On the construction of mental objects in third and in first persons«1»

Arno L. Goudsmit, PhD«2»

This paper deals with some formal properties of objects that are supposed to be internal to persons, that is, mental structures and mental functions. Depending on the ways of talking about these internal objects, they will appear different. Two types of discourse will be presented, to be called the realist and the nominalist discourses, and the paper focuses on some differences between these discourses with respect to the constructions of 'internal objects'. This is discussed with respect to constructions pertaining to other persons, and pertaining to oneself. The realist discourse assumes an identity between the person and his construction of himself. I will illustrate this discourse in terms of Descartes' ideas on himself as a 'thinking substance'. The nominalist discourse assumes an impossibility to attain this identity, and instead to imply a complementarity between the person and his self-construction. I will illustrate this discourse in terms of the problems both William James and Sartre discerned when a conscious person chases after his own consciousness (termed 'judging thought' and 'pour-soi' respectively).

1   Two discourses

The term 'discourse' will be used for a class of language games«3» that have in common a particular presupposition, mostly implicit. The two discourses will be presented as parallels to a medieval controversy on the status of universal concepts. At stake then was the question whether concrete individual things ('particulars') or abstract species and genera ('universals') should be considered to be more real. In modern language: are classes more real than their members, or vice versa? Aristotle«4» had called the members 'primary substance' and the classes 'secondary substance', but in the Middle Ages the two were brought into an opposition between 'realism' and 'nominalism'. These became two opposite ontological systems, holding implacable metaphysical principles with respect to the reality of the world and to the status of 'universals'. Realism considered the abstract 'universals' to be more real than the concrete 'particulars'; nominalism held the opposite«5».

This text does not pretend to submit a historical overview of this opposition. Rather, it is the core idea of this controversy that will be transposed into a context of language users that construct objects in the course of their conversations. Nor does the present text aim at metaphysical answers to the question of what comes first. In fact, it is argued elsewhere (Goudsmit, 1998) that objects are constructed, within a realist or within a nominalist discourse, whereas pre-reflexive experiences are beyond the domain of these discourses and hence cannot be constructed like objects. Accordingly, a metaphysics that departs from pre-reflexive experiences«6» does not thwart a constructivist treatment of objects, as long as the latter is not of a radical relativism. But such a metaphysics will not be of our present concern.

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3. I use this term in the sense of Wittgenstein (1958).

4. Categories, V. See the Aristotle (1955) edition, p. 19.

5. cf. Copleston, 1962, see esp. p. 263 and footnote 31; and Weinberg, 1964

6. for instance, as proposed by Merleau-Ponty (1964), in his concept of 'flesh'.

In analogy to the medieval metaphysical realist-nominalist controversy, I will propose a realist and a nominalist discourse, which resemble the medieval positions. It is within these discourses that objects can be constructed that I will call 'internal objects'. The realist discourse considers internal objects to be really existent, a solid ground for the explanation of mental phenomena in a particular person. The nominalist discourse considers internal objects to be a product of our thinking (and acting), i.e., as a meaning or pattern that, for practical purposes, is ascribed to a set of concrete behaviors.

This is not only an opposition between essentialist and non-essentialist conceptions of mind and mental phenomena, but also between a focus on explanation and a focus on application. The realist discourse puts a definite emphasis upon the explanation of phenomena in terms of underlying essences; the phenomena are called 'symptoms', the essence is called 'illness'. The nominalist discourse puts a definite emphasis upon the ways in which concrete individual things can be dealt with. This latter discourse is much more pragmatically oriented, and it resembles the medieval nominalist movement**«7»**, which also put an emphasis upon the use of abstract concepts as *instruments* for conceiving concrete things. For example, a prominent nominalist school was that of the 'calculatores'**«8»**, who took abstract concepts as mere tools for reasoning, first of all reasoning about motion, without claiming that these notions corresponded to really existing entities or essences. In a similar vein, the nominalist discourse uses conceptions of mental phenomena as tools for acting (e.g. deciding about treatments), not as grounds for explanation.

The realist discourse gives priority to the 'universals', and hence to the quest for explanations and for unifying underlying principles. This discourse gives focal attention to the difference between 'what it really is' (essence) and 'how it appears to the observer' (appearance). For instance, a general practitioner examining a patient's lungs by means of a stethoscope receives a lot a measurement impressions which he tries to interpret as the symptoms of a particular state of the body, e.g. a pneumonia. The pneumonia is then considered to be the real thing (essence) that is the matter. The noises heard through the stethoscope are considered only as the symptoms (appearances); they are often unreliable, and the physician will have to look for as many indicators (symptoms) as possible. Furthermore, the physician is aware of these perceptual drawbacks, and takes them as inevitable features of his personal equipment as an observer.

The nominalist discourse, on the other hand, gives priority to the 'individuals', not to the 'universals'. The individuals are the points of departure for the observer. I will call these individuals 'symbols**«9»**'; a symbol is used as the carrier of a particular meaning or interpretation that is assigned to it. The nominalist discourse gives focal attention to the difference between these symbols and their 'interpretations by the observer' (meanings). A meaning is only secondary to its 'symbols'. Unlike the 'appearances' of the realist discourse, 'symbols' are defined as observational data that are certain. For instance, a translator of a particular text will have no doubts concerning the characters and sentences in front of him. He will take them for granted, but he will be much more uncertain about what they mean, how they can be understood and translated best according to the author's intentions. Similarly, a researcher inspecting his raw data will take them for granted and be much more concerned about how to analyze (i.e.: interpret) them.

The realist discourse is more oriented upon sources and explanations, the nominalist discourse more upon goals and applications. Accordingly, in this paper I will contrast activities for the sake of explanation (e.g. etiology of conscious phenomena) with those for the sake of application (e.g. the determination of one's practical position), and I will put this in terms of the pairs essence-appearance and meaning-symbol.

Both discourses are characterized by an awareness of the distinction between the abstract concept and the concrete perception of a particular object. In the realist discourse the abstract concepts are considered to constitute essences of mental phenomena. In the nominalist discourse the abstract concepts are used instrumentally (as did the Parisian 'calculatores'). I call these two discourses *critical discourses*, because

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7. e.g. Abaelard and Buridan (cf. De Rijk, 1992, p. 55)

8. cf. Wallace, 1978, p. 124ff.

9. in accordance to its usage in mathematics: a distinct readable entity, in itself meaningless, to which a variety of rules and definitions can be assigned (cf. also Pattee's usage of it in his seminal 1972 paper).

each of them maintains a distance to their objects of discussion, that allows a critical distinction between 'what?' and 'how?'. Schematically:

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                        abstract:              concrete:

realist discourse:      essence (what?)        appearance (how?)
nominalist discourse:   meaning (how?)         symbol (what?)
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The 'what?' questions pertain to what I call 'substances', and the 'how?' questions to what I call 'accidents'. Accordingly, substances and accidents are assigned different roles in the two discourses, yielding two radically different ways of constructing reality:

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                        substance:             accident:

realist discourse:      essence (abstract)     appearance (concrete)
nominalist discourse:   symbol (concrete)      meaning (abstract)
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These schemes can be considered as the basic conceptual framework of the present paper. More about the definition of these discourses can be found in Goudsmit (1992, 1998).

