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THE MINIMAL SELF AND THE AFFECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS – THE ROLE OF RETROACTIVITY IN THE SELF-CONSTITUTION

Abstract

Contemporary discussions between phenomenology and the philosophy of mind portray the minimal self as a dominant issue. In this paper I propose a distinction between the minimal and core self from a phenomenological point of view suggesting the idea that retroactivity may have crucial role in the constitution of the self. The aim of the paper is to elaborate on the problem of phenomenological unconscious that is closely related to body memory and the retroactive awakening of past events. I argue for a dynamic and malleable core self that lives through multiple disintegration and reintegration processes due to emotional traumas. According to my thesis the affective unconscious that underlies the core self is closely tied to the retroactive sense-making processes.

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I will examine the basic notions of the so called *minimal* and *core self*. The problem of the self has recently attracted a considerable amount of attention in philosophical, psychological, and neuroscientific investigations. Galen Strawson enumerated 29 different conceptions of the self, including the most basic notion that defines the self merely as “a subject of experience” (Strawson 2000, p. 39). The paper takes into consideration of the minimal self from the viewpoint of phenomenology. According to the thesis of the dynamic minimal self the phenomena of *retroactivity*¹ can disintegrate and reintegrate the affective infrastructure of the minimal self. Therefore, the conception of the *affective unconscious* will be one of the most significant elements of the paper.² My intention is to complete the idea of

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¹ For preliminary purposes we can define retroactivity as a special intentional act that closely connected to recollection; though, it works on the level of phenomenological intuition and its affective force and spontaneity differentiates it from conscious recollection. Retroactivity is a non-linear movement of intentionality between present and past that often arranges past events into a wholly new *Gestalt*.

² The problem of the affective unconscious can be subsumed under the broad category of the *phenomenological unconscious* which gave rise to several discussions in the phenomenological literature (Bernet 2000, de Warren 2010). In the following study, my

phenomenological unconscious by placing the process of *retroactive awakening* to the level of the minimal self. The outcome of this theoretical leap will be that the minimal self, as the sub-system of the person,³ often undergoes radical subversive/traumatic processes and its own phenomenal character (i.e., the *feeling tone* or *sense* of the self) is not unaltered over time. Additionally, I propose that the affective schematism of retroactivity has crucial role in trauma-processing⁴ and overall well-being; furthermore, it can determine the ways of self-integration and self-narration. According to my thesis, a pre-reflective sense-making process re-stabilizes the bodily-homeostatic and affective balance of the minimal self.

2. The minimal self: abstraction or fundamental notion?

In his 2013 paper, Ullmann convincingly argues that the minimal self, as the basis of self-experience and self-knowledge, is an abstract and wholly empty conception. Ullmann considers the minimal self as the formal distinction between one's own and others' experiences. Nevertheless, Zahavi demonstrates that the self in question is not a formal or abstract identity-pole that gives unity and coherence to the flow of experiences in a Kantian manner (Zahavi 2005, p. 104). To my mind, there is a more dynamic reading of Zahavi's conception based on the role of self-affection⁵ and on

arguments will be based mainly on the ideas of Ullmann (2004, 2010, 2013) and Kozyreva (2017, 2018).

³ For Husserl and Merleau-Ponty the person is determined by his or her bodily habits and overall bodily style. As Dermot Moran summarizes: "Memories, skills, practical abilities are literally incorporated in the body, in the way we hold ourselves, move our bodies, walk, sit, eat, look weary, adopt a defeated air, and so on [...] Nevertheless, there is an extremely deep inalienable individuality to human experiencing. Each of us has a familiar gait or a specific tone of voice, set of facial expressions, even favorite strings of words." (Moran 2011, p. 56)

⁴ Retroactive understanding is not only relevant in cases of re-considering traumatic events, but it has crucial role in trauma-genesis as well. In the scenarios of Freud's seduction theory the prepubertal sexual assault traumatized the person in a retroactive manner (Neu 1991, p. 2–3). Freud demonstrates that there can be direct or indirect (i.e. symbolic) link between the supposedly traumatic event and the pathological phenomenon (Freud 1912).

