



Unlocking the Self in Self-Writing

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DECLARATION

“I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others.”

Signed: Polly North and Dr Justine Baillie.

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I develop a critical approach to self-writing and especially to the 'deliberately introspective' diary. An important element in the work is an analysis of how issues surrounding the discussion of the self, free-will, and voice have been negotiated by critics of self-writing and two exemplars of deliberately introspective writing: Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag. It is proposed that consideration of the deliberately introspective diary – by being so obviously personal and therefore concerned with issues bearing on the elusive concept of self - uniquely energises discussion of the self and self-writing.

Close analysis of current self-writing commentary finds that critics tend to become entangled in futilely reconciling what the thesis argues are unavoidable contradictions between and within two competing accounts of the self and personal autonomy, broadly to be characterised as Humanist and 'post-modern'. Criticism is also found to stumble on the ineluctable complexities of such concepts. Philippe Lejeune (in, *On Diary*); Jacques Derrida (in, *The Postcard: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond* and, *Writing and Difference*); Ihab Hassan (in, 'Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature'); Patricia Meyer Spacks (in, 'How to Read a Diary'); Shirley Neuman (in, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences'); and Susan Sontag (in her critical work and diaries) are signal amongst several astute critics of self-writing. Even amongst these there is some critical confusion and even angst. As a remedy, a critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism' is developed. The approach is designed to prompt and enable the critic to interrogate and to deploy the merits of competing and conflicted interpretative perspectives without attempting to resolve their irresolvable tensions. Having developed the case for deliberate eclecticism the thesis returns to intertextual analysis of the deliberately introspective writing of Aurelius and Sontag and finds that the approach is robust. It is concluded that the approach, the strategy of judiciously deploying different vantage points at different times, is a useful analytical tool and frees criticism of self-writing from dialectical partisanship. It is more tentatively concluded that the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism can be applied to wider literary criticism, and to any other discipline that returns to consideration of the self and free-will.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I propose and develop a particular critical approach to self-writing and especially to the 'deliberately introspective' diary.¹ An important element in the development of this approach is an analysis of how issues surrounding the discussion of self, free-will, and voice have been negotiated by critics of self-writing, philosophers, and two exemplars of deliberately introspective writing: Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag. The work of Aurelius and Sontag is deployed in the thesis because as a very early and a very modern deliberately introspective self-writer they offer rich cases for consideration, comparison, and contrast. Each of them is instructive as well as illustrative on the core issues bearing on the discussion of self. In Chapter Seven, Aurelius and Sontag are similarly valuable as we turn to issues surrounding critical reasoning and especially the autonomy of the critical voice. The problems of the self, including the question of its autonomy, reach an apotheosis in the quintessential self-writing form, the deliberately introspective diary, where these ideas are often the subject of intense examination. It is found in the thesis that the self and free-will are often discussed as (albeit occasionally practicable) non sequiturs or factitious notions. However, self-writers such as Aurelius and Sontag, and critics of self-writing, often write as though the self and its ability to think and act with autonomy are at least plausible, if perplexing, concepts, or even (at least in their less sceptical moments) facts.

Critics tend to agree that the terms self-writing and life-writing allude to:

¹ A crucial objective for the critical approach to self-writing proposed in this thesis is that it supports critics as they manage elusive ideas, particularly those pertaining to self, free-will, and voice. Exploration of these concepts is exceptionally 'raw' and acute in deliberately introspective diaries; particularly those that have been written as an account of an internal dialogue conducted in the manner (at least) of its being private (Sontag 2013a: 41 and Spacks 2003: 55). Thus, it is this self-writing form that best serves the aim of the thesis. 'Shared' on-line self-narratives, such as blogs, Facebook timelines, Twitter tweets, and even, life-logging applications and devices, display similar characteristics to deliberately introspective diaries. However, these forms require an approach that complements their particular characteristics and that differs from the critical focus adopted in this thesis. Shared self-narratives, for example, unlike the privately kept diary, start with an often deliberately public and dialogic intention. Understandings of shared self-narratives would perhaps benefit from analyses of social networks or of self-concepts that have been built on primarily dialogic approaches; such research might also contain quantitative analysis and tailored surveys. The thesis is not intended as an exhaustive exegesis of self-writing forms. There are instances and period-specific genres in the development of self-writing forms that are referred to and these make points which are relevant to the objective of the thesis. Finally, the Western tradition of self-writing should be delineated from non-Western traditions. In East Asia, for example, the diary form is a thriving literary tradition (dating from the eighth century AD) with characteristics that, again, require a different type of approach and emphases from that deployed here. These areas are fertile ground for further study.

‘[E]phemera written about a life, such as letters or diaries... memoir, biography, and autobiography’ (Rak in Sugars 2015: 814).² However, academics working in the field, including Julie Rak, a specialist on memoir and autobiography, and a key contributor to Philippe Lejeune’s, *On Diary*; Marlene Kadar in, ‘Coming to Terms: Life-Writing - From Genre to Critical Practice’; and Donald J Winslow, compiler of, *Life-Writing: A Glossary of Terms in Biography, Autobiography, and Related Forms*, consider the nomenclature of self-writing to be polysemous and ill-defined.³ Rak has attributed problems of classification, in part, to the lack of critical literary interest in and therefore knowledge of such writing (Rak in Sugars 2015: 814-815). Defining self-writing is indeed difficult; however, it is argued in this thesis, that the criticism of self-writing faces a greater problem: that our ideas of self, free-will, and voice are amorphous and accounts of them contradictory. Though these complexities offer critics fertile ground for interpretation, if they are not fully acknowledged and not rigorously attended to, they can lead to confusion and unresolved conflicts within the criticism, as we find in Chapters Five and Six.⁴

Self-writing is the term adopted in this study for a broad spectrum of work within which the deliberately introspective diary sits. This is in accordance with self-writing being the term preferred by most critics of autobiography, biography, memoir, and diary as capturing the self-reflective aspects of the writing they analyse. The term is, for example, used by Michael Foucault in ‘Self-Writing’. Foucault’s essay is part of a series concerned with the distinctions between classical and contemporary attitudes to the philosophical and therapeutic benefits of, ‘writing as personal exercise’ (Foucault 1983: 415-430).⁵ It is the term adopted by Susanne Gannon in her analysis of the ways in which traditional notions of self, self-reflection, and self-writing have been subverted by post-structural literary

² Distinctions between the diary form and other forms of self-writing (including biography, autobiography, and memoir) and between the diary and other forms of literature, that are also often self-reflective (including, novels, plays, and poetry), are expanded on in Chapter One.

³ For further reference to the terminology deployed in the criticism of self-writing – including difficulties in fixing or defining terms for self-writing forms - see: (Rak in Sugars 2015: 11, 121, and 813-825); (Kadar 1992: 4-6); and (Winslow 1995: IX).

⁴ By way of a preliminary to the idea and argument in the thesis that the concept of self is an equivocal and elusive question, rather than a definite thing, the philosopher, Simon Blackburn, explains that for millennia the self has been and remains, ‘possibly the most challenging and pervasive source of problems in the whole of philosophy’ (Blackburn 2008: 76). He describes how the, ‘elusive “I”, [...] shows an alarming tendency to disappear when we try and introspect it.’ (Blackburn 2008: 344).

⁵ See glossary for definitions of ‘contemporary’ and ‘classical’. Foucault pursued his comparative analysis of the nature of self-reflection in classical Greek and twentieth-century Western literature and cultural zeitgeists in at least six essays, including, ‘Technologies of the Self’ (Foucault 1988: 16-49). Gill and Hadot offer critiques of Foucault’s research and conclusions, for further reference see: (Gill 330, 334-335, and 343) and (Hadot 1995: 206-13).

theorists, 'The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing: French Post-structural Theory and Autoethnography' (Gannon 2006: 474-495). It is also the term preferred by Peter Heehs in his book: *Writing the Self: Diaries, Memoirs, and the History of the Self*. Heehs, following Gannon, analyses how post-modern literary theories, including structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstructionism destabilise ideas of self, personal autonomy, and self-governed utterance in the self-writing text (Heehs 2013: 1-9).

As Julie Rak has observed, self-writing and most particularly the diary form has, until recently, not only been largely ignored as literature but often disparaged. In his essay, 'The Diary on Trial', Philippe Lejeune, an oft-cited critic of the diary form, explains how it has generally been characterised as, 'unwholesome, hypocritical, cowardly, worthless, artificial, sterile, shrivelling, feminine etc.' (Lejeune 2009: 147)⁶ Jeremy D Popkin, a co-contributor with Rak to Lejeune's *On Diary*, describes the unexplored literary landscape of diaries:

It was said to be a region of arid, barren landscapes, devoid of aesthetically satisfying monuments. Rumour depicted the inhabitants as primitive savages, going about naked and spending too much time and energy contemplating their own navels to produce anything worth bringing back to civilization... Because the overwhelming majority of diary-writers do not aspire to see their words published... the diary exists at the margin of literature, and most diarists would not label themselves as authors. (Popkin in Lejeune 2009: 1)

It is worth noting that the self-writing forms, autobiography and memoir, have been accorded higher levels of critical respect than diaries. This is, as is explored in Chapter One, because they are usually taken by critics to represent a more formal, uniform, coherent, and official overview of a person's life.⁷ Elizabeth Podnieks makes this point in her introduction to, *Daily Modernism: The Literary*

⁶ Lejeune remarks that though many diaries do not have literary kudos, all have 'aesthetic merit' (Lejeune 2009: 19). For further discussion of the literariness of the diary form see: (Matthews 1977: 286-300); (Lejeune 2009: 147-167); and (Spacks 2003: 48). For further reference to the literary study of diaries see bibliography for Knapp, 'The Diary as Art: Anaïs Nin, Thornton Wilder, Edmund Wilson' (Knapp 1987: 223-230) and Sinor, 'Reading the Ordinary Diary' (Sinor 2002: 123-149).

⁷ Autobiography and memoir are forms in which the writer will consider their life as a whole and in retrospect, for example, such self-narratives will often follow a formal and chronological template and begin with details such as the writer's date of birth, social circumstances, and education. A diarist is usually concerned with more immediate details. Autobiographers will often record events, names, and experiences that have public significance. Autobiographers and memoirists often write with a keen eye on their future audience. That is: they write with a view to publication. This adds a public dimension to these forms that is not so pronounced in the (usually) privately kept and more informal diary form.

Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anaïs Nin: ‘Until recently, the diary genre has received limited critical attention... studies of life-writing have tended to focus on autobiography and those that mention the diary often cursorily dismiss it, or marginalise it as a “sub” or “lesser” form of autobiography “proper”.’ (Podnieks 2000: 4)

There have been, however, notable exceptions. For example, Samuel Pepys’ (1633-1703) diaries (first published in 1825, over one hundred years after his death); James Boswell’s (1740-1795) diaries (a full edition of which was not published until 1950); and Virginia Woolf’s (1882-1941) diaries (first published in 1953) have all been widely read. It can hardly be claimed these diaries have been ‘cursorily dismissed’ (to use Podnieks’ phrase). The difference here is between a wide lay readership, which enjoys the highly personal in famous diaries as well as the historical, and the academics for whom the historical relevance of the literary artefact is more important. Academics and critics have read diaries for many reasons: sometimes for their literary merit, but more often than not for the insights they afford the historian, biographer, or literary critic as they research an age or epoch; or, in the case of Woolf’s diaries, for what her private writing reveals about her more public literary output. Like the diaries of Pepys, Boswell, and Woolf, the diary-like characteristics of St Augustine’s (354 AD-430 AD) *Confessions* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-1778) *Confessions* also draw in an appreciative critical readership. This is partly because of the compelling literary qualities of their self-reflective writing and partly because they are emblems of an age or movement (St Augustine, as an early Christian figure and Rousseau, as a Romantic). Other noted diarists, such as WNP Barbellion (1889-1919) and Anne Frank (1929-1945), also achieved recognition, in part, because of the poignancy with which they evoked an event or age.⁸

Diaries that are published and then accorded literary regard have tended to be valued because they can act as auxiliary primary resources for an historian or biographer studying a particular individual, event, or epoch. This approach to the

⁸ The Englishman and naturalist, Bruce Frederick Cummings, published his diaries under a pseudonym: WNP Barbellion. Those of his diaries that are in publication were highly edited. The first run of published diaries sold well and earned high praise from literary critics. For further reference see bibliography for HG Wells’ introduction to, *The Journal of a Disappointed Man and A Last Diary* (1984).

diary relegates the form to the status of bystander to an age, body of work, or a person. In this reading a diarist becomes secondary to the extraordinary times in which they lived. Julie Rak emphasises this trend in the criticism of self-writing:

[T]he study of diaries has been met with indifference, incomprehension, and hostility. Historians have regarded diaries either as transparent source documents or personal records which should be taken with a grain of academic salt. English-language literary scholars have examined some diaries, most notably the diary of Samuel Pepys for their historical content... Feminist criticism which highlighted the importance of women's experiences... has made a small industry of examining Virginia Woolf's diaries... But generally diaries have been a minor area of study in a number of fields because... they are not written with a mass audience in mind. (Rak in Lejeune 2009: 22)

Many diarists will write in private and their work remain unseen and hidden from critics. However, as Chapter One establishes, and despite privacy being described as a defining feature of much diary-writing, there is an open question as to how private any writing or person can claim to be. The thesis finds that current criticism of self-writing often describes it as using a language composed by others (i.e., a public language, not a private language); as constructed against a back-drop of determinates and contexts (such as social, cultural, or political milieus); and as a silent conversation conducted with a hypothesised interlocutor.

Though diaries are treated by some critics as instrumental (that is as valuable to other studies but not in themselves) and accorded the status of bystander, there are also critics who have studied the form for what it reveals about the self. From the mid-twentieth century self-writing forms, starting with autobiography and then diary, were increasingly applauded for the ways in which they supported and celebrated self-definition that was derived from autonomous cognition and action. That is: self-writers who reflected on the experience of self in their self-writing texts were accorded by critics a class of self that was, to a degree, autonomous. The self-narrative was extolled as giving structure and safe harbour to self-writers' volitional intent and voices. Georges Gusdorf's essay, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography' (first published in 1956), is an example of this class of early

criticism of self-writing and is often referred to by later critics.⁹ Gusdorf illustrates that initially critical approaches were designed to highlight the ways in which self-writing seemed to promote, champion, and foster the idea of a self that could act, speak, or write with volition (Gusdorf in Olney 2014: 28).¹⁰

In Chapters Five and Six, it is found that the Humanist (a term shortly to be defined in this introduction and expanded on in Chapter Three) character of Gusdorf's approach endures in the criticism of self-writing; even as Humanism's defining characteristics and many of its principles are seriously challenged by current critical approaches. Twenty years after Gusdorf's critique of autobiography, William Matthews, a noted bibliographer of diaries, applies a similar approach to the diary. In his essay, 'The Diary: A Neglected Genre', Matthews remarked: 'The [diary] form is unique among literary genres in that it envisages no external audience, and that peculiarity affects both the contents and the style... [it is] writing that a person does of his own free-will and entirely for his own interest.' (Matthews 1977: 287) Matthews claims 'free-will' for diarists. However, as is explored in the thesis, to do so and to characterise diarists' personal autonomy as a defining feature of the diary form (and a feature of one's approach to it) is a deeply contentious critical move.¹¹

⁹ The importance of Gusdorf's essay to current critiques of self-writing is identified by Shirley Neuman: (Neuman 1992: 214). Neuman describes Gusdorf as a Humanist critic. James Olney (also identified by Neuman as a Humanist critic) discusses Gusdorf's Humanist influence on current critics of self-writing; see bibliography for Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Olney 2014: 8, 11, and 28). Olney describes Gusdorf as influencing critics who have sought to classify self-writing as a genre in which personal autonomy is fostered. In this regard, self-writing forms are described as providing a type of structuring agency to the individual (i.e., the pages and the narrative they contain in this view complement a person's sense of a self that is capable of autonomous intentions and actions, without that narrative dominating the individual). For example (and with direct reference to the work of Gusdorf and Olney) the critics Walker and Friedman highlight how self-writing forms liberate women's voices from patriarchal hegemonies; see bibliography for NA Walker, *Women's Autobiographies* (Walker 1991: 1-3) and Friedman, 'Women's Autobiographical, Selves: Theory and Practice' (Friedman 1988: 34-62).

¹⁰ Extended accounts of the history of self-writing can be found in M Kadar's and M Jolly's surveys of the genre; see bibliography for Kadar, *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice* (Kadar 1992) and the second edition of Jolly, *Encyclopaedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* (Jolly 2013). The combined editions of the bibliographic series, *The Annual Bibliography of Works about Life-Writing 1978-2012*, present a sketch of critical trends in the study of self-writing. The 1978 edition has seven pages of works and the 2012 edition, one hundred and forty three. The sharp rise in publications on self-writing marks a corresponding increase in academic interest. The accompanying abstracts to each edition of the annually published bibliography reflect changes in academic focus and cultural zeitgeists. Self-writing forms are often described as buffering the individual from, for example, cultural influences; contrariwise the forms are also described as reflecting dominant cultural forces. For further reference see: (Wachter 1978-2012). It is worth noting the arbitrary use of the hyphen in 'life-writing', there is a hyphen in Jolly's encyclopaedia and Wachter's bibliography, but not in Kadar's collection of essays, this is an example of the lack of critical consensus on exact terms and definitions for life-writing forms.

¹¹ Matthews asserts, in accordance with a number of other critics, including Purvis and Longstaff and Misch, that self-writing can be described as the literary embodiment - or expression of - a person's free-will and unfettered utterance (Matthews 1977: 287). However, it is argued, in the thesis, that when criticism accords free-will to self-writers - without first interrogating the terms and issues associated with such a claim - its critical force or value is weakened. As Chapters Five and Six illustrate if terms and issues are not clearly defined a critical argument may become partisan or tangled in resolving irresolvable puzzles. In Chapter Three the work of philosophers Strawson and Taylor is considered as part of the exploration in the thesis of the term 'free-will'. Philosophical discussions of free-will, traditionally, tend to oscillate between concepts of determinism and freedom. Determinism is a - 'doctrine that every event has a cause' - and that includes the

Chapters Five and Six illustrate how some current critics of self-writing analyse how a person may live in obedience to or in defiance of a network of dominant forces, powers, structures, or institutions. As is expanded on in Chapter One, such ascendant entities are described as either covert or explicit. They include inherited biological or historical traits and hegemonies of language, or of a particular society or culture, or of politics.¹² There is the crucial and underlying problem of the degree to which free-will may be at work in either the obedience or the defiance.¹³

It is argued in the thesis that to consider the nature and content of self, as it is reflected on in self-writing, is also at some point to consider the autonomy of the self. Current critics of self-writing often admire the strength of character or the self-possession and subversive qualities of the self-writer and the self-narrative. In doing so they find themselves wanting to legitimize and promote the idea of an autonomous self and voice. Purvis and Longstaff in, *The Encyclopaedia of Gender and Society*, observe the significance of this issue to critics of self-writing: '[I]t appears to provide a space in which the self can exercise degrees of autonomy and agency, yet the subject is limited by the self that the [...] form appears to construct.' (Purvis and Longstaff in EGS 2008: 197)

That self-writing (such as diaries, autobiography, and memoir) provokes the critic to consider the writer's experience of self and personal autonomy is perhaps why

concept of self, i.e., the self is not a *causa sui* event (Blackburn 2008: 102). In the hard determinist view, personal freedom is incompatible with determinism; the self is not autonomous, neither therefore is writing on the self; it is, for example, more likely to be a product of social circumstances or evolutionary psychology. There is also the idea that an individual may be free to act voluntarily or without immediate coercion in a determinist natural order; this is often labelled: compatibilism. In this view individuals are not necessarily the originator of their actions. For further contemporary references to hard and soft determinism or compatibilism, see bibliography for Fisher, *Deep Control: Essays on Free Will and Value* (2011) and (Strawson 2008: 12-13). Descriptions of a person's self as *causa sui* requires a different type of freedom from the compatibilist: a libertarian view (Weatherford in the OCP 1995: 293). That is: the idea that a person always has the option to act in an alternative manner to that which he or she originally choose and that 'determinism is false'. Indeterminists hold that the natural order is determined by random chance and within this, 'something or other is free' (Weatherford in the OCP 1995: 293). There is also the idea that a person's 'will' is beyond reason; this is a concern for the Stoics (in Chapter Three) and a certainty for Schopenhauer, most famously in, *The World as Will and Representation* (first published in 1819). There is no final agreement amongst discussants of these issues. However, it is important that critics examine the issues before describing a self-writer as writing freely or as freely describing the self.

¹² The term 'hegemony' refers to: 'leadership or dominance, especially by one state or social group over others' (*Oxford English Dictionary*: 2010). Hegemonies can be political, economic, cultural, military, national, or international. They can be a group, institution, or entity; or an abstract ideology, narrative, or idea. 'Hegemonic' tends to refer to the processes by which a dominant body holds its ascendant position. These processes are often described as ideologies; public narratives, such as those put forward in propaganda or state education; and legislative or bureaucratic frameworks and laws. Hegemonies and hegemonic processes have been interpreted (as the footnote below indicates with reference to Jean-François Lyotard) as obvious or as more covert and abstract powers (and, therefore, not stemming from any one individual or group).

¹³ The diary critic, Irina Paperno, describes how diary-writing invites, 'comparison between the writer's life and the social world outside' (Paperno 2004: 572). For further reference see bibliography for Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries?' (Paperno 2004: 561-573).

it has been a popular resource for recent feminist critics. As Rak observed earlier in this introduction, self-writing is regarded as significant because it, 'highlight[s] the importance of women's experiences'. (Rak's comment comes sixty years after Gusdorf's analysis and thirty after Matthews'.) Jochen Hellbeck, a critic of self-writing returned to in Chapter Six, describes how Soviet era diaries can be viewed as, on the one hand, an 'author's own salvation' and, on the other, as 'harmful instrument[s]' of control deployed by dictatorial authorities (Hellbeck 2006: 38 and 48). Self-narratives are, according to Hellbeck, tools of the self, but also of the state (Hellbeck 2004: 621-629). Formerly marginalised or subjugated individuals who write a self-narrative (individuals who have been marginalised by dint, for example, of their gender, race, or sexual orientation, or individuals who are subjects of a totalitarian state) are (implicitly or explicitly) often posited by current critics of self-writing as asserting (a degree of) personal freedom in their self-narratives. A self-writer may be described as asserting themselves against their oppressors or oppressive frameworks (in Rak's case, against and within patriarchal hegemonies and in Hellbeck's case, against and within brutal political regimes). In another description of self-writing as a function of self-writers' free-will, Lejeune describes diaries as 'antifictions' (Lejeune 2009: 201). Antifiction is a neologism proposed by Lejeune in, 'The Diary as Antifiction'; such a fiction can be defined as a counter-narrative to 'metanarratives' or 'grand-narratives'.¹⁴ To postulate that a narrative and its narrator can be dissident - or counter a more powerful 'grand-narrative' - is linked to the idea that the counter-narrative and its writer have the freedom to be so.

Current criticism of self-writing is found to often describe self-writers as having some capacity to delineate themselves from, and even subvert, the influences upon them. According to this view, the emancipative act is supported by and enacted in self-reflective writing. Such claims are made as critics seek to explain what self-writing means to them and, importantly, as they find ways to validate its literary worth. It is worth tentatively adding to this that critics may favour this critical

¹⁴ 'Metanarratives' and 'grand-narratives', in English translation, are terms coined by Jean-François Lyotard. 'Grand-narrative' is the term deployed by the co-authors and diary critics, Tony Purvis and Gary Longstaff in, *Encyclopaedia of Gender and Society* (Purvis and Longstaff 2008: 197), to describe the type of dominant narratives diary-writing can overcome or challenge with the power of its own narrative. For further reference see bibliography for Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984: 19-23).

course (with premeditation or not) to validate their own work (as, for example, also being arrived at through autonomous reasoning and therefore directly attributable to the critic). In addition to these attractive descriptions of the self-asserting writer, and of what they can achieve in their self-narrative, Phyllis Wachter, editor of, *The Annual Bibliography of Works about Life-Writing*, quoting from Alan Powell's, *A Rhetoric of Symbolic Identity*, describes how writing about the self can act as a 'container' and can be used to hold, cohere, and structure one's self-concept (Powell in Wachter 2006: 615). Finally, Patricia Meyer Spacks, a critic returned to in Chapter Six, describes how: '[The diary] can uncover unexpected ways of achieving personal dignity. It can redefine authenticity.' (Spacks 2003: 48)

Critics make these attractive observations even as they identify (in a more obviously post-modern critical mode) the ways in which concepts of self are culturally constructed, or are more public than private, or more a convergence of determinates than self-determining.¹⁵ A danger can arise here; at least it can for those critics who are tempted to applaud the volitional voice of the self-writer as it is found in self-writing. That is: pathologising the self-writer and their self-writing as being overwhelmed by powerful influence will lead, by logical steps, to pathologising the concepts of self, free-will, and voice. This is linked to a corrosion of the idea that there is a self that is capable of autonomous thought and action and therefore singularly capable of extracting its self-narrative from the many narratives it is party to. It is this progressive disassembly of the 'sincere', 'private', 'subjective voice' and its freedom to be so that Hellbeck alludes to in his critique of diary:

[T]he diary's personal testimony promises sincere, private testimony, [...] at closer sight [it] reveals manifold connections to conventions governing the public world. The relationship between the diarist's subjective voice and objective reality, and the question of any given diary's representativeness as a record

¹⁵ Post-modern is hyphenated in the thesis and stands for a range of critical approaches that follow modernity in terms of chronology, including structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstructionism. Though these three approaches are contemporary (i.e., formulated in our own century and the last) they often contain the residue of or reflection on ideas from other centuries. In the thesis 'post-modern' is put in quotations marks to remind the reader of its specific usage, shortly to be expanded on in this introduction and in Chapter Four. Patrick Slattery in, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, states that postmodern (without a hyphen) is usually used to emphasise the break of the postmodern with what had gone before, including the modern (Slattery 2012: 23). However, in the thesis the post-modern is taken to be, in part, a reflection of what preceded it, for example, as Chapter Four and Five illustrate, Jacques Derrida found much to inspire his post-modern deconstructionist approach in Plato's Phaedrus and in Nietzsche's philosophy.

of individual experience, are further complicating issues. These questions [...] produce residues of uncertainty, openness, and indeterminacy. (Hellbeck 2004: 621)¹⁶

A self-writer or self-writing critic who describes themselves as, for example, the 'unique addressee that 'I' constitute' (Derrida 1987: 33) or defines the self as capable of - or having achieved a form of - 'authenticity' and 'dignity' (Spacks 2003: 48) will, at some point, be led to wonder whether the self is autonomous.¹⁷ It is obvious that critics who readily accept the idea that the self is capable of autonomous thought and action – and in some way self-determining – are able to readily accord self-writers autonomy of voice. In such a schema it is easy to accord writers' voices the qualities of 'dignity' and 'authenticity' (Spacks 2003: 48). (However, as is examined in Chapter Four, the interest and value of a text does not rest on its being the product of a volitional person's voice.)¹⁸

The thesis concludes that in learning how to discuss self-writing, in particular the deliberately introspective diary, tools and habits are acquired that support discussion of not merely this form of writing, but also other forms of literature. Self-writing and concomitant questions as to authorial autonomy and the nature and content of self-concepts remind critics that they are dealing with contradictory and elusive material. It is the complexity of such material that the critical approach, proposed in the thesis and labelled as 'deliberate eclecticism', is designed to

¹⁶ Hellbeck uses 'subjective' in a particular way, to understand his use of the term we can refer to the philosopher Robert C Solomon (also referred to in Chapter Four). The way in which Hellbeck uses the term pertains, '[firstly] to the subject and his or her particular perspective, feelings, beliefs, and desires... [the term] is [secondly] also used to... underscore the importance of perspective, the fact that everyone sees the world from his or her individual vantage point.' (Solomon in OCP 1995: 857) The first definition describes subjectivity as the first-person point of view or experience one has of one's physical sensations, emotions, thoughts, or dreams. The second definition describes an epistemological model in which objective measures and standards are seen as incompatible with subjective perspectives. In this view the veracity of information, intentions, and or reasons that are described as having been arrived at subjectively is perhaps compromised by their not being objective (i.e., in one definition of objective, the subjective perspective is not measurable, observable, or testable by a third party). The nature of subjective perspective and experience is further explored in Chapter Three, section two. Chapter Four, section one is an exploration of the ways in which the subjective nature of persons' thinking and reasoning processes have led some academics and philosophers to view all reasons, judgements, ideas, and arguments as being equally subjective, equally limited by their subjective nature and thus, equal, or relative, to each other in critical veracity. Aurelius' and Sontag's attempts to determine the strength of their opinions and judgements and thus, the veracity of their reasoning powers and those of others, are examined in Chapter Seven, section six. The analysis serves the purpose of the thesis which is, in part, to build a strong and well-reasoned approach to self-writing.

¹⁷ Derrida uses the term 'unique addressee', to describe himself, twice more in, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. For further reference see: (Derrida 1987: 81 and 192).

¹⁸ The 'post-modern' preoccupation with the influence of cultural, social, or political contexts over texts and people (a discussion expanded on in Chapter Four) is not quite the same as discussion of the influence of perhaps more readily identifiable determinates identified in a strictly materialist view of the universe (such 'determinates' might include a person's genetic make-up and heritage, in biology, or the movement of atoms, in physics). In what Peter Strawson (a philosopher returned to in Chapter Three) characterised as the 'pessimistic determinist' view the *fact* that a person's behaviour is determined by, for example, history or biology is an absolutist view with a clear cause and effect relationship between determinates and determined (Strawson 2008: 1-4). The 'post-modern' view of controlling influences is better described as being suspicious, it is not clear on the line of cause and effect.

manage. The approach is introduced in Chapter Four and expanded on thereafter. Deliberate eclecticism is designed to navigate the ambiguities of and the contradictions between and within complex ideas; necessarily, a thesis on self-writing encounters many of these especially when it comes to the recursive process of reflecting on oneself. The critical approach of deliberate eclecticism is to the critic as a civil servant's impartial brief is to the politician; it is a brisk reminder of the merits of different critical positions (including, in our case, those of the relativist and the critically assured stances). It advocates the merit of adopting provisional points of view and allowing that all critical judgements are provisional. It is argued that the critic using deliberate eclecticism is not enfeebled by adopting neutrality (even if temporarily), but, rather, is freed from pretending to an omniscience which leads to Delphic infallibility. Deliberate eclecticism encourages the critic to lay out the course he or she has charted through the varieties of evidence and opinion which clutter the scene. It is how we operate within ambiguity that is important; as Aurelius points out: '[W]hen you are thwarted return to the struggle and be well-contented if for the most part your actions are worthier of human nature.' (Book 5.9)

The diary: from the quotidian to the quintessential

In Chapter One it is argued that the deliberately introspective diary, which is deployed by its writer as an exercise in self-reflection, can usefully be seen as the purest form of self-writing. The chapter is a clarification of what is meant by the term 'diary' and its quintessential form, the 'deliberately introspective' diary. The family of characteristics for the diary form, expanded on in this chapter, builds on taxonomies produced by William Matthews in, 'The Diary: A Neglected Genre' and Philippe Lejeune in, 'Composing a Diary' (Matthews 1977: 299-300 and Lejeune 2009: 168-175). Diary-writing is shown to be, variously, regular, frequent, spontaneous, extempore, fragmentary, dated, frank, honest, private, personal, and introspective; quite often diary-writing is undertaken as an exercise (that is: for its own sake as a process). The characteristics are placed in a spectrum, original to this thesis, running from the quotidian to the quintessential. Diarists can elect to use characteristics from this spectrum in a variety of permutations. But the diary will almost always be in a vital and fundamental sense personal. This

characteristic maximises diaries' critical potential and quickly takes one to problems pertaining to reflection on concepts of self and free-will.

The chapter fulfils the first stage of the argument made in the thesis for a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism. The quintessential diary form (the deliberately introspective diary) puts in high-relief and in the language of the day perennial issues relating to the nature and content of self-concepts; including the degree to which persons can claim, and be accorded by critics of self-writing, the ability to act, write, and speak ways that are derived from autonomous cognition. The self and free-will are terms critics of diary, self-writing, and other forms of literature are bound to address. However, as is revealed in Chapters Five and Six, the complexities of such rich and provocative concepts require a careful and clearly defined critical approach, if they are to be managed well.¹⁹ In Chapter Two, we meet the pair of deliberately introspective writers who advance the work of the thesis; intertextual analysis of their writing introduces the terms and issues of the self that critics of self-writing discuss.

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag: deliberately introspective writers 2,000 years apart

Chapter Two deploys two deliberately introspective writers as emblematic of the almost self-evident case that concepts of self, free-will, and voice can be found at the heart of self-writing. The case studies are Marcus Aurelius (121 AD – 180 AD), emperor of Rome from 161 AD to 180 AD, and his *Meditations*, and Susan Sontag (1933 - 2004), a professional critic, film maker, and novelist, and her diaries, *Reborn* (1947-1963) and, *As Consciousness is Harnessed to Flesh* (1964-1980). Occasionally, entries selected from the two deliberately introspective writers will be lengthy. This is so the writers' original intent and voices register clearly over the more formal voice of the thesis.

¹⁹ Literary critics, from different backgrounds and within different approaches, have recognised the importance of the issue of self to self-writing and to literature more broadly. Popkin remarks: 'The diary is the point where life and literature meet' (Popkin in Lejeune 2009: 2). For further reference to the relevance of self-awareness to literature more broadly, see: (Hellbeck 2004: 621-629); (Misch 1950: 4-9); and (Hassan 1988: 420). All three agree that awareness of the self as a concept is a crucial issue in much literary out-put and criticism.

No pair of self-writers could represent a host. But Aurelius and Sontag, such different writers in so many ways, are similar in demonstrating the quintessential feature of self-writing: a preoccupation with the self. Theirs was a preoccupation that was often angst-ridden and took on intellectual as well as spiritual and moral dimensions. Aurelius and Sontag are chosen as case studies because their acutely and deliberately introspective writing introduces the salient (often challenging) terms and issues relating to the discussion of self and free-will. Chapters Three and Four are an analysis of how these issues and terms have been managed in literary criticism, philosophy, and the criticism of self-writing. Equipped with this knowledge it is possible to return to the pair, in Chapter Seven, for a full and proper exploration of what their deliberately introspective writing reveals. Intertextual analysis of their work expands on, amplifies, and strengthens the critical approach to self-writing that is proposed, in the thesis, as a means of navigating contradictory and elusive concepts of self. (The approach is labelled: deliberate eclecticism.)

The two writers neatly bookend the millennia; importantly, they are sharp exemplars of early and modern perspectives on the concepts of self and free-will. Obviously, Marcus Aurelius did not have to hand some of the analytic tools available to our own contemporaries, or to Susan Sontag. There were no definitions relating to structural semantics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, or neurology available to him. He did have, however, a full complement of the sorts of doubts and beliefs about the self and its autonomy which have since fascinated successive generations. Taken together Aurelius and Sontag stress how influential - across millennia - ideas of the self are in self-writing (indeed in almost all writing). It is the disparity between the eras from which the texts are drawn that makes their similarities so instructive, not to say poignant. It is Aurelius' and Sontag's differences that add piquancy to and put in high relief their similarities. That such qualitative similarities exist across such wide-ranging disparities (not least 2,000 years of history) draws out quite how elusive and ineluctable the concept of the autonomous self has been and remains. In addition to this - as a pair - Aurelius and Sontag facilitate a useful intertextual study and comparative exercise.

Intertextual analysis of Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing reveals that they were concerned with whether the self could logically reflect back on itself and, if it could, whether it could perform this self-reflective act comprehensively and honestly. They were also concerned with whether they could control and be honest about the self. Beyond the problems of recursiveness, self-control, and candour, Aurelius and Sontag are shown, in Chapter Two, to have been aware of the problem of free-will. They were concerned that any idea that their selves were autonomous was open to the objection that they were products of their history, culture, and society.

Though neither Aurelius nor Sontag use all the diary characteristics outlined in Chapter One, they use a permutation of these characteristics. In this way, though they take highly selectively from some of the norms of diary-writing, they represent a long line of deliberately introspective writing. PA Brunt, Richard Dickson, Christopher Gill, Pierre Hadot, Philippe Lejeune, and Richard Rutherford, as Chapter two evinces, are amongst the classicists and critics who have remarked on the self-writing characteristics to be found in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (Brunt 1974: 1-20, Dickson 2009: 103-104, Hadot 1998: 27, Gill 2011: VII, Lejeune 2009: 54, and Rutherford 1989: 8-13 and 50-51). Though Aurelius would not have used the term 'diary' (we find he would have used the term hypomnemata and that this term can be affiliated with at least four diary characteristics), he almost certainly wrote privately, frequently, if not day-to-day, seemingly spontaneously, and, most importantly, in great detail about his self-reflection (these characteristics are found, in Chapter One, to be particular to the diary).

It is the acutely self-reflective nature and the diary-like qualities of the *Meditations* that make it possible to deploy the work in a thesis about self-writing and its criticism. Chapter Two evinces these qualities, in part, by identifying the *Meditations* as the classical form, hypomnemata. Hypomnemata were often highly personal, fragmentary, informal, privately and regularly kept notes or - more importantly - exercises. These are also, as we find in Chapter One, characteristics of the diary form. Establishing the correspondences between the *Meditations*, hypomnemata, and contemporary diary forms is important; the *Meditations* represent a 2,000 years old struggle with reflecting on a self that is both

contradictory and elusive and support the argument in the thesis that self and free-will are, and have long been, problematic concepts commanding critical attention and requiring dexterous critical navigation.

In *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, hypomnemata are described by the classicist Georg Misch as:

[S]omething...“noted down as an aid to memory”... [hypomnemata is] a conception indefinite in itself, simply expressing the absence of artistic elaboration... It was the usual name for autobiographical works, in addition to bios in the sense of “way of life” or “career”... portraits being described as “*hypomnema of the body*” and writings as “*hypomnema of the mind*”. [Italics mine] (Misch 1950: 186)²⁰

Linking hypomnemata, in which the first focus was the personal life of its author, with contemporary diary forms is a move supported by, for example, the classicist Vivien Gray, in her research into the personal dimensions of ancient Greek historiographies (most notably her essay ‘Classical Greece’); by Gabriele Marasco in, ‘The Hellenistic Age: Autobiography and Political Struggles’; and by Cinzia Bearzot in, ‘Royal Autobiography in the Hellenistic Age’. The classicists agree that hypomnemata were for personal use and were informally and regularly kept notes or exercises. After the Classical Age of Greece and the Hellenistic period, the form became increasingly personal and or philosophical.

In Chapter Two, the *Meditations* are shown to be the earliest and longest example of deliberately introspective hypomnemata we have. That Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* are hypomnemata, is observed by, for example, the classicist Christopher Gill, in his translations of the *Meditations* and in his research into Stoic philosophy, including *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*, and Pierre Hadot in, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Gill 2006:

²⁰ Misch explains how hypomnemata or ‘ὑπόμνηματα’ translates to, ‘notes in aid of memory’. The *Etymological Greek Dictionary* confirms that the root ‘μνάομαι’, means ‘to remember, think of, ponder’. For further reference to etymological work on hypomnemata, see bibliography for Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises: From Their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period*. Dickey defines hypomnemata in relation to the Greek word for notes: ‘σχόλια’. She describes hypomnemata as, ‘self-standing commentaries...ὑπόμνημα (sing.) ὑπόμνηματα (pl.)...unified works by a single author’ (Dickey 2007: 25-26). See glossary for further reference to ‘hypomnemata’.

389 and Hadot 1998: 34)²¹ Marcus Aurelius himself describes the *Meditations* as hypomnemata (Book 3.14). The *Meditations*, in accordance with characteristics for personal hypomnemata and contemporary diary-writing, were almost certainly written privately for personal use and not intended for publication. Marcus Aurelius states that what he writes is for him alone: 'Say to yourself' (Book 2.1). Pierre Hadot observes that Aurelius wrote, 'day by day' (Hadot 1998: 28). As such the entries in the *Meditations*, though not dated, are often written in the manner of extempore or in-the-moment entries, a style often achieved in diary-writing. The lack of a narrative structure and frequent repetition of themes and phrases suggests Aurelius' entries were unpremeditated or spontaneous and left unrevised, again a characteristic of diary-writing.

Academics take different views on the specific nature of Marcus Aurelius' introspection and its philosophical dimensions; however, most agree that the *Meditations* is a highly self-reflective text. Academics also agree that Aurelius wrote his *Meditations* as a form of spiritual exercise and self-development. In Chapter Two, this is the view taken by, for example, Christopher Gill in his translations of the *Meditations* and his research into Stoic philosophy in, for example, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*; Pierre Hadot in, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*; Mark Forstater in, *The Spiritual Teachings of Marcus Aurelius*; and Richard Rutherford in, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: A Study*. Gill 2006: 389, Hadot 1998: 34, Forstater 2001: 1-91, Rutherford 1989: 8-21) Thus, though Aurelius would not have used the word 'diary', his *Meditations* (as hypomnemata or otherwise) take us to the heart of problems surrounding the self and self-reflection, so often acutely evident in deliberately introspective diary-writing.

Susan Sontag, like Aurelius, uses her diaries as an exercise in spiritual, intellectual, and moral development. She explicitly used her diary-writing to work through her views on literature, including writing about the self (not least her own). On the 20th of August 1964, for example, Sontag remarks in her diary that,

²¹ Christopher Gill comments, in his introduction to the Oxford World's Classic's edition of the *Meditations*, that: '[The] *Meditations* are a work unparalleled among writing surviving from Classical antiquity... It is the philosophical diary of a Roman emperor... Aurelius is writing to examine his inmost thoughts and advising himself how best to live.' (Gill 2011: VII-X)

'reading criticism clogs conduits through which one gets new ideas: cultural cholesterol' (Sontag 2013: 19). She analyses the merits of competing critical approaches, including a responsive approach that she perhaps thought cleared 'cultural cholesterol'. Sontag's use of the diary as criticism is important to the aim of the thesis to develop a critical approach to self-writing: Sontag's diaries as criticism illustrate how critical reflection can also be self-reflection and that the one informs the other.

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag are alike in using their self-writing as private relief from their public duties; as a means of improving their private selves; and in the hopes of performing better in public. Though Sontag thought her diaries might be read by her loved ones, it is moot whether she thought they would be published (Sontag 2013: 257). For both writers, privacy was very important, or at least valuable as a working assumption. An additional reason to use Aurelius and Sontag as representative of the issues found in deliberately introspective writing is that the level of public exposure they experienced, as a result of their professional lives, means that the tensions between their public and private lives are seen in high relief.

Aurelius and Sontag have received a great deal of critical attention, as later references to their work illustrate. However, the importance of their deliberately introspective writing to self-writing criticism has not been explored. For instance, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* have been analysed in detail by classicists for their philosophical or Stoic dimensions, but they have not been exploited properly as a study of self-writing. Susan Sontag's diaries have been discussed as an adjunct to her professional criticism, but her value as an exemplar of self-writing, in and of itself, has not previously been explored. An aim in the thesis is to advance the study of self-writing; it also advances the study of Aurelius and Sontag as self-writers.

A finding in the intertextual analysis, in Chapter Two, is that the nearly 2,000 years separating Aurelius and Sontag have not radically altered the ways in which the self is theorised or experienced. Studying Aurelius and Sontag supports the argument that reflection on the concepts of self and free-will is a contradictory and

slippery exercise and has for centuries presented much the same puzzles in much the same terms. The crucial perspective Aurelius and Sontag shared (and one fundamental to the work of the thesis) was an active, questing ambivalence as to their faith in the autonomy of the self. They were profoundly conflicted on the matter and this hurt them. They saw the merits of both sides of the argument, as to the self and its free-will, and they anxiously wrestled with balancing them. The critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism', that is introduced in Chapter Four, is intended to manage these problems and with less angst. Chapters Three and Four are an in depth analysis of the terms and issues Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag introduce.

The contradictory and elusive self: Humanist perspectives

Chapter Three analyses terms and issues bearing on the discussion of self and free-will (these ideas, and the problem of reflecting on them, were introduced by the touchstones of the thesis: Aurelius and Sontag).²² These are major questions in the analysis of self-writing and are notoriously treacherous, difficult, and contested. Chapter Three pays particular attention to the ways in which the tradition broadly known as Humanist has approached and defined the concepts of self and free-will.²³ The thesis describes as Humanist the view that the self is an inviolable concept and that an individual has, at least to some degree, autonomy. However, it also highlights how this tradition has presented challenges to the concept of autonomous self-hood. Humanists debate whether the self can self-verify; whether it is consistently itself over time and in any one moment; and, in a Cartesian division of mind-body into a dualism, whether the self is of the mind, or whether self and the activities of the mind are of the body or perhaps some other dimension. Throughout history, and within what is called the Humanist tradition,

²² 'Voice' is: '[A] word sometimes used in a semi-technical sense to denote the authorial persona in a narrative voice... it is like hearing an individual speaking' (Gray 1992: 302). In Chapter Three, concepts of voice are drawn out. Ideas on the spoken or written voice oscillate around their being culturally constructed and, therefore, a blend of often competing voices, or *sui generis* and self-determined and, therefore, more likely to be singular and unique to one individual. For further reference see: (Lagaay 2012: 1-5) and (Elbow 1994: 1-35).

²³ A Lacey (a philosopher referred to in Chapter Three's exploration of the Humanist tradition) describes how the Humanist view produces a, 'tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority.' (Lacey in OCP 1995: 375) For further reference to Humanism in philosophy see bibliography for Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy* (Scruton 2002: 23). For further reference to Humanism and its links to the classical Greek concern with 'humanitas' and the education and development of man see: (Snell 1982: 246-263). For further reference to distinctions between classical, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and contemporary uses of the term Humanism see bibliography for Norman, *On Humanism* (Norman 2004: 1-14).

deliberately introspective writers, and philosophers and critics of every kind, have struggled with multiple contradictory and elusive ideas of the self and free-will. There is no final convincing explanation for the nature and content of the self. It is, even in the Humanist tradition, a hybrid of often competing and internally contradictory concepts. ('Hybrid' is used in its simplest sense to denote a concept that is composed of different elements; it is not used in its post-colonial or multi-cultural rhetorical context.)

Amongst the philosophers analysed in Chapter Three, as we lay out the Humanist credo, are Julian Baggini and Gareth Southwell (co-authors), and Simon Blackburn. As part of an exploration of the debate on personal autonomy and determinism, the chapter refers to the work of Paul Ricoeur in, *Oneself as Another*, Peter Strawson in the essay, 'Freedom and Resentment' (first published in 1974); and Charles Taylor in, 'Agency and the Self' (Part 1 of, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*, Taylor 1985: 13). Amongst the literary critics referred to, as they discuss authorial autonomy, are: Terry Eagleton in, *Literary Theory: An Introduction and After Theory*; Roland Barthes in, 'Death of the Author'; Jacques Derrida in, *Writing and Difference*; Ihab Hassan in, 'Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature'; and Matthew Clark in, *Narrative Structures and the Language of the Self*. Though personal autonomy is clearly a philosophical matter, it is also often a literary one, hence analysis of both philosophers and literary critics. The discussion in Chapter Three of issues pertaining to free-will is crucial to the criticism of self-writing. This is, firstly, because critics will perhaps want to decide whether the self-writer and their voice are autonomous or not; secondly, and as an adjunct to the first question, critics may then logically wonder whether the critical voice is itself autonomous.

Concepts of self are important in a number of disciplines, both inside and outside the Humanities, including literature, psychology, politics, and neuroscience. They are found in discussions of 'identity', 'person', 'personality', and 'individuality'. In *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*, Christopher Gill comments that these are not, 'precise, technical terms, but have a range of, partly overlapping, connotations' (Gill 2006: XIV). Though the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, descriptions of each are disputed by current discussants. The

self is generally referred to as an abstract that forms an integral part of the (usually) more substantial 'person': a person is aware of the self as part of their consciousness. Chapter Three draws out the ways in which the concept of self is described, in classical and contemporary theories, as being mental and physical and therefore, to varying degrees, a self that is 'embodied'. In the thesis, the terms 'individual', 'identity', and 'person' are used sparingly and refer to a person's or individual's sense of themselves as being self-aware.²⁴ 'Identity' or 'individuality', in contemporary terms, are usually a matter of identifying how persons delineate themselves within a society; for example, these are terms that figure in 'Identity Politics', in which an individual is defined by – or chooses to define themselves by – the codes and conventions pertaining to their gender, ethnicity, or class.²⁵

The self is described by EJ Lowe, a contributor to a useful guide in these matters, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (OCP)*, and a philosopher concerned with the relationship between concepts of self, language, and thought:

[Self is] often used interchangeably with "person", though usually with more emphasis on the "inner", or psychological, dimension of personality than on outward bodily form. Thus a self is conceived to be a subject of consciousness, a being capable of thought and experience and able to engage in deliberative action. More crucially, a self must have a capacity for self-consciousness, which partly explains the aptness of the term "self". (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816)²⁶

²⁴ Simon Blackburn describes how defining personhood is, 'one of the central problems of metaphysics' (Blackburn 2008: 283). Charles Taylor (a philosopher referred to in Chapter Three) describes the differences between, and the interactivity of, the characteristics that make up a 'person' and 'self' in, 'The Concept of the Person': 'A person is an agent who has an understanding of self as an agent.' (Taylor in Carrithers et al. 1985a: 263). Thus, Taylor defines a person as a mental-physical entity with a concept of agency and, importantly, a concept of self (a self that is known linguistically and semantically through its social and moral significances). For further reference see: (Taylor 1985: 1-11) and (Taylor 1989: 3-91). Gill's, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue*, is an account of how the terms person and 'personality' are used in psychology, sociology, and philosophy and often circle around the term self (Gill 1996: 1-29). Gill returns to the concept of self and its definition in, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Gill 2006: 72).

²⁵ For further reference to how the term 'identity' is used in sociology and how it is used interchangeably with the term 'self', see bibliography for essays by Calhoun and Lemert, 'Social Theory and the Politics of Identity' (Calhoun 1994: 9) and Lemert in, 'Dark Thoughts about the Self', (Lemert in Calhoun 1994: 100). Calhoun and Lemert discuss contemporary social theory and the politics of identity. Lemert, in particular, discusses how identity formations turn on self-concepts. For further reference see bibliography for Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991). Giddens discusses the use of the term 'identity' in relation to the 'self' and modernity (Giddens 1991: 50-54); he discusses the term 'person' and what affect modernity has had on the definition of the term (Giddens 1991: 32); and he discusses the self as a mental and physical concept in the chapter, 'Body and Self-Actualisation' (Giddens 1991: 99). For further reference see Taylor's, *Sources of Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (returned to in Chapter Three). For Taylor, the term 'self' and the term 'identity' are both vitally informed – and linked - by ideas of personal freedom and morality: 'The notion of self that is connected to our need for identity is meant to pick out human agency, that we cannot do without some orientation to the good, that we each essentially are (i.e., define ourselves at least inter alia by) where we stand on this.' (Taylor 1989: 33) Taylor's ideas are explored further in Chapter Three. The first half of Taylor's book is taken up with laying out what 'identity' means in the late twentieth century, including how it is significant to persons (has come to mean something) and is bound to ideas of self, free-will, sociability, and morality (Taylor 1989: 3-198).

²⁶ For further reference see bibliography for Lowe, *Forms of Thought: A Study in Philosophical Logic* (2013: 50, 69, and 94).

Discussions of self (in, for example, metaphysics, psychology, literature, or neuroscience) deploy a range of approaches, including Freudian or psychoanalytic approaches and computational theories of mind. Metaphysicians discuss whether the self is constant over time and at any single moment in time. Neuroscientists discuss what activity of the brain produces such a concept. Some psychologists define the concept of self according to persons' behaviour, others according to the concept's evolutionary efficacy. Sociologists, amongst others, tend to discuss a self that is a product of culture and society. Discussants disagree as to what the notion of self can be described as, however few disagree on it being a volute issue with an ineluctable resistance to conclusive definition or explanation.²⁷ The first-person subjective experience of self cannot be taken out and examined or copied; the neuroscientist Susan Greenfield remarked in, *You and Me: The Neuroscience of Identity*, that though it garners many insights, the best science cannot and, 'will never be able to throw light on the subjective first-hand experience of feeling what it's like to be me, or you.' (Greenfield 2011: 140) And Matthew Clark, in his research into the different types of self-concept encountered in literary texts, in *Narrative Structures and the Language of the Self*, commented that when it comes to describing the nature and content of self he was, 'not sure that... a complete theory is possible.' (Clark 2010: 2)²⁸

The second half of Chapter Three focuses on important differences between two early twentieth-century classicists (Bruno Snell and AWH Adkins) and several late twentieth and twenty-first century classicists (including Christopher Gill, Damien Stocking, and AA Long). These classicists have disagreed on the degree to which a concept of the autonomous self was the invention of the classical Greek and Roman periods; on what forms it took, if any; and how it compares with contemporary concepts of self. The analysis, in Chapter Three, illustrates that some of the issues in subsequent contemporary discussion of the self would be comprehensible to the classical Greek mind and later to the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius. More importantly, the analysis of both pre-classical and classical

²⁷ 'Volute' is a term applied to the spiral shape of a mollusc's shell, it is used in the thesis as an analogy for the recursiveness of self-reflection: the recursive act of the self that is reflected upon and is the reflector.

²⁸ For further reference to the many ways in which the self is defined in late twentieth and twenty-first century contexts, especially the sciences, see bibliography for Searle's, *Mystery of Consciousness*. Searle lays out how consciousness of self has been defined in algorithms (Searle 1997: 65); in quantum mechanics (Searle 1997: 80-84); in computational theories (Searle 1997: 16); and in information processing theories (Searle 1997: 155, 176, and 205).

concepts of the self and free-will establishes that such ideas have been provocatively contradictory and elusive for millennia. Chapter Four evinces how in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries such concepts are uniquely challenged.

The contradictory and elusive self: 'post-modern' perspectives

The 'post-modern' class of theory has been labelled according to various often arcane differences, including structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist. Following common usage, the thesis employs 'post-modern' as a term to represent a stable of theories that share similar approaches to concepts of self, authorial volition, and self-narratives. When the term is used in this catch-all sense it is in quotation marks as a reminder of its special use in this thesis. The 'post-modern' view sees the self as having existence (if any at all) as the thinking and feeling happening to a person, but not at all controlled by them.²⁹ Susanne Gannon, a critic of self-writing (returned to in Chapter Five) in, 'The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing: French Post-structural Theory and Autoethnography', usefully describes post-structural theories (part of the 'post-modern' family) thus: 'Post-structural theories problematize taken-for-granted Humanist notions of the subject as capable of self-knowledge and self-articulation while simultaneously providing a rationale for incorporating the personal into research.' (Gannon 2006: 474)³⁰ Gannon's argument substantiates the view in the thesis that post-structural theories 'problematize' traditional, Humanist notions of the self and free-will.

²⁹ The discussion of personal autonomy, and the ways in which a person's actions and intents are influenced or formed by determinates extraneous to the person (such as a person's history, biology, and or society), is obviously important to a range of movements and periods - other than the 'post-modern'. For example, Sontag notes, and classicists Snell and Gill expand on, the ways in which Homer was exercised by the extent of his heroes' volition (Sontag 2013: 28, Snell 1982: 1-22, and Gill 2006: 174-176). Moving into the later Hellenistic and Classical Ages of Greece, as Chapter Three evinces, one's free-will remained an important philosophical question; for example, in Stoicism the idea individuals had the potential for personal autonomy was accepted as part of a broader, compatibilist-type framework. The question of free-will remained important almost 2,000 years later, in, for example, Nietzsche's and Sartre's philosophies (both of which Sontag had particular regard for, Sontag 2013: 271). Sartre, for example, classed personal freedom as the defining characteristic of a person's existence and essence, persons were 'condemned' to be free (condemned because being free meant one had to bear responsibility for the impact of one's choices on oneself and one's fellow man). For further reference see bibliography for Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (Sartre 2007) or (Sartre 1992: Part Four, Chapter One, 'Being and Doing: Freedom', 433-553). For further reference to Nietzsche's concept of free-will see: (Baggini and Southwell: 2002: 142-176 and Scruton 2002: 186-199) and for discussion of Sartre's concept see: (Baggini and Southwell: 2002: 177-179 and Warburton 2010: 210-231).