2   Internal objects and the two discourses

Internal objects are attributions through which a person, originally related to in the second person (addressed as 'you' or 'Thou'**«10»**), becomes related to in the third person (referred to as a '(s)he' or an 'it'). When an internal object is constructed, the conversation interactants together create a detachment from this third person. This may be the case when the behaviors of a particular third person become the topic of discussion between people; then agreement can be attained by finding the appropriate qualifications about this person. These may range from rude qualifications such as 'mad' and 'bedeviled' to refined psychiatric diagnoses. There is always some degree of detachment from a person qualified in these circumstances, which may range from violent expulsion of the person, via mildly frowning about him, to detachedly and purportedly 'objectively' diagnosing him.

'Internal' objects, such as experiences, representations, thoughts, emotions, intentions, dispositions, states, traits, etc., are usually assigned to such a (third) person as properties of his mind**«11»**. Thus, the social definition of persons, and more generally, human 'individuality', arise as social achievements**«12»**, as solutions to impending conflicts. The 'internal objects' are socially constructed as some abstract thing in or about a third (observed) person, a thing that serves for the conversation partners who are talking about this third person, in one of two ways. *Either* it serves as a foundation, that is to explain and account for the queer behaviors, *or* as a façon de parler about these behaviors, a way of qualifying them.

In the first case, if a foundation is sought, there may be agreement about a substance that is believed to be *'really there' inside* the third person (e.g. his alleged 'soul', 'character', 'mind', 'personality', 'ego', and the

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10. in the sense of Buber's famous work (1922). Notice that the immediacy of the second person prohibits a direct reference to him or her. The second person cannot be pointed at. Only when a new second person is found and associated with, the previous one can become a third person, i.e. someone spoken about and pointed at (cf. Goudsmit, 1998).

11. This mind is usually situated *inside* the person. In fact there is no compelling reason why these 'internal' objects should be located inside a person. Gods, ghosts, demons, spirits, satyrs or nymphs, as they occur in most civilizations, are no less real than the other objects of our culture, 'mental' objects included. Cf. also: "... in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits." (Quine, 1953, p. 44).

12. Cf. also Toulmin (1979, 1986). Cf. also Jansz (1991), for an overview of 'personal' versus 'social' conceptions of individuality.

like). In the second case, the qualifications of the observed behaviors are helpful in making (technological, moral or other) practical decisions. Here the observers focus upon the 'objectively observable' behaviors, about which agreement exists, in order to make their decisions (e.g.: "what should we do with a person who behaves thus...?").

I will now elaborate the construction of internal objects in both critical discourses (sections 2.1 and 2.2). Then (sections 3.1 and 3.2), I will pay attention to this construction by the person himself. This, as will be elaborated, looks entirely different in the two critical discourses.

2.1.   **Internal objects in the realist discourse**

The realist assumption is concerned with the objective existence of the internal object as a substance, an internal state of affairs. For example, the unexpected and incomprehensible behaviors of a (third) person considered insane may be explained in terms of the possession of a demon, or in terms of the existence of a particular mental state. When such an explanation is given, the demon or the mental state are introduced as an essence, the appearances of which are the behaviors of the ill person ('symptoms'). This conception is usually elaborated in the tradition of *theoretical explanations*, in which questions of the 'how come?' variety are given a central position. Here the internal object is constructed as a *mental structure*. This may be a rather *permanent* feature, such as a person's 'character trait'**«13»**, but it may also be a more *transient* mental state, such as a person's state of consciousness**«14»** at a particular moment, as well as his 'unconscious' states in the sense of psychoanalysis. In brief, it may be anything as long as it is used as an abstract substance (essence), as a state of affairs that is *conceived* to be internally the case. I am therefore not so much concerned with what a mental structure *is* and what not, as proposing this term for that what a critical observer is constructing, when for explanatory purposes he refers to an internal state of affairs in another person. This type of constructions**«15»** contributes to the development of (metaphysical) theories about mind, and subjectivity, and that which causes them.

2.2.   **Internal objects in the nominalist discourse**

The nominalist assumption is concerned not with an internal state of affairs, claimed to exist objectively, but rather with an external state of affairs: the world shared by the observers. This world is taken as a substance, a set of symbols, of which the person in question is assumed to create his own meaning. This meaning is in the first place a particular *way of dealing* with the 'external reality', a way of making a particular sense out of it, for practical purposes. In the nominalist discourse the person's deviant or perhaps incomprehensible behaviors are considered as idiosyncratic accidents to this environment, pragmatic qualifications of it. This environment, in itself, is considered as a meaningless world of symbols to which meanings can be given. Notice well that it is by the external observers that a third person (e.g. a patient) is assigned such a particular or peculiar meaning assignment to this environment! This meaning may entirely be fully different from how this third person is actually experiencing his environment, also when the meaning assigned by the observed person is called a particular 'impression' or 'representation' of the 'external reality'**«16»**.

This nominalist conception has been defended most eloquently by Ryle (1949). He proposed to understand mental phenomena entirely in terms of qualifications assigned to external behaviors, instead of as entities internal to the observed person.

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13. Giel (1982, p. 90) mentions the explanatory function of concepts like 'character trait'.
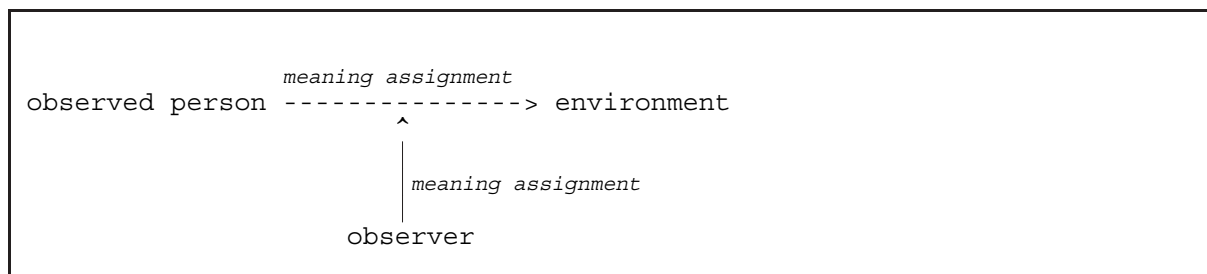
14. Such as the 'substantive parts' as William James called those parts of the stream of consciousness that are accessible to our introspection (see section 3.2; cf. James, 1890, p. I-243). These are also the elements that we seek recourse to when accounting for our actions.

15. Clearly, whenever such an internal structure has been constructed, it will be regarded as really existing, not as 'merely' constructed.

