



My proposal in this essay, then, is to show how distinctions among types of ownership have a special relevance to the

must somehow connect representations of an other inside one's own mind with an actual other outside the mind, which makes

assignments are all taking place "in" my own mind. Thus, we discover an unexpected tension between senses of "ownness": on the one hand, every mental state that presents itself in the course of conscious life is ascribed to me; on the other hand, I refer at least some of those contents to others. I may be mistaken (as a matter of fact) about these references, but my sense that some genuine attribution is possible within my mental life does not make sense on the traditional view in which all mental states are categorically my own. Thus we must look for some more fundamental source from which the differentiation of experience into yours and mine is possible *within* the compass of my mental life.

To account for this sense of otherness within my own mental life, Scheler considers an "immediate flow of experiences, *undifferentiated as between mine and thine*" (246), and a "stream flooding" over the self (247). I will call this the "common stream of experience" (CSE).<sup>4</sup> To describe the CSE, Scheler offers the experience in which a mental state is given with an indeterminate reference to oneself or the other. Ideas *in the air* (political ideas, fads) or the pervasive mood of a rock concert serve as examples. Such mental states are clearly presented, even if one has doubts about who "owns" them. One falls in with ideas or moods presented in this undifferentiated state, and is governed by them. The mental lives of children and primitive peoples provide exemplary cases of the common stream





essential personality. I focus on two general patterns of experience, which I call “discord” and “displacement.”

The basic structure of *discord* is a tension or incommensurability posed by the specific content constituting the common stream—these are tensions built into features of the shared values, thoughts, and styles of life presented in shared experience, which only present themselves under certain conditions. Discord arises in cases in which our shared experience presents an issue or poses a challenge to us and reveals its discontinuity or its inability to *settle* the matter for us. It forces us to affirm one particular dimension of shared experience over another—to prioritize—

"overshadowing" of the mental life of a child in the ethos of a family. For instance, a child faces the diffuse influences of her parents: parents may assent to entirely opposed activities, have differing temperaments and moods, express themselves in different gestures or patterns of language, and embody different styles or attitudes toward life. Much of the complex turbulence of a concrete romantic relationship is impressed upon the child, and not just the celebrated connections it provides between people. Some of these differences can be combined or reconciled, but others are confrontational or contradictory. They present alternative ways of being a person. Even life with a single parent can be complicated by



*Displacement* refers to a loneliness in which one must offer up a personal act in order to re-engage with one's environment. It is form of detachment forcing one to respond to gaps in the structure of the common stream of experience—instances in which the common stream carves out an island, as it were, and no longer carries one along in a continuous shared experience. This is not necessarily an intellectual detachment, because one's experience may be characterized by impulses or emotions. One's impulses are disconnected from the situation in a way that articulates or develops them in a new way, however.

Displacement, like discord, is often unavoidable. Even in a crowded room, in the bustle before a holiday dinner, a young child may find herself displaced: the adults move around her like satellites in indifferent orbits—they are *busy*, wrapped up in putting the turkey on the table, filling glasses, chattering; the child drifts in the space between the adults, but isn't present to them. Here the practices informing the common stream of experience have suddenly left a gap, a pocket into which the child falls with no immediate expectations, no requirements, and no desires but those she can muster on her own. Now she must speak or act in order to fill the practical space left to her, to reconnect with her environment. Of course, she cannot produce her act *ex nihilo*, but must draw on the resources available to her. Nonetheless, raising one activity to prominence—to go explore outside, to raid the dessert early—is to affirm that activity in a way only made possible from the space opened up in displacement. In displacement, one's own desires and ideas have a chance to materialize and move one to action in a new way; the source of one's acts moves from the anonymous dictation of the common

stream to something more immediately one's own. Displacement forces this new distinction between being drawn along by practical engagements and moving oneself along. Thus we discover another starting point for the substantive sense of self—that is, a self attached to specific contents by means of individual acts.

What follows from these patterns of discord and displacement? If these patterns accurately describe part of our experience in the CSE, then we have some evidence against the postulation of an essential self in accounting for individuation. If these patterns could be buttressed with additional patterns, then the process may become completely *a posteriori*. What largely underlies and motivates the process of individuation, what galvanizes the agent to action, is the experienced features of the CSE in which our lives begin. One's self is defined initially in terms of

self along the lines I have suggested? For instance, does such an account imply that selves may be impossible under certain circumstances? For the first two questions, I shall only suggest