³⁰ Ihab Hassan in, 'Postface 1982: Toward a Concept of Postmodernism' in, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, provides an in depth assessment of what 'post-modernism' has come to mean in the late twentieth century: (Hassan 1982: 259-273). Hassan has been described as creator of the term: 'postmodern'. However, he cites the term's first appearance in the work of Federico de Onis (1932). Hassan characterises the 'post-modern' as: 'Antiform, play, chance, anarchy, silence, dispersal, anti-narrative, indeterminacy, immanence' (Hassan 1982: 269). Hassan lists writers he regards as 'post-modern' (Hassan 1982: 260). In this list are structuralists, post-structuralists, and deconstructionists, it includes Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Lacan.

'Post-modern' discourse is often concerned to discern the controlling power or forces governing the self. The self is, in this conception, heavily influenced by dominant contexts or determinates. (Such ascendant influences on the person include the type of hegemonies or 'grand-narratives' discussed earlier in this introduction; for example, historical or biological traits; the limits and the force of language and discourse; and cultural and social conventions.) Chapter Four explores how there is also, especially in deconstructionism, the question as to the degree to which an individual can be said to control the language they use to write their self-narrative. In 'post-modernism' language is often described as having its own power. In this view language has a life and characteristics which make it impossible for anybody - or anything - to own or control thought, speech, or narrative. Contrariwise, and within 'post-modernism', there is also the view that language is itself controlled by elites.³¹

Gannon highlights an unavoidable paradox in 'post-modern' self-writing: 'Writing about "oneself" is risky writing. It is difficult to write about the self and to be an escape artist from the self at the same time.' (Gannon 2006: 484) The paradox of the deconstructed self discussing the deconstructed self is explored in Chapters Five and Six, where it is also established that this is a challenge current critics of self-writing do not always manage well. (As is described in Chapter Three, this sort of problem also faces the Humanists but in a different, less stark form.)

Philosophers and critics range over the competing or complementary views in both the Humanist and 'post-modern' traditions, espousing, condemning, and reconciling them by turns. The Humanist or 'post-modern' approaches to the self-concept are irreconcilable and internally contradictory. Neither can be definitive about the nature and content of the self. The case is made in these chapters that there is no agreement between or even within the competing merits of Humanist and 'post-modern' descriptions of the self. The conclusion of Chapter Four offers the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism as a solution to the problems posed

³¹ Chapter Four includes discussion of the scepticism in 'post-modern' theories; such theories are often concerned with the indeterminacy of meaning, and therefore with the idea that there is no meaning, explanation, or idea that can be accorded value above another. It is an idea that affects the meaning accorded literary texts and literature more generally, for further reference see: (Eagleton 1996: 45, 66, 74, 126, and 133). Again, to be sceptical of the determinacy or felicity of evaluations and evaluative processes is not new, this type of scepticism, one which seriously questions the perspicuity and power of human epistemological processes and results, can be identified in classical Greek theories of appearance and reality. For further reference see: (Gill 2006: 393-4, 396-9, 402, and 405-7).

in Chapters Three and Four. It proposes that at different times and for different reasons one can usefully deploy one or other of a range of often contradictory ideas and that these vantage points will be selected with a judicious promiscuity. The thesis proposes deliberate eclecticism as a critical approach that can confidently navigate contradictory elements pertaining to concepts of the self without becoming entangled in resolving irresolvable questions or blending conflicting ideas – such as those held at the extremes of the Humanist tradition and the extremes of the ‘post-modern’. Concepts of self are multiple, volute, and resist stabilisation. Self-writers and critics would do well to fully acknowledge, embrace, and work with such inveterate ambiguity.

Deliberate eclecticism does not seek to avoid the problems of concepts of self or free-will. Instead, the approach acknowledges that it is wise to pay due respect to the strengths of various competing accounts. Rather than seeking to resolve the contradictions between, say strict Humanism or strict ‘post-modernism’, it deploys a range of approaches in turn. Deliberate eclecticism has a further merit. As is shown in later chapters, particularly Chapter Seven, it is a critical tool that can navigate the dilemma of relativism. On the one hand, and for the sake of argument, the approach is an acknowledgement that in the final analysis almost all judgements are a matter of opinion rather than of epistemologically solid evidence. On the other, as a tool of discerning analysis, it can adopt the mode of insisting that the quality of arguments can be tested by many means, including rationality. (The concept of critical relativism is discussed in Chapter Four, and the ways in which the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism manages its import are expanded on in Chapter Seven.)

It is at this point the thesis, having laid the foundation for discussion of the self and free-will, turns to critics of self-writing to investigate how they manage such complexities. The majority of the critics cited in this thesis are ‘post-modern’. This correlates with the ‘post-modern’ being the majority style of current critical work. However, the thesis also looks at a smaller body of work of a Humanist stamp. Both Humanist and ‘post-modern’ strands of criticism contain strengths, but also weaknesses. The Humanist would like to be better able to provide strong evidence for the nature of the self, and the ‘post-modern’ would like to be better

able to abandon the concept thoroughly. For the Humanist, the self-concept proves more vague than they would like and for the 'post-modern', more stubborn. The 'post-modern' critical strand, as we will see, faces a particular difficulty, in the form of an internal contradiction, but both traditions produce tensions which richly reward discussion.

Ihab Hassan in, 'Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature' and Georg Misch in, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* provide the most clearly Humanist account of the autonomous self. Hassan in particular is well aware of and sympathetic to some 'post-modern' critical approaches. The more obviously 'post-modern' critics analysed are: Lejeune (in, *On Diary*); Hellbeck (in, 'The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response' and, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*); Shirley Neuman (in, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences'); Jacques Derrida (in, 'Envois'); Spacks (in, 'How to Read a Diary'); and Sontag (in, for example, 'The Artist as Exemplary Sufferer', and in her diaries as criticism). However, these often 'post-modern' critics also, to varying degrees and with varying levels of reluctance, display Humanist critical (and philosophical) tendencies. (What the critic Matthew Clark describes as a 'mystic residue' lurks in much current self-writing criticism, and it does so however 'post-modern' such criticism's analytical methods are, Clark 2010: 192.) Critics from both schools often have a complicated relationship with the opposing paradigm. Critics from both schools sometimes concede the range of their tendencies and sometimes do not; their approaches are sometimes nuanced and quite often conflicted.

Critics of self-writing and the self

Chapter Five is an analysis of the ways in which critics of autobiography and biography have approached concepts of self, free-will, and voice and how they have negotiated the questions raised by such concepts. This slight broadening of approach, from the quintessential form of self-writing (the deliberately introspective diary) into criticism that is about autobiography and biography, has the merit of drawing out the parallels between the diary, wider self-writing, and many other literary genres. As was established at the beginning of the introduction, autobiography has traditionally enjoyed a level of critical regard not yet accorded the diary. It is found, in the thesis, that the diary form deserves and would reward similar levels of attention.

In Chapter Five, the critics of self-writing and particularly of autobiographical forms, Ihab Hassan and Georg Misch, are found to favour the view that the self-writer has some claim to an autonomous self and voice, but have some respect for its being a construct. On the other hand, Shirley Neuman in, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences', is most sympathetic to the deconstructed voice and self, but has some respect for its voice and autonomy and is keenly aware of the flaws of the 'post-modern'. Neuman is shown to be a feminist critic of self-writing and 'post-modern' in her general approach. She is also found to admire women diarists or autobiographers precisely for their courage and self-assertion. Her admiration presupposes her female writers' personal autonomy and is an essentially Humanist response. Even as Neuman identifies the two opposing approaches and the competing ways in which they regard the autonomous self, the problems of both the Humanist and the 'post-modern' and certainly the problems of bringing them together are neither fully acknowledged nor addressed (Neuman 1992: 213-231). Finally, Jacques Derrida - in, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* and his criticism, 'Force and Signification' (*Writing and Difference*) and, 'Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name' - is the most committed deconstructionist. And yet, there are deliberate nuances as well as unintended confusions in Derrida's writing on autobiography: notions of self and of an autonomous authorial voice lurk even in his deconstructed world. Derrida's theory

(that his self and free-will are defunct parodies and lack legitimacy) founders on his stubborn awareness of his own self and his critical intent and activity. Thus, even as they are dismissed, the concepts of self and free-will retain their elusiveness.

In Chapter Five it is argued that critics of self-writing are shown to subject texts to a range of methods, but also often to be trapped in their biases. They are also shown to be unclear about how to manage their 'post-modern' approaches with their instincts, which are often Humanist. Though the critics of self-writing analysed are nuanced, under challenge their critiques tend to revert to type or to their favoured credo. The problem is that it is only for the sake of a convenient dialectic that the Humanist self is supposed to be inviolable and autonomous and the 'post-modern' self supposed to have been wholly disassembled and debunked. The conflict between the two schools or models is, literally, for the sake of argumentative tidiness. The difficulty seems to be that a pair of rival hypothetical paradigms both useful as tools in discussion have hardened into opposing orthodoxies.

The core of the problem for critics of self-writing is that whatever their theoretical predilection they may - and often do - find that they approve or disapprove of their self-writing subject. In the degree to which the critic is 'post-modern' this tendency to the *ad hominem* is, paradoxical. It ought, logically, to be difficult to blame or praise a self deconstructed into non-existence. The critic may do so in respect of, for instance, their subject's uniqueness, or their political, moral, or intellectual worth. This is to say that critics treat their subjects as fully fledged persons and ascribe to them a degree of free-will, rather than as social (or cultural, political, and economic) automatons or cyphers. This is, as Chapter One asserts, for two key reasons. Firstly, the personal voice in self-writing is acute and matters. The self-narrative is afforded a degree of, what Spacks has described as, 'dignity' and 'authenticity' if it can be seen as an autonomous utterance (Spacks 2003: 48). Secondly, the tendency to describe the self-writer as free and as having some unique and certain sense of a credible self can in turn strengthen critics' claims to the volition of their own voices. (The issue of critics' utterance is explored in Chapter Three and expanded on in Chapter Seven.)

It is argued that the issue for the criticism of self-writing is not that the Humanist or 'post-modern' paradigms contradict each other, nor is it the problem that the equivocal concept of an autonomous self resists interpretation. It is that when different paradigms are incorporated into criticism and their essentially competing and internally contradictory values are not recognised or fully acknowledged the force of the critical argument is diluted. (The same applies to a lack of critical commitment to laying out the elusive nature of the concepts of self and free-will.) Criticism that does not clearly outline the approach or approaches adopted and the ways in which they are used is in danger of further obfuscating an already difficult issue. Deliberate eclecticism is designed to be forthright about critical ambivalence and is keen to evaluate and pursue but not to reconcile competing approaches, including the competing aspects of the Humanist and the 'post-modern'.

Critics of diary and the self

Chapter Six is an exploration of the work of diary critics, including Philippe Lejeune in, *On Diary*, and Susan Sontag, particularly her collection of essays, *Against Interpretation*. Both are themselves diarists as well as critics. The chapter also analyses the work of Patricia Meyer Spacks and Jochen Hellbeck. As with the critics in Chapter Five, the ways in which diary critics have negotiated (or failed to negotiate) ambiguities surrounding the concepts of self, free-will, and voice contribute to the development, in the thesis, of a critical approach to self-writing.

Again, in essence, whether Humanist or 'post-modern', the goal of current critics of diary is often to celebrate and draw forth marginalised voices. Philippe Lejeune, is described by both Julie Rak and Jeremy D Popkin as powerfully Humanist in his conviction that the self matters. For instance, he is described by Popkin as a diarist who, 'proudly affirms his identity [...]'. This for Lejeune is the essential attraction of diary-writing: it is a realm of freedom, whose practitioners can decide for themselves how to behave, and then change the rules as they please.' (Popkin in Lejeune 2009: 5-6) The Humanist bias of Lejeune's analysis of the diary form, in essays such as, 'The Diary on Trial', accords with Popkin's account. And yet

Lejeune's analysis has elements of the 'post-modern': he sees that persons are heavily influenced by their sociological, political, and cultural contexts. Again, the problem is not that Lejeune uses both approaches; it is that he does not analyse how pathologising the contexts for the self inexorably spills over to pathologising and ultimately, disassembling, the self he so keenly upholds.

In another example, Jochen Hellbeck in, 'The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response' and, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*, is found to praise diaries for the ways in which they empower the individual. Hellbeck describes how an individual's sense of self is compounded by its narration. Simultaneously, and contradictorily, he favours a cultural historicist approach to the self and its narrative which describes it as culturally constructed and describes diaries as tools of a Soviet State fashioning willing individuals in accordance with communist views.

Critics of self-writing, including Derrida, Neuman, Hellbeck, and Lejeune, whilst usefully and necessarily deploying a range of approaches do so with varying degrees of acknowledgement. Though these critics are shown to have internally contradictory views they seldom have a useful approach to discussing the various dimensions of their accounts. And too often their arguments stumble over their partisanship. Chapter Three and Four illustrated that self, free-will and voice have, for centuries, been circled by contradictory and elusive ideas. Chapters Five and Six find that these complexities persist in self-writing criticism and can, if not treated carefully, fox critics. Deliberate eclecticism proposes that losing sight of a range of views, in pursuance of an agenda or for any other reason, exacerbates an already difficult problem.

In Chapter Six, it is argued that the critics who use a range of methods and are honest about their critical ambivalences are found to be most useful in understanding self-writing and self-writers. Susan Sontag, in her criticism of the diary form (in both her personal diary and her professional criticism), and Patricia Meyer Spacks in, 'How to Read a Diary' and in, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*, avoid jargon and are clear about what they want to find in their self-writers. Sontag and Spacks discuss their experiential as well as their

analytical response to the voices they find. 'Raw' is a term deployed by both Sontag and Spacks to describe the style of writing they found in deliberately introspective texts (Sontag 2013a: 41 and Spacks 2003: 55). Raw can also be used to describe the type of responsive analytical approach to self-writing adopted by the two critics. Sontag and Spacks prefer to take their diarists' voices at 'face-value'. But, they also analyse how these voices may have been influenced (culturally, socially, or linguistically). As they dissect the voices they read they are not distracted from hearing them. The merits of Sontag's and Spacks' critical approaches are drawn out in the analysis in Chapter Six. However, it is also found that neither set out to construct a critical approach tailored to the complexities of ideas surrounding the self and free-will as such concepts are reflected on in self-writing. The research illustrates that a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism can usefully and comfortably rest at the heart of critical approaches to the often difficult and elusive concepts of self, free-will, and voice. Ambiguous material is in evidence. Deliberate eclecticism is therefore useful to the critic as they identify, regulate, and systematise this material and are open, clear, and honest about their contradictions and ambivalences.

Further intertextual analysis of Aurelius and Sontag: their angst about self and a critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism'

In Chapter Seven, aware now of discussion of the problematic concepts of self, free-will, and voice, it is possible to return to the deliberately introspective writing of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag and achieve a thorough intertextual analysis of our pair. (The discussion of Aurelius' and Sontag's self-examination, in Chapter Two, raises the problems of reflecting on concepts of self and free-will and prompts us to develop analytical tools with which to robustly discuss them. These tools are developed in Chapters Three to Six.) In Chapter Seven Aurelius' and Sontag's exploration of the many dimensions of self-hood encourages us to engage in a discussion about the self, and sometimes informs it. The intertextual work of this chapter highlights, again, how the similarities and sometimes the differences of the pair can be illuminating for critics of self-writing.

Aurelius and Sontag each reasoned with their self as they tried to understand its nature and dared to improve on it. Aurelius and Sontag both wavered as to the autonomy and the veracity of their reasoning powers and in their opinion of the value of the judgements of others. Aurelius was at times a conformist Stoic and at other times a highly questioning one; at times Sontag was a highly intellectual critic and at others a 'spontaneous' one (Sontag 2013: 290). Their confusions and contradictions remind us of the fallibility of human reflection and self-reflection. But, they also remind us of the merit of deploying different points of view as we try to reason with and understand amorphous subjects. This chapter strengthens the argument that the strategy of deliberate eclecticism offers what this thesis labels a 'high-functioning fallibility'. Deliberate eclecticism is suggested as a critical approach that can navigate equivocal subjects with dexterity, discernment, and equanimity, whilst avoiding dogmatism. It is not a matter of finding a middle way through alternate views; rather it is a matter of accepting, and manoeuvring within, at different times, in different moods, and for different purposes, the value of different views of the self and writing about these concepts. As it weighs up the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments, it avoids both partisanship and crude relativism. (In Chapter Four, a subtle distinction is made between what the thesis calls sophisticated and crude types of relativism.) As will be expanded on in the thesis, deliberate eclecticism, with its high-functioning fallibility, in matters that are inveterately elusive allows elements of the evaluative to thrive alongside elements of critical relativism.

In summary, in Chapter One the deliberately introspective diary is found to showcase a quintessential feature evident in other forms of self-writing: self-reflection. In Chapter Two the deliberately introspective writing of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag is drawn on as a register for the terms and issues surrounding discussion of the concepts of self and free-will; notably, the nature and content of self and the degree to which a person can claim, or be accorded by a critic of self-writing, the ability to act, speak, and write with volition. These concepts are also found, unsurprisingly, to be a feature of the criticism of self-writing. Chapters Three and Four explore early and modern perspectives on these ineluctable and amorphous ideas. Prepared now with a necessary examination of the terms and issues found in the criticism of self-writing it is possible to turn to an exploration of

the critics, including Lejeune, Hellbeck, Neuman, and Derrida. It is found that the criticism tends to become caught in an ambition to be authoritative or all-encompassing; can misjudge the seriousness of the ambiguities at work in self-writing; and can neglect to navigate the tensions between and within competing accounts of the concepts of self, free-will, and voice. In Chapter Seven we return to Aurelius and Sontag, this time the writers serve as a register of issues surrounding the discussion of critical reasoning and especially the autonomous critical voice. It is their practice of reflecting on the self-concept in a written exercise that helps develop the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism; an approach suggested in the thesis as an advance on aspects of current criticisms of self-writing. The conclusion of the thesis reiterates the need for a critical strategy that can navigate indefinite and complex matters clearly. The approach of deliberate eclecticism is such a critical strategy. Additionally, it is concluded that deliberate eclecticism, though initially designed as a response to problems in self-writing, has critical qualities that can be applied more broadly. Criticism, like much self-writing, is an activity, a process, even an exercise, much more than it is a hunt for definitive answers or theoretical purity. Along the way critics and readers will often find value in some highly theoretical writing just as they will in some wildly subjective writing. It is to the critical exercise that I now turn.

CHAPTER ONE

The diary: from the quotidian to the quintessential

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Defining the diary
3. The diary as self-reflection
4. Extempore, spontaneous, and fragmentary diary entries
5. Honesty and frankness in the diary
6. The private diary
7. Writing as exercise and 'hypomnemata'
8. The daily diary
9. The diary is different

Diary entry from Mary Powell, John Milton's wife:

1643 I have Nobodie now but you, to whome to tell my little Griefs; indeede, before I married, I know not that I had anie; and even now, they are very small onlie they are soe new sometimes my Heart is like to burst. I know not whether 'tis safe to put them alle on paper, onlie it relieves for the Time, and it kills Time and perhaps, a little While hence I may looke back and see how small they were.¹

1. Introduction

Chapter One is a clarification of the term 'diary' and is an anatomization of the form which produces a family of characteristics associated with diaries. The characteristics are placed in a spectrum running from the quotidian to the quintessential. Diarists can elect to use characteristics from this spectrum in a

¹ Powell's entry highlights a selection of diary characteristics expanded on in this chapter, including the idea that diaries sometimes act as confidante; are often written in private and kept a secret; and are often written in each day or, at least, entries are written regularly and chronologically. Consciousness of the manner in which 'time' or one's life-time passes is often significant to diarists. Powell imagines that her diary is a record that she will reflect back on: diaries are often written for reasons of posterity. By being often written informally and in private, for example, the form lends itself to self-reflection. The way in which the form nurtures self-reflection, in combination with its structure (its often calendar based format), means it is described by critics as mapping out and providing coherency to what might otherwise be conceived by the diarist as disparate events and experiences, i.e., the structure and unity of the self-narrative perhaps lends unity to a writer's memories and experiences. For Powell, the coherency of the form can lend coherence to a person's past and present experiences of self, and offers the hope of, in the future, 'looking back at problems and seeing how small they were'.

variety of permutations, but the diary will almost always be, in a vital and fundamental sense, personal. The critical approach to self-writing proposed in the thesis derives, to some degree, from scrutiny of a particular form of diary: the deliberately introspective. That is, obviously, a very personal type of writing. Chapter One describes how this quintessential diary form, introspective, acutely personal, puts in high relief issues surrounding the discussion of self, free-will, and voice.

The terms and issues associated with the self, free-will, and voice – and the discussion of these concepts in the thesis - are introduced by Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag in Chapter Two, and further analysed in Chapters Three and Four. A key finding in all these chapters is that the ideas of self and personal autonomy are provocatively elusive and the often competing approaches to them internally contradictory. We will explore how the complexities of self and free-will cause our chosen pair angst, and have particular implications for critics of self-writing. These include: ascertaining who or what is represented in the deliberately introspective text; who or what guides critics' responses to that text; and how both should be evaluated.

2. Defining the diary

Visitors to a stationery shop will often find a standard and expected form of diary: a book formatted for daily handwritten entries. This design can be described as the 'pro forma' diary. Standard definitions agree on the daily aspect of diary-keeping. But a diary might fulfil this rudimentary and pro forma requirement and be an ordinary notebook or a sheet of paper. In *The Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Martin Gray's basic description for diary is: 'A day-by-day record of a person's life, written for his or her own use and not necessarily with any intention to publish it.' (Gray 1992: 87) There are open questions as to whether a diary can be fictional; whether it must be, or can be, an honest portrayal of a person's life; and whether it is a form with conventions which must be abided by.²

² Obviously, there are famous examples of fictional diaries, namely Samuel Richardson's, *Clarissa* or, more recently, the diaries of Bridget Jones and Adrian Mole. However, as these are based on fictitious characters and events they do not bear direct relation to the diaries written by living (or deceased) persons about their lived experiences. If a diary can be both about fictitious characters and events and written by individuals about their lived experiences, there is a question as to

The family of characteristics for the diary form, proposed in this chapter, recognises and observes these nuances. It builds on taxonomies produced by William Matthews, the noted bibliographer of diaries, and Philippe Lejeune, the oft-cited critic of diaries (both of whom were first mentioned in the introduction to the thesis).³ Diary-writing is shown to be, variously, regular, frequent, spontaneous, extempore, fragmentary, dated, frank, honest, private, personal, and introspective; quite often diary-writing is undertaken as an exercise (that is: for its own sake as an often habitual process). It is useful to remember that the order for the characteristics has been chosen because it generates the idea of a spectrum running from the quotidian (in the sense of routine and usual) to the quintessential (in the sense of integral to or at the inner heart of diary-writing). It is *some* permutation of these characteristics that will constitute a diary; invariably no two diarists will elect to use the same set as they write their diary.

Diarists have written on a daily basis but also infrequently and with an eye to producing a synopsis, in one entry, of many missed days. Some write spontaneously, but after months of silent and unwritten reflection. Many diaries are written as though for private consumption, but actually with an eye to posterity or publicity, sooner or later. There are also 'professional' diaries kept by politicians, scientists, psychologists, and patients (recording their experience at the hands of professionals). Some diarists veer toward the impersonal, in the sense that some writers may not be very or at all introspective and may be recording outside events - perhaps selected according to some agenda not their own - and as objectively as possible. However, and even so, what the diarist chooses to reflect on demonstrates, to some degree, a personal preference. And what seems objective to some may well seem subjective to another.

Diarists are not always entirely clear – certainly not always objective – in their own reasoning as to their diary-keeping. Diaries clearly fulfil very personal and varied

which of the two is representative of the diary form? When does fact become fiction, and vice versa? For further reference to the tenuous nature of fixing definitions and terms for self-writing forms see the first section of the introduction to the thesis. For further discussion of the varied nature of diarists' motivations see bibliography for Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and their Diaries* (Mallon 1995: 60).

³ For further reference to Matthews' and Lejeune's taxonomies see: (Matthews 1977: 299-300) and (Lejeune 2009: 168-175, 'Composing a Diary'). For further reference to diary characteristics see bibliography for Matthews, 'The Diary: A Neglected Genre' (Matthews 1977: 290-300) and, *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written Between 1442 and 1942* (Matthews 1967) and Lejeune, 'The Diary on Trial' and 'How Diaries End' in, *On Diary* (Lejeune 2009).

functions for different people. So, it is hardly surprising that diarists' choices from amongst the diary form's characteristics differ greatly. Eckhard K Kuhn-Osius in, 'Making Loose Ends Meet: Private Journals in the Public Realm', observes: 'It is very difficult to say anything about diaries, which is true for all of them.' (Kuhn-Osius 1981: 166) Whilst this is true, it is both pragmatic and necessary to define, at the least, a spectrum of characteristics. Alexandra Johnson in, *A Brief History of Diaries*, remarks how, in theory, a diary has few gross or general rules by which to define itself, however in practice: 'A diary has hundreds of unwritten rules. Those hissing 'shoulds': keep a diary daily; write only in hardbound journals; record only deep thoughts in perfect handwriting.' (Johnson 2011: 12) The logic of this element of the argument, that there is a spectrum of characteristics for diary forms, is fallible but for practical purposes it is a workable and robust hypothesis and allows for the particular amongst the general. The characteristics explored in this chapter differentiate the diary from other literary forms and provide reference points that make it possible to identify examples of the form and develop critical approaches in keeping with and sensitive to its distinctive characteristics.

Reverend Kilvert (1840-1879) and Queen Victoria (1819-1901) were two committed, British diarists. The content and form of their diary-writing partly overlapped. They were both keenly aware of electing to write, in private, their self-reflective and personal thoughts in a form they called 'diary'. Though they wrote at the same time, there were some obvious differences between them as individuals: one was male, the other female; one a clergyman, the other royalty; and one lived in the country and the other in the court. They also gave different reasons for writing a diary: one wrote to arm against his foreboding sense of mortality and the other to be busy. However, they both wrote frequent, dated, often personal, and (though they may well have had an eye on future publication) seemingly private entries. These two well-known diarists illustrate how though there are similarities between individual diarists there are also pronounced differences. In writing that is for oneself (conducted in and kept private) diarists' idiosyncrasies are perhaps, as is explored in sections five and six of this chapter, permitted a freer or less inhibited reign than would otherwise be the case in writing intended for publication. Reverend Kilvert wrote that it was his desire to leave some evidence of having lived, however humbly, that prompted his diary-keeping: 'Why do I keep this

voluminous journal? I can hardly tell. Partly because it seems a pity that, even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should pass altogether away without some such record.’ (Kilvert 3rd of November 1874, 1999: 9) Queen Victoria wrote that it was a way of being productive, of filling days: ‘I love to be employed; I hate to be idle.’ (Queen Victoria RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W) 27th of January 1835, Lord Esher’s typescript) The entries from the diaries of Reverend Kilvert and Queen Victoria illustrate that both wrote about their ‘lives’, experiences, and thoughts using first-person pronouns (i.e., ‘I’ and ‘mine’); from a first-person perspective; and in the manner of a private and internal dialogue, held within and with the self (as the combination of the first-person subjective and possessive pronoun indicates). As was asserted at the beginning of this chapter the diary is quintessentially personal and by being so it is a forum for self-reflection.

3. The diary as self-reflection

Even at their most quotidian, diaries reveal personal details relating to their writers and are in this sense revealing about the self.⁴ Even the most perfunctory appointment diary reveals what its diarist wanted to remember. Diaries can reveal the writer (and therefore, presumably, the writer’s concept of self) unconsciously. That is: the writers may well not have wanted to be self-revelatory and what is learnt about the writers might have been unintended by them (and might have been regretted by them). Some military and political diaries fall into this category, for instance, the journals of Tony Benn or the wartime diary of Winston Churchill.

It is reasonable to argue that the deliberately introspective diary, which is deployed by its writer precisely as an exploration of the most inner self, can usefully be seen as the purest form of the diary. It takes the personal to the extreme. Thus, the deliberately introspective diary takes to an extreme one aspect of the work which many other diaries cover and many other texts imply.⁵ That is why it is labelled as quintessential in the thesis. The quintessential end of the diary form spectrum is a place where living people self-interrogate (in a subjective mode) and often where

⁴ The exact terms and issues explored in the thesis and pertaining to the self, free-will, and voice, as such notions are described in self-writing, are investigated in Chapters Three and Four.

⁵ Introspection occurs, according to the philosopher Simon Blackburn, when one looks into, ‘one’s own mind, to find what one thinks and feels’ (Blackburn 2008: 197).

they interrogate the idea of self (in an objective mode). Critics of self-writing certainly take this aspect of the form seriously.

Philip Spalding, writing on the diary form in the mid-twentieth century, was a relatively early member of a steadily expanding body of diary academics. He describes a persistent trend in criticism of the diary form; one which sees the development of the diary as revealing the history of self:

The history of the diary in so far as it exists, is that of the development of self-awareness... is the rise of nationality, and within nations the rise of individual consciousness, under the twin spurs of freedom and thought through the Renaissance of classical learning, and freedom of conscience in the Reformation, that prepare the way for autobiography of all kinds. (Spalding 1949: 90)

Spalding emphasises, in the passage above, the view that the development of - 'individual consciousness' - can be interpreted as an ancillary to historical and socio-political developments. From the Renaissance, and through the Reformation, there were increased levels of self-awareness, as people grew ever conscious of themselves as individuals in a state that also had an ever-solidifying, national identity.⁶ Chapter Three is an investigation of terms and issues pertaining to the concepts of self, free-will, and voice. Chapter Three also shows that classicists have identified a rise in self-awareness, which was concomitant to developing notions of statehood, as early as the classical Greek period.⁷

Descriptions of self-awareness can be found in writing that is about the self. Following on from Spalding's observation above, Andrew Hassam, in his study of modern British diary fiction, *Writing and Reality*, describes how: 'Diaries are seen as having a high potential for self-reflectivity.' (Hassam 1993: 19)⁸ Irina Paperno, a

⁶ For further reference see bibliography for Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property, and Social Transition* (Macfarlane 1978: 189-216). Macfarlane's thesis is that historians have tended to sweep over the high levels of self-awareness (in relief to increased awareness of property rights) found during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries AD; this is as they emphasise increased levels of self-regard and self-reflection, even self-obsession, in subsequent and more recent centuries.

⁷ See glossary for specific dates and periods associated with the term 'classical'.

⁸ For further reference to Hassam's work on autobiography see bibliography for, Hassam, 'Parabiography: The Varieties of Critical Experience' (Hassam 1980: 593-612).

historian and literary academic, supports this view: '[The diary] is a mould waiting to be filled; a generic matrix that gives distinctive shape to the experience it records. The diary offers a unique narrative form, or template, for the tracking of self in time.' (Paperno 2004: 571) Research carried out in 1993, by the psychologists Wiener and Rosenwald, and published in, 'A Moment's Monument: The Psychology of Keeping a Diary', indicates that the therapeutic and psychological effects of diary-writing proceed from the self-reflective insights they provide the diarist over time. Wiener and Rosenwald made a number of other observations, three of which are significant here. Firstly, the diarist seeks, in the diary, to make sense of their self-concept as distinct and coherent within the flow of other information in their lives. Secondly, the diary is an externalization of consciousness. Finally, the diary can support accurate memory recall. This research has, most famously and recently, been augmented by the linguist and psychologist, James Pennebaker. In papers that include, 'Forming a Story: The Health Benefits of Narrative' and, 'Experimental Manipulations of Perspective Taking and Perspective Switching in Expressive Writing', Pennebaker provides evidence for the potentially therapeutic affect of deliberately introspective diary-keeping.⁹ So, it has been illustrated that psychologists and literary critics alike view the diary (as it is being written and as a finished product) as an expression of and a medium for reflection on the nature and content of the concept of self and some see diaries as 'therapeutic' aids to or 'templates' for oneself.

In Britain, from the eighteenth century onwards, there was a steep increase in self-reflective diary-writing.¹⁰ The literary critic Susan Levin, in her study of Dorothy Wordsworth's writing and the Romantic era, remarks: 'No concern is so basic to Romanticism as this narrative of self-development, as the story of the growth of the self and its relationship to the external world. For from Rousseau's *Confessions* on, the defining characteristic of Romanticism may be the taking of the individual self as the primary literary topic.' (Levin 2006: 6-7) A reason for large numbers of personal diaries, after the eighteenth century, may be as much

⁹ Pennebaker found that diaries are a forum for self-reflection and a text in which to calibrate and substantiate one's sense of the self with positive effect. For further reference see: (Pennebaker 2011: 926-938).

¹⁰ For further reference to eighteenth-century, self-reflective diary-writing see bibliography for, Garber, *Self, Text, and Romantic Irony: The Example of Byron* (Garber 2014: 1-20) and Matthews, *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written Between 1442 and 1942* (Matthews 1967: Introduction).

technological as it was social, cultural, or personal. Greater availability of writing materials, for instance, coincided with better education for greater numbers. Literacy rates, in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, have been estimated at ten percent of the English population. Denise Murray comments that it was not until the 'end of the eighteenth century that illiteracy began to decline to near 50 percent [in Europe]' (Murray 2000: 47). So, prior to the eighteenth century only a small minority of the population were literate enough to write diaries, whatever their inclination to record their lives and even if they could afford the materials or leisure required.

The European Reformation (circa 1500s) produced the puritan diary. Puritan diaries dealt directly with the religious feeling and moral fibre of their writers.¹¹ Philippe Lejeune, Margo Todd, Bernard Capp, and Stuart Sherman link these Western sixteenth-century diaries with a specifically spiritual or theological 'self-fashioning' (Todd 1992: 236-264). The narrative of self becomes, in this context, an instrument of the pilgrim, seeking virtue, in the eyes of God and salvation. However, it was also an instrument of the church, seeking to instil in its members concepts of self that accorded with theological edict. This development in the diary form's history harks back to St Augustine's *Confessions*, written twelve centuries before the Reformation. The *Confessions* are St Augustine's spiritual account of himself to God. So, though it is a general observation that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's, *Confessions*, published in the late eighteenth century, mark a significant moment in the gathering pace of self-reflection in the West, interest in the nature and content of self can be noted much earlier.

Famous diaries from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries include those of Lord Byron, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, and Yuri Olesha, all of whom reflected on the self. Their diaries range from the Romantic to the Modernist eras, all testify to the enduring subject of self in such writing. The Russian twentieth-century novelist Yuri Olesha's (1899-1960) diaries often refer to the frustration Olesha felt

¹¹ Samuel Ward and Richard Rogers were two such Elizabethan and puritan diarists; for further reference see bibliography for Knappen, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries* (1933). For further reference to puritan or confessional genres of self-writing see: (Capp 1979: 24-25); (Lejeune 2009: 74); (Paperno 2004: 563 and 567); (Ransell 2004: 596); and (Todd 1992: 236-264). Diaries as religious edification, were a form that endured into the early 1900s, especially in the U.S.A. The practice can be found amongst both puritans and quakers; Patricia Meyer Spacks' 'How to Read a Diary' is an analysis of one such diarist, namely, Elizabeth Drinker. For further reference see: (Spacks 2003: 45-62).

when he reflected on a self he could only partially identify: 'So who am I? Who? This question must be resolved, must be answered.'¹² Diarists, often write of the unequivocal presence of an equivocal self. They ask, as Olesha did, 'who am I?' The diarist and twentieth-century British novelist, Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), wondered which self she wrote of: 'True to oneself – which self?' (Mansfield 1954: 70) And Mansfield's peer, Virginia Woolf, wrote in her diary about the complexities of identifying a diarist's audience which may be solipsistic: 'Whom do I tell when I tell a blank page?' (Woolf 1984: 341) This thesis does not include an analysis of the development of self throughout history. What is pertinent here is that deliberately introspective writing hinges on self-reflection.

Purvis' and Longstaff's entry for 'diary' in, *The Encyclopaedia of Gender and Society (EGS)*, summarises some of the ways in which diary-writing is significant. (The aspects of diary-writing Purvis and Longstaff remark on can be seen as running from the quotidian to the quintessential, in the manner of the characteristics described in this chapter.) The co-authors describe how diaries are an important daily account or report and, more profoundly (and problematically), are often taken to represent self-writers' 'highly subjective... private lives' and their resilience to 'grand-narratives':

The diary is a literary genre that reports and chronicles the experiences and events of a particular day in the life of one individual. The account is usually written in the form of a first-person narrative and provides subjective reflections covering a wide range of topics. The diary, which can be distinguished from the genre of autobiography, usually refers to a given period in the diarist's life. The account can be highly subjective and is often written in direct response to events that highlight some of the conflicts of living public and private lives... If official history serves as a grand-narrative, often written from the male viewpoint, then the diary functions as a micro-narrative. (Purvis and Longstaff in EGS 2008: 197)

¹² For further reference to Olesha's diary see bibliography for Wolfson, 'Escape from Literature: Constructing the Soviet Self in Yuri Olesha's Diary of the 1930s' (Wolfson 2004: 609-620).

Purvis and Longstaff support the argument (first made in the introduction to the thesis) that 'private' narratives (in this case those recounted in the diary) are often conceived as being in 'conflict' with 'grand-narratives'. 'Grand-narratives' (and 'metanarratives') are portrayed by Jean-François Lyotard as taking different forms, for example, they can be explicitly dominant and demonstrably powerful or they can control the individual and their narrative by more covert means: 'The narrator must be a metasubject in the process of formulating both the legitimacy of the discourses of the empirical sciences and that of the direct institutions of popular cultures. This metasubject, in giving voice to their common grounding, realizes their implicit goal.' (Lyotard 1984: 34) There is an already well-articulated and generally accepted futility to describing power as centralised to a single and clearly visible entity. Power takes on different forms, at different levels, and influences many subjects.¹³ The power ascribed to such dominant narratives (be that power covert or obvious, linguistic or historical and cultural), according to structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist approaches, manifests in a range of devices, including symbols, signs, tropes, discourses, individuals, and institutions. Purvis and Longstaff describe the diary as a type of 'first-person' counter-narrative to 'the male viewpoint' or 'official histories'. They argue that - in the diary - diarists can delineate a 'highly subjective' and 'private' view of the self from 'grand-narratives'.¹⁴ The proposition that a diarist is able to determine, assert, and narrate a 'private' class of self is linked to concepts of personal autonomy.

Authorial volition, intention, and 'authority' are recurring issues for critics of self-writing (writing in which the self-writer's presence, and the writer's experience of self, are often writ large). It is also an issue in current critical approaches to

¹³ For further reference to this well-articulated idea in psychology see bibliography for Baumeister, *Public Self and Private Self*, (Baumeister 2012: 99-116) and for its discussion in sociology see bibliography for Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1977: 72-95). For further reference to the power networks that have been described by sociologists and literary theorists alike as proliferating at different levels of civilisation see bibliography for Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence* (Giddens 1985: 61-72). For further reference to how literary critics describe powerful forces, extraneous to or not under the control of the author, as abnegating the autonomy of the writer - or their utterances - see bibliography for Eagleton et al., *Modernity, Modernism, Postmodernism* (Eagleton et al. 2000: 12-20) and Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1997: 35, 40, 49, 56, 301, and 304). It is an idea that has also been articulated, famously, by the writer, Flaubert and the semiotician, Saussure and, more recently, by the writers, Barthes and Foucault. For further reference see bibliography for Walder et al., *Literature in the Modern World* (Hirsch in Walder 1992: 48-55; Adorno in Walder 1992: 89-99; Sartre in Walder 1992: 202-207; and Benjamin in Walder 1992: 357-362).

¹⁴ For further reference to Lyotard's discussion see bibliography for Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Lyotard 1984: 19-23). In the excerpt from Purvis and Longstaff they also use the term 'micro-narrative'. It is worth noting that Lyotard thought the 'little narratives' (of small powerful forces, working within larger and also powerful forces) could influence individuals as irresistibly as those of larger institutions.

literature, more broadly. Martin Montgomery et al. neatly summarise the changes over several centuries in the status accorded by critics to the author and his or her autonomy:

There are different views about the author's role in creating a text and about how the author relates to other people's texts and the ways of writing which precede and surround him or her (the tradition). One view is that the author is a skilful agent who draws upon the tradition, but is less important than the tradition itself; this is associated with literary criticism and attitudes in Britain from the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, Romanticism offered an alternative view, according to which authors find the material for their work within themselves. This places the author at the centre of writing... This view... survives today as a popular "common-sense" view... There is another way of being interested in the author... an attention to the relation between the author's life and works can be a way into thinking about the ways in which historical circumstances shape the creation of texts through the author. It is also possible to see the author as the representative of a particular group... [the] post-structuralist argument represents a radical overturning of the authority of the author and of those institutionalised ways of reading which are centred upon it. (Montgomery 1996: 232-237)¹⁵

In the passage above, Montgomery et al. begin by describing how traditionally, 'the author has been at the centre of writing'. The author is described as a 'skilful agent'. Montgomery et al. move on to describe how 'institutionalised ways of reading', 'historical circumstances', 'groups', and 'post-structuralist' theory represent a 'radical overturning of the [traditional] *authority* of the author'. Thus, the idea of an authorial self that is autonomous; has authority over its authorial voice; and is perhaps the originator of creative outlay is compromised. It is put under pressure by the relocation of authorial volition and intention to an 'other'; for example, an institution, social group, or culture.

¹⁵ Questions of authorial intent or the status of authors' authority in the text, and how this relates to estimations of free-will and to the ways in which self-writing is interpreted are recurring themes in the thesis. If the volition of authors' intentions is seriously compromised there is a distancing effect between the author and the meaning intended in their text. In a text that is so focused on the personal life of its author, for example, the diary, it is clear why these are questions returned to in the criticism of self-writing (by, for example, the critics reviewed in Chapters Five and Six). For further reference to the significance of authorial intention to literature more generally see bibliography for William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy' (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954: 3-18); Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' (referred to in Chapter Four); and McLoughlin and Gardner, 'When is Authorial Intention not Authorial Intention?' (McLoughlin and Gardner 2007: 93-105). For further reference to how authorial intent has been discussed in literary criticism see: (Sontag 2013b: 15-16); (Eagleton 1996: 17, 96, 98, 102, 130-134, 199, and 200); and (Fish 1980: 11, 14-15, 69, 97, 100-101, 171-174, and 271). Querying authorial intent is not new. The Romantics, for example, explored how creative genius was somehow not autonomous, as is evidenced in, for example, the 'Aeolian Harp' motif, and is explored in Coleridge's poem by that name.

As one reads a diary there will be moments when the words are especially resonant, as though one were hearing oneself and that is hardly less true or likely for the reader of the works of any writer, writing about selves which are supposedly fictitious. Matthew Clark, classicist, linguist, and author of, *Structures of Narrative and the Language of the Self*, remarks that: 'Probably every narrative must have some underlying concept of the self and subjectivity.' (Clark 2010: 1)¹⁶ (Clark's work on narrative and the concept of self is returned to in Chapter Four.) The work of the self-described cultural and literary critic, Irving Howe, is explored in Chapter Three. Howe, in keeping with the views of Clark, describes how the self is a recurring concept in writing and finds that philosophers juggle competing versions of it:

German literature seems decisively to show that in some version the idea of the self has been central to the work of many major literary figures these past two centuries, and more problematically, that even Nietzsche, while at some points disdaining the idea of the self, inclines at other points to recoup a version of it. The self, it would appear, can be banished only by a banishing self. At least for purposes of literary discourse - I cannot enter the philosophical discussion - this historical evidence takes on significant weight. (Howe 1991: 76)

Montgomery et al., Clark, and Howe argue that discussions of self and free-will inform not only the criticism of self-writing but broader literary debate. Purvis and Longstaff and Spalding, in their analysis of writing about the self, illustrate that a crucial element of this debate is whether an author's self, and self-expression, can ever be described as autonomous. This section has established that deliberately introspective diaries take to an extreme a quintessential aspect of self-writing: self-reflection. As such, descriptions of the concept of self and of the degree to which writing can be described as a product of self-writers' volition often feature in critiques of self-writing. Moving on from the most quintessential of features the

¹⁶ For further reference to the significance of the concept of self and subjectivity to writing and interpretation see bibliography for Sartre, *What is Literature?* (Sartre 1967: 41-46, in particular his reference to 'primary subjectivity', Sartre 1967: 134-136). In 'Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature', the literary critic Ihab Hassan agrees with Matthew Clark that in literature, more broadly, some form of self-awareness is a constant (Hassan 1988: 420). Hassan comments on the self-concept's presence in literary texts throughout his academic text, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*. Hassan identifies the disassembly of traditional models of self (explored in Chapters Three and Four) in Kafka, Genet, and Beckett (Hassan 1982: Kafka 110 and 138; Genet 156, 161, and 208; and, finally, Beckett 215, 233, 237, and 247). Writing a little earlier than Hassan, the literary critic Georg Lukács in, 'The Ideology of Modernism', explored the extent to which man places 'man' at the centre of literary content (Lukács 1963: 19-27).

following sections consider a selection of the more obviously contentious characteristics claimed for the diary: that is diary-writing as spontaneous, extempore, fragmentary, frank, honest, private and habitual writing as exercise. These characteristics are contentious because, unlike reflection on the self or personal details pertaining to the diarist, they are not found in all diaries.

4. Extempore, spontaneous, and fragmentary diary entries

The terms extempore, spontaneous, and fragmentary capture the idea of the quick expression of a half-framed or emergent thought. They form part of the 'exercise' characteristics of diary-writing (arrived at in section seven of this chapter). The terms reflect the way people 'think aloud' in diaries as a matter of thinking or writing 'in-the-moment'. 'Spontaneous' and 'extempore' might be taken as synonyms. But they are words with importantly, if subtly, different uses and convey different nuances of the diary entry. Spontaneous covers the manner of utterance, as in being unprepared and unrehearsed at least in-the-moment of writing or speaking. One might think long and hard and then sit down and write and still be spontaneous. The preparation for the act of writing or speaking may have been long, and the moment keenly anticipated, and yet the words themselves not formulated. The moment of the act of writing or speaking is allowed to exert its own influence.

Extempore covers the contemporaneity of remarks. These are remarks describing contemporary events or feelings. They are written in the present tense, or in the near-present, or are written at the earliest available moment; or with a strong consciousness of the need to capture the moment and, as it were, frozen in that moment and not edited later. This captures the legal sense of extempore; these are remarks that are fresh, unedited, and in that sense maybe specially provisional and liminal. Extempore captures something about the 'genesis' of the spontaneous remark (it is contemporaneous with an event or feeling) and the 'afterlife' of the remark (once made, it is not tampered with). One advantage of the extempore (as well as the often private and time-lined) diary entry is this: it is written without hindsight. It is writing which foregoes the luxury and pitfalls of editing the experience or even (at its purest) much editing of the writing. In this way, it

captures and maintains the advantage of its being contemporaneous with the events it describes (as a policeman's notes are supposed to). It is written before the writer has marshalled a defence of what he or she did; before the writer can see how events would unfold or before the diarist has had a chance to self-edit. A diary that is written extemporarily or spontaneously is not just an account of a progress (or decline); it is a contemporaneous account; it represents the timeline of a flow of events, but also – especially in a deliberately introspective diary – of the experience of them as they happened.

It is possible that in moments of private communion or in extempore reflection a diarist can find or allow spontaneity in thought and writing which is revealing in a suggestive rather than a prescriptive way. As Lord Byron suggested in his diary: 'When I am tired – as I generally am – out comes this and down goes everything.' (Byron 1990: 50) Spontaneous and extempore writing, and the half-formed thoughts that are their territory, are akin to what Peter Elbow, a specialist on the literary voice, describes as 'freewriting' (Elbow's work is considered more fully in Chapter Three): 'Freewriting may seem crazy but actually it makes simple sense. Think of the difference between speaking and writing. Writing has the advantage of permitting more editing. But that's its downfall too. I am always thinking about the awkwardness, wordiness, and general mushiness of my natural verbal product.' (Elbow 1998: 5)

Extempore and spontaneous diary-writing can take on a shape and an agency of its own. It is a writing exercise or method that leaps ahead (or hopes to leap ahead) of (to paraphrase Elbow) 'awkward' or 'wordy' thought processes, self-delusions, false memories, and forgotten moments; and to achieve a form of relatively unfettered self-expression. And though this type of fidelity to the moment, and what it reveals about the concept of self, may itself be an illusion, it can nonetheless achieve something for the diarist: the unexpected, an emergent and suggestive meaning, or a surprising expression which was sincerely meant, if incompletely understood. By spontaneous it is not implied that such diary-writing is unconsidered. For instance, much deliberately introspective diary-writing is the spontaneous result of a great deal of reflection or analysis and may include finely-worked aphorisms, at least when the aphorism is the gem produced by a quick wit

in-the-moment. This idea of the aphorism neatly takes us to the fragmentary characteristic of some diaries.

Fragments are certainly often a feature of the spontaneous or the extempore diary entry. They are the likely outcome of the spontaneous or extempore approach by being a natural product of the jottings of a flow of consciousness or of self-consciousness. It is reasonable to speculate that the more thoughts are structured sentences, paragraphs and so on, the more they are likely to have been edited; the more a retrospective view has been applied to them; the more they have been re-ordered for the sake of rationale and perhaps for self-justification. Fragments of writing can be jottings of thoughts in their untidy, and perhaps more revelatory, state.

The fragmentary is also worth identifying as its own diary characteristic, and especially of the deliberately introspective diary, not least because it can be the effect of using the diary as a form of exercise. Brevity, and often highly-elliptical brevity, will often suit a diarist who is jotting down a first 'take' on what might become big ideas or feelings, or first sketching out a map of a large or long flow of ideas or feelings. Such reflection on feelings, experiences, or ideas may need to tumble out at speed and in snippets, partly for the fear of their being otherwise forgotten and lost. Such utterance will tend to the gnomic and aphoristic. In her diaries Susan Sontag wrote aphoristically, and wrote about the aphorism as a literary form:

4/26/80 Aphorism. Aphorism features aristocratic pessimism [in the margin:] scorn, cool. Alternative: Aphorism features pessimism and rapidity... Aphorism are rogue ideas... this is all the aristocrat is willing to tell you; he thinks you should get it fast, without spelling out all the details. Aphoristic thinking constructs thinking as an obstacle race: the reader is expected to get it fast, and move on. An aphorism is not an argument; it is too well-bred for that. (Sontag 2013: 512)

Sontag, in this diary entry outlining an idea for an essay in praise of the aphorism, draws out how in its 'rapidity' and demand for concision the aphorism can capture half-formed, 'rogue' thoughts that might escape the hand of a more laboured writer. An aphoristic diary entry might be both finely 'constructed' and

'aristocratically' intellectual ('thinking as an obstacle race') without being stripped of the knee-jerk honesty of less guarded remarks. However, as the next section establishes (and as is found in Chapter Three and its analysis of the recursive processes of a self that is reflective and is reflected upon) complete and honest self-reflection, even when narrated aphoristically and spontaneously, is often considered an ideal.

5. Honesty and frankness in the diary

Amongst the family of characteristics we aspire to the diary, there is a normal assumption that the diarist (especially the diarist writing in private) is honest: 'Critics... often examine why a memoirist chooses to tell the truth about events, how she or he decides to do this, and how truth claims affect our reading of the... work.' (Rak in Sugars 2015: 818) The diary (at least outside fiction) is normally assumed to be truthful: 'It is possible to be sued for writing a memoir or a biography, but not for writing a work of fiction.' (Rak in Sugars 2015: 815) The reader trusts that the diarist is the sole 'author-narrator-protagonist' of that diary (Lejeune 1989: 4). In this way the diarist is sole custodian of their diary-writing. Lejeune describes the unspoken contract between the autobiographer and their reader as an 'autobiographical pact':

By bringing up the problem of the author, autobiography brings to life the phenomena that fiction leaves in doubt: in particular the fact that there can be identity of the narrator and the principal character in the case of narration 'in the third person'... this identity is established without ambiguity... Autobiography is not a guessing game: it is in fact exactly the opposite... The autobiographical pact is the affirmation in the text of this identity (the author-protagonist- narrator). (Lejeune 1989: 1-14)¹⁷

Lejeune's definition of the 'autobiographical pact' is not exactly replicated in the diarists' pact with the reader, or with themselves, and yet it illustrates that in self-writing the author is expected and expecting to be, in Lejeune's terms, the unambiguous and identifiable narrator, protagonist, and author of their text.

¹⁷ In 1971, Lejeune published, *Autobiography in France*, in which he laid the principles of the 'autobiographical pact'. He updated the theory in, *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader* (Lejeune 1982: the relevant chapter is, 'The Autobiographical Contract'). Lejeune restates the idea in, 'On Autobiography' (Lejeune 1989).

However, the 'affirmation' in the text of the author's identity is not 'without ambiguity'.

There is an important issue in the matter of honesty and it has to do with self-deception. A diarist might have every intention of being honest, and struggle to be so: the hardest deception to overcome is self-deception. As Lord Byron wrote in his diary: 'I fear one lies more to oneself than to anyone else.' (Byron 1990: 50) The degree to which a diarist – or indeed novelist, poet, or dramatist - is free and able to be candid about the experience of self in his or her text is a theme Patricia Meyer Spacks has returned to often.¹⁸ She addresses individuals' ability to control the ways in which they privately think of the self in, for example, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, published in 1976 and, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*, published in 2003.

According to Spacks in, 'How to Read a Diary', diaries show-case (in Spacks' terms, 'substantiate') the type of 'ambiguous' self-exploration novels hint at:

Novels remind their readers in many ways of the layers of disguise that envelop the personality, hinting that the attempt to share all thoughts and feelings amounts only to a final disguise. Diaries may substantiate the point, inviting their readers to invent a personality for the voice that speaks through them. Whether they ostensibly reveal an inner life or confine themselves to external detail, they provide wonderfully ambiguous material for interpretation. (Spacks 2003: 62)¹⁹

Of particular value here is Spacks' description of how a diarist, aspiring to honest self-reflection, will produce a narrative with - as it were - several layers and channels within it. In the next chapter, Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag are shown to have been aware that the notion of the honest self is problematic. They could not be certain what their 'inner' self was or how much control they had over it (Sontag 2013: 233 and Book 7.14). A further dimension of honesty is the idea of

¹⁸ In his paper 'Literature and the Extra-Literary' for a session on 'Imagining the Eighteenth Century: in Honor of Patricia Meyer Spacks', at the MLA National Convention, San Diego, Michael McKeon remarks: 'Repeatedly she shows us how closely the forms of self-hood, narrative, and lived experience are intertwined, as she patiently, persistently, and elegantly unpacks their reciprocal dynamism within their historical and cultural contexts' (McKeon 1994: 11).

