

Cognition and Community: The Scottish Philosophical Context of the "Divided Self"¹

Gavin Miller

University of Edinburgh

This article aims to place the work of R.D. Laing into the context of Scottish history of ideas. It is possible to clarify and strengthen Laing's arguments by situating them alongside the work of Scottish philosophers such as David Hume, J. B. Baillie and John Macmurray. In particular, it can be shown that Laing is not philosophically naïve. Philosophy – and this is readily apparent in Hume's account of human nature – tends to say that we are indeed divided selves. The work of Baillie and Macmurray helps to defend Laing from the charge that the "divided self" is, in truth, the logically inevitable account of human being. The study of Laing's Scottish precursors also has a further consequence. The side of Laing that values social relations emerges in greater clarity, and in greater consonance with his sympathy for the marginalised and the alienated.

Philosophy and Ontological Insecurity

Ontological insecurity is a particularly important term of art in Laing's work. It pertains to the "unreal," inauthentic individual, whose life is without spontaneous expression:

The "unreal man" learnt to cry when he was amused, and to smile when he was sad. He frowned his approval, and applauded his displeasure. "All that you can see is not me," he says to himself. But only in and through all that we do see can he be anyone (in reality). If these actions are not his real self, he is unreal; wholly symbolical and imaginary; a purely virtual, potential, imaginary person, a "mythical" man, nothing "really." (Laing, *Divided Self* 37)

To the ontologically insecure individual, for whom life is an empty performance, day-to-day existence seems futile. Laing glosses in the following manner this peculiar affliction:

The individual in the ordinary circumstances of living may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question . . . He may feel more insubstantial than substantial, and unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is genuine, good, valuable. And he may feel his self as partially divorced from his body. (*Divided Self* 42)

Ontological insecurity is therefore primarily a term for the affective life of a certain kind of individual. One can be ontologically insecure without holding an explicit opinion on such issues as the status of universals, or the reality of mind and matter. Nonetheless, there is also a strongly cognitive connotation to the term; one may

indeed be ontologically insecure because of a consciously held ontology. This is particularly evident in the relation between ontological insecurity and a dualism of psyche and soma: "ontologically insecure person[s] . . . seem . . . to have come to experience themselves as primarily split into a mind and a body. Usually they feel most closely identified with the 'mind'" (Laing, *Divided Self* 65). The philosophising mind may therefore be regarded as an instance of the impoverished inner self of the ontologically insecure individual: "The body is felt as the core of a *false self*, which a detached, disembodied, 'inner,' 'true' self looks on at with tenderness, amusement, or hatred as the case may be" (Laing, *Divided Self* 69).

The dualism of the philosophical self is well exemplified by the philosophy of David Hume (who is, of course, also Scottish). In Hume's philosophy, the ontology of mind and body plays a particular epistemological role, and – in order to clarify this function – it is firstly necessary to follow the philosophical history which leads to his conclusions. Philosophers, as lovers of wisdom, would seem advised to consummate this relationship by thinking hard and thoroughly. They therefore typically discipline themselves to obey the following principle advanced by Aristotle:

he whose subject is being *qua* being must be able to state the most certain principles of all things. This is the philosopher, and the most certain principle of all is that regarding which it is impossible to be mistaken . . . Which principle this is, we proceed to say. It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect. (*Metaphysics* 1005b)

The principle of non-contradiction is so powerful because it is a condition of all intelligible theorising. Anyone who attempts to deny it, "can neither speak nor say anything intelligible; for he says at the same time both 'yes' and 'no.' And if he makes no judgement but thinks and does not think, indifferently, what difference will there be between him and the plants?" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1008b).