⁵ The phenomena of self-affection or auto-affection became a crucial research interest in contemporary phenomenology and phenomenological psychiatry as well. For example, Fuchs accentuates the lived body's auto-affective nature that underlies first-personal consciousness: "The self-referentiality that is rooted in the auto-affectivity of the body is indeed imparted to all our perceptions, actions, and thoughts." (Fuchs 2005, p. 96) Zahavi (1999) claims that self-affection is an immediate relation to ourselves in which the affecting force and the subject of the affection coincide. Self-affection endows our experiences the "what is it like" character, therefore, self-affection and the conundrum of phenomenal consciousness (Nagel 1974) are closely related. Lohmar, following in the footsteps of Husserl, speaks of phantasmatic self-affection, a special ability of consciousness to complete

the thesis that the self is an integral part of time-consciousness, thus, it has an immediate experiential reality (Zahavi 2005, p. 106). Interestingly, both Zahavi and Ullmann argue for the fundamental role of a “phenomenological self” in an indirect way from the standpoint of the narrative self, by referring to MacIntyre’s claim that “Stories are lived before they are told – except in the case of fiction” (MacIntyre 1985, p. 212).

For Zahavi, the key question is the very nature of subjectivity, and thus he introduces the notion of Husserlian intentionality to his philosophy of mind. The minimal self is by no means restricted to sheer self-referentiality. Considering the problem of the self, Zahavi developed several layers of defining strategies: (1) primarily, the Self as pre-reflective self-awareness indeed alludes to the first personal givenness of experiences. Zahavi argues that experiences “bring me into the presence of different intentional objects” (Zahavi 2005, p. 122). (2) From the earlier thesis it is clear that in the intentional relation the accomplishments of the subject and the impression of the object are inseparably intertwined – that echoes the basic Husserlian paradigm of intentionality (Zahavi 2005, p. 123). (3) Furthermore, he argues that, the pre-reflective sense of *mineness* is integral part of the stream of consciousness and there is no room for a worldless ego-pole here; the main question is not who is the subject of experiences, but rather, the very nature of “subjectivity of experience” (Zahavi 2005, p. 125-26).

Naturally, Ullmann and other interpreters rightly pointed out that the sheer distinction between the experiences of mine and others’ are too empty to characterise a self; but Zahavi argues that there is no self without content and every intentional type (i.e., perception, imagination, thinking etc.) also implies an experiential difference in its phenomenal character. The lived experience per se has its own characteristic qualitative sense over time, and the fluctuation of experiential qualities is incomprehensible without a basic ground. Therefore, Zahavi stresses that the diachronic continuity of the self is anchored in the “interior self-affection” of the living present (Zahavi 2005, p. 116). Contrary to the standard notion of the minimal self, Ullmann claims that it is plausible to suppose a “phenomenological self”, that is not identical with the abstract, visuo-spatially understood minimal self or with the higher-level narrative self. However, in opposition to qualms about abstraction Zahavi argues that: “we will never encounter the minimal self in its purity. It will always already be embedded in an environmental and temporal horizon. It will be intertwined with, shaped and contextualized by memories, expressive behaviour and social interaction, by passively acquired habits, inclinations, associations, etc.” (Zahavi 2010, p. 6). Zahavi endorses the multi-dimensional account of the self, therefore, the role of the affective unconscious can be a significant addendum similarly to the developmental investigations of the self-other emotions.

perceptual content with feeling-toned phantasmatic elements In this respect perception is modified or schematized by self-affection (Lohmar 2010).

3. The affective unconscious and body memory

The term “core self” directly implies self-affection (i.e. the experiential flow of time consciousness) that constitutes the basic level of intentional activity and the diachronic unity of the self as well. However, in this respect, unity indeed suggests the *constancy* of the core self. From the phenomenological point of view, Ullmann’s notion of affective unconscious demonstrates that the basic level of self-affection does not correspond to a constant core self, rather, it is always under the influence of the fluctuating affective unconscious of the *person* (further deliberation will be ensued). That means, from first personal perspective, one is not simply immersed in the “feeling of being alive”, rather, our self-affective well-being is schematized by our fleeting moods and emotions due to our worldly (embodied) situatedness. Therefore, on the one hand, there is no person without the (phenomenological) core self, and, on the other hand, personal experiences are able to schematize and often determine the phenomenal character of the core self. In this context the core self is always a personal self and not strictly identified with Damasio’s core consciousness that remains stable across the lifetime of the organism. While Zahavi (2005, p. 138-39) have found neurological support for the minimal self in Damasio’s *core consciousness* and *core self* conceptions, that also comprise the *mineness* of experiences, it is important to find other avenues to complete the discussion of the minimal self.

