attention “commander” in an evolutionary perspective see Soares (2010). In “Meditations on Hunting” Ortega y Gasset meditated, however, not from a biological evolutionary standpoint, but from a philosophical point of view on “hunting” as a fundamental human attentional diversion phenomenon, that we should have in mind as well besides its biological function.
on other concepts or only appears in the moment of its failure, as is documented by the large literature on pathological situations of the self as in schizophrenia or the missing body image (see: Gallagher, 1995), and is parallel to the case of “attention” that can be called a philosophical embarrassment (Waldenfels, 2004) that accompanies the literature of attention and its many non-unified theories and incoherent theoretical metaphors (see: Gerner 2012; Fernandez- Duques & Johnson 1999, 2002) through which it is described.

The idea of proposing a necessary relation between attention and the self by means of an “attentional self” shares difficulties in the description of “attention” and “self” as independent concepts. And one might say that through the introduction of attention into the concept of the self increases the complexity in the understanding of what the self could be. Nevertheless, it is our aim to show that looking tangentially at the self from the perspective from attention we obtain concrete insights that can be made fruitful for the concept of the “Self”.

1.1 Conceptual personae of the impossible attentional self: Monsieur Teste as the impossible “man” of attention

Let us assume here for a few short paragraphs that the actual philosophical debate of the self would be fundamentally enriched if we took the philosophical personae of writers into consideration – as we will do in the first place with the conceptual personae Monsieur Teste of Paul Valéry as an attentional self in its conceptual constellations.

The “impossible man of attention” Teste is considered by Valéry as being “no one” (Valéry, 1989, p. 131), and as such has “no personality that is unique and his own, no inseparable attributes.” (Ibid.) He is also characterized as well as the “Tête (Teste, Head)” (Valéry, 1989, 90) or “The game played with oneself” (Valéry, 1989, p. 106) and its living self observation and will still always be “some stranger to me” (Valéry, 1989, p. 102), thus is fundamentally related to the “other” in its proper doubled definition as other-self. The Self is thus seen as a strange habit of interchange of two different perspectives in a kind of “self-game” between “me” (Teste himself) and “he” (Teste narrated or the narrative self and put into perspective by the narrator/author of Teste) – a higher-order
“narrative self”: “Monsieur Teste had taken the strange habit of thinking of himself as a chessman in his own game. He could see himself. He could push himself across the table. At times he lost interest in the game. / The systematic use of Me and He.” (Valéry, 1989, p. 100). What, however, happens if the interest in the distinction of he/me is dropped and the self-game stops, seems a fundamental question that we should answer with the concept of a “self”. “He” is also characterized as a plural episodic multitude of Selves “Teste. / The home of Selves/ The islands of Selves” (Valéry, 1989, p. 148) or man’s potential of a “pure” or virtual attentional self “beside his body” (ibid.) and as such will be helpful to understand better what – as we will see later- Metzinger in “Being no one” understands as an “attentional self” as a precondition of stabilized subjective experience.

But let us stick to Monsieur Teste, who Valéry paradoxically describes as between The “Everything” in the sense of all particular sensations (bodily needs, pain or caution) before any reflection and before a “pure reflexive self” in which “Self” and the sensational “Everything” would be merely polar properties of an attitude or disposition that can be turned into an automatic routine (body schema or body image). In the end for Valéry the maximum consciousness of the self is turned into a routine behavior and as such in Valery’s perspective is seen as animalized by the biological fact of being sensitive to typical biomechanical processes of animal life.

Firstly, we will look at the case of the Paul Valery’s conceptual personae in “Monsieur Teste” in which not only Monsieur Teste shows itself as an a) impossible pure attentional self, but as well as part of an extended concept of the self by b) “Monsieur Teste’s” wife Émilie Teste and who is accompanied by a c) partial observer of Monsieur Teste, a friend of Monsieur Teste who observes him and describes him in an attentional scene at the “theatre” of consciousness as well as by an d) author-narrator-self of Paul Valéry that gains self-knowledge by reflecting on his own conceptual personae Monsieur Teste that he properly created in odd moments of his life

11 “Teste was conceived – in a room where August Compte spent his early years – at a period when I was drunk on my own will and subject to strange excess of consciousness of my self.” (Valéry, 1989, p. 3).
Teste is defined from the outset as a concept of the impossible\textsuperscript{12}, a “man of attention” that shows different notions about the conceptual personae of the attentional self related by its author:

[A] Monsieur Teste – alias the “attentional self” – is regulated by an equilibrium of possibility and impossibility

[B] Monsieur Teste – alias the “attentional self” – is a mechanism that sets up and regulates the relation between the known and the unknown

[C] Monsieur Teste – alias the “attentional self” – deals with the experience of the finite.

All three notions of Monsieur Teste as a thinking image of the attentional self are concepts of a multitude of attentional selves that are interrelated and connected and none of them alone can provide a realistic account of a unified “attentional self” or the one and only persona of Monsieur Teste, which also means each conceptual personae being taken on its own and as a materialization of the “Self” is impossible, as they would be neglecting necessary layers of the self (from the minimal to the narrative self). Even so, considering the minimal self we have to listen to what Bernhard Waldenfels states about the complex working of attention. According to Waldenfels (2004) there is not one but a double-event of attention, and thus – I would propose – also a double concept of – for instance – the minimal “self”: as attention is not just “Auffallen” the “what happens” side that could be conceptually mapped by physiological processes alone, but is as well an “Aufmerken” – that is an event that shows “what happens to me”, and thus implies the perspective of an attentional self to which through my body/ a “me” is

\textsuperscript{12} “Why is Monsieur Teste impossible? That question is the soul of him. It changes you into Monsieur Teste. For he is no one other than the demon of possibility. His concern for the whole range of what he can do rules him. He observes himself, he manoeuvres, he will not allow himself to be manoeuvred. He knows only two values, two categories- those of consciousness reduced to its own act: the possible and the impossible. […] Its brief and intense life is spent in watching over the mechanism, which sets up and regulates the relation between the known and the unknown. It even applies its obscure and transcendent powers obstinately to simulating the properties of an isolated system in which the infinite plays no part.” (Valéry, 1989, pp. 6–7).
affected and may respond before any conceptual epistemic noting of x, and any kind of narrative or narrative self is implied. According to Waldenfels, attention should first be approached through a double-view or a double-grasp of the two single movements (Auffallen- Aufmerken), in addition to the third part, the taking notice side of epistemic attention, which is when I attend to x and note or recognize that it is x (for example, a book on my desk).

Thus, the “self” for Valéry’s thinking personae Monsieur Teste deals correspondingly to our view on attention with the incoherence of the mind that for example a new stimulus (It happens) creates that happens first as an event that is followed by the event of the self (something happens to me) – that what happens, is actually happening to me, before I note what it is that happens and what this me as such involves. The “self” thus first appears as a mental pre-conceptual response to the instability of what happens and what can thus possibly happen to me. In this line of thought Paul Valéry has already stated:

– I am the unstable.
– The mind is maximum possibility- and maximum capacity for incoherence
– The SELF is the immediate response to each partial incoherence which is a stimulus (Valéry, 1989, p. 73).

Thereby we can note three of Monsieur Teste’s notions of the attentional self:

[1] The self is part of responsive attention, an direct or “immediate response” to a situation involving the incoherence event
[2] The self is stimulus driven, and as such we can easily call it an empirical attentional bottom-up self
[3] The self is both an actuality attentional mode, or a capacity/bodily mechanism and a possibility attentional mode, or a mere possibility of the mind.

The self is seen here as a consequential response to the maximum of incoherence of the mind. The incoherence of the mind makes it alive, as does the coming to the point in its most exactness. This also means that Monsieur Teste would be not “mortal” but dead, if he would be fixed as a “pure absolute” or “pure transcendental” self. This impossible
purely transcendental notion of the concept of the “self” leads us to several key questions of Monsieur Teste as the dynamic centre of awareness:

[…] how does one choose a character to be oneself? How does that centre take shape? Why, in the theatre of the mind are you You? *You and not me?* But is that not precisely Monsieur Teste’s research: to withdraw from the self, the ordinary self, by trying constantly to diminish, combat, compensate the irregularity, the anisotropy of consciousness. (Valéry, 1989, p. 109)

Hence Valéry that turns the self into a paradoxical concept makes an essential double notion of the self clear:

a) The ordinary functional self-mechanism creating coherence in a sea of chaotic episodic impressions and stimuli is located in a permanent struggle with an implicit b) “extraordinary” self that in extremis properly not only compensates irregularity but even creates the incoherence of the mind by taking each episodic extraordinary attentional event of the self at face value.