16. cf. also footnote 22

This conception is usually elaborated in the tradition of *technology and applied science*, in which questions of the 'whereto?' variety are given a central position. Here the internal object is constructed as a *mental function*, for example a person's 'delusion', his wishes, 'information processing styles'. More generally, his experiences are taken as modes of dealing with the environment. These functions are constructed by the critical observers, as ways of speaking about the person under observation. They are in fact the meanings that the observers assign to the observed person's behaviors ('symptoms'), and as such they are the names they give to the kind of coping that they perceive the observed person to perform with respect to his environment. These meanings may concern rather *permanent* modes of performance[17], as well as rather *transient* ones[18]. To give an example: a person may be regarded to be 'paranoid'. Then in the nominalist discourse this paranoia is given as a meaning to this person's modes of coping with his environment; furthermore, these coping performance modes are themselves considered as (over-suspicious, distorted etc.) meanings the person assigns to his environment.

Thus, unlike the realist assumption, the nominalist assumption entails a kind of *double meaning assignment*[19]: the person observed is assumed to act as a meaning assigner[20], and this is also the meaning that the observers are assigning to this person's behaviors (without reifying these into mental structures). In section 3.2 I will return to this double assignment that accompanies the nominalist discourse.

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                       meaning assignment
 observed person ---------------> environment
                         ^
                         |
                         |  meaning assignment
                         |
                  observer
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In a rather pure manner we find the nominalist assumption prevalent in the technology of model building. A *model* is usually meant as an action that performs a particular function[21]. A model is considered a 'functional equivalent', if its outputs are indistinguishable from those of the modelled system. The 'Turing test' is a well known formulation of this idea. Chess playing by computers has been elaborated along these lines. Such a model, then, is a meaning (or interpretation, action) assigned to the symbols (i.c. a particular chess configuration). It is then no longer an issue whether or not this artificial chess is similar to chess playing by humans, but the model's performances are *named* 'chess' because of what they do, (viz. the production of chess movements that are, at least to some extent, functionally equivalent to those by human

17. such as those Wittgenstein calls 'dispositions', a term by which he means skills (cf. Ter Hark, 1990, p. 234)

18. Such as the 'transitive parts' (see section 3.2 below) as William James called those parts of the stream of consciousness that do not allow being pinned down by introspection. James also distinguished the 'feelings of tendency' (cf. 1890, p. I-249) i.e. the experiences of tending to some state of consciousness, but not yet having arrived at it. These in fact are described in a similar way ("If we try to hold fast the feeling of direction, the full presence comes and the feeling of direction is lost" p. I-253). Cf. also ter Hark, 1990, pp. 241ff.

19. which is not entirely unlike Giddens' idea of a 'double hermeneutic', as in: "The conceptual schemes of the social sciences therefore express a *double hermeneutic*, relating both to entering and grasping the frames of meaning involved in the production of social life by lay actors, and reconstituting these within the new frames of meaning involved in technical conceptual schemes." (1976, p. 79)
    ['lay actors': cf. what I call 'observed persons'; 'the frames of meaning involved in technical conceptual schemes': cf. what I call 'critical observer's conversations']

20. Clearly, these meanings, purportedly assigned by the observed person to his environment, are quasi-objects for him, unless he is made aware of them (as happens *par excellence* in psychotherapeutic conversations). Whenever the meanings of the observed person, as he experiences them himself, become of focal interest to the observer, the latter enters in the former's life world. How to put adequately into words the meanings assigned by the observed person to his environment, is one of the major stumbling blocks of the interpretative social sciences (cf. Schutz' (1932) so called 'postulate of adequacy').

21. In Löfgren's (1990) terms: "... a model of an action is not a description of the action, but another action that shares essential properties with the action itself."

chess players). Furthermore, 'chess playing' is here a meaning assigned by an external observer to the machine's performances; it is not a description of some internal state of the machine.

A mental function may be anything as long as it is used by the critical observer as an abstract accident (meaning), as a mode of performance that is *conceived* to be operational in a person. Again, I am not so much concerned with what mental functions *are* and what not, as proposing this term for that what a critical observer is constructing, when for practical purposes (such as: prediction and control of behaviors, etc.) he refers to a performance mode in another (observed) person. This type of constructions contributes to the development of techniques and technology in general.

2.3. **Overview and variations**

The following summarizes the two types of internal objects that can be assigned to a person:

	realist discourse:	**nominalist discourse:**
`builds:` `considered as:`	*mental structures:* `essences`	*mental functions:* `meanings`
`of two types:`		
lasting:	`(character) traits`	`skills, 'dispositions'`

transient:	`'substantive parts',`
	`(such as 'mental images')`
		`'transitive parts',`
		`(such as 'feelings of`
		`tendency')`

As can be imagined, an observer may switch from one way of constructing internal objects to another. A switch from a nominalist mode to a realist mode happens when the observer comes to believe that the constructed *mental function* does exist as a *mental structure* that is a kind of substance**«22»** for the observed person's behaviors. This type of switch is likely when the observer has reasons to lay more emphasis upon finding proper (causal or other) explanations for the observed phenomena, for example when a doctor is expected to account for his deeds in terms of 'knowing what' is the matter with a patient (and in terms of 'knowing why').

To take another example, it was in order to avoid the vagueness inherent to theoretical interpretations, that the early behaviorists stuck to a preference for studying pure behaviors. By describing regularities (e.g. of the S-R type, and, even more, of the S-O-R type), they hoped to remain true to their principles. However, they came to implicitly assume a great variety of concepts, such as neuronal connections, learning histories, habits, response hierarchies and the like: all newly created abstractions that at times even obtained the status of essences. For example, Thorndike, who in fact antedated classical behaviorism, presented his 'law of readiness' in terms of 'conduction units'. Though these were lacking a precise physiological meaning, he

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22. Cf Winograd's description of such fallacious reification:
"1.   A scientist observes some recurrent pattern of interactions of an organism.
2.   He or she devises some formal representation (for example a set of generative rules or a "schema") that characterizes the regularities.
3.   The organism is assumed to "have" the representation, in order to be able to exhibit the regularities.
4.   (Depending on the particular sub-field) The scientist looks for experiments that will demonstrate the presence of the representation, or designs a computer program using it to see whether the behavior can be generated by the program.
The error is in the reification of the representation at step 3." (Winograd, 1981, p. 248/249)
        Cf. also Zimring, 1974, p. 123: "Another [assumption is] that emotions, feelings, and thoughts exist as internal objects that can cause behavior and experience. We think that it is the anger within a person that causes him to slam a door, whether or not he is aware of the anger."
        Also Giel (1982, p. 90) mentions what he calls the 'skid' from a descriptive frame to an explanatory one (in terms of a person's 'structural background).

used them nevertheless as the abstract carriers of 'conduction' (Hilgard, 1956, p. 18)**«23»**. Gergen (1984) describes how, in a similar vein, the notion of 'self-concept' was understood by the neo-behaviorists as an internal mental structure, which "... is generally viewed as the product of environmental influence" (p. 73), but which also "determine[d] the character of behavioral responses" (p. 72). Thus, an internal entity is constructed for the sake of explanation, and an unnoticed switch has been made from a nominalist to a realist discourse.