¹⁹ The passage reminds us, firstly, that diaries and novels are not the same literary form, secondly, it reminds us that readers do well to adapt to the character of the form when reading, and finally, that diaries can take to an extreme aspects of the work done by novelists. The 'self' that is often at work in literary creation is the first and foremost focus of the deliberately introspective diary.

frankness, which is a form of stubborn openness or commitment to that which one holds to be as full and truthful an account of the self as possible. As William Matthews describes:

As far as possible, the diarist should be frank. A diary is not improved any more than any other literary form by obscurity, scatology, and a lot of four-letter words, but a certain amount of truthful recklessness in reporting things about oneself and other people adds the necessary dimensions to many a diary. (Matthews 1977: 299)

One can be honest but careful and economical with the truth, and canny or discreet. To be frank, as Matthews describes, is to tell the truth and perhaps the whole truth, but maybe especially the truth which may offend the hearer. Obviously, the diarist may want to be wholly honest but for all sorts of reasons avoid full frankness. Such a diarist may resort to being honest (as far as this is at least possible), but discreet. This relates to privacy. The more one assumes one is writing in private or being read only by discreet readers, the more one can in principle risk frankness.

6. The private diary

Private here means, 'for or belonging to one particular person' and 'not to be shared or revealed'.²⁰ Privacy can be presumed to encourage or allow honesty, and perhaps especially of the frank kind. Susan Sontag refers to ideas surrounding privacy, honesty, and frankness in her deliberately introspective diary: 4/26/80 'One doesn't write to others anymore; one writes to oneself. Why? Parsimony? [...] The persona of a notebook is different. More insolent (let's not think about the whiners)' (Sontag 2013: 512). She seems to hope that the diary can be a record of and a refuge for her unmasked self.

Sontag makes a distinction between writing for her private self (the 'oneself') and for 'others'. She makes a distinction between her private 'diary' self and her public 'notebook' persona. However, the distinctions between the two types of self, the public and the private self, are not easy for an individual to maintain or even to

²⁰ For further reference see bibliography for the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2010).

discern. A crucial theme for the two deliberately introspective case studies deployed in Chapter Two, Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag, is reflection on 'oneself' as public or private. Both worry about the degree to which they control their private selves and the public world around them. Sontag, writing for herself, may have written frankly in her diary, because she thought no-one but herself would re-read it. It is also possible to conclude that she was not writing entirely privately or in all honesty about herself. She did not write or live in isolation from the world, though she felt able to write 'to oneself' and not to 'others'.

In *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*, Spacks argues that, to some degree at least, a person is never entirely private. A person in the world regards themselves in relation to the world outside their own, ostensibly, private mind, thus the world is, metaphorically, let into the mind: 'Privacy... if considered historically, often demands focus on the way people expose and guard themselves in relation to limited numbers of others.' (Spacks 2003: 4) Spacks goes on to argue that a person is able (through deliberately introspective diary-writing) to cultivate mental spaces that are more private than public: 'Diaries are the private space in which people work out their intimate relationship with themselves and their intimate relationships with others. Without the privacy of the diary the diarist, the private diarist, loses a space in which to explore, improve on and fetishise this relationship' (Spacks 2003: 21).

Spacks is careful to observe that the relationship between the public and private is not a simple one of conflict. It can be an important part of a person's development of their understanding of the self:

Do we to some extent always have half an eye on the future reader? The person who sneaks a peek at our private lives. The disconnect between the public man and the private man in its Latin meaning speaks of the private man's consciousness of the public, his desire to fit into it or his desire to at least improve himself so that he may better his relationship with it. It is not just a question of improving one's interaction with the public but one's interaction with oneself. (Spacks 2003: 2)

Spacks illustrates that an individual may feel one's private 'interaction with oneself' is encroached upon by the public and that the diary, as a relatively uninhibited space in which to voice one's private sense of self, is able to buffer the individual from some of the effects of these external influences. However, in Spacks' reading, the individual to some extent needs the public. The public can be the measure of private self-development and provides an additional layer of reflective possibilities. There can be no conclusive answers as to who or what are the final arbiters or custodians of a person's thoughts or privacy. However, it is possible to tease out aspects of the interactions and tensions between the individual and, for example, their society, history, or culture. How the world outside or the 'public' affects a person's 'private' sense of self, including Patricia Meyer Spacks' views on this, are considered more fully in Chapters Five and Six.

It is interesting and peculiar that to write in privacy is not incompatible with a diary-writer imagining publication at sometime or other. An element of delayed exposure may be very important to the diarist. This applies most obviously in the case of a writer who may be offending someone else; but it can apply when a writer exposes personal weaknesses. Sometimes, privacy may not merely be temporary as a matter of delay; it can also be a deliberate ploy or conceit. The conceit of privacy can be a useful contrivance to convey a sense of the privilege of confidentiality. The conceit of privacy may sometimes be a device adopted by a shy sort of writer to induce an unaccustomed frankness in their writing. A diarist might want to be true to a commitment to honesty and frankness and at the same time want his or her diary to be read by others. The diarist – with an eye to making their private material, public - can achieve this by taking seriously an idea or conceit of privacy. In some sense the diarist treats putative readers as confidants. It is a paradox that some of the most famous diaries, and especially that some famous highly introspective diaries, were probably intended only for private consumption. In the case of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, civilisation has proceeded to expose to public gaze material the author probably intended to be permanently private and maybe ephemeral.

7. Writing as exercise and 'hypomnemata'

This section describes the 'exercise' characteristic of diary-writing. It is also an opportunity to establish some of the links between writing as exercise and a classical Greek and Roman form of writing as exercise: philosophical and personal hypomnemata (literally, notes made for memory). Diaries, especially deliberately introspective and private ones, often have as a characteristic that they are written exercises: the writer, metaphorically, 'takes out' their thoughts (philosophical, psychological, deliberately introspective, or otherwise) and 'airs' them. And the point of the exercise - is exercise. The exercise of writing may well have stated goals, for instance, philosophical epiphany or psychological or spiritual balance, but the premise is that it is in the doing that these goals are to be achieved. Philippe Lejeune comments: 'Before becoming a text, the private diary is a *practice*. The text itself is a mere by-product, a residue. Keeping a journal is first and foremost a way of life, whose result is often obscure and does not reflect the life as an autobiographical narrative would do.' (Lejeune 2009: 31) In a diary entry from the 20th of April 1919, Woolf describes how the regularity of private diary-writing is a form of exercise: 'The habit of writing thus for my eye only is good practice... I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life.' (Woolf 1984: 120) For Woolf the point of the exercise was to 'learn'. It is a broader rule that the business of writing diaries is the very point of the exercise or, to put it a little differently, the importance or status of the activity of writing equates with that of the written product. The work this type of diary exercise can do for their readers is a by-product of the work they did for their authors as they wrote. For the reader a diary can provide insight into the processes of the writer's (and quite often the writerly) mind.

An example of writing as exercise can also be found in philosophical writing. For instance, it is closely allied to Wittgenstein's philosophy as exercise in notebooks. Wittgenstein did much of his important philosophical work in this way. Ray Monk, a biographer of philosophers, describes Wittgenstein's method for doing philosophy in fragmentary exercises in notebooks: 'As soon as he returned to Cambridge, he reverted to a practice he had not kept since the *Tractatus* had been published: he began to make personal, diary-like entries in his notebooks... it provided a

substitute for a person in whom he could confide.’ (Monk 2012: 267) It is worth noting that Monk’s use of the word ‘confide’ suggests that people who make ‘personal diary-like entries’ do so as a function of a self-awareness that they feel is not automatically public, though self-reflection might be influenced by the world outside it is possible – as Spacks observed in the previous section - to feel that one harbours thoughts that are one’s own and that are - to some degree at least - private.

A master of the philosophical aphorism, Ludwig Wittgenstein, in a posthumously published collection of notes, *On Certainty*, described how the act of spontaneous and fragmentary writing could be revealing in a way that ponderous and lengthy exegesis was not: ‘I do philosophy now like an old woman who is always mislaying something and having to look for it again... I believe it interests a philosopher, one who can think himself, to read my notes... For even if I hit the mark only rarely, he would recognise what target I had been ceaselessly aiming at.’ (Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 1969: paragraphs 532 and 327, in Monk 2012: 578) Monk notes that when readers see the final material they will not see some facilely and falsely structured ‘complete’ piece of philosophical essay-writing. Rather, they will be led to important insights in the work which the very spontaneity of the method reveal better than an explicit structure might have.²¹

Susan Sontag usefully highlights in her diary how this exercise can be a different sort of fragmentary work, not just spontaneous, but also (in a return to a term introduced in section four of this chapter) aphoristic: 4/26/80 ‘The aphorism. The fragment – all of these are “notebook-thinking”; are produced by the idea of keeping a notebook... The notebook has become an art form [...] a thought-form (Barthes), even a philosophical form (Lichtenburg, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Cioran, Canetti)... One doesn’t write to others anymore; one writes to oneself.’ (Sontag 2013: 511) Sontag here observes that in the notebook one no longer writes for others, in the interests of philosophical advancement or art, but primarily, as she did, for oneself. She also links the note form with Barthes’ method of

²¹ For further reference to the use of diaries by philosophers in the development of their theories see: (Monk 2012: 298, 446, and 365). It is worth noting that Lichtenberg, an influence on Wittgenstein’s theory of language, also wrote in note form, especially when he wrote down his philosophical remarks. The same use of aphorism is found in Nietzsche’s work.

subverting traditional ideas of self and writing using equally fragmentary, yet insightful notes (here, one might refer to, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* or to Barthes' anti-autobiographical autobiography, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*). Wittgenstein adopted the note form as part of his philosophical exercise, Barthes as a sort of weapon of the iconoclastic.²²

Philosophical note-taking as exercise is presaged in the classical Greek and Roman world. Hypomnemata were an often coveted literary form for philosophers. It was also the form coveted by Marcus Aurelius as he reflected on notions of self and free-will, both as a philosophical and spiritual exercise. There do not appear to be previous studies arguing for richly suggestive links between hypomnemata in which the personal was the first focus and contemporary diary-writing.²³ Establishing these links supports two key arguments in the thesis. Firstly, that the dilemmas of the self and free-will - and the attempt to manage them - have been, for at least two millennia, enduring philosophical, spiritual, and literary issues. And people have found that the philosophical and spiritual exercise of deliberately introspective writing, if it does not solve the problems of the self, may at least draw them out. Secondly, establishing the links between the contemporary and classical exercise of deliberately introspective writing, is part of making the case, in Chapter Two, for Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* as deliberately introspective writing that can be deployed in conjunction with the deliberately introspective writing of a contemporary diarist, Susan Sontag.

There have been lengthy studies linking classical texts with contemporary autobiography, biography, and memoir (and, as has been observed, few, even

²² Sontag is perhaps led to refer to Wittgenstein, as she considers Barthes' use of the aphorism, because Wittgenstein's work represents a precipitation, in the early to mid-twentieth century, of philosophical concerns with the slipperiness of language and the link between language and meaning. Chapter Four explores how Wittgenstein's work is reflected in the philosophical under-current to much of the 'post-modern's' questioning of the reliability of representations rendered in language and the self-narrative. Strawson describes how: 'Wittgenstein is anxious to make us see the multiplicity between words and sentences' (Strawson describing paragraph 23 in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, 2008: 149). According to Wittgenstein, language and the meaning it signifies are taught in a type of learning game that is exercised within specific frameworks. Language and meaning are constantly re-interpreted. Words and their meaning are not static states or symbols. Meaning is variable, not fixed, and often a constituent of a range of factors, often too myriad to define (Strawson 2008: 149). Barthes and Wittgenstein were prompted to explore literary styles and structures as a way, in part, of circumnavigating what they conceived of as a gap between language and the meanings language is employed to comprehensively represent. Both found the 'note' form (a feature of some diaries) particularly suited to what they wanted to achieve in their writing. In the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein asserts: 'The best I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks' (Wittgenstein 2008: Preface). Barthes was not alone amongst 'post-modern' writers or theorists in his respect for the idea that language and meaning are, if not wholly indeterminate, unreliable. It is, as is explored in Chapter Five, a trope exercised by Derrida, but also by Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka.

²³ See glossary for definitions of the terms 'hypomnemata' and 'contemporary'.

perfunctory, links made between classical texts and the diary). Georg Misch first published his two volume work, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, in 1907; his academic counterparts were Friedrich Leo, Ivo Bruns, and Albrecht Dihle.²⁴ In 1971, Arnaldo Momigliano published, *The Development of Greek Biography*. In the last forty years these authors' investigations into classical forms of autobiography and biography have been supplemented by a number of academics, including Johannes Engels, Frances B Titchner, Holger Sonnabend, and Joseph Geiger. The Brill companion, *Political Autobiographies and Memoirs in Antiquity*, published in 2011 and edited by Gabriele Marasco, is a recent addition to these studies. It represents a careful synthesis and development of its predecessors' opinions. In a similar vein to their predecessors the Brill companion's contributors identify personal themes in a number of classical texts, including hypomnemata and ephemerides.²⁵ The classicist Georg Misch in, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, produced an early (in terms of the development of self-writing criticism) and extensive survey of traits in classical literature that are comparable with those of contemporary self-writing forms, particularly autobiography. (Misch's two volume study was first published in 1907.) Misch defines 'hypomnemata' as:

The word in itself means that something has been "noted down as an aid to memory"... [hypomnemata is] a conception indefinite in itself, simply expressing the absence of artistic elaboration, it served as did its equivalent commentarii, to indicate all the manifold documents in which the writers were concerned only with the contents, and not with any use of the rhetorical style. It was the usual name for autobiographical works, in addition to bios in the sense of "way of life" or "career". It seems that through its use for anything in the nature of memoirs the word hypomnemata acquired a connotation relating rather to the person concerned than to the material of his recollections: portraits being described as "*hypomnema of the body*" and writings as "*hypomnema of the mind*". [Italics mine] (Misch 1950: 186)²⁶

²⁴ For further reference to the work of F Leo, A Dihle, and I Bruns see Momigliano's analysis: Leo (Momigliano 1993: 10, 14, 15, 16, 18-21, 46, 70, 76, 80, 87, 89, and 93), Dihle (Momigliano 1993: 10, 16, 17, 21, 113, 114, and 125), and Bruns (Momigliano 1993: 10, 16, 17, 21, and 51). The trio's contributions to understanding the development of classical literary forms that can be compared to autobiography, are not in translation and understandings of the texts have been largely supplied by Momigliano.

²⁵ All texts assert that one could go as far back as 800 BC, to Homer's heroes in the Iliad and Odyssey, for the earliest Western examples of self-concepts and self-reflection in literature.

²⁶ Misch explains how hypomnemata or ὑπόμνηματα translates to 'notes in aid of memory'. This is comparable with the informal and fragmentary characteristic of some diary forms. The *Etymological Greek Dictionary* confirms that the root μνᾶσθαι, means 'to remember, think of, ponder'. For further reference to etymological work on hypomnemata see bibliographic reference for, Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises: From Their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period*. Dickey defines

This extended passage is provided because it draws out how hypomnemata were intended as 'portraits' 'of the mind'. As such they are comparable with deliberately introspective diaries. This chapter has, for example, visited the 'minds' of Queen Victoria and Lord Byron. Further to this, according to Misch, hypomnemata was the catch-all classical term for a form of acutely personal memoir that was not intended as an exercise in rhetoric or in 'bios'. Importantly, such hypomnemata were notes related directly to the person (rather than to a public or military 'career'). Memoirs are often linked to diaries, however and as is established at the end of this chapter, there are distinctions: namely memoirs tend to be organised systematically and with rather more hindsight and less spontaneity than diary entries. Setting aside, for a moment, these nuances of genre, Misch's comment emphasises how the classical literary form, hypomenmata, were often the highly personal reflections of an individual on their life. As such personal hypomnemata can be linked to later forms of deliberately introspective self-writing.

In *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, Pierre Hadot, a classicist with a particular interest in writing as 'spiritual exercise', describes how classical Greek and Roman hypomnemata were often written as philosophical notes: 'It is probable that many educated people – and especially philosophers - were in the habit of making such collections of all kinds of notes for their personal use: both in order to inform themselves, and also in order to form themselves, that is their spiritual progress.' (Hadot 1998: 30)²⁷ Hadot refers to the Stoic Epictetus' *Discourses*, as a well-known example of philosophical hypomnemata. The *Discourses* were notes on Epictetus' philosophical lectures; they were transcribed and later published by his student Lucius Flavius Arrianus. Unlike Marcus Aurelius' first-person and expressly personal philosophical and spiritual exercise, the *Discourses* did not relate to Arrianus' personal life. (The *Meditations* are shown, in Chapter Two, to be a uniquely long and surviving example of hypomnemata used

hypomnemata in relation to the Greek word for notes: σχόλια. She describes hypomnemata as, 'self-standing commentaries...ὑπόμνημα (sing.) ὑπόμνηματα (pl.)...unified works by a single author' (Dickey 2007: 25-26).

²⁷ For further reference to writing as spiritual and philosophical exercise see bibliography for Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Hadot 1995).

as personal philosophical and spiritual exercise.)²⁸ Hadot and Misch are referring to types of hypomnemata produced after 400 BC.

Before 400 BC and from as early as 550 BC, Cinzia Bearzot describes how hypomnemata were: '[N]otes to aid memory in which content tended to prevail over form, [they contained] material lacking literary pretension to be stylishly embellished by historians. More generally, however, the hypomnemata cover quite a wide semantic area, ranging from mere notes from the royal chancellery to proper historiographic works.' (Bearzot 2011: 39-40)²⁹ Before the Classical Age of Greece, hypomnemata tended to be treated as research notes or as dated archival resources. These informal notes were not intended for public consumption, but as reference material for historians, kings, military leaders, diplomats, and politicians. The private and informal characteristics of these early and prosaic hypomnemata carried through to and perhaps prompted later – less prosaic and more personal and philosophical – hypomnemata. Bearzot describes how hypomnemata, from the Classical Age of Greece onwards, had, 'rather strongly individually characterized... form and content.' (Bearzot 2011: 40) (Writing in private, for personal use, and in an informal literary style can be linked to characteristics for the contemporary diary.)

The use of hypomnemata, during the classical Greek and Roman periods, as written exercises with a personal aim (i.e., the aim to record details of one's life, particularly personal details, as observed by Misch 1950: 186, or personal and philosophical notes, as observed by Hadot 1998: 30) was an incremental development.³⁰ As has been discussed, hypomnemata were initially linked with early classical works of historiography and archival or official reports and became increasingly author-centric and philosophical circa 400 BC. Momigliano argues that by 400 BC:

²⁸ In Chapter Two it is established why it is possible to link the *Meditations* with 'hypomnemata'. For further reference see: (Hadot 1998: 30-32) and (McLynn 2011: 28).

²⁹ Momigliano cites a number of early example of biographical impulses in literature before the Classical Age of Greece, starting in 550 BC, and earlier, if one considers 'mythical biographies', including Homer's 'Odysseus' figure (Momigliano 1993: 24). The evidence is often second-hand (i.e., biographical or autobiographical texts that have not survived but are referred to in historiographies) but compelling and indicates that the impulse to record details of a life, from a personal perspective, was strong, even previous to the Archaic period (Momigliano 1993: 23-42).

³⁰ For further discussion of the parallels between ephemerides, a type of classical archival document, and hypomnemata see: (Momigliano 1993: 89-91) and (Bearzot 2011: 39, 41, 42, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, and 56). Ephemerides, unlike hypomnemata, were first and foremost official archival documents and are not seen by academics as evolving into personal documents.

The exploration of individual lives made enormous progress... [it]... covered new ground. The characterisation of individuals, the art of portrayal and the study of human motives became more subtle... [they] developed...[S]chools of the fourth century developed the art of talking about individuals, including the most important of individuals – oneself. Momigliano 1993: 102)

Academics link an increasingly personal focus in hypomnemata to a broader interest in autobiography during the Hellenistic period and the Classical Age of Greece. Bearzot, Misch, and Hadot discern emerging autobiographical traits in a long list forms, including personal historiographies; encomia; apologia; political, royal, legislative texts; anecdotes or character sketches; administrative or judicial defences; portraits; panegyrics; diatribes; soliloquies; testimonia; eulogies; and funeral speeches. However, according to Bearzot, Misch, and Hadot, the literary form, hypomnemata, took a singularly vivid personal turn (Bearzot 2011: 37-87, Misch 1950: 186, and Hadot 1995: 11, 179, and 209-10).

Monique Trédé-Boulmer - unlike Momigliano, Bearzot, Misch, and Marasco - argues that classical Greeks and Romans did not have literary genres comparable with contemporary self-writing forms. She argues that though there are traits akin to those of contemporary autobiography, such traits do not denote an emerging form of literature (Trédé-Boulmer 1993: 13-20).³¹ A consequence of these discussions, both for and against early forms of self-writing, is that there are arguably traits in classical texts remarkably similar to what is now labelled, in contemporary parlance, 'autobiographical'. It is reasonable to claim that literate classical Greeks and Romans understood what it was to write about oneself and one's experiences (especially during and after the Hellenistic period and before Marcus Aurelius started his *Meditations*) and that autobiographical traits recur in classical literary genres, even if such writing was not then labelled as autobiography.³² Bearzot argues that:

³¹ For further reference to discussion of autobiographical traits in classical texts see bibliographic reference for, Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography Historia Einzelschriften* (Geiger 1985:47); Titchner, 'Autobiography in the Hellenistic Age' (Titchner 1999: 155-163); and Zimmerman, 'Anfänge der Autobiographie in der griechischen Literatur' (Zimmerman 2007:3-9). Where a translation was unavailable, reading was done on my own, supported by cross-referencing with (Bearzot 2011: 37-87).

³² Marasco notes that personal histories were part of a broader concern with history in classical Greece (Marasco 2011: 87-121). For further discussion of hypomnemata and the form's development from historiography to something more like personal records see: (Momigliano 1993: 89-90); (Gray 2011: 9); and (Bearzot 2011: 37-87). Bearzot, Gray, and Marasco

An age of transition in which individual historical figures do progressively emerge, albeit with their merely public image... while in the Classical Age the existence of properly autobiographical texts – that is, having the explicit aim of preserving the memory of significant events in one's life can be disputed - the existence of autobiographical writings in the Hellenistic age cannot be reasonably denied. (Bearzot 2011: 38)

Bearzot goes on to argue that: 'It seems to have been commonplace for Hellenistic kings to keep daily diaries to be preserved.' (Bearzot 2011: 47) And that hypomnemata (circa 400 BC) were, 'a specific branch in memoir writing' and a 'natural' preoccupation for, 'generals, politicians, and kings [in] historical, political, and social contexts in which great monarchies play a key role.' (Bearzot 2011: 39)³³ Based on this research, it is fair to conclude that hypomnemata were a classical literary form, often with strong parallels to contemporary self-writing forms. Definitional tensions remain: neither the contemporary classifications of the contemporary diary nor the contemporary classification of hypomnemata and proto-autobiographical forms are entirely stable.

However, it is evident hypomnemata were often personal, fragmentary, informal, privately, and regularly kept notes or exercises. In the hands of Marcus Aurelius (who also, as Chapter Two evinces, wrote hypomnemata with spiritual and philosophical intent, informally, privately, and regularly) the form was very much a harbour for the inner voice of a self-critical, self-discovering, even self-inventing, certainly self-improving writer who deployed his entries for the work of introspection. Both deliberately introspective classical hypomnemata and contemporary deliberately introspective diaries have been described as working for their authors by allowing a self to converse with itself, and to produce an account of itself. The product works for readers because, whilst it may have some of the characteristics of a book or a conversation, it was and is not necessarily intended that the words would go out into the world. Published (or discovered

provide examples of an increasingly personal flavour in hypomnemata post-350 / 400 BC. Vivien Gray, in her essay 'Classical Greece', in the Brill Companion, *Political Autobiographies and Memoirs in Antiquity*, identifies autobiographical traits in early classical literary works, including works circa 550 BC. For further reference see (Gray 2010: 1-37). Gray's initial focus is on historiography, travel literature, and official personal portraits. The point is that literary accounts or personal portraits of people that are taken to have lived are found as early as 550 BC.

³³ In Greece, before the Classical Age, acutely personal, private, and informal records may have been kept by 'ordinary' citizens, but it has not been possible to find surviving copies of these in primary or secondary resources. This is an area for future study.

unpublished) deliberately introspective diaries allow us to become the privileged spectators of another person's interiority, and often the most telling of them will have been produced in the spirit of hypomnemata.

8. The daily diary

The observation that the conventional format for a diary (often) lends itself to daily entry-making is hardly contentious; however, it is worth briefly exploring the ways in which the diary format is linked to time. This section is concerned with diaries in which the dates of entries are important (whether they are strictly daily, or in any way regular, being secondary). After all, time has been an aspect of much scholarly research into texts which involved the diary form.³⁴ For millennia, dated commentaries have been found in annals, chronicles, almanacs, and other formal records. They were and are crucial documents, not least in allowing the flow of events, or their timeline, to be assessed. These formal time-concerned texts continued to fulfil their original purpose as records of state or other activity, not least by leaders and their officials. But gradually they also became documents in which personal notes were made in a dated format.³⁵ There are three noteworthy types of dated, sometimes regular and even daily, records which became documents in which people added details of their subjective experience and have therefore been linked with the development of the fully-fledged, often deliberately introspective diary form. Dated records thus, in present terms, shifted from the quotidian to the quintessential end of the diary spectrum.

The earliest of the texts, linked to the development of the calendar based design of the diary form, is the almanac. Almanacs started as star charts, around the

³⁴ For further reference to the significance of time in the diary and to the formation of diarists' self-concepts (as they narrate their past, present, and future concepts of self in the diary) see: (Lejeune 2009: 29-51 and 51-61), (Matthews 1977: 286-300), and (Sherman 1996: 56). Neuroscientists have also taken an interest in the links between narrative and the coherence of self-identity over time, for further reference see bibliography for Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (Damasio 2012: 'An Architecture for Memory', 130-157 and 'The Autobiographical Self', 210-241). In Chapter Six, J Hellbeck, I Paperno, Sontag (as professional critic), and Spacks are also shown to discuss the relevance of temporality in the narration of the self. A comprehensive study of the link between time and the calendar based design of diaries from the seventeenth century onwards, has been carried out by Arianne Baggerman, the Head of the Centre for the Study of Egodocuments. The theme is returned to in Chapters Three and Four, as a matter of philosophy and of narrative identity.

³⁵ For further reference to ricordanzes see bibliography for, Bruker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati* (Bruker 1967: 39). For further reference to almanacs and the diary form see bibliography for Capp, *English Almanacs 1500-1800: Astrology and the Popular Press* (Capp 1979: 238-270). And to accounting books generally, but also ricordanzes, see bibliography for Carruthers and Espeland, 'Accounting for Rationality: Double Entry Bookkeeping and the Rhetoric of Economic Reality' (Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 31-69).

sixteenth century BC, and gradually became public calendars and one-stop information shops. It is widely contended that the almanac was a forefather format to the appointment diary. Though the daily form of the almanac corresponds with the daily diary it should be noted that the printed almanac contained information about what *would* happen. It was in almanacs' margins that people began to note what *had* happened. Chronicles and annals are time-dependent accounts of historically significant moments (such texts appear around 300 AD). Ricordanzes are account books which were dated, often elaborately descriptive, notes on financial matters (and were made from about 1300 AD).

The consensus amongst academics such as Arianne Baggerman, Philippe Lejeune, and Stuart Sherman is that increasing observance of time, from the 1550s onwards, meant time (the past, present, and future) and the need to record time – and how one passed time - became a pressing concern. It is as though, as the counting of minutes became an exacting discipline so to did accounting for the minutiae of one's life and even oneself. In *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form 1660-1785*, Sherman writes of the Western diary form's relationship with time in the seventeenth century AD: 'It was the diary... that rose as the form that could grasp most effectively the new temporality – and could respond.' (Sherman 1996: 67) An interest in the personal and an emphasis on self-expression marched in time with these developments. The personal can also be found in official documents, sometimes as scribes and clerks (including monks) found themselves adding marginalia to the texts they were working with. Sometimes, rulers added their own comments (or orders) to dated records, and the timed, formal entry leaps out as having become personal. Alongside these developments the idea of the journal as something very highly personal also gained traction, with the quintessential diary (described here) gaining ground in its own right.

And of course, the most common diary form of popular culture cliché remains one in which an angst-ridden youngster takes a Christmas present diary and – at least for as long as the New Year's resolution or the anxiety lasts – turns it into a daily outpouring of daily occurrences jumbled up with intense introspection. That a diary is written daily is a widely accepted characteristic of the form. However, diarists

may not write daily and often when they do choose to write (especially in the case of Sontag or the puritan diarist Samuel Ward) conflate days and months into a condensed passage reflecting on the overall impression left, but not the detail. Time is also relevant when, in Chapter Three, we consider how concepts of self are seen to both change and remain static, over time.

9. The diary is different

The characteristics reviewed in this chapter illustrate how diaries are a special class of literature. Excluding fictional diaries or the diary as a fictional device, the diary form is, above all, populated with peoples' personal accounts of their lived experience. Even at their most dishonest or delusional diarists are writing about a lived experience. A diary, particularly a private diary, can be described as convention-light compared to the published novel, poem, or play. Novels, poems, and plays, for example, ask the writer to adopt a persona or personae and to make their writing accessible or pleasing to others. In seclusion, diarists are less likely to feel duty-bound to please anyone or anything except themselves. They can make of the form what they will, stylistically as well as thematically, without concern for how their writing will affect other people.

There are a number of literary forms closely linked to the diary, including the journal (usually thought of as more formal than a diary), the memoir, compilations of private letters, and autobiography (even biography). The commonality is that they were or are, usually, a living person's (or a person who was known to have lived) perspective on events they are (or were) a part of. These diverge from the diary – especially its spontaneous and extempore form – in that they are usually carefully considered and retrospective; they are often written with hindsight; and tackle longer periods of time. Lejeune's definition of autobiography remarks on its retrospective attitude: 'Definition: retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality.' (Lejeune 1996: 4) Memoirs, autobiographies, and letters are often writing with some intended public significance, whether immediate or delayed. Further to this, memoirs are written as a form of extended anecdote, a snap shot of life, told for its effect and

coherence or its social, political, or cultural significance. In *Unreliable Truth: On Memoir and Memory*, Maureen Murdock distinguishes the memoir thus: '[A] memoir is a slice of life about which a writer muses, struggling to achieve some understanding of a particular life experience. A successful memoir demonstrates a writer's slow coming to awareness...some understanding of how her consciousness is working.' (Murdock 2003: 49) The diary is also a snap shot of life, but it is told through a series of snap shots taken with maybe less eye on composition, with spontaneity.

It is worth noting that the diary even stands apart from its closest cousin. William Matthews describes how the journal and the diary, though often confused with each other, are on close inspection markedly different:

The two terms are often used interchangeably. Samuel Pepys usually called his own diary a journal, for instance, but the crux of the difference between a journal and a diary lies in the matters of formality and personality. A journal is usually written to a plan: the writer sets out to record certain types of occurrence or experience in regular fashion, and usually he has from the beginning a specific and limited objective and a clear idea of what he intends to do and what use will be made of his record. Commonly he has an audience in view, and this usually affects the way he writes. (Matthews 1977: 286)

The salient difference Matthews remarks on is that journals are planned and addressed to an audience in a manner not common to diaries. However, despite its distinctions from other forms of literature, including other self-writing forms, the deliberately introspective diary and study thereof in the respect it addresses issues of relevance to other forms of writing, such as the concepts of self and authors' volitions, has broader significance. So, whilst this chapter shows some of the ways the form differs from other literature, it also illustrates how the form epitomises some too.

In this chapter the case has been made for a family of characteristics which deserve the expression, 'diary'. Further, that there is a diary spectrum from the quotidian to the quintessential, and good reason to focus on the quintessential end of the spectrum. The diary has also been delineated as its own form, not lightly to

be confused with its self-writing cousins (for instance, the journal, memoir, and autobiography) that also deal with the highly personal and often contain dated entries. From the generality of the diary form, and from the widest definitions of diary, this thesis refocuses on a specific area, and does so because it is at the inner heart of the quintessentially diaristic: the deliberately introspective diary and its concern with the introspection of a self.

Chapter One fulfils the first stage of the argument made in the thesis: that reflection on the concept of self finds its apotheosis in deliberately introspective diaries and as such it is a crucial issue to self-writers and to critics of self-writing. The self, free-will, and voice are subjects that critics of diary, self-writing, and other forms of literature are perhaps bound to address. Finally, Chapter One has found that hypomnemata, in which the personal life of its author is the first focus, to be a classical literary form with strong parallels to contemporary diary forms. The argument that hypomnemata have relevance to the study of diaries supports the selection of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* as deliberately introspective writing.

The next chapter is an introduction to the deliberately introspective writing of Aurelius and Sontag; their writing reveals the key terms and issues associated with discussion of the self. Chapter Three and Four are an interrogation of these terms and issues. It is found that often competing and unresolved approaches to ambiguous concepts of self, free-will, and voice are internally contradictory. These elusive concepts have caused consternation across millennia. And have so whether they are viewed through the prism of subjective and deliberate introspection (in the case of Aurelius and Sontag, as they interrogated and reasoned with their visceral sense of self) or from, ostensibly, more objective critical viewpoints (in the case of the critics and philosophers referred to in the thesis, as they attempt to critically analyse and reason with multiple and variable concepts of self). It is the aim of the thesis to develop a critical approach that can support the reader and critic as they navigate such contradictory and elusive concepts in the diary, self-writing, and other forms of literature. The critical approach is introduced in Chapter Four as deliberate eclecticism. The approach is developed (in Chapters Five and Six) in light of the ways in which current critics have approached the concept of self and self-writing. In Chapter Seven, armed

with these theoretical and critical insights, it is possible to return to the deliberately introspective writers: Aurelius and Sontag. Intertextual analysis of their writing, in the next chapter, finds them as instances of all the dilemmas of self described in the thesis. They are by turns self-aware and naïve; commanding and lost; individualist and inhibited; logical and muddled; introspective and sometimes outward looking. It is as though they command all the material in the thesis and are bemused by it. The pair's angst makes sharp and poignant the need for a refined critical approach to the complexities of reflecting on the concepts of self and free-will.

CHAPTER TWO

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag: deliberately introspective writers 2,000 years apart

Contents

1. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Susan Sontag's diaries
2. Marcus Aurelius and his hypomnemata: the *Meditations*
3. Marcus Aurelius' introspection
4. Susan Sontag's introspective diaries
5. A summary of how Aurelius and Sontag act as guides for the thesis

Diary entry from Benjamin Robert Haydon:

December 1821 - I cannot write [...] The last day of 1821. I don't know how it is, but I grow less reflective as I get older. I seem to take things as they come, without much care.

Diary entry from Susan Sontag:

May 1965 A spiritual project – but tied to making an object (as consciousness is harnessed to flesh). [Sontag's brackets] (Sontag 2013: 86)¹

¹ Haydon's and Sontag's entries amplify a subject addressed in the thesis: too much self-reflection can be counter-productive to nurturing the 'full[ness]' of self. The 'full' self referred to here can be described as 'less reflective' (Haydon 1821) and 'spontaneous' (Sontag 2013: 290). Sontag was concerned that too much self-analysis (too serious a 'spiritual project') would distance her from a (potentially), 'full... self' (Sontag 2013: 280). This is problematic because without at least *some* reflection there is *no* reflection and thus, a limit on awareness of the 'full... self'. (An additional issue is that of recursive self-reflection, this issue is explored in Chapter Three.) Sontag, using Heidegger's and Sartre's terminology, refers over ten times to her 'project of self-transformation' (i.e., her 'spiritual project') and to the 'authentic self' at least four times (Sontag 2013: 315 and 278). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger refers to the 'potentiality-of-being' as, 'authentic' (Heidegger 1996: 247-250 and 272-282; in particular, 'The Attestation of Da-sein of an Authentic Potentiality-of-Being...', 1996: 247). In *Being and Time*, Sartre differentiates a type of self that is conscious of itself and of its contexts - 'for-itself' - and a self that is in a more pre-reflective mode - 'in-itself' (Sartre 1992: 22). The 'full' self Sontag aspired to was, perhaps, equated with 'in-itself'. However, 'in-itself' is pre-reflective, it is inert and it is 'for-itself' that is actively self-conscious. 'For-itself' is in this way – according to Sartre - a negation of 'in-itself' (in Sontag's phrase, 'for-itself' is 'consciousness... harnessed to flesh' and, in her view, sometimes uncomfortably so). Sontag, though she aspired to a 'spontaneous' self, also felt that to *not* be consciously analytical carried the danger of rendering her being passive; in the manner of Sartre's static 'in-itself' (Sontag 2013: 290). Sartre's 'in-itself' can be compared with Heidegger's 'sein' or 'being' and aspects of Heidegger's 'da-sein' or 'being there' can be identified in 'for-itself'. For further reference see: (Heidegger 1996: 26-29, 32-39, 40-48, 61-63, 77-82) and (Scruton 2002: 166 and 269-280). Heidegger, in particular, seems to argue that 'being' is to 'do' (i.e., action) and not to lose oneself in introspection. Aurelius asked: 'What are you yourself?' (Book 8.40) He found that, on close examination, the self he tried to know, so he might develop it, became increasingly problematic. If Aurelius had cared less, as Haydon perhaps came to, and Sontag sometimes aspired to, he may have been less troubled. Sartre's 'for-itself' faces a separate problem: living in 'bad faith'. That is to live in denial of one's freedom. Sartre's 'project' (Sartre 1992: in, chapter 'Presence to Self'), is to identify one's freedom without fear. Not being in 'bad faith' (i.e., not resisting or twisting one's freedom) is perhaps the type of 'full' self Sontag was referring to (Sontag 2013: 280 and Sartre 1992: 116). In Chapter Three, living in accordance with one's freedom is found to be for many Stoics a preferred type of self and one that is comparable with the type of self Sontag explored. Sontag's autonomous concept of self was explored with different parameters to Aurelius' more Stoic conception but for similar reasons.

1. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Susan Sontag's diaries

The first section of Chapter Two describes the ways in which Marcus Aurelius' deliberately introspective *Meditations* and Susan Sontag's equally introspective diaries, *Reborn 1947-1963* and, *As Consciousness is Harnessed to Flesh 1964-1980*, support the aim of the thesis (which is to develop a critical approach to self-writing that can manage the complexity of issues crucial to its work: those pertaining to the concepts of self, free-will, and voice). The deliberately introspective writing of the pair is an insightful and penetrating register for the often challenging terms and issues typical to discussion of the self, free-will, and voice. Though separated by almost 2,000 years and despite some obvious differences, including gender, profession, historical antecedents, language, social norms, social position, political climate, and education, Aurelius and Sontag shared a preoccupation with notions of the self, free-will, and voice. Crucially, the pair had a similar angst over what they found. They are an apt demonstration of an argument in the thesis: that the concepts of self, free-will, and voice are amorphous and are party to often competing and internally contradictory perspectives. In addition to this, Aurelius and Sontag make the point that the problems of reflecting on concepts of self, though not ahistorical or acultural, matter to people with different backgrounds and from different periods of time. Thus, they augment an additional argument in the thesis: that concepts of self, free-will, and voice are enduring and influential in self-writing (indeed in almost all writing that is written and read by anyone with even a small degree of self-awareness).

The pattern of terms and issues set out by Aurelius and Sontag (in this chapter) is analysed in Chapters Three and Four. This examination of the concept of self, so vital to self-writing and its criticism, is a foundation for the discussion of self-writing and its criticism, in Chapters Five and Six. Aurelius and Sontag are exemplars of the type of material a critic (or amateur reader) of deliberately introspective self-writing will often be drawn to address. In Chapter Seven, armed with a fuller analysis of the concepts of self and free-will, and the relevance of these issues to self-writing criticism, Aurelius and Sontag are returned to for a full and proper intertextual analysis. Their reflections on and evaluations of the concepts of self

and free-will are expanded on. It is found that the pair amplify the usefulness of the critical approach to self-writing proposed in the thesis and support the development of the approach's structure and logic. So, not only does intertextual analysis of Aurelius' and Sontag's introspective work introduce and support the examination of terminologies and issues flowing from self-writing, their writing informs the type of 'metacriticism' (or the criticism of criticism) developed in the thesis. For example, in Chapter Seven, the pair's deliberately introspective writing and the dilemmas it deals with inspires analysis of the ways in which critics' volition and the status of critical judgements are evaluated.

Chapter Two illustrates that Aurelius' and Sontag's self-reflective exercise was complicated by a number of issues, not least a self they found problematic and puzzling. They were concerned with whether the self existed and, if it did, what form it took; they were not sure the self could observe itself and, if it could, whether it did so fully and honestly; and they questioned the degree to which they had control of the self. (Chapter One introduced the idea that being honest about the self in writing or in thought is vitiated by the problem of self-deception and self-control.) In addition to problems of location, recursiveness, self-candour, and self-control, Aurelius and Sontag are shown to have been aware that any idea that their self was autonomous was open to the objection that they were products of their history, culture, and society.

Thus, a crucial theme for Aurelius and Sontag – and for the thesis - is reflection on oneself as a public and a private person. For them, and for us, the discussion of how a person is public and private takes many forms. For them it was often an angst-ridden exercise. A person may live in defiance of or in obedience to pre-existing discourses, structures, or institutions (these might be linguistic, historical, social, cultural, or political). There is the problem of the degree to which personal autonomy, or volitional choice-making, may be at work in either the obedience or the defiance. The tensions between the public and the private aspects of self are vital to the criticism of self-writing. As was observed in the introduction and is expanded on in Chapters Five and Six, critics of self-writing are often tempted to hypothesise and even to celebrate and foster a type of self that has a degree of free-will and a voice that is a product of volitional cognition. This critical tendency

has perhaps developed in response to the often acutely intimate and confidential pitch of self-writing, the closeness of the self-writer's voice; or it is the result of a critical ambition to accord importance to the self-writing text; or it is the result of a critic's sense of their own critical voice and its status. The tendency manifests itself as admiration for the strength of character, or the uniqueness, self-possession, and subversive qualities of the writer and self-narrative. Such critics find that these attributes rest, in part, on the concept of a strongly autonomous self. This produces a clear tension in those contemporary critics of self-writing who also deploy models of thought (including, but not limited to, the 'post-modern' described in Chapter Four) that cast doubt on such autonomy. This conflict of emphasis is not always clearly acknowledged and can lead to tensions in the criticism. Though the tensions between a concept of self that is considered to be autonomous (and the autonomously arrived at self-narrative) and a self that is considered to be culturally constructed might be irreconcilable, it is possible to reconcile criticism to this tension, as the critical approach proposed in the thesis suggests.

Neither Marcus Aurelius nor Susan Sontag used all the diary characteristics outlined in the previous chapter. However, they used a permutation of these characteristics. In this way, though Aurelius and Sontag take highly selectively from some of the norms of diary-writing, they represent a long line of diary-writers. It has been established, in Chapter One, that there is not a single selection of characteristics that appears in every single diary: diarists select from a range of characteristics often associated with the diary. Therefore, though no single diarist is representative of a host, diarists can be seen to share characteristics of the diary form. Aurelius and Sontag, such different deliberately introspective writers in many ways, share many qualities. The most important quality they share, and one the previous chapter demonstrated sits at the core of self-writing, is a preoccupation with the self: Aurelius and Sontag are, in this way, quintessential diary-writers.

Susan Sontag's diary entries are often (following the diary characteristics described in Chapter One) frank, dated, regular, seemingly spontaneous and extempore, private (at least as a conceit), an exercise, and above all, very

deliberately introspective. For Sontag, the diary's main role was to explain herself to herself. This included exploring the extent of her personal freedoms. Sontag was keen, if she could, to determine and improve on herself. This type of self-improvement had moral, intellectual, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions. In addition to diary-writing's significance, to Sontag, as an aid to self-examination and then improvement, she (as is demonstrated in this chapter and pursued in Chapters Six and Seven) explicitly used her diary-writing to work through her views on literature, including diaries. Sontag used her diaries as both criticism and self-criticism. The finding, crucially, substantiates the idea that critical reflection is also self-reflection and the one informs the other. Further to this, Sontag's literary use of a deliberately introspective form, substantiates the suggestion (in Chapter One) that self-writing, if not all writing, is connected to one's being aware of oneself. Sontag's blending of self-reflection and professional criticism is indicative of the diary-led approach to self-writing proposed in the thesis.

Marcus Aurelius, like Sontag, explored the concept of a self that is autonomous in the abstract (as intellectual exercise) and his own consciousness of his self and volition in particular. He did so in ways which made his work endure across generations; as recently as 2002, Gregory Hays' translation made the *Washington Post's* bestseller list for two weeks. As well as being introspective, and therefore fulfilling a quintessential characteristic of diary-writing, his written notes were spiritual, intellectual, and moral exercise.² Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* are also shown here to be the earliest, long, extant example of private, informal, and personal hypomnemata currently available. (In Chapter One it was illustrated, with reference to the work of, for example, Cinzia Bearzot in, 'Royal Autobiography in the Hellenistic Age', that introspective hypomnemata are a classical literary form in which the writer often made private, informal, and author-centric notes.) Establishing the link between diary-like hypomnemata and the *Meditations* is part of the argument for claiming Marcus Aurelius as representative of aspects of self-writing. In some ways Aurelius is its harbinger, not least because he chose to write

² A key part of Marcus Aurelius' philosophical exercise was its moral value. Being good, and how to evaluate what being good entailed, were recurring subjects in Stoic philosophy and in the *Meditations*. The word 'good' is used almost one hundred times by Aurelius. The theme of writing as exercise, particularly an exercise in developing one's understanding of and ability to be good, is a theme identified here and returned to in the next chapter.

about his very deliberate self-analysis, and is therefore a sharp exemplar of a quintessential characteristic of self-writing: self.

As this chapter demonstrates, though Marcus Aurelius would not have described himself as a 'diarist', he certainly wrote in a manner reminiscent of four of Chapter One's characteristics for diary-writing. He wrote with deliberate introspection, and as far as it is possible to establish of any piece of writing that is almost 2,000 years old, he also wrote fragmentarily, privately, and at chronological intervals. As we find, though his were not obviously entries written at daily intervals, they were, according to passing geographical and temporal references, entries that were composed in-the-moment or extempore. The *Meditations* are a precursor to the study of contemporary, deliberately introspective writing and they are significant to this thesis because he explored many of the issues that successive generations (and critics of self-writing) find interesting and peculiar in self-awareness. (For instance, Aurelius explores what his self is and whether he can shape and understand it.)

An additional reason to use Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag as exemplars of the issues found in other deliberately introspective diaries is the level of public exposure they experienced. Their very public personas (one an emperor, the other a New York intellectual) and their membership of different kinds of elites put their privacy and private self-reflection, or self-reflection conducted in the manner of being private, in high relief. For both diarists, privacy in self-writing was either very important, or at least valuable as a working assumption. Aurelius and Sontag are alike in using their self-writing as private relief from their public duties; as a means of improving their private selves; and in the hopes of performing better in public. However, as we have found in Chapter One and will explore further in this chapter, though one may write in private; it does not follow that one's dialogue with oneself – or the dialogue with what Sontag and Aurelius describe as the 'inner' self - is entirely private. Thus, that Aurelius' and Sontag's public engagements were a significant feature of their lives and therefore puts in such high relief their private lives, augments the exploration in the thesis of deliberately introspective writing's privacy characteristic and of the concept of self as public and private.

The case for selecting Aurelius and Sontag is further supported by the work of previous critics of self-writing. There is precedent for employing a pair of case studies, such as Aurelius and Sontag, to make a broader genre-specific argument. In *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, Marshall Mason Knappen chooses two diarists, Samuel Ward and Richard Rogers, as representative of the puritan diary form (first mentioned in Chapter One). Knappen's argument, which his case studies support, is that puritan diaries functioned as an instrument of 'self-fashioning' according to theological doctrine. Knappen is followed in the argument he makes for puritan diary-writing as self-construction by Margo Todd, in her 1992 article, 'Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward'. Todd, however, selects one diary to make her point: 'A careful reading of the whole notebook, then, will provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of a particular, rather ordinary Cambridge puritan and of the self-fashioning process in which he engaged, and following that process will suggest a self-definition of puritanism.' (Todd 1992: 239)³ It is worth noting that Todd identifies that self-reflection and self-definition are often treated as coterminous by diary-writers. Both ideas are linked and strongly in evidence in Aurelius' and Sontag's texts which, historically, sit either side of the puritan diary form. Finally, such a precedent can also be found in Patricia Meyer Spacks' work on diary. (Spacks has been mentioned in the introduction and in Chapter One; her approach to diaries is explored in Chapter Six.) Spacks, in her essay, 'How to Read a Diary', selects two eighteenth-century diarists as her exemplars for ways of reading the diary genre: the American woman Elizabeth Drinker and the English man James Woodforde (Spacks 2003: 48).

Neither Aurelius nor Sontag hail from the periods Knappen's, Todd's, and Spacks' criticism of self-writing drew on. Aurelius and Sontag are important because they bookend two millennia of deliberately introspective writing. The 2,000 years that divide Aurelius' and Sontag's writing, includes and subsumes a range of episodes

³ In the following quotation, Todd illustrates that the type of tensions Aurelius and Sontag felt, between the 'private', subjective, and internal self and the world beyond such a self, are also found in the sixteenth century. Again, Todd uses one case study to make her broader, genre-specific point on 'Renaissance self-fashioning': 'For Ward as for other Renaissance writers, the process was not really an autonomous one at all; Renaissance self-fashioning always involved submission to something outside the self. Ward shaped his identity according to patterns set for him, by charismatic mentors in a puritan college and by the powerful figures that emerged from his authoritative texts.' (Todd 1992: 250) This passage, again, highlights the significance of the issue of self-writers' claims to autonomy to the criticism of self-writing.

in the self-writing genre. In addition to this, the differences between Aurelius and Sontag intensify the striking confluences of the self-reflective angst they shared. Across vast disparities (most obviously two millennia, but also, for example, the differences between their professions and genders), the pair approached the idea of an autonomous self and the multiple, complex, and often contradictory experiences of self and free-will in similar ways. The disparities between Aurelius and Sontag add piquancy to the poignancy of their similarities. That the pair shared so much in such different eras amplifies an argument in the thesis: the concept of an autonomous self has presented much the same problems to people over the course of two millennia. It is enduringly elusive.

The intertextual analysis carried out in Chapter Two and expanded on in Chapter Seven illustrates that, though Aurelius' and Sontag's contexts and terminologies differ, they tackled similar issues in similar ways. (Sontag labels the contexts that she felt affected herself and her reflection on self as, 'frameworks' or 'world views', Sontag 2013: 57, 235, 265, 290, and 414.) They described a shared regard for deconstructing their frameworks, views, and concepts of self, whilst simultaneously exercising and attesting to the integrity of all three in an introspective text. Aurelius and Sontag are keen exemplars of what it is to live with a contradictory and elusive concept (or concepts) of the self. They engaged with those theories of the self that they came into contact with and, to a degree, intellectualised their experiences, but what they write about is visceral and raw in a way that theoretical exegesis is not. Though a reader might learn a little about the selves these writers describe, their discussions are also an opportunity for the reader to learn about their self. This is – remarkably – as true of reading Aurelius as it is of reading Sontag. Spacks supports these twin ideas: that another's introspective text can provide clues to our own selves, though we may be reading of long-dead foreigners: 'Maybe we want to participate intimately in another's life... imaginatively sharing experience. Maybe... we yearn for reassurance about the contours of that humanity we share with people from other times and places.' (Spacks 2003: 48) There is a final point to clarify before advancing the intertextual analysis in this chapter and that is the question of which, from many, translations to select for the *Meditations* (originally written in Greek by a Roman).

On examination of the translations available I have elected to use Christopher Gill's and Robin Hard's *Oxford World's Classics* translation from 2011. The translation has sold over 12,000 copies since 2011. Its popularity indicates that it is already a widely used translation. Hard and Gill both have long careers as classicists and translators of Greek. Hard has translated several texts for *The Oxford World's Classics* series, including Epictetus' *Discourses* (which are included in the analysis in Chapter Three of classical and Hellenistic concepts of self). In *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, Gill is cited three times for the quality of his Greek translations. He has produced a translation of the *Meditations* (Books 1-6) with an extensive introduction and commentary in *The Oxford University Press Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers Series* (2013). The 2013 *Clarendon* edition of the *Meditations* has been considered and compared with the 2011 *Oxford World's Classics* edition. There is little gained in the comparison. However, the commentary in the 2013 text has been useful as it contains extensive reference to Marcus Aurelius' engagement with standard philosophy of the time and reflects Gill's sensitivity to the nature of the personal in the *Meditations*. Other translations of the *Meditations*, that have been considered in this selection process, include John Jackson's (Oxford Clarendon Press: 1906), ASL Farquharson's (Oxford University Press: 1944), Maxwell Staniforth's (Penguin: 1964), Gregory Hays' (Modern Library: 2002), and Martin Hammond's (Penguin: 2006). Pre-twentieth century the most notable translation is George Long's (1862).⁴

The approaches Hard and Gill adopted to translating the *Meditations* are useful to the work of the thesis. It is a translation formulated in combination with the classicists' knowledge of comparative texts and of Greek classical and Hellenistic philosophies of self. Gill has published and lectured widely on the *Meditations* and the philosophy of the Stoics, a philosophy Marcus Aurelius is shown, in Chapter Three, to have referred to often. The Gill and Hard translation has been selected because both are classicists who have taken particular interest in Aurelius, as a person, an emperor, and as a philosophical thinker. They have synthesized the findings of previous translations in their most recent edition and as modern

⁴ For a full pre-1990s list of translations of the *Meditations*, see: (Rutherford 1989: 265-266).

classicists are acutely aware of the dangers of over-projecting the character of one's age onto translations. The fidelity of a translation to the original intent of Aurelius' self-discussion is important to the research in the thesis. Gill's and Hard's combined experience as translators; their effort to remain faithful to Aurelius' intent at the time of writing; and their knowledge of the contexts that would have informed Aurelius, has made their most recent edition of the *Meditations* a key resource.

2. Marcus Aurelius and his hypomnemata: the *Meditations*

Marcus Aurelius was emperor of Rome from 161 AD to 180 AD. He is reputed to have been a fair and serious emperor. A recent biographer, Anthony Birley, writes how Aurelius conducted himself with:

A painstaking thoroughness and attention to detail; an over careful insistence on elaborating obvious or trivial points; purism in the use of both Greek and Latin languages; an earnestness which produces an attitude to the pretensions of the Greeks far more serious minded than Pius [Pius was Marcus Aurelius' adopted father and emperor before Marcus Aurelius]. [Square brackets mine] (Birley 1993: 139)

Birley observes that: 'In the judgement of his contemporaries Marcus Aurelius had been the perfect emperor.' (Birley 1993: 224) Birley provides primary evidence for this claim from the Roman writer Papinian (142 AD – 212 AD): 'He was described by professional lawyers as "an emperor most skilled in the law" and by the great Papinian as a "most prudent and conscientiously just emperor".' (Birley 1993: 133)⁵ In a passage from the fourth century AD, *Historia Augusta* (the *Historia Augusta* are a late Roman collection of biographies of Roman emperors) provided by Birley, Marcus Aurelius' behaviour towards others is described as being:

At all times extremely reasonable in restraining people from bad actions and urging them to good ones, generous in rewarding, quick to forgive, thus making bad men good, and good men very good, and he even took insults, which he had to put up with from

⁵ Further evidence for Aurelius' virtuous and imperial behaviour is drawn from the writings of Cassius Dio. For further reference see: (Cassius Dio 71.36.3 in Birley 1993: 133)

some people, with equanimity... Finally if he was firm he was always reasonable. (Birley 1993: 135)⁶

Moving on from this portrait of Aurelius, the Roman emperor and his reputation, the remainder of this section illustrates the ways in which Aurelius wrote about his self-reflection and free-will, and why the *Meditations* are a uniquely long and surviving example of deliberately introspective hypomnemata that stands up to comparison with the contemporary diary form.