Let’s stick just for a moment to the second extraordinary notion of the self that breaks with diachronic self-habits by considering the relation of the conceptual personae of Monsieur Teste together with the conceptual personae of his “wife” Émilie Teste:

Émilie Teste achieves the possibility of self-formulation while reflecting on her husband, self-designating herself as being more than a mere witness, but already an “organ” (Valéry, 1989, p. 24)- though external- of Monsieur Teste. By reducing herself to an organic and organizational inter-dependence with Teste, however, being a “non-essential” (ibid.) or external organ in his life-world, she describes the essence of her character as longing “to be surprised” (ibid.) by Monsieur Teste’s episodic self and the relation she has to Teste as being strongly bound by “the uncertainty of his moods” (ibid.). Their conceptual relation is double a) of “husband” and “wife” and their distinct activities and necessities are said to be in tune b) in the sense of interdependence of lived organization. Émilie Teste and her “husband” are two conceptual personae of one attentional self and as such are interrelated. The practical organ of sensible stimulus-driven

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13 “But I am somewhat more than the witness of his life. I am a part, almost an organ of it, though non-essential. Husband and wife as we are, our actions are harmonized in marriage and our temporal necessities are well enough adjusted,
responsivity to the world and the ideal episodic or “epochal” attentional self of Monsieur Teste are two inseparable aspects of the attentional self. The way of investigating in the impossible autochthonous pure attentional self of Monsieur Teste finds its necessary responsive structure in the pragmatic function of a stabilizing attentional self – that here is called Madame Émilie Teste- and that in Thomas Metzinger could be described as the function of focusing the centre of attention in order to stabilize subjectivity. This, however coming from the double constellation of Paul Valéry’s Monsieur Teste/Émilie Teste is however just a simplistic picture of the attentional self that in its foundation is dyadic and contains a double movement of focus and distraction.

Thus coming back to the key question of how the centre of the self gains form, and how Monsieur Teste becomes himself, we have to look at the description of Émilie Teste.

In the metaphoric “conceptual marriage” between Edmond and Émilie Teste, her preoccupation about his episodic self is defined by the fear of his disappearance through absorption, or a purely “episodic” self that would be equaled with change itself:

…A bit more of such absorption, and I am sure that he would be invisible!… (Valéry, 1989, p. 26).

Émilie shows herself as “almost” a bodily organ regarding the possibility of an episodic attentional self of Monsieur Teste in her function of self-preservation, for instance in regulating the “social life”\footnote{In relation of a merely “spiritual” part of the attentional self alias Monsieur Teste and its social organ Émilie Teste one should consider the following quote by Valéry in which the vital function of self-preservation is attributed to the social “organ” of the ego while the pure spiritual Teste kills in its epochal way: “Ego./There are things I could “clarify” and don’t wish to…/I keep them in condition. The social keeps the spiritual in condition. /Social life does not want Monsieur Teste to discharge his duties. We must admit that the spirit kills and the letter gives life… or at least, preserves it.” (Valéry, 1989, p. 125).} of the attentional self of Monsieur Teste. This is exemplified by her actions of responding to the environment as in the case of her responding to a
letter to a friend of Monsieur Teste, that is, questioning and observing the “life” of Monsieur Teste from a distance.

By being a conceptual personae or a figure of thought of sensibility that understands little but responds to the necessity of the attentional self to work, she would sometimes act instead of or as part of Monsieur Teste, the “man of attention”. The relation of Monsieur Teste and Émilie Teste shows itself through in-between events15 (Waldenfels 2002) of attention because “in the phenomenon of attention the mundane consciousness fights with transcendental consciousness.” (Blumenberg, 2002, p. 200), and in this perspective one has to see what could be formulated as a complex attentional self between constitutional stability and instability at the same time: The self is a marriage! Valéry gives us the most rich and thought-provoking conceptual personae of an attentional self: Monsieur Teste and his wife Émilie with whom we are able to explore the working of related but distinct complementary functions of the self that are in constant (dis-) equilibrium.

Equipped with the pragmatic function of her “reading” Monsieur Teste, Émilie Teste describes herself as acting complimentary to the extraordinary, transcendental attention based on interior observation of Monsieur Teste:

Kind sir (and friend) […] So I read your letter to Monsieur Teste. He listened without showing what he thought of it, nor even that he was thinking about it. You know that he reads almost nothing with his eyes, but uses them in a strange and somehow inner way. I am mistaken – I mean a particular way. But this is not it at all. I don’t know how to put it; let’s say inner, particular…, and universal!!! His eyes are beautiful; I admire them for being somewhat larger than all that is visible. One never knows if anything at all escapes them, or, on the other hand, whether the world itself is not simply a detail in all that they see, a floating speck that can

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15 “Zwischenereignisse” or “In-between-events” for Waldenfels are events in which something appears [auftritt], while they connect to something else, without having been connected or related to it before. (Waldenfels, 2002, p. 174; see also Waldenfels, 1987, pp. 46–48). According to these in-between-events, Waldenfels inscribes in-between-events of attention in his philosophy of the “strange” or the “other”. In-between-events of attention happen either a) between me and the others or b) between a group (us) and another group or c) in general between the “proper” [dem Eigenem] and the strange [dem Fremdem] that unfolds in the phenomenon of attention consisting of a double event in auffallen-aufmerken and is irreducible to one of its double events.
besiege you but does not exist. Sir, in all the time I was married to your friend I was never sure of what he sees. (Valéry, 1989, p. 22, *translation altered*, A.G.)

Monsieur Teste’s attention is not only particular, but also universal, and above all an inner principle. The eyes of Teste are not just organs to perceptually pick up visual information. They are more actors of transformations in which a world densifies or vanishes, in which by attentive observation a detail of the world can become a whole world or in which the world expands or shrinks in an instant: zim-zum. What stays are the riddles of not understanding exactly what it is that the eyes of Monsieur Teste actually see: What is this inner attentive self?

As Valéry says, the “proper soul” of Monsieur Teste is his impossibility of existing as a “real person”. On the other hand M. Teste is thinkable as a “proper demon of possibility”, a “personnage de fantaisie” (Valéry, 1946, p. 7) that extends in an episodic self that is measurable in exceptionally few “quarters of an hour”16. Paul Valery called “Monsieur Teste” in his introductory preface the “impossible man of attention”.

Despite the rhetoric of failure and the impossibility of the model character Monsieur Teste postulated by Valéry as the constitutive impossibility of M. Teste as a real person, paradoxically he is taken as someone that could transform the one thinking Monsieur Teste into the proper Monsieur Teste – “[Elles change vous en Monsieur Teste] It changes you into Monsieur Teste” (Valéry, 1989, p. 6 [1945, p. 11]). This change into Monsieur Teste from the one thinking Monsieur Teste is central. At the same time it is even more central to note that there is another change that is excluded in the moment in which the reader or thinker of Monsieur Teste changes herself into Monsieur Teste. By becoming a “man of attention”: the change into change itself is excluded. This means per definition of an attentional self there can never be an absolute identity between the episodic change and the one experiencing the change. Thus this difference constitutes the self-variance or

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16 “Coming back to Monsieur Teste, and observing that a character of his kind could not survive in reality more than a few quarters of an hour, I say that the problem of that existence and its duration is enough to give it a sort of life. The problem itself is a seed. A seed is a living thing; but there are some that could never develop. These make an effort to live, become monsters, and monsters die. In fact we know them only by this remarkable property of being unable to endure. (Valéry, 1989, p. 5).
instability of the attentive self. This also shows the openness of the self as unequal of the changing episode: The attentional self acts as the difference of “what happens” and “what happens to me”.

Monsieur Teste, as described by his author Paul Valéry, shares with his author one basic intention regarding an episodic self: “to extend the duration of certain thoughts” (Valéry, 1989, p. 3)\(^{17}\).

Parallel to this temporal limitation we find the neurobiological research of the Munich Neuroscientist Ernst Pöppel and the temporal empirical window of three seconds\(^{18}\) of attention. This limited capacity in time or load of an episodic attentional self that Valéry in his “Extracts from Monsieur Teste’s logbook” calls the centre of elasticity, “Centre de ressort” (Valéry, 1946, p. 65) can ideally prolong the attentive observation until a temporal maximum of a quarter of an hour. Recently research on the praxis of meditation has shown that this temporal plasticity differs and increases when carrying out a continuous praxis of attentive meditation\(^{19}\). The “centrality” into which these different episodic attentional periods come together and gain coherence while not dissolving into change and the episodic itself is exactly one of the most difficult philosophical problems of the self, from perceptual binding to the coherent identity of selves over time:

> What he calls: *The Central Problem*. To be a center. This problem is one of agreements – coincidences, stabilities, time intervals of various kinds in combination

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\(^{17}\) “Monsieur Teste? / If reflection on one point could be prolonged, it is likely that the content of thought would allow its substance to appear, and that whatever it might represent, one would see the canvas, the panel, the texture- the true element of time. There would be an expansion of time during which a sort of pure sensation would arise in its place, as the substance of the meaningful illusion. But such an extension is impossible. Attention ends in the perception of attention itself, which is fatigue […]” (Valéry, 1989, p. 121).


or contrasts [...] The Contrasts between specific times, various functions— that is to say, what keeps us from merging with change itself, and makes us aware of divergence, [...] and gives us the Capacity of the moment [...] its instability (self-variance). (Valéry, 1989, p. 120)

For Bernhard Waldenfels, Paul Valéry marks a hybrid between writing and thinking in a singular way that is preoccupied with attention in the Cahiers- but also in Monsieur Teste- that opens up a “new form of poetics” (Waldenfels, 2004, p. 28) as well as formulating a concept of the self by following the self’s traces of strangeness [Fremdheit], absences [Absenzen], deviations [Abweichungen] and “delays” [Retardandis], and as such considers this worrisome phenomena of an attentional self, that could here be called unbalanced attentional dives.