The opposite switch from a realist mode to a nominalist mode happens when the observer comes to believe that the constructed 'essence' (or 'character', 'unconscious', 'mental state', etc.) is in fact a *mental function*. This type of switch is likely when the observer has reasons to lay more emphasis upon practical implications of his observations, implying that what matters is not so much whether or not a particular mental entity is present, as what can be done about it. By way of example of this, we may think of what happens when a physician is expected to account for his deeds in terms of 'knowing how' to proceed with a patient.

3   The construction of internal objects from a first person's point of view

A person can construct internal objects and attribute them to others, but also to himself. That will be the issue of the present section.

3.1.   The construction of 'self' in the realist discourse: Descartes

A realist construction of 'self' develops when a person attempts to account for his own modes of performance. It happens when this person decides that a particular mental *structure* must be (or must have been) the case inside himself. This may be a wish, an intention, a conviction, or something else that can be indicated as a 'state of mental affairs'. For example, in everyday language, inspired on vulgar interpretations of psychoanalysis, this can be expressed in statements like "I must have wished it unconsciously". The notions of 'crime passionnel' and 'irresponsibility' ('non compos mentis'), as they are used in jurisdiction, connote similar references to mental structures that express themselves in the behaviors to be explained or accounted for. The same holds for those situations in which a person agrees to be possessed by a ghost or devil. It is the internal (mental) state of affairs that is constructed here, not for some observed third person, but for oneself (qua observed person). This internal state of affairs is meant to be an explanatory ground for one's conduct, to be used when accounts seem to be required by others**«24»**.

But also in order to account to oneself for one's own existence can such an explanatory ground be constructed. This is what has been the primary aim of Descartes, and for a long time it has served as a paradigm for common sense and a groundwork for modern science. It seems expedient, therefore, to give it some attention:
  "... I saw from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it very evidently and

23. On the other hand, in the best of behaviorist traditions, Hull (1943) warns against such reification of behavior functions: "To reify a function is to give it a name and presently to consider that the name represents a thing, and finally to believe that the thing so named somehow *explains* the performance of the function." (p. 28). Then, as a 'prophylactic' he proposes "to regard, from time to time, the behaving organism as a completely self-maintaining robot, constructed of materials as unlike ourselves as may be." (p. 27), since "[t]he temptation to introduce an entelechy, soul, spirit, or daemon into a robot is slight" (p. 28).

24. This is one of the basic tenets of Shotter (1984), viz. that the reference to an inner mentality as a source of explanation of one's own behavior, is au fond a social act, meant to satisfy other persons.
  In psychotherapeutic encounters one may find a large variety of this kind of statements, mostly meant to account for the patient's incapacity to do something particular. Thus a person describes his own problem in terms of:
  "*a certain impossibility inside myself*, already existing quite a time, that impedes me, to replace that which I got from my father and from my mother, to replace that with something different, so that I can say: "look, this is what I do"; and this ... perhaps might enable my acceptation of [a particular burden in the patient's life].
  (...) It is a certain impossibility which does not, by which I, well no, I am clearly not capable to have those emotions which I have with respect to it, [those emotions] of which I think that they are vented through that sadness, to have such a control of them that they do no longer bother me."

certainly followed that I was; on the other hand if I had only ceased from thinking, even if all the rest of what I had ever imagined had really existed, I should have no reason for thinking that I had existed. From that I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing; so that this 'me,' that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is. (Descartes, 1637/1973, p. 101 [AT VI, p. 32-33])**«25»**

and:

"... but it cannot be that when I see, or (for I no longer take account of the distinction**«26»**) when I think I see, that I myself who think am nought." (Descartes, 1641/1973, p. 156 (second meditation) [AT VI, p. 33])**«27»**

It is always the observation of a particular mental performance (thinking, seeing, etc.) that permits Descartes to conclude his essence to be a 'res cogitans'. And, once this thinking substance is proved, the existence of the thinker himself is saved from existential doubts.

A person's 'cogitations' are considered the accidents (appearances) of this substance (essence)**«28»**. But notice that something peculiar is the matter with the way substance and accidents hinge together. For the essence is *defined* here in terms of its performances: ("a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think"). Indeed, one may wonder what good reasons there are for distinguishing substance and accident at all**«29»**. For Descartes it was the quest for an indubitable and certain foundation of his own existence. This foundation is usually denoted with the term 'archimedean point', i.e. the foothold from which to argue and observe the world**«30»**.

It is interesting to notice that Hintikka (1962, p. 16) regards the relation of 'cogito' to 'sum' for Descartes to be "not that of a premise to a conclusion. Their relation is rather comparable with that of a *process* to its *product*. The indubitability of my own existence results from my thinking of it almost as the sound of music results from playing it."**«31»**

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25. ["... et qu'au contraire, de cela même que je pensais à douter de la vérité des autres choses, il suivait très certainement que j'étais; au lieu que, si j'eusse seulement cessé de penser, encore que tout le reste de ce que j'avais jamais imaginé eût été vrai, je n'avais aucune raison de croire que j'eusse été: je connus de là que j'étais une substance dont toute l'essence ou la nature n'est que de penser, et qui, pour être, n'a besoin d'aucun lieu, ni ne dépend d'aucune chose matérielle. En sorte que ce moi, c'est-à-dire l'âme par laquelle je suis ce que je sous, est entièrement distincte du corps, et même qu'elle est plus aisée à connaître que lui, et qu'encore qu'il ne fût point, elle ne laisserait pas d'être tout ce qu'elle est." (Descartes, 1963, p. 604)]

26. Precisely this non-differentiation, mentioned by Descartes in passing, is what Merleau-Ponty considers the crucial miscalculation of what he calls 'the philosophy of reflexion'. Cf.: "To reduce perception to the thought of perceiving, under the pretext that immanence alone is sure, is to take out an insurance against doubt whose premiums are more onerous than the loss for which it is to indemnify us: for it is to forego comprehending the effective world and move to a type of certitude that will never restore to us the "there is" of the world." (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 36)
    ["Réduire la perception à la pensée de percevoir, sous prétexte que seule l'immanence est sûre, c'est prendre une assurance contre le doute, dont les primes sont plus onéreuses que la perte dont elle doit nous dédommager: car c'est renoncer à comprendre le monde effectif et passer à un type de certitude qui ne nous rendra jamais le "il y a" du monde." (1964, p. 58-9)]

27. cf. also his sixth meditation (1641/1973, p. 190 [AT VI, p. 78]) and the second meditation (1641/1973, p. 150 [AT VI p. 25])

28. Sartre (1943, p. 122), speaking in terms of "this cartesian substance the attribute of which is thought" ("cette substance cartésienne dont l'attribut est la pensée"), calls this essence a 'substantialist illusion' ("l'illusion substantialiste de Descartes").

29. This is how William James in fact argued, when opting for a radical reduction of the thinker to the thought (cf. section 3.2).

30. See Bernstein (1983, p. 16): "It is less clear what is the Archimedean point in Descartes' philosophy - whether it is the cogito or God himself".