It is not possible to confirm whether the version of Aurelius' *Meditations* read today is complete; nor is it possible to know exactly when and where Aurelius chose to write his entries; nor whether the text was originally composed in the twelve-book format in which they have been published for centuries.⁷ It is not known who first edited the *Meditations* and how much the editor deviated from Aurelius' original intention. Anthony Birley writes: 'No one knows who preserved Marcus Aurelius' manuscript after his death or how and when it first found a wider readership... at any rate by the fourth century AD [over two hundred years after his death] the work was undoubtedly well known.' [Square brackets mine] (Birley 1993: 212)

However, and despite these uncertainties as to the exact process for the eventual publication of the *Meditations*, Pierre Hadot (first referred to in Chapter One's discussion of hypomnemata and the diary characteristic of exercise) notes that Aurelius wrote, 'day by day' (Hadot 1998: 28). Thus, pointing to the (albeit infrequent) daily nature of the entries. The entries are, in the manner of some entries in contemporary diaries, often aphoristic: 'Perfection of character requires this, that you should live each day as though it were your last, and be neither agitated, nor lethargic, nor act a part.' (Book 7.69) They are also haphazard, fragmentary, and in the style of a passing observation, with little context: 'If he did wrong, the ill lies with him; but perhaps he did not.' (Book 9.38) One is left to ask: what wrong and who committed it? The lack of a narrative structure and frequent repetition of themes, ideas, and phrases suggests his entries were – following the

⁶ The accuracy of the *Historia Augusta*, a history of Roman emperors, is a contentious issue; its dating and authorship are not confirmed. However, it remains a primary resource for classicists and is often cited.

⁷ For further reference to the composition and chronology of books 1-12 in the *Meditations* and the publishing process for the *Meditations* during and after the Medieval and Renaissance periods see: (Hadot 1998: 20-34) and (Rutherford 1989: 45-47).

style of many diary entries - unpremeditated or spontaneous and written extempore, in-the-moment, and left unrevised. As does the urgency with which he compels himself to act in a certain way: 'Do not act as if you had ten thousand years to live... while you have life in you, while you still can, make yourself good.' (Book 4.17)

It is possible to confidently surmise that the majority of entries were compiled towards the end of Aurelius' life (171-180 AD). This is because fleeting geographical references to Roman camps at the top of Books 2 and 3 indicate that they were written during his later military campaigns in Germany (early 170s AD). The few references to specific writing locations (in Books 2 and 3) add weight to the idea that these were entries made in-the-moment. However, apart from these cursory temporal and geographical sign-posts, the entries are undated. There is little of the pro forma design associated with the diary form in Chapter One. In his private and reflective moments, such as the moment marked at Book 9.38, it is possible to argue that Aurelius felt little requirement for quotidian notes or details of the day-to-day because he was, in all probability, writing for himself and certainly about himself and did not require the book to act as a detail-driven aide memoire. The *Meditations* were, almost certainly, written privately, for personal use, and were not intended for publication (Hadot 1998: 35 and Gill 2006: 389). Marcus Aurelius states that what he writes is for him alone: 'Say to yourself' (Book 2.1). The academic and historian, Peter Brunt, concluded in his essay, 'Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*', that Aurelius wrote for himself:

Scholars who cannot bring themselves to think that Marcus Aurelius was writing for his self alone have... been forced to conjecture that he wrote on wax tablets, which were scattered after his death and pieced together by an editor, or that what remains consists simply of extracts from a larger and coherent work. But in the former case one would expect the most witless editor to have made a more logical arrangement of the *disiecta membra* by topics. And in the latter, had Marcus Aurelius ever chosen to compose a moral treatise, he would surely himself have given a more systematic, thorough and explicit exposition of his favourite themes, of which some trace would be detectable in excerpts. (Brunt 1974: 2)⁸

⁸ It is the consensus amongst academics that Aurelius wrote for himself and in private. For further reference see: (Gill 2011: VII-XI), (Forstater 2001: 10), and (Hadot 1998: 27).

Though Brunt argues the *Meditations* lack a systematic approach or a single philosophical outlook, they were not lacking in serious purpose. They were intended as a private and introspective exercise that would support Aurelius' intellectual, philosophical, spiritual, and moral progress.

Richard Rutherford in, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: A Study*, describes how Aurelius endeavoured, through the act of writing, to 'discipline' and 'prepare' his self (Rutherford 1989: 20). Aurelius' goal (or telos) was a well-formed self (i.e., a self that was, according to Stoic philosophy, in line with natural Reason) and a good, happy, and virtuous life (the exact philosophical nature of his goals for 'self-preparation' are explored in Chapter Three). Aurelius' self-analytical practice in the *Meditations* (i.e., his written exercising of the self) was based, in part, on Stoic philosophical theory:

The unbiased reader usually concludes that this is indeed a private work of self analysis and devotion. This view receives confirmation from detail since there are many admonitions and allusions which seem to have point and significance for Marcus Aurelius himself, in his role as emperor, but for no one else. (Rutherford 1989: 10)

Mark Forstater agrees with Rutherford's observation that Marcus Aurelius was embarked on 'self analysis' for self-improvement, he remarks in, *The Spiritual Teachings of Marcus Aurelius*: 'These thoughts and exhortations were not written for publication or posterity. They were private and personal, a kind of diary for spiritual development.' (Forstater 2000: 10) Gill identifies the: '*Meditations* [as] a work unparalleled among writing surviving from classical antiquity... It is the philosophical diary of a Roman emperor... Aurelius is writing to examine his inmost thoughts and advising himself how best to live.' (Gill 2011: VII-XI) Gill is interested in how the *Meditations* supported Aurelius' personal development; in the work they did for Aurelius philosophically, morally, and personally and that they are a uniquely early, extant, and long example of this type of introspective writing. So, just as Sontag used the diary as criticism (a form in which to work out her ideas on aesthetics and literature) and as self-examination; Aurelius used his deliberately

introspective writing as a way of exploring the personal, as well as the philosophical.

Marcus Aurelius was clearly self-preoccupied. He asks himself: 'What are you thinking of?' (Book 3.4) and 'What are you, yourself?' (Book 8.40) His *Meditations* were not (as many, more prosaic, classical hypomnemata were) intended as an archival document; or as a formal account of his imperial reign, or his administrative or military successes; or, indeed, as a commonplace book. As has been observed, the *Meditations* often omits prosaic details, including dates, place names and, except for the odd mention of a philosopher and what he owes to various people in his life (in Book 1), it is free of the names of the people he would have interacted with on a day-to-day basis. Aurelius does not describe trips abroad, battles, administrative problems, sleeping patterns, meals, hunts, physical ailments, deaths, births, marriages, the weather, or other details worthy of public historiographies.

Aurelius' self-preoccupation was not vain and though he seems to have taken little interest in recording the minutiae of daily life, he was keenly aware of his social, moral, and imperial roles and duties and put himself under an injunction to perform them well. This was a reciprocal arrangement. By acting as a good 'Roman and man', he hoped he would feel a 'free' and satisfied man:

At every hour devote yourself in a resolute spirit, as befits a Roman and a man, to fulfilling the task in hand with a scrupulous and unaffected dignity, and with love for others, and independence and justice; and grant yourself a respite from all other preoccupations. And this you will achieve if you perform every action as though it were your last, freed from all purpose and wilful deviation from the rule of reason, and free from duplicity, self-love, and dissatisfaction with what is allotted to you.
(Book 2.5)

At Book 5.37, Aurelius considers what elements compound to make him 'good': 'In former days, at whatever moment they caught me, I was a man who was blessed by good fortune. But the person who is blessed by good fortune is the one who has assigned a good lot to himself and a good lot consists of this: good dispositions of the soul, good impulses and good actions.' (Book 5.37) At Book

11.5, Aurelius considers it his 'profession' to be 'good' and to ascertain what it means to be 'good': 'What is your profession? [or perhaps more clearly: what is it that you profess to be?] To be a good person. And how is this to be achieved, except on the basis of theoretical principles, some relating to universal nature and others to man's specific constitution?' [Square brackets mine] (Book 11.5) Aurelius asks himself repeatedly to ensure that he is 'good' both inside his 'soul' and in his actions to others:

To what purpose, then, am I presently using my soul? Ask yourself this question at every moment, and examine yourself as follows: what is presently to be found in that part of me which is called the ruling centre? And whose soul do I have at present? That of a child? That of an adolescent? That of a woman, of a tyrant, of a domestic animal, of a wild beast? (Book 5. 11)

These phrases were intended as calls to action. His intent – to feel good and be good - is exemplified in his use of self-commands to: 'act', 'behave', 'do not', 'ensure', 'revere', 'follow', 'remember', 'resist', 'wait', and 'always keep'.

Marcus Aurelius described his entries as: notes (hypomnemata, Book 3.14); supports (parastêmata, Book 3.11); hooks (parapêgmata, Book 9.3); and rules (kanones, Books 5.22 and 10.2). More or less randomly assembled, privately and frequently written, informal, and personal notes are suggestive of personal hypomnemata (as was established with reference to the work of Bearzot, Momigliano, Hadot, and Misch, in Chapter One). It has been established (in Chapter One) that it is by dint of these characteristics that personal hypomnemata can be described as presaging the diary form. Hypomnemata were initially linked with historiography and archival reports and became increasingly author-centric and philosophical in the fourth century BC. In this section, it is established that Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* are personal hypomnemata and as such can be deployed in an analysis of self-writing.

In *Marcus Aurelius: Warrior, Philosopher, Emperor, Meditations*, Frank McLynn's description of the literary form for the *Meditations*, conforms to the characteristics of personal hypomnemata: 'It is not a diary like those of Pepys and Boswell, nor is it a commonplace book... the book... is a series of personal notes taken on a daily

basis... particularly as an aid.' (McLynn 2011: 204) Aurelius was certainly familiar with hypomnemata and connects it directly with his *Meditations*: 'Marcus Aurelius... speaks of his "personal notes" using the diminutive word hypomnemata.' (Hadot 1998: 34)⁹ Another link between the *Meditations* and hypomnemata is that Aurelius had great admiration for his near-contemporary, the Stoic philosopher, Epictetus. In Book 1, Marcus Aurelius writes how he is lent, by his tutor Rusticus, a copy of Epictetus' hypomnemata. Epictetus' *Discourses* were the remarks of the philosopher, as preserved in informal notes (hypomnemata), made by his pupil. The *Discourses* were published and intended as an accurate record of a philosopher's teachings (Gill Gill in *Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: XVII-XXVII). It is not known how much their style follows Epictetus' intended method of writing or speaking, or how much that style might merely be the result of the circumstances of note-taking. But whatever the reason, they were written in the same century as the *Meditations* and they were, as Chapter One evinced, admired by Marcus Aurelius, and perhaps not least for their fragmentary style, which was similar to his own, and perhaps was so because he imitated it. The *Discourses* of Epictetus (transcribed by Arrian) are often reiterative, commanding, dogmatic, and direct, as were the *Meditations*. But as philosophical notes from a lecture, they are not as personal, spontaneous, or extempore as the *Mediations*. The *Discourses* do not, therefore, bear the characteristics of later diary-writing, nor of the *Meditations*.

Marcus Aurelius' hypomnemata received titles from later editor, but was originally written, as far as it is possible to know, without a title. Hypomnemata generally bore no name until revision and publication made it necessary. Misch supposes that Aurelius' intention not to be published removes the *Meditations* from the genre of hypomnemata: 'Free as he was from all vanity of authorship, [he] cannot have intended that his reflections and maxims should be elaborated into a literary work in the style of writers who used note-books (hypomnemata) as material for the exercise of their art.' (Misch 1950: 444) Misch allies the *Meditations* with soliloquy:

⁹ The passage Hadot is referring to is at Book 3:14. For further reference to Aurelius' use of the word hypomnemata see: (Rutherford 1989: 28-29).

Soliloquy in the ancient sense covered not only monologue, which is familiar to us in life and in imaginative writing as an elementary form in which a man who has to decide what action he will take sets his conflicting impulses against each other... Soliloquy also meant quite generally the reflective activity which we may describe as thinking or brooding. (Misch 1950: 445)

In agreement with Misch (and every commentator referred to) it is fair to claim that the *Meditations* were notes made for personal use and not intended for publication, and that material in classical hypomnemata sometimes was cleaned up and published. It does not appear plausible, as Misch (who is seemingly alone in taking this line) claims it is, that this practice – which may well not apply to the *Meditations* at all - is a good enough reason to discount hypomnemata as being the *Meditations*' underlying literary form. The exacting rhetorical sophistication of the soliloquy and its tendency to address an audience broader than oneself make a compelling reason to discount soliloquy as a description of the *Meditations*. Often, both soliloquy and hypomnemata were written in the first-person and as though one were speaking to oneself, however, they were also regarded as separate and delineated literary forms.

Soliloquy was a highly formal rhetorical device that gave the illusion one was speaking to oneself, and hypomnemata were often written, informal notes made to oneself. The *Meditations* were private, they were 'reflective' and 'brooding', but with a specific purpose: they were intended as philosophical and spiritual exercise. They were not intended as an exercise in rhetoric. In as much as they were intended for private use, they were not intended as a public demonstration of Marcus Aurelius' skill in, for example, soliloquy. Hence, it would seem reasonable to claim the *Meditations* as hypomnemata, not soliloquy. Especially as Aurelius describes his *Meditations* as hypomnemata. The absence of its author's intent to publish is not reason enough to discount hypomnemata as a description of a work's form. (This seems especially the case if reviewed in light of Cinzia Bearzot's research into hypomnemata, in section seven, Chapter One.)

Rutherford argues that Book 1 of the *Meditations* is the most recognizably autobiographical and, 'cannot be said to belong to any of the regular categories of ancient writing' (Rutherford 1989: 48). He explores a range of literary forms

suggested by the *Meditations*, including autobiography, portraiture, panegyric, diatribe, encomium, and soliloquy. Rutherford describes Aurelius' portraits of people in Book 1 as linked to traditional genres of character sketch, biography, testimonia, eulogy, and funeral speeches. These forms, like soliloquy, were strictly standardised. As an educated Roman, Marcus Aurelius knew, and, in all likelihood, respected the literary standards of his day (Misch 1950: 446). However, according to the analysis thus far, though the *Meditations* may possess some of the attributes of other classical literary genres, taken in their entirety Aurelius' notes to himself were hypomnemata.

In Chapter One it was demonstrated that classical and personal hypomnemata display many of the characteristics of contemporary diary forms. The *Meditations* have been tentatively described as 'diary' by at least three academics: Christopher Gill (Gill 2011: VII), Misch (Misch 1950: 457), and Brunt (Brunt 1974: 1-20). However, the philosophical emphasis; absence of material personal references even in the most coherent and chronological of the Books (Book 1); the lack of references to people, events, places, and dates and the fact that Marcus Aurelius wrote in Greek and not his native tongue Latin, all detract from the theory that the *Meditations* might be directly linked to contemporary diary forms. Hadot swiftly brushes off the assumption that Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, may retrospectively be called a diary: 'If... we understand by "diary" a writing to which one consigns the outpouring of one's heart and spiritual states, then the *Meditations* are not a diary.' (Hadot 1998: 27) Conversely, Keith Dickson in, 'Oneself as Others: Aurelius and Autobiography', tentatively argues that the *Meditations*, particularly Book 1, might be viewed as early autobiography, 'in a peculiar and exceptional sense.' (Dickson 2009: 104) Rutherford describes Book 1 as, 'a piece of autobiography, but of a very oblique and reserved kind.' (Rutherford 1989: 51)¹⁰

There are two reasons Dickson's link between contemporary autobiography and the *Meditations* is tenuous. Firstly, it relies on traits he identifies in only one of twelve books in the *Meditations*. Secondly, the autobiographical traits he identifies in Book 1 are only autobiographical in the sense that Marcus Aurelius writes of

¹⁰ Dickson's definition of autobiography is from Lejeune's, *On Autobiography*. For further reference see: (Lejeune 1989: 1-14).

people he has known and what he has learnt from this knowledge. The lack of specific detail about other persons (or about the circumstances of his knowing them) highlights how Aurelius was not interested in recording what happened, where and when, and to whom; nor was he interested in character sketches for posterity. He was interested in material which added to his personal philosophical and spiritual exercise and development.

In *On Diary*, Philippe Lejeune writes about classical 'notebooks':

[They contain] nuggets of wisdom that one could re-read for one's edification or convey to others. It was this process that led to Epictetus' *Manual*, the treatises and letters of Seneca and Plutarch, and perhaps the most fascinating of all, which occasionally borders on the personal diary in its tone and allusions, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (Lejeune 2009: 54).

Lejeune is rightly cautious in labelling the *Meditations*, 'diary'. His main hesitation is its lack of a temporal structure: 'Despite numerous references to his personal experiences Marcus Aurelius' thoughts are never dated or given a temporal order. They are immersed in a sort of eternal present, always equidistant from death.' (Lejeune 2009: 54) However, the arguments made in Chapter One have successfully cleared the way for the idea that though diaries are often written daily strict temporal observance is not a quintessential trait of the form. Lejeune remarks that Aurelius' entries are 'personal' and 'immersed in a sort of eternal present' (Lejeune 2009: 54), as are many entries in deliberately introspective diaries. However, Lejeune does not draw out quite how acutely 'personal' and 'private' the *Meditations* are. They contain over 200 entries which are deliberately introspective in the manner of the quintessential diary. The works of Epictetus (who, as has been illustrated, did not write his *Manual*), Plutarch, and Seneca, are the classical documents Lejeune marks out as literary bed fellows to the *Meditations*. But these were intended for public consumption and were not private or personal. Lejeune's comments do not overcome the argument that Marcus Aurelius is at the heart of the lair wherein the deliberately introspective diary beast lives and flourishes. The *Meditations* are an opportunity to explore and analyse what happens in diary-writing and in a diarist when diarists write about themselves.

In conclusion, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* were intended for private and personal use and can be thought of as hypomnemata that were dedicated to spiritual and philosophical development. And as such can be linked to later characteristics of the diary. This claim of similarity is necessarily anachronistic, since the *Meditations* are a pioneering work which preceded later classifications. There is evidence Aurelius was not the first to use hypomnemata for personal reasons and is therefore not entirely original. For example, there is evidence that Augustus (63 BC-14 AD), first emperor of Rome, 'compiled several ingenious works, which discover his personal learning, but they are lost through the injuries of time, as his *Exhortations to Philosophy*.'¹¹ Though not original, the *Meditations* are the earliest, long, extant example of anything like this use of hypomnemata. Even if the *Meditations* are neither exactly hypomnemata or exactly diary-like, as it is evidenced and argued they are, Marcus Aurelius produced a piece of writing for himself that is crucially an early discussion of the experience of what it is to exist in the world with a consciousness of self and intelligent and close comparison with later diary-writing is irresistible.

3. Marcus Aurelius' introspection

The next two sections are intended as an exposition of terms and issues associated with the concepts of self and free-will – as they are discussed (or given a 'voice') in the deliberately introspective writing of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag. (The terms and issues the pair raise are defined in Chapters Three and Four and a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism, intended to manage the inherently contradictory and elusive business of reflecting on the self, free-will, and voice, is proposed. In Chapters Five and Six, it is the turn of self-writing critics to demonstrate how they handle these all important issues in self-writing.) Previously, it has been demonstrated that Aurelius was acutely self-preoccupied. This section starts with a poignant example of the acute and anxious nature of Aurelius' experience of self: 'Turn next to the character of your associates, of

¹¹ For further reference see bibliography for Dane, *A complete dictionary of the Greek and Roman antiquities: explaining the obscure places in classic authors ... also an account of their navigations, arts and sciences, and the inventors of them, with the lives and opinions of their philosophers.* (1700)

whom even the most agreeable are hard to endure, not to mention the fact that it is not at all easy even to bear with oneself.' (Book 5.10) He was always his own best critic and his introspection was often directed at improving on what he saw as lacking in himself:

Will there ever come a day, my soul, when you are good, and simple, and at one, and naked, and clearer to see than the body which envelops you? Some day will you enjoy a loving and affectionate disposition? Will there ever come a day when you are so much a member of the community of gods and human beings as neither to bring any complaint against them nor to incur their condemnation? (Book 10.1)

He personally suffered as a philosophical intellectual and a moralist: 'You will soon be dead and you are not yet simple or unperturbed, or free from suspicion that things from outside can harm you, nor are you yet gracious to everyone, nor do you yet believe that wisdom lies in one thing alone, in acting righteously.' (Book 4.37)¹² So, Aurelius was, sometimes, at odds with himself: he found it hard to 'bear' himself (Book 5.10). He also found it hard to bear his 'community' (Book 10.1). However, his 'complaints against' community did not dampen his commitment to avoiding its 'condemnation' (Book 10.1). Thus, Aurelius was internally conflicted and sometimes he was in conflict with the world he felt to be outside his self.

Aurelius doubted his ability to control his self and to control the tensions between him and the world he felt to be outside (what he has described as the, 'community of gods and human beings' Book 10.1). Aurelius describes in an entry, at Book 7.14, how the 'outside' affects his self: 'Let anything from outside that so wishes happen to the parts of me which can be affected by this event; for it is up to them.' He concludes by retaining the freedom to pass judgement on how he will think about this external event: 'But I myself, if I do not suppose that anything bad has

¹² Aurelius experienced a number of physical and mental difficulties. There is, for example, conjecture that he habitually used opium as a respite from stomach complaints. For further reference see bibliography for Africa, 'The Opium Addiction of Marcus Aurelius' (Africa 1961: 97) and (McLynn 2011: 102). In addition to this, Aurelius lost thirteen children which must have caused him distress. For further reference to Aurelius' psychological and emotional states see: (Book 7: 58), (Book 7.64), and (Book 7.71).

happened to me, have yet to suffer any harm; and it is open to me not to make that supposition.’ (Book 7.14)¹³

Part of the problem Aurelius finds in separating himself from the world around him is that he took his social responsibilities seriously:

For tell me, man, when you have done a good turn, what more do you want? Is it not enough that in doing this, you have acted according to your own nature, that you should go on to seek reward for it? It is just as if the eye sought compensation for seeing, or the feet for walking. For as these were made to perform a particular function, and by performing it according to their own constitution, gain in what is due to them, so likewise, a human being is formed by nature to benefit other, and when he has performed some benevolent action or accomplished anything else that contributes to the common good, he has done what he was constituted for, and has what is properly his. (Book 9. 42)

It was one of Aurelius’ contradictions that he was as invested in the world as he aspired to divest himself of its influence upon him. Marcus Aurelius sought solace in philosophy from both his self and the world outside his self:

Love that to which you are returning, and come back to philosophy not as to a school teacher, but as those with sore eyes turn to a sponge and white of egg... For in that way you will not only be obeying reason, but you will find your rest in it. And remember this: philosophy wishes nothing for you other than what your nature wishes, whereas you were wishing for something else which is not in accordance with nature (Book 5.9).¹⁴

However, and in contradiction to his faith in the power of philosophy, he struggled to gain solace from it: ‘I for my part cannot gain nourishment from my studies and hold true to them.’ (Book 4.30) Aurelius had doubts about the quality of his ability to reason and philosophy’s perspicuity. Directly after he wrote of his love for philosophy at Book 5.10, he writes that over time neither he himself, nor his faculty

¹³ This is a typically Stoic reflection on the issue of self and its autonomous decision-making powers, in a providential natural order. Stoicism and the question of free-will in this philosophy are issues returned to in Chapter Three.

¹⁴ The entry, at Book 5.9, refers to the Stoic idea that man was part of a Reasoned, providential universe and in accordance with this cosmological Reason he had an innate capacity for human reason. By building on his capacity for reason man would live in accordance with his nature and that of the universe. This type of self-development, in accordance with Reason, was called ‘oikeiosis’ and is explored in the next chapter. Further examples of Aurelius’ love for philosophy can be found at: (Book 1.16), (Book 1.17), and (Book 2.17).

of reason, nor the philosophies he studied could be the constant friend he hoped they might be:

Realities are concealed, so to say, behind such a veil that not a few philosophers, and those of no mean quality, have supposed them to be wholly beyond our comprehension, while even Stoics themselves find them hard to comprehend; and every assent to sense impressions is subject to alteration – for where are we to find a person who is never subject to error? Now pass on to the sensible objects themselves: how ephemeral they are, how cheap, how liable to become the property of a catamite, a prostitute, or a robber! Turn next to the characters of your associates, of whom even the agreeable are hard to endure not to mention the fact it is not at all easy to bear with oneself. In the midst of all this murk and filth, this unending flux of substance and time, and of movement and things that are moved, what there could be that deserves our respect or is in any way worthy of serious pursuit I cannot conceive. (Book 5.10)¹⁵

This entry is returned to in Chapter Seven, it is important as it shows Aurelius at his most confused and conflicted. He wanted to believe and take solace in philosophy. Aurelius thought, if he did so, he might attempt a reconciliation of the tensions within and between himself and others: he might reconcile them by understanding them or explaining them. However, he finds that managing such complexities and the complexities themselves are, ‘wholly beyond our comprehension’ (they are in the terminology of the thesis, elusive) hence Aurelius’ anxieties.

Contrariwise, Aurelius (sometimes) seems to have thought that others might guide him: ‘If you fail to [possess the power or to access reason to make an appropriate judgement] suspend your judgement and consult your ablest advisers.’ [Square brackets mine] (Book 10.12) In addition to the benefits of peer engagement and of studying Greco-Roman philosophies, he seems also to have believed he might be able to help himself:

¹⁵ Aurelius’ reference to ‘assent’ is a reference to Stoic advice, particularly the Stoic Epictetus’ advice, that the Stoic should examine and reason with the impressions life made upon them and decide whether to allow the impressions to impact upon their emotions and mental equilibrium. It was the Stoic’s freedom and choice to judge whether an impression was to affect him or her.

There are three things of which you are composed: body, breath, and mind. Of these the first two are your own in as far as it is your duty to take care of them; but only the third is your own in the full sense. So if you put away from yourself... all that is attached to you independently of your will, and all that the vortex whirling around outside you sweeps in its wake, so that the power of your mind, thus delivered from the bonds of fate, may live a pure and unfettered life alone with itself doing what is just... then you will be able to pass at least the time that is left to you until you die in calm and kindness. (Book 12.3)

Aurelius praises his freedom to choose how he will think, feel, and act: 'I remain a free agent and none shall prevent me from doing what I will: and my will is to act according to the nature of a rational and sociable creature.' (Book 5. 29) He felt, at times, he was a 'free agent' and that it was his freely willed choice to act rationally. At Book 9.7, Aurelius describes how, in order to exercise his 'rational' 'will', self-control must win its own battle over imagination, impulses, and desire: '[B]lot imagination; put a curb on impulse; quench desire; ensure that your ruling centre remains under its own control.' (Book 9.7) At Book 8.39, Aurelius describes the exercise of self-control as pitted against what gives him pleasure: 'In the constitution of a rational creature I see no virtue that pits itself against justice; but I see one that can pit itself against pleasure: self-control.' (Book 8.39) It seems Aurelius felt he must not only manage the tensions consequent to the interface between himself and the world, but also manage tensions between aspects of himself that he felt to be internal (part of his 'constitution'): such as his self-control and his desires.

In summary, Marcus Aurelius' descriptions of his self contradict one and other. On one hand, he felt free. On the other, he felt his free-will and self-control to be inhibited or to be, at times, inhibiting. On one hand, he admired the veracity of his peers' judgments and opinions, and of his own subjective powers of reason and judgement. On the other, he suspected that his, and others', judgment-making abilities were inveterately flawed. He explored these contradictory experiences in a private, highly introspective, informal, frequent, and fragmentary notebook or hypomnemata. The discussion in this chapter and the last has demonstrated that hypomnemata (in which the first focus is the personal life of its author) are a classical Greek literary form with remarkably similar characteristics to those of the

contemporary diary form. Aurelius' contradictory experiences of the self and free-will, the varying levels of doubt and belief he maintained about the volition, coherence, and inviolable nature of his self, were remarkably similar to the experiences Susan Sontag described in her diaries.

4. Susan Sontag's introspective diaries

Susan Sontag was, like Marcus Aurelius, self-preoccupied. Her diary entries were written privately, at frequent and dated intervals, in a typically aphoristic and fragmentary style. They are deliberately introspective and intended as an exercise in self-improvement: of the moral, spiritual, and intellectual kind. This is demonstrated in, firstly, her interest in self-transformation 4/11/71: 'I am only interested in people engaged in a project of self-transformation' (Sontag 2013: 315). And, secondly, her interest in spiritual exercises: 12/8/77: 'Spiritual exercises: lowering the ideas into the body. Making it part of one's instincts. Can't be a Buddhist or Hindu without changing one's physiology' (Sontag 2013: 442). In these ways, like Aurelius, she employs the quintessential and some quotidian requirements for diary-like writing.

Sontag's deliberate self-examination in her critical writing and of course, most notably, in her diaries, is remarked on by her son. David Reiff, Sontag's son and editor of her diaries, describes how in them Sontag, 'self-consciously and determinedly went about creating the self she wanted to be.' (Sontag 2009: X) Sontag's original diaries are held at the University of California, Los Angeles, at her behest. In his Introduction to *Reborn*, David Reiff writes:

I have always thought that one of the stupidest things the living say about the dead is the phrase "so-and-so would have wanted it this way." At best, it is guesswork; most often it is hubris, no matter how well intended. You simply cannot know. So whatever else there is to be said about the publication... of Susan Sontag's journal. It is not the book she would have produced – and that assumes she would have decided to publish these diaries in the first place. Instead, both the decision to publish and the selection have been mine alone. Even when there is no question of censorship, the literary dangers and moral hazards of such an enterprise are self-evident. These diaries... were written solely for herself. (Reiff 2009: VII)

Reiff, according to the passage above, has attempted to be frank and honest during the editing process, despite his observation that, firstly, by publishing her private diaries he has already broken with his mother's intentions for them and, secondly, absolute fidelity to another's work requires one to be inside the other's thoughts, and that is not possible: 'I had no question of excluding material... To the contrary, my principle of selection was partly informed by my sense that it was the rawness and the unvarnished portrait this material presents of Susan Sontag as a young person who self-consciously and determinedly went about creating the self she wanted to be, that was the most compelling in the journals.' (Reiff 2009: X)

There is little question Reiff left his editorial mark on the published diaries, however, his recognition of the difficulties inherent in editing with a keen fidelity to the spirit of the subject seems to have been a key principle in his editing choices. This does not alter the fact that what is missed in the editing and publishing of any diary are the other marks of the diarist, including underscoring, changes in written style, changes in ink, insertions, editing marks, doodles in the margins, and crossings out. With these caveats in mind it seems fair to claim that Reiff's job as editor – difficult as it may have been - was conducted with seriousness, sensitivity, and integrity and the result can be treated with equal seriousness.

Reiff discerned that his mother's ambition, in her introspective writing, was to 'create the self she wanted to be'. The theme of self-transformation is picked up often by Sontag in her criticism and in her diaries. Sontag starts her critical essay, 'Writing Itself: On Roland Barthes', with the observation that diaries are an, 'exemplary instrument in the career of consciousness.' (Sontag 2013c: 63) Sontag describes how Carlotta, her lover at the time, prompted her to examine herself:

2/17/70 C has become the first big intellectual event (this past week) since my trip to Hanoi. And [calls my] consciousness into question. As my trip to Hanoi made me re-appraise my identity, the forms of my consciousness, the psychic forms of my culture, the meaning of "sincerity", language, moral decision, psychological expressiveness, etc., so the trip to Paris - pain, loss, abandonment, the advent of anguish + insecurity - has

made me re-appraise almost everything about the forms of my thinking and feeling. (Sontag 2013: 274)

Sontag 'question[ed]' and 're-apprais[ed]' her 'forms of consciousness'; she thought that to change herself she had to first know herself. Travel abroad (to Hanoi and Paris in this instance) aided her self-reflection, perhaps because travel produced a distancing effect between her 'private' self and the habits or conventions of her day-to-day existence (to be examined shortly), such distance may have afforded her the ability to look more objectively at her life or, perhaps, simply given her the time to reflect on herself. Her diaries were a written introspective exercise that she carried out in private. The entry selected to illustrate this is written in the form of an internal dialogue. This is revealing of the inner voice (as it is discussed in Chapter Three) an inner voice that is felt to be both of the self and apart from the self, a self that is in dialogue with itself and self-interrogates:

8/7/68 Maybe that's why I write in a journal – that feels right. I know I am alone, that I am the only reader of what I write here – but the knowledge isn't painful, on the contrary I feel stronger for it, stronger each time I write something down... I can't talk to myself, but I can write to myself. (But is that because I do think it possible that someday someone I love who loves me will read my journals + feel even closer to me?

"I want to be good."

"Why?"

"I want to be what I admire"

"Why don't you want to be what you are?" (Sontag 2013: 257)

Susan Sontag wanted to be better but she also considered what 'it' was she was improving on: she explored what it was to be conscious and to have a self. In the aptly-titled series of diaries, *Consciousness Harnessed as Flesh*, Susan Sontag considers what her 'body' would look like if it could take on the complexity and fluidity of her 'subjectivity':

8/12/67 The transformation of my subjectivity. If the outside corresponded to the inner life in people, we couldn't have "bodies" as we do. The inner life is too complex, too various, too fluid. Our bodies incarnate only a fraction of our inner lives. (The legitimate basis for the paranoid endless anxiety about what's "behind" the appearances.) Given that they would still have inner lives of the energy + complexity that they have now, the bodies

of people would have to be more like gas - something gaseous yet tangible-looking like clouds. Then our bodies could metamorphose rapidly, expand, [...] As it is, we're stuck with a soft but still largely determinate (especially determinate with regard to size + dimension + shape) material presence in the world - almost wholly inadequate to these processes which then become "inner" processes. (i.e., far from wholly manifested, needing to be discovered, inferred; capable of being hidden, etc.) Our bodies become vessels, then - and masks. Since we can't expand + contract (our bodies), we stiffen them a lot - inscribe tension on them. Which becomes a habit - becomes installed, to then re-influence the "inner life". (Sontag 2013: 233)

The body and the 'inner life' are seen here as distinct entities. The body is a 'vessel' and 'mask', and the 'inner life' is that which is, 'not wholly manifest, needing to be discovered, inferred; capable of being hidden'. And, contrary to this view, the two distinct entities are working together. They influence each other or 'reinfluence' each other. The interaction of the 'body' with the world does not, according to Susan Sontag, exclude the person having an 'inner life' or a subjective, internal dialogue.

Though Sontag saw room in the world for a private 'inner life', she also felt the 'inner life' could not escape the impact of the world upon it. In the following diary entry, Sontag writes that, by marrying Philip Reiff, she wrongly conformed to, 'the right kind of gratifications' and 'deprivations':

8/12/67 As Eva pointed out, if I hadn't made the grand switch from "Kant" to "Mrs. DH Lawrence", I would never have been able to write fiction. The first, and absolutely essential step was - of course - to end my marriage. My life with Philip was chosen + designed to be the context in which I would go further + further along the "Kant" road. The right kind of gratifications + the right kind of deprivations. (Sontag 2013: 232)

In the entry above, Sontag writes of her Kantian subservience to her wifely duties (here, Sontag is perhaps referring to, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in which Kant attempted to produce a taxonomy of the duties of humans to each other and within society) and how if she had not switched to the role of 'Mrs DH Lawrence' she would never have found her creative voice (here, Sontag is perhaps referring to the fact that Frieda Weekley left her husband, as Sontag left her own, to marry

Lawrence and therefore marry, as Sontag did, into the literary life). Sontag appears to be observing that if she had continued as Philip's wife she would slowly have inured herself to the role, thus the persona (of 'wife') she had adopted would become her self-identity. Sontag was keenly self-aware and aware of the cultural and socio-political influences upon her:

2/17/70 Obviously, my set of mind corresponds much more to the conditions under which work in the world is performed. And everyone knows that much more work gets done in Protestant than in Catholic countries. This view is obviously exacerbated in a woman in a Catholic country - because there are strong positive pressures on every girl which discourage the mental set that creates a capacity to work. Intellectual skills, except those involving the development of sensibility, are not encouraged in girls. Executive or administrative force is disparaged as "aggressive", castrating, unbecoming, unfeminine. Women are encouraged to work, not only in Catholic countries but everywhere, only in situations where they take orders - or perform thoroughly routine tasks (as in housework). To be creative or to direct an enterprise, in a woman, is by cultural definition, aggressive. For a woman to function as an autonomous, independent, decision-making being is, by cultural definition, unfeminine - even though the culture allows, and even flatters, a small number of exceptional women who defy the prohibition and function this way anyway. So Carlotta's set [of mind] with respect to will, action, decision-making is not only furnished by her culture, but is heavily compounded by the fact of being a woman. (Sontag 2013: 281)

In the entry above cultural templates of female identity inhibit Carlotta's 'will, action' and 'decision-making'; thus, vitiating the idea that Carlotta or Sontag had the option to think and act autonomously. Sontag was particularly concerned with how the cultural definition of females was 'male-dominated'. In the following entry, women are subjugated in public by social ideologies:

2/15/70 Every time a woman is raped (and murdered) in a big city, that's a lynching. Women's Lib. How the metaphor illuminates. What is sexual (i.e., "private" according to male-dominated society) becomes a political (i.e., public/ social) crime - rooted in the public, ideological subjection of women. Dialectic of the relation between conscious and consciousness - function of language (language promotes consciousness/ an increase of consciousness is not only philosophically debilitating (cf. Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, Nietzsche), but, more

importantly morally debilitating). Isn't it spiritual arrogance on my part to feel corrupt (compromised) every time I am not present in the fullness of my being? A kind of moral hysteria? (Problem of *Persona* – has Martin the answer?) Denial of creatural reality. (Sontag 2013: 271-272)

Sontag's exploration of the - 'dialectic of the relation between conscious and consciousness' - raises the contradictory issue of how the self reflects back on itself. (The recursiveness of reflecting on oneself is an issue explored in the next chapter.) Sontag, though she remarks that to reflect on oneself is a recursive and complex process, appears to be more concerned that she is too conscious of her consciousness. Sontag – though she was committed to exploring and improving herself – was, contrariwise, concerned that she was too 'conscious' or 'consciousness-laden' (Sontag 2013: 290). Sontag was worried that to be too conscious drew her away from the, 'fullness of my being'.¹⁶ This personal concern fed through to her professional consideration of competing critical styles. She was concerned that to be too critical would draw her away from productive criticism. So, in another contradiction, Sontag was critical of a critical style that was not 'creatural' or 'spontaneous' enough (Sontag 2013: 272, 282, and 291). (It is a paradox, returned to in the thesis, that it is moot whether one can be one without the other: one must be 'conscious' of oneself as a 'creature' to be creatural.)

Sontag, in as much as she felt she was inhibited by the contexts within which she lived, was equally able to feel that she gained from the influences upon her, including, for example, Existential philosophy. Sontag describes the Existentialist Nietzsche as being one of a 'private pantheon' setting standards for 'myself' and the 'best part of consciousness': 2/15/70 'I make an "idol" of virtue, goodness, sanctity. I corrupt what goodness I have by lusting after it. - And I've always thought my idols were the best part of my consciousness! (My idol = my moral aspirations; my private pantheon—Nietzsche, Beckett, etc.; my "standards" for myself.)' (Sontag 2013: 271). Ihab Hassan (introduced in Chapter One) in, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, provides a sharp description of key tenets often associated with Existentialist thought:

¹⁶ Sontag's reference to the 'fullness of my being', perhaps, relates back to an idea, often found in Existential philosophy, of the potential and pre-reflexive self that is fully 'in-itself'. This is an idea introduced by the excerpt from Haydon's diary at the beginning of this chapter. See the beginning of Chapter Two for further reference.

‘Existentialism we know, plumbs the solitude of man. It follows through the nihilism of Nietzsche, denies all essences, all a prioris in the human condition, and achieves a transvaluation of values despite itself.’ (Hassan 1982: 143)

The ‘nihilism’ characteristic of Existentialism was and is significant for many modern and ‘post-modern’ writers, including Sontag. Hassan describes the philosophy’s ‘tragic’ and ‘nihilistic’ influence on writers from the Marquis de Sade, to Kafka and Beckett (‘tragic’ is a term we find, in Chapter Six, Sontag also deployed to describe Existentialism’s influence on twentieth-century literature). Hassan determines that the idea that there are no stable, reliable, or final truths (no ‘a prioris’ or ‘essences’) meant that these writers were often caught in a process of describing this nebulous state or finding a way of either evading or embracing it. Many ‘post-modern’ theorists, including Jacques Derrida (discussed in Chapter Four and Five), embraced Existentialism’s, ‘transvaluation of values’ and denial of ‘all essences’. (It is in keeping with the analysis of classical concepts of self, in Chapter Three, to note here, that contemporary forms of nihilistic philosophies are presaged in early Greek philosophy, nominally, by the Sceptics, specifically under Pyrrho of Elis.) Though not all Existentialists were thoroughgoing nihilists, the term and the philosophies associated with it symbolise, at the least, a deep and often searching interrogation of the nature of self and its free-will. The spirit of such a philosophy – one that draws into question the concept of an autonomous self – is important to the often ‘post-modern’ criticism of self-writing analysed in Chapters Five and Six, including, most obviously, Jacques Derrida’s, ‘Envois’.

Perhaps because of her education, including her interest in Existentialism, Sontag was able to feel capable of activity that was, in part, autonomous. This facility for autonomous thought and action was felt to be in conflict, with and ran contrary, to the influences she felt were exerted upon her (the influence, for example, of a ‘male dominated society’, and of religion). Katie Roiphe in, ‘Under the Sign of Sontag’, highlights how what is ‘remarkable’ in Susan Sontag’s diaries is, ‘the ferocious will, the conscious and almost unnatural assembly of a persona that rises above and beyond that of ordinary people. The determination she devotes to figuring out who to be, on the most basic and most sophisticated level, is breath

taking.’ (Roiphe 2008)¹⁷ Sontag’s experience of free-will is a recurring theme in her diaries:

2/2/71 Is it possible I owe yet a second liberation to Simone de Beauvoir? Twenty years ago, I read *The Second Sex*. Last night, I read *L’Invitée*. No, of course. Still have much to live through to free myself. But, for the first time, I was able to laugh... I despised myself a little less. (Sontag 2013: 314)

Conversely, (perhaps as a result of reflecting on the master and slave relationship set up in the first chapter of Hegel’s, *Phenomenology of Spirit*) Sontag saw that this experience of self-control and autonomy was vulnerable:

11/17/64 Conceiving all relationships as between a master and a slave... In each case, which was I to be? I found more gratification as a slave: I was more nourished. But – master or slave, one is equally unfree. One cannot step away, get out of character. A relationship of equals is one not tied to “roles”. (Sontag 2013: 74)

In the following entry Sontag’s contradictory experiences of being both a slave and master of influence and slave and master of one’s own self are voiced:

2/12/70 Things happen - I control very little. I must take responsibility for everything I do; I am the author of my life... Meaningless of the idea of making oneself do what one doesn’t want to do. I am a “decision head”. I generalise from my experience. My principal source of self-esteem is that I can decide, and act (force myself) even when I don’t want to do something. I am “in control” of myself. Function of intelligence: self-overcoming. (Sontag 2013: 266)

The ebb and flow of her experience of free-will was played out against the powerful tide of (in Sontag’s words) the ‘public, ideological’ pressures she met in her daily life; including, the conventions of a ‘male-dominated society’ or of ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ doctrine. These were the tensions between her, ‘principal source of self-esteem’ (i.e., being “in control” of myself), and the ‘Things’ outside that self. Again, this is an important tension in self-writing and its

¹⁷ The reference for this passage can be found in the bibliography, see Katie Roiphe, the *Slate*, ‘Under the Sign of Sontag’, (2008).

criticism. It is a tension that can be found between the individual and their relationship with the world: the tension Sontag characterised between the 'master and the slave'. In addition to these tensions, Sontag suffered the internal contradiction that her ability to reason, decide, act, and choose, in a manner that was felt to be self-governed, was a 'source of self-esteem' and, contrary to this, forced her to act against herself.

5. A summary of how Aurelius and Sontag act as guides for the thesis

In this chapter, a selection of entries from Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Susan Sontag's diaries illustrated that these two deliberately introspective writers draw on some of the characteristics of what it is to write diaristically. Despite their differences Aurelius and Sontag shared a preoccupying, often troubled, sense of the self and of their personal autonomy. The pair show-case and lend support to two arguments made in the thesis. Firstly, deliberately introspective texts reveal contradictory and elusive concepts of self and free-will. Secondly, two very different writers, Aurelius and Sontag, experienced the self and free-will in similar ways - across a gap of 2,000 years.

Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing raises recurring issues in self-writing and its criticism. They introduce, eloquently and thoughtfully, how each is concerned with and manages what it is to be introspective or to experience a self; its free-will and voice. As is discussed in the next chapter, the idea a self-writer has a degree of autonomy accords them a status not extended to a non-volitional automaton or a writer composed of (in Sontag's terms) 'cultural definitions'. For our deliberately introspective writers, Aurelius and Sontag, it was found that the idea of personal autonomy was very important. For example, Sontag felt that being "in control" of myself' was her 'principal source of self-esteem'. Thus, and as Chapters Five and Six confirm the discussion of concepts of self and free-will is an important element in self-writing criticism.

In Chapters Three and Four it is found that neither side of the argument (i.e., that the self is the site for autonomous action and thought or is, if it is a tenable concept at all, non-volitional) ultimately, has the upper hand in discussions of the

self. Discussants of the self and free-will disagree and have done so for at least two millennia. It is true that neither view of the self seems to have held the upper hand in Aurelius' and Sontag's self-reflection. They are united by their continued exercise of self-reflection and in the angst they felt about what they found. It is the complexity of Aurelius' and Sontag's self-reflection that makes it such fertile material for research and suggests that forcing contradictory and elusive views on the self into over-simplified opposing extremes (such as a self-concept that is deemed to be capable of volition and a concept that has no volition) is perhaps neither possible or desirable.

An adjunct to the discussion of Aurelius' and Sontag's free-will is that of the autonomy of critics. It is hard to discuss the autonomy of Aurelius or Sontag in isolation from critics' autonomy (especially when the aim in the thesis is to develop a critical approach to self-writing). As Aurelius and Sontag analyse from what vantage point they can actively and autonomously improve their self, the critic is perhaps drawn to reflect on the vantage point from which they critique self-writing. Analysis of these two branches of the discussion of free-will – whether the self and self-writer has autonomy and whether the critic has autonomy – are part of the exploration in the next two chapters.

The deliberately introspective writing of Aurelius and Sontag raises the terms and issues to be explored in the thesis: those pertaining to the equivocal notions of self, free-will, and voice. These terms and issues are often reflected on in self-writing and its criticism. Fully equipped with analyses of these terms and issues it is possible to return to the pair, in Chapter Seven, for a full and detailed intertextual analysis. Chapter Seven reveals how the pair's concern to know and develop their selves and the veracity of their judgements is tested. It is tested as they negotiated varying levels of doubt and belief in the strength of their ability to reason and in the verisimilitude of their evaluation of concepts of self and of free-will. Their endeavour amplifies and expands on elements of the critical approach to self-writing proposed in the thesis: deliberate eclecticism.

CHAPTER THREE

The elusive self: Humanist perspectives

Contents

1. Introduction
2. The 'elusive "I"'
3. Why the discussion of self and free-will is important to self-writers and self-writing critics
4. Free-will
5. Voice
6. The classical self
7. The Stoic self¹

Diary entries from Katherine Mansfield:

21/5/18 - I positively feel, in my hideous modern way, that I can't get in touch with my mind. I am standing gasping in one of those disgusting telephone boxes and I can't "get through". (Mansfield 1954: 133)

13/11/21 - Come my unseen, my unknown, let us talk together. (Mansfield 1954: 270)²

1. Introduction

In Chapters One and Two it has been established that a crucial feature of much self-writing is reflection on the self. Self-reflection reaches an apotheosis in the deliberately introspective diary. It follows that critical discussion of deliberately introspective writing is often preoccupied with terms and issues bearing on the concept of self, including free-will and voice. Chapter Three clarifies the terms self,

¹ For further reference to the phrase: the 'elusive "I"' see: (Blackburn 2008: 344).

² The first entry, from Mansfield's diary, emphasises the difficulties (to be explored in this chapter) of being honest about a self that is reflected on recursively (this is: when reflecting on itself the self is both subject and object). For Mansfield, the ability to - 'get in touch with my mind' - is further vitiated by her being, what she describes as, 'modern'. Modern theories of the self and society and the ways in which they test traditional concepts of a private or 'inner' self are part of Chapter Four's exploration of the 'post-modern'. However, it is also found in this chapter, that the ways in which the 'outside' affects the 'inside' are important questions in more Humanist evaluations of the self. The second entry emphasises how the concept of self remains, despite its elusiveness (its being 'unseen' and 'unknown'), a topic for inner conversation or internal dialogue.

free-will, and voice. In the discussion of the issues pertaining to these terms particular attention is paid to the nature of what shall henceforth be referred to as the Humanist tradition, with some reference to the 'post-modern'. (The discussion in Chapter Four is focused on the 'post-modern' tradition.) Expanding on Humanist and 'post-modern' discussion of these often perplexing concepts is significant to the development, in the thesis, of a useful critical approach to self-writing.³ It is in this genre that writers are found to be at their most introspective and as such it is where the issues of the self, free-will, and voice are often starkly evident. The concept of self can be broken down into three compartments. Firstly, there is the question of its nature. That is in what sense does the self exist? Secondly, there are issues of personal volition and agency. That is the matter of the self's freedom of will, its autonomy, or its freedom of intention and action. Then, thirdly, does the self have a distinct voice? That is, setting aside the issue of the nature of self, the degree to which the self is free to choose what to think and say or can be self-determining and therefore can know that it has spoken freely.

It was alluded to in the introduction, and is asserted here, that there is a view of self and free-will as practicable and feasible, even inviolable, concepts and that this is commonly a Humanist view. A Lacey, a classicist and philosopher, summarises that the, 'so called Humanist movement arose in the fifth century BC when the Sophists and Socrates "called philosophy down from heaven to earth".' (Lacey in OCP 1995: 375)⁴ The class of Humanism discussed in the thesis is: 'The tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority.' (Lacey in OCP 1995: 375)⁵ In this schema, man's 'powers'

³ For further references to the literary Humanist tradition see bibliography for Schwarz, *The Humanistic Heritage: Critical Theories of the English Novel from James to Hillis Miller* (1986). Particularly the pages on the Humanist writers and critics Van Ghent (Schwarz 1986: 80-97, 196, and 246), Lubbock (Schwarz 1986: 32), and Miller (Schwarz 1986: 222-265).

⁴ For further reference to Humanism and its links to the classical Greek concern with 'humanitas' see: (Snell 1982: 246-263). For further reference to distinctions between early Greek and Roman, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and contemporary uses of the term Humanism see bibliography for Norman, *On Humanism* (Norman 2004: 1-14).

⁵ Descartes and Kant figure in the discussions in this chapter. They both had important ideas about the self that influenced later Humanist tendencies, however, neither were Humanist in the now predominant contemporary sense of the term. For example, both believed in God and Descartes is described as actively breaking with his more (according to the Renaissance definition) Humanist and scholastic peers. For further discussion of the philosophical movements Descartes affiliated himself with, see bibliography for, JR Milton, in J Kraye and MWF Stone, *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy* (Milton in Kraye and Stone 2000: 161). Descartes is Humanist in the manner that he located, 'the point of [epistemological] certainty in my own awareness of myself... [and gave] a first-person twist to the theory of knowledge that dominated the following centuries' (Blackburn 2008: 101). Kant was Humanist in the manner that he, for example, developed the idea of a 'categorical imperative': the idea that people have the freedom to choose to act towards each other in the ways they think others might and should. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant developed the idea of the 'transcendental ego' (i.e., the ego that framed one's reasoned judgements and was in this sense an a priori type of self-organiser and, as such, elevated man to a reasoning being). In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (a late lecture series in Kant's teaching career) refers to 'inner intuition' and 'inner sense', ideas that also privilege individuals' subjective and reasoning 'ego' and, again, a move

and 'authority' are linked to the concept of personal autonomy and all three link to the ways in which man is accorded status. The philosophers Julian Baggini and Gareth Southwell describe Humanism as the view that: "[M]an is the measure of all things" and that humanity is in control of its own destiny... it puts humanity at centre stage, master of itself.' (Baggini and Southwell 2012: 180)

It is important to draw out how, in the passages above, Lacey and co-authors Baggini and Southwell describe Humanism as emphasising the connection between man's (humankind's) 'status' and the ability to 'master... itself' or man's 'authority'. The philosophers emphasise that, in Humanism, how man matters – his 'status' - is related to his having 'authority' or (in terms shortly to be discussed) 'free-will'. In Chapters Five and Six, and in keeping with this Humanist argument, it is found that critics of self-writing often deploy and conflate the concepts of 'status', 'importance', and 'authority'. Critics - whether Humanist or 'post-modern' - are often keen to accord the self-writing and self-writers they critique 'importance'. In order to do so, whether they acknowledge it or not, in effect they ascribe autonomy to the writer.

Simon Blackburn, a philosopher and author of a number of explanatory guides to philosophical questions, including *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, describes how in the twentieth century the term Humanism (a term that, as we have seen, stems from the Greeks and has connotations that were developed through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment):

[I]s sometimes used as a pejorative term by post-modernists and especially Feminist writers, applied to philosophies such as that of Sartre, that rely upon the possibility of the autonomous, self-conscious, rational, single self, and that are supposedly insensitive to the inevitable fragmentary, splintered historically conditioned nature of personality and motivation. (Blackburn 2008: 178)

with connotations a contemporary Humanist would recognise (Kant 2006: 148 and 164). For further reference to Kant and Humanism see bibliography for Allison, 'Kant's Transcendental Humanism' (Allison 1971: 182-207). Though Kant later disagreed with Descartes' idealism, they both lent the concept of self a privileged position in the person. Lending such significance to man's ability to 'master... itself' is a Humanist move in both the Renaissance and contemporary sense of the term, for further reference see: (Norman 2004: 14 and Baggini and Southwell 2012: 180).