As the diver never can maintain himself completely in his or her “element”, and as such needs to come back to the surface to take a breath, the man of attentional self – Monsieur Teste – feels like he is a fish out of water, that needs to prolong his being in a longer duration and thus stretch the episodic attentional self and the episodically appearing objects of attention. For Valéry the condition of something as an object of attention, of a thing, is only able to be understood when one is shown a rule of a medium value in the moment of its observation: “The things are only what they are as average duration and depth of observation.” (Valéry, Cahiers II, p. 262, cit. in Waldenfels, 2004, p. 34). Things are gazes directed towards them for a certain amount of time in comparison and relation to other possible things. The functioning of attention, according to Valéry, is explained in relation to a regular value that only shows up at the moment of a dislocation and thus the imbalance in relation to this medium value is constituted through a process of finding a re-equilibrium, or we could say: attention is what deviates from what should be expected as a medium value and thus the attentional self is the gesture between the balance and imbalance of this medium value of experience. This medium value seems already implicit in expectation regarding things and their givenness and by a possibly notable shift away from a pre-given expectation towards the actually attended thing in observation. To be attentive means – in this sense of Valéry – “to find or go looking to find a value of X that differs from its medium value X_” (Valéry, ibid.) and that both values show themselves only in their dyadic relation.
That is how the attentional self shows itself as an imbalance of the mind that calls for (re-) equilibrium. The moment at which attention happens – Valéry notes – can be minimal: “a tooth aches – a disquietness [Sorge] – a necessity” etc. are all seeds, luminous signs of attention” (Waldenfels, 2004, p. 34). This is why the conceptual personae of a pure “unstable” episodic self that is devoid of any bodily multisensory experience – such as Monsieur Teste – is still a conceptual personae of an attentional self.

2. Heautoscopic “attentional self”

2.1 Italo Calvino’s Mister Palomar’s development from an aesthetic to an heautoscopic “attentional self”

Calvino’s text “Mr. Palomar” (1985 [1983]) shows three steps of a phenomenology of attention – firstly, phenomenological description, secondly, narration, and thirdly, meditation. Moreover, Mr. Palomar deals with the self in three types of experience as Calvino explicitly remarks at the end of his book: a) the self of Mister Palomar in visual experience b) the self in experience involving language/meaning and symbols and c) the self in speculative experience (cosmos, time, infinity, the relation of self and world and the dimensions of mind).

The name of the conceptual personae of the self, Mr. Palomar, is derived from a famous astronomical observatory (Calvino, 1985, p. 37), which is located in the north of San Diego County operated

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20 Those marked “1” generally correspond to a visual experience, whose object is almost always some natural form; the text tends to the descriptive/ Those marked “2” contain elements that are anthropological, or cultural in the broad sense; and the experience involves, besides visual data, also language, meaning, symbols. The texts tend to the form of the story/ Those marked “3” involve more speculative experience, concerning the cosmos, time, infinity, the relationship between the self and the world, the dimensions of the mind. From description and narrative we move into meditation” (Calvino, 1985, p. 128).

by the California Institute of Technology, Palomar. Palomar in Calvino is the second conceptual personae of the attentional self we want to explore and is seen here as an exemplary conceptual personae of the attentive gaze of the self in observation of the self and the world.

At the end of Calvino’s book, Mr. Palomar comes to the phenomenological conclusion of his own being, and that his task is “to look at things from the outside” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113) while all the observables (from the wave to the stars, animals or daily objects) “ask” him to prolong his attention towards them. His attentive gaze is caught by a multitude of details ready for his observation of his attentive gaze by “running all over the details” and is “then unable to detach itself” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113) from these observable details. That is why in the end Palomar sees just one path that he could go and that is to extend his attention:

Mr. Palomar has decided that from now on he will redouble his attention: first, by not allowing these summons to escape him as they arrive from things; second, by attributing to the observer’s operation the importance it deserves. (Calvino, 1985, p. 113)

But the following questions remain beyond the magnification of attention and thus the extension of the self: can Palomar actually observe everything that he wants or ought to observe in a universal and objective manner, and how long can he keep the empirically perceptible, observable details or run over all of them in an attentive gaze?

Is it actually possible to run over all the details if they are for example all the stars in the universe, or all the crumbs of bread on a table, or all the atoms and neuronal relations of single neurons in a single brain? How is the complexity of the world and reality manageable with Palomar’s attitude?

22 “After a series of intellectual misadventures not worth recalling, Mr. Palomar has decided that his chief activity will be looking at things from the outside. A bit near-sighted, absent-minded, introverted, he does not belong temperamentally to that human type generally called an observer. And yet it has always happened that certain things- a stone wall, a seashell, a leaf, a teapot- present themselves to him as if asking him for minute and prolonged attention: he starts observing them almost unawares, and his gaze begins to run over all the details and then is unable to detach itself” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113).
The perfect universal observer shows himself in Mr. Palomar as being impossible and Palomar becomes more and more the expression of this failure of universal observation, as his self is located in between the world and its pure observation “as it is”:

At this point he faces a critical moment; sure that from now on the world will reveal to him the wealth of things, Mr. Palomar tries staring at everything that comes within eyeshot; he feels no pleasure, and he stops. A second phase follows, in which he is convinced that only some things are to be looked at, others not, and he must go and seek the right ones. To do this, he has to face each time problems of selection, exclusion, hierarchies of preference; [...] (Calvino, 1985, 113–114).

After the failure of looking at all the things with the same importance or giving all things the same relevance (as he already tried while observing the naked bosoms of a woman at the beach along with everything else) his pleasure of observation dissolves and he finally stops. His difficulties are due to the involvement of the self in observation. However, in the second attempt Palomar gets involved in one of the basic problems extremely relevant to the theme of attention and thus the attentional self: the problem of selection, exclusion, creation of hierarchies of attention and preference – why Palomar is attentive to this and not that, as not everything can be attended to at the same time and there is a basic non-simultaneity in attention. All that we are attentive to has already happened in a double way: it has happened and it has happened to me and while I start noting my experience of what has happened it is already “too late” for the attentional double event.

This leads for Palomar into the next question of how we can exclude the self, here called the “ego”, of the observer from the observed and impossibly, but desirably, let the “world look[s] at the world” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113) itself. Mr. Palomar therefore questions the “who” in observation, or as he says: “Who’s eyes are doing the looking?”:

[…] he soon realizes that he is spoiling everything, as always when he involves his ego and all the problems he has with his own ego./ But how can you look at something and set your own ego aside? Whose eyes are doing the looking? As a rule, you think of the ego as one who is peering out of your eyes as if leaning on a window sill, looking at the world stretching out before him in all its immensity (Calvino, 1985, p. 114).
Calvino’s Mr. Palomar does not just want to suspend the participation of the human “ego” in observation, but also wants to shift radically the perspective of attention constituting an observer or a self as if “leaning on a window sill” observing the world, in which the world observes the world without the blur or noise that the egoic bodily centered observer always seems to introduce.

Palomar’s intent seems the opposite of a classical Husserlian phenomenological approach that by its program wants to bracket all statements on the existence or non-existence of the world, in order to reach phenomenological consciousness of things by epoché— the suspension of the world (bracketing) by eidetic variation. Palomar uses the image of the “window” through which the “ego” observes the world and that changes position as a thinking image of the attentional self (that has another image for instance in the “frame” ([Der Rahmen] Pöppel, 2010[2006]) or the tunnel in the “Ego-Tunnel” (Metzinger, 2009) metaphor.

However, Mr. Palomar is actually seen as the conceptual personae of an “attentive observing Ego” that observes and besides being linked to a certain egoic perspective, tries to change its perspective from looking from “inside out” to observing from “outside out” -as happens for example in Out-of Body experiences, as we will see later. In terms of Italo Calvino we can state a shift of perspective. From the perspective of subject-object relation in “the ego looks at the world” he shifts the gaze from one object to another. This means we get a radical new perspective in “The world looks at the world” (Calvino ibid.), in which a non-egoic self represents the looking world and the objects are the looked-at-world: The gaze becomes autonomous and seemingly independent of the ego.