The same premise re-appears later in philosophical history when Descartes asserts that, in all the seemingly various kinds of thinking, we essentially follow the Euclidean model in which a set of implications are deduced from self-evident axioms:

Those long chains of reasoning . . . of which geometricians make use in order to arrive at the most difficult demonstrations, had caused me to imagine that . . . provided only that we abstain from receiving anything as true which is not so, and always retain the order which is necessary in order to deduce the one conclusion from the other, there can be nothing so remote that we cannot reach to it, nor so recondite that we cannot discover it. (*Discourse* 92)

For Descartes, we find epistemic security by that same confident procedure with which, for example, we infer, from our knowledge of axioms concerning parallel

lines, that the sum of the angles of a triangle cannot on pain of self-contradiction be other than 180 degrees.

Descartes also employs an ontological vocabulary which, too, is formed by the principle of non-contradiction. De Wulf elucidates this traditional terminology for the distinction between primary and secondary being: "The substance or substantial being is the being that exists without needing any other being in which to inhere for its existence, and which serves as subject or support for other realities. Man, horse, house, are substances; whereas the virtue of the virtuous man, the colour of the horse, the size of the house are accidents" (§62). A substance is an independent being, a thing that may, without contradiction, be conceived as existing without relation to any other thing. On the other hand, an accident is a dependent being, a thing that may be conceived as existing only in relation to some other thing.

The language of substance and accident therefore appears when Descartes examines the ontological status of his own being according to the principle of non-contradiction. He has, he believes, legitimate doubt in those cases where he may conceive of his existence without some other existent:

examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be; but yet that I could not for all that conceive that I was not. On the contrary, I saw from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it very evidently and 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. (Descartes, *Discourse* 101)

Descartes asks if one may conceive that there are no other people, or other things, or that one does not have a body, and that one yet exists. His answer is affirmative: one is a substance independent of other people, or things, or a body. However, if, by doubting that one doubts, one attempts to conceive of the absence of thought, then one finds that this is nonsensical: a thing cannot be both A and not-A at the same time in the same respect; the "I," therefore, cannot both be doubting and not-doubting at the same time. The property of a substance without which it cannot exist is its essence, and thus one is a substance the essence of which is thought.

We have here a significant intimation of the schizoid position in philosophy. The first step in Descartes' thoughts is to uncover the true self. He finds that he is a "mind" of imaginary (but logically well-formed) symbolisations, which is disengaged from the illusory goings-on of the body, space, and community. Fortunately for Descartes'

peace-of-mind, he manages to escape this uncomfortable position by a remarkable sleight-of-hand. He purports to show that his apparently conceivable doubts are, in fact, nonsense. As is well known, the crucial step in this demonstration is the ontological argument:

on reverting to the examination of the idea which I had of a Perfect Being, I found that in this case existence was implied in it in the same manner in which the equality of its three angles to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle; or in the idea of a sphere, that all the points on its surface are equidistant from its centre, or even more evidently still.

(Descartes, *Discourse* 104)

The concept of the absolutely Perfect Being includes existence; otherwise that Being would be less than perfect. The statement "the Perfect Being does not exist" is consequently self-contradictory; therefore, God exists. The benevolence of the Perfect Being assures Descartes that his initial doubts about other existents were unfounded:

it is impossible that He should ever deceive me; for in all fraud and deception some imperfection is to be found; and although it may appear that the power of deception is a mark of subtlety or power, yet the desire to deceive without doubt testifies to malice or feebleness, and accordingly cannot be found in God.

(*Meditations* 172)

It is unnecessary, in the present context, to subject the ontological argument to an extensive critique. It is sufficient to note that the same sort of trick can be performed by making-up words for necessarily-existing dragons, unicorns, and chimeras. That a necessarily-existing thing should not exist is certainly unintelligible, but this implies only the intelligibility – and not the truth – of the contrary proposition, "a necessarily-existing being exists."