It is important to clarify that though, as Blackburn observes, Humanism has been perceived by many 'post-modernists' as an inadequate description of the, 'autonomous self-conscious, rational, single self', the Humanist tradition has itself presented its own type of challenges to the soundness and inviolability of the self and free-will. (Some of which anticipate the later challenges to the concept of self explored in the next chapter.) This chapter considers how, for example, there is little consensus amongst essentially Humanist thinkers as to how and whether persons have the freedom to act on self-determined intentions. There are also the problems of: the self's location, or lack of (a discussion often confined to metaphysical problems of self, including Descartes' mind-body dualism); of how the self reflects back on itself; and how the self remains unified and singular over time, or in a single moment.⁶

This chapter and the next explore multiple views of the self, each of which contain their own defences and challenges, and finds that speculation ranges over these often opposing views, espousing, condemning, and attempting to reconcile them by turns. In the second section of this chapter classical concepts of self, in particular Stoic concepts, will be explored. The analysis supports the argument that a Roman (Marcus Aurelius) would have been familiar with the idea of self and free-will and can be deployed as a case study for deliberately introspective writing. It also demonstrates quite how enduringly elusive concepts of self and personal

⁶ The idea that one's concept of self is not fixed to a specific temporal point was first mentioned in section eight of Chapter One, as part of the discussion of the daily characteristic of many diary entries. The variable nature and content of self-concepts is a recurring issue in the criticism of self-writing. Matthew Clark in, *Structures of Narrative and the Language of the Self*, posits that a person is capable of maintaining a coherent sense of self through temporal shifts. A person is able to (re)imagine – often in narrative - their own pasts and futures and in doing so construct teleological frameworks for the self. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio in, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, describes how, 'both personhood and identity' are 'presided over' by the 'autobiographical self', i.e., the way we construct our biography – the story of our life – is vital to how we know ourselves (Damasio 1999: 'autobiographical memory', 17-18, 119, 120-127, 157-158, 173, and 175 and the 'self', 17-18, 22, 94, 104, 112, 130, 134-143, 161, 172-176, 196-200, and 216-217). If the mapping of our experiences (including past memories, present thoughts, and future imaginings) in a coherent temporal framework is what makes us fully conscious and human then writing the story of our lives reinforces this process. It also places the idea of self at the very core of self-writing. The philosopher, Galen Strawson posits in, *Selves: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics*, that the idea one has of self is only momentary, as such the self-concept does not persist through time as one thing, though he concedes that it is felt to and believed to (Strawson: 2009). The importance of the philosophical question, how the self-concept maintains itself over time, can be identified in the work of, most famously, William James, *Principles of Psychology* (first published 1890); J Dewey, *How We Think* (first published 1910); J-P Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (first published 1943); M Heidegger, *Being and Time* (first published 1927) and P Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Volume 1-3*, (first published 1984). Classical scholars were also concerned with change or temporal differentiations in substantial and insubstantial objects and subjects, for example, Aristotle in *Categories* and *Metaphysics Z*, worked to quantify the degree to which changes to matter/the person, over time, could so radically alter the form and substance of the matter as to render it another form. For further discussion of the classical attitude towards time and self-awareness see: (Sorabji 2006: 242). There is the further question as to what point in time is the self, if it is constant, calibrating. The idea of the self as a constant and unified site is further tested by David Eagleman et al's experiments, in 'Motion Integration and Postdiction in Visual Awareness', the scientists reported that though we think we live in the present sensory information is received at different speeds, there are signals to be transferred and processes in the brain to be completed, before data makes an impression we are conscious of, all introspection is, according to this view, retrospective. For further reference see: (Eagleman 2000: 2036).

autonomy are. The dilemmas of the self have for at least two millennia preoccupied people.

2. The 'elusive "I"'

There are multiple ways of thinking about and describing the question of the self. Even as the self is dismissed (for example, as an insubstantial abstract or a fallacious illusion) it remains a significant issue for many and as such questions as to its nature (i.e., what it is), structure, utility, purpose, and content have been of both personal and professional interest for centuries.⁷ This chapter and the next explore how the concept of self is often delineated from other entities, faculties, and processes attributed to human beings (such as the mind, or the body). The concept of self is defined and discussed variably; as a transcendental ideal; as a useful abstract, useful to both individuals and society; as the means by which we know ourselves to exist or as the locus for a person's 'being'; as a regulator for memories, thoughts, intentions, emotions, sensory impressions, and less formalised thoughts (i.e., the type of thoughts that are not attached to language or images); as an illusion or trick of the mind; as a mental-physical emanation; and as a social and cultural function and construct.⁸ Each of these descriptions of self may build on or include the residue of another class of self. Aside from the tensions between different explanations of self, there are the tensions between the ways in which a person might describe their subjective experience of self and how

⁷ Sartre, particularly in his essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* (see bibliography, the essay was originally offered as a lecture in 1945, references are to a 2007 re-print), puts forward the theory that the essence of a human being is preceded by his or her activity: his or her existence. This adds an additional layer to the idea that writing about the self is an exercise and, in the diary, a daily exercise. According to Sartre it is an exercise that can feed-back to one's very essence. Interesting though it is, Sartre's ideas on what it is to exist cannot be empirically tested and reside firmly within the internal logic of Sartre's broader ideas on ontological phenomenology (see first footnote to Chapter Two).

⁸ The following footnote expands on the definitions for self given above. The ideal, immaterial, and transcendent type self is explored shortly with reference to Descartes' self-verifying 'cogito'. The more physicalist idea of a self (that is: a self consequent to mental-physical processes) is explored towards the end of section two of Chapter Three. The concept of the self as a 'bundle' of sensory impressions can be found, for example, in Hume's work. For further reference see bibliography for Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Hume: 2000, first published 1739). There is also a concept of self as a cognitive impression designed to support the evolution of the species via, for example, culture/ civilisation-building. It is an idea posited by, amongst others, the psychologist Roy Baumeister in, *The Cultural Animal Human Nature, Meaning, and Social Life* (Baumeister 2005, in particular Chapter Seven). 'Unattached thoughts' (i.e., the type of thoughts the self might be described as regulating or hosting) are what the psychologist RT Hurlburt describes as, 'unsymbolized thoughts'. For further reference see bibliography for Hurlburt, 'Unsymbolised Thinking' in, *Conscious Cognition* (2008: 1364-74). Damasio et al. describe the 'social me' in, 'Neural Correlates of Admiration and Compassion' in, PNAS (Damasio et al. 2008: 8021-26). According to the work of Richard Nisbett, the parameters for the socially constructed self varies from culture to culture; it is a construct that depends on the development of the ways in which people interact. For further reference see bibliography for Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought* (2003). The one static point of acultural significance, according to Nisbett's interpretation, is that society, in some way at least, impacts on one's view of self. We find, towards the end of this chapter, that contemporary approaches to the self hold the residue of classical Greek and Roman descriptions.

the concept is described to them. Discussants disagree, however the issue of self appears to be ineluctable.⁹

EJ Lowe, a contemporary philosopher particularly interested in metaphysics and first referred to in the introduction to the thesis, described the term 'self' as:

[O]ften used interchangeably with "person", though usually with more emphasis on the "inner", or psychological, dimension of personality than on outward bodily form. Thus a self is conceived to be a subject of consciousness, a being capable of thought and experience and able to engage in deliberative action. More crucially, a self must have a capacity for self consciousness, which partly explains the aptness of the term "self". (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816)¹⁰

It is confidence or belief in (what Blackburn described as 'reliance' on) this class of self that is labelled as Humanist. That is: a self that is a 'subject' or 'being' capable of 'thought' and 'deliberative action' (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816). And yet a self that is 'master of itself', is impossible to know: one cannot shake the hand of the self. It is an, 'elusive "I", that shows an alarming tendency to disappear when we try and introspect it.' (Blackburn 2008: 344)

Thus, a challenge to examining the idea of self or oneself is that one does so from the very odd position of the self itself: from the first-person and subjective point of view. The consciousness of self is both pivot and lever, even when it is attempting to shift its view of its self. It is this elusive quality of a person's cognition about themselves (or, if the self has been dismissed, a person's reflection on the machinations of their own mind) that has led even those Humanist philosophers who privilege the idea of a cogent and practicable self to question the validity of such an idea. The recursive nature of subjective reflection on oneself and the

⁹ The self (as abstract, interaction, mental-physical emanation, or ideal) has been posited by both philosophers and scientists as a possible locus for a person's knowledge of their existence. The idea can be found in the theories of seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalists, such as Descartes and Spinoza, and of empiricists, such as Locke. It can also be found in the work of twentieth and twenty-first century philosophers, such as Heidegger, Sartre, Ricoeur, and Taylor. Though descriptions differ and discussants disagree, that the self is an issue remains evident. For further reference see: Taylor on Descartes (Taylor 1989: 301, 395, 480, 495-512); Damasio in, *Looking for Spinoza* (2003); Ricoeur in, *Oneself as Another* (1992: 7-1) and Chapter Two, footnote one, for Heidegger's and Sartre's approaches to self. Again, as we find towards the end of this chapter, these ideas hold the residue of classical Greek and Roman attempts to understand the significance of the concept self.

¹⁰ For further reference to Lowe's definition of the term 'self' see bibliography for Lowe, *Forms of Thought: A Study in Philosophical Logic* (Lowe 2013: 50, 69, and 94) and for discussion of the 'self' as a subject of metaphysics (ontology), see: (Lowe 2013: 2-3, 34-39, 50, and 62-63).

problems it perhaps poses to those endeavouring to reason with and examine the subjective experience is returned to at the end of this section.

In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur, the twentieth-century philosopher and literary theorist, lays out the two paradigms between which Western concepts of self (in both the Humanist and 'post-modern' view) traditionally oscillate: 'For Descartes the cogito is both indubitable and the ultimate foundation of all that can be known. For Nietzsche, on the contrary, the cogito is the name of an illusion.' (Reagan 1998: 74)¹¹ Ricoeur establishes that there is a conflict between the idea of the 'cogito' and the 'anti-cogito' or Descartes' 'self' and Nietzsche's 'non-self'. Highlighting these extremes, however crude or simplistic they are, is a useful way of marshalling competing ideas on the self. Ricoeur, goes onto describe how the self-concept is: 'The first truth - I am, I think – remains as abstract and empty as it is invincible; it has to be 'mediated' by the ideas, actions, works, institutions, and monuments that objectify it.' (Ricoeur 2008: 43) The self is not, according to Ricoeur, an 'invincible' certainty (cogito) neither is it an 'empty' nullity (anti-cogito). The nuances of Ricoeur's approach are returned to in the next chapter in a discussion of his concept of 'narrative identity'; a term Ricoeur uses often in *Oneself as Another*, especially the fifth and sixth studies, 'Personal Identity and Narrative Identity' and 'The Self and Narrative Identity' (Ricoeur 1992: 113-140 and 140-169, also at 1992: 1-3 and 1990: 246 – 249).¹²

The self-verifying Cartesian 'cogito' is a concept of self that has been defended and disputed in Western philosophy with equal vigour. Blackburn provides a useful summary of René Descartes' (1596-1650) 'cogito':

¹¹ Ricoeur in, 'The Question of Self-hood', or Chapter One of *Oneself as Another*, discusses Descartes and Nietzsche in the terms suggested above (Ricoeur 1992: 7-11).

¹² Ricoeur's work explores additional challenges to the idea of an 'invincible' self; including firstly, the idea that language does not directly relate to that which it is used to describe and as such cannot represent the self accurately and secondly, the idea that articulation can significantly contribute to the form of that which is articulated. This is a discussion for Chapter Four.

The self conceived as Descartes presents it in the first two *Meditations*: aware only of its own thoughts, and capable of disembodied existence, neither situated in space nor surrounded by others. This is the pure self or “I” that we are tempted to imagine as a simple unique thing that makes up our essential identity. Descartes’ view that he could keep hold of this nugget whilst doubting everything else is criticised by Lichtenburg and Kant and subsequent philosophers of mind. (Blackburn 2008: 56)¹³

In addition to Kant’s and Lichtenburg’s later criticisms of Descartes’ philosophy of self, Blackburn points to Hume’s bundle theory of mind as challenging the indomitable ‘cogito’. That is: ‘[The] view that...we have no reason to think in terms of a unified self that owns a variety of experiences or states; we only have access to the succession of states themselves. The enduring self is then a fiction, or a figment of the imagination.’ (Blackburn 2008: 51) Hume, ever the sceptic, may have objected to Descartes’ particular conception of cogito, but he and many of his peers and immediate successors (including Kant) were indebted to the privileged position Descartes afforded the subjectivities of a self-discerning ‘I’.¹⁴ The passage from Blackburn supports the idea that the Humanist tradition posed its own challenges to the concept of an inviolable self, thereby, importantly supporting the idea that discussions of the self are rarely settled within or between traditions.

A second challenge to the verity of the self-concept (and ‘cogito’) is the problem of its coherence and consistency across time. Blackburn writes: ‘The problem is that the idea of one determinate self, that survives through life’s normal changes of experience and personality seems to be highly metaphysical.’ (Blackburn 2008: 51)¹⁵ Is the self a constant point or does it have invariable qualities? An example of a change in the self is that of shifting persona. Almost every person (almost every self) has a different persona as it goes through life. Some people feel that

¹³ For further reference to Books One and Two of Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy* see bibliography for Chavez-Arviso, *Descartes’ Key Philosophical Writings* (1997 : 134 and 139).

¹⁴ For further reference to the discussion amongst late Renaissance and early Enlightenment philosophers on the nature of self see the philosopher Rorty’s summary: (Rorty 1976: 11).

¹⁵ How the self maintains its unity and coherence through the movements of time and matter is a persistent question in philosophy, particularly in metaphysics. Rorty observes that philosophical discussions of persons are either about what characteristics identify a person, or how a person remains a coherent and singular entity through material and temporal changes: (Rorty 1976: 2). See footnote six in Chapter Three for further reference.

they choose different persona or marshal different personae, and others feel that they have a persona or personae thrust upon them: 'It seems possible that more than one person or personality should share the same body and brain, so what makes up the unity of experience and thought that we each enjoy in normal living?' (Blackburn 2008: 283)

In Chapter One, Patricia Meyer Spacks described how deliberately introspective writers often attempt to strip away a public and invented 'persona' to reveal a self that is felt to be at the 'inner' core of the individual and 'authentic' to them (Spacks uses the term 'inner life', 2003: 52, 59, and 62). The diarist, who writes in private, attempts a private 'inner' dialogue, or at least something in the manner of. Blackburn observes that the concept of self can be conceived of as a combination of (perhaps, contrived and public) persona and a (perhaps, less contrived and more private) inner self; both of which change over time. Even when they are seen as subsisting in a single entity (the person), corralling these sometimes disparate and contradictory states into a unified and coherent self is no simple psychological or intellectual task.

A third challenge is that of mind-body duality. Descartes saw the two entities (mind and body) as distinct and separate to the brain.¹⁶ However, if they were distinct this did not fully explain how they related to each other and where the self (thought to be mental) actually was. Hassan, a critic who is, as we have seen, a useful and experienced guide in these matters, describes the problem:

¹⁶ Descartes' concept of mind-body duality is laid out in the Sixth Meditation of *Meditations on First Philosophy*: 'I have a body that is very closely conjoined to me, nonetheless because on the other hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself insofar as I am only an unextended thinking thing, and on the other hand a distinct idea of body insofar as it is an extended non-thinking thing, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body.' (Descartes 1997: 176) Working almost five centuries later, the philosopher Peter Strawson (returned to in this chapter) in, 'Self, Mind, and Body', argues that, 'really the history of a human being is not the history of one two-sided thing [mind-body], it is the history of two one-sided things. One of these things is a material object, a body; the other is an immaterial object, a soul or mind or spirit or individual consciousness.' (Strawson 2008: 186) Strawson makes this observation as he builds an argument in which the 'two one-sided things' (i.e., mind and body) are not a duality but a unity or an active unison in which the significance and peculiarities of neither are dissolved: 'The fundamental concept... is that of a human being, a man, a type of thing to which predicates of... various classes... can be ascribed... [and] the concept of a mind or consciousness is dependent on the concept of a living person.' (Strawson 2008: 188) Strawson's argument and his analysis of Cartesian dualism raise issues that persist in contemporary evaluations of the person and the self-concept, including how the consciousness of self, as an inimitably subjective experience, is unified with the body, as an observable and material object, and how both act together, rely on each other, and combine over time. For further discussion of the consequences of Descartes' emphasis on the 'inner and the outer' and 'radical reflexivity' (i.e., how the duality model of the person served to bring centre stage the mental activities of the person) see: (Taylor 1998: 143).

[T]he reflexive act of consciousness the seat of reality... ushered dualism into Western thought while admitting solipsism by the back door... the essence of the material world as extension and motion [could be seen]; the problem remained... to explain how, in a dualistic universe, mind and matter could touch. (Hassan 1982: 216)

Thus, even in Descartes' philosophy, where being alive is a form of self-hood that is mental (of the mind), there remained the question of how such an abstract reality could be substantiated.

Descartes' problem concerned the location of the metaphysical self. Current approaches to this challenge are heavily influenced by physical sciences, such as biology and neuroscience. That a person is aware of their body is, according to physicalist approaches, a basic element of consciousness of oneself and it is from this platform that more complex cognitive processes develop. Empirical approaches to the self describe it as 'embodied'; an emanation of mental-physical processes, rather than a metaphysical or transcendental quality (in this case Descartes' self-hood that is 'of the mind' is also physical).¹⁷ Proponents of this view often hold, in some capacity at least, that the seat of the concept of self is consciousness and that consciousness is a measurable brain activity. That the self is embodied is a description that has been linked closely to a number of Homeric, Archaic, Classical (as in the Classical Age of Greece), and Hellenistic perspectives on the self. (For example, the Stoic conception of self is described by a number of late twentieth century classicists as dependent on the interaction of a person's physical-mental functions and parts with the world around them (classical perspectives on the self are explored at the end of this chapter).¹⁸

¹⁷ John Searle in, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, opines that some biological and neurological descriptions of consciousness are built on, 'the urge to reductionism and materialism' and that this physicalist impulse, 'derives from the underlying mistake of supposing that if we accept consciousness as having its own real existence, we will somehow be accepting dualism [i.e., the Cartesian mind-body split identified above] and rejecting the scientific view.' (Searle 1997: XIII) Searle describes how the philosopher or scientist who 'insist[s] that materialism might be right', as part of an attempt to avoid the idealism of Descartes' dualism, also risks, 'eliminating consciousness by reducing it to something else... [and] end[s] up deny[ing] the real existence of the conscious states they were supposed to explain' (Searle 1997: XIII). Searle's approach is to avoid the extremes of Descartes' dualistic model and of contemporary materialism and marry the 'phenomenological' and the 'physical', Searle accepts the, 'irreducibility of consciousness... without accepting [Descartes'] dualism' (Searle 1997: 213-214). Searle argues that the subjective state and the physical state co-exist in their different characters: 'The way out is to reject dualism and materialism and accept that consciousness is both a qualitative, subjective mental phenomena and at the same time part of the physical world.' (Searle 1997: XIII). A reason for highlighting Searle's hybrid approach to consciousness and consciousness of self is that an adjunct of the critical approach to self-writing proposed in the thesis is its attempt to move from false dichotomies to a, 'plurality of goods and hence often of conflicts, which other views tend to mask by delegitimizing one of the goods in context.' (Taylor 1989: 518)

¹⁸ See glossary for specific dates and periods associated with the term 'classical'.

The embodied self has been posited as accommodating both the experiential force of the 'inner life' and the necessary interaction of a human being's materiality with the material world. It is often a perspective composed of a network of multiple and interdependent elements (including mental and psychological, physical and biological, social and environmental). The psychologist and academic, Eleanor Rosch, describes this type of embodied self in, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*.¹⁹ Rosch's comment illustrates how the material or physical experiences of an individual, including the experience of cognitive or mental processes, are not extrinsic to 'inner' subjective experience: 'We hold... that Western scientific culture requires that we see our bodies both as physical structures and as lived experiential structures – in short as both "outer" and "inner".' (Rosch 1992: XV)²⁰ The embodied self, to some degree, brings together the elements of self that are experienced as mental and physical; as 'outer' and 'inner'; and by doing so insists that as a material entity, in a material world, such a self will have worldly dimensions. The embodied self is acted on and acts on the world which it is a material part of.

There immediately arises the issue as to the constancy of whatever physical dimension one gives the self. In *The Kingdom of Infinite Space*, Raymond Tallis, a poet, novelist, and philosopher, describes the embodied self as requiring more than a brain (or a mental component):

¹⁹ Joseph Tabbi has researched how recent advances in cognitive science inform literary criticism. For further reference see bibliography for Tabbi, *Cognitive Fictions* (Tabbi 2002: 1-20); Waugh, 'Mind in Modern Fiction' (Waugh 2011: 127); and Zunshine, *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies* (2011: 1-61). Zunshine's collection of essays describe late twentieth and twenty-first century scientifically inspired approaches to literature or writing and explore how science and literature have come together in the past, for example, in the writing of CP Snow or HG Wells. A persistent theme – in Tabbi's and Waugh's work and Zunshine's collection – is how the reductive tendencies of some scientific methods are ill-suited to literary interpretation and cannot capture reading and writing experiences as, for example, data or material admissible in empirical studies. However, the majority of essays in Zunshine's collection, including Alan Richardson's, 'Facial Expression Theory from Romanticism to the Present', are keen to describe how quantification of the literary exercise can be exciting and revealing. Richardson, for example, analyses the facial expressions of Austen's characters and assesses what this reveals about the characters' states of mind.

²⁰ For further reference to the deployment – in literary criticism – of a self that is described as a consequence of material and physical processes see: (Clark 2010: 2). For further reference to the embodied self, see bibliography for the work of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (Damasio 2012: Chapter Two, 'From Life Regulation to Biological Value'). Damasio, though he scientifically opines that the consciousness of self is a symptom of physical processes, does not think the self is therefore a meaningless by-product of physical activity; for further reference see bibliography for Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, (Damasio 2003: 284). The neuroscientist Susan Greenfield's work also explores the fallacies and revelations of 'neurologized' subjective experiences, for further reference see: (Greenfield 2011: 140).

The bottom line is this: the brain is a necessary condition of all forms of consciousness, from the slightest twinge of sensation to the most exquisitely constructed sense of self. It is not, however, a sufficient condition. Selves are not cooked up, or stored, in brains or (as writers such as the late Francis Crick would have it) in bits of our brains, such as the claustrum. Selves require bodies as well as brains, material environments as well as bodies, and societies as well as material environments. That is why, despite the hype, we won't find in the brain an explanation of ourselves, or the secret of a better self or a happier life. (Tallis 2008: XVIII)

The extreme end of physicalist views of self is described as 'epiphenomenalism'. That is: the idea that the self, as a mental event, is wholly a product of physical activity and can be empirically and objectively measured. It is not, as the passage above illustrates, a view held by Tallis. It is also an idea famously contested by the philosopher Thomas Nagel.²¹ In his essay, 'What is it like to be a Bat', Nagel posits that the subjective consciousness of self is not fully or satisfactorily definable according to physical parameters: '[It] is not captured by any of the familiar recently devised reductive analyses of the mental.' (Nagel 1974: 435-450)²² In Nagel's opinion (and in the opinion of a group of twentieth-century

²¹ Nagel argues that the subjective point of view is incompatible with epiphenomenalism or strictly physicalist descriptions: 'If physicalism is to be defended, the phenomenological features must be given a physical account... [However] Every subjective phenomena is essentially connected with a single point of view and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view... to deny the logical significance of what we can never describe is the crudest form of cognitive dissonance.' (Nagel 1974: 437-441) Nagel's solution to this illogical but tempting move is to, 'develop an objective phenomenology not dependent on empathy or imagination' or, to describe it another way, a framework in which to better understand subjectivity on its own terms: a framework that does not strip subjectivity of its subjectivity so as to render it a physical object (Nagel 1974: 446-450). This discussion is important to self-writing: a genre that is often described as being written from an acutely subjective and first-person perspective and follows on from the reference to Searle's work at footnote 17, Chapter Three.

²² The philosophers, Thomas Nagel, John Searle, and Charles Taylor contend that it is the echo of Cartesian dualism which informs the lurking dichotomy in many contemporary approaches to a person's subjective perspective or experience. Taylor, following Nagel, summarises the problematic nature of objectifying – so that it might be observed and measured by empirical studies - the first-person or subjective experience: 'The philosophy of disengagement and objectification [in Taylor's terms 'instrumentalist' perspectives that have been handed down, in part, from the Enlightenment] has helped to create a picture of the human being, at its most extreme... from which the last vestiges of subjectivity seem to have been expelled. It is a picture of the human being from a completely third person perspective.' (Taylor 1989: 175) Part of his reasons for arguing against the full objectification of the subjective first-person perspective is that in the process the subjective loses its defining character; for Taylor pushing for this type of approach to the subjective experience of self leaves the person no, 'ontological space... abolish[es] the space... for 'strong evaluations' [i.e., abolishes the space in which, according to Taylor, meaning and morals can be framed]' (Taylor 1989: 332 and 500). Taylor is as scathing of extreme subjectivism (in his terms 'expressivist' perspectives that have been handed down, in part, from the Romantics) as he is of extreme objectification: 'A total and fully consistent subjectivism would tend towards emptiness: nothing would count as a fulfilment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfilment.' (Taylor 1989: 507) An additional point worth making, is that reductionists (bent on objectifying the subjective) can find themselves rather ironically venerating the subjective view point: 'The paradox [of the 'instrumentalist' view] is that this severe outlook is connected with – indeed based on – according a central place to the first-person stance.' (Taylor 1989: 175) What Taylor means by this is that to applaud third-person perspectives and objectivity is to applaud the reasoning capacity of persons, thus the strength of the objective perspective relies on the veracity of the subjective: it is objectivity, paradoxically, turned inward. Again, the significance of this discussion and the approaches Nagel, Searle, and Taylor suggest to the nuances of understanding both objective and subjective perspectives are a facet of the approach of 'deliberate eclecticism' advocated in the thesis; i.e., in part, an attempt to move beyond false dichotomies to a, 'plurality of goods and hence often of conflicts, which other views tend to mask by delegitimizing one of the goods in context.' (Taylor 1989: 518)

philosophers, dubbed 'mysterianists') the subjective experience of a consciousness is ineffable and views upon it, ranging from epiphenomenalism to the metaphysical, can only ever be partially and imaginatively contrived. Two facets of Nagel's argument are, firstly, that human beings do not have the required mental architecture to form objective opinions about their subjective cognitive experiences and, secondly, that if the subjective experience were to be objectified (so it could, for example, be examined and measured) it would no longer be subjective.

Twenty years after Nagel wrote 'What is it like to be a Bat', John Searle, a philosopher specialising in philosophical and empirical approaches to consciousness and the self, observed that, 'consciousness has an irreducible subjective character which is not identical with any third-party objective features. Consciousness is irreducibly subjective in the sense that conscious states are not experienced by or accessible to other individuals.' (Searle in OCP 1995: 153)²³ Ten years after Searle's comment, in *You and Me the Neuroscience of Identity*, neuroscientist Susan Greenfield remarks that the best science cannot and, 'will never be able to throw light on the subjective first-hand experience of feeling what it's like to be me, or you.' (Greenfield 2011: 140) It is worth noting, as Searle does, that though '[c]onsciousness is not reducible in the way that other biological properties typically are'; the subjective or first-person perspective of self-consciousness (i.e., one's knowledge of oneself) does not mean that neuroscience or biology cannot offer (at the least) some insights into the functions and processes of consciousness (Searle 1992: 1, 76, and 249 and 1997: 187-217).

The subjective point of view can preserve one's notions of self (i.e., one's view of oneself according to Nagel, Greenfield, and Searle is, at least to some degree, resistant to and therefore preserved from objective or empirical measures). The degree to which human experience is subjective can, however, also blindside

²³ In 'Subjectivity Ancient and Modern: The Cyrenaics, Sextus, and Descartes', Gail Fine tentatively defines subjectivity ('if there are subjective states') as a form of consciousness that is experiential, available to 'introspection', and which is defined by its functions as much as by its 'state', 'being in pain, having a sensation, experiencing something,... all count... there is some characteristic phenomenological feel to subjective states... It is often said that one has some sort of privileged access to one's subjective states.' (Fine 2003: 193)

reflection on oneself. Quassim Cassam, a philosopher who has written on the self, self-awareness, and the self's worldly contexts, comments that:

One view of self-consciousness would be that it is the consciousness of a special kind of object, "the self". In reply, it has been claimed that just as the eye cannot see itself, so the self, understood as a subject of awareness, cannot be aware of itself as an object. According to Schopenhauer, for example, the suggestion that a subject can be an object to itself would be "the most monstrous contradiction ever thought of". More cautiously, it might be argued that the core of the intuitive notion of self-consciousness is what might be called introspective self-awareness, and that one cannot be introspectively aware of oneself as an object. (Cassam in OCP 1995: 817-818)

Following on from Cassam's observation that an individual's self-reflection is recursive and therefore, it can be surmised, logically produces incomplete self-descriptions, Noordhof describes how, '[m]uch philosophical discussion has centred around the status of the beliefs we obtain through introspection. "Are they justified?" and "How likely are they to be false?" are questions often asked.' (Noordhof in OCP 1995: 414-415) If the recursiveness of reflecting back on oneself is accepted as a profound problem (in the previous chapter it was illustrated that Sontag saw recursiveness in self-reflection as an issue but did not problematize the idea), it is a non-negotiable challenge to Humanist (indeed all) accounts of the self.²⁴ Even in a nuanced form, the problem of recursiveness seems intractable. Richard Sorabji, a classicist and philosopher, who has long been particularly drawn to exploring contemporary and classical concepts of self (Sorabji 2006: 1) observes in, 'The Impossibility of Self-Knowledge':

I am not sure why someone should not apprehend themselves as apprehending an item, and as apprehending themselves, and as being apprehended by themselves. The problem seems rather to lie at a different point, that at some level the higher acts of apprehension will, in a finite mind, remain apprehended so that one does not apprehend the whole of oneself. (Sorabji 2006: 210)

²⁴ Sorabji describes, how the logical improbability of a self being simultaneously object and subject (or, reflecting back on itself) is not a new phenomenon. It was identified as an issue by classical philosophers (Sorabji 2006: 210). That the process of self-reflection is so complicated is part of the argument, made in the thesis, that the self is a volute and elusive issue and, thus, requires careful management. The critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism', to be introduced in the next chapter, is designed to incorporate the elusiveness of the self in its interpretative processes, as a virtue and not a vexation.

So, though Sorabji finds that in classical (and this can be extended to contemporary) discourse it is possible for the consciousness of self to be in dialogue with itself (so not fatally damaged by recursiveness) he concedes that there are 'parts' of the mind that cannot be viewed directly. Despite these challenges, it seems unavoidable that the Humanist description of self (a self that is, at its extreme, a practicable, volitional, and inviolable concept) is engaged with. The idea, in a pat paradox, cannot be attacked or deconstructed without framing it, in itself.

The discussion in this chapter reveals that when the self is described as having a nature and content such attributes are often amorphous, especially when it is the self describing itself. Descriptions of the self that rely on 'res cogitans' have made a subjective 'I' directly present to itself; they have also abstracted the self from the body and from the world. Those that describe the concept of self as 'res agens', or as an emanation of mental-physical processes, have not been able to replicate or clone the lived subjective experience (Greenfield 2011: 140). Neither have those who take a materialist perspective on the self-concept, by their own admission, completed the task of teasing out the layers of social, cultural, and historical exchange and the many mental-physical faculties and events of a person that are described as joining to produce the subjective experience of self.²⁵

Lowe's description of the self, employed at the beginning of this section, included the idea that the self is capable of 'deliberative action' (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816). The degree to which the self has free-will is the subject of the following two sections. The idea of free-will is, like that of the self, often described as illusory or lacking in factual evidence. Questions remain, especially when dealing with complex ideas such as self and free-will, and they do so even as we share ideas with third-parties; pursue individual research; have different types of reasoning and logic, such as analogical, comparative, deductive, and inductive; and develop ways of testing evidence. How does one know, for example, that the reasons or

²⁵ For further reference to the incompleteness of the increasingly biological and social sketch of the self, and the vast array of complex factors that make such a task so difficult to complete, see bibliography for Pinker, *The Blank Slate* (Pinker 2002: 51). It is worth noting that no explanation has successfully disposed of the tensions, alluded to in the previous chapter by Aurelius and Sontag, between a person and their environment and within a person and about their self.

judgements formed about the self and free-will have validity beyond the confines of cognitive intentionality? In Chapter Seven, section six, the strengths and weaknesses of critical reasoning is explored through intertextual analysis of Aurelius' and Sontag's doubts and beliefs in the veracity of their subjective reasoning powers and judgements, and those of others.²⁶

3. Why the discussion of self and free-will is important to self-writers and self-writing critics

Free-will and authorial volitions are issues explored in section four of this chapter with reference to the work of contemporary philosophers, including Peter Strawson and Charles Taylor. In the last two sections of this chapter the theme is developed with reference to Stoicism (in particular, the Stoic philosopher, Epictetus) and to modern classicists and their interpretations of Stoic philosophy. The question of whether a person is capable of autonomous thoughts and actions is as elusive as the issue of the 'cogito' or self and has been so (as Epictetus et al. illustrate) for at least two millennia.

It is crucial to the argument for the critical approach developed in the thesis, that there is little consensus as to whether the self, if such a concept is to be granted semantic currency, has free-will. The individual who doubts the autonomy of their self and the volitional content of their cognition may in turn doubt the legitimacy of their experience of self. The individual may feel they cannot lay claim to their experiences; they may feel themselves a canvas upon which forces act; and they may feel that their concept of self is overseen in different ways (by, for example, society, culture, politics, or the language of their thought and speech). This class

²⁶ Solomon, in the introduction, drew out two definitions of the first-person point of view or the subjective state. The first definition described it as the first-person point of view one has of one's physical sensations, emotions, thoughts, or dreams. The second definition describes an epistemological model in which objective measures and standards and subjective perspectives are seen as incompatible, or at least as different. In this view the veracity of information, intentions, and or reasons that are described as having been arrived at subjectively is perhaps compromised by their not being objective: i.e., in one definition of objective, the subjective is not measureable, observable, or testable by a third party. Chapter Four, section one, explores how it is the subjective nature of persons' thinking and reasoning processes that has led some academics and philosophers to view all reasons, judgements, ideas, and arguments as being equally subjective, equally limited by their subjective nature and thus, equal or relative to each other: 'Subjective truth... describe[s] the force of passionate conviction and commitment... the intended contrast, obviously is objective truth, scientific truth, matters which can be verified or established by proof. But 'subjective truth', although conscientiously 'unscientific', is not therefore meaningless or irrational... [it is] a commitment to believe, in the face of 'objective uncertainty', in matters that cannot be demonstrated or verified.' (Solomon in OCP 1995: 857). In Chapter Seven Aurelius and Sontag explore the nature and veracity of the first-person and third-party reasoning that they felt informed the judgements they formed.

of self-doubt complicates the awareness of self and its description and as such is an important issue in self-writing and for self-writers. The critical response to self-writing, as has been observed, is perhaps shaped by self-writing's often acutely personal nature. If a self-writer is described as free it is perhaps easier to describe the writer as self-determinedly shaping their narrative and identity.

Self-writers do not often philosophise the concept of free-will and appear to proceed on the, unconscious or unacknowledged, premise or assumption that they write with an intent that is of their own volition. In Chapters Five and Six, however, it is clear that though critics of self-writing (including Shirley Neuman, Stanley Fish, Jacques Derrida, Jochen Hellbeck, and Susan Sontag) may not interrogate the concept of free-will they are preoccupied with a type of self and voice that are viewed as self-asserting or (to use the term employed earlier by the co-authors, Baggini and Southwell) have 'authority'.²⁷ Any critic and especially the critic of self-writing confront the problem of the autonomy of the self in two acute forms. Firstly, critics will perhaps want to decide whether the diarist and their voice are autonomous. Secondly, critics may then wonder whether the critical voice is itself autonomous.

In the first case, whatever the theoretical predilection of the critic, they may and often do find that they approve or disapprove of their self-writing subject and do so in respect of, for instance, their uniqueness or their political, moral, or intellectual worth. Though these ideas are not coterminous, nor fully dependent on the degree to which a person can be argued to have volition, the status of the relationship between them and the individual is perhaps vitiated if the individual is considered to lack any personal freedoms. (In the next chapter we consider the ways in which these types of worth are not coterminous with each other or dependent on personal autonomy.) That is to say: critics seem to treat their subjects as fully fledged persons with some assumption of free-will, rather than as cultural or social automatons or cyphers.

²⁷ We have also seen how diary critics, Matthews (1977: 287) and Purvis and Longstaff (EGS 2008: 197), focused on the issue of self-writers' free-will and how Montgomery et al. discussed the writer of any literary work as a 'skilful agent' (1996: 232-237).

In the second case, critics will perhaps wonder whether they themselves can lay claim to the type of autonomy they either grant or deny the self-writers they analyse. Critics who deny the autonomy of the self - even to themselves - seem to be in a logical bind; after all it is hard to know what status to give their criticism if they themselves are automatons. In any case few critics - in practice - write as though they doubt their own autonomy. However, (in Chapter Five) Jacques Derrida and (in Chapter Four) Edward Said are much preoccupied with discerning the free-will of the critic and for Derrida there is a conflict between the voice he writes in and his desire to recognise it as non-volute and this tension causes him angst.

Critics' views on the autonomy of the self are the subject of what might be called a professional hazard. That is to say whichever view critics take of autonomous types of self and voice they often find themselves privileging the autonomy of the authorial voice and its intent. And they do so whether it is the voice of the writer whom they are critiquing or their own voice as a critic. Self-writing critics tend toward preserving the idea of a self-writer as having autonomy of voice. It is an interpretative stance that can in turn strengthen a critic's claim to their voice. This is not to say that the class of self deemed to be lacking in autonomy has not also afforded plenty of rich territory for analysis. However, even where critics of self-writing, in Chapters Five and Six, discuss the 'post-modern' and deconstructed self they will seldom find it easy to deny their own critical voice.

It is demonstrated, in this and the proceeding chapters, that whether the self or voice that are described as autonomous are upheld or challenged by critical approaches to self-writing, they remain stubbornly elusive issues. Given such elusiveness, it is important to not hope for final answers, or hold too firmly to one view. The critical approach of deliberate eclecticism (that is developed in the thesis and introduced in the next chapter) is a useful critical tool designed to manage the strengths and weaknesses of multiple contradictory descriptions of the elusive and ineluctable concepts of self, free-will, and voice without its being prescriptive.

4. Free-will

Discussion of concepts of self often leads to consideration of the degree to which the self has free-will (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816). That is: the ability to deliberate and act on decisions, reasons, choices, intentions, and beliefs that have been formed in a manner that has not been coerced or forced and is, if not *causa sui*, at least, to a degree, volitional.²⁸ (Even if the experience of a self is dismissed as an impracticable abstract construct then the discussion of free-will is that of a human being's or agent's ability to act and think freely.)²⁹ The philosopher, Jennifer Hornsby, defines the 'agent' as, 'a person... who is the subject when there is action. A long history attaches to thinking of the property of being an agent as (i) possessing a capacity to choose between options and (ii) being able to do what one chooses' (Hornsby in OCP 1995: 18). A key element in Hornsby's description of free-will is that the 'agent' is the locus of choice-making and action.

Section three, of this chapter, explored why one's capacity to make volitional choices about how one is to think and write about the self is important to self-writing and its criticism. Philosophers have for centuries been dismissive of free-will or, at least, have discussed the ways in which personal autonomy is compromised if the world is determined. And yet, the idea of people having choices and options, and being responsible for them, is described by Ihab Hassan, as an 'effective fiction' (Hassan 1988: 420).³⁰ The debate about free-will

²⁸ It is worth teasing out the distinctions between the terms free-will, autonomy, and agency. Agency tends to be reserved for describing action that has not been coerced; consideration of agency often includes the idea that a person is free to act whilst under social, biological, or historical determinates. The sociologist Giddens, for example, describes a person as having agency within social and cultural structures in, *The Constitution of Society*, (Giddens 1984: 1-28). Free-will and autonomy are perhaps, in their purest sense, more grandiose terms for the class of freedom, or self-governance, that entails freedom of thought, decision-making, and action from a causal chain (i.e., the freedom to act and think without one's thoughts and actions having been caused by a determinate that has not stemmed, *causa sui*, from the agent). Neither Aurelius or Sontag use the term agency, both use free-will or autonomy. It is also worth remembering that it is the term free-will that is typically used by critics of self-writing, and it is so within the Humanist and 'post-modern' binary or critical framework attributed to the criticism of self-writing by, for example: (Neuman 1992: 216), (Brenner 1996: 105), and (Gannon 2006: 474). As such free-will, in as much as it is defined at all by critics, is often discussed in terms of a self-writer having or not having the capacity for intent and action that are *causa sui* or free of a causal chain. Though free-will is alluded to in the criticism of self-writing, and the tensions between a self-writer's free-will and society often teased out, the terms and issues of free-will are often left under-examined; hence, the examination in this section.

²⁹ Philosophers and scientists discuss free-will, autonomy, or agency in relation to the 'self' or the 'human', 'person', or 'individual'. For example, in section two of this chapter, Lowe described the 'self' as often being attributed with a type of autonomy (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816). However, Charles Taylor tends to discuss the agency of 'humans' (Taylor 1989: 33, 113, 52) and Peter Strawson, throughout his discussion of personal freedoms in *Freedom and Resentment*, tends to use the terms 'person' and 'individual'.

³⁰ The self and its free-will are described as 'effective' by the literary critic Hassan as part of his argument that a sense of one's personal freedom and social responsibilities are important parts of building healthy - social and personal - moral frameworks (Hassan 1988: 420). Free-will is effective, even as a fiction, in as much as it makes us feel our actions are our own and that we, therefore, have a responsibilities to others, as well as to ourselves, to make them 'good' actions. An example of this type of perspective is found in Kantian ethics: man must be moral, and to be so he must be free, ergo: man

traditionally oscillates between the extremes of free-will (freedom) and determinism; and between the experiential knowledge of free-will and the masses of academic thought which says that this is a deeply flawed view to hold in a determinist world.³¹

The contemporary philosophers, Peter Strawson and Charles Taylor, usefully describe how humans are self-aware. A human is aware of themselves as being human, in relation to other humans. Humans are social entities and have a socially and morally valuable sense of their ability to form intentions and act on them. Strawson and Taylor are fairly 'optimistic' (to use Strawson's terminology) about a person's claim to some freedoms. They grant evaluative and choice-making experiences to persons they describe as having mental-physical-social facets and functions. This is a variety of the embodied concept of person described in section two of this chapter. This type of person and their freely arrived at intentions and actions co-exist with what Strawson and Taylor describe as being, in all probability, a deterministic natural order.

Strawson and Taylor have been chosen on their own merits, but also because their views, in combination, are useful to the work of the thesis. In addition to these reasons for exploring the work of Strawson and Taylor, each has a link to another philosopher referred to in this chapter and the next, Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur refers

is free. The contemporary philosopher and cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett has described free-will as being very much part of a causal chain, according to his view, a person's actions and intentions are caused by biological and neurological events. In this view, man is not free in the Kantian sense. Dennett describes how a flourishing society, in which human life is treated with respect, relies on persons representing reasons to themselves for a given action. As part of the reasoning process a person is led to take responsibility for their actions. According to Dennett free-will is teleological and better described as the ability to feel we represent reasons to ourselves for our actions. For further reference see bibliography, Dennett, *Prospect, Are We Free?* (2014).

³¹ The ideas traditionally associated with the discussion of free-will have been laid out in the introduction to the thesis. Determinism and freedom are often discussed in terms of their being part of a causal chain: one's intentions and actions are, according to this approach, either caused by the person as a volitional act, or they are caused by something else, such as, biology, history, nurture, or social mores. Descriptions of free-will in neurobiology have developed in tandem with physicalist ideas of self, including those discussed in section two of this chapter. The psychologist Baumeister describes free-will as an advanced form of simple organic processes. The simple act of controlling one's breathing or appetite, according to Baumeister, develops into more sophisticated forms of self-control and self-regulation which are useful to a successful society within which individuals can flourish. In this way Baumeister redefines free-will and describes it as a freedom to act un-coerced within social and biological determinates. For further reference see Baumeister, *Slate* magazine, *What Does Free-will Mean?* (2013). Steven Pinker, a behavioural psychologist and neuroscientist, attributes ideas of self-control and decision making to genetic heritage and biological or neurological impulse. For further reference see bibliography for Pinker, *The Blank Slate* (Pinker 2002: 47-51). The physicist Roger Penrose, has described how consciousness and free-will are more than likely a product of, yet to be measured and fully examined, microtubules in the brain. Penrose links consciousness and free-will with quantum mysteries and thinks explanations of both will be found in their combined study. For further reference see bibliography for Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind* (Penrose 1994: 422). The philosopher Jennifer Hornsby does not think agency is part of a causal chain – whether that chain is described as biological or historical and cultural. In this view actions instigated by an agent are often a response to outside events or circumstances, Hornsby concentrates on 'naïve' types of action, such as the need to cross the road to catch a bus. For further reference see bibliography for Hornsby, 'Basic Activity' (Hornsby 2013: 1-18) and 'Actions and Activity' (Hornsby 2012: 233-245). As with the self, discussants disagree.

to Strawson in, *Oneself as Another*, as he develops his concept of 'person' (Ricoeur 1992: 33 and 88).³² A synergy is identified, in Chapter Four, between Taylor's and Ricoeur's description of identity formation and its relationship to self-narration, or the narration of biography, or personal history.³³

Strawson, in his essay 'Persons', observes that what makes an entity a human is its mental-physical-social facets and functions; awareness of one's own 'actions' and 'intentions'; and consciousness of oneself in relation to others (Strawson 1958: 339):

The concept of person is to be understood as the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates corporeal characteristics... I am suggesting that it is easier to understand how we can see each other (and ourselves) as persons, if we think first of the fact that we act, and act on each other, and act in accordance with a common human nature. (Strawson 1958: 354 and 362)³⁴

In Strawson's view, whilst a person can be aware of 'primitive' and human facets: '[O]ne person may [still] be unsure of his own identity in some way, may be unsure, for example, whether, a particular action... had been performed by him.' (Strawson 1958: 362) According to Strawson, thinking of our ability to act, our personal autonomy, is part of our ability to think of ourselves as human. In 'Freedom and Resentment', Strawson, distances himself from unanswerable (and perhaps spurious) philosophical questions of natural order (i.e., is the natural order determinist or not?). He describes how a person (though they are probably living in a determinist world) can be sure of their capacity to, in practice, hold certain 'concepts', 'attitudes', or 'intentions', including, 'such things as gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings.' (Strawson 2008: 5)³⁵ Strawson

³² Ricoeur returns to his idea of the person on numerous occasions in, 'Person and Identifying Reference: A Semantic Approach', see: (Ricoeur 1992: 27-40).

³³ In his turn, Ricoeur has played an important role in the theories of, for example, Philippe Lejeune (a critic of diary analysed in Chapter Six). Julie Rak has remarked that: 'It is obvious that the work of Lejeune on diaries is in dialogue with the narrative theory of Paul Ricoeur and Gerald Genette' (Lejeune 2009: 18). Lejeune writes of his admiration for Ricoeur in his essay, 'Antifiction' (Lejeune 2009: 201).

³⁴ Strawson meant by 'common human nature', not an a priori or pernicious 'group mind', but a 'special kind of social world', i.e., a world in which humans have in common the ability and desire to observe how other humans behave and can adapt their behaviour accordingly. This is comparable to the Kantian 'categorical imperative', as Strawson himself was well-aware. For reference see abridged autobiographical detail to *Freedom and Resentment*: (Strawson 2008).

³⁵ Strawson wants to find a way of answering the 'pessimistic determinist's' criticism of the 'optimistic determinist': the criticism that describing inhibited forms of personal agency (such as the reactive attitudes a person might hold) does not in itself establish the root causes for these attitudes. In reply to the pessimist who insists that there can be no exceptions to

insists that, free of determinism or not, we consider some 'attitudes' and 'intentions' to be important because the 'attitudes' and 'intentions' of others have a significant affect upon us: 'The central commonplace that I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions towards us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions.' (Strawson 2008: 5)³⁶ Strawson considers the probable truth of determinism as an 'if'; with this 'if' in mind there is, 'endless room for modification, redirection, criticism, and justification.' (Strawson 2008: 25) Even as there are these elusive questions (questions described in Chapter One as residing at the heart of writing that is about the self), Strawson argument implies that one can, in practice, describe and evaluate concepts. Strawson, at least, feels there are merits in evaluating persons as holding certain (in his terms) reactive attitudes and intentions, whilst - in all likelihood - residing in a deterministic natural order.

Charles Taylor, in his essay 'The Person', written twenty or so years after Strawson's similarly titled essay, writes: 'A person is an agent who has an understanding of self as an agent, and can make plans... what seems important about a person's conception of self is that it incorporates a range of significances which have no analogue with non-person agents.' (Taylor in Carrithurs 1985a: 256-257)³⁷ To be a significantly human agent with self-awareness has an important social aspect. Taylor insists that a significantly human quality is the ability to communicate, which is part of being social:

determinism's reach, Strawson answers: 'If we could imagine what we cannot have, viz. a choice in this matter, then we could choose rationally only in the light of an assessment of the gains and losses to human life, its enrichment or impoverishment; and the truth or falsity of a general thesis of determinism would not bear on the rationality of this choice.' (Strawson 2008: 14) For further reference and a critique of the ways in which Strawson's estimations of personal agency require a step away from the crucial question of root causes see bibliography for, Stjernberg, 'Strawson's Descriptive Metaphysics – Its Scope and Limits' (Stjernberg 2009: 529-541).

³⁶ Strawson's defence for his use of 'commonplaces' or for attributing all people, whatever their particular cultural or historical context, with 'reactive' attitudes is, pragmatic: 'No doubt to some extent my own descriptions of human attitudes have reflected local and temporary features of our own culture. But an awareness of variety of forms should not prevent us from acknowledging also that in the absence of any forms of these attitudes it is doubtful whether we should have anything that we could find intelligible as a system of human relationships, as human society.' (Strawson 2008: 26). It is an argument that makes it possible to concede that there will always be exceptions to a rule, but that generalisations, though perhaps gross by their very nature, are useful to discussion (here, of 'systems' of 'human society') and can be sophisticated or, at least, argued in a sophisticated manner.

³⁷ It is important to note that Taylor couches his analysis of persons as social and significant humans in a context that presupposes the significance of such ideas to how people conceive of themselves as agents or selves; how people treat each other; and create morals and meaning (Taylor 1989: 12).

Agents are a being for whom things matter, who are subjects of significance. This is what gives them a point of view of the world... Once one focuses on the significance of things for agents... what is clear is that there are some peculiarly human ends... Consciousness is indeed essential to us. But this cannot be understood simply as the power to frame representations but also as what enables us to be open to these human concerns. [...] The essence consists... in the sensitivity to certain standards, those involved in the peculiarly human goals... it is impossible to see how one could make the distinction... between, for example, things one wants to do, and things that are worthy to be done, unless one was able to mark the distinction in some way: either by language, or at least by some expressive ceremonial. (Taylor 1985: 104)

Taylor argues that being self-aware means one is aware of one's human (and by this he means moral and social) concerns and significance, and of the affect one has on the world. It was reflection on others that formed part of Strawson's argument for the personal significance of the reactive attitudes and intentions he described.

Taylor formulates his views on agency around a person's ability to choose between 'strong' and 'weak' evaluations. A person's free-will or self-hood is asserted in the person's choice to strongly favour some 'evaluations' of the self, over others:

The capacity for strong evaluation in particular is essential to our notion of the human subject [...] without which we would find human communication impossible (the capacity for which is another essential feature of human agency)... in fact the human beings we are and live with are all strong evaluators. (Taylor 1985: 28)

This is important because Taylor suggests people have a degree of freedom in how they choose to describe themselves. According to this view a self-writer may choose, in their self-writing, to 'strongly' favour one evaluation of the self-concept over another. It is also important because people are often defined by their actions

and if we choose to act in a certain way, we may hold ourselves, or others may hold us, responsible for the effects of that action.³⁸

The accounts by Strawson and Taylor of the concepts of free-will and self are useful. They define a person according to physical-mental attributes; awareness of self; the awareness of others; and by the ability to form particular types of autonomous judgements and attitudes within social, cultural, and historical contexts. The degree to which a person's self, cognition, and actions are, on the one hand, a consequence of volition or, on the other hand, constituted by other factors, outside of the control of the person, is unfathomable; in Strawson's terms, an 'if'. Though ideas of free-will and self are elusive, and the subjective and volute experience of such notions resistant to empirical testing or full substantiation, it is possible to hypothesise about these ideas in the manner that Strawson and Taylor have. In the previous chapter, Aurelius and Sontag formed their own ideas about the autonomous self. In Chapters Five and Six, we analyse the critics of self-writing who voice theirs.

5. Voice

'Voice' is a subset of the foregoing discussion: it is about the freedom and efficacy of utterance, which is a special example of agency. It is at least as elusive as all other concepts intimately bound with the self. The discussion of voice is an important element of explorations of the tensions between a writer's autonomous voice and the thorough-going determinist view; particularly when such a view supports the identification of the self and its voice as cultural constructs. (Further discussion of the culturally constructed self and its voice, and how they are constructed, will be carried out in Chapter Four.)³⁹

³⁸ Taylor connects the ability to make evaluations with an individual's 'situatedness' in a community and with a communal language; via a process of exchange a set of 'strong evaluations' can become 'standards', according to which morality is measured and in which an individual can be as invested as his or her peer. Again, it is worth noting that a person's formation of a self-concept is a facet of Taylor's analysis of how a person – in 'exchange' with that around them - devises moral standards and evaluations and, thus, identifies meaning. Taylor explains how persons' evaluative capabilities can be judged and moral frame-works developed: 'A good test for whether an evaluation is 'strong'... is whether it can be the basis of admiration and contempt [i.e., what would another person make of it?].... that is they involve discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desire... or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged.' (Taylor 1989: 4)

³⁹ Martin Gray, editor of a guide to literary terms, defines voice as: '[a] word sometimes used in a semi-technical sense to denote the authorial persona in a narrative... The fundamental characteristics of narrative can all be traced to the art of story-telling, and the word 'voice' reminds us that the basic relationship between narrator and audience is like hearing an individual speaking, and deciding what kind of person we are listening to...TS Eliot distinguishes between private, public

Voice is described variously as the person's speech or inscription (considered as sound or even as style of utterance); as the voice of a group of people (as in the colonized, or the feminine, or the political party, or the protestor) and their right to be heard; and as the 'inner' voice (as in the personal thought as yet unspoken). It is much debated whether it is possible to describe the voice of a writer (including the voice of the self-writer or the critic) as under the command of the individual, possibly even *sui generis*; or contrariwise, as a voice that is – to a degree – inhibited or subjugated. There are also the concomitant questions of what it is when it is an 'inner voice', a 'written voice', or a 'spoken voice', and whether these can be discerned or detected as 'honest'.

Alice Lagaay, a German philosopher specialising in the voice in literature, philosophy, and psychology, defines types of philosophical and literary voice.⁴⁰ In *The Voice in Philosophy, Between Sound and Silence: Reflections on the Acoustic Resonance and Implicit Ethicality of Human Language*, Lagaay discusses voice as utterance – written or spoken – and as the silent, inner voice. The inner voice might be our thoughts as speaking or spoken as it were, under our breath. Self-conscious thoughts are usually in the form of some sort of inner dialogue:

[A] striking feature that many philosophies of voice seem to share is that in almost every case in which the outer, acoustic resonance of the speaking or singing voice occurs, it seems to be accompanied by a reference or an attempt to describe a very different experience of voice: the experience of an inner voice enters the scene which, whilst lacking the external nature or acoustic resonance of the embodied, musical voice (i.e., no sound waves), is nevertheless clearly audible. Moreover, this voice is almost always distinguishable from the constant murmur of the author's or thinker's own thought-process, flow of consciousness or interior monologue. The inner voice enters the scene as the voice of another. And what characterizes this voice is that it tends to have an undeniable authority which is impossible to ignore and is associated with clear moral guidance. (Lagaay 2012: 4)

and dramatic poetry in his essay 'The Three Voices of Poetry' (1953): 'The first voice is the voice of the poet talking to himself – or to nobody.' (Gray 1992: 302) The voice of the writer is not to be confused with a writer's deliberately adopted literary persona (Gray 1992: 216).

⁴⁰ Lagaay's paper was presented at Vienna at the *Philosophy on Stage* (#3) festival in (2012). For further reference see bibliography. Some of the material was subsequently published as a contribution to *Theatre Noise: The Voice in Performance* (Lagaay 2012: 57-69).