Palomar doubts that this radical shift brings about an expected “general transfiguration” (Calvino, 1985, p. 114) of the observed objects of the world, as he “casts his eyes around” and states that no such transformation of worldly objects occur:

23 The subtitle of the book of the German neuroscientist Ernst Pöppel on the brain and the self shows a similar inverted shift in which the observational ego or self is now looked at from the perspective of the brain as the title shows: “The Frame. A view of the brain onto our ‘I’” [Der Rahmen. Ein Blick des Gehirns auf unser Ich].
No such thing. The usual quotidian grayness surrounds him. Everything has to be thought of from the beginning. Having the outside look outside is not enough: The trajectory must start from the looked-at-thing, linking it with the thing that looks (Calvino, 1985, p. 115).

This higher attention shift, not just from one observed object A to another object B, but an radical change of perspective in observation – in which the proper frame or window of the self is pushed outside the proper sensual limitations of the body – seems to fail and always bounces back on the ego of Palomar, his eyes and glasses that the world “needs” to be perceived:

But how can you look at something and set your own ego aside? Whose eyes are doing the looking? As a rule, you think of the ego as one who is peering out of your own eyes as if leaning on a window sill […] So then: a window looks out on the world. The world is out there; and in here, what do we have? The world still- what else could there be? With a little effort of concentration, Mr. Palomar manages to shift the world from in front of him and set it on the sill, looking out.

Now, beyond the window, what do we have? The world is also there, and for that occasion the world has been split into a looking world and a world looked at. And what about him, also known as ‘I’, namely Mr. Palomar? Is he not a piece of the world that is looking at another piece of the world? Or else, given that there is world that side of the window and world this side perhaps the “I”, the ego, is simply the window through which the world looks at the world. To look at itself the world needs the eyes (and the eyeglasses) of Mr. Palomar. (Calvino, 1985, p. 114)

The understanding of the “I” or ego here as the window through which the world looks at the world could be called the attentional self that can be shift its perspective from an aesthetic bodily-centered perceptive point of view towards an heautoscopic point of view among others. The basic metaphor of the self therefore seems the window through which the world is observed. Palomar’s undertaking seems derived from the transformation of a window scene by Caspar David Friedrich famous drawing “Window looking over the park” to the surreal visual experience of the window of René Magritte and his painting “The human condition”. Can we imagine the window through which we look as being put outside – beyond the frame of the window of subjectivity – and even turned around towards the window?
Palomar is confronted with the dilemma that he wants to look at things “from the outside” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113) and not from the inside. This means he wants to bracket and thus suspend his ego in the moment of observation.

Palomar is trying to change the anchor of his attention from a bodily-centered aesthetic point of view (inside-out) towards a heautoscopic attention point of view (outside-out) in which even his body is disembodied and his gaze and regard can start not from himself but from the observed object. This absolute bracketing of the aesthetic attention seems, however, impossible. The attentional self can be seen as the play of perspectives and gazes in between aesthetic and heautoscopic poles.

Similarly we will see that attention purely without a body in out-of-body experience and heautoscopy (Metzinger, 2009) seems impossible. Breyer (2011) also notes that the theoretical transformation of pure aesthetic towards pure heautoscopic attention in which the own lived body [Leib] can be seen as an objectified body [Körper] among others in the thing world and scrutinized from the point of view of a neutral objective observer is a “liminal phenomenon” that shows the two poles of attention between the pure immanence of inwardness of the sensing living body and the pure outward directedness of the neutral objective observer as impossible, as in reality it can never be reached by phenomenological experience permanently suspending one of these poles.

Through this meditation Palomar reaches the problem of identity and differentiation in attentional observation, as for him observation is linked to the observation of a self-signifying activity (a sign, a summons, a wink), and the signification of a self, an “itself” that signifies something and thus catches and attaches attention to both poles- of the observer and to the observed- by separation or distancing one thing from the other:

From the mute distance of things a sign must come, a summons, a wink: one thing detaches itself from the other things with the intention of signifying something…

what? Itself, a thing is happy to be looked at by other things only when it is convinced that it signifies itself and nothing else, amid other things that signify themselves and nothing else (Calvino, 1985, p. 115).

Mr. Palomar is, however, also a conceptual personae of failure in the attentive gaze in observation, as he- from the outset of an naïve phenomenological approach- fails to observe all that there is to see in a single observation with his bare naked eye: His plan is to maintain the duration of observation as long as possible to simply “see a wave” (Calvino, 1989, p. 4) until he would notice “that images are being repeated, he will know he has seen everything he wanted to see and he will be able to stop” (Calvino, 1989, p. 4) his phenomenological observation of the single wave. The succession of singularities in which he wants to notice a pattern of repetition seems a difficult task and time-consuming as well as tiring for his attention, but also his disposition as being “impatient to reach a complete, definitive conclusion of his visual operation, looking at waves […]” (Calvino 1989, p. 6). Palomar wants to simplify his observation through the method of “mastering the world’s complexity by reducing it to its simplest mechanism.” (Calvino, 1989, p. 6) in this case a single wave. However, the observation of everything there is to see with “scientific attention” – a single wave that then may become a universal of seeing waves – does not seem at all easy and brings us to the paradox of seeing the regularity of the singular that in the case of the wave is a very complex dynamic phenomenon, thus becoming another conceptual personae of impossible attention.

In another episode regarding the conceptual personae of impossible attention Mr. Palomar rehearses four modes of attentional gaze (Bernhard Waldenfels, 2006, pp. 96–98) in being attentive to the naked breasts of a woman lying on the beach (the empty gaze, the fixed gaze, the overflying gaze and the universal all-embracing gaze) that show the important relation between attention and the ethos of the senses. Attention and responsibility, amenity, or courtesy of how to be attentive is closely related. This means: not paying heed and thus overhearing or overseeing someone can create a socially conflicting situation as well as being too attentive or (over-) attentive. This also means that attention is not just programmable but has to be offered and can also be withheld, can be voluntary given or involuntary
imposed, attention can be withdrawn or denied and as such is culturally and historically codified by values concerning how to be attentive to certain situations or not. Attention is valued and socially shared and thus is joined by social claims of validity. This also means that the attribution of attention can in a social situation become too much for the “normal” claim of validity of a certain situation. Therefore paying close attention – for example to the breasts of a naked woman on the beach- can be perceived as penetrating over-attention, intrusiveness or pushiness. At the same time a lack in giving attention for instance to the beauty of a new haircut or a new dress someone wears may be being seen as rudeness.

From aesthetic to heautoscopic attention

In the end Mr. Palomar comes to the phenomenological conclusion of his own being, and that his task is “to look at things from the outside” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113) while all the observables (from the wave to the stars, animals or daily objects) “ask” him to prolong his attention towards them. His attentive gaze is caught by a multitude of details ready for the observation of his attentive gaze by “running all over the details” and is “then unable to detach itself” (Calvino, 1985, p. 113) from these observable details. That is why in the end Palomar sees just one path he could go and that is to increase his attention, even if the following questions remain:
1. Can Palomar as conceptual personae of the attentional self actually observe everything that he wants or ought to observe in a universal and objective manner, and how long can he stay with the details or run over all of them in an attentive gaze?

2. Can Palomar anchor his attention not from an bodily centered perceptive (aisthetico) point of view, but instead from a point of view “out of his body” and from “inside out of the body of the thing” that he wants to observe? A heautoscopic attentional self as a scientific observer is proposed in which even his body is disembodied and his gaze and regard can start not from himself but from the observed object. This means that the theoretical transformation of a pure aesthetic towards a pure heautoscopic attentional self in which the own lived body [Leib] can be seen as an objectified body [Körper] among others in the thing-world and scrutinized from the point of view of a neutral objective observer is a “liminal phenomenon” that shows the two poles of attention between the pure immanence of inwardness of the sensing living body and the pure outward directedness of the neutral objective observer in an impossible split. This means in reality it can never be reached by phenomenological experience. This absolute bracketing of the real aesthetic attentional self seems impossible; however, it could be imagined and thought of, as a metaphysical form of virtual attention, that would, however, never be independent from a self in a body.

Now I will concentrate on the implicit “attentional ghost” of Thomas Metzinger’s virtual and attentional self that in out-of-(real)-body experiences can shift the self-localization and viewpoint of attention away from an intra-or extramissionist attention, and thus becomes autoscopic from a viewpoint beyond embodiment. All conceptual personae are fundamental diagrammatic features of the concept of attention which, if taken on its own as the only necessary feature or function, show themselves to be impossible, and as such would provoke a strange and impossible phenomenon in which an episodic attentional self would gain no dynamic of experience in between stability and imbalance.