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Ullmann (2013) argues that, to be a person is always a differentiated form of being, however, despite the seemingly intact public appearance of the person, there is a good reason to suppose that we are often defined by our *blind spots* in our conscious life. There are several occasions in our day-to-day living when we astonishingly reflect on our just-past behaviour and cannot fathom why we were acting in certain ways and what happened to our normal behaviour or habits.

Affectivity does not correspond to the instinctual self-affection of the lived body, rather, as Ullmann argues, it has an invisible or implicit meaning structure. This meaning structure may imply some kind of representational characteristics, but the affective unconscious is rather the invisible innervation of the visible behaviour – in a Merleau-Pontian sense (Ullmann 2013, 35-36). Ullmann, quite similarly to Thomas Fuchs, defines affectivity as a network of emotions and moods, which are dimly present in our being-in-the-world. Affectivity has a *horizon*, a space of possibilities that can be identified as the secondary or unconscious affectivity of our mental life. The most conspicuous occurrences of the affective unconscious are our typical reactive patterns in certain situations; these patterns are passive and automatic without conscious deliberations. Ullmann considers the phenomenological unconscious as an “invisible affective pattern”, and he does not want to reduce it to any kind of psychological model of the unconscious. In opposition to Ullmann,

Kozyreva (2017) reinterpreted the features of implicit memory⁶ in a phenomenological framework and introduced the notion of *affective memory* that invisibly schematizes the self.⁷ Ullmann argues that the affective unconscious is basically relational, since its origin and further activity is based on interpersonal – especially traumatic – relations. Thomas Fuchs introduced the phenomenological account of trauma: trauma means a not yet integrated or interpreted event, which manifests itself not only by means of repressed memories, but also lies in the implicit layer of the lived body:

The traumatic event is an experience that may not be appropriated and integrated into a meaningful context. As in pain memory, mechanisms of avoidance or denial are installed in order to isolate, forget, or repress the painful content of memory. The trauma withdraws from conscious recollection, but remains all the more virulent in the memory of the lived body, as if it were a foreign body. At every turn, the traumatized person may come across something that evokes the trauma.
(Fuchs, 2012a, p. 17)

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Following in the footsteps of Ullman we could argue that the affective unconscious is not only a volatile sphere of moods and emotions around us, but also the malleable medium of traumatic events. And the trauma⁸ is often traceable back to (1) shocking

⁶ In short, implicit memory encompasses the strange accomplishments of amnesic patients who are able to acquire certain skills without explicit recollection of the learning process or exhibit aversive behaviour as if they could remember painful events (e.g. electric shock or a pinprick) (Schacter et al. 1993). In general terms implicit memory shows some kind of preconscious information processing. We can speak of implicit processing when people are influenced by past experience without explicit recollection or “without awareness that they are remembering” (Schacter 1996, p. 161).

⁷ Kozyreva argues for the role of implicit memory to understand pre-reflective self-experience: “Similarly, research on implicit memory in cognitive psychology has shown that its influence extends beyond mere bodily or perceptual experience and includes feelings, behavior, conceptual thinking, and the interaction with other people. It is precisely this perspective that justifies the position of implicit memory as a constitutive dimension of the pre-reflective self-experience, and thereby puts it in the center of the current research.” (Kozyreva 2017, p. 175)