Lagaay describes how voice is, on the one hand, considered an embodiment of the individual who utters it or inscribes it (this is generally called the Humanist view). On the other hand, voice is considered as the embodiment of the individual's multivalent existence (a sense more characteristic of what has been labelled 'post-modern'). Lagaay refers to the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's influential views on the poly-vocal writer's voice (a voice made up of many voices) versus a singular authorial voice:

Literary theory... tends to focus either on the uniqueness of an author's lyrical voice or, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphony or "heteroglossia" [Bakhtin: 1994], that is, on the notion that a multitude of different voices resides within each voice, the multiple layers of vocality in a literary texture brought to the foreground. (Lagaay 2012: 1)⁴¹

Lagaay later in her essay describes how: 'The voice is both individual and communal... every human voice is unique... In this sense every voice is the signature of an individual. Yet... no voice ever resonates alone but emerges as a singular current brought about within a sea of other mimetically interwoven voices.' (Lagaay 2012: 5) The idea that a person's voice is made up of many voices, not all of which are under the control of the individual has two branches (explored more fully in the next chapter). The first is that language has a voice of its own and the second is that the voice is mediated through its interactions with the world.

Peter Elbow specialises in helping students find their literary voice. Elbow describes the waxing and waning of academic regard for the technical and semi-technical use of the term voice, and its practice in classrooms and literature. His description neatly summarises what voice has meant in literature studies since the 1960s:

⁴¹ For further reference to Bakhtin's work on polyvocality see bibliography for Kumamoto, 'Bakhtin's Others and Writing as Bearing Witness to the Eloquent "I".' (Kumamoto 2002: 66-87) and Morris, *The Bakhtin Reader* (Morris 2003), especially the following sections: 'The Heteroglot Novel' and 'Double Voice Discourse in Dostoevsky'. Bakhtin was particularly interested in polyvocal voices in Dostoevsky's work. For further reference to Bakhtin's discussion of the poly-vocal text see bibliography for Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 'Dostoevsky's Discourse' (Bakhtin 1984: 181-274).

Starting around the 1960s, there was a surge of enthusiasm for getting voice into writing. Those of us who were in that surge were not all saying the same thing, but we were all promoting voice in one sense or another: "Voice is an important dimension of texts and we should pay lots of attention to it. Everyone has a real voice and can write with power. Writing with a strong voice is good writing. Sincere writing is good writing. My voice is my true self and my rhetorical power". But then came the skeptics. They weren't all saying the same thing either, but they were all being critical in one sense or another: "Let's not pay so much attention to the voice in texts. Voice is a misleading metaphor. We don't write with a voice that is ours. We do not write, we are written by our culture. We are socially constructed, and what we mistake for a self is a subject position that changes as we are differentially interpolated from one social context of our life to another. Sincerity is not a useful goal for writing". (Elbow 2007: 168)

Elbow draws out how writers' voices are often accorded 'power', 'strength', or 'realness', and their writing accorded merit, when they are deemed 'sincere'. Similar (if not these exact) attributes, as shall become apparent, are ascribed by critics to self-writers and their self-writing. In the case of self-writing and its criticism, writers' 'strong' or 'powerful' voices are sometimes also linked to and augmented by writers' 'sincerity' (or honesty and 'truthfulness'). However, as has been demonstrated, Elbow observes that though, on one hand, there is the view that self-writing is the 'real voice' that 'can write with power' (perhaps, we can assume, the power to make autonomous choices about what to write). There is, on the other hand, the view that the writer and their voice can hardly be powerful because, 'we do not write, we are written by our culture', we are cultural constructs and so are our voices. As such to claim to be strongly or powerfully 'sincere' - or to ascribe sincerity to writers' voices - is not a 'useful goal'.

Writing with a sincere voice, or a voice with something like what Philippe Lejeune describes as a 'resemblance to the truth', is perhaps aided by pursuing 'resonance' (Lejeune 1989: 22). This is the word used by Elbow when he seeks to describe the capacity of the voice to say rather more than it is quite able to articulate. This is in keeping with one conception of diarists, who sometimes write extempore or spontaneously, producing responses which are perhaps closer to capturing the indefinite motions of experience than laboured, fully-formed

analyses. Extempore and spontaneous utterance has the potential to skirt round a person's analytic or reasoned states. It eases the need to replace equivocal ideas with facts and the unequivocal: the self is a volute and elusive concept and one way to attempt to recreate it 'honestly' is to circumnavigate its pedantry. To, rather ironically, delve past self-consciousness to consciousness, as Elbow puts it: 'What is a sincere voice? [...] A person is usually too complex and has too many facets, parts, roles, voices, identities. But at certain lucky or achieved moments, writers or speakers do manage to find words which seem to capture the rich complexity of the unconscious... It is words of this sort that we experience as resonant - and through them we have a sense of presence with the writer.' (Elbow 1994: 12) Susan Sontag, it is worth noting here, regularly wrote of by-passing self-consciousness so as to glimpse the true nature of her consciousness: 2/18/70 'But am I not over-powering with the labour of reason the glimpse I've had of a more organic, less problematic, less consciousness-laden view of the world?' (Sontag 2013: 290)

Inner and uttered voices have been described, in this section, as thoroughly resistant to unequivocal interpretations in both Humanist and 'post-modern' thought. So, the self-writer and the critic of self-writing are confronted with multiple, often competing and internally contradictory, perspectives on the elusive concepts of self and free-will. The 'inner' voice can be seen as dwelling at the heart of the problems attending one's awareness of an autonomous self. The inner voice is essential to the concept of self by being its expression and by being one, and perhaps the main, way in which a person thinks about and knows the self. For instance, thinking about the inner voice might lead the critic of self-writing to consider how one can be sure that it is an honest and clear (let alone a free or untrammelled) experience or expression of the self. And there is the obvious philosophical difficulty of wondering who could ever be objective about the status, autonomy, or sincerity of their own inner voice. Even Elbow's attractive idea of the 'resonant' may be a matter of well-disguised or disingenuous dishonesty.

Irving Howe (a friend of Susan Sontag's and a literary critic interested in concepts of the self and society and how the relationship between the two is manifest in literature) in, 'The Self in Literature', remarks on the importance of remembering

and handling the inevitable difficulty that the concept of self is - in equal measures – both powerful and elusive:

No one has ever seen the self. It has no visible shape, nor does it occupy measurable space. It is an abstraction, like other abstractions equally elusive: the individual, the mind, the society. Yet it has a history of its own which informs and draws upon the larger history of our last two centuries, a time in which the idea of the self became a great energizing force in politics and culture. (Howe 1991: 56)

Howe is a useful and instructive example of the line of argument that handles the problem of the abstract self by assuming a compartmentalised self that has private or 'inner' and outer parts. Howe further relates that: 'The locus of self often appears as "inner", experienced as a presence savingly apart from both social milieu and quotidian existence. At its root lies a tacit polemic, in opposition to the ages. In extreme circumstances, it may be felt as "hidden".' (Howe 1991: 56) The 'tacit polemic' of the self is, Howe argues, that it is experienced as an inner concept and perhaps profoundly so, and is also public or in dialogue with the way it is described and formed by social or cultural discourses and even grammar. This is the class of tension Hassan describes as synonymous with the 'variety of theories' found in 'post-modernism' (as Chapter Four evinces):

The self, we know, is now in dire difficulty, declared a 'fiction' by a variety of theories. A fiction? Perhaps an effective fiction, more durable than all the theories that proclaim it so. Call it an eidolon, bloodied, sweaty, and rank with the rage of history. And the other, everything that the self is not? Is it fiction too, though of another kind? (Hassan 1988: 420)

The 'inner' self-concept and its ability to act, evaluate, and write with volition are ambiguous, if not entirely, to use Hassan's term, 'fiction[al]' ideas, but it seems they are ineluctably so. For Blackburn the idea of self, whether it is a mental-physical concept or an transcendent ideal and despite its challenges, remains useful, 'if we avoid it we seem to be left only with the experiences themselves, and no account of their unity in one life, or as it is sometimes put, no idea of the rope around the bundle.' (Blackburn 2008: 51) The degree to which a person's concept of self is the result of private and autonomous thought, preserved from the influence of that which lies outside its inner confines, figures significantly in critical

discussions of the self and, as Chapters Five and Six illustrate, of self-writing. As the next section illustrates, such tensions have been a component of discussion of the self for at least two millennia.

6. The classical self

This section is an exploration of the classical world's view of the self. Included within this are references to Homeric, Archaic, Classical (as in the Classical Age of Greece), Hellenistic, and later Greco-Roman ideas, henceforth, unless a specific reference calls for it, the term classical will be used.⁴² Contemporary classicists have disagreed on the degree to which the self was the invention of the Homeric, Archaic, Classical (as in the Classical Age of Greece), or Hellenistic periods; on what forms it took, if any; and how it compares with contemporary concepts of self. Were there concepts particular and special to these periods? Is there some cross-fertilisation of ideas between classical and contemporary concept of self?⁴³ In the interests of avoiding anachronisms or hubristic analysis, the following section explores key historical and philosophical contexts for the concepts of self that recur in Marcus Aurelius' classical and deliberately introspective writing. It finds that Aurelius was familiar with philosophies of self. The finding supports the idea that he was a pioneer in self-writing. After all, without a form of self-awareness it would be hard to argue that he was deliberately self-reflective. The next section is illustrative of the Stoic view of self, as an important subset of the classical view, and vital to Marcus Aurelius who had a conflicted relationship with the school.

The exploration (in this section and the next) is useful in analysis of the *Meditations* and shows that the concept of self is one that has endured. From the start it is clear that ideas on the self were present in classical times. It is also clear that the self was taken to be difficult to know, even unknowable, within multiple, often competing and internally contradictory, perspectives.⁴⁴ In *Self: Ancient and Modern Insight about Individuality, Life, and Death*, the classicist and philosopher,

⁴² For reference to dates for distinct periods in the classical, see the glossary.

⁴³ It is worth noting that classicist Richard Sorabji views the classical self and persona as distinct concepts: the self is something which is active and makes choices as its natural condition and a persona is seen as a role which is adopted through personal autonomy and choice making. For further reference see: (Sorabji 2006: 159-160 and 173-176).

⁴⁴ For further reading on how the troublesome act of self-awareness was conceived by the Greeks see: (Sorabji 2006: 9 and 202-211) and Hadot (1998: 75-76, 130-131, 181, and 212).

Richard Sorabji draws parallels between contemporary and classical perspectives and finds it is not possible to be clear about what the self is in any era: 'Even within a single sentence, there may be radically different aspects selected as self... I cannot agree with any account that says that, for the ancient Greeks, self meant so and so because the notion can refer to different things.' (Sorabji 2006: 34) Sorabji's, self-described, 'task is to see whether ancient philosophers had accounts of self'. He concludes, 'they most certainly did. Again and again, they show the same interest in the individual person, and especially the individual viewed from the first-person point of view as "me" [the introspected self-conscious].' [Square brackets mine] (Sorabji 2006: 32)⁴⁵ From the, 'huge range of conceptions of self [amongst] ancient philosophers', Sorabji focuses on a selection, including Aristotle's, Plato's, and the Stoics'. He draws out the ways in which each perceived of the self (as a transcendent or embodied entity) and how they assessed the act of self-awareness.⁴⁶ Importantly, for the in depth analysis of Marcus Aurelius' concept of self in Chapter Seven, Sorabji asserts that a man such as Aurelius would almost certainly have had such a concept and that it would have been influenced by a range of perspectives.

'Ancient philosophers' disagreed with each other on their descriptions of the self and all diverge from contemporary descriptions. However, as becomes clear, it is reasonable to conjecture that a classical person, capable of complex activities requiring advanced cognitive functioning, was also able to cogitate at a sophisticated level about their awareness of self. Terminologies differ and there are many concepts which are not shared but there are parallels with contemporary concepts of self. Parallels include similar attempts at providing unity and coherence to the person's consciousness of the self as an experience with multiple states and functions; similar explorations of the co-existence of the mental and physical functions and entities in the person; similar concerns with what happens to the self or soul after death; similar issues with personal autonomy in a

⁴⁵ Sorabji has read the classicists analysed in this section. He has read Snell, Adkins, and Gill. The main difference between him and Snell and Adkins is that Sorabji believes self-awareness was an issue for Homeric, Archaic, Classical, or Hellenistic Greeks. The key difference between Sorabji and Gill is that Sorabji places more emphasis on the subjective nature of self.

⁴⁶ For further reading of Sorabji's account of Aristotle's concept of the self as 'embodied' or an interactive amalgamation of mental and physical processes and entities (Sorabji 2006: 32, 35, 47); as having the capacity to reason (Sorabji 2006: 250) and as distinguished from Plato's more ideal, transcendent concept of self (Sorabji 2006: 6, 35, 117-18, 122, and 187-188). For further reading on the Stoic embodied self as both inviolable (with free-will) and an entity capable of reasoning, in accordance with cosmological reason see: (Sorabji 2006: 8, 44-5, 49, 181-187, and 194).

predetermined or deterministic natural order (cosmos); and similar attempts to live well according to deeply-felt and intellectually robust personal and social moral codes.

Significantly, for the development of a critical approach to self-writing, classical Greek descriptions of self, however they are retrospectively perceived, were as contradictory and elusive as ours. In the 'Impossibility of Self-Knowledge', Sorabji describes an important classical challenge to fathoming the nature and content of self. That is: the concerns of Aristotle, Plato, and (later) the Stoic Seneca with recursive self-knowledge (what Sorabji describes as 'infinitely regressive' self-knowledge):

Self-awareness has been thought problematic in modern Continental philosophy, on the ground that the subject and object of awareness ought to be distinct from each other. [...] Two paradoxes of self-awareness discussed in Antiquity concerned the questions of whether it would be contentless or infinitely regressive. (Sorabji, 2006: 202)⁴⁷

Sorabji is of the opinion that though subjective self-enquiry may, in theory, be regressive (or recursive, to use the terminology employed previously in this chapter), in practice an individual very much, 'maintain[s] himself or destroy[s] himself by eating or not eating, can encourage himself, or teach himself' (Sorabji 2006: 202). So, in practice self-awareness is a crucial matter for individuals and indeed, survival. It is crucial, despite competing and internally contradictory views on its nature and its elusive abstract status. (Sorabji's remark harks back to Hassan's description of the self as an 'effective fiction', in section four of this chapter, Hassan 1988: 420.) A self that is significant by dint of its practical value applies in, according to Sorabji, classical Greece as much as it does in some contemporary Western concepts. That concepts of self are multiple, often internally contradictory, and elusive does not mean that the idea of self is easily dismissed or that discussion of it should be avoided. It requires, again according to Sorabji, 'more discussion of which case self-awareness would resemble.' (Sorabji 2006: 202) It is an assertion in the thesis that the question of self-awareness is

⁴⁷ Sorabji's use of the word antiquity is a general term for the 800 BC to the end of the Roman empire, circa 476 AD.

enduring and pervasive, from the classical Greeks to now, and requires a critical approach that can manage its ambiguities.

Reflection on the nature of self can be found in classical Greek thought. The ways in which it was thought of during these periods has connotations for - and was mediated by - Greek language and grammar.⁴⁸ In *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought: From Homer to Plato and Beyond*, the classicist and linguist Edward Jeremiah explores the classical Greek relationships between the reflexive pronoun ('myself') and the concept of self. Jeremiah links the use of reflexive pronouns (pronouns which reflect back on themselves) with an individual's ability to reflect on their self: '[S]ometime during the Archaic age, Greek grammaticalised a specialised reflexive pronoun comprising a synthetic fusion of a personal pronoun and the intensifier αὐτός [self].' (Jeremiah 2012: XV-XVI)⁴⁹ The personal pronoun was the simple 'him' or 'her' and the more complex 'reflexive' was the 'intensive adjective' self. The intensive adjective is subsequently nominalised and becomes a subject: self. The reflexive pronoun is nominalised, according to Jeremiah, by the time of Aristotle. The self is both a grammatical and semantic construct Marcus Aurelius, writing over five hundred years later, would have been well aware of.⁵⁰

Bruno Snell, a mid-twentieth-century classicist (author of, *The Discovery of the Mind in Greek Philosophy and Literature*), and his peer, AWH Adkins (author of, *From the Many to the One: A Study of Personality and Views of Human Nature in the Context of Ancient Greek Society, Values, and Beliefs*) contend that the self-concept described in the Homeric epics is so different to contemporary concepts it could hardly be thought to exist. Snell and Adkins adopt an essentially Cartesian model as their benchmark for what they consider a concept of self to be.⁵¹ This mid-twentieth-century and Cartesian approach to the concept of self in classical

⁴⁸ It should be noted that though Homer writes of individuals as being aware of their actions and as being aware of themselves, as an amalgamation of physical and mental parts, Homer's epics reveal that the word 'self' was not familiar to him; nor was the word 'body'; especially in the sense that the two are varyingly conceptualized in the twenty-first century. Jeremiah views the pronoun, in the context of Homer, as a passing observation of the subject's distinction from other objects, not as a 'curiosity of thought' (Jeremiah 2012:12).

⁴⁹ Diachronic' means: 'The study of a language in terms of its origins and historical development.' (*Oxford English Dictionary*: 2010)

⁵⁰ 'Nominalised' describes a grammatical instance in which, 'the reflexive pronoun [comes] to refer to some essential form of the human being' (Jeremiah 2012: 1).

⁵¹ For further reference to the history of classical studies and its development of perspectives on Greek concepts of self, see bibliography for Gill, *Greek Thought* (Gill 1995: 5-20)

Greece associates a growing and heightened self-awareness, circa 400 BC, with an increase in co-ordinated and powerful, political, legal, and administrative institutions. Increasingly sophisticated state-owned institutions were met with intellectual, cultural, social, and geo-political developments. The combination, according to Adkins and Snell, can be perceived as recalibrating man's thinking of himself. Man went from being a member of a tribe with few laws that were not mythopoeic, to being an individual with a degree of autonomy.

In this view, citizens (a small but dominant minority in classical Greece) were granted certain personal freedoms, including the right to make economic, legislative, and political decisions. A result of this increased sense of autonomy was that citizens were increasingly aware of the effects of their actions and, concomitantly, of themselves as individual. In this chapter, autonomy has already been claimed as a component of reflection on the concept of self and this view adds weight to this assertion. Regard for previously dominant authorities, whether divine or tribal, was diluted by the institutionalisation of secular law and order and recognition of one's situation as an individual with state-sanctioned rights.⁵² It is worth noting that according to this view individuals and their self-awareness were, to some degree, complemented by their being an integrated part of society. The influence of the powers of state on the individual, are here an empowering force rather than a disempowering force. The waxing and waning strengths of an individual's sense of the self and free-will, as they negotiate powers other than themselves (including those of state and society), are returned to in Chapter Four.

Shirley Sullivan in, *Psychological and Ethical Ideas: What Early Greeks Say*, disagrees with the chronology of the view above. She writes that consciousness of self is much older and pre-classical: '[It is] a notion that already appears to be present in Homer [; though] over time ideas emerge, change and disappear [this does not mean] the absence of a concept of that thing within a society.' [Square brackets mine] (Sullivan 1995: 2-3) Later classicists, writing fifty or so years after Snell, tend to agree with Sullivan's view. Though, in the main, classicists from the

⁵² For further reference to the socio-political and cultural changes between 800 BC and 100 AD see: (Snell 1982: 69-111 and 247-252). And see bibliography for Kitto, *The Greeks* (Kitto 1951, 1991) and Jan Österberg, in his more recent, *Self and Others: A Study of Ethical Egoism* (Österberg 1988). Both agree that c400 BC witnessed extraordinary change which resulted in a conception of an individual with a distinct sense of self.

latter part of the twentieth century, including Christopher Gill (1996: Chapter Six), Ruth Padel (1992: 42-48), and Damien Stocking (2007: 56-84), accept Snell's argument that the Archaic concept of self took on a deepening significance after 400 BC, the later classicists tend to disagree with Snell's deployment of an essentially Cartesian concept of self as the chief benchmark for classical concepts.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, classicists argue that Homer, and several of his later classical contemporaries, viewed the self as a *worldly* amalgamation of many parts, physical and mental (including, obviously, arms and legs; and, less obviously, 'noos' or intellect; 'phren', brain or mind; 'thumos', spirit or mind; and 'psyche' also spirit or soul). For instance, Damian Stocking prefers to remove Homeric (and some classical) references to self from Cartesian self-verifying subjectivity. He replaces the Cartesian with 'des-regens', a functioning unity: 'I would submit, therefore, at least as a first approximation, that the real Homeric self, the "entity" to which names and pronouns most properly refer throughout both Homeric epics, is nothing other than that functioning. The self is, so to speak, a "working assembly" greater than the sum of its "members".' (Stocking 2007: 59)

Richard Sorabji usefully argues that the unity of a self-concept – within a 'working assembly' - is supplied by, 'the single owner of that awareness, not by the owner's using a single faculty.' (Sorabji 2006: 260) Sorabji's observation applies to classical as well as contemporary analyses of the unity and coherence of self. Stocking's conception of a Homeric person with differing mental-physical parts, corralled within a single place of activity, had a degree of free-will, or at the least decision-making abilities. For instance, at their most self-reflective Homer's heroes struggled with making decisions, the outcomes of which they felt to be their own responsibility.⁵³

⁵³ Gill cites passages where Homeric heroes consider their actions in terms of their social impact, thereby giving the heroes self-reflective functions, or at the least, decision-making functions. This analysis highlights the centrality of what Gill calls, 'interpersonal or social relations' in the formation of early Greek concepts of self (Gill 2006: 340).

Christopher Gill, in particular, correlates classical views of the self - as the integration of worldly, physical, and mental elements - with contemporary perspectives on the embodied self:

I think this kind of conception is implied in central works of classical Greek theory such as Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and that aspects of this idea are also embodied in presentation of heroic figures in Homer's *Iliad* and Greek tragedy. I have offered the image of the 'self in dialogue' as a symbol... The image is that of the person as a locus of interlinked types of dialogue: internal dialogue between the parts of the psyche, discourse between people as engaged social participants, and shared debate or dialectic about the fundamental norms of human life. (Gill 2006: 341)

In *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*, Gill argues that the Cartesian models of self deployed by Snell and Adkins are an inappropriate measure of what constitutes a self in the classical Greek and Roman periods. Gill considers these ideas especially discordant with Archaic, Hellenistic, and Classical (as in the Classical Age of Greece) concepts of the self:

The use of subjectivity as a criterion of self-hood or personhood reflects the influence of Descartes' move... The contrasting criterion of objectivity can be linked with the reaction in many contemporary theories of mind against the... emphasis on subjectivity... the human mind can be understood just as well, or better, from a third-personal as from a first-personal standpoint... An idea... analogous to the... Cartesian conception of the self-conscious 'I'... is that the individual agent has a crucial... role in setting moral standards. This idea has its roots in Kant's thinking... I have suggested that ethical approaches... could be 'participant' in approach by contrast to the various kinds of individualism that are crucial to the post-Kantian tradition... the contrasting objective-participant conception of person... was characteristic of Archaic and Classical Greek thought. (Gill 2006: 338-342)⁵⁴

The 'subjective-individualist' model, in Gill's opinion, wrongly assumes a single, unified, and transcendental locus for the subjective self and its self-defined (Kantian) free-will. Gill favours what he describes as an 'objective-participant'

⁵⁴ For further reference to Gill's views on Kantian concepts of self-hood, free-will and individual's ability to make moral choices, and how this concept is reflected in classical philosophy, see: (Gill 2006: 65 and 186).

model. According to which self was an interpolation and interactivity of physical, mental, and worldly matter.⁵⁵ This dialogue of parts, to use Gill's terms, endorses the idea that the self is a combination of multiple internally contradictory, as well as complementary entities, states, functions, and concepts. In the 'objective-participant' model a self can be observed through 'third-person' 'procedures' and measured (this, as we found in section two, is the case in both the contemporary and classical view of the embodied self): 'Objectivist methodology gives no such status to the first-personal standpoint and focuses on procedures which can be applied from a third-personal standpoint. Modern scientific experiments for instance, into the states of the brain.' (Gill 2006: 338-339) The 'objective-participant' model emphasises how classical philosophy is thought to have aspired to and held to the idea that objectivity was a possibility: that there were stable and discernible truths or facts.

The second 'participant' component of the model posits that a person and their consciousness of self are in a reciprocal participatory dialogue with the world and society:

The term 'participation' is designed to avoid the rather common modern idea that there is a radical dichotomy between 'individual' and 'society', which may be taken to imply that social involvement requires the individual to surrender her identity. Rather participation in interpersonal or social relations can be seen as absolutely central to self-hood.' (Gill 2006: 340)⁵⁶

Gill emphasizes that embodied selves are 'engaged' as 'social participants'. Again, this 'engagement' is a recurring theme in the thesis. Here, it is clear that the dialogue is adversarial and, contrariwise, 'absolutely central' to self-hood. Gill is keen to stress that the dialogue between the individual and society, classical or contemporary, is not necessarily tense. In this view, 'social involvement' does not automatically jeopardise the claim of the individual to autonomous thought and action.

⁵⁵ For further reference see: (Gill 2006: 340) and (Gill 2006: 32-47, 345-8, and 351). Gill's view was that though these elements were not always working in unison – indeed could work against each other – they were interconnected, for example, one's physical appetite might not accord with one's intellectual or moral curbing of it, even as the one influenced the other.

⁵⁶ It is worth noting here that Gill's 'objective-participant' model is largely informed by classical philosophy's near-universal fascination with eudemonia. Achieving eudemonia fulfilled one's duty to oneself and to the society one lived in, in this way it was participatory. See glossary for a definition of the term 'eudemonia'.

Jeremiah points out (in his study of the classical self-concept and its grammar referred to earlier) that a classical individual may indeed have fallen foul to the 'rather common modern idea' (to use Gill's phrase) that one's personal autonomy and 'self-hood' are inhibited and heavily influenced by society. Jeremiah's remarks follow on from his discussion of a Delphic term: 'Know thyself'. This is a classical injunction to attend to oneself and is described shortly:

Making yourself be in a certain way by not letting yourself do such and such. Again, we find a scheme of self-control in which certain behaviours are to be admitted or not admitted of the self. The disciplined man cultivates a transcendental self that is capable of such determinations and prides himself on it... these notes of advice to oneself are also useful aids for negotiating the complex world of human affairs as an individual, as someone who therefore needs laws for himself to direct his conduct. (Jeremiah 2012: 117-118)

That such opposing perspectives (the self-concept is constructed according to the influence of society or culture and is in an 'absolutely' necessary dialogue with its environment) can both seem significant and valid (in classical or contemporary terms) is part of the reason the thesis claims evaluating the nature and content of the self-concept to be so testing an issue.

The classical concept of the self, as discussed by Gill et al., is one Marcus Aurelius would have been familiar with, and, as is illustrated in Chapters Five to Seven, it is useful to our analysis of self-writing. However, as Gill points out, it remains a contemporary prism through which to view classical ideas (Gill 2006: 326). It is, as has been observed, a prism that returns us to 'the rather common modern idea' that there are tensions between the 'individual' and 'society'. These tensions are explored by self-writers and by critics of self-writing and are returned to in the next chapter. Gill helpfully sets up a perspective on the classical self that privileged objectivity and participation over subjectivity and individualism and can be understood in relation to some contemporary views of self. It is a holistic approach to the self that includes multiple elements, including the individual and the collective and the individual's physical, mental, and worldly functions and faculties.

The Humanist idea of the self – conflicted and elusive as it is – may or may not have been an invention of classical Greece (or strongly presaged then), or only a refinement of an earlier but recognisable self from Homeric Greece. However, the analysis in this section illustrates that some of the issues in subsequent discussion of the self would be comprehensible to the classical Greek mind and to Marcus Aurelius. The analysis also supports a claim made in the thesis: that the elusive concept of self has for, a long time, at least two millennia, been viewed from multiple vantage points that often contradict each other and are internally contradictory.

7. The Stoic self

The previous section provided background to current debates surrounding the nature and content of the classical self. This section concentrates on Stoic ideas of self, not least because that is the school of philosophy Marcus Aurelius preoccupied himself with in the *Meditations*.⁵⁷ It explores the characteristic holism of many Stoic principles, including the design of the cosmos; human free-will and reason; the concept of the embodied ‘hegemonikon’ and a synoptic or interdisciplinary approach to learning.⁵⁸ This approach and the characteristic holism described are also synonymous with Marcus Aurelius’ interactionist approach to his experiences. He employed a range of tools in understanding his self and these tools included Stoic principles, but were not confined to them.

A cosmos determined by Reason

The Stoic reasoned that the universe was divinely Reasoned and providential and that humans, as a part of this design, had an innate and constitutional capacity for reason. The Stoics thought of the divine (not God or Gods per se) as the architect of the entire cosmos. The chief (what I call) design specification of the cosmos was natural Reason. Natural Reason was incontrovertibly virtuous and perfect.

⁵⁷ For further reference to Marcus Aurelius’ introduction to and deployment of Stoic philosophy see: (Hadot 1998: 18), and (Misch 1950: 443-485). For further reference to the *Meditations* as ‘self-addressed meditation’ see: (Gill 2006: 97-100, 389, and 454).

⁵⁸ These aspects of Stoic philosophy are not exclusively Stoic. Stoicism developed from its response to other philosophies and bears relation to them. For example, eudemonia and its association with the virtuously flourishing life is an important aspect of Socrates’ philosophy, as of Aristotle’s and Plato’s.

Human beings that fully developed their own capacity for reason could achieve this level of virtue. To train oneself in accordance with Natural and divine reason the individual had to know the self – hence the phrase ‘Know thyself’. ‘Know thyself’ was a Delphic precept that heavily influenced classical philosophical thought, including Stoicism; the concept is examined shortly in conjunction with a special form of Stoic self-knowledge and self-development (‘oikeiosis’). To ‘Know thyself’, as we found in Chapter Two’s intertextual analysis of Aurelius and Sontag and can identify in deliberately introspective writing more generally, is a compelling exercise that is aided by writing.

Divine and natural Reason (the cosmos), human reason, and virtue were linked. This interdependency of the individual and the cosmos is characteristic of the holism to be found in Stoic thought and reminds us of the idea that the nature of self and the world are, and have for some time, been considered as composed of multiple elements that are sometimes interpolated. A remark from Zeno the Stoic (circa 330-260 BC) summarizes this characteristic: ‘The parts of the world are sensing. The world does not lack feeling... Now the soul feels with the body in sickness or under the knife, and the body feels with the soul turning red when the soul is ashamed and pale when the soul is afraid. Therefore the soul is the body.’ (De Quincey 2010: 118)

Christopher Gill, in accordance with his ‘objective-participant’ model analysed in the previous section, describes how, in general, Stoics viewed man and the cosmos holistically. The mental-physical-cosmological worked in tandem. According to Gill, the Stoics conceived of man as integrated with the cosmos and as an integrated combination of mental and physical processes:

The holistic character of the theories derives, in part, from the fact that they offer an inclusive but integrated world-view; specific kinds of entity; for instance, human beings are also conceived as relatively cohesive (psychophysical and psychological) wholes or as coherent but relatively complex structures within a universe that is also so understood. Stoic-Epicurean principles [...] present the universe and natural kinds, such as human beings, holistically, that is, as inclusive but coherent wholes [...] the universe as a whole and all determinate entities within it, and not only what are normally regarded as living things, are seen as

combinations of active, animating principle and body. (Gill 2006: 28-31)⁵⁹

In essence, the Stoics argued for a Reasoned cosmos, and it was so in ways variously teleological, providential, or deterministic. But they permitted individuals free-will (prohairesis) to choose to exercise their reason, or not.

This is an idea of the individual as a combination of elements that are predetermined (providential) and self-determining (autonomous). A variation of these ideas can be found in later discussions of freedom and determinism; ideas first explored in sections three and four of this chapter, with reference to Strawson and Taylor. In Chapter Two, the concepts of self and personal volition were found to be important to Aurelius and Sontag. Aurelius, in particular, found the Stoic idea of personal autonomy in a predetermined world attractive but (in as much as all theories pertaining to such challenging concepts are found to be elusive) doubted the status of his autonomy. As is expanded on in Chapters Five and Six, personal autonomy is an element in critical discussions of deliberately introspective writers.

The 'psychophysical' hegemonikon or the embodied self

In accordance with the Stoic holism described by Gill, in the passage above, a Stoic's capacity for reason, indeed all human mental-physical responses, was coordinated in a central 'governing faculty' or hegemonikon. The hegemonikon was situated in the heart.⁶⁰ Gill's glossary to Epictetus' *Discourses* describes it thus: 'Hegemonikon [was the] controlling or governing part; [the] control centre of an animal's psychological (and psychophysical) life; in effect, the brain, though placed by the Stoics in the heart; in human beings thought to be rational in its functioning.' (Gill in *Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 336) As with the contemporary idea of an embodied self the 'psychophysical' had, 'an instinctive attachment to [the self] as organic units' (Gill 2006: 364). The Stoic conception of the cosmos was entwined with an equally holistic conception of the person. Gill describes the Stoic idea of

⁵⁹ Gill discusses psychophysical holism in Stoicism. For further reference see: (Gill 2006: 31-3, 40-1, 45-6, 71, 80-1, and 265-6). Gill finds it in aspects of Aristotle (Gill 2006:21) and in Hellenistic thought more generally (Gill 2006: 14).

⁶⁰ See glossary for a definition of the term 'hegemonikon'. For further reference to the concept's importance in Stoicism see: (Gill 2006: 33-4, 40-1, 55, 75-76, 97, 142, 220, 289, and 302). The location of the hegemonikon differs between philosophers in Stoic philosophy and in Hellenistic philosophy more generally. Gill discusses the issue of the hegemonikon's location in parts of the body (Gill 2006: 34, 98-99, 241-243, and 301-302)

the hegemonikon as a type of 'control-centre' for the person (Gill 2006: 34-35, 40-41, 55, 75-76, 97, 142, 220, 289, and 302).⁶¹ Richard Sorabji observes in, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death*, that the control-centre (hegemonikon) was not always in control of all aspects of the person; it was also a site for conflicts between the mental and physical symptoms and processes that flowed through it (for example, intellectual reason, emotions, pain, or appetite). The hegemonikon and its reasoning faculty were closely related to or equated with the Stoic concept of self.⁶² Thus, the development of oneself was also the development of one's ability to reason, in accordance with natural Reason, and the control, or discipline, of the more unruly aspects of oneself.

It is worth noting that in Gill's opinion the 'majority' of Stoic selves were in a sense 'unstructured':

In one sense all selves are structured in Stoic and Epicurean thought, in that they are conceived as psychophysical and psychological unified wholes and not as combinations of distinct or independent parts. In another sense however the great majority of selves are 'unstructured' in failing to achieve the ideal structure. (Gill 2006: 207)

This was because the self was hard to know and getting to know it was an exercise that few completed. The Stoic self was equally as elusive and conflicted, as the later Humanist self. It was accepted that the Stoic would find it hard to 'Know thyself', and then to identify oneself with natural Reason. The Stoic who did not identify with natural Reason would not handle their experiences with equanimity and good reason and, therefore, would not be able to achieve eudemonia and a special kind of self-development, called 'oikeiosis' (to be defined shortly). In Chapter Seven, both eudemonia and 'oikeiosis' are found to be a significant part of Marcus Aurelius' deliberate introspection and were also, under a different guise, important to Susan Sontag's. (Sontag describes her self-

⁶¹ Hadot conceives of the Stoic 'self' or 'guiding principle' as being somehow separate to a 'genuine self' (Hadot 1998: 116-117): 'That which we think is our true self is imposed on us by destiny, but in fact our genuine self is situated high above destiny' (Hadot 1998: 120-121). Sorabji also discusses Stoicism and the concept of a 'true self' see: (Sorabji 2006: 48, 50, and 157). The internal dialogue between different levels, or aspects, of self is found in Sontag's diaries, as she discusses developing the self to attain the 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280). It is also a type of inner dialogue – between different classes or concepts of 'selves' as they are experienced in the same person – as we have seen in discussion of the excerpts at the beginning of Chapter Two.

⁶² The concept was important to Marcus Aurelius, he often refers to the hegemonikon as his 'guiding principle' or 'ruling centre' (Gill 2006: 99-100) and (Book 8.7, Book 9.9, Book 11.7, and Book 12.24).

development as the process of becoming 'authentic' or of transcending the self.) The Stoic, 'unstructured self', as described by Gill, aimed to develop and 'achieve an ideal structure'. A common thread through the Stoics', Aurelius', and Sontag's conceptions of self-development is self-knowledge. For Aurelius and Sontag, such ideals of 'structured' self-hood had personal, spiritual, intellectual, and moral aspects. Aurelius and Sontag reasoned with their concepts of self so that they might improve themselves. Aurelius and Sontag had conflicting views on their own and others' powers of perspicuity and felt that the status of their self-development was augmented or under-mined by their varying powers of intellect or reason. In Chapter Seven, their handling of competing ideas on the self and its ability to reason is drawn on, as part of the development of the critical approach proposed in Chapter Four, 'deliberate eclecticism'.

Eudemonia

Eudemonia was an important idea across all philosophical schools and meant the flourishing or good life (Cooper 1975: XI, 16, 22, and 155). The philosophical concept of eudemonia started as an essentially Socratic ideal (Socrates is mentioned by name at least six times in the *Meditations*) but a wide range of philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, and the Epicureans – as well as the Stoics - viewed man's *raison d'être* to be his eudemonia. Eudemonia and its consideration included man's responsibilities to state and community. For the Stoic Epictetus, a key figure in Marcus Aurelius' philosophical education and endeavour, a eudemonic life was an inherently virtuous life:

Now if virtue promises happiness, an untroubled mind and serenity, then progress towards virtue is certainly progress towards each of these. For whatever is the definitive end to which the perfection of a thing leads, progress is always an approach towards it. How does it happen then that when we agree that virtue is something of this kind, we yet seek progress, and show it off, in other things? What does virtue achieve? Peace of mind. (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.4.3-5)

It is important to note that the time and effort spent attaining eudemonia was part of the significance of its attainment. Eudemonic practice was part of its product: it was a way of life. (The idea of practice has been touched on, in Chapter One, in

discussing the notion of exercise as one of the diary's family of characteristics. The idea that diary-writing, as a deliberately introspective exercise, has antecedents in early Greek philosophy and literature is returned to shortly.)

Free-will or prohairesis and the inviolable self

It was an important aspect of Stoicism that all humans, as Reasoned and reasoning beings, had the free-will (prohairesis) to choose to live reasonably and eudemonically, in accordance with the divinely Reasoned universe. Epictetus describes how the person's capacity to choose (prohairesis) could not be constrained by Zeus himself: 'Can anyone prevent me, then, from going with a smile and good cheer and serenity? "Betray the secret" – I will not betray it; for this is in my own power...not even Zeus himself can get the better of my choice.' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.1.23) Sorabji in his essay, 'Self as Practical Reason: Epictetus' Inviolable Self and Aristotle's Deliberate Choice', characterises prohairesis as a precursor to the contemporary conception of 'free-will' or 'agency' (Sorabji 2006: 181-192).⁶³ And yet, eudemonia and the capacity to achieve it through good reason were not, in the Stoic view, for persons to decide or invent.⁶⁴ Man's free-will was part of an essentially providential cosmos. It seems almost to have been a matter of whether one chose to live in the fullness of rationality, the dictates of which were clear to those who accepted cosmic reasonableness.

The Stoic's ability to choose freely (prohairesis) was a core function of the reasoning faculty or hegemonikon. Hadot contends that Epictetus perceived the hegemonikon, in Marcus Aurelius' terms the 'ruling centre', as a faculty which could 'delimit' the person. Reason and choice empowered the individual to identify what they had control over and that which they had no control over and could therefore stop trying, ineffectually, to control. Stoicism taught, 'the difference between the things that depend on us and the things that do not depend on us... the difference between inner causality and external causality.' (Hadot 1998: 114) The practice of good reason was also the process by which the person might

⁶³ Sorabji remarks that Epictetus' conception of prohairesis differs from early Stoics' and Aristotle's. For further reference see: (Sorabji 2006: 192).

⁶⁴ In contemporary philosophy this combination of man's free-will, in a providential cosmos might be dubbed 'compatibilism', though in compatibilism providence would be replaced with determinism.

access objective realities, the 'process by means of which we hold fast to the facts and to the reality in our objective and adequate representations.' (Hadot 1998: 131)⁶⁵

Intertextual analysis of Sorabji's and Hadot's interpretations of Stoic philosophy, especially Epictetus' *Discourses*, illustrates that the Stoic self was perceived as being 'inviolable' because of its free-will. This, in accordance with the discussion in section three of this chapter, links the status of self with the status of its personal autonomy.⁶⁶ In the Stoic view the two concepts are interdependent. The personal freedom to choose was both equated with and preserved the idea of the self. The freedom to choose well was conducted on the basis of reason in the hegemonikon. Thus, free-will, reason, and hegemonikon were integral to the Stoic conception of self.⁶⁷ Sorabji links the concept of prohairesis with Epictetus' effort to create an 'inviolable self' (Sorabji 2006: 185).⁶⁸ Hadot, using different terminology, also links the Stoic view of self with free-will: 'When the self... becomes aware of its freedom, it acts only by making its reason coincide with the Reason of Universal Nature.' (Hadot 1998: 118-119) Epictetus describes himself as prohairesis: 'The particular end [what sort of man you want to be] relates to the occupation and choice of each individual' [Square brackets mine] (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 3.23.4-6). In an entry which describes what can be physically subtracted from a man, he says it is only choice which may not be subtracted: 'But

⁶⁵ Epictetus' describes examination of representations as a three-part practice in the *Discourses* (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 3.2.1-2). Marcus Aurelius' entries sometimes allude or directly refer to Epictetus and to Epictetus' method, for further reference see: (Book 1.7, 3.6, 4.41, 7.54, 8.48, 9.24, and 11.33). For further reference to the Stoic practice of giving assent to representations – of exercising one's reason and judgement – see: (Hadot 1998: 125 and 131); (Sorabji 2006: 181-197); and (Long 1991: 102-220).

⁶⁶ It was observed in section two of this chapter that the philosopher Charles Taylor (writing almost 2,000 years after Epictetus) also describes how a person's sense of personal autonomy is a crucial factor in their formulation of and allegiance to a particular moral framework and self-concept: 'To know who you are is to be orientated in moral space... The ways in which morals and identity are formed is also how meaning is formed' (Taylor 1989: 28). Taylor makes this assertion because the urge: 'To talk of universal, natural, or human rights is to connect respect for human life with the notion of autonomy' (Taylor 1989: 12). The idea that 'self as agent', in exchange with other agents, is vital to the formation of meaning, especially the meaning invested in moral frameworks that rest within a broader respect for the dignity of human-kind, is important. It is a sense of these linked ideas that perhaps leads some critics of self-writing to applaud self-writing for its emancipatory qualities and as a forum for a person's unfettered self-expression.

⁶⁷ Sorabji describes 'will' and 'soul' are characterised as being 'the inviolable self' (Sorabji 2006: 185). Hadot defines the *horme* (impulse to act) as simply 'will' which is found in the reasoning faculty. Hadot regards the 'islet of autonomy' as the 'soul's' defining feature (Hadot 1998: 83). Hadot identified the 'soul' with the 'self' (Hadot 1998: 121); 'guiding principle' or *hegemonikon* (Hadot 1998: 83); as the 'ego' (Hadot 1998: 107); as the 'intellect' (Hadot 1998: 123); and as the 'vital principle' (Hadot 1998: 114). Hadot also refers to the self and 'reason' as the 'daimōn', Hadot describes *daimōn* as an inner 'diffuse divine power' (Hadot 1998: 123). The soul, for Marcus Aurelius, is the *hegemonikon* or in contemporary terms the 'self' or 'ego', according to Hadot (Hadot 1998: 106). Though Sorabji and Hadot use different terms, personal autonomy is based on reason as it operates through the person's 'hegemonikon' and they interlink to constitute Stoic ideas of self-hood. Sorabji – in particular - discusses the concept of a 'true self' as synonymous with the concept of Stoic reason or intellect, for further reference see: (Sorabji 2006: 4, 33, 34, and 101).

⁶⁸ Sorabji describes inconsistencies in Epictetus' argument: for example, if the 'I' is *prohairesis* how can it also be a body, appetites or emotion? How can it be social if all 'I' is, is choice?. For further reference see: (Sorabji 2006: 180-190).

the tyrant...will cut off, what? Your head. What is there, then, that he can neither chain nor cut off? Your choice. Hence the advice of the ancients, "Know thyself".'
(*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.18.17)

Though the capacity to reason was innate, people did not automatically align the self with good reason or free-will. Few, if any, Stoics could claim to be 'wise' and fully coherent. Hadot points out that: 'For Epictetus... as for the Stoics in general, the essence of mankind does consist in reason, the principle of freedom and the power to choose. Precisely because it is the power to choose, however, it can be either good or bad and is not necessarily right.' (Hadot 1998: 89) It is clear from Hadot and Sorabji that, firstly, the Stoic was defined by their free-will (*prohairesis*) and reason. Secondly, that they did not always reason or choose positively. Finally, rather ironically, they did so according to what someone else (Epictetus, for example) said, that is, not according to their own volition. We are, again, reminded of Strawson's and Taylor's philosophies, in which they described the person as capable of making choices from within a number of determinates, including social, cultural, or moral *nostrums*. According to Stoicism, the better one knew the self the easier it would be to align oneself to free-will and reason and make well-reasoned choices.

'Know thyself' and Oikeiosis

Richard Sorabji remarks that: 'The Neoplatonist commentators... (rightly, I think) conclude that the starting point for studying Plato and the whole of philosophy must be the Delphic injunction, "Know thyself".' [Sorabji's brackets] (Sorabji 2006: 51) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (OCD)* describes, 'The famous exhortations carved on the [Delphic] temple, "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much"' as, 'moral precepts'. It was 'Knowing thyself' (at least knowing the Stoic conception of self) that, according to Stoicism, was central to self-development: 'Self-awareness... was an important subject for Plato... and for Aristotle... But the Stoics, given their interest in self-interrogation, in basing decisions on the individual persona, in finding some truths within and in the newborn's consciousness of its own person,

made it more important still.’ (Sorabji, 2006: 201)⁶⁹ Sorabji’s comments highlight the importance of the relationship between ‘self-interrogation’ (such as the type conducted in deliberately introspective texts); ‘decisions’ made about the status of the ‘individual’; and the ways in which an individual is able to be truthful about their inner self. Self-writers and critics of self-writing are often drawn to the view that self-interrogation – in writing – aids, what Sorabji describes as, ‘finding truths within’. ‘Authentic’ is a term, Hadot, Sontag, and Spacks have been shown to deploy as they describe an ideal of (to paraphrase Sorabji) ‘truthful’ self-awareness (Hadot 1998: 4, 109, 163, and 286, Sontag 2013: 280, and Spacks 2003: 48). Spacks, the critic, and Lacey, the philosopher, help draw out the link between, on the one hand, the ‘authenticity’ and the ‘dignity’ of a person’s self-awareness (in Spacks’ terms) and, on the other, a person’s ‘status’ and ‘authority’ (in Lacey’s terms). Spacks identified this link in the introduction, with reference to diary-writers, and Lacey identified it, in the first section of this chapter, with reference to Humanist descriptions of ‘humankind’.

Epictetus encouraged his students to ‘Know thyself’ (*Epictetus’ Discourses* 1995: 1.18.17) he did so because, ‘no man is free who is not master of his self’ (*Epictetus’ Fragments* 1995: Fragment 35). According to Epictetus, the man who did not ‘Know thyself’ could not act on or ‘master’ his self in accordance with natural Reason; he could not realise his eudemonia. The man who was master of his self was ‘free’; not free from third-party concerns, considerations of social duty or morality, but free in the sense that he had the potential to know and control his own mind and reason. This form of Stoic self-development was known as oikeiosis. Gill describes oikeiosis as: ‘A process of ethical development, ultimately to a sense of community with all human beings as rational animals.’ (Gill in *Epictetus Discourses and Fragments* 1995: 336)

Hadot directly links Stoic ideas of ‘Know thyself’, to self-transformation and links self-transformation to moral ideals: ‘It is the self’s awareness of itself which transforms it, making it pass in succession from the domain of necessity to the domain of freedom and from the domain of freedom... to morality.’ (Hadot 1998:

⁶⁹ Gill discerns that the Stoic’s preoccupation with ‘self-scrutiny’ is to some degree, at least, stronger than that adopted in the ‘Platonic-Aristotelian pattern’ (Gill 2006: 330 and 389-391).

182) Stoic self-knowledge and self-transformation required a force of will, the power to act. The power to act well was one that the Stoic could develop through exercising self-knowledge in accordance with natural Reason. The Stoics, in a manner adopted by Aurelius and Sontag in Chapter Seven, linked self-development (what Sontag calls, 'looking for self-transcendence or metamorphosis', Sontag 2013: 64) to one's freedom to develop oneself. It is found that developing the self was a crucial part of 'Know thyself' for Aurelius and Sontag. That it was so hints at the reason critics of self-writing find themselves, in Chapters Five and Six, asserting the freedoms of the self-writer in the self-writing text. Section three of this chapter was an analysis of why concepts of personal freedom are perhaps significant to critics of self-writing as they perform their critical acts.

The concept of a person's free-will was important in Stoicism, as a matter of personal and spiritual equilibrium and of achieving one's full moral and social potential. Free-will, reason, and 'Knowing thyself' were also significant concepts for Marcus Aurelius (as was introduced in Chapter Two and as is explored further in Chapter Seven). The Stoics generally posited the idea that one had some control over one's reason (in a cosmos that was predetermined), however, free-will, self-control, and reason (though natural) do not go unchallenged. For example, man was not always considered in control of himself and being in control of oneself was difficult. Gill described this state as the 'unstructured self'. Self-development – or structuring the wayward self - was an act of will and required regular philosophical exercise, including deliberately introspective writing. Further to this, it serves the argument made in the thesis that the self is elusive, to observe that these Stoic concepts, however closely attended to, have done and still do present contradictions and ambiguities.

The exercise of philosophy

Exercise was a feature of self-writing first introduced in Chapter One. It is worth stressing that to 'exercise' self-knowledge was not merely to deploy it or utilise it. Importantly, it was more akin to a work-out of the spirit or mind for its own sake, perhaps in the way a modern person might talk of 'mindfulness', or a religious

person of a spiritual exercise. It is relevant to analysis of deliberately introspective writing, especially in the often diurnal, regularly kept, and private diary. The very keeping of a diary - the habit of writing it up and being in the frame of mind to address entries introspectively - fits this Stoic conception of exercise and practice.

Epictetus advised his students to 'Know thyself' and to practice philosophy through written exercise: 'These are the things that philosophers ought to study; it is these that they should write about each day; and it is these that they should exercise themselves.' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.1.25) And they should, 'have these reflections at hand by night and day. Write them down, read them, talk about them, both to yourself, and to somebody else... and then another man and then another.' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 3.24.103) Sorabji describes how for the Stoic the philosophical life – a 'good' way of life - included development of oneself (specifically, one's reason and free-will in accordance with natural Reason): 'Epictetus... recommends you turn to yourself in order to discover your innate preconceptions about the good' (Sorabji 2006: 197).⁷⁰ A key method for such self-knowledge and philosophical understanding was written exercise.

The Stoic stressed that by itself philosophical theory did not do anything, but that 'doing' philosophy was valuable as a way of informing one's actions in the world. Epictetus remarks: 'Philosophy does not promise to secure anything external for man, otherwise it would be admitting something that lies beyond its subject-matter... That again lies in the art of living.' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.15.1) And: '[W]ithout severe and constant training, it is not possible to ensure that our desire should not fail or our aversion should not fall into what it would avoid... this habit has a powerful influence' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 3.12.5-6).

Philosophy and eudemonia needed to be habitual states and regular exercise aided habituation. Pierre Hadot states that: 'For the ancients in general, but particularly for the Stoics and for Marcus Aurelius, philosophy was, above all, a way of life.' (Hadot 1998: 35) Though the on-going exercise of philosophy and self-knowledge had to be constant and were crucial to the inner life and the moral

⁷⁰ Sorabji discusses this feature of Stoic philosophical theory and practice on numerous occasions, see: (Sorabji 2006: 119, 176, 166, 182, and 195-197).

constitution of the individual that morality was also important as a matter of action and efficacy. Frederick Pollock (the late Victorian historian) describes the 'doing' of Stoic philosophy in, 'Marcus Aurelius and the Stoic Philosophy':

Now the objects of the Stoics were eminently practical; they strongly held that knowledge is for the sake of action, and that the worth of philosophy consists in its power to guide the conduct of life...They further said that the knowledge by which action is to be guided is a knowledge derived from experience; and they said it in terms which fixed no bounds to the possible bearing of experience and knowledge upon action. (Pollock 1879: 49)

One way of doing philosophical theory was to carry out written exercises in hypomnemata, the classical literary form first introduced in Chapter One. This was both a philosophical theory and, more importantly, exercise with practical effect. Hypomnemata were found to be, through reference to, for example, Bearzot, Marasco, and Hadot, written exercises often deployed by royalty, scholars, statesman, military leaders, and philosophers. (In Chapter Two it was found that hypomnemata are the form Aurelius chose for his *Meditations*.) Exercise suggests an on-going activity. For the classical Greeks, the Stoics, and Aurelius, a philosophical exercise was to 'Know thyself' in writing. It is the type of exercise in which the process is equal to the final product. Interpretation and criticism are - like deliberate introspection, self-improvement, and their written description - on-going exercises. The exercise characteristic is returned to, most notably, in Chapter Seven where analysis of the deliberately introspective exercise of Aurelius and Sontag is used to strengthen the development of, and to amplify the import of, the critical approach to self-writing developed in the thesis.

Self and social awareness

To 'Know thyself' was a duty to oneself and to others.⁷¹ The dialogue between oneself and others was considered a necessary and reciprocal dialogue. Gill described this exchange in section seven as part of his 'objective-participant' model of self. Stoic cosmological holism included the idea that individuals behaved virtuously and with good reason for their own benefit as well as the benefit of others. Opinion is, again, divided on the ways in which this type dialogue served or subverted the individual and their sense of self. For example, Edward Jeremiah described how 'Know thyself', 'refers... to a self enmeshed in a set of social relations (including relations to gods). What one is being exhorted to know about oneself is one's proper place relative to others.' (Jeremiah 2012: 19) Hadot in, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, writes how the dialogue, including its spiritual and moral dimensions, between the individual and society was a way in which to encounter the 'authentic' self: 'The intimate connection between dialogue with others and dialogue with oneself is profoundly significant. Only he who is capable of a genuine encounter with the other is capable of an authentic encounter with his self, and the converse is equally true.' (Hadot 1998: 91)⁷² Epictetus advised his students: 'You are a citizen of the universe, and a part of it.' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 2.10.3)⁷³

⁷¹ In Stoicism, particularly in Epictetus' philosophy, collegiate learning (testing ideas against those of others) was an important component of forming one's own, more subjective notions, including notions of self-hood and morality. For further reference to the contemporary importance of a self-concept that is built – in part – through a person's participation in a shared language and social exchanges, see, for example: (Taylor 1989: 33-35); (Heidegger 1996: 49-56); (Sartre 1992: 22); and (Ricoeur 1992: 58). Taylor puts it thus: 'A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it... my self-definition is understood as an answer to a question: Who I am... and this question finds its original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions... and also crucially in the moral and spiritual orientation.' (Taylor 1989: 35) So, for Taylor, 'meaning' comes from our ability to articulate it to others. Strawson, in Chapter Three, in line with Taylor's argument, linked an individual's participation in society with the development of a particular class of personal autonomy: the development of reactive attitudes (Strawson 2008: 12). It appears that, from Epictetus to philosophers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, persons' exchanges with the world around them, in particular the world shared with other persons, can be described as inseparable from the development of *personal* freedoms and self-concepts. This exchange – though it can be characterised as impinging on one's 'private' or self-determined space - can also be characterised as beneficial. The pros and cons of social engagement are two dimensions of Aurelius' and Sontag's discussion of the self and personal volition. It is this discussion that criticism of self-writing often touches upon – when, for example, a critic claims writers have the freedom to choose what they will write or how they will conceive of themselves. Criticism, however, rarely identifies and expands on the issue free-will – and how it is dealt with by writers and philosophers. In the next chapter we explore how the idea of a person in exchange with the world around them – and individual's engagement with a shared language – is complicated when firstly, language is described as being an unreliable 'describer' and secondly, when the entities an individual is in exchange with become over-bearing.