Aisthesis (perception) refers to a form of aesthetics that is based on perception. But this does not mean that one could reduce aesthetics to attentive perceptual routines. (See: Gerner, 2010b).
2.2 Metzinger’s “attentional ghost”: the virtual self floating out of the body and the impossible full body illusion

Let’s look at a non-orthodox experience of attention that lies in between sleep and wakefulness. Here attention seems to do the impossible and follow a virtual self, leaving the material body or the attentional focus, going up in the air and floating ghostlike over one’s body. This figure of impossible attention is referred to as Out of Body experiences (OBE) and has been recently investigated as an empirical phenomenon in the Cognitive Neurosciences as we will see. Metzinger makes the point that non-standard cases of self experience are an epistemological important entrance door for verifying and researching into his theory of the minimal phenomenal self and its model (even though non-standard, deviant or pathological, extraordinary cases of selfhood might not automatically lead to a correct description of having a self or “selfhood”. For Metzinger what is important in these non-standard, altered and/or pathological experiences is what fails and shows up and this gives us access to in comparing 1st PP reports (of patients or research subjects) with neuro-scientific 3rd PP studies (trying as well to understand the “neural correlate” to the phenomenological description of what appears in experience, which leaves the difficult questions of causality still open for debate and the philosophical foundation of correlates in general) into how a permanent body-“model” is transformed. The phenomena he deals with in the third chapter of The Ego Tunnel (2009) called “Out of the Body and into the Mind: Body-image, Out-of-Body Experiences, and the Virtual Self” are non-orthodox phenomena such as the Out-of-body experience which for a long time where treated as and in para-/pseudo-science, but which gained momentum in psychology in the 1980s (see Blackmore’s research) although they have long been “career obstacles” for researchers choosing these topics. However, since the end of the late 1980s and 1990s they have been picked up by neuroscientists, (neuro-) psychologists and psychiatrists such as Devinsky (1989) or have been treated in relation to seizures and autoscopic phenomena as well as concerning felt presences, multiple perspectives and duplications of one’s body (phantom body); Botvinick & Cohen (1998) regarding the rubber hand illusion, and which recently entered a new phase of research in which Metzinger became involved with as did the Swiss neuroscientist
Olaf Blanke (2002; 2004; 2008) and the Swedish researcher Henrik Ehrsson (2007; 2012). The latter actively induced these phenomena in test persons through brain-area stimulations, that of course also raises lots of ethical questions that Metzinger is also aware of (in the last chapter of his book (2009) he asks what a good state of consciousness is (and what are non-desirable or eliminable mental states or experiences; also Metzinger tries to induce certain abnormal body experiences in test persons by stimulating certain brain areas, swapping bodies or to evoke a full body illusion as in Blanke and Metzinger’s test case (2008). Other phenomena in which our attention is working in between sleep, dream and wakefulness are for example trance-like states in between dreaminess and wakefulness and out-of-body-experiences which are an example, that through attention guide our body image into an unusual or non-orthodox experience of our body-selves. It seems in this case that our attention is directed in a way that a regular perceptual state would not enable us to. We can say that our perceptual map of ourselves is dislocated, our attention is placed on a mapping of a virtual body self in an out-of-body experience, which means that OBE form part of being attentive to ourselves in a non-orthodox way, and are less grounded by our surroundings than in perceptual attending.

The in-between event between wakefulness and dream attending of ourselves from an out-of-body point of view had happened to myself, when I personally experienced something that I had never felt before and that was not a mere dream. At the same moment that I had broken my leg and had been prepared to be operated on after being anaesthetized in Germany over 20 years ago, I had a proper out-of-body experience in which my body left my fixed body, which was not able to move on the operation table and the virtual body floated as an “out-of-body” ethereal body trying to start to play football but my body was floating across the operation room looking down on me and I couldn’t control it myself, and then the OBE stopped as the anesthesia had put me in a sleep state.

2.2.1 The concept of disembodied attentional self in an out-of-body experience (OBE)

It seems evident: attention and an attentional self both are embodied. But having said this, is it actually always necessarily put into perspective
from one unique and unified fixed body position? Can attention actually wander its centeredness or attentional self-location, and can it be dislocated, willingly or not, can the perspective with what we feel, perceive, reason or image be experienced subjectively out of a, my or the body?

The heautosopic and autoscopic, as well out of body experience will now be considered and what this can tell us concerning the “impossible” attention out of a living body and how this relates to the attentional self in general:

Let’s consider this phenomenal relation of attention in the instance of a body by taking a closer look at Thomas Metzinger’s research into the seemingly impossible but actually experienced out-of-body experiences (OBE) (see Metzinger, 2009, chapter 3, Metzinger, 2005). Even though I will not come to the same representationalist conclusions about a permanent “virtual body model” as Metzinger does, his observations and research is valuable in respect of this phenomenon in between wakefulness and dream in which attention plays a major role in non-orthodox self-experience such as Out-of Body experiences.

Metzinger refers to his own OBE in his recent “The Ego Tunnel” book (2009) and refers to several other researchers, specifically the OBE and consciousness researcher Susan Blackmore (1982; 1984; 1987, see also: 1993) whom he met for the first time in 1995. Moreover, he draws on the work of the Swiss biochemist Ernst Waelti and also research into the pathological conditions of OBE, for example OBE induced by seizures. In the domain of empirical psychology Blackmore carried out several review studies and came up with a scientifically sound empirical theory for these strange body phenomena. What is interesting in her book on near death experiences (1993) is how she collects data from phenomenological 1st person reports and structures their “grammar”. One of the characteristics she found out was the jump-like movement of the “ethereal” body movement. Another point Metzinger picks up from Blackmore’s research is the

Blackmore (1993) shows how subjectively experienced OBE as “religious limit phenomena” of a “soul” flouting out of the body or having “tunnel” visions of light at the end of the tunnel merely are phenomenological evidence for an injured and altered self (under the influence of drugs or anaesthetics) or even a “dying” brain state of consciousness, such as triggered by the fact that the brain in certain moments (dying) undergoes lack of oxygen (and as we might all know
following idea: Out-of-Body experiences are “models of reality created by the brains, that are cut off from sensory inputs during stressful situations and have to fall back on internal sources of information” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 87). Here a conflict of two processing sources (perceptual or observational feedbacks) and internal models could create different non-unified body representations and thus two types of attentional selves. This could explain why during the OBE I was angry that my body would not move towards the ball but floated over the ball in the operation room. Metzinger also underlines in Blackmore the idea that memory reconstructing visual cognitive maps of past experiences – say for example movement maps of walking on the beach – are most often organized from a geometrical 1st PP that is not our actual real but motionless body perspective – that is, a bird’s eye perspective27 rather than in real life (online) human- height perceptive situation.

But what exactly are Out-of-Body experiences (OBE) and what have they in common with other autoscopic phenomena? And especially why are they important for understanding the self?

We know that the representation of the self as bodily self is complex, and if we take the idea of a basic bodily self serious we are confronted by a multitude of bodily systems that have to be integrated into one more or less coherent body schema and a body image that include motor signals as well as multisensory signals (somato-sensory, vestibular, visual, auditory, visceral). First of all OBE are autoscopic body phenomena. Autoscopic phenomena as Bolognini et al (2012) put it, “refer to complex experiences involving the illusory reduplication of one’s own body”. One could add that OBE not only refer to the dislocation of body parts, but that introduce a global shift in the body image. According to Mohr & Blanke (2005) autoscopic phenomena (AP) are rare, illusory visual experiences how the excess of oxygen and breathing rate is a hallucinogenic “natural drug” experience, we can imagine how – on the contrary – a lack of oxygen in the brain can trigger specific experiences while the brain and the “one” that experiences, dies (if – of course – the people coming close to death, survive and can still report their experiences).

27 “Close your eyes and remember the last time you were walking on the beach. Is your visual memory one of looking out at the scene itself? Or is it of observing yourself, perhaps from above, walking along the coastline? For most people the latter is the case” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 87).
during which the subject e.g. has the impression of seeing or feeling a second own body in *extrapersonal space*. AP – in their view – consist in “out-of-body experience, autoscopic hallucination, and heautoscopy”. For Brugger et al (2006), Heautoscopy is the encounter with one’s double (the reduplication of a single body and self and thus a breakdown of integrative processes that let me identify with my body or my self), in the sense of a multimodal “illusory” reduplication of one’s own bodily self. Aspell et al (2012) express it as following:

An individual undergoing an OBE usually experiences a dissociation between his self-location and his first-person visuospatial perspective with respect to the seen location of his own body – in other words, he perceives his own body (and the world) from a spatial location and perspective that does not coincide with the seen position of his body.