31. Hintikka refers here to Descartes' letter to Morin of july 13, 1638, in which the lux-lumen distinction is introduced.
    It is interesting in the present context to find that Descartes (1638, [AT II, p. 205]) describes *lux* as primary to *lumen*, the former being the source of the latter. We may, therefore, understand *lux* as comparable to the cogitative acts, the thinking process (Descartes [AT II, p. 203] speaks of 'movement or action'), and *lumen* as comparable to the resulting certainty about one's own existence.

Thus my existence is the existence of a thinking substance, and it can be inferred from its cogitative acts. But at the same time, that which is inferred (the *product* of the inference), exists *in* these cogitations and is immediately present through them**«32»**. My existence ('*sum*'), according to Hintikka, is in a sense intuitively self-evident (1962, p. 15), in that I cannot sensibly think the contrary ('I do not exist'). It is this intuitive self-evidence that does not appear to me (the thinker) as the *conclusion* of an inference, but rather as something that is undeniably given, due to the very fact of my thinking performance. Hence, my intuitively self-evident existence is the ground, or substance, of which my cogitations are the expressions (appearances).

Notice that according to Descartes it is the person himself (i.c. Descartes) who observes his own mental performances**«33»** and explains them *for himself* as appearances of his own existence, thus proving his own existence ('ergo sum'). In this way Descartes' invention, the 'res cogitans' or 'Cogito', is meant both as the object and as the subject of his argumentations. The 'I', the existence of which is sought to be proven, is alleged to be the 'I' of the same person who wants to find this proof, and therewith to receive the account of his own existence. The identification of these two I's is typical for his argumentation**«34»**. It is from the conviction that the thoughts of the observed 'I' are the thoughts of the observing 'I' as well, that the self-observing person comes to believe himself (qua observed person) to be *immediately* knowable to himself (qua observer). This 'I' as an object of argumentation is in a particular privileged way accessible to this 'I' as a subject of argumentation. The Cogito is believed to be transparent to itself**«35»**. It is this self-transparency that makes the homunculus question irrelevant to Descartes.

The Cogito, as an issue of conflict management in the realist discourse, is the form of a critical object, an abstract issue of agreement. It is agreed to be an irrefutable foundation, but one to which only its owner has free access. The Cogito is (implicitly) agreed to exist *beyond* the domain of social interactions in which it is constructed. By implication, I (that is: my Cogito) am what I am able to know best**«36»**, and even

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[It seems Hintikka is not entirely precise in his own text. For he continues: "or (to use Descartes's own metaphor) light in the sense of illumination (*lux*) results from the presence of a source of light (*lumen*)." The terms 'lux' and 'lumen' are swapped here, their difference in fact being explained at pp. 203-205 (AT), and not at p. 209, as Hintikka has it.]

32. Cf.: "The peculiarity of [the] relation [between 'cogito' and 'sum'] explains Descartes's vacillation in expressing it in that he sometimes speaks of the *Cogito* as an inference and sometimes as a realization of the intuitive self-evidence of its latter half" (Hintikka, 1962, p. 17).
     Here, 'cogito' and 'sum' are respectively meant by the former and latter half of the inference. They are the observed performance (accident) and the existence to be proven (substance). Notice the double meaning of the term 'cogito': it is used both for the existence of the cogitating substance and for the very performance of cogitation.

33. Heidegger (1961, p. II-148) emphasizes Descartes' concept of 'cogito' as a 'cogito me cogitare'.

34. "... to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks, that is to say a mind or a soul, or an understanding, or a reason..." (1641/1973, second meditation, p. 152 [AT vol. VI, p. 27])
     Cf. also Sartre's criticism of this identification (footnote 58).

35. "...that there is nothing which is easier for me to know than my mind" ((1641/1973, second meditation, p. 157, [AT VI p. 34]
     and: "... mind in its intellectual activity in some manner turns on itself, and considers some of the ideas which it possesses in itself" (1641/1973, sixth meditation, p. 186 [AT VI p. 73])
     Cf. Husserl's ideas (as mentioned by Strasser, 1985, p. 136/7) on the self-transparence of consciousness:

"... the sort of being which belongs to the mental process is such that the latter is essentially capable of being perceived in reflection." (Husserl, 1982, p. 99/§45) ["Die Seinsart des Erlebnisses ist es, in der Weise der Reflexion prinzipiell wahrnehmbar zu sein" (1922, p. 84/§45)]

36. Heidegger describes Descartes' position thus:
     "Das Bewußtsein meiner selbst kommt nicht zum Bewußtsein von den Dingen hinzu, gleichsam als ein neben dem Dingbewußtsein herfahrender Beobachter dieses Bewußtseins. Dieses Bewußtsein von den dingen und Gegenständen ist wesenhaft und in seinem Grunde zuerst Sebstbewußtsein, und nur als dieses ist Bewußtsein von Gegen-ständen möglich. Für das gekennzeichnete Vor-stellen ist das *Selbst* des Menschen wesentlich als das zum Grunde Liegende. Das Selbst is sub-iectum." (1961, p. II-155)]
["The consciousness of myself is not additional to the consciousness of the things, as if it were an observer of this consciousness who proceeds in juxtaposition to the consciousness of things. This consciousness of the things and the objects is essentially and basically first a self-consciousness, and only as such is consciousness of ob-jects possible. Man's *self* is essential for the indicated act of re-presentation, as that which underlies it. The self is sub-iectum." (my translation)]

entirely. But notice that this knowledge of mine is not different from my knowledge of the appearances of this Cogito, i.e. the cogitative acts. The distinction between abstract substance and concrete accidents does then not so much apply to the Cogito and its appearances, as to the position taken by a participant in a social encounter. The Cogito as well as its appearances are concrete for its owner, but abstract for all others. *The distinction between abstract substance and concrete accidents boils down to the distinction between the position of others and the position of myself!* This is a major conclusion we can draw from Descartes' attempt to describe his own mental objects within a realist discourse.

It is from the point of view of the other that my Cogito is an abstract form, and it is from my own point of view that it appears as concrete, i.e. perceivable to me. Descartes' vacillation between intuitive self-evidence and inference, as Hintikka put it**«37»**, can be understood as a wavering between the point of view of others (inference) and the Cogito's own point of view (intuitive self-evidence).

Critical objects exist as composites of substance and accident. The substance is here the existence of a Cogito that can be inferred from the occurrence of thinking acts within a person. The accidents consist of these thinking acts. Their occurrence is how the Cogito appears to itself, but they do not appear to the other persons with whom conversations are had**«38»**. The self-observing person who is convinced of the existence of his own Cogito, does so in the context of social disagreements or conflicts, which he attempts to manage. By agreeing that each person possesses such a cogitating nucleus, people not only accept all other things as unwarranted in principle, but they also construct each other as isolated and inaccessible to one another**«39»**.