⁷² Ihab Hassan describes 'the other' as, 'everything that the self is not?' (Hassan 1988: 420).

⁷³ Gill debates the extent to which the dialogue between the individual and social morals and mores was seen to have a negative or positive affect on the Stoic self. For further reference see: (Gill 2006: 180). Society was not taken, in Stoicism, as a fundamentally ethical construct to which one owed obedient submission.

The reciprocal dialogue between the individual and the collective meant that the Stoic could test the strength of their philosophical convictions in the world: 'Eat as a man, drink as a man, adorn yourself, marry, sire children, play your part as a citizen... show these things, so that we can see that you have in truth learnt something from these philosophers.' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 3.21.5) In this way social interaction was a philosophical training ground. And objective criteria for what it was to be virtuous or eudemonic could be developed through participatory activities: including debate or learning from others and testing one's knowledge against the views of others.

As has been observed, in section three of this chapter, exploring the interaction between the person and the world is an enduring preoccupation for critics of self-writing and philosophers alike. It has been related to the idea of personal freedoms. These are important perspectives in the next chapter's analysis of 'post-modern' challenges to the autonomous self. In Stoicism the matter of free-will takes on a distinctly moral and social dimension. These dimensions can also be traced in contemporary understandings of the autonomous self in society. For instance, in Chapter One, it was observed that private self-reflection in the diary can also be about being a better person in public (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 2). In section four of this chapter, Strawson and Taylor described how a person's self-awareness and sense of personal freedom were strengthened in response to others. In Chapter Two, Marcus Aurelius' and Susan Sontag's relationship with the world (including their interactions with the people around them, and the roles, duties, and conventions they felt beholden to) was also found to be both amicable and acrimonious. The next section examines the difficulty of viewing this dialogue between self and society – indeed any dialogue that is between a subjective self and another entity – objectively.

Classical subjectivity and the Stoics

In a chapter of the *Discourses* entitled, 'That Logic is Indispensable', the Stoic Epictetus describes how reason reasons because there is nothing superior to reason. Stoic reason was crucial to the Stoic concept of self, and indeed for Stoics

the self could, to some degree, view the self. Thus, the puzzle of recursive self-knowledge (explored in section six of this chapter) was less pressing:

Since it is reason that analyses and brings to completion all other things, reason itself should not be left unanalysed. But by what shall it be analysed? Plainly, either by itself or by something else. Well: either that too is reason, or it will be some other thing superior to reason, which is impossible. If it be a form of reason, what, again, shall analyse that? For if it can analyse itself, so could the reason that we began with. If we are going to require another form of reason, the regress will be endless and have no stop... That is why, I suppose the philosophers put logic first... in this area [you have] a choice incapable of being restrained or compelled or hindered... Everything will be in accordance with your own mind, and equally, with the mind of god. (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.17.28)

The passage illustrates how the superiority of the subjective 'mind' that could know itself, and of the 'mind of god', offered access to objective 'truths' about the self (and one's moral duty). Or perhaps more strictly, it suggests that a person's subjective reason had the potential to achieve 'complete' and 'unhindered' objective knowledge if it had been successfully aligned with natural Reason. In 'Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition: Spinoza, Lipsius, Butler', the literary academic and classicist, Anthony Arthur Long, describes the self-concept as being capable of both subjective and objective thought: 'The Stoics were eudaemonists, determinists, deists and defenders of the claim that human reason can have incorrigible access to the basic principles of reality.' (Long in Inwood 2003: 25)

Epictetus held that human reason (and therefore knowledge of oneself and virtue) was predominantly subjective and in the first-person: '[O]f necessity every man must deal with each thing according to the opinion that he holds about it' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.3.4) And:

Where is progress then? If any of you... turns to your faculty of choice, working at it and perfecting it, so as to bring it fully into harmony with nature; elevated, free, unrestrained, unhindered, faithful, self-respecting: if he has learned too that whoever desires, or is averse to, things outside his own power can neither be faithful or free... this is the man who is truly making progress... If a person opposes very evident truths, it is not easy

to find an argument by which one may persuade him to alter his opinion. (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.4.1-32)

This was a subjective knowledge that was released from a merely arbitrary or wilful point of view:

The beginning of philosophy is this: the realisation that there is a conflict between the opinions of men, and a search for the origin of that conflict, accompanied by a mistrust towards mere opinion, and an investigation of opinion to see if it is correct opinion, and the discovery of a certain standard of judgement. (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 2.11.13)

The virtue and tenacity of one's subjective reason could also be tested in the world. The desire to follow the injunction, 'Know thyself', could be prompted and developed through interaction with third-party, objective sources such as education and philosophy; a person doing so was: '[T]he man who is making progress, having learned from the philosophers...' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.4.1). Moreover:

The power of argument and persuasive reasoning is great; and particularly, if it be developed by training and receive additional plausibility through the application of language. For in general every faculty is dangerous to weak and uninstructed persons... By what method can one persuade a young man who excels in these kinds of study that he ought not to be an appendage to them, but they to him... not bearing that anyone should undertake to remind him of what he is lacking and where he is wrong? (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.8.8-9)

As was observed in section seven of this chapter, Christopher Gill, as he argues for an 'objective-participant' versus 'subjective-individualistic' model of self in classical philosophy, argues that the subjective and first-person perspective is too regularly a constant point of return in post-Cartesian considerations of access to objective knowledge. Gill posits that privileging the subjective over the objective is at odds with classical philosophy's general view that there were objective truths: 'I am not convinced that the idea of the subjective is relevant to ancient thought at all, except in a very weak sense.' (Gill 2006: 370) Gill's objective-participant model emphasises the privileged position objectivity had in classical Greek thought. However, without subjective knowledge the subjective has no experience of what

it is to be objective, as the non-subject needs a subject to be 'non'. Gill, though he argues assiduously that any changes during Stoic self-development were changes based on an 'objective-participant' framework, in which there was little room for subjectivity, also states that:

We find that Epictetus' stress on the importance of 'examining your impressions' before giving assent and Seneca's focus on 'self-scrutiny' as regards actions and beliefs... is one which may have to be conducted by the person on her own – in the absence of any suitable teachers or collaborators... Hence self-examination and self-modification can bring about changes in a way that does not depend on the social context of one's upbringing or adult development. (Gill 2006: 379)

Thus, even in Gill's predominantly 'objective-participant' framework, there is room for the subjective. Troels Engberg-Pedersen is a classicist specialising in Stoicism and the influence of the classical age on theology. He, like Gill, leans towards emphasising the potential for objective knowledge in Stoic thought.⁷⁴ But he, occasionally and (I would say) unavoidably, strays into describing a role for subjective thought in Stoicism. In *Paul and the Stoics*, Engberg-Pedersen describes the Stoic framework (one he bases on the ethics of Cicero) as privileging a faculty for human reason that was, primarily, objective: 'Within that framework... there is a complete change from relating everything subjectively to the individual that one oneself is – to relating it to the objective perspective or rationality itself, a view from above the individual that the individual may him – or herself - come to occupy' (Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 65). He goes on to argue that 'personal development as appropriation' (Engberg-Pedersen 1986: 145-183) - or Stoic *oikeiosis* - depended on a subjective love of the self and that awareness of one's objective reason was based on this subjectivity:

What is described is how the world around the individual is seen from within, from the perspective of an individual person who says I and me about him or herself. This element is of fundamental importance to the theory... it is the element of self awareness (*sensus sui*) which provides that self love which grounds and explains desire itself and so also action directed

⁷⁴ Engberg-Pedersen discusses the 'objective' dimension in Stoic thought. For further reference see: (Engberg-Pedersen 1986: 150-3, 156-62, and 175-7). And for Gill's opinion see: (Gill 2006: 341-2, 369, and 391-399).

towards acquiring things outside the self. (Engberg-Pedersen 2000: 54)

So, both Engberg-Pedersen and Gill emphasise the Stoic facility for reason and objectivity. But they also demonstrate, perhaps a little reluctantly, that the first-hand, subjective experience of the individual was perceived by Stoics to be a necessary component to self-hood.⁷⁵

The philosopher and classicist Charles Kahn in, 'Discovering the Will: From Homer to Augustine', argues that choice or rational agency is subjectively realised. The reasoned or unreasoned choices we make (for example, about which representation to invest in) cannot be made by anyone other than ourselves.⁷⁶ Long in, 'Representation and the Self in Stoicism', seems to agree with Kahn's proposition that the Stoic's conception of self was fundamentally subjective. Kahn's focus is on the subjectivity of choice; Long's basis for the subjectivity of self is the Stoic emphasis on self-knowledge and how being aware of oneself as alive is an important part of being alive. Long also explains that though objective reality can be 'accessed' by the Stoic, it is very rare that anyone can completely harness objective perception.⁷⁷

If Gill and Engberg-Pedersen emphasise the place of the objective in Stoic thought; Hadot and Sorabji, in accordance with Kahn and Long, tend to emphasise the place of the subjective. Hadot describes how: 'Aurelius and Epictetus draw a distinction between "objective" inner discourse, which is merely a pure description of reality and "subjective" inner discourse which includes conventional or passionate considerations, which have nothing to do with reality.' (Hadot 1998: 104) Sorabji writes that though objectivity was valuable to the Stoic: 'In general I believe the Stoics did not think that ethics could be covered by a system of rules... the wise person is the only interpreter of and standard of what is lawful... Although some Stoics find precepts or general rules of thumb... the precepts cannot tell you

⁷⁵ Engberg-Pedersen discusses the 'subjective' dimension in Stoic thought. For further reference see: (Engberg-Pedersen 1990: 24-5, 32-63, 110, 120, and 140). And for Gill's discussion see: (Gill 2006: 329-30 and 359-69).

⁷⁶ For further reference to how Kahn views Epictetus' identification of the self with choice see: (Kahn 1988: 253).

⁷⁷ For further reference see: (Long 1991: 102-220).

exactly what to do.’ (Sorabji 2006: 164)⁷⁸ Sorabji contends that there were some objective, ‘general rules of thumb’ which could influence the way the Stoic reasoned but these had little impact on the way a person behaved, especially in later Roman Stoicism:

Stoics differ from Kantians in the restrictions on the reliance on rules and in their interest in exceptions that do not always fall under rules. But the particular need to be true to yourself, and in cases where the self is unique, is a special case... I take the doctrine of individual persona and nature to give Stoicism a new interest in the individual in the period from Panaetius (who died in 109 BC) through the first century AD. (Sorabji 2006: 165)

Ultimately, though it had participatory and objective dimensions Stoic reasoning (as to what the self was and what was good or bad) allowed considerable scope for the subjective.⁷⁹ These are insights that support analysis of Aurelius’ views on the merit and objectivity of his own subjective reasoning powers; those of others; and those on which the theories he has learnt are based.

An important point to make here is that the credence Aurelius accorded each source of knowledge varies, for example, he seemed to have had equal amounts of faith and doubt in the Stoic idea of personal autonomy. Reflection on the perspicuity of the intellect is also part of Sontag’s self-analysis. Aurelius’ and Sontag’s conflicted views on their own and others’ powers of reason and free-will are drawn on, in Chapter Seven, as a prism through which to explore the critical process and the ways in which its results are tested and accorded merit.

In conclusion to this chapter and in preparation for the next, the first step toward a useful critical approach to self-writing was Chapter One’s exploration of core issues in self-writing, especially that which is deliberately introspective: the self, free-will, and voice. Reflection on these concepts is often acute in self-writing and as such it is this type of writing that offers a profound opportunity to critically confront such singularly ambiguous ideas. The second step has been to identify

⁷⁸ For further reference to Stoic concepts of human reason as subjective or objective and the corresponding codification of moral rules in line with group norms or in line with individual’s intent see: (Gill 2006: 251-253 and 298).

⁷⁹ Epictetus remarks that, ‘good and bad... mean different things to different people.’ (*Epictetus’ Discourses* 1995: 1.2.5) It was an individual’s duty to reason what was good or bad, ‘for it is you who knows yourself, and what value you set upon yourself.’ (*Epictetus’ Discourses* 1995: 1.2.11).

the terms for and the issues of the concepts of self and free-will. The issues have been revealed through introducing our case studies for deliberately introspective writing: Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag. The third step is to identify and investigate the terminology used to discuss these issues and to analyse what philosophers and literary critics have made of them in Marcus Aurelius' classical era and Susan Sontag's more contemporary era. This has been the work of this chapter and will be continued in the next. That these issues are so enduring and so difficult strengthens the case for developing a critical approach that can manage them effectively and well. It was also found, in this chapter, that the classical injunction to 'Know thyself' was an important part of the type of philosophical exercise encouraged in hypomnemata, this in turn led to Marcus Aurelius' hypomnemata.

This chapter has shown that the Humanist tradition can be characterised as upholding the idea that an individual's voice and their concept of self are autonomous. In this view, a person's self-writing and their self-awareness have, to a degree, (in Lacey's terms) the 'authority' and the 'status' of being the product of autonomously arrived at intentions. However, the verisimilitude of ideas surrounding the self and free-will have, in different ways, also been challenged and challenging for almost 2,000 years. (This is so even in the Humanist tradition) Explanations of self, as discussed thus far, are contradictory and elusive and there is little chance of being able to answer fundamentally equivocal questions such as those Aurelius asked, including 'What are you yourself?' (Book 8.40) and what are the 'things that give rise to your passions and set you moving like a puppet.' (Book 12.19) (He asks, as many deliberately introspective writers have since: who am I? And: what are the things that affect me and why do they?) Chapter Four focuses on a particular set of challenges to ideas of an inviolable self and of uninhibited personal volition and agency. These have been characterised as 'post-modern' and include the idea that the self, if it is anything at all, is a secondary effect of forces that are not controlled by it (for instance, dominant historical, linguistic, political, and social forces and their codes and conventions). Chapter Four is also an introduction to the critical approach to self-writing advanced in this thesis: deliberate eclecticism. The Humanist and 'post-modern' traditions can be characterised as two opposing poles of debate in discussion of an autonomous

self. At their extremes, the Humanist stresses the inviolability of the self, and the 'post-modern' stresses its fallibility. They can act as useful dialectical units within which to collate a broad spectrum of ideas on self. However, both traditions are fractious. They are internally conflicted about the veracity of competing ideas on the concepts of self, free-will, and the self-governed voice: each tradition contains its own self-critique.

This chapter and the next demonstrate that neither the Humanist nor 'post-modern', in their pure form, can fully capture the multiple, competing, internally contradictory, and often ambiguous ideas bearing on discussion of the self-concept. They certainly cannot capture the varied dimensions of Aurelius' and Sontag's experiences of self (as described in the previous chapter). The chapters are a reinforcement of the idea of a hybrid self. That is to say one cannot reasonably assert a final, single, and simple view of the self, but only of the self as multiple contradictory and elusive components (such as experiences, ideas, or phenomena). (The word hybrid is used here in its simplest sense to denote a concept that is composed of contradictory and elusive elements; it is not used in its post-colonial or multi-cultural rhetorical context.) The self will retain its complexities, however cleverly one attempts to simplify it or conceptualise it. Shoehorning the contradictions of self into an over-simplified thesis and its antithesis is to ignore complexity and steal from the self its proper richness. This means that in a Humanist mode a critic can be nuanced; and that in a 'post-modern' mode can claim the same right.

CHAPTER FOUR

The elusive self: 'post-modern' perspectives

Contents

1. The Humanist and 'post-modern' self
2. Literary theory, the 'post-modern', and the self
3. The life of language
4. The 'post-modern' narrator
5. Life in language: 'narrative identity'
6. A critical approach to self-writing: 'deliberate eclecticism'

Diary entries from Katherine Mansfield:

1917 - Is that all? Can that be all? That is not what I meant at all.
(Mansfield 1954: 124)

1919 - I wasn't in the whole of myself at all. I'd got locked in, in some little [...] top room in my mind, and strangers had got in - people I'd never seen before were making free of the rest of it.
(Mansfield 1954: 169)

9/8/20 - But if I say more I'll give myself away. (Mansfield 1954: 2)¹

¹ The first entry from Mansfield's diary draws on a theme explored in this chapter: the reliability of language to represent accurately that which it is deployed to represent. An additional dimension to the question of language's representativeness is: what of the meaning we accord language is reliable? The two issues, particularly the latter, feature as a trope in much 'post-modern' literary theory, including, as we shall see, Derrida's deconstruction, and in the criticism of self-writing. Sections three and five of this chapter deal with these issues. The second entry describes Mansfield's feeling that the self is incoherent and not of oneself. Aurelius and Sontag were shown, in Chapter Two, to have experienced this Schopenhauerian lack of self-control. (See the introduction to the thesis, footnote 11, for further reference to Schopenhauer's analysis of a person's 'will'.) Thus, personal autonomy is not only subject to 'external' determinates, but 'internal'. The third entry alludes to the idea that the more one focuses on the self, or 'says' of it, the further away one gets from full articulation and appreciation of the concept. This is an experience Sontag refers to (Sontag 2013: 280). Though not confined to Existentialism, it is a distinction made, by Sartre, for example, between the being 'in-itself' (pre-reflective) and the being 'for-itself' (the gap between a pre-reflective mode and being conscious and self-conscious). This idea has been explored in the diary excerpts at the beginning of Chapters Two, and will be further pursued in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

1. The Humanist and 'post-modern' self

In Chapters One and Two it was found that notions of the self, free-will, and voice take centre stage in self-writing, particularly in the deliberately introspective diary. Therefore, as Aurelius and Sontag illustrated, the form provides critics with a valuable opportunity to consider the complexities of reflecting on concepts as elusive as the self, free-will and voice. At the end of this chapter a critical approach to self-writing is suggested and is labelled 'deliberate eclecticism'. Its chief principles are a direct consequence of reflecting on deliberately introspective writing and the material therein.

In Chapter Three it was established that traditional views of a self that is autonomous are contested even within the Humanist tradition. The concepts of self and free-will were found to be ineluctable and equivocal. However, the majority of Humanist discussion is conducted on some assumption that the self is a credible, even inviolable, concept with the capacity for autonomous intent, action, and voice. In Chapter Four it is demonstrated that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the plausibility of a self 'able to engage in deliberative action' and capable of volition faces a set of challenges distinct from those posed by nuanced Humanists (Lowe in OCP 1995: 816). This chapter discusses how 'post-modernist' critical approaches, including those of structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstructionism, have developed specialised ways of interrogating concepts of a self able to speak of itself freely. 'Post-modern' discussions tend to work from the assumption that self and free-will have little (or no) validity, except as ideas to deconstruct. The connotations of this type of ignoble non-self must be taken seriously in any approach to writing that is about the self. The labels, Humanist and 'post-modern', were chosen because they neatly represent the extremes of two opposing interpretations of self. However, it is important to keep in mind that elusive ideas, including those pertaining to the self and free-will, do not escape questioning within either tradition.

Our own contemporary views of the self are richly conflicted in several areas. There is, for instance, a feeling and view that social media has intensified a 'cult of

the self', which is at once (according to one's point of view) a boost to the autonomy of the self and a self-absorbed threat to it. Arguably, society now has the curiosity that the high aspirations of Humanism for the individual have dangerously tipped into self-obsession and triviality. This anxiety is well described by the novelist, Howard Jacobson, in a recent BBC talk entitled, 'The Tyranny of the Selfie':

We are narcissists now in every corner of our lives, fascinated by the most trivial thought that trundles through our brain, recording it for our friends, communicating every twinge of feeling, every passing impulse, telling people we don't know what page we've reached in books they've never heard of. (Jacobson 2015) ²

To recast the issues highlighted by Jacobson in the terms important to this thesis, there is a view that social media has brought a fresh energy to the sense of the Humanist self and its autonomy of voice. But there is awareness, too, that such exposure is perhaps counter-productive to the stability and coherence of such a concept.

There is a related tension to the type described above and that is between a class of self that is described as having a form of volition and that of a culturally constructed self. It is a tension often returned to in 'post-modern' discourse. The term 'culturally constructed' (first deployed in the introduction to the thesis) describes a concept of self that is heavily influenced by powerful entities, forces, ideas, or discourses other than itself and over which it has little (or no) power. In 'post-modern' discourse these powers are wielded over and through the self-concept by, for example, dominant cultural elites, discourses, structures, and institutions, including those that are social, political, or economic. The power that constructs the self in this way is described as being so insidious it is imperceptible. (These are the type of ubiquitous forces Lyotard was described, in Chapter One, to have been preoccupied with.) Implicit or explicit, such power is manifest in the

² The reference for this passage can be found in the bibliography, see Jacobson, *The Guardian*, 'The Tyranny of the Selfie', (2015). Jacobson – in this opinion piece - tends toward the view that self-identification in the age of the internet is unattractively narcissistic. There is also the counterview that persons' self-identification can be positively impacted on by on-line activity. For further reference to this discussion in psychology, and the empirical studies related to it, see bibliography for Johnson et al., *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*. In this handbook, Haythornthwaite and Tanis discuss how on-line social networks support communities and the individuals using them (Haythornthwaite and Tanis in Johnson et al. 2009: 121 and 139). For further reference to how people perceive the self, particularly privacy of the self in the internet age, see bibliography for Agger, *Oversharing: Presentations of Self in the Internet Age* (Agger 2012: 1-11).

language and grammar, symbols, signs, conventions, and tropes of these dominant forces. For example, there are political patriarchal or imperial hegemonies that are described as determining an individual's life – and his or her authenticity - but also his or her self-identity. This tension can be traced in the debate, reviewed in section four of Chapter Three, on personal freedom and determinism.³

The notion of a self that has volition is important to critics of self-writing. For example, in Chapters Five and Six, Shirley Neuman, Jochen Hellbeck, and Philippe Lejeune, often find themselves - contradictorily - adopting a 'post-modern' approach in order to better grant their self-writers' or, indeed, their own, utterances the status of having been arrived at freely and with good sense. That critics are tempted to accord this type of status to the self-writer is an essentially Humanist impulse, as is the critical tendency to emphasise the ways in which the writer is perhaps emancipated or unique. At its extreme this Humanist impulse contravenes the 'post-modern' approaches it is often couched in.

Actually, and as an important aside for the critic of self-writing, even at its strictest extreme the 'post-modern' does not rob the self-concept and utterance (be that in narrative or speech) of uniqueness and still less of interest. And this is because the uniqueness of self and voice is not necessarily wholly dependent on their having free-will (that they are thought to be, is an idea we owe, in part, to the Humanists). Even if the self and its voice are, according to the 'post-modern' strictures to be analysed in this chapter, cultural, linguistic, or historical constructs, each person seems to be the result of almost infinitely complex constructions, they are in effect unique and can be accorded the status this description entails. It is hard to imagine a person being a mental clone of another. No one seems to seriously believe that their consciousness is perfectly replicated in someone or something else. And, separately to the uniqueness of utterance, even if it was thought that a person's utterance was a social construct, and even if we thought it was wholly determined, a good deal of interest may still be found in that utterance.

³ It is worth noting that a person may be 'authentically' culturally constructed, as much as they might be 'authentically' autonomous; in as much as it is possible to say that a person has a self that is authentic, at all, such authenticity is not coterminous with autonomy. However, it is perhaps easier to describe a self as being authentic; if that self-authenticity is not also described as an authentic combination of powerful networks, conventions, descriptions, and so on.

However, in the terms important to this thesis, the (by now quite elderly) 'post-modern' (not always entirely fairly) is associated with the idea that if individuals (their voice and if permissible, even in a limited sense, self-concept) are accorded uniqueness, they are so according to a uniqueness that is relative to that of other individuals. Relativism is embedded in social media, of the type described by Howard Jacobson in the passage above, and is seen in the assumption and the idea that everybody's voice has equal status. This obviously chimes well with the 'post-modern' view. At first glance it seems to chime well with the Humanist view, but there are complications here. Lurking in relativism is the difficulty that it becomes impossible to evaluate differing opinions and that affronts much of the Humanist tradition. Humanism, especially as developed in the Enlightenment, takes reason and quality of argument very seriously; whilst it accords persons equal status it does not automatically assume that everyone's voice has equal status. A Humanist is often keen that everyone should be heard, but is often resistant to the idea that everybody's utterance has an equal status.⁴ It is important to note here that whilst relativism puts all persons on an equal footing this can actually be experienced as an anxiety about one's own uniqueness.

Contemporary relativism is a powerful force in fields as seemingly disparate as academic literary study (including, in the criticism of self-writing) and social media. There is now a wide-spread doubt that any opinion could be called expert or authoritative and a wide-spread mistrust of political, media, professional, and academic elites. This view is well expressed by the philosopher AC Grayling in a discussion of the issue (triggered by the recent death of Jacques Derrida) with Richard Lea, in the *Guardian*:

⁴ For further discussion of 'relativism' as a philosophical conceit see: (Baggini and Southwell 2012: 112, 144, 147, 151-2, and 195) and (Blackburn 2008: 326). For discussion of 'relativism' in literary criticism and academia, see: (Eagleton 1996: 20-21, 23-24, 33-35, 39, 47, 61, 81-82, and 205).

Relativism is the mainstream position for post-modernist theory across a wide range of disciplines - anthropology and literary theory especially... It is easy to believe and takes careful thought to counter... Also it is espoused by people with enticing and intellectual-sounding foreign names - Manolo Blahniks of the mind rather than the feet. (Grayling quoted by Lea 2004)⁵

Academic discussion finds itself in a bind because on the one hand, it respects the 'post-modern' and its relativism but on the other, it is necessarily evaluative. (In Chapter Seven, intertextual analysis of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag shows them discussing - sometimes agonising over - the status of their opinions and the calibre of their opinion-making. Their discussion informs the critical approach developed in the thesis.) Some species of relativism is inevitable, given the inherent fallibility of critical judgements. That there is no final answer need not immediately spring the critic into indeterminacy. It is plausible – and practical – to adopt a distinction between what the thesis calls sophisticated and crude types of relativism. Both spring from the same idea: that evaluations are fallible. However, sophisticated relativism adjusts to this knowledge, and moves beyond it to hone evaluative processes and to investigate, analyse, test, evince, and defend judgements.⁶ A cruder approach rather than adjusting - and oddly with no certainty

⁵ The reference for this passage can be found in the bibliography, see Richard Lea, *The Guardian*, 'Relative Thinking', (2004).

⁶ Persons' evaluations can be regarded as equal or relative to each other because the verity of an evaluation cannot be fixed and as such all evaluations are equally likely to be wrong (or right). Two ideas behind this are, firstly, human cognition has limits, for example, one cannot know what has not yet happened and, secondly, the subjective nature of human cognition resists objective analysis and therefore the verity of human cognitive processes and judgements cannot be 'taken out' and fully tested. The sceptic takes both ideas very seriously. The notion that a sophisticated form of relativism is a favourable alternative to crude relativism is supported by the work of Wittgenstein, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Taylor. In, *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein describes how an idea (or interpretation) – that is regarded sceptically and is considered, therefore, to be relative to all other ideas - can 'stand fast' as part of a process of enquiry: 'I should like to say that Moore does not know what he says he knows, but it stands fast for him, as also for me: regarding it as absolutely solid is part of our method of enquiry' (Wittgenstein 1969: paragraph 151). Thus, Wittgenstein seems to suggest that a critic can hold strongly to an idea, as it is tested and weighed against others, and as part of a process in which one cannot know either way whether to doubt or trust one's reasons. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' is the idea that through often, for example, historically constituent and culturally or socially determined perspectives or 'horizons', a fusion of perspectives and or arguments, comparisons, and enquiries can deliver one to perhaps a more-or-less correct 'dialogic' idea, if not a finite and fixed 'maxim' (Gadamer 2004: XXVIII, 435-468, and 537). Both Gadamer and Taylor hold to the idea that one makes judgements through exchange: 'A good test for whether an evaluation is 'strong' or not... is whether it can be the basis for attitudes of admiration and contempt.' (Taylor 1989: 3) Taylor also argues that: 'Once we see that agents are constituted by exchange, we understand that reason also advances in another dimension that of the rational search for consensus through argument.' (Taylor 1989: 509) We can, using this method and with interpersonal relationships in mind, 'lead towards agreement on general good by error reducing moves.' (Taylor 1989: 505) Thus, according to Taylor, a person can make judgements and can seek to improve the judgements they make, a person can discriminate which evaluation is, 'right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower.' (Taylor 1989: 4) However, the process of evaluation - though not static (as it might be in crude relativism) - is not simple: 'An articulation of [an] 'object' tends to make it something different from what it was before.' (Taylor 1985a, 38) And, 'what is agreed upon is that no framework [moral or otherwise] is shared by everyone' (Taylor 1989: 12). The idea of enquiry that is allowed to, on the one hand, produce results that 'stand fast' and are achieved through 'dialogic' situations or the 'fusion' of ideas and that, on the other hand, are also allowed to not be 'true' or fixed sits well with the notion of 'sophisticated relativism' and is built into the design of 'deliberate eclecticism': the approach to self-writing advocated in the thesis and introduced at the end of this chapter. It is also an approach complemented by the varying levels of doubt and belief Aurelius and Sontag are found to have, in Chapter Seven, towards

as to rightness of its acquiescence – summarily yields to fallibility and throws-over the evaluative process.

The Humanist idea of a self that has some degree of volition has had plenty of other contemporary problems to contend with. Since the nineteenth century, the notion of self has been under an assault which might be called, broadly, scientific. This has produced what one might call a mechanistic view of the self, deriving from a determinist or materialist view of the natural order. More recently, biology and neuroscience have - at their extreme and epiphenomenal end - further and more directly under-mined some Humanistic views of the self. Epiphenomenalism contends that a person – their experiences and actions – are the product of biochemical processes and structures. In this view, the self is rarely accorded free-will and may barely exist. If it is considered to exist, in some sense, it does so in as much as it is an evolutionarily useful abstract.⁷

These strictly scientific perspectives are important to a contemporary person's view of the self, but can be taken as largely covered in the last chapter's concern with determinism. Of special concern here, and more generally to this thesis, is the way varieties of these mechanistic views of the self have coincided with, or been informed by particularly literary critical methods and ideologies. These literary approaches are almost all allied to the social sciences, or to the highly-theoretical end of the humanities: the sociological, psychological, semiological, cultural, and political arenas have produced views - not least of literature - which crucially challenge the concept of an autonomous self and are summarised as 'post-modern'.

the perspicuity of their reason, and that of others. For example, Aurelius and Sontag, though they felt that their reasoning ability was compromised, shared a degree of certainty in the strength of their reasoning ability and continued to exercise it.

⁷ For further discussion of the historical significance of mechanistic schemas, see bibliography for Clarke and Rossini. eds., *Routledge Companion to Literature and Science* (2011). Particularly, (Vanderbeke 2011: 193 In. Clarke and Rossini. eds.). For further reference to the affect of mechanistic perspectives on philosophical thought, see: (Okasha 2002: 4-7, 5-6, and 84 In. Clarke and Rossini. eds.). For discussion of mechanistic views and Descartes, see: (Nash 2011: 258 In. Clarke and Rossini. eds.); and mechanistic views and Copernicus, see: (Snider 2011: 444 In. Clarke and Rossini. eds.); and Isaac Newton, see: (Cole 2011: 450 and 459 In. Clarke and Rossini. eds.) For discussion of mechanistic world views and the philosophy of determinism, see: (Russell 1996: 715-716). For further reference to the affect of deterministic or mechanistic frameworks on early and mid twentieth-century views of the subjective nature of self, see Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (Searle 1997: 189-214); Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Taylor 1989: 495-521); and Nagel 'What is it like to be a Bat' (Nagel 1974: 435-450). For further reference to how the self is portrayed in literature and through the prism of modern empirical enquiries into the nature of consciousness, see bibliography for Waugh, 'Mind in Modern Fiction' (Waugh 2011: 125-140) and (Sielke 2011: 38-53 In. Clarke and Rossini. eds.).

Literary 'post-modernism' can be described as having two main tendencies; one emphasises the power of inherited narratives and the other, the power of language or grammar themselves.⁸ In practice, discussion often amalgamates these. For instance, the philosopher Robert C Solomon, reflecting on the affect of post-structural discourse on discussion of the self, remarks how the literary philosophers Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida, 'have rejected the notion of "the subject" altogether and insisted that what is mistakenly identified by that name is a "construction" of politics, language, and culture.' (Solomon in OCP 1995: 857) Solomon describes post-structural (and structural) discourse as often being interested in the controlling power behind one's concept of self.

It is important to keep in mind that very few Humanists or 'post-modernists' are purists.⁹ Just as Humanism corralled within its theoretical walls both dissenters and assenters, and was contradictory and unresolved, most proponents of 'post-modern' theories are themselves ambivalent. However, the 'post-modern' is an attempt to under-mine and dismantle the grip of traditional and often Humanist views, and especially those on the autonomous self. It was shocking because it represented an assault on what were taken to be key characteristics of Western

⁸ The question of language's capacity to both serve and subvert that which it articulates has played an important role in philosophical and literary studies. (The theme was first mentioned in Chapter One, as part of the discussion of the 'fragmentary' style adopted in diary-writing; some 'post-modern' literature; and philosophical writing, including Wittgenstein's.) The issue of language's reliability can be traced back to classical philosophy; in particular, Plato's dialogue 'the Phaedrus' (Derrida 1981: 'Plato's Pharmacy' in *Dissemination*, 67). Much later, in the nineteenth century, Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote of language's unfixed and unfixable nature and the significance of this to epistemological enquiry in, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense': '[Truth is] a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms' (Nietzsche 1954: 46-7). Twentieth century philosophical figures, in the development of this approach to language and meaning, have been Wittgenstein (1889-1951, inspired by Gottlob Frege, 1848-1925) and 'Ordinary Language' theorists, such as Gilbert Ryle, John L Austin, and Peter Strawson. A number of philosophers have merged questions of language with ontological questions, for example, Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, (an influence on both Derrida and Sontag), weaved his views on the unreliability/ unavailability of language together with ideas on what it is to be a conscious person 'in- the- world' (see: footnote one to Chapter Two). Heidegger describes how language is unreliable as a means of description and can draw one away from 'authentic' 'da-sein'. However, language is also the 'sign[age]' by which we know 'da-sein' (Heidegger 1996: 123 – 150, for example, 'Understanding and Interpretation' and 'Da-sein and Discourse: Language'). For further reference to the philosophy of language see: (Quinton in OCP 1995: 489). 'Linguistic turn', a phrase first used by Gustav Bergmann in his review of Peter Strawson's 'Individuals' in 1960, describes the twentieth century's increased interest in language and meaning. The work of philosophers has been taken up by key figures in literary criticism, for example, the semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure and the psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Taylor contends that a person is 'constituted' by and is 'maintained within a language community' he goes on to comment that an individual, 'may innovate but will start from base of common language' (Taylor 1989: 33-35). In this way language is never 'private' (Taylor 1989: 34-35 and Strawson 2008: 188). That language can be described as 'shared' and not 'private' can be perceived as - a negation of or a positive influence on - a person's capacity to self-define their self-concept. It can also be seen as a neutral acknowledgement of the interplay between the person and the world around them. It would seem that the self-writer (or critic) must somehow manage the gap between what they describe and how they describe it.

⁹ That a single theory or theorist could be squeezed into one term, for example, 'post-modern', goes against much theory. Post-structuralists and deconstructionists concerned themselves with the usefulness of literary labels for genres and forms, as did early literary critics who concerned themselves with gauging the literary canon. For further reference to 'post-modern' challenges to literary taxonomies, see bibliography for Derrida, 'Law and Genre' (Derrida 1980: 55-81). Derrida argues that critical literary distinctions and evaluations are essentially arbitrary and in this sense defunct. For critical estimations of the evaluation of literary texts and their competing merits in the 'canon' – and before the 'post-modern' – see: (Eagleton 1996: 10, 175-177, and 208).

civilisation and its ideals, namely that, except under duress, a person could speak his or her mind autonomously.¹⁰ Personal autonomy was, as Lacey identified in the first section of the previous chapter, a crucial part of what man took to form his 'importance' and 'status' in the world. When self-writing critics, such as Spacks, accord the self-writer and their voice the status of having 'authenticity' or 'dignity', it is hard not to see how this status derives from a Humanist view of the self and is threatened by a thorough-going 'post-modern' view. The 'post-modern' does not (necessarily) have to be seen as robbing a person of uniqueness or interest, or even 'status', but it does vitiate some crucial common denominators for Western ideas of personhood. And thus, as we shall find in Chapters Five and Six, affects the way some critics of self-writing evaluate the position of the self-writer.

It is crucial to stress that under inspection 'post-modern' critiques are not as rigorous as they are sometimes, indeed usually, characterised to be by their main progenitors, supporters, or enemies. It is a matter of logic that if it were really true that what people say and write is not in some part their own creation, but is merely the result of the types of hegemonies identified in the introduction, such as dominant patriarchies or political regimes, we readers would hardly know what credence to give theoretical opinion or criticism.

Again, returning to our case studies for deliberately introspective writing, Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag, we find that they illuminate how the ideas discussed so far and in this chapter are not so easily delineated or separated from their counter-parts. These are complex and elusive ideas. Susan Sontag was keenly aware of the dominant intellectual orthodoxies of her day and both deployed and rebelled against them. Pierre Hadot observes how Marcus Aurelius, likewise, was well aware of his age's dominant intellectual orthodoxies and both deployed and rebelled against them:

¹⁰ For further discussion on the interaction between our contemporary concepts of self and sociology, since the 1970s, see bibliography for KA Cerulo, 'Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions' (Cerulo 1997: 385). And for further discussion of the individual and the 'state' see: (Howe 1990: 205-251). For discussion of the affect of psychology on post-nineteenth-century concepts of the self, from Sigmund Freud to evolutionary psychology, see: (Hassan 1988: 421) and (Plotniksy 2011: 203-215 In. Clarke and Rossini eds.)

In antiquity, the rules of discourse were rigorously codified. In order to say what he wanted to say, an author had to say it in a specific way, in accordance with traditional models, and according to rules prescribed by rhetoric or philosophy. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, for instance, is not the spontaneous outpourings of a soul that wants to express its thoughts immediately, but rather an exercise accomplished in accordance with definite rules. As we shall see, they presuppose a pre-existing canvas... The meaning of the *Meditations* can, therefore, only be understood once we have discovered, among other things, the prefabricated schemes which have been imposed upon it. (Hadot 1998: Intro IX)

In this context, Marcus Aurelius could not remotely escape the philosophical, social, political, and rhetorical or literary conventions of his time. However, as Chapter Seven illustrates, it is part of his usefulness to future readers that he was aware of them and to a degree rebelled against them. Likewise, Susan Sontag simultaneously could not escape patriarchal, theological, or intellectual hegemonies (including the 'post-modern') of her time. And yet, she questioned the authority 'post-modernist' discourse wielded in criticism, as she so frankly and rebelliously asserts in her diaries:

3/1/78 I'm not thrilled anymore by literary criticism as auto-critique – the construction of methodologies, the deconstruction of texts. Criticism that is about itself. 'Illness as Metaphor' [Sontag's essay] is an attempt to 'do' literary criticism in a new way but for a pre-modern purpose to criticise the world. It's also "against interpretation" – once again. With a subject, instead of a text [...] So many modern ideas thought to be liberating to some class or relationship or just aspiration have turned out to be more enslaving than not. [Square brackets mine] (Sontag 2013: 453-454)

It seems diary-writing gave Sontag the opportunity to exercise a critical candour she would not have permitted herself in her more academic work. The passage above refers to 'against interpretation' and came over ten years after the publication of Sontag's critical essay, 'Against Interpretation'. It is an example of how Sontag used the diary as criticism. As Chapters Six and Seven demonstrate, Sontag's approaches to interpretation were a continuous critical and personal exercise and she took an often ambivalent view of the extremes of

'deconstructionism' or 'auto-critique' ('auto-critique' is her term for a type of deconstructionist literary criticism that is about criticism and not, in her view, literature). The diary entry now serves to illustrate how Sontag measured the extremes of the 'post-modern' against her tendency to 'do' a more responsive type of 'literary criticism'. Again, Susan Sontag, as a deliberately introspective writer and as a critic, is useful to the development, in the thesis, of a critical approach to self-writing.¹¹

The entry also helps draw out how, what Sontag labels, 'modern' critics have accorded the status of *not* being 'slaves' (i.e., of having freedoms) to certain 'classes' of writers. Critics have done so often as part of a wider movement to, 'liberate some class or relationship or just aspiration'. And modern critics who have attempted to perform this emancipatory gesture, 'have turned out to be more enslaving than not'. This is – as is found in analysis of the criticism of self-writing, in Chapters Five and Six – perhaps because some 'post-modern' critics have either been too dogmatic or attempted to merge – with little acknowledgement - an essentially Humanist move with their essentially 'post-modern' theories and approaches.

2. Literary theory, the 'post-modern', and the self

A structuralist reader of a diary might think that the self-narrative was interesting and useful, but be aware that the diarist was probably dominated by someone else's narrative. Such a reader, whilst happy to describe a dictatorship of elite hegemonies, would not allow that their own favoured critical narratives might be equally elitist and ideological. A thorough-going post-structuralist reader of a diary would probably close the book unfinished because of his or her understanding that

¹¹ Sontag's deliberation of a range of – often conflicting – critical approaches is mirrored in Taylor's discussion of a key dialectic in conflicting approaches to the self-concept and to persons, more generally. Where Sontag uses the term 'auto-critique' (Sontag 2013: 453), Taylor uses 'instrumentalist', and where she uses the words 'spontaneous', 'erotic', or 'raw', Taylor uses 'expressivist' (Sontag 2013: 290, 2013a: 14 and Taylor 1989: 321 and 368). For Taylor, 'instrumentalist' approaches represent – at their extreme – a desire to reduce all matter and ideas to measurable objects. Sontag would, perhaps, have described 'instrumentalism' as too analytical. Taylor describes how 'expressivism' privileges, 'imagination... and feeling' (Taylor 1989: 368) It is an approach that Sontag would, perhaps, have described as intuitive and responsive. (Taylor linked 'instrumentalism' to Enlightenment rationalist notions and 'expressivism' to Romantic subjectivism.) Though Sontag favours a responsive/ 'expressivist' approach, her responses are sometimes highly critical and analytical, in a manner that might be compared with the 'instrumentalist' attitude. Managing the strengths and weaknesses – at different times and for different reasons - of often competing critical attitudes, as well as approaches, is a principle of the critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism' (described at the end of this chapter).

it was incapable of having any stable or determinate meaning; as Jane Tompkins, in her explanatory essay, 'A Short Course in Post-Structuralism' describes:

You cannot apply post-structuralism to literary texts... Because to talk about applying post-structuralism to literary texts assumes the following things: 1. That we have free-standing subjects; 2. That we have free-standing objects of investigation; 3. That there are free-standing methods; and 4. That what results when we apply reader to method and method to text is a free-standing interpretation. (Tompkins 1988: 733)

In *What is Literature?*, Jean-Paul Sartre (an honorary structuralist writing about literature, at least in this instance) wrote that in his view the writer's claim to writing that has stemmed from autonomous intent is seriously compromised by the counter claim of 'society': '[The writer] defined within the framework of an established society and in relationship to institutions, values and ends which are already fixed... is a parasite of the governing elite.' (Sartre 1967: 81) Structuralism, typically, observes that the self-writer and person are not able to command the type of separation from the body politic that Patricia Meyer Spacks described, in Chapter One, as a facet of a concept of self that is thought to be arrived at privately and with volition:

Privacy whatever its definition always implies at least temporary separation from the social body... if privacy implies freedom from – from watchers, judges, gossips, sensation seekers – it also connotes freedom to: to explore possibilities without fear of external censure. [...] privacy is the measure of the extent an individual is afforded the social and legal space to develop the emotional, cognitive, spiritual and moral powers of an autonomous agent. (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 19-25)

Thus, a structuralist approach (a form of 'post-modern' discourse) under-mines the concept of an autonomous self and voice in literature.¹²

¹² Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, describes how post-structuralism expanded on structuralism's critique of traditional views of the self and voice. He lists and labels proponents of the 'post-structuralist' agenda as the 'deconstructionist', Jacques Derrida; the 'French historian', Michel Foucault; the 'French psychoanalyst', Jacques Lacan; and the 'feminist philosopher and critic', Julia Kristeva (Eagleton 1996: 116).

3. The life of language

An important feature of structuralist and, in particular, post-structuralist interpretations of the voice and self, is the focus on the way that language is far from neutral. On the one hand, it is mediated within political, economic, social, or cultural hegemonies (these may be covert or obvious controlling forces). On the other hand, it has its own power, in this view language has a life and characteristics which make it impossible for anybody to own or control their thought or speech. In post-structuralism the givenness of language is to some degree out of the control of the individual and of elite power structures; it is to some degree its own power.

In this way language is only ever inadequately representational and has its own life, beyond the intended meaning of the author. Thus, the author's autonomy over or control of language and its meaning is destabilised. Discussion of the degree to which language can be representational has a long history. Ihab Hassan in, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, observes how:

The postmodern spirit lies coiled within the great corpus of modernism [...] gnawing at the nerve of certain authors, diverting others into mad experiments. It is not really a matter of chronology: Sade, Jarry, Breton, Kafka, acknowledge that spirit. It may be rather a question of "Terrorism", [...] a sense that literary language can no longer carry the burden of consciousness, an intuition that culture can never mediate nor contain. (Hassan 1982: 139)

Hassan's comment draws out how this concept of language is neither new nor confined to 'post-modernism'. He observes how pre 'post-modern' writers, such as the Marquis de Sade and Franz Kafka, tried to both capture and evade the givenness of language in their writing techniques. Following Sade and Kafka, 'post-modern' self-writers have adopted writing techniques, including the use of fragmentary sentences, elliptical themes, and disjointed or unconventional syntax, to convey their suspicion of traditional ideas and especially of the self-concept and its articulation. Derrida's, 'Envois' is an example of the use of such techniques in

'post-modern' self-writing. (Derrida's work is examined in the next chapter.) Daniel Chandler in, *Semiotics: The Basics*, a popular Routledge guide to the semiotic theories of the 'post-modern', provides a further description of the iconoclastic approach to language and how it affects reflection on the nature and content of self-concepts:

Commonsense suggests that "I" am a unique individual with a stable, unified identity and ideas of my own. Semiotics can help us to realize that such notions are created and maintained by our engagement with sign systems... We derive a sense of "self" from drawing upon conventional, pre-existing repertoires of signs and codes. [...] We are thus the subjects of our sign systems rather than being "users" who are fully in control of them. (Chandler 2004: 217-218)

Chandler lays out the strict 'post-modern' perspective that writers are incapable of extricating, from 'The Babel of Interpretations', narratives, texts, or selves that have the merit of being anything other than a simulacrum of, 'pre-existing... signs and codes'.¹³ Chandler's characterisation of the semiotician's view of language and its relevance to the deliberately introspective text is also found in Derrida's collection of essays, *Writing and Difference*. Derrida has been selected as a representative of the 'post-modern' enterprise partly because he is so often cited (approvingly or not) but also because he took a keen interest in autobiography and his critique of the form, as discussed in Chapter Five, shows him to be a nuanced 'deconstructionist'.

Peter Elbow, a critic referred to in Chapter Three, describes how Derrida, 'calls voice a major problem in our understanding of discourse – the idea that voice underlies writing and that writing always implies the "real presence" of a person or a voice. This objection has spread beyond people who identify themselves as deconstructionists or post-structuralists.' (Elbow 1994: 1) Derrida often, though not always, takes the view ascribed to him by Elbow. The view that the voice is a problem is taken, for example, in Derrida's essay, 'Force and Signification':

¹³ The phrase is taken from the title of ED Hirsch Jr's essay, 'The Babel of Interpretations' in, *Validity and Interpretation* (Hirsch 1992: 48-51).

By enregistering speech, inscription has as its essential objective... the emancipation of meaning - as concerns any actual field of perception - from the natural predicament in which everything refers to the disposition of a contingent situation. This is why writing will never be simple "voice-painting" (Voltaire). [Derrida's brackets] (Derrida 2001: 13)¹⁴

Voice is, in Derrida's description, the oppressor from whom the person must emancipate expression: 'This time, writing not only will no longer be the transcription of speech, not only will be the writing of the body itself, but it will be produced, within the movements of the theatre, according to the rules of hieroglyphics, a system of signs no longer controlled by the institution of the voice.' (Derrida 2001: 240) Derrida's deconstruction of voice is related to his deconstruction of traditional ideas of consciousness (from which the voice heralds); in particular Cartesian concepts of a self-verifying 'cogito'. Derrida describes the consciousness of self as: '[A] conceptualization of the past, I mean of facts in general. A reflection of the accomplished, the constituted, and the *constructed*. Historical, eschatological, and crepuscular by its very situation.' (Derrida 2001: 3) And in, 'Cogito and the Madness of History', Derrida describes the Cartesian 'cogito' as: '[T]he meaning of the Cogito or (plural) Cogitos (for the Cogito of the Cartesian variety is neither the first nor the last form of Cogito); and also to determine that what is in question here is an experience which, at its furthest reaches, is perhaps no less adventurous, perilous, nocturnal, and pathetic than the experience of madness.' (Derrida 2001: 39) Here Derrida, likens the hankering after a 'cogito' to a form of madness; in doing so Derrida seeks to under-mine the idea that the self is a reasoning or autonomous structure. However, mad or not, there is an 'experience' and dismissing it as an experience that is not to be reasoned with because it is a form of madness does not make the experience itself evaporate. The idea of self may be a form of mental illness (madness), but reducing it to such a state does not eliminate the issue.

Further to Derrida's destabilisation of the Humanist self and its voice (let us for the moment assume that is what he intended and achieved), Roland Barthes, an influential critical force in the 'post-modern', also famously re-positioned the reader

¹⁴ Derrida also discusses the merits of types of 'voice' in utterance, in literature, or in drama in, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences'. For further reference see: (Derrida 2001: 252).

and the writer in relation to their texts. Barthes wrote in, 'The Death of the Author', that writers' voices are:

[I]mpossible to know, for the good reason that all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes. (Barthes 1977: 143)

Barthes' declaratory title obscures the subtleties of the essay. His was a repositioning of the author, not a death. Barthes himself wrote an autobiography so cannot properly be said to have completely deconstructed his own 'auto'. As the critic JG Kennedy comments:

For many critics and scholars in this country, Roland Barthes came to represent... the nefarious structuralist plot to turn literature into writing, works into texts, and authors into anonymous scriptors... [he] became a symbol of the dehumanization of literary study [...] He typically regarded the self, the subject, as a locus of confusion... Yet there was... a richly human element in much that Barthes wrote, a persistent reflection upon his own memories... which behind a mask of erudition often disclosed signs of personal struggle. (Kennedy 1981: 381)

Kennedy draws a picture of a Barthes who juggled the nuances of Humanism and the 'post-modern' and pertinently illustrates that this nuanced approach is most evident in Barthes' self-reflection. As Sontag points out, in her own mode of self-reflective diarist as critic, that Barthes' 'self-description' was an important part of his writing and criticism:

4/7/80 Barthes. People called him a critic, for want of a better label; and I myself said he was, "the greatest critic to have emerged anywhere". But he deserves the more glorious name of writer. His body of work is an immense, complex, extremely discreet effort at self-description. Eventually he became a real writer. But he couldn't purge himself of his ideas. (Sontag 2013: 505)

In the following diary entry Sontag reflects on Barthes' and her voice. The entry ends with a question mark:

Good signs are arbitrary > Barthes in *Mythologies*. Bad as natural. The willingness to be open... I will tell you in whatever voice is left to me of the voices now inhabiting. They cry. Each sentence, each breath is a sundering. This fabric, this bolt of language belongs to whom? (Sontag 2013: 175)

Sontag asks, as many 'post-modernists' have done, who does language belong to? Perhaps, it belongs to the individual and the collective who deploys it? Who then lays the greater claim? And does language have its own say in the matter? Sontag goes on, in the same entry, to quote Wittgenstein on how language and one's view of the world and oneself interact: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world", "To imagine a language means to imagine a way of life".¹⁵ The quotations emphasise how language is interpreted as having a life of its own and, perhaps, a life that is beyond the volition of its users. In these aphoristic quotations language has 'limits' - it may not directly represent that which it articulates - and such limits affect the lived experience.

However, Sontag (picking up on Barthes' point that literature can be, 'the trap where all identity is lost', but also contrary to it) wrote about the 'release' writing could offer the self:

With the enrichment of the personality, one discovers its limits, the poverty and the shackles of the self, one discovers that one has only one life, an individuality forever circumscribed, but which contains many possible destinies [here she is alluding to Existentialism]... Writing then becomes a quest of poly-personality, a way of living diverse destinies, of penetrating into others, of communicating with them... of escaping from the ordinary limits of the self. [Square brackets mine] (Sontag 2007: 77-78)

Intertextual analysis of Barthes, Sontag, and the critic Kennedy has shown that Barthes and Sontag, though they found the concepts of self, free-will, and voice problematic, continued to voice their views and self-descriptions. They did so as though their self and its voice had a degree of efficacy and volition. 'Post-modern'

¹⁵ The full translation of the first quotation from Wittgenstein is: 'The limits of my language (as I alone understand it) mean the limits of my world'. The quotation is from paragraph 5.62, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, for further reference see: (Wittgenstein 2002: 68). The second quotation is from the later *Philosophical Investigations*, for further reference see: (Wittgenstein 1986: 19).

discourse can destabilize the inviolability of the autonomous 'auto' in autobiography, or the 'I' in diary. Unlike much Humanist discourse, it seems at odds with the individual asserting an autonomous voice in a personal text. However, in practice, the 'post-modern' is rarely as rigorous or as iconoclastic as it might wish to be. This feature of contemporary literary theory has far-reaching theoretical connotations for self-writers and for current critics of self-writing. In this view when a self describes itself it may not be able to do so because it does not control the only means it has of doing this work, namely language. Thus, just as the self does not have an eye with which to see itself it does not have power over the words and grammar with which it describes itself.¹⁶

4. The 'post-modern' narrator

Theories that strongly presume they can identify and dissect a person according to the structures they exist in, that is to say presume strongly deterministic or mechanistic accounts of the human person, have consequences. Such accounts may affect the ways in which people feel about their self and voice; they affect how voices are viewed by others; and how individuals are held accountable for the ways in which they use their voice. They affect how literature is read. They have – in some cases - become an, ideology and even orthodoxy.¹⁷ The journalist, author, and poet, Harry Eyres, writer of the *Slow Lane* column in the *Financial Times*, describes the influence of such analysis on poetry in graphic terms:

Nowadays poetry is analysed with a bristling armoury of critical, historical, social and psychological theory. Many insights are gained but, I sometimes feel, at the expense of what the poem was originally envisaged as being – a human utterance, spoken by the poet to an audience in the present but also in the future, which mixes the “useful with the sweet”, as Horace puts it. The poem has turned into an object, a text, to be scrutinised but not to be loved. (Eyres: 2015)¹⁸

¹⁶ For further descriptions of the post-structural model see: (Tompkins 1988: 733-749); (Eagleton 1996: 105, 112, 127, and 199); and (Eagleton 2004: 1).

¹⁷ For further reference to the discussion of the institutionalisation of some literary theory and discussion of when literary theory becomes ideological, see bibliography for Nelson, 'Against English: Theory and the Limits of the Discipline' (Nelson 1987: 46-52).

¹⁸ The reference for this passage can be found in the bibliography, see Eyres, *The Financial Times*, 'Horace: The Best Self-Help There Is', (2015).