The phenomenon of polyopic heautoscopy (a multiplication of body and self) according to Brugger et al (2006) “points to the multiple mappings of the body, whose disintegration may give rise to the illusory experience of multiple selves.” Autoscopic phenomena deal with a) viewpoint changes, b) “illusionary” self-identification, c) altered or abnormal self-location(s) and d) changes in the first- person perspective (see: Aspell et al., 2012) as studies of Ehrsson 2007 and Langenegger et al. 2007 show by the manipulation of multisensory cues that the brain is supposed to use in order to “create a representation of self-location and identity” (Aspell et al., 2012). Blanke (2005) defines out-of-body experiences in the following manner:

In an out-of- body experience, subjects feel that their “self”, or centre of awareness, is located outside the physical body and somewhat elevated. (Blanke, 2005, p. 173)

OBE can be idiopathic, self induced or induced by non-invasive technological aid (Blanke & Metzinger, 2009) using for instance video (Lenggenhager et al., 2007), virtual reality (Ehrsson, 2007) or robotic devices (Ionta, 2011), inducing changes in the self-location, self-identification or first person perspective in healthy subjects. Moreover, recent research has not only described phenomenologically these strange doubling, mirroring or shadowing phenomena of a “disrupted” self (Mishara, 2010) but has shown as well that invasive manipulation of the brain can even induce a “illusory shadow person” (Arzy
et al., 2006) by artificial brain stimulation for instance in the paradigm of asynchrony stimulation of different modes of perception (e.g. tactile and visual).

Metzinger, following Blanke\(^{28}\) calls 1) **OBE**, as well as 2) **autoscopic hallucination** and also 3) **Heautoscopy** “illusionary global own body perceptions” (Blanke/Metzinger, 2008, pp. 9–10) or autoscopic phenomena “leading to alterations of the minimal phenomenal self” (ibid, p. 10).

Diagram 1, © Gerner.

This diagram (adopted from: Blanke & Metzinger, 2008, p. 10) shows the dynamics of the attentional self-location [SL] in autoscopic experience: Three cases of direction of the attentional point of view, either from the hallucinated body towards the somatic body in *Out-of-body experience* (virtual observer perspective) or from the somatic body towards the hallucinated virtual body (somatic 1P perspective) in *Autoscopic hallucination* or both ways in *Heautoscopy* (switching between somatic 1P perspective and virtual observer perspective). The somatic and the virtual body in these three cases of observer perspectives always face each other on the contrary to a “felt presence” from behind (existential feeling perspective of autorscopy), another form of autoscopic experience.

These altered self phenomena are defined by “seeing a second own body in extracorporeal space” (see: Metzinger 2005; Blanke 2008 my underlining) and are phenomenologically distinct in the sense of the

\(^{28}\) Blanke (2005) in a very interesting article on the relation of heautoscopic experience and self-portrait in artists resumes this phenomenon as follows: “To conclude, one might say that autoscopic hallucinations and AH [autoscopic hallucination] self-portraits reflect that the self perceives its body from the outside and as a mainly visual body. The reduplicative character of the double is only implicitly present and the mechanisms of ‘seeing’ predominate over spatial and body-perceptual mechanisms. The self ‘sees’ its body as the body of somebody else.
a) self-identification, b) the direction of the visual weak 1st PP and c) the self-location either in the physical body as in autoscopic hallucination, or in the floating above body looking down onto the physical body as in OBE, or in the either/or direction of the weak 1st PP in the physical or illusionary body in Heautoscopy. All these illusionary global body perceptions can be caused by different pathological conditions in specific brain areas. In general heautoscopy and OBE are abnormal minimal phenomenal self-extensions towards a strong 1st PP in which by self-identification with the incorrect content of a global body representation attention is misled by wrong global body perceptions. This seems to be the difference of heautoscopy to the state of dreaming in which attention cannot be specifically directed. In an OBE self-location is never at the position of the physical body as represented, therefore OBE are associated with the feeling of “dis-embodiment (the experience that the subject of conscious experience is localized outside the person’s bodily borders)” (Blanke/Metzinger, 2008, p. 9).

There is another non-standard phenomena of a feeling of a (non-visual!) presence of another body behind the actual one, not seen but felt as *a presence behind*, that can also be induced by stimulation of certain brain areas (in this case the left angular gyrus, while in the same study by Blanke (2002), the stimulation of the right angular gyrus resulted in an OBE, “as if the patient were floating from the ceiling and looking down and being directed from the floating body onto herself” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 96).

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Out-of-body experiences and OBE self-portraits also reflect the self, perceiving its body from the outside, but not only as a visual body but as a body in a complex spatial scene of which the body is only a part. The reduplicative character of the double is explicit and the painter’s self is distanced and elevated from its body. The self is ‘out of touch’ with its somato-sensory perceptions and ‘sees’ its body with the eyes of somebody else. Finally, heautoscopy and heautoscopy self-portraits reflect the perception of the body from the inside via somatosensory and motor mechanisms. The self is in touch not only with her or his bodily feelings but also with the bodily feelings of the double. The self does not ‘see’ but mainly ‘feels’ its body and the body of the double to be the same body.”
In recent studies Blanke et al. have discovered other brain areas that are supposedly involved in the causation of OBE when lesioned brain areas are stimulated (as in seizure patients that report OBE): the extrastriate body area (on the right half of the temporo-parietal junction) and the left half of the temporo-parietal junction (Blanke et al. 2004; 2005). The brain region of the temporo-parietal junction (TPJ) is also activated in “less than half a second” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 97) if a test person is asked to imagine himself as if in the position of an OBE watching his body from above. “If this brain region is inhibited by a procedure called transcranial magnetic stimulation, this transformation of the mental model of one’s own body is impaired.” (Metzinger, 2008, p. 97) Metzinger, as Blanke, expresses two pathological conditions for OBE: 1) disintegration on the level of the self (or self-model in the words of Metzinger) 2) the conflict between the visual space and the vestibular sense of balance:

Two separate pathological conditions may have to come together to cause an OBE. The first is disintegration on the level of the self-model, brought about by a failure
to bind proprioceptive, tactile and visual information about one’s body. The second is conflict between external, visual space and the internal frame of reference created by vestibular information, i.e., our sense of balance. In vertigo or dizziness, for example, we have problems with vestibular information while experiencing the dominant external, visual space. If the spatial frame of reference created by our sense of balance and the one created by vision come apart, the result could well be the conscious experience of seeing one’s body in a position that does not coincide with its felt position. […] Finally when an epileptic patient whose OBEs were caused by damage to the temporo-parietal junction was asked to stimulate mentally an OBE self-model, this led to a partial activation of the seizure focus. Taken together these observations point to an anatomical link among three different but highly similar types of conscious experiences: real, seizure-based OBEs; intended mental simulations of OBEs in healthy subjects, and intended mental simulations of OBEs in epileptic subjects (Metzinger, 2009, p. 96).

Important in my view is what Metzinger puts at the end of his neuronal explanation of OBE, and that is that in deviant or pathological conditions, as in the case of seizure patients, the phenomenology in these patients in comparison to healthy subjects differs in the first seconds of an OBE, and again show a different phenomenology in those you learned to influence mental states by meditation. Metzinger does not mention examples such as those of attentional absorption into a task or a situation such as in post-voluntary flow-experiences (See Bruya, 2010; Dormashev, 2010) which makes his assumption of getting closer to what the minimal form of selfhood is by examining non-standard cases of self experience epistemologically at least a more complex issue:

The initial seconds clearly seem to differ between spontaneous OBEs in healthy subjects and those experienced by the clinical population, such as epileptic patients. The onset may also be different in followers of certain spiritual practices. Moreover, there could be a considerable neuro-phenomenological overlap between lucid dreams and OBEs as well as body illusions in general (Metzinger, 2009, p. 98).

Metzinger proposes – and indeed has to do so if OBE were to be of value to discovering the minimal phenomenal self – that OBE are general human experiences, and do not only appear in deviant or pathological conditions or are merely culturally based narrative inventions. As further examples he refers to situations such as meditation and I would add flow experiences (skilled experiences that had to be learnt with effort
and become habit in a way that they are experienced as post-voluntary effortless flowing, such as skiing down a ski slope after having learnt how to ski well), and the example he gives (but not designates as such) of a Marathon runner, where after some kilometers the woman goes into a trancelike state in which her body floats above her and her vision is of a bird-eye’s view watching the landscape from above. This unorthodox change in the perspective or the center of projection of the “I” I would designate as unorthodox attentional self maps, in which the dimensionality, the projection type and the material reference towards a real world scene is altered with attention occurring in an unusual way that we have no habitual experience of. It is a new map that occurs to us as an unusual or non-habitual orientation, but where we still can alter and move around the focus points we want to reach attentively. Seeing myself, however, floating out of my material body position is, however, an altered non-orthodox experience of my self.