⁸ There is no room here to give a detailed analysis of the recent pluridisciplinary approach to trauma that comprises the disciplines of clinical neuroscience, anthropology, psychoanalysis and, last but not least, phenomenology. However, it is worth considering the paradoxical and versatile nature of trauma. On the one hand, especially in cases of PTSD, trauma is overt, since an unbearable situation with its full affective force and its relative vivacity comes back to the present, but on the other hand, we can speak of hidden traumatic events which resist symbolization and narrative understanding. Schacter gave a detailed analysis of the memory biases that can be observed in reliving and retelling traumatic events (Schacter 1996). Bettina B ergo draw attention to an intriguing historical development: when Charcot and Freud introduced the problem of traumatism to explain hysteria they overcame mind-body dualism

outer events or (2) inner non-representable wishes or moods (Ullmann 2013, p. 33). However, in Ullmann's notion of affectivity there is a certain similarity to psychoanalytical findings. For example, with respect to affectivity he argues that the feeling of our own being (i.e. self-affection) is always closely connected to the experiences of joy and pain. But, for him, affectivity is not the sheer propagation or transmutation of libidinal energies, rather, he emphasizes the *meaning structures* of affectivity which schematizes the self throughout interpersonal relations. In addition, it is reasonable to suppose, that the core self is always bombarded by the attacks and eruptions of the affective unconscious, and, paradoxically, the core self is the subject matter and the source of this very unconscious processing. We are now arrived at question of phenomenalization per se and self-affection seems to be an aporetic notion without clear-cut meaning or explanatory value. On the one hand, Ullmann resists the temptation to reduce the affective unconscious to the notion of Michel Henry's self-affection or to the lived body, but, on the other hand, his concept is closely related to implicit memory.

It is not exaggeration to say that Fuchs reintroduced the problem of implicit memory to phenomenology through body memory. Merleau-Ponty developed the concept of "habitual body" in his seminal work (*Phenomenology of perception*) and Fuchs subsequently argues for an invisible network of predispositions and introduces the concept of body memory as well.⁹ In Fuchs's words:

The body is thus the ensemble of organically developed predispositions and capacities to perceive and to act, but also to desire and to communicate. Its experience, anchored in the body memory, spread out and connect with the environment like an invisible network, which relates us to things and to people (Fuchs 2012a, p.11).

Fuchs also introduces a *horizontal unconscious*; for him, the affective unconscious is at the same time a corporeal and intercorporeal unconscious.¹⁰ Fuchs

and observed a close connection between the physiological and the psychological, the real and the imaginary (Bergo 2009, p. 213). Michael Lambek regards trauma as a window "into aspects of mind and body that are evolutionarily deeper, ostensibly, than symbolic activity and reflective consciousness – deeper, therefore, than self-understanding, or at least external to it. Trauma offers a class of experiences that are not integrated within the ego or language." (Lambek 2009, p. 238)

⁹ Body memory is a kind of synthesis of repeated situations: "If, following Merleau-Ponty, we view the body not as the visible, touchable and sentient physical body but first and foremost as our capacity to see, touch, sense, then body memory designates the totality of these bodily predispositions as they have developed in the course of our development - in other words, in their historical dimension. In body memory, the situations and actions experienced in the past are, as it were, all fused together without any of them standing out individually." (Fuchs 2012b, 91)

¹⁰ In contrast, Ullmann's argument often bears the marks of Heideggerian philosophy of moods since he does not try to reduce the affective unconscious to an objectifiable territory.

argues, through citations of Merleau-Ponty, that unconscious fixations include traumatic experiences from the past, and the “intercorporeal presence” of forgotten or repressed experiences prone to schematize the lived space by constraining the possibilities of action in the daily life of a person (Fuchs 2012b, p. 86). Body memory is a very intricate piece of machinery with several layers, skills, capacities. Fuchs argues that body memory “constitutes a sensomotoric, libidinous and interactive field in which we, as embodied beings, constantly move and conduct ourselves.” (Fuchs 2012b, p. 92) In this respect, the affective unconscious is anchored in the body; that is, the repulsive or attractive forces of the life-world are schematized by the projective capacities of our lived body. But without the role of intersubjectivity the lived body’s auto-affective, projective capacity would be a solipsistic illusion. We are not encapsulated selves, but we dwell in the world of intercorporeality and for Fuchs the “implicit relational styles”, the manifestations of the body memory, are acquired by interactions with the environment and others.