Eyres' aversion to using the tools of 'post-modern' literary criticism is, in part, due to their drawing the reader away from a more 'spontaneous' or 'raw' enjoyment of the text. Sontag uses the terms 'spontaneous' and 'raw' - at different times - in both her diaries and her criticism. They are terms that describe her preferred approach to the diary form, herself, and to art or literature. They are also terms Sontag felt best described what could be achieved in the diary form, a literary form she saw as more naturalistic than most (Sontag 2013: 280, 282, and 291 and 2013a: 41) It is a view that can affect the way self-writing is read, especially when one considers that often a private and deliberately introspective diarist might come to their diary in a highly-charged and emotionally stirring moment.

The late twentieth-century literary academics, Edward Said, Matthew Clark, and Ihab Hassan allow us to be a little sceptical of the extreme end of the 'post-modern'. They have discussed the free-will of the self and voice in literature versus the construction of that self and its voice (by, for example, language or social, historical, and cultural circumstance) and they have done so through the analysis of critical literary theory and a range of literary forms. They are cited here for four reasons. Firstly, the three critics describe the difficulties 'post-modern' theorists have in disengaging from, whilst they deconstruct, traditional concepts of self and free-will. Secondly, they describe how the type of iconoclasm attempted by the 'post-modern' – if it is to be serious and fully embraced - requires a way of speaking about the world and literature that has not (yet) been arrived at. Thirdly, they show that there are often multiple competing perspectives on the self and that unravelling them - whilst allowing their rich complexity to remain intact - requires a variety of approaches, including but not restricted to 'post-modern' approaches. Finally, they strengthen the suggestion, in the thesis, that developing analytical tools with which to manage competing and internally contradictory ideas on the elusive self is valuable to the criticism of self-writing and literature more broadly.

Edward Said is often seen as presenting an idea of the individual as a product of geo-political, imperialist, and cultural frameworks. For instance, in *Orientalism* (1978), Said stresses that the colonized voice is under some form of duress from imperialist discourse. This type of rhetoric includes traditional late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Humanist or Christian descriptions of the individual as

existing within narratives of race and power. (It is worth noting that at this point in Said's criticism Humanism is classed as part of a hegemonic discourse.)

However, he also claims that persons can assert themselves within hegemonies. Said identifies a Humanist type of autonomy of voice in the oppressed people he wants to emancipate.¹⁹ The same impulse to emancipate the person and a person's utterances can be found in Said's 1983 publication, *The World, The Text, and the Critic* (and in an article published in 1975, 'The Text, The World, and The Critic'), Said recognises that writers and critics are worldly subjects, heavily influenced by multiple factors, and certainly affected by 'post-modern' perspectives, but maintains that from within this position it is possible for an author to write in an 'irreducibly individual' manner:

What makes style receivable as the signature of its author's manner is a collection of features variously called idiolect, voice, or more firmly, irreducible individuality. The paradox is that something as impersonal as a text, or a record, can nevertheless deliver an imprint or a trace of something as lively, immediate and transitory as a voice. (Said 1983: 33)

Said is an example of a literary critic who has tried to reconcile 'post-modern' and Humanist claims for the freely willed voice as part of his emancipation of individuals from various powerful social, cultural, and political influences (and he has done so often using the rhetoric of both critical approaches). Matthew Clark (first introduced in Chapter Three) like Said, upholds the volition of the individual's self and voice within the structures that inform it. In *Structures of Narrative and the Language of the Self*, Clark finds that though authors' positions within texts are nuanced, authors are an ineluctable presence in the text: 'I do believe in authors, and I believe that authors are responsible for what they write... I also believe that the best evidence for the author's intention is usually to be found in the text.' (Clark 2010: 10) Clark's counter-attack to 'post-modern' suspicions of authorial autonomy (in Clark's terms 'intention') and the representativeness of language is that, '[l]anguage can certainly be ambiguous, but I do not believe that there is an endless and uncontrollable slippage of the sign... I do not believe that language is

¹⁹ For further discussion of Said's concept of Humanism and particularly how it is an approach to the person that can be described as clashing with his more 'post-modern' and post-colonial discourse, see bibliographic reference for Geertz, *New York Review of Books*, *Conjuring with Islam*, (1982).

isomorphic with the world... I do believe that a theory of meaning must include a theory of reference, however complicated that may be.' (Clark 2010: 10) In Clark's analysis, narrative is a necessary, if 'complicated', part of a 'theory of reference'. As such the notion of self and its narrative are preserved from full deconstruction, not least because it is hard to see how without narrative and 'a theory of reference' deconstructionism could set about constructing itself.

Clark concludes his analysis of literary self-concepts, with an allusion to an almost Humanist self that has to be spoken of and must be spoken of in language, however contested the value of language's representativeness may be: 'I feel, though I cannot prove it, that the self is more than its linguistic subjectivities. Take these away, and there is still some mystic residue, some self before we talk, and after. But whatever the self is outside of language, we have no way to talk about it.' (Clark 2010: 192) In keeping with the principles of the critical approach suggested in the conclusion to this chapter, Clark is careful not to create such arbitrary battlegrounds as Humanist versus 'post-modern', or self versus the 'other'; he asserts in the conclusion to his research:

I have argued that there are various ways of conceiving the self: the Cartesian self; the Hegelian self; the Freudian self; the self as agent, as patient, as experiencer, as witness; and even the self as instrument or as location... The study of narrative demands a concept of the self richer than the nearly ubiquitous binary division of the self and the other, or the subject and object. (Clark 2010: 179)

The thesis proposes a critical approach that has learnt from the nuances of Clark's work on self in literature, but avoids a retreat into the poetics of, 'mystic residues' (Clark 2010: 192).²⁰ Deliberate eclecticism is intended to preserve the richness of discussion bearing on the issues of self and personal autonomy and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of starkly competitive and internally contradictory perspectives on such elusive ideas. However, it does so in a way that avoids vague generalisations or poetic evasions, but provides instead a critical

²⁰ In what can be characterised as a response to Clark's sense of the 'mystic residue', Searle argues that: 'We can, and indeed must, grant the irreducibility of consciousness without claiming that it is somehow metaphysically not a part of the ordinary world [or is 'mystic[al] – to use Clark's term]. We can, in short, accept irreducibility without accepting dualism. And accepting this reality should allow us to explore the mystery of consciousness free of the misunderstandings that have confused so many discussants of the subject.' (Searle 1997: 214) Searle suggests we can explore consciousness and its mysteries without concluding that such mysteries are mystical.

gymnasium in which the merits of competing explanations can, in their turn, be impartially exercised. In this mode one can adopt the intellectual persona, for instance, of a thorough-going (or nuanced) Humanist and pursue such insights that position offers. Then one could adopt the posture of a 'post-modernist' (of any kind) and garner the insights from that perspective.

Further to Clark's nuanced approach, Ihab Hassan describes the 'realist' writer Robbe-Grillet (author of, *For a New Novel*) as a writer who achieved a balance between, 'the arrogance of Humanism and the self-pity of tragedy' (Hassan 1982: 175). Hassan posits that Robbe-Grillet's writing illustrates a juggling of the extremes of the 'arrogant' assumptions of the Humanist self and the equally extreme and 'terrifying' tragedy of the Existential or deconstructed self. (The philosophy of Existentialism and its often 'nihilistic' stance were described in Chapter Two.) Robbe-Grillet achieves this, according to Hassan, with the foundational understanding that all opposing concepts of the self are met in language or 'end... in speech' (Hassan 1982: 170-175). Hassan's understanding of the practical necessity of language is akin to Clark's pragmatic assertion that there must be some 'theory of reference', however 'slippery' or 'isomorphic' such theories are. That is: if people are to be able to refer to things and themselves (or to the unreliability of language; linguistic slipperiness is often, paradoxically, a theory about language communicated in a language).

Hassan asserts that though the status of the narrator and the self is 'disturbed' by Existential or 'post-modern' critique, the narrator continues to be in, 'the midst of things'. The narrator and the narrating self persist and they do so however they are described or theorised:

A disturbed narrator, both absent and omniscient, leaves no alternatives to the reader but to become himself that narrator or else to close the book. Once again we stand within the circle of subjectivity, on the thresholds of solipsism, believing only what we have no other means to disbelieve. We are still in the presence of man, of human consciousness oppressed by itself in the midst of things. (Hassan 1982: 175)²¹

²¹ For further reference to the discussion of the importance of author and reader subjectivities, in literature and literary criticism, see bibliography for Sartre, *What is Literature?* and (Hassan 1982: 175). In the mid-twentieth century Sartre laid out the terms of a debate that has grumbled on into the twenty-first century. Sartre – as he explains the 'dialectical

In this way there is a narrating 'presence' that draws the critic into 'select[ing]' ways of critically 'representing' it (Hassan 1988: 422). In his essay, 'Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature', Hassan helps identify the inherent ambiguities of reflecting on the self (and by extension the narrator) as the presence of an 'urgent question':

We should not be dazzled by a deconstruction that explodes all "essentialist" notions, leaving every urgent question hanging sullenly in the air. The self may rest on no ontological rock; yet as a functional concept, as a historical construct, as a habit of existence, above all, as an experienced or Existential reality, it serves us all even as we deny it theoretically. The self represents something to us, even when we select some aspect of it to act. (Hassan 1988: 422)

Hassan's logic suggests that if – in practice - we did not concede some ground to the usefulness of language we would 'close our books' and that if 'human consciousness' and our 'subjectivities' were fully deconstructed we would no longer be in the presence of man. As the deconstructionist Derrida helps illustrate in the next chapter, even the strictest 'post-modern' challenge to the verity of an inviolable notion of self and of free-will simply adds new dimensions to already elusive issues. The 'post-modern', as Hassan describes it, does not break the 'circle of subjectivity' (it cannot get rid of the personal in its sometimes impersonal descriptions of the self).

Clark and Hassan conclude that the 'post-modern' is suspicious of the reliability of meanings accorded to, for example, words, syntax, autonomy, self, and to the determinacy of meaning itself. For both, this suspicion is met - but not resolved - in language; the impulse to communicate; the stubborn presence of 'human consciousness'; and in the richness of our discussions of these issues.²² Clark

correlative' between 'two distinct agents', the reader and writer - argues that the writer and reader is so much a subjective beast (Sartre 1967: 41) that what he or she experiences as they write or read is - their self. Both writer and reader are, according to Sartre, 'primarily subjective', 'the literary object has no other substance than the reader's subjectivity' (Sartre 1967: 45). Sartre charts the rise of authors' impulses to impose the self, the subjective view, on writing from the chroniclers of the Middle Ages to the novelists of the eighteenth century. Sartre identifies a concomitant rise in a move to authenticate subjectivity; so that the value of the subjective might be underpinned with a notion of truth and its importance, therefore, drawn out.

²² Terry Eagleton describes how, in 'post-modern' literary theory the concept of semantic indeterminacy is often tied to the unreliability of language (this is an idea previously encountered in this chapter and introduced in Chapter One): '[Post-structuralism's] indeterminate approach compromised the viability of the experience of the consciousness of self, and in

and Hassan illustrate that, even in their careful consideration of 'post-modern' and Humanist ideas, the self and the ways in which it is spoken of remain contradictory and elusive. Clark and Hassan are not, to use Hassan's terms, 'dazzled' by what they see as the merits of 'deconstruction[ist]' theory (Hassan 1988: 422). Their approaches are nuanced. They consider multiple and often conflicted views. They are, however, in Hassan's terms sometimes, 'oppress[ed]' by the ambiguities and complexities of the self (Hassan 1988: 431). And both tend towards upholding, 'some mystic residue, some self before we talk, and after.' (Clark 2010: 192) This thesis proposes that by deliberately accepting the existence of multiple incomplete and enigmatic ideas it becomes easier to calmly identify their terms and issues and survey their range of strengths and weaknesses impartially. This is an element of the critical approach delineated and promoted at the end of this chapter. The view of the self and its narration, as presented by Clark and Hassan, is expanded on in the next section through reference to the contemporary philosophers (first introduced in Chapter Three) Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor. Both philosophers have worked on the ways in which a person's self-identity is brought to fruition in language.

5. Life in language: 'narrative identity'

Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor propose that the 'narratives' (Ricoeur 1990: 246-249 and 1992: 113-140 and 140-169) or 'evaluations' (Taylor 1985: 28) a person

doing so the viability of the expressions it produces in the text, meaning is... somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself. Not only my meaning, indeed, but me: since language is something I am made out of...' (Eagleton 1996: 112). For further reference to the question of indeterminacy in 'post-modern' literature see: (Hassan 1982: 139-177). For further reference to the confluence between 'post-modern' and philosophical ideas of semantic indeterminacy see: (Hassan 1982: XIII-XV, 9, 23, 42, 139-150, and 156-177). Following on from Eagleton's view, Paul Cobley, *author of the Routledge Companion to Semiotics*, describes how 'post-modern' descriptions of language's representativeness have assisted in creating, what he describes as, a 'discursive imagination'; the indeterminacy of which has flourished in studies in linguistics and literature, but also affected the ways in which individuals and culture are viewed. For further reference see: (Cobley. In. Clarke and Rossini. eds. 2011: 398). Taylor, unlike Derrida, argues that, 'we can, of course, try to increase our understanding of what is implicit in our moral and evaluative languages.' (Taylor 1989: 34). Taylor asserts that language is recognised as a coin for the development of, for example, self-concepts, moral frameworks, and meaning, in both the shared and subjective spheres, 'the search for moral sources outside the subject through language that resonates within him or her, is the grasping of an order which is inseparably indexed to a personal vision' (Taylor 1989: 509-510). The 'indeterminacy of meaning' argument, at its extreme, fuels the crude relativist's position: if no meaning is stable, all meanings are relative. Taylor's counter argument - that even with this acknowledgement there is space for 'consensus through argument' - helps mediate this crude position into a more sophisticated relativism. It is worth noting that there is, at least here, a common understanding of the shared need to evaluate, improve on evaluation, and of evaluations' fallibility, this common understanding - meaning - and its common terms of reference would be vitiated if all meanings were wholly indeterminable. The analysis here is a product of considering how language and meaning are conceived of in literature, self-writing and its criticism and is drawn out in Chapters Five and Six with reference to critics of self-writing. The analysis also links to consideration of the critical process, including the concept of relativism, explored at footnote six, in Chapter Four. Understandings of both the criticism and the critical process support the development of a critical approach in the thesis.

develops and adopts as he or she fashions their concept of self can in turn act on that concept. (Chapter Three provided analysis of Taylor's approaches to the concepts of self and free-will.) Ricoeur's approach to 'narrative identity' is in keeping with a principle for the critical approach developed in the thesis; namely, that moving between and within multiple competing and internally conflicted theoretical perspectives is a useful strategy for managing equivocal notions of the self. Christopher Norris, a philosopher and author of numerous books on 'post-modern' theory, describes Ricoeur's nuanced philosophical approach:

[It is understandable that] Ricoeur should avoid the kinds of polarized thinking and attendant polemics that have characterized so much recent debate. But he does take issue with structuralism and post-structuralism for what he sees as their relentlessly negative stand with regard to questions of meaning, subjectivity and truth. His recent works on metaphor and narrative again show Ricoeur treating these issues, through a dialogue that patiently engages all sides of the dispute while seeking a perspective atop of (often sterile) antinomies. (Norris in OCP 1995: 774)

Following this critical method, Ricoeur developed the term: 'narrative identity' to describe how the stories one tells of oneself are part of the formation of one's self-concept (Ricoeur 1992: 113-140 and 140-169 and 1990: 246 - 249). The term is referred to in several of his publications, including *Time and Narrative Volume Three* and, *Oneself as Another*.

Narrative identity does not exhaust the question of the self-constancy of a subject, whether this be a particular individual or a community... the practice of narrative lies in a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us. In this sense, narrative exercises imagination more than the will, even though it remains a category of action. [...] reading also includes a moment of impetus. This is when reading becomes a provocation to be and to act differently. However, this impetus is transformed into action only through a decision where by a person says: "Here I stand!" So, narrative identity is not equivalent to true self-constancy except through this decisive moment, which makes ethical responsibility the highest factor in self-constancy. It is at this point that narrative identity encounters its limit and has to link up with the non-narrative components in the formation of an acting subject. (Ricoeur 1990: 249)

In this view narrative structures (i.e., single bodies of work organised according to clear principles, such as chronology or themes) combine with a person's 'decisive' moment of narration to produce a narrative and an identity (Ricoeur 1990: 249). Within this narrative arc, according to Ricoeur, a person's identification of and 'attestation' to or 'commitment' to physical and mental 'character' traits are additional stitches in the fabric of the self. A person's consistent 'attestation' to character traits supports 'self-constancy': 'By character I understand the set of distinctive marks which permit the re-identification of a human individual as being the same.' (Ricoeur 1992: 119) (This is a return to the issue, introduced by Blackburn in Chapter Three, of the concept of self's constancy over time.) According to Ricoeur, a person's self holds out the 'promise' to maintain its character, in spite of and in the event of change. However, this 'attestation' is a, '[kind] of belief... It is not a certainty, like the cogito, it is open to interpretation, it is susceptible to change, this vulnerability will be expressed in the permanent threat of suspicion, if we allow that suspicion is the specific contrary of attestation.' (Ricoeur 1992: 22)²³ So, in this view one suspects that one's 'narrative identity' or 'attestations' and 'promises' to the self are 'open to interpretation'.

There is an additional complication: though the narration of the self is a 'decisive' act the narration itself is not passive, it too acts. In Ricoeur's view, especially in *Oneself and Another*, the self-concept both informs and is informed by narrative. Here, the individual is - to some degree - in control of language and - to some degree - controlled by language. The narrative of self is a 'decisive' act, but its decisiveness - or its "Here I stand!" - has limits. Narrative identity does not therefore, 'exhaust the question of self-constancy' (Ricoeur 1990: 249). The decisive action of self-writers' 'imaginings' or 'wills' (their autonomy) is limited by that which is described as heavily influencing and then inhibiting autonomous

²³ In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur describes how the study of one's 'I' should not be isolated from its existence in time. It is necessary to study 'I' in relation to time because time both obscures 'I' and provides 'I' with the key to 'I'. 'I' changes over time but there is something in 'I' around which these changes are made. Ricoeur is perhaps trying to describe a middle ground between Descartes and Nietzsche by abandoning the desire to fix 'I' as - always and in its entirety - consistent over time. According to Ricoeur some elements are consistent and others not (Ricoeur 1992: 50-53, 64, 116 - 118, 123-124, 140-148, 159-161, 179, and 309-319). In *Time and Narrative III*, section two, 'Poetics of Narrative: History, Fiction, Time', Ricoeur, describes a self that is sometimes disassembled by the actions of different 'time' states (i.e., cosmological and phenomenological). A person's time-diffracted self-concept is coalesced by Ricoeur under 'narrative' (in language). However, though this might seem a little more positive an estimation (than Derrida's, for example) of the determinable nature of language and oneself through time, Ricoeur (following Heidegger) goes on to assert that, 'narrative identity is not a stable and seamless identity. Just as it is possible to compose several different plots on the subject of the same incidents... so it is always possible to weave different, even opposed plots about our lives' (Ricoeur 1990: 248).

thought and decision-making. Beyond the 'decisive moment', Ricoeur considers social, cultural, and political norms additional determinates for a person's narrative identity and decision-making (Ricoeur 1990: 249).²⁴

So, though narrative can support coherent self-description (it provides a structure and a medium through which to articulate and formulate views of the self) Ricoeur describes 'narrative identity' as vulnerable. This is, in part, due to the fact that it is impossible to identify the subject with itself without 'recourse' to other objects. Thus, creating a distance between the self and itself. The self-writer inevitably uses language to close this gap. However, language as a public utility or having a character of its own may be a misleading tool of self-expression. The self-writer may use language, but not control it. We either accept these limitations or, as Ricoeur observes, fall to 'antinomy' and to conceiving the self as merely an 'illusion':

Without the recourse to narration, the problem of personal identity would in fact be condemned to an antinomy with no solution. Either we must posit a subject identical with itself through the diversity of its different states or, following Hume and Nietzsche, we must hold that this identical subject is nothing more than a substantialist illusion, whose elimination merely brings to light a pure manifold of cognitions, emotions, and volitions. (Ricoeur 1990: 246)

Ricoeur seems to insist that despite the 'threat of suspicion' there is perhaps the potential for 'more reliable attestations' of self: 'There is no true testimony without "false" testimony. But there is no recourse against suspicion, but a more reliable attestation.' (Ricoeur 1992: 22) Ricoeur's views on the life of the self and of language are nuanced. He appears to, ultimately, hope for a 'reliable' and comfortably 'manifold' 'attestation' to the self that can perhaps subsume cruder 'antinomies' (such as the antinomy between 'oneself' and 'another', Ricoeur 1992:

²⁴ The structuring agency of 'narrative identity' is 'limited' and augmented by, for example, language and contexts, but also by its not being 'lived experience'. If we take 'lived experience' to be more than abstract, Clark writes: 'One might say... that theoretical and philosophic models are imperfect abstractions of lived experience. Narrative of course is not lived experience, but rather a selection and ordering of the overwhelming abundance of life according to some plan or purpose. Each selection and ordering amounts to a theory, though in the telling the theory is best left implicit.' (Clark 2010: 180) Clark goes on to say that though not 'lived experience': 'Narrative sits between and mediates theory and experience, and it draws its particular strength from its participation in both. A narrative will use an implicit model to make sense of life, and it will show what it might feel like to live within some model.' (Clark 2010: 180) Thus, Clark expands on Ricoeur's idea of narrative identity and the limits to its structuring agency.

22 and 1990: 246). It is useful to consider Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity in the light of Charles Taylor's work. Charles Taylor, like Ricoeur, argues, on the one hand, that language has its own powerful character and that a person's evaluations or descriptions of themselves and their experiences are heavily mediated:

Our attempts to formulate what we hold important must, like descriptions, strive to be faithful to something. But what they strive to be faithful to is not an independent object..., but rather a largely inarticulate sense of what is of decisive importance. An articulation of this "object" tends to make it something different from what it was before. (Taylor 1985: 38)

And, on the other hand, Taylor grants that people are able to form strong preferences that are both, to a degree, self-defined and self-defining: 'To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand... My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within... I can determine from case to case what is good... or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of making a stand.' (Taylor 1989: 27)²⁵ So, an individual, from within a 'horizon' of cases, identifies from 'case to case' which moral act they 'endorse or oppose' and this evaluative process supports the ways in which the individual constructs their view of their self.

Ricoeur's and Taylor's discussions make the argument that a deliberately introspective writer can be reasonably described as having (a degree of) freedom to form 'narratives' of the self or choose 'evaluations' of the self. However, such personal autonomy is also inhibited in various ways (by, for example, historical or biological determinates; the limits and the force of language; or by cultural tropes). The self-writer can be, on the one hand, described as controlling their narrative of their self-concept. And, on the other, the self-writer can be described as being controlled by the language of the narrative itself and other, more powerful,

²⁵ Taylor describes how, 'making sense of one's life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra... In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going... Our lives exist in this space of questions [Who am I?, Am I good?] which only a coherent narrative can answer.' (Taylor 1989: 47) Taylor argues that the coordinated narration of our past and future (that is: narration as a vital component of our sense of identity and notion of self) matters because it supports the development of moral frameworks and meaning: 'Quest for a secure moral framework is... always a quest for sense.' (Taylor 1989: 18) This is a reciprocal dialogue between individuals and their communities, in which: 'Others... are not simply external to me, they help constitute my own self-hood.' (Taylor 1989: 47 and 509) This generation of meaning, morals, and identity is both perpetuated and complicated by the fact that 'articulation by its nature cannot be completed.' (Taylor 1989: 34) Taylor names Ricoeur, Heidegger, Macintyre, and Bruner as his key influences in developing his ideas of narrative identity (Taylor 1989 204-205).

narratives (such as cultural, social, or political narratives). The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that these perspectives contain both strengths and weaknesses and are unavoidably nuanced. Therefore, the critic of self-writing is perhaps well advised to adopt an approach that encourages investigation of various arguments, systematically and in turn, whilst remaining aware of the qualities of their competitors. The next section is an introduction to a critical approach to self-writing suggested by the research in Chapters One to Four: the approach is labelled deliberate eclecticism.

6. A critical approach to self-writing: 'deliberate eclecticism'

The research, in Chapters Three and Four, has illustrated that though there are many ways of describing the self, free-will, and voice there are no definitive or authoritative explanations. Two critical approaches to the self (a vital issue in self-writing, and therefore also in the criticism of self-writing) have been characterised as the Humanist and 'post-modern'. Humanist philosophical and literary approaches, at their extreme, keenly promote the inviolability of the self and the strength of a person's ability to act and think autonomously.²⁶ The second tradition, and one that often has a competing description of the self and free-will to the Humanist, is the 'post-modern'. This includes Derrida's deconstructionism and the theory's impulse to break down traditional notions of meaning and language, including the concept of self and its volition and voice.

Though both approaches are useful, accepting that notions of self are contradictory and elusive means that one cannot properly call oneself a strict Humanist or a strict 'post-modern'. Whichever theory is deployed in discussion of and reflection on the nature of self, free-will and voice they remain ineluctable and elusive. To have a bias for one or other view would ignore that both Humanism and the 'post-modern' are each internally divided and complicated perspectives. All utterance is open to competing views. Despite such complexity, the self is a concept that 'simply interests us' (Hassan 1988: 437).

²⁶ As Chapter Three explored, this type of Humanist move is found in, for example, Descartes' inviolable 'cogito' (as described in Books One and Two of his *Meditations* Descartes 1997: 123-190). Later examples are Kant's concepts of 'inner intuition' and 'inner sense', as described in, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Kant 2006: 33 and 54).

The critical approach to self-writing, advocated in this section, is a direct result of considering the heart of the deliberately introspective diary: reflection on the self. The thesis proposes 'deliberate eclecticism' as a critical approach that can confidently navigate the many contradictory and elusive elements pertaining to ideas on the self, including the degree to which it has free-will. The approach deliberately avoids becoming entangled in resolving the irresolvable elements of opposing sets of theories, or in blending conflicting ideas. Deliberate eclecticism enables one to juggle competing ideas. It frees one from asking in what degree one favours one or other perspective by the simple manoeuvre of seeing strengths in both.

The term eclecticism is used to denote the critical quality of being open to the merit of more than one interpretation or to a range of theories. The approach is 'deliberate' because it is intended to sit at the forefront of critics' minds. It empowers, enables, and encourages critics to abandon partisanship and to manage - without being unduly 'dazzled' - the complex and conflicted discussion of self and self-writing (Hassan 1990: 422). This type of interpretation can, as is further explored in Chapter Seven, be both emotionally responsive (in the manner of Sontag's preferred critical approach) and rigorously analytical (as Sontag often was). Deliberate eclecticism suggests that critics might confidently consider a range of perspectives (as long as they are clear which approach is being adopted, when and why). The thesis does not propose deliberate eclecticism as a theory, but as an account of an intellectually robust technique of managing many theories. These include our two incompatible theories, Humanism and 'post-modernism' or, more accurately, our two different families of theories. One of the reasons it is intellectually robust is that it can look at theories without undue partisanship; it will adopt, analyse, and possibly discard theories.

A deliberate eclecticism of approach might help us, as critics, marshal multiple views. It also serves the potential of the on-going process of interpretation, not least by understanding its limits. If criticism is to be comfortable with elusive material it is almost unavoidably obliged to be honestly ambivalent. Thus, the approach is designed to, firstly, avoid obscuring the richness of complex material,

including the discussion of self or, indeed, literature and, secondly, to interpret complex material without shutting oneself off to the possibility of other interpretations. To suggest that criticism is an on-going process and must tackle inherently elusive ideas – and that its conclusions will be fallible – seemingly ushers in the relativism, referred to in section one of this chapter.

Deliberate eclecticism does not forbid relativism. It does not forbid any perspective in matters that are contradictory and elusive. However, it confronts crude relativism. It does so by accepting that, in some, critical modes criticism can be relativist and in other critical modes it can be self-assured and evaluative. In an evaluative mode, the merits of an argument can be assiduously reasoned, explored, compared, and evidenced. Terms and issues can be systematically evaluated. Deliberate eclecticism does not imply that the critic be permanently in awe of the fact that all definitions and conclusions are fallible. Rather the approach advocates a form of discerning or high-functioning fallibility. It acknowledges that at different times and for different reasons one is going to deploy one or other from a range of ideas and that these vantage points will be selected with an even-handed, judicious, and careful promiscuity.

Adopting an approach of deliberate eclecticism has some obvious literary and philosophical precedents. The impulse that lends itself to such an approach can be identified in, for example, John Keats' description (in a December 1818 letter to his brother) of conducting oneself thoughtfully and openly, despite epistemological doubts: 'Negative Capability': '[T]hat is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' (Keats 2012: 71). It can also be identified in Isaiah Berlin's essay, 'The Hedgehog and the Fox', originally published in 1953. Berlin took his inspiration from the Greek poet Archilochus who wrote: 'The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing'. Berlin argues that all intellectuals fit into this model. The 'hedgehog's' wish is to make the world conform to one big idea (i.e., Platonism, Marxism, Existentialism, or deconstructionism) while the 'fox' believes that the world cannot be reduced to a single idea. The two examples show the critical impulse underlying a deliberate eclecticism of approach is far from wholly new. A deliberate eclecticism of approach differs in the respect that it is not

advocating the critic be either a fox or a hedgehog (Berlin), nor does it reach after 'mysteries' rather than 'reason' (Keats). The approach advocates that all sides of the coin have their place in criticism and that the critic might be well-advised to hold with the idea, deliberately and consistently, that a deliberate eclecticism of critical approach permits the type of open-mindedness, modesty, and critical capabilities suggested by Berlin and Keats. Deliberate eclecticism rams home the point to critics that contradictory and elusive material necessitates openness and it is a portable and easily remembered term.

The approach described here is fresh. It is so, because it is content not to reconcile differences between the Humanist and the 'post-modern', whilst remaining critical and highly evaluative of both; it is suggested as a continual point of return; has been inspired by direct consideration of deliberately introspective texts; and is not an approach that has been explicitly advocated or systematically and consistently applied in the criticism of self-writing. At the very least the approach achieves a critical space in which concepts of a self that is, on the one hand, autonomous and, on the other, lacks volition or is culturally constructed can live alongside each other without dazzling critics with their ambiguities. Both types of self-concept are alluded to in the deliberately introspective self-writing of Aurelius and Sontag. Chapters Five and Six are the next step in understanding how to interpret deliberately introspective texts. Firstly, the chapters analyse some imbalances in current criticism of self-writing, and secondly, they explore how a deliberate eclecticism of approach might help to redress these critical issues.

CHAPTER FIVE

Critics of self-writing and the self

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Shirley Neuman: a 'poetics of differences' and autobiography
3. Georg Misch and Ihab Hassan: Humanism and autobiography
4. Stanley Fish: the 'post-modern' and 'biographical intentions'
5. Jacques Derrida: the 'post-modern' and 'otobiography', 'autothanatography', and 'heterography'

Diary entry from Katherine Mansfield:

1921 - One must learn, one must practise, to forget oneself... Oh God I am divided still. (Mansfield 1954: 269)¹

1. Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the discussion of issues surrounding the self, free-will, and voice held in the previous two. Here, the focus is on how these equivocal concepts are managed by Humanist and 'post-modern' critics of autobiography and biography. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of current critics' management of contradictory and elusive ideas of self, as such ideas are found in self-writing, is a part of the development of the critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism' described in the thesis. (The approach was introduced in the final section of Chapter Four.)

¹ In this extract Mansfield writes how to feel undivided (in herself) required practice and an act of forgetting oneself. In her diaries, Sontag refers to a form of self-forgetting she calls self-transcendence, that is: transcending oneself to become a different type of (less-divided) self. As has been noted in footnote one in Chapter Two; there are philosophical distinctions, particularly in Existentialism, between self-knowledge that is gained through reflection on one's self-concept and on its place in the world, and an experience of self that is in a more pre-reflective state. The diary excerpts at the beginning of this chapter, and Chapters Four, Six, and Seven, also allude to this class of idea. It is worth noting that both Mansfield and Sontag used their diary-writing, in a manner Aurelius would have recognised, as an exercise in self-development, through knowing the self. As this and the next chapter explores there are various critical approaches to discussions surrounding the issues of self. For example, Derrida, in this chapter, would indeed have liked to have more thoroughly forgotten himself, once he had deconstructed the concept and found it to be redundant.

Autobiographies are a close cousin of the diary and biography. Elizabeth Podnieks remarked, in the introduction to the thesis, that the diary is seen as a 'sub' form to the autobiography (Podnieks 2000: 4).² In this thesis the reverse has happened, in as much as the often privately kept and deliberately introspective diary has been shown to take us to the heart of issues any critic of self-writing, more broadly, is likely to examine (i.e., the issues of self and free-will). This has, for example, been amply demonstrated by Aurelius' deliberately introspective (and diary-like) hypomnemata and Sontag's diaries, both of which helped illustrate in Chapter Two the problems inherent to reflection on the concepts of self and free-will. However, the deliberately introspective diary form would perhaps benefit from the level of analysis - if not the exact findings and approaches - found in the criticism of other genres, including autobiography and biography. (Actually, even flawed criticism can alert future critics to potential pitfalls.) The autobiography shares several family resemblances with the diary: autobiography is always personal, often introspective, and it would normally be written chronologically. It is worth remembering that diary forms often deploy characteristics that autobiographies do not share. In Chapter One it was established that autobiographies are not often written extempore. They are often: highly-edited; written retrospectively, indeed years after the events they describe; intended as a memoir for some sort of public use, even if only within a family and often intended for publication (or would be grateful for publication). In addition to these characteristics they are often highly rationalised, rarely fragmentary, and seldom written for their own sake as an exercise. In this way the form is not usually as 'raw' or candid as the privately kept diary. ('Raw' is a term deployed by both Sontag and Spacks to describe the type of personal reflection reserved for the diary, Sontag 2013a: 41 and Spacks 2003: 48.)

Critics of autobiography, biography, or diary are often obliged to manage terms and issues associated with the concepts of self, free-will, and voice. (These terms and issues were introduced by Aurelius and Sontag, in Chapter Two, and

² Podnieks' view that the diary has been marginalised in literary studies is supported by: (Lejeune 2009: 147). For further reference to the diary's marginalisation in literature see bibliography for, FA Nussbaum, 'Toward Conceptualising Diary' (Olney 1988: 128) and JN Lensink, 'Expanding the Boundaries of Criticism: Diary as Female Autobiography' in, Brownley and Kimmich, *Women and Autobiography* (Brownley and Kimmich 1999: 151). Further reference to the diary as literature and the development of the criticism of self-writing can be found in the introduction to the thesis.

analysed in Chapters Three and Four.) Chapter Three established that, at its extreme, Humanism stubbornly respects the inviolability of the self, free-will, and the unfettered voice. From this solid foundation, a critic of self-writing can accord the self-writer: 'status', 'importance', or 'authority' (Lacey in OCP 1995: 375). Chapter Four established that 'post-modern' theories posed a distinct set of challenges to traditional notions of the self and personal autonomy. These included the idea that one's notion of self is heavily influenced by, for example, inherited traits, language, and the codes and conventions of its cultural contexts. A strict 'post-modernist' tends to resist the idea that there are determinable and stable meanings, especially for traditional Humanist ideas of an inviolable and autonomous self. 'Post-modern' question marks - over the determinacy of meaning, the self, and free-will - inevitably problematize the (to use Lacey's terms) 'status', 'importance', or 'authority' of both the writer and their self-writing. In as much as the narrative can be meaningfully shown by 'post-modernism' to not be controlled by the writer; who then controls narrative and whose is it? Such an approach does not - as Chapter Four described - automatically deny self-writers or self-writing the status of being unique or significant and interesting. However, these attributes are to some degree vitiated by the 'post-modern', as it brings the autonomy of the self and the self-writer and the self-writing text into question.

The purist 'post-modern' view that self and voice have no volition can cause critics difficulties as they analyse the voices they find in self-writing. However, critiques with a predominantly Humanist perspective are not unproblematic. In Chapter Three it was shown that Humanism's credo - literary or philosophical - contains arguments that pose problems for the inviolability of the self, including how the concept of self retains its coherence and unity over time; how oneself is both the reflector and the reflected upon; and where the self is located. It is important to recognise that both the 'post-modernist' and the Humanist critic of self-writing have encountered these problems.

However, this chapter asserts that the strictly 'post-modern' case on self-writing has a particular weakness. (And it is one that the thorough-going Humanist case on self-writing does not contend with in quite the same way.) This matters not least because in common with much contemporary literary discussion, writing

about the self has often been discussed through a 'post-modern' filter. 'Post-modern' criticism tends to promote the idea that traditional arguments for an inviolable self and for a person's ability to act and think with autonomy are indefensible. But, and here lies the conflict, 'post-modern' critics of self-writing often find themselves granting the self-writer a degree of autonomy. Though often disparaging of Humanist rationales for workable concepts of self, free-will, and voice, 'post-modern' criticism is also keen on the value of the courageous, forceful, and authoritative voice of the victim. In addition to this critical discrepancy, 'post-modern' critics face the logical difficulty of challenging the autonomy of almost all voices except their own.

In this chapter we find that those 'post-modernists' who argue that there is a narrative or grammar or agenda which wrecks the possibility of personal voice are often the very same 'post-modernists' who attempt to argue for the subversive qualities of a voice in its self-narrative (for example, the qualities of the self-asserting feminist voice speaking out against patriarchal hegemonies or the political activist working within a dominant and tyrannical political regime). For instance, the feminist and often 'post-modern' critic, Shirley Neuman in, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences', wants to accord her female self-writers and their voices autonomy (Neuman's work is analysed in section two of this chapter). This contradicts the method she uses to identify the hegemonies of gender and culture that have silenced or have dominated female voices. Theories that under-mine the idea that the self-writer is, to a degree, autonomous also bring into question self-writers' abilities to delineate themselves from their constructs (for example, the influence of a patriarchal society, political elites, or imperialist rhetoric). And consistency would suggest that these theories also under-mine emancipatory literary agendas. This conflict is seldom frankly acknowledged in current criticism of self-writing that discusses it as a genre of counter-narratives or of emancipation. If tensions are described they are often smoothed over or set aside to preserve the unity of the piece or argument.

Further to this tension, Jacques Derrida found it 'tragic' that he could not quite remove himself from his self (Derrida 1987: 81). (Derrida's work is analysed in

section five of this chapter.) Derrida's failure to remove himself from his self-awareness meant he could not fully embrace his deconstructionist position on traditional views of the determinacy of meaning, language, concepts of self and critical autonomy. The 'post-modern' self-writing critics under discussion, even if reluctantly, accord meaning and even value to the idea of the autonomous self. Some do so by mistake, in gaps in their logic, and others do so much more deliberately. The difficulty may be that too many facets of the concept of an autonomous self, that the more partisan 'post-modern' critics dismiss, turn out to be stubbornly customary.

It is one of the arguments of this thesis that 'post-modern' critics of self-writing and the approaches they adopt are valuable. They are useful both in their purist challenge to the status of the autonomous authorial voice and in their more nuanced guises. But they are seldom as forthright in their internal contradictions as logicity requires. The point here is that even the most theoretical of the theorists (the 'post-modern') are unable to maintain the purity of their theoretical enterprise when they confront writing that is about the (elusive) concept of self. It is the lure of the dialectic that perhaps causes problems for the critic, of either perspective. The stand-off between the two approaches is, literally, for the sake of argument or convenience. It is not possible to establish, without doubt, which perspective defines the self.

2. Shirley Neuman: a 'poetics of differences' and autobiography

Shirley Neuman is an academic critic interested in self-writing forms and in particular those written by women. In her essay, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences', Neuman argues that the two key critical approaches to self-writing are the 'Humanist' and 'post-structural': '[B]oth humanist and post-structuralist theorists... [of] this canon focus on the literary text and its author. The first may see the author as creating a universal self and the second may see the author as dead and the textual subject as destabilised.' (Neuman

1992: 216)³ Neuman's characterisation of the competing critical paradigms deployed by 'theorists' of the self-writing 'canon' accords with the extremes of Humanism and 'post-modernism' laid out in Chapters Three and Four. Neuman describes how critics of self-writing view the status of the self-writer's voice as, on the one hand, 'universal' and Humanist and as, on the other hand, 'dead', 'destabilised', and post-structural.⁴ Shirley Neuman, in keeping with another argument made in the thesis, also asserts that the recognition of autobiography as a genre worthy of critical appreciation began with critics applauding the genre's ability to foster and celebrate the notion of an autonomous self, an essentially Humanist move:

The historical importance of this concept cannot be overestimated: the humanist foundations of the notion of a textually and experientially unified self made it possible to take autobiography seriously within the literary institution. (Neuman 1992: 214)⁵

The analysis in this section reveals that it is an essentially Humanist notion of the writer and their autonomous voice that directs Neuman's critical objectives. And that Neuman's tendency to favour this interpretation of the self-writer's autonomous voice is not fully acknowledged in her criticism. Neuman starts her essay with a typically Humanist perspective on the centrality of the authoring 'I' in autobiography:

For most readers and writers of autobiography, the genre contracts that its authorial and narrating "I" is verifiably an actual person to whom that "I" refers... It remains true of even the "new autobiography" such as Derrida's *The Postcard* or Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes: its dislocations and displacements of the narrating "I" or of the authorial signature, which question the notion of a unified self. (Neuman 1992: 213)

³ Neuman suggests here that she is more concerned with what the reader finds in the text than with the centrality of the author, however the essay is then focused on the author and their self-writing text.

⁴ In the thesis 'post-modern' is used in place of post-structural. The term, post-modern, encompasses structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist theory. At work in all four terms is the idea that the value of meaning is seriously undermined by the indeterminacy and, therefore, instability of all meaning. Meaning is often destabilised in these theories by its being concomitant to an unquantifiable range of shifting contexts, constituents, and determinates, some of which are explicit, others covert; or its full articulation is limited by the limits of language's representativeness. The term 'post-modern' and the ramifications of its theoretical position was discussed at length in the previous chapter.

⁵ Neuman refers specifically to the Humanism at work in Gusdorf's essay, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography', for further reference see: (Gusdorf in Olney 2014: 8, 11, and 28). Gusdorf's Humanist influence on later criticism of self-writing was analysed in the introduction to the thesis.

Contrary to this Humanist instinct in Neuman's criticism, much of her work is in the 'post-modern' territory of drawing out the oppressive hegemonies at work in the feminine voice. In this way Neuman often epitomises a particular sort of theoretical agenda, one which is characteristically 'post-modern'. She privileges a marginalised or oppressed voice and shows how this voice has been obscured by traditional – often patriarchal or imperialist - hegemonies:

Who's there? Whose self is this anyway?... Opening the door on a poetics of autobiography grounded on the concept of the individual...[the]...critic has most often found a privileged white male subject that implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, denies fully realized self-hood to at least some, and often all, women, people of colour, colonial subjects, and so on. (Neuman 1992: 217)

Neuman, using the tools of the 'post-modern', deconstructs the 'privileged white male subject' and the 'women, people of colour, colonial subjects' who have been victims of it. In accordance with her not fully formulised observance of Humanist tenets, she does so without analysing the problem that this process of emancipating the victim sets her on a path which leads by gradual steps to (what Neuman describes as) 'fully realized self-hood' or to the Humanist and autonomous type of self. Neuman lays out the dilemma that the feminine voice, released by 'post-modern' critique from the shackles of traditional patriarchal structures, is accorded some autonomy. That is if it is to be allowed personal dignity and especially, the dignity of struggle. The female voice might attract attention because it has been denied agency and voice but it can hardly be accorded full humanity – or rights – without being accorded some class of autonomy of action and utterance.⁶

Usefully, Neuman is clearly aware of and uses both Humanist and 'post-modern' approaches to self-writing. She sees in both the potential to create oppressive hegemonies: 'post-structuralist poetics of autobiography have, in practice, if not in theory, produced a subject almost as hegemonically powerful as the humanist self they attempt to destabilise.' (Neuman 1992: 215) In her attack on 'post-structuralist poetics' Neuman notes that according voice to (say) women and the

⁶ Taylor, amongst others, discusses the intersects between our concepts of self and of ourselves as agents and the ways in which human beings are accorded dignity by others: with a person's claim to agency comes personal responsibility, but also a claim to be treated responsibly by others. Thus, a claim to certain inalienable human rights emerges. For further reference see: (Taylor 1989: 16-49, 62, 64, 78, 95, 103, 188, 201, 232, and 283).

colonialized is likely to be stereotyping them. This is what she calls the 'erasure of difference'. Neuman believes that, 'such theories of group identity prove reductive': 'Each of these different poetics is constructed around a category: 'woman', 'native', 'black', 'lesbian', and so on. But those categories contain within themselves both their own exclusions and their own erasures of difference.' (Neuman 1992: 219) Neuman is properly alert to the fact that once one has rescued the feminine voice from the patriarchal hegemony - one might then feel a need to rescue the individual woman from the hegemony of the stereotype that might be assumed to own her.

Neuman proposes a 'poetics of differences' in the criticism of autobiography. It may be that she does so to overcome her difficulties with the 'post-modern' 'erasure of difference'. She usefully reflects on how discourse – of any kind – is always in danger of becoming hegemonic or ideological as it uses generalities to reflect on the particulars of a case. It is worth noting that she somewhat paradoxically (given her critique of 'post-modernist' theories and their reductive tendencies) is using language that is redolent with deconstructionism. (The type of language found in, for instance, Jacques Derrida's, *Writing and Difference*.) Identifying differences is a method she hopes will favour interpretation of the 'particulars' of individuals, over the particulars of the (marginalised) groups to which the individual might belong:

Such a poetics of differences would allow us to heed the ways in which any given autobiographical subject exists at particular and changing intersections of... a host of material conditions... Such a poetics would conceive of the self not as a product of its different identity from others but as constituted by multiple difference within and from itself. (Neuman 1992: 224)

A 'poetics of differences' addresses Neuman's immediate problem with the 'post-modern' (how to differentiate the marginalised individual within the marginalised group), but as the approach is based on the identification of differences and the emancipation of the disempowered from oppressive structures it cannot, rather confusingly, escape its 'post-modern' character.

Thus, Neuman does not escape her larger problem: deconstructionism does not stop at deconstructing hegemonic narratives, but as a matter of logic and principle goes onto deconstruct the voices Neuman wants to rescue and uphold. It seems reasonable to accept that the more one acknowledges the individuality of a voice, the less one can logically be a 'post-modern' sceptic as to the self and its autonomy, and the more one finds oneself in the Humanist camp. Neuman does not make this clear. Neuman is led by an urge to liberate the female voice and does not acknowledge that the 'post-modern' (though it has helped highlight feminisation as a necessary project) perhaps vitiates this endeavour. Finally, in offering a solution embedded in 'poetics' Neuman might reasonably be accused of wanting to introduce a sort of poetry and not a sort of logic and this is at odds to an argument she has tried to make logical.

The difficulty with Neuman's critique is that the reader is left to work out how much respect to pay to the 'post-modern' deconstruction of the self and its volition. The reader must resolve this issue because the 'post-modern' is an approach which, by progressive steps leads, from deconstructing the structures informing the concept of self, to the deconstruction of the concept. The reader must work out how to meet this task whilst respecting the more empowering elements accorded by an awareness of an autonomous self-concept. Neuman employs a range of approaches, but does not lay out her definition of 'fully realized self-hood' nor what she wants to achieve with which approach and when. On close reading, she wants only the post-structural theories that strip the marginalised of their marginalising structures and narrative, but also wants the Humanist theories that preserve the voice of the marginalised. Critically, employing multiple approaches when confronted with difficult material seems sensible, if one is clear about which are being deployed when and why. The critics Georg Misch and Ihab Hassan, like Neuman, are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of Humanist and 'post-modern' approaches to self-writing. However, they are a little more forthcoming about the contradictory and elusive character of descriptions of self and autonomy and the Humanist tendencies in their criticism.

3. Georg Misch and Ihab Hassan: Humanism and autobiography

The mid-twentieth-century classicist and critic Georg Misch in, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, describes how the 'substantial merit of the [autobiographical] genre' is what it can do for the author. Autobiography lends to self-writers' experiences a 'unity and significance'. Such 'significance' can, in Misch's view, lend the self-writer a 'measure of philosophical dignity' (Misch 1950: 7):

Autobiography ['s]... main implication is that the person whose life is described is himself the author of the work... from this point of view this chameleon-like genre secures a unity that it does not possess in literary form. And from this element of unity proceed the substantial merits of the genre... the man who sets out to write the story of his own life has it in view as a whole, with unity and direction and a significance of its own... This element in autobiography is a fundamental advantage. It gives a measure of philosophical dignity. (Misch 1950: 7)

The passage illustrates how Misch is working from the critical perspective that there is a self and that there is an author who commands a 'view' of their, 'own life... as a whole, with unity and direction'. The author is not, in the 'post-structural' terms laid out by Neuman in the previous section, 'dead' or irrevocably 'destabilised' (Neuman 1992: 216).⁷

Misch, reflecting on determinism and the freedom of the autobiographer, takes the view that beyond authorial freedom and even beyond 'determining causes', there is 'something original' (a priori) that lends an author authority in his or her autobiography: 'When we analyse human activity, after removing all determining causes, there remains behind it something original which instead of being overcome by influence is more likely to transform them.' (Misch 1950: 593) Misch also tends to favour the idea that there is an autobiographical genre. As we find in the analysis of Derrida's work, in the final section to this chapter, the question of genre definition is not so easily settled in deconstructionism.

⁷ Misch, usefully to the work of the thesis, writes that - from the Renaissance, through the Enlightenment, to the nineteenth century - the autobiographical form has been of interest to Humanists (Misch 1950: 4-5). Misch describes, in similar terms to the thesis, how this is because autobiographies are literature in which the self and individual are crucial.

Misch does not take for granted the self-writers' claims to free-will and the role their personal autonomy might play in authorial intent and action. Misch identifies these attributes of the self-writer as significant, or (in Misch's terms) as distinguishing the 'merit' of the self-narrative. However, he is also keen to accept that the type of scrutiny – often found in the 'post-modern' - is an important part of analysing the 'meaning' of autobiographical texts. Misch describes how the nineteenth century, with its increasingly scientific accounts of the self and the ways in which it, 'imposed... political or social circumstances' on 'character', challenged the concept of an autonomous self and, 'thus provided a different interpretation of the causes of autobiographical writing' (Misch 1950: 9):

A modern artist... will smile at the way men talk as a matter of course of their self or ego... as a solid and constant thing that remains constant in spite of the changes of life from birth to death. Against this he may point to the original meaning of persona – or mask... or the part or character which anyone sustains in the world or which is imposed upon him by political or social circumstances. (Misch 1950: 9-10)

Misch highlights the distinction between the self as - 'a solid and constant thing' - and as a 'political or social' construct. Whilst recognising the usefulness of drawing out the tensions between the two, one more public than private, Misch argues that a self-writer commands enough autonomy over his or her autobiography to determine what makes the self 'fixed in the fluid'. He seems keen on a muscular type of self that is, to some degree, capable of volition and self-shaping:

There remained the task of determining the fixed in the fluid, as the banks are reflected in the river or a path is formed by treading it. The man who essays to write a history of autobiography finds himself face-to-face with this task. For he has before him not only the infinite natural multiplicity of individual life but also the historically determined multiplicity of its forms of presentation; and he has to seek the point at which those forms come into a unity. (Misch 1950: 5)

Misch emphasises an assertion made in the thesis, that self-writers are explicitly or implicitly 'face-to-face with the task' of delineating to what degree they and their self-narrative are, on one hand, a 'natural multiplicity of individual life' or, on the

other, socially or 'historically determined'. (In the terms of the thesis, to what degree the self-writer can be described as self-defining and autonomous versus their description as a cultural construct.) Misch highlights how it is a task also faced by the critic of self-writing. Misch's emphasis falls on a self-writer with volition, in as much as he or she commands a self-unifying self-narrative. He argues that autobiography is a genre which has the merit of supporting the individual's 'unity' and the 'philosophical dignity' of the self-writer. The late twentieth-century literary critic, Ihab Hassan, was more fully immersed, than Misch, in 'post-modern' theories and their use in literary study. Hassan, like Misch, does not entirely relinquish the concept of an autonomous self.

In *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, Hassan describes a 'post-modernism' that augments the ways in which we interrogate ourselves, the author, and the text. However, he also highlights how, at its extreme and most ideological, the rhetoric of the 'post-modern' becomes impractical: 'Human beings... cannot be reduced to material or political terms, as the Standard Model in Cultural Studies now strongly implies. They cannot be reduced to Spirit or Beauty or Truth or Language... They cannot be reduced, period.'⁸ Hassan's aversion to the extreme end of the 'post-modernist' attitude is that it so, 'finally assumes an ideology, a linguistic obsession.' (Hassan 1982: XIII) In 'Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature', Hassan argues that, as an ideology and at its extreme, 'post-modernism' and its views on the self are unhelpful because even as the concept is deconstructed:

The self simply interests us, whether in life or in literature. It interests us, especially, in autobiographical narratives of quest or adventure wherein an individual at risk enacts our life in myth. Thus, in the end, the genius of the self derives its practical powers from an inexpugnable will to be and to believe... No, the self is no mysticism: it empowers this discourse, any counter discourse, and all the visitations of history. (Hassan 1988: 437)⁹

Hassan asserts that the self is, to some degree, a useful concept. However, it would be too simplistic to claim that Hassan is representative of Humanist critique.

⁸ The reference for the passage from Hassan's interview can be found in the bibliography, see, Frank Cioffi, Interview with Ihab Hassan *Postmodernism, Etc.:** (1998-1999).

⁹ For further reference to Hassan's assessment of autobiography, see bibliography for Hassan, 'Parabiography: The Varieties of Critical Experience' (Hassan 1980: 593-612).

He has accepted that both the autonomous type of self and the culturally constructed type are experienced (they are both part of the hybrid notion of self, first described in Chapter Three) and that both (given their abstraction and the recursiveness of reflection upon them) can be valid evaluations of the nature of self. In the following passage he describes how readers may, at different times and for different reasons, read with one or other of the two opposing views in mind:

Readers... may read rhetorically, as de Man [i.e., Paul de Man the twentieth-century literary critic] invariably does. [T]hey may also read passionately, experientially, responding to a felt reality, a reality neither "present" nor "absent", neither immediate nor intrusively mediated. In brief, they read, as the best readers read, with their own sense of death (or self), alive to them, and in doing so experience new possibilities for both self and otherness. [Square brackets mine] (Hassan 1988: 421)

Both Misch and Hassan acknowledge the usefulness and nuances of Humanism's and 'post-modern's' opposing views on the idea of an autonomous self. However, they tend to work on the basis that authors have some plausible – and useful - concept of self and of their personal autonomy. Therefore, they claim a degree of authority for self-writers in their self-writing. They do not hold that such ideas are defunct or so destabilised by 'post-modern' description that they cannot also have, in Misch's terms, 'substantial merit'. Hassan describes how writing is a discernible, 'reality... neither immediate nor intrusively mediated'. According to Hassan, human beings cannot be reduced to models, including the 'Standard Model in Cultural Studies' and its 'linguistic obsession'. (This is the type of 'post-modern' 'linguistic obsession' discussed in the 'Life of Language' section in Chapter Four.) Misch and Hassan, whilst they respect the merits of the 'post-modern', are forthcoming about their own Humanist bias. When Misch and Hassan are confronted with their faith in the nebulous - 'mystic residue' - of an autonomous self, they are also, perhaps, not entirely sure how to be as analytical and as rigorously critical as their academic temperaments demand they should be (Clark 2010: 192). Clark, in Chapter Four, described a frustration that the self and first-person evaluations of it were not more definite: 'I feel, though I