This, however, brings us deeper into the concept of a virtual “self-model” that attention supposedly controls.

For Metzinger no such “things” as selves as substance exist, as he explained in the Introduction to his book “Being No one. The self-model theory of subjectivity”:

[…] no such things as selves exist in the world: Nobody ever was or had a self. The phenomenal self is not a thing but a process – and the subjective experience of being someone emerges if a conscious information processing system operates under a transparent self-model. (Metzinger, 2004, p. 1)

The fiction of the “self” and its transparent model is said to have subjective selective advantages to form, for example, “higher forms of thoughts” (Ware, 2006, p. 1). In conscious experience Metzinger identifies three characteristics related to the self: a) Mineness, the notion that something belongs to the self (i.e. my thought, my feeling, my legs, my choice) b) selfhood, the idea that “I am a person”, the maintenance of an identity over time c) Perspectivalness a certain understanding of orientation in a representational space (giving a self a positioning and a relation to other representations) implying experience of a global attentional self and the relation of the self and some other object. The self, here defined as the “center of awareness”, is defined by Metzinger as
the possibility of being able to manipulate the focus of attention. This is the reason why with Metzinger we can call it an *attentional self*.

In Metzinger’s representational view we have no direct access to the world, but the senses and their underlying neurobiological complex systems and functions create internal objects and contents that can be observed and manipulated by conscious “processing”. Metzinger proposes the elimination of an ontological self not for the sake of reductionism but for the sake of a more sound explanation of what conscious experience is said to be:

It has now become clear that we will never solve the philosophical puzzle of consciousness- that is, how it can arise in the brain, which is a purely physical object- if we don’t come to terms with this simple proposition: that to the best of our current knowledge there is no such thing, no indivisible entity, that is *us*, neither in the brain nor in some metaphysical realm beyond this world. (Metzinger, 2009, p.1)

Thus Metzinger tries to address exactly the next question that arises from a “being no one” perspective of the self in conscious experience:

So when we speak of conscious experience, what is the entity *having* these experiences? (Metzinger, 2009, p. 1)

Metzinger tries to answer this question of the first-person perspective through the intention to explain a) the theory of an apparent self within his naturalist “phenomenal Self-Model (PSM)” a multimodal plastic structure that will in principle for Metzinger be explained by neuro-scientific findings probably involving distributed processing and the b) the conceptual metaphor of the “Ego-Tunnel” as the “Consciousness tunnel that has evolved the additional property of creating a robust first person perspective, a subjective view of the world” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 11, my underlining). For him these two are the explanatory challenges in describing how “[…] a genuine sense of selfhood appears.” (Ibid, my underlining)

He continues as follows: “We have to explain your experience of *yourself* as feeling the tactile sensation in the rubber hand, of *yourself* as understanding sentences you’re reading right now. This genuine conscious sense of selfhood is the deepest form of inwardness, much deeper than just being “in the brain” or in a “simulated world in the brain”. This
non-trivial form of inwardness is what the book is about.” (Metzinger, 2009, p.12, my underlining). He evokes the “transparency” of the underlying (neuroscientific) mechanisms of conscious experience as an argument for the process of a self-modeling its existence. In general Metzinger’s studies want to “contribute to a deeper understanding of non-conceptual, pre-reflective layers in conscious self-representation” (Metzinger, 2010, p. 25), in the embedded bodily self, that are distinct from for example the contents and the relations of visual perceptive experience in the “seeing self” and what is perceived, in which he assumes the following theses:

1) Metzinger conceptually defends the claim that agency is not “part of the metaphysically necessary supervenience- basis for bodily self-consciousness.”(Metzinger ibid, see also: Blanke/Metzinger, 2008). But what are the constitutive conditions for selfhood after Metzinger, what is “truly necessary and not only sufficient to bring about an ego” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 101)? For Metzinger agency (see chapter 4 of his book and the phenomenon of the alien hand) is not a necessary condition, as it only selectively manipulates two dimensions: a) self-identification or “[…] the degree to which an organism identifies with the content of a global body representation” (Blanke/Metzinger, 2008, p. 7) or with the “content of a conscious body image” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 101) and b) self-localization as the embedding principle of the self in space. Self-localization is necessarily spatial-temporal including the feeling of “nowness”. For Metzinger the target phenomenon of consciousness/conscious experience lies in basic minimal phenomenal embodied selfhood that can be “causally controlled by multisensory conflict alone” (ibid.) without any meta-control or author of action. For this minimal phenomenal self a “seeing” self for him is neither necessary as an “emotional” self nor a self-reflective or narrative self. The seeing self is not necessary because

[…] you can shut down the windows in front of the little man behind your eyes. The seeing self disappears. The Ego remains. You can be a robust, conscious self even if emotionally flat, if you do not engage in acts of will, and also in the absence of thought. Emotions, will and thoughts are not necessary to the fundamental sense of selfhood (ibid.)
2) On the level of the *empirical and phenomenological foundation* of his theory he wants to show how several phenomena of a) non-standard partial (body-) self experience such as the *rubber hand illusion* and b) “illusionary own global body perceptions” in which he includes “Out of Body experiences”, (virtually induced) “full body illusions”, “autoscopic hallucinations” and “Heautoscopy” that can be seen as an interesting “entry point” for researching into “the nature of the phenomenal self” (Metzinger, 2010, p. 25) in general and the “Minimal Phenomenal Self” (MPS) in particular. The MPS is related to *embodiment* and the simplest form of self-consciousness. Embodiment deals with the sense of “ownership” and identification with the body as a whole (the phenomenological sense of “mineness”) and is specifically important as it anchors the self, situating cognition through the subjective experience of *having a body*. One can, however, interpret the rubber hand phenomenon not merely as an “illusory” phenomenon, but as an extension or better an addition of an extra co-present object (the rubber hand) to the bodily self as Thomas Fuchs underlines:

> Functionally the rubber hand connects temporarily to the body, because by that the best possible coherence of different sense-modalities is installed […] this does not turn the sensed body into an illusion. (Fuchs, 2012, p. 33)

3) Metzinger tries to install a new research target in the investigation of the attentional self, which he calls the Self Model Theory of Subjectivity (SMT) in which the most important research entity – besides his questionable general constructivist “Phenomenal Self-Model” (PSM) – is what he calls the “Minimal Phenomenal Selfhood” Hence he differentiates epistemologically between different 1st Person perspectives (see Blanke/Metzinger, 2008, p. 7):

He calls this first and basic state of a *minimal phenomenal self*, “*selfhood-as-embodiment*” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 102) or “weak 1 PP” (Blanke/Metzinger, 2008, p. 7), which he describes as a “calm, emotionally neutral state, deeply relaxed and widely alert, a state of pure observation, without any thought, while a certain elementary form of bodily self-consciousness remains” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 102). On his immanent *bodily account of the self* it is not a possessive self in the sense of “global ownership or “The feeling of this body being mine”, because global ownership already presupposes three entities: a) an
Conceptual Personae of the “attentional self”

invisible self b) the body and c) a relation of body and self. On the contrary this basic selfhood for Metzinger is “the body that possesses itself” (ibid.) The question of ownership is put into perspective in the following way:

Owning means to be able to control it, and selfhood is intimately related to the very moment in which the body discovers that it can control itself – as a whole” (ibid.) The example he gives is the initial moment of “coming to yourself” in the moment of waking up. The self is however not about control as such but about the enabling conditions for control. The minimal phenomenal self thus includes a bodily sense of space (spatial frame of reference) and time (the feeling of now), a body image and the transparency of this body image (the organism creating this image does not recognize it as an image). Moreover, the Here- and Nowness has to be accompanied by a “visual (or auditory) perspective originating within the body volume, a centre of projection, embedded in the volume of the body. (Ibid.)

* Metzinger proposes a three levels of the self in which attention plays a significant role, however, only on the second and third level, as for him phenomenal “attentionality” would be only linked to a weak 1st PP in which in his view still there is no attention (in the sense of an active control mechanism of the focus of attention).

Firstly, for Metzinger there is the weak 1st person perspective (1PP) a “purely geometrical feature of an egocentric model of reality” that is a spatio-multimodal model of reality (spatio-visual, spatio-auditory etc.).

This includes a) a spatial frame of reference and b) a global body representation. Hence the body projects c) a perspective “originating within this body representation”. The weak 1st person perspective orients the body through a centre of projection, “[…] which functions as the geometrical origin of seeing (or hearing etc.) Organism’s perspective.”

I would call this the initial orienting, attentional bodily self.