Fuchs as a psychiatrist, argues that vaguely felt emotions or impulses are often the “reverberations of forgotten or repressed contents as well as forebodings and anticipations of a possible problem” (Fuchs 2012a, p. 20). Psychotherapeutic techniques (e.g. focusing) can crystalize a *meaning core* from the bodily “felt sense”; and these *meaning cores* are often autobiographical events that reside in the past. Fuchs claims that body memory is not only the disposition of perception and behaviour, but also the carrier of life-history as well. Body memory serves as an umbrella concept for explaining the complexity of affective life. As a result, the intangible affective allure of situations, the random eruption of impulses, the unbearable pressure of a situation, a hypersensitivity to certain situations, an intuitive impression about other people etc. become tangible, characterizable phenomena by means of body memory.

The interpretation of a bodily “felt senses” suggests the ongoing oscillation between non-representational and representational elements of consciousness. As discussed above, Fuchs convincingly argued for a horizontal unconscious where the repressed is instantiated in the present by the lived body. Fuchs’ body memory is the transitional zone of the non-representational and representational aspects of the self. The aim of psychotherapy is to find the meaning cores of the peculiar bodily behaviour and emotions. And from the phenomenological point of view the genesis of meaning through the lived body is a crucial point, as well. Ullmann proposed that the retroactive genesis of meaning is a crucial point where psychoanalysis and phenomenology can meet.

4. Retroactivity and the multiple-core self

Fuchs does not claim that the meaning cores of body memories are explicit representational contents, rather in certain conditions (especially in case of PTSD patients) the body *re-enacts* the past in the present.¹¹ A certain volatile mood, an unusual behaviour, or an outburst of anger in a therapeutic situation are telling examples of the blind spots of the affective unconscious. The notion of body memory weaves the different threads of affective unconscious into one holistic network. Since phenomenology tries to investigate the intentional accomplishments of consciousness in lived time, the question arises: how can we reconcile the notion of body memory with the phenomenology of lived time?

Ullmann (2010) argued that retroactivity is one of the most fundamental activity of consciousness that can be understood as an oscillatory movement in the unidirectional stream of inner time-consciousness. Similarly, Kozyreva (2017) argued that the past always connected to the living present not only by means of explicit recollection but also with implicit affective awakening. The horizontal structure of consciousness implies that consciousness “can hardly stand »blind spots« and it shows a strong inclination towards coherence.” (ibid., p. 211) Ullmann develops further the rudimentary analysis of retroactivity that can be found in Husserl’s analysis on passive synthesis (Husserl 2001), and argues that, surprisingly, retroactivity is a fundamental constituent of consciousness and an appropriate medium for genetic-phenomenological investigations as well (Ullmann 2004, p. 137). While Zahavi stresses the inseparable relation between time-consciousness and self-affection, Ullmann underscores the role of retroactive awakening in re-evaluating our personal memories. To my mind, self-affection, time-consciousness, and retroactivity could be conjoined aspects of the phenomenological unconscious, however, let me hasten to add, there is no clear phenomenological method to observe and describe these mechanisms adequately.¹² Let us try to approximately characterize these intriguing aspects of the living present.

¹¹ From neuroscientific perspective Charles E. Scott defines trauma-related memories as affective or pre-reflective memory traces. In strong stress-related situations, the amygdala, which is the centre for instinctive memory, activated and later it can also engender such experiences as if the past danger were present. Without the brains hippocampal function the traumatic event is out of spatial and temporal context: „When a traumatized limbic system dominates, we have a degree of stress that overrides other affects, and we have a measure of sensation that is without the affections of reasonable or communal expression. It is affection with no sense of identity.” (Scott 2009, p. 119)

¹² At first glance, self-affection seems to be the pure fact of impressionability: „More generally, Henry conceives of self-affection as a purely interior and self-sufficient occurrence involving no difference, distance or mediation between that which affects and that which is affected. It is an event which is strictly nonhorizontal, non-ecstatic and non-temporal.” (Zahavi 1998, p. 25) But Zahavi shows a more dynamic notion of self-affection in the philosophy of Henry and Husserl where self-affection means “the process of affecting and being affected” that can be described “as the self-temporalization of subjectivity” (See Zahavi 1998 and 2003).