A more important point is that Descartes' logical method is an inadequate account of everyday knowledge. Hume recognises that statements about the world are not deductive. To postulate, for example, the existence of a cause without its effect is not to violate the principle of non-contradiction; in ontological terms, cause and effect are substantial existents:

as all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and as the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct, 'twill be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment, and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle. The separation, therefore, of the idea of a cause from that of a beginning of existence, is plainly possible for the imagination; and consequently the actual separation of these objects is so far possible, that it implies no contradiction nor absurdity. (Hume 79-80)

Hume, though, is untroubled by the inability of philosophical reasoning to reconstruct everyday belief in causality; he assumes that such apparent knowledge is mere

psychological certitude. In this, however unwittingly, Hume elaborates Descartes' account of error. The latter refers to habituation to account for his difficulties in believing only the dictates of pure reason: "ancient and commonly held opinions still revert frequently to my mind, long and familiar custom having given them the right to occupy my mind against my inclination and rendered them almost master of my belief" (Descartes, *Meditations* 148). Hume develops this account of error by arguing that what is apparently knowledge of the world is no more than such insistent opinion: "Reason can never satisfy us that the existence of any one object does ever imply that of another; so that when we pass from the impression of one to the idea or belief of another, we are not determin'd by reason, but by custom or a principle of association" (97). An expectation of a certain effect upon a cause is therefore merely an opinion which "may be most accurately defin'd, A lively idea related to or associated with a present impression" (Hume 96). Indeed, phenomenological vivacity is also essential to Hume's account of belief in a world beyond thought. This, he claims, is grounded in the distinction between impressions – "those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence" – and ideas – "the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning" (Hume 1). The distinction between the world of things and the world of subjective experience is merely this variation in vivacity: "When I shut my eyes and think of my chamber, the ideas I form are exact representations of the impressions I felt" (Hume 3).

Because of this disjunction between what is taken as rational belief in everyday existence, and what is rational belief when measured against the canon of pure reason, the consistent application of the principle of non-contradiction leads to an essentially schizoid conception of the self. A person is partly a rational ego which believes only what is given by pure logic. The mind, however, is incessantly badgered by sensory thoughts. Some of these are merely muttered *sotto voce* – such as "here is a unicorn," or "carpets can fly." Others, though, are bellowed at the mind: "HERE IS MY ROOM!" "FIRE HEATS WATER!" The latter are opinions, and are the source of our pretensions to rational knowledge about the world. Belief in the reality of such logically separable existents as other things, other people, and cause and effect, is understood as a kind of akrasia by which the soul of the philosopher succumbs to the force of habituated opinion.

In the Cartesian-Humean model of subjectivity, the real self is therefore a logically consistent ego that has lost hold of the reins which guide the body. This account of selfhood is a paradigm of the ontologically insecure self described by Laing. The philosopher – guided, as she must seemingly be, by the principle of non-contradiction – is forced to limit her ego to a realm of phenomenologically-attenuated imaginary symbolisations. Only in this impoverished mode of being can she exist in rational autonomy. Similarly, in Laing's description, "the unembodied self, as onlooker at all

the body does, engages in nothing directly. Its functions come to be observation, control, and criticism *vis-a-vis* what the body is experiencing and doing, and those operations which are usually spoken of as purely 'mental'" (*Divided Self* 69). The philosopher therefore pays for epistemological security with existence in a world of ghost and phantoms distinct from the vivid realm of illusory-people and seeming-things impressed upon the soul by the body. This is exactly the position of Laing's ontologically insecure, "schizoid" individual:

there is an attempt to create relationships to persons and things within the individual without recourse to the outer world of persons and things at all. The individual is developing a microcosmos within himself; but, of course, this autistic, private, intra-individual "world" is not a feasible substitute for the only world there really is, the shared world. (*Divided Self* 74–75)

The futility of the schizoid position is, perhaps surprisingly, also intermittently recognised in the philosophical tradition. Even Hume concludes that, however philosophically secure he knows his conclusions to be, they are existentially inadequate:

nature herself . . . cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium . . . I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther. (269)

The Insufficiency of Theory: J.B. Baillie and John Macmurray

Laing's discussion of the schizoid personality can therefore be seen to subsume Hume's account of subjectivity. The Humean self, like the schizoid, dwells in a world of imaginary conclusions and phantastic doubts. So long as action and interaction are held at bay, observes Laing, then one may indulge in the far-fetched speculations endemic amongst philosophers:

The self, as long as it is "uncommitted to the objective element," is free to dream and imagine anything. Without reference to the objective element it can be all things to itself – it has unconditioned freedom, power, creativity. But its freedom and its omnipotence are exercised in a vacuum and its creativity is only the capacity to produce phantoms. (*Divided Self* 89)

Laing's terminology of "the objective element" is openly indebted to G.W.F. Hegel's discussion of the attractions of interior life: "It can readily be understood why the schizoid individual so abhors action as characterized by Hegel. The act is 'simple, determinate, universal. . . .' But his self wishes to be complex, indeterminate, and unique . . . He must *never* be what can be said of him. He must remain always ungraspable, elusive, transcendent" (*Divided Self* 88).

The text from which Laing quotes is a revised edition of J.B. Baillie's 1910 translation of Hegel's *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Baillie was an extremely significant Scottish philosopher who, though nowadays neglected, had a great influence on his native tradition. In *Studies in Human Nature*, published in 1921, Baillie shows that he is, in a quite proper sense, an existentialist. He insists that thought is not the essence of human being: "Truth . . . is certainly not all that the mind in its varied life strives after; by itself truth does not fill the cup of life to the full. The mind feels and perceives, it acts and it adores; and for such activities, truth, in the sense just stated, is neither relevant nor satisfying" (Baillie 226). Baillie therefore argues that thinking is pathological when detached from day-to-day life: "while the procedure of thinking has its own peculiar laws and aims, as the laws of seeing are different from those of hearing, the function is fulfilled in connection with the whole scheme of the individual life, separation from which leads not to healthy development but towards disease and dissolution" (Baillie 216). The precise form of this "disease" is the division of the self between a portion that lives in the here-and-now, and a remainder which infers unbelievable conclusions. Baillie, to be sure, is unlike most philosophers because he identifies the self proper with the putatively "non-cognitive" component. Nonetheless, the end-point is the same as that later described by Laing, and earlier suffered by Hume: "the thinking agent is turned into a quasi-external spectator of his own processes, watching the revolutions of his intellect as it produces concept, hypothesis, and inference, and having neither the power nor the interest to participate in its operations" (Baillie 215).

Since, as Baillie notes, the logic of two millennia of philosophical analysis can be so readily abandoned, it may be that the "processes" involved are rather less compelling than they are supposed. This possibility may be approached – and related back to Baillie – by an examination of Aristotle's meta-philosophical speculations. He starts from the plausible assumption that the love of wisdom should produce an epistemology by which dogma and fancy may be distinguished from the genuine knowledge provided by true belief, theoretically justified. Aristotle notes, however, the objection that such a putative theory of knowledge could only be properly known by use of another, prior theory, and that this prior theory would, in turn, require another and so on: "one party . . . claims that we are led back ad infinitum on the grounds that we would not understand what is posterior because of what is prior if there are no primitives" (*Posterior* 72b). An alternative to this infinite regress would be the hypothesis that the theory which guides the investigation is also that which the investigation produces: "The other party . . . argue that nothing prevents there being demonstration of everything; for it is possible for the demonstration to come about in a circle and reciprocally" (Aristotle, *Posterior* 72b). But this, to Aristotle, is quite unacceptable: "that it is impossible to demonstrate simplicity in a circle is clear, if demonstration must depend on what is prior and more familiar; for it is impossible for

the same things at the same time to be prior and posterior to the same things" (Aristotle, *Posterior* 72b). The supposed criterion of knowledge therefore creates a dilemma: the theory of knowledge cannot be validated by the employment of another theory for this leads to an infinite regress of distinct criteria; nor, however, can the criterion be justified by itself, for this would be circular.