3.2.   **The construction of 'self' in the nominalist discourse: James and Sartre**

A nominalist construction of 'self' develops when a person attempts to assign meanings to his own modes of performance, like when he wishes to control and predict his own behaviors for practical purposes. He may then decide that a particular mental *function* must be (or must have been) the case inside himself, of a kind he could have attributed also to others**«40»**. It is not an essence of his behaviors that is of his interest

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Likewise:
"... even if subsequently [the doubt's] own existence imposes itself upon me as a limit to the doubt, as a something that is not nothing, this something is of the order of acts, within which I am henceforth confined. The illusion of illusions is to think now that to tell the truth we have never been certain of anything but our own acts, that from the beginning perception has been an inspection of the mind, and that reflection is only the perception returning to itself, the conversion from the knowing of the thing to a knowing of oneself of which the thing was made, the emergence of a "binding" that was the bond itself." (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 37)
Cf. also the above quotation from Descartes, associated with footnote 25.

37. cf. footnote 32

38. It is interesting to notice, however, that Hintikka (1962, pp. 17-8) argues that the sentence "I exist" does have a bearing upon the persuasion of conversation partners. The search for consensus with others, therefore, seems to be not alien to Descartes' arguments concerning his own existence.

39. Cf.: "... la relation avec autrui devient pour [la psychologie classique] incompréhensible. En effet, qu'est-ce d'abord que le psychisme, celui d'autrui ou le mien, pour la psychologie classique? Un point sur lequel tous les psychologues de la période classique s'entendaient tacitement était le suivant: le psychisme, ou le psychique est *ce qui est donné à un seul*. Il semblait en effet qu'on pût admettre sans autre examen, sans autre discussion, que ce qui est constitutif du psychisme en moi comme en autrui, c'est ce qui est incommunicable. Ce psychique en moi je suis seul à le saisir, par exemple mes sensations, ma sensation de vert, ma sensation de rouge, vous ne les connaîtrez jamais comme je les connais, vous ne les éprouverez jamais à ma place. Il résulte de cette idée que le psychisme d'autrui m'apparaît comme radicalement inaccessible; du moins dans son existence même. Je ne puis pas atteindre les autres vies, les autres pensées, puisque par hypothèse elles ne sont ouvertes qu'à l'inspection d'un seul individu, celui qui en est le titulaire." (Merleau-Ponty, 1951, p. 19)

40. That it is in the first place a construction from the point of view of an *external* observer may be illustrated by a well known case from the history of astronomy, which I am in the first place due to Linschoten (1964). The British astronomer Maskelyne and his assistant Kinnebrook differed about the exact time measurement by means of observation of star movements (see Stigler, 1986, p. 240). Though in 1796 Maskelyne did notice a systematic difference between observational data of himself and his assistant, Maskelyne clearly did *not* construct a particular mental function that was to be attributed to his assistant. In fact, the difference was regarded as unexplainable, and eventually even as irregular! Exit Kinnebrook. Quoting Sanford (1888, p. 8), Stigler (p. 241) gives Maskelyne's own words: "I cannot persuade myself that my late assistant continued in the use of this excellent method (....) of observing, but rather

here, but rather a (practically relevant) meaning assigned to these behaviors. As a result, there is always some 'self' involved that *does* the meaning assignments as well as some 'self' that *is* the meaning assigned. For these two a variety of terms has been used, such as 'I' and 'me', 'judging Thought' and 'empirical person', 'pour-soi' and 'ego', etc. We will see that, unlike in the realist discourse, the members of these pairs of terms do not coincide.

Paradigmatic for this line of argument have been the ideas of William James (1890) on introspection. In his description of the 'stream of consciousness' James introduces the notions of 'transitive' and 'substantive' parts. These, according to James, together constitute the stream of consciousness**«41»**. The transitive parts are considered the trajectories along which our consciousness arrives at its contents. Though crucial constituents of the stream of consciousness, they are themselves not accessible to a conscious inspection that is a detached observation. Whenever one might wish to grasp them as if they were already the contents of one's consciousness, they will actually turn into such contents, becoming substantive parts and lose their transitive quality. Their transitive quality, thus, is elusive to conscious inspection**«42»**. These transitive parts are considered the interconnections between the contents of our thoughts**«43»**.

Distinguishing between the 'empirical person' and the 'judging Thought', James describes the latter as a process and the former as the object of its knowledge:

> "Personality implies the incessant presence of two elements, an objective person, known by a passing subjective Thought and recognized as continuing in time. Hereafter let us use the words ME and I *for the empirical person and the judging Thought*." (1890, p. I-371),

Of course the 'empirical person' or 'empirical me' is considered by James as an observable, like other things

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suppose he fell into some irregular and confused method of his own, as I do not see how he could have otherwise committed such gross errors".

Clearly, what *might* have been understood by Maskelyne as a mental function (and quite a regular one indeed), to be dealt with as an internal object in Kinnebrook, was obviously not recognized and constructed by him. Instead, he stuck to attributing to his assistant an 'irregular and confused method'. Twenty years later, however, the very fact of these (and other) regularities gave rise to the notion of a *'personal equation'*, introduced by the German astronomer Bessel. He did what Maskelyne omitted. Each observer's measurements could be compared with those of others and also with experimental setups (yielding respectively the observer's 'relative' and 'absolute' personal equations, as Sanford (1888) calls them). A range of factors (from astronomical to 'psychical') could experimentally be found that determined an observer's personal equation.

Sanford extensively describes Bessel's actions and considerations, of which most interesting for us is Bessel's decision to include also *his own* measurement performance and compare it with those of other astronomers. Unlike Maskelyne, he established and accepted for himself a particular personal equation, according to which he perceived and administrated measurement phenomena slightly differently from others. Thus he succeeded in constructing a mental function for himself comparable to those he constructed for others.

41. "Consciousness (..) does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it filty as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described" (1890, p. I-239)

42. "Like a bird's life, [the stream of our consciousness] seems to be made of an alternation of flights and perchings. The rhythm of language expresses this, where every thought is expressed in a sentence, and every sentence closed by a period. The resting-places are usually occupied by sensorial imaginations of some sort, whose peculiarity is that they can be held before the mind for an indefinite time, and contemplated without changing; the places of flight are filled with thoughts of relations, static or dynamic, that for the most part obtain between the matters contemplated in the periods of comparative rest.

Let us call the resting-places the 'substantive parts,' and the places of flight the 'transitive parts,' of the stream of thought. It then appears that the main end of our thinking is at all times the attainment of some other substantive part than the one from which we have just been dislodged. And we may say that the main use of the transitive parts is to lead us from one substantive conclusion to another.

Now it is very difficult, introspectively, to see the transitive parts for what they really are. If they are but flights to a conclusion, stopping them to look at them before the conclusion is reached is really annihilating them. Whilst if we wait till the conclusion *be* reached, it so exceeds them in vigor and stability that it quite eclipses and swallows them up in its glare. Let anyone try to cut a thought across in the middle and get a look at its section, and he will see how difficult the introspective observation of the transitive tracts is. The rush of the thought is so headlong that it almost always brings us up at the conclusion before we can arrest it. Or if our purpose is nimble enough and we do arrest it, it ceases forthwith to be itself. (...) The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks." (James, 1890, pp. I-243/4)

See also footnote 18.