The simplest example for retroactive awakening is when we recognize that a certain tune was hearable at the background while we were immersed in a conversation with our friends. In this case, the affective force¹³ – metaphorically speaking – leads backwards into the retentional flow and awakens former impressions; that is, it makes sense to the formerly unrecognized sounds (i.e. a *Zeitgestalt* begins to take shape in the just-past). Ullmann argues (2010, p. 280) that retroactivity in the present means the awakening of sensations in the just-past retentional flow, but we can speak of the role of retroactivity in recollection where a kind of *Gestalt-switch* or sense-bestowing is at work; that is, an old memory also can be newly recognized by a wholly new sense-making process due to events happening in the present. Therefore, retroactivity can be conceived as *awakening* of past impressions and *cancellation* of former meaning. For the latter, let us turn to Larrabee's simple example: we see a stranger approaching and we believe that she is "Jane" because we have arranged a meeting with her. However, as the stranger comes closer, we suddenly recognize that the person was always a stranger and not Jane (Larrabee 1995, p. 360). We retroactively alter the passively attributed meaning in the retentional flow of the experience and thus the felt sense – so to speak – undergoes a certain *Gestalt-switch*.¹⁴

There is a far wider spectrum of retroactive cancellation in emotionally disturbing cases. Let us consider melodramatic scenarios of breaking a close friendship or a divorce. In these cases, the images and emotions of several happy years can quickly fade away due to the suddenly felt resentment, anger and other affective impulses. In the mind of the injured person the joyful memories of holidays and other blissful events suddenly transform into ephemeral illusions, or in worst cases, anxiety provoking memories. In these kind of states of self-reproach patterns of anxiety and desperation, or anger and remorse surges up from the affective unconscious and prone to overwrite several years of pleasant memories with melancholic or irritating moods.

Considering the examples, the awakening of affective unconscious in the dynamic of retroactive cancellation is prior to any conscious sense-making process.

¹³ The metaphor of affective force and the retroactive schematism of the past are not only phenomenological constructions but they have their own significance in psychoanalysis as well. Bergo interprets Freud's sexual traumatism in a very similar vein: "... the reminiscence amounted to a resemblance between events whose incipience might not have been traumatic, and an ongoing event that revealed the sexual meaning of the earlier ones, endowing them suddenly with an affective force and ideational form that overwhelmed the psyche, producing traumatism retroactively." (Bergo 2009, p. 214)

¹⁴ Naturally, cancellation of a meaningful content is not restricted to the special cases of retroactivity, rather it is an inherent mechanism of perception. According to Husserl, due to instability of an actual perceptual object (for example we are unable to decide between the impression of a human being or a mannequin), we often recognise entirely new occurrences as well as apprehensions on higher level of perception (Husserl 2006, p. 478).

The retroactive understanding and *Gestalt-switch* in question, at first glance, seem to be the part and parcel of narrative understanding; however, to my mind, the retroactive (and also future-oriented pro-active) propagation of affective forces are prior to any deliberate sense-making process and often has somatic aspect as well. From discussions on body memory we could consider that the retroactive dynamics of the affective unconscious, that arises in a non-egological (i.e. self-affective) manner, lies at the level of the core self and the lived body. And it seems plausible to suppose that, this kind of (traumatic) retroactive awakenings and cancellations significantly transform the core self's and the lived body's holistic phenomenal character. In this respect, retroactive awakening and cancellation embedded in the core self and works in a self-affective, spontaneous way. Furthermore, the retroactive understanding of the past events often can be considered as clear signs of psychosocial conflicts (e.g. consciously unbearable and unbelievable events), which gave rise to radical changes in the (phenomenological) core self.