Secondly, and important in relation to attention in the sense of Metzinger is the “selfhood-as-subjectivity” (Metzinger, 2009, p. 102) or “strong 1 PP” (Blanke/Metzinger, 2008, p. 7), or stronger selfhood. The transition from the minimal phenomenal self to the self-as-subjectivity is marked -for him- by the supplementary self-representation of the minimal selfhood as being directed towards an object that is by being able to change the location and duration of
attention in *attentional agency* or how he calls this by the “controlling the focus of attention”. Thus the stronger -not just minimal but also subjective phenomenal- self that first of induces a perspective after Metzinger’s hypothesis happens

[...] when we first discover that we can control the focus of attention. We understand that we can draw things from the fringe of consciousness into the centre of experience, holding them in the spotlight of attention or deliberately ignoring them – that we can actively control what information appears in our mind. Now we have a perspective, because we have an inner image of ourselves as actually representing, as subject directed at the world. Now we can, for the first time, also attend to our own body as a whole – we become self-directed. Inwardness appears. [...] when we attend to the body itself [...] Consciousness is the space of attentional agency. Selfhood as inwardness emerges when an organism for the first time actively attends to its body as a whole. If a global model of the body is integrated into the space of attentional agency, a richer phenomenal self emerges. It is not necessary to think. It is not necessary to move; the availability of the body as a whole for focal attention is enough to create the most fundamental sense of selfhood-as-inwardness – that is, the ability to become actively self-directed in attention. The body model now becomes a self-model [...]. The organism is now potentially directed at the world and at itself at the same time. It is the body as subject (Metzinger, 2009, p. 102).

Thus the strong 1PP seems to be a global representation of the organism as a whole, given through a) Minimal Phenomenal Self and b) as being “directed” towards something, an “object component” (including the body itself). This direction of the 1PP towards a thing of experience for Metzinger necessarily includes the ability “to control the focus of attention”. For me this could be called the noting self.

**Thirdly, Selfhood as cognitive 1PP:** The cognitive 1PP occurs “[...] when a system possesses a concept of the strong 1PP and is able to apply this concept to itself (i.e. it has an abstract and active mental representation of itself as a subject of experience which includes a special form of cognitive self-reference).” The cognitive 1PP presupposes the capacity of self-reference in the sense of using concepts such as “I” in “I (myself)-thoughts”. “I myself am a subject of experience”. This cognitive 1PP for Blanke/Metzinger (2008, p. 7) might be exclusively human “Many organisms might have phenomenal self-*models*, but perhaps only humans have self-*concepts.*”(ibid.). This could be called the self-attending (and self-observing) self.
2.2.2 Virtual Out-of-body experiences and impossible full body illusions

Metzinger and Blanke (2008) amplify the notion of a partial body illusion as in the rubber hand illusion that I will sketch out here briefly. The rubber hand illusion takes up a strange phenomenon that Botvinick & Cohen (1998) called “Rubber Hand ‘Feels’ Touch That Eyes See” regarding an artificial body part lying on the table (the rubber hand) while the real left hand is hidden under the table (as the right arm and hand). Then a probe will repeatedly simultaneously stroke the visible rubber-hand, as will the real corresponding body part under the table. After a while (about a minute) the body image is redirected towards the visible rubber hand (body part), even creating a link (an illusory arm) that normally is accompanied with a sound or a crack felt when redirection of the virtual body part is active in this illusion.

Metzinger and Blanke (2008) now distinguish between partial vs. global ownership of a body and carried out an experiment within a virtual reality setting to simulate a full body illusion and a swapping of the notion of one’s 1st PP towards an illusionary body in front of the test person.

A head mounted display consisting of goggles that showed two separate images to each eye, creating the three-dimensional illusion of being in a virtual room. Subjects were able to see their own backs, which were filmed from a distance of two meters and projected into the three dimensional space in front of them with the help of a 3D decoder. When I acted as the subject of the experiment I felt as if I had been transposed into a 3D-version of René Magritte’s painting La Reproduction interdite. Suddenly I saw myself from the back standing in front of me. While I was looking at my back Bigna Lenggenhager was stroking my back, while the camera was recording this action. As I watched my own back being stroked, I immediately had an awkward feeling, I felt suddenly drawn towards my virtual body in front of me, and I tried to “slip into” it. This was as far as things went. (Metzinger, 2009, p. 99)

The most “interesting” outcome of these experiments (even though Metzinger’s conclusion of a reductive “geometrical view” of the self – and thus separated from biological matter and body structures – does not convince me) seems to be the conceptual conclusions Metzinger proposes after a series of tests with one’s own body being stroked (own body condition) or a fake body being stroked (fake body condition) and
an object being stroked synchronically and out of synch (control condition) the “embedding principle”:

The bodily self is phenomenologically represented as inhabiting a volume in space, whereas the seeing self is a point without extension- namely, the centre of projection for our visio-spatial perspective, the geometrical origin of our perspectival visual model of reality. Normally this point of origin (behind the eyes, as if a little person were looking out of them as one looks out of a window) is within the volume defined by the felt bodily self. Yet as our experiments demonstrated, seeing and bodily self can be separated, and the fundamental self of selfhood is found at the location of the visual body representation. (Metzinger, 2009, p. 100)

3. Outlook

We are confronted with lots of questions – that we cannot answer for now – but it is still important to clarify what the results of this research are, even if we do not have all the final answers but are rather confronted with posing future questions to be investigated. In this bold but strange account of the very interesting phenomenon of the so called “full body illusion” and the out of body experience the following questions and critical points, and the approximation towards the phenomenon of the “attentional self” serve not as a conclusion but as an outlook within the impossible and the more possible fields of attention. It seems not so clear that epistemological questions concerning standard vs. non-standard cases of experience are easily compared. Does a dying brain always inform us about the living brain in all its functions or does a dying brain simply give us more insight into how a brain with impaired blood-flow or lack of oxygen alters our states of mind. Another point remains unclear: Why is it that the visual geometrical self should be the basic condition for the minimal phenomenal self (what about time consciousness, what about the basic feeling of being affected? What about touch and the skin as a compass and map of the body, that is not to be dislocated and touched elsewhere, as it is the proximate sense and not, as with the case of vision, the sense for approximating what is in the distance). Attention can arouse what is affected involuntarily through
sensory stimulation of one’s own body skin, though not from the stimulation of merely seeing another body stimulated. This question can be linked to Metzinger’s representative account of the self as a fiction of a transparent model in general: Metzinger himself asks

[…] The organism is now potentially directed at the world and at itself at the same time. It is the body as subject./ But again- who controls the focus of attention? In our Video Ergo sum study, who is the entity misidentifying itself? (Metzinger, 2009, p. 103)

There logically cannot be a deception happening in Metzinger’s illusionary self-model if there is “no one” or “no entity” to be deceived in the first place by the “self”. And still there is that feeling to know what it is like to be myself today this morning different from yesterday night when I finished this text in the year 2012, and still the one I am referring to and comparing the two notions of myself from yesterday and now, as well as Valéry’s question of what it is that makes up the center, what forms the center of attention? How are the episodic attentional self – Monsieur Teste – and the stabilizing and responding attentional self – Emilie Teste – interconnected, how are they “husband” and wife” inside a unified attentional self? These are deeper philosophical questions of ascribed identity that Metzinger leaves out in his “illusionary” account of the self. Again we can pose another question to be clarified in the future: Does the search for a minimal phenomenal self help in clarifying the question of conscious experience and the different modes of experience of an attentional self? To deeply link the different modes of attention such as in aesthetic and heautoscopic attention, attention in distraction (self-absorption, meditation etc.) and self-consciousness in relation to the non-self is beyond the scope of this paper but should be developed in the near future when describing a complete account of an attentional self. Thus, what the attentional self is and how it works in all its variety is an important future task of a philosophy of cognitive science. Is an attentional self an epistemological construct that joins separate research areas, but does not clarify what a non-dualist, or immanence account of the self should be about? This remains unanswered as well as the following question: How can OBE exactly help to clarify what the self is as a centre of projection and how does attentional control of focus actually stabilize the first person perspective? What role does distraction play in the
formation and the working of the self? Does attention therefore, besides attending with a specific sense modality, introduce a specific modus, in between virtuality (self) and the actuality of attending perception? If attention can follow the virtual body floating and look from above, then it should not necessarily be seen as a perceptive phenomenon, but as a virtual phenomenon that should also combine important conflicting inputs (as for instance visual and tactile) in a mereological account of a self. This also includes not only the notion of the visual body but the whole range of the multimodality of senses (somato-sensory, vestibular, visual, auditory, visceral) and especially the question how these sensible parts of the self are interconnected synchronically and even diachronically as well as synthesized in a global embodied self experience and linked to – what Metzinger calls – the orientation aspects of perspective (for him the weak 1st PP). The question remains however: Are these aspects merely representational and just “illusionary” or are they real and imminent in the bodily senses? These important questions that have arisen in our research show that it is fruitful to think more about attention and the self together in a mutual close relation and discover more about what can be called an “attentional self” that we modestly started to explore with two of its conceptual persona.

References


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