43. "The transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the thought than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood. It is a part of the consciousness as much as the joint is a part of the bamboo." (James, 1890, p. I-240)

in the world, but it also exists as "a man's inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions" (1890, p. I-296). The 'empirical person' is an object of consciousness, whereas the 'judging Thought'**«44»** is precisely not that. Anticipating Sartre, who also denied the positive existence of consciousness as a transcendental entity, James writes:

> "The only pathway that I can discover for bringing in a more transcendental thinker would be to *deny* that we have any direct knowledge of the thought as such. The latter's existence would then be reduced to a postulate, an assertion that there *must be* a *knower* correlative to all this *known*" (1890, p. I-401)

But, as we will see, unlike Sartre, James takes the existence of this knower as equivalent to the existence of the thought:

> "*If the passing thought be the directly verifiable existent which no school has hitherto doubted it to be, then that thought is itself the thinker*, and psychology need not look beyond." (1890, p. I-401)

Cartesian though this may look at first sight**«45»**, it differs from Descartes' position in that James does *not* require an observer-observed relation between thought and thinker**«46»**. Indeed, the very observer is missing; there is no essence or 'ground' inside the person that serves as a subject. Instead, James (p. I-304) even playfully suggests the term 'sciousness', emphasizing that it is not so much a self-awareness that is involved in our stream of consciousness, as a more primary relatedness to the objects of our thoughts. Thus, the thought, qua process, differs from its object, and whenever the thinker himself is taken as the object of his own thoughts, it is not the thought itself, qua process, that is this object**«47»**. Indeed, one would be inclined to understand this as a necessity, though James does not formulate it expressly.

This entails that any form of self-reflection creates a distance between the thinker and himself, one that was not present in 'sciousness'. Thus, the 'judging Thought', which is in fact a passing 'sciousness' that is not concerned with itself, can be understood as a transitive part of the stream of consciousness, viz. the one that is presently actual. On the other hand, the 'empirical person' is to be understood as a substantive part.

Though the position of Sartre, like that of James, cannot be qualified as nominalist with respect to the status of universals - as is the traditional meaning of the term -, he may be called a nominalist in our present, derived, sense with respect to his ideas on consciousness. According to Sartre, consciousness is beyond our capacities to objectify. In opposition to Descartes, Sartre maintains that the 'I think', which is the subject of the consciousness, is never able to found its own presence**«48»**. In this respect Sartre is also critical of Husserl's concept of a 'transcendental ego' that in fact is meant to offer such a foundation of consciousness**«49»**. Instead, Sartre conceives consciousness as a 'pour-soi', which is a hole in the world of the things, which exist 'en-soi'. It is this pour-soi that acts as a source of meaning assignments to the world. The assigned meanings are laid over the en-soi world like a net.

On the other hand, in opposition to the pour-soi, Sartre considers the 'ego' as a constructed entity that is

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44. A comparable terminology is used by G.H. Mead, in his definition of the 'I' and the 'me' (1962, p. 175)

45. cf. section 3.1 on the Cogito as coincidence of thinker (observer) and observed thoughts

46. cf.: "To say that one can identify one's own psychological states places an arduous burden on theoretical speculation. Such a conclusion would entail a concept of mind in which a psychological process could essentially ascertain its own states. Rather than a single stream of consciousness, one would be forced into a mental dualism in which one level of process acted as a sensing and recording device and a second process furnished the stuff to be sensed and recorded. Such a dualism is sufficiently awkward that one is led to conclude that the assumption of internal perception is a reconstructed form of the subject-object dichotomy represented in the traditional metaphor of external perception. In this case the object is displaced inward, and one is left with the image of an inward eye in the process of perceiving itself." (Gergen, 1984, p. 66)

47. Cf.: "... this thought, that is, the I, is in itself a process that is principally unacknowledgeable for the subject. As soon as it is known, it becomes part of the 'me', the empirical self" (Jansz, 1991, p. 85)

48. Sartre, 1943, p. 122

49. The transcendental ego, being the subject of consciousness, was considered as consisting of pure acts. It was meant by Husserl as an attempt to radically rethink Descartes' Cogito, but also, in a sense, to continue his programme.

contemporaneous**«50»** to the en-soi entities of the world, and of a comparable status. As such it is comparable to James' notion of 'me'. But more emphatically than James, Sartre maintains that the 'ego' is a construct**«51»**, made by consciousness when reflecting upon itself and searching for its own unity. For example (and: *par excellence*), when one discovers oneself observed by another person, Sartre maintains**«52»**, one is reduced to an ego that exists in the 'regard' of the observer. As such, a person's ego, as a locus of states, actions, and qualities**«53»**, is also an issue of the 'science called psychology'**«54»**, but does not coincide with the person's consciousness and his lived experiences. It never will, and therefore, what we call the 'ego' and its states, actions and qualities, is never the essence of our consciousness, set aside the essence of ourselves. There is no such essence, according to Sartre, and hence there is no mental structure that serves as the source of our expressions.

If we nevertheless want to speak about such an essence, it must be as a 'nothingness'. It is in this respect that we must call Sartre a nominalist, for whatever we affirmatively say about consciousness, it will be a name, a model, a construct or whatever, but not the description of an essence. Consciousness is the source of meaning assignments, but cannot itself be qualified in positive terms.

In the nominalist discourse a split is made not between what is accessible to the 'owner' of the Cogito and what is accessible to the others, but rather between 'I' and 'Me', the untouchable (transitive) process versus the observable constructed (substantive) subject matter. Here the accessibility of the behaviors of the observed person is almost equal to all who are interested in the assignment of a meaning to them, so that a 'me' or 'ego' is constructed as a thing about which disagreements are possible *in public*. Thus, a person may find himself in disagreement with others about 'who he is'. This public disagreement about his 'ego' or 'me' would be impossible in a realist discourse, where the other persons would not be granted a bit of authority in matters of one's own Cogito**«55»**. In the nominalist discourse these disagreements are possible, and a person might even construct his own personal uniqueness as a divergence from how he is defined by others**«56»**. On the other hand, the inaccessibility of this person's 'I'**«57»** is also equal for all: *it is neither a symbol nor a meaning, and it cannot be constructed as such. It is in fact beyond the domain of the nominalist discourse.*

As I mentioned above in section 2.2, there is in the nominalist discourse a doubleness of meaning assignment. The observer may not only find himself labeling his own behaviors in terms of internal objects (i.c. mental functions), but he may also come to regard himself as the one who does the meaning assignments to his environment. This is the double assignment inherent to the nominalist discourse, now applied by an observer to himself.

Unlike in the realist discourse, as exemplified by Descartes' Cogito, in the nominalist discourse these two

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50. Sartre, 1966, p. 86.

51. Cf.: "Allerdings sagt Nietzsche: "Der Begriff des "Ich" als Subjekt ist eine Erfindung der "Logik"."" (Heidegger, 1961, p. II-185) ["However, Nietzsche says: "The understanding of "Ego" as subject is an invention of "logic"."" (my translation)]

52. 1943, p. 307

53. Sartre, 1966, p. 54

54. ibid.

55. In psychotherapeutic sessions this is the phenomenon of the therapist who claims some certainty about the patient's mental structure (e.g. a particular desire), and who requires from the patient to admit and recognize the *real existence* of this mental object. Within a nominalist discourse, on the other hand, this type of power display would not be necessary; the therapist would only speak about the patient's performances in functional terms, without claiming such real existence, as in: 'it seems as if you are not willing to look for a different job'.

56. Furthermore, the meanings thus constructed might become reified in terms of the 'deeper motives' of the person, or in terms of a 'true self' etc.

57. or 'judging Thought' (James), 'pour-soi' (Sartre)

assignment roles do not coincide, but instead remain disjoint**«58»**: while the observer is observing himself in dealing with the world, he assigns to his performance a particular meaning, viz. that his performance, in turn, is a meaning assignment to the world. Compared to the situation of observer (e.g. clinician) and observed (e.g. a patient diagnostically described as paranoid), the self-observer is himself in a double role (e.g. both clinician and patient). Qua self-observer he labels his own performances as a particular way of dealing with his environment (cf.: paranoid), and qua self-observed person he is seen to assign his own meanings to this environment**«59»** (e.g.: 'these people all want to poison me'). The 'double hermeneutics' of observer and observed person go together here, *but they do not merge!* The latter role of observed person who assigns a meaning to his environment can only come into existence due to the former role of (self-)observer! This is to say that a person's assignment of a meaning to his environment exists as an act *only* to the extent that this person is able to observe himself assigning this meaning. If he does not observe himself in doing so, any meaning assigned by him to his environment can be sensibly conceived only in terms of a construct made by another person.

On the other hand, if he does observe himself in assigning a meaning to his environment, he in fact takes an external point of view in regard of himself. What he (as observer) then does is to consider particular modes of functioning of his own (as observed person), and (as observer) to regard these as ways in which he (qua observed person) deals with his environment. Thus, the meaning that he assigns (qua observer) to his modes of functioning is that these are meaning assignments**«60»** by himself (qua observed person) to his environment. For example, he may find himself thinking and dreaming about a particular person, and conclude that he may be in love with this person (and accordingly he may take responsibility for this state of affairs).

The self-observing person who constructs his own assignments of meanings to his own behaviors, does so in the context of social conflicts and attempts to manage them. By taking his behaviors as publicly agreed upon, he may use the meanings he assigns to them as legitimations of his own valuations of the world. Indeed, his individual goals and purposes may be the names and qualifications he assigns to his own behaviors. As such, he may disagree with others with respect to the assigned meanings, such as his own opinion and course of actions in respect of the (agreed) facts, but not with respect to these facts. They serve as the agreed substance between critical observers.

To the nominalist it is (at least in the last resort) not so much of interest what consciousness is, or what the 'I' is, as how to act, in respect of both oneself and others. Thus, according to Sartre it is of particular importance not to use one's ego as an explanatory alibi. It is when one uses his ego in order to account for his deeds**«61»**, that is, when one avoids his absolute responsibility for his deeds, that one commits the fallacy of 'mauvaise foi'. This fallacy in fact is a particular case of a switch from a nominalist to a realist discourse. Sartre's concept of 'mauvaise foi' is a case of a meaning taken for an essence. Instead of taking the ego as an explanatory ground, Sartre wishes to underscore man's absolute freedom and responsibility.

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58. Precisely the unrecognized presence of this doubleness in the cartesian Cogito is considered by Sartre as a contamination of it (1966, p. 73).

59. This is achieved by what Sartre calls our prereflexive cogito (Sartre, 1943, pp. 19-20).

60. The term 'meaning assignment', of course, does not need to make part of the observer's vocabulary.

61. as in: "it is all due to my character, which I can't help". A version of it that looks more sophisticated is: "it is not compatible with my professional identity to refer you to dr X"

4   Concluding remarks

The empathic understanding of a person is often considered possible only by drawing analogies between my own behaviors and those of the other person. If bursting into tears is an expression of sorrow in my case, then it will be in his. This is a realist understanding of empathy, one that often can be found among psychotherapists, who believe that, however subtle their empathic understanding may be, it 'must be' a matter of drawing inferences from the observed behaviors of the patient**«62»**.

Notice that the Cogito's self-transparency of the realist discourse is in the first place a *postulated* one. From the fact that we are able to inspect our thoughts and emotions, Descartes concludes that the contents of our mind coincide with the mind that reflects on it. This implies that the Cogito's self-transparency is complete, at least in principle. This has been contested by William James, in his distinction of 'substantive' and 'transitive' parts of a person's so called 'stream of consciousness'. Hence, we may wonder that in case our Cogito's self-access were not complete, then it might also be that in some respects it is *better accessible to others than to its owner*. If that is true, then there is no more reason to regard empathy as a matter of inference by analogy.

On the other hand, the two roles of observer and observed (as in Sartre's opposition between consciousness (which is a pour-soi) and the ego (which is an en-soi), or likewise as in James' duality of 'I' and 'me') are not identified to one another, as did cartesian realism in postulating the self-transparency of the Cogito. Rather, in the nominalist discourse, as for example presented by James or by Sartre, a *complementary* relation is maintained between the knowing or observing 'I' (or 'pour-soi') and the known/observed 'me' (or 'ego'). The term 'complementarity'**«63»** is a technical one and denotes the impossibility to describe a process of observations (cf. the 'I') in terms of the objects that can be perceived through it (cf. the 'me').

The two discourses, therefore, diverge with respect to the assumed accessibility of internal objects to third and first persons.

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62. e.g.: "... Allport (1937) subscribed to a complete divorcement between intuitive processes and inferential processes, although he pointed out that in any given act of understanding both processes are involved. He also asserted that it is virtually impossible to distinguish their products. We go further and assert that the process called intuition by Allport and other writers is actually an inferential process in which the cues are inaccessible to self-examination." (Sarbin, Taft & Bailey, 1960, p. 181)

63. Though the term 'complementarity' can be found in James (e.g. 1890, p. I-206), he uses it only in respect of dissociative mental states of (hypnotized and other) persons. This is not what later came to be meant by 'complementarity', especially since the works of Niels Bohr. In any case, James' treatment of the relation between transitive and substantive parts is clearly a case of complementarity, since the transitive parts cannot be perceived but by freezing them into substantive parts. Their 'transitivity' escapes.

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Arno Goudsmit (1955) works as a psychotherapist in private practice. He is also an assistant professor at the University of Maastricht, Medical Dept., School of General Practice. He wrote a (cum laude) PhD thesis on some of the theoretical foundations of psychotherapy. He is the author of a variety of papers on epistemological issues in psychotherapy and on self-organizing systems and paradoxes. He is also the editor of *Self-organization in psychotherapy. Demarcations of a new perspective* (Heidelberg, New York: Springer Verlag, 1989) and he is currently editing *Thirdness. Sense as a complex phenomenon.*