The problem of retroactivity is at the heart of self-understanding and reveals, again, the unresolved questions of the relation between the self and the person. For Fuchs, the Ego (i.e. the person) refers to reflective self-consciousness and autobiographical memory; while the self means the pre-reflective self-awareness and the background feeling of the body.¹⁵ It is reasonable to suppose that we can speak of the dual aspect of retroactive sense-bestowing process as well. Therefore, there is no reason to deny the crucial role of narrative sense-making process in the mechanism of retroactivity at the level of the person. We could designate the conscious process of reflectively re-evaluating and re-shaping our distant memories as a *conscious or personal retroactivity*. But at the level of the core self, there lies a *blind or intuitive retroactivity*, which often overwhelms the lived body in self-affective way due to spontaneously engendered disturbing "felt senses".

In a very similar vein, Kozyreva, in her impressive article and book, established a very close connection between body memory and the "implicit or non-objectifying intentionality of affective awakening" (Kozyreva 2018, p. 221). Kozyreva speaks of "non-representational past relation" on the basis of the phenomenology of the lived body. Furthermore, following Husserl's theory of affectivity she demonstrates that *affective awakening* (i.e. retroactivity) and *explicit recollection* (remembering) are closely related, but not identical processes. The relation between the two can be considered as a constitutive relation: "Clearly, not all awakenings reach the level of actual memories, but all rememberings start as affective awakenings, and these latter can be seen as tendencies towards reproductive intuitions." (Kozyreva 2017, p. 189) The above-mentioned distinction between blind and conscious retroactivity partly echoes Kozyreva's considerations; however,

¹⁵ As we have seen earlier, Fuchs considered a close connection between the self and bodily feelings. And a Husserlian heritage come to the foreground, when he defines the feeling body by means of interoceptive, proprioceptive, and kinaesthetic awareness that also implies auto-affection (Fuchs 2015, p. 325)

besides the implicit (blind) affective awakening I can also imagine a conscious retroactivity on the personal level that reconsiders occurrent memories from a new perspective. Thus, we can imagine scenarios in which the affective force is more or less dominant in the oscillatory movement of consciousness between the past and the present. In some cases, retroactivity can be considered as a purely intellectual (and narrative) process when we ruminate over past events of our lives. In other cases, especially in trauma induced cases, a spontaneous retroactive awakening takes place in the living present that overwhelms the conscious ego and initiates a new sense-bestowing process through repetition of the past situation.

By employing Husserl's observations on affection and instinctual drives, Ullmann argued that the phenomenal unconscious is the horizon of fluctuating affections and sense-formations. This kind of oscillating *affective relief* (the term coined by Husserl), may imply a self-contradiction, since formless, impulsive affects and sense-*Gestalts* are mutually exclusive terms. However, the aporetic nature of the affective unconscious evaporates, if we agree with Fuchs, and suppose that affective impulses often implicitly contain a hidden meaning core. When Ullmann introduces the concept of affective relief, then, a dimension of a not yet fully articulated meaning with feeling tone can be imagined.¹⁶ Blind retroactivity could be the engine that occasionally – due to traumatic events – transforms or re-schematizes the relief of the affective unconscious and the core self as well. Blind retroactivity is in close connection to the body and pain memory, since it often engenders disturbing existential feelings and somatizations.

Ullmann argues that trauma not only means a non-representable, repressed event in the past but also “such kind of event which brutally burst into the subject's well-known and cosy world” (Ullmann 2013, p. 32). Gusich (2012) proposed a similar idea when she emphasized the role of the “traumatic force” (Bernet 2000) and the *affective strength* of a situation. In a severe traumatic situation, a self-protective denial of the event takes place in order to mitigate the affective strength of the happening. The traumatic event cannot be integrated to our horizon of meaning and a temporal disorientation (i.e. the fixation of awareness to that singular event) ensues as well (Gusich 2012, p. 510).