If the epistemological enterprise is to escape this dilemma, then it seems to Aristotle that we must have an immediate knowledge of the theory of knowing: "if it is necessary to understand the things which are prior and on which the demonstration depends, and it comes to a stop at some time, it is necessary for these immediates to be non-demonstrable" (*Posterior* 72b). This leads to the metaphysical quest for first principles: there is supposed a kind of knowing which imposes itself on the thinker as undeniably true, and within this kind of knowing there is known the theory of knowledge. The preferred candidate for intuitive knowledge is as we have seen the principle of non-contradiction which for both Aristotle and Descartes is so obvious as to be indisputable. As the insufficiency of this principle is discovered, however, so there develops, as in the work of Hume, a sceptical philosophy detached from the consequently downgraded interests of everyday life.

Yet the schizoid philosophy, and its attendant divided self, are far from inevitable. Foundationalism is not only existentially impoverished, it is also cognitively inadequate, for, insofar as anyone presents a convincing philosophical principle, it is by a willingness to argue. But for a consistent foundationalist, argument is unnecessary, and philosophy trivial; there is no need to philosophise if one must, in fact, already possess an intuitive cognition of the theory of knowing. This problem is recognised by Baillie in a remark on the insufficiency of a theoretical answer to the question "what is truth?": "the complete answer to the question," he tells us, "cannot be found by postulating a 'criterion' of truth. A criterion of truth must itself be a true criterion, and we are thus at once in an indefinite regress in the search for such an instrument, or we already have it in our hands all the while" (14). In other words, if philosophy is to avoid such dead-ends as infinite regress, dogmatic assertion (or, unmentioned by Baillie, logical circularity), then it must give up the primacy of theory in order to recognise that thought is necessarily subordinated to a fuller human life.

This realisation is also central to another important Scottish philosopher to whom Laing is indebted. In *The Divided Self*, John Macmurray is mentioned as a thinker who criticises the depersonalising tendencies of a "theory that seeks to transmute persons into automata or animals": "it is difficult," remarks Laing, "to explain the persistence in all our thinking of elements of what Macmurray has called the 'biological analogy'" (*Divided Self* 23). Macmurray is also a determined opponent of the ontologically insecure self of Western philosophy. In his Gifford Lectures of 1953,

he argues, like Baillie, that the schizoid position is consequent upon the assumption that knowledge is fundamentally theoretical:

The particular unreality which concerns us is the disruption of the integrity of the Self through a dualism of practical and theoretical activity. We are asked to embark upon a purely theoretical activity which isolates itself from the influence of all "practical" elements – since these must introduce bias and prejudice – in the hope of attaining a knowledge which will take precedence over the beliefs by which, in practice, we live. (Macmurray, *Agent* 77-78)

Again, like Baillie, Macmurray identifies the key problem as the assumption – held by both Descartes and Aristotle – that philosophy should produce a theory by which to secure knowledge against error: "This, it may be said, is the point of view of philosophy – that nothing is known until it has been transformed, by rational criticism, from a mere belief into a logical certainty. Knowledge, in this strict sense of the term, is the product of thought and lies at the end of a process which begins in doubt" (Macmurray, *Agent* 78).

This premise leads, as we have seen, to an epistemology plagued by an insoluble trilemma of infinite regress, logical circularity, and extra-discursive certainty. Macmurray's way out of this dead-end is to revise the assumption that we must be able to say what thinking is before we can do it. Thinking is, instead, a skill which we already possess before we attempt to theorise and articulate it: "the distinction between 'right' and 'wrong,' which is constitutive for action, is the primary standard of validity; while the distinction between 'true' and 'false' is secondary" (Macmurray, *Agent* 89). To know is therefore primarily to act rightly:

Knowingly to actualize one of a number of possibles, and in doing so to negate the others, is to characterize the act that is so performed as right and the others as wrong. Again, it is the doing of the action which so distinguishes between right and wrong, not a theoretical judgement which may or may not precede, accompany or follow the doing. (Macmurray, *Agent* 140)

Thus, if we find that our theory of knowledge can have, in principle, no effect upon what we actually believe, then we must accept the authority of our skilful coping with the world over our putative theoretical reconstruction:

Suppose that I am presented with a triumphant logical demonstration. I accept its premises; I can find no flaw in the argument. The conclusion follows with logical necessity and is therefore logically certain. But at the same time I find the conclusion impossible to believe. What then? I can only reject it *in toto*, even if I can find no theoretical grounds for doing so. (Macmurray, *Agent* 78)

This, of course, differs greatly from the traditional schizoid metaphysical position in which even though "I refuse to act in conformity with my theory . . . and so provide

evidence that I do not really believe it" (Macmurray, *Persons* 130), I "can always lay the blame upon the body and its practical demands"(Macmurray, *Persons* 131).

The work of Baillie and Macmurray therefore explains why Laing is so indifferent to the philosophical claim that we are indeed selves divided into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Within Laing's native philosophical context, a great deal of work had already been done to discredit this model of the human subject. It is no mere bravado, then, for Laing to dismiss implicitly the seemingly most developed conception of human being as, in fact, mere "ontological insecurity."

Macmurray, Laing, and Community

The ground against which Laing figures includes not merely a critique of Cartesian subjectivity, but also an insistence that the self is essentially social. This motif finds an epistemological form in Macmurray's further consideration of the know-how upon which theoretical knowledge is based. Though indeed, one may be skillful in a purely instrumental sense, this, for Macmurray, is not the primary ability of a human being: "the skills a child acquires, and the form in which he acquires them, fit him to take his place as a member of a personal community, and not to fend for himself in natural surroundings" (*Persons* 58-59). The child's true environment is therefore the social world:

In the human infant – and this is the heart of the matter – the impulse to communication is his sole adaptation to the world into which he is born. Implicit and unconscious it may be, yet it is sufficient to constitute the mother-child relation as the basic form of human existence, as a personal mutuality, as a "You and I" with a common life . . . Thus, human experience is, in principle, shared experience; human life, even in its most individual elements, is a common life; and human behaviour carries always, in its inherent structure, a reference to the personal Other. (Macmurray, *Persons* 60-61)

To be cognitively skilled is therefore fundamentally to have been socialised into the practices of a group:

the child's development has a continuous reference to the distinction between "right" and "wrong." He learns to await the right time for the satisfaction of his desires; that some activities are permitted and others suppressed; that some things may be played with and others not. He learns, in general to submit his impulses to an order imposed by another will than his; and to subordinate his own desires to those of another person. He learns, in a word, to submit to reason. (Macmurray, *Persons* 59)

Macmurray therefore finds a profound philosophical significance in the primary social relationship between child and carer: "we may say that the first knowledge is the recognition of the Other as the person or agent in whom we live and move and have

our being" (*Persons* 77). One might summarise his position in the following way: we must know-how before we can know-that; but prior even to knowing-how, is simply knowing, or acknowledging, another.

Metaphysics, of course, takes knowing-that as the primary form of knowledge. Macmurray argues that this dogma is so beguiling precisely because it entails the obliteration of recognitive knowing. The primacy of the theoretical allows the philosopher to alienate himself from his existence as one person among many:

our fear of the Other generates the desire to escape from the demands of the Other upon us, by withdrawing from action into another life, the life of the mind, in which we can exist as thinkers, and realize our freedom in reflection. If this could be, then we should be pure minds, and spectators of a world of activity in which our actions would be determined for us by laws not of our making. In the realm of thought we should be free, but our bodily life would be determined by the laws of that world of necessity from which we have escaped. The world of action would become an *external* world, a world of phenomena; that is to say, a *show* – a dramatic spectacle which unrolls itself upon the stage for us to watch, to follow and to enjoy. (Macmurray, *Persons* 130-31)

The philosopher consequently feels that she is answerable only for the thoughts of her logical ego, and not for the beliefs and practices of her putatively mechanical body: "we have uncovered the motive of dualist thinking. It is the desire to know the truth without having to live by the truth. It is the secret wish to escape from moral commitment, from responsibility" (Macmurray, *Persons* 131).

Macmurray regards this attempt to evade one's original and primary social existence as essentially due to a crisis of faith which may occur during ontogeny. The divided self is, he argues, a consequence of the child's failure to trust his or her carer (designated by Macmurray as "the mother"):

If a child is to grow up, he must learn, stage by stage, to do for himself what has up to that time been done by the mother. But at all crucial points, at least, the decision rests with the mother, and therefore it must take the form of a deliberate refusal on her part to continue to show the child those expressions of her care for him that he expects. This refusal is, of course, itself an expression of the mother's care for him. But the child's stock of knowledge is too exiguous, the span of his anticipation too short, for him to understand this. (*Persons* 88-89)

There is much – such as toilet training and times-tables – that a child must suffer in order to become an adult. Such things undoubtedly seem arduous at the time but, in retrospect, are recognised (by most of us) as a vital contribution to one's autonomy. A child has trust, or faith precisely because despite its inability to see the value of these

formative experiences at the time, it nonetheless submits to them in order to maintain a relationship with a loved other. When this submission is willing and whole-hearted, then, for Macmurray, the development is normal. When, however, it is merely a prudent conformity, then, he argues, a pathologically divided self will be created:

He will become a "good" boy, and by his "goodness" he will create for himself a secret life of phantasy where his own wishes are granted. And this life of the imagination in an imaginary world will be for him his *real* life in the *real* world – the world of ideas. His life in the actual world will remain unreal – a necessity which he will make as habitual and automatic as possible.

(Macmurray, *Persons* 103)

Here, Macmurray thinks like a theologian. The parental carer is analogous to that all-loving God who, in his infinite wisdom, permits what, to us, seems to be suffering. Indeed, the torments inflicted lovingly on a child by her parents must seem as baffling to that child as God's command to Abraham that he offer Isaac as a sacrifice. This is why Macmurray asserts that "the child can only be rescued from his despair by the grace of the mother; by a revelation of her continued love and care which convinces him that his fears are groundless" (*Persons* 90). For those of us who are not theologians, Macmurray merely seems naive. It is indeed vital that a child should have trust in adults; it is far from inevitable, however, that his or her elders should not abuse that trust. The young are vulnerable precisely because they cannot easily distinguish between straightforward abuse and an experience which, although painful, is nonetheless a condition of growth and autonomy. Laing, unlike Macmurray, is perfectly aware of this possibility, and this is why he cannot simply disapprove of the schizoid position. It may, like many so-called psychopathologies, be an adaptive response to a social environment that is far from loving. This is apparent in Laing's consideration of "David" a young man who has grown up in an abusive family, and who has developed into "an ambulatory schizophrenic" (*Wisdom* 143):

In his teens he lives with his father. Father's girlfriend – physically naked – father and girlfriend make love with him around. Father sometimes loses his temper with him, hits him: he feels increasingly abject, cowardly, frightened. He decides to "agree" with everything. He becomes compliant, dishonest, insincere, flatters, internally hates, externally fawns. (Laing, *Wisdom* 145)

David, who is being treated by his father as if he were an unfeeling thing, can regain a sense of agency by cultivating his own Cartesian split:

His body: this place of rage, terror, desire and despair. This place of life, which is too harrowing and too fraught with too many conflicts and contradictions that entangle him, that he cannot resolve or transcend. What does he do? He withdraws from his body. He dissociates himself from it. He refuses to *be* it, live it, inhabit it, permeate it with himself. (Laing, *Wisdom* 147-48)

With this hermeneutic sympathy, intended to recognise the agency of the so-called "patient," Laing intensifies the personalist philosophy of his intellectual context.

Macmurray, however, when he turns to "mental illness," lapses into a view of "madness" as existing beyond the frontier of the I-thou relationship:

Let us suppose that a teacher of psychology is visited by a pupil who wishes to consult him about the progress of his work . . . As [the interview] proceeds, however, it becomes evident that something is wrong with the pupil. He is in an abnormal state of mind, and the psychologist recognises clear symptoms of hysteria. At once the attitude of the teacher changes. He becomes a professional psychologist, observing and dealing with a classifiable case of mental disorder. From his side the relation has changed from a personal to an impersonal one; he adopts an *objective* attitude, and the pupil takes on the character of an object to be studied, with the purpose of determining the causation of his behaviour.

(Macmurray, *Persons* 29)

Whereas Laing would endeavour to hear the voice of a comprehensible intention, for Macmurray, the mentally "ill" may only be explained in terms of psychological causality:

the objective attitude of the psychologist arises from, and is indeed made necessary by, the abnormal condition of the pupil. For the abnormality consists in his inability to enter into normal personal relations with others. This makes the personal attitude impossible in practice. More specifically, the abnormality consists in a loss of freedom – in a partial inability to act. The behaviour of the neurotic is compulsive . . . The motives of his behaviour are no longer under intentional control, and function as "causes" which determine his activity by themselves. This, at least, is the assumption underlying the change of attitude, the assumption that human behaviour is abnormal or irrational when it can only be understood as the effect of a cause, and not by reference to the intention of an agent. (*Persons* 36)

Macmurray again succumbs to an unfortunate residue of theological thinking. Those who, lacking a revelation of the carer's continued love, choose to remain divided selves are exiled from Macmurray's secularised soteriological community. Because they are unable to recognise the gift of the other's grace, they lack suitable inspiration, and may only be compelled by earthly causality. This unwillingness to recognise whole-heartedly the intentionality of the divided self leads Macmurray into the same trap as many medical professionals. We might think, in this context, of the psychiatrist who essentially fails to recognise homosexuals as intentionally homosexual, and who instead relegates their sexuality to a domain of psychological causality. There it may be treated by such means as the conditioning of reflexes or the liberation of repressed affect. Consider also the family doctor who, unable to understand his patient, declares that her depression is not reactive (is not, in other words, a comprehensible form of sadness), and therefore prescribes the chemical intervention appropriate to an endogenous depression. In both these cases, as with Macmurray, there is a

depersonalisation of the "patient" by an expert who is unable, or unwilling, to recognise the intentionality of the individual in question.

Laing is far from making such rash assumptions. He would regard as naïve any attempt to objectify "madness" into an effect of such causes as infantile trauma, conditioned reflexes, or chemical imbalances in the brain. Laing refuses to reduce the other to a baffling alien being who cannot be known or understood, but only explained in psychodynamic or neurological terms. The task is instead to acknowledge him or her in fullness and spontaneity:

It is just possible to have a thorough knowledge of what has been discovered about the hereditary or familial incidence of manic-depressive psychosis or schizophrenia, to have a facility in recognizing schizoid "ego distortion" and schizophrenic ego defects, plus the various "disorders" of thought, memory, perceptions, etc., to know, in fact, just about everything that can be known about the psychopathology of schizophrenia or schizophrenia as a disease without being able to understand one single schizophrenic. Such data are all ways of *not* understanding him. (Laing, *Divided Self* 33)

We should here recall Laing's famous objection to Kraepelin's observations of a disturbed young man. Laing concludes, "What about the boy's experience . . . ? He seems to be tormented and desperate. What is he 'about' in speaking and acting this way? He is objecting to being measured and tested. He wants to be heard" (*Divided Self* 31).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that, despite Laing's eventual dissent from his native context, the background of Scottish philosophy is vital to a proper appreciation of his work. Indeed, had this tradition been internationally available when Laing was alive, and had Laing been more willing to acknowledge it, he might well have been appreciated for the rigour and depth of his thought. As this article demonstrates, the work of Baillie and Macmurray defends Laing on at least two fronts. First, he can be protected from the philosophical accusation that the divided self is merely a developed consciousness of what, in truth, is the case for us all. Second, Laing's context brings out the importance of intersubjective recognition for his work, and indicates a possible reconciliation of this aspect with his refusal to invalidate the experience of the schizoid self. Thus, if we approach Laing in the fashion he would advise – that is to say, with a spirit of hermeneutic charity – then we shall be more likely to find not the ravings of a near madman, but the conclusions of a reasoned inquiry.

Endnotes

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