In case of these unacceptable events, somatization and narration could occur at the same time. When something unbearable happens (e.g., an almost fatal accident or any kind of mental-physical shock), one can say to oneself that “It can't be

¹⁶ Naturally, the problem arises that this dynamic notion of phenomenological unconscious is burdened with the drawbacks of constructive phenomenology. However, surveying the field of consciousness studies one can find possible alternatives to expand the horizon of consciousness in order to incorporate the affective unconscious. For example, similarly to the above-mentioned focusing therapy, meditation, or psychedelic therapies may be of some use in this respect. But the goal of this paper is to show the importance of affective unconscious in ordinary circumstances of day-to-day living.

possible!” or “I cannot believe that!” etc. Another mode of processing may take place in the lived body by psychosomatic symptoms (due to anxiety, fear, anger etc.). On the level of time-consciousness the usual protentional dynamics of consciousness could collapse in cases of anxiety or shock provoking situations. The self is unable to project itself into the future. The unbearable novelty is like a dagger that thrusts into the core self and engender a radical alteration on the level of self-affectation. The traumatic outer event may actuate a very subversive change in the person including his or her core self.

I suppose that the subversive nature of traumatic event may be mirrored in the self-affective reaction of the core self. And thus, it is possible that certain disturbing events will first give rise to blind retroactivity, and then, conscious retroactive processing. For example, in case of a street robbery, I would immediately feel immense fear and humiliation in a self-affective way after the event, and I would only be able to consciously reinterpret the situation later. In case of blind retroactivity, a somatization may occur without clear meaning. Larrabee (1995) argues from Husserlian perspective, that in case of somatic manifestations some kind of passive associative process is at work; that means, non-somatic experiences later could engender somatic effects: “For example, the pressure of making a decision by a certain deadline, a seemingly mental process, becomes the pressure of the headache; or a decision to carry a number of inappropriate responsibilities is somatized in a kinked back.” (Larrabee 1995, p. 358). In certain traumatic events, similar kind of somatic symbolization may suddenly overwhelm the subject. However, the sequence can be imagined in the opposite direction as well. Let us suppose, that something unexpected happened to me (e.g., I have survived a car accident without a scratch) which can be easily understood in a narrative manner, my core self remains stable; then a few days suddenly I feel an unbearable shock in my lived body. In this example, unusually, the emotive dynamics of blind retroactive awakening took place after the conscious understanding. With respect of these examples, there is a *slippage*, but also a *synchronizing* tendency between blind and conscious retroactivity; the two processes are interrelated in the of sense-making process of the subject.

Pointedly retroactive understanding, in traumatic cases, implies the subversion of the core self. The very nature of retroactivity sheds light to the inner fractures of the core self and the need for reintegration by means of subconscious (bodily) and conscious (narrative) understanding. The role of blind retroactivity suggests that the pre-conscious self-affective (i.e., bodily) “interpretation” is often the precursor or the consequence of conscious retroactive sense-making. In conclusion, the stability and permanence of the core self is not a universal feature of conscious life, the life of a person is often articulated by incommensurable affective episodes which re-schematize the core self as well. Thus, it is not far-fetched to suppose *multiple-core selves* in time-consciousness that turn the relatively static notion of the minimal self to the ongoing process of self-development and self-

understanding. If we accept, in accordance with recent developments, that the minimal self is not a visuo-spatially understood self-referential loop of intentional acts, but rather it is temporally and bodily founded, then we are on the brink of a dynamic theory of minimal/core self that could open up new vistas in understanding of the layers of the self.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the paper was to expand the concept of minimal self. The notion of body memory and retroactivity shed some light on the ongoing dynamics of the core self. In conclusion, the notion of affective unconscious was introduced that can be considered as the horizontal structure of the minimal self, and vice versa, the minimal self can be reinterpreted as a condensation of affective unconscious patterns, which often manifest themselves as blind spots on the personal level. Therefore, a subtle difference can be considered between the *minimal* and the *core self*. While the minimal self mainly refers to the brute fact of for-me-ness of experiences, the core self refers not only to the ownership of intentional states, but also the self-affective (bodily) dimension of the self (and the person). The second aim of the paper was to explicate the notion of traumatic subjectivity in which retroactivity played a crucial role. As a result, the minimal self not only constitutes itself in time-consciousness in a self-affective way, but also the non-serial intentional oscillation of retroactivity has a crucial role in self-constitution. Though, at first glance, retroactive self-constitution seems to be a personal or especially narrative self-understanding, on the level of the core self a latent sense-making process of the lived body is at work that often gives rise to the disintegration and reintegration process of the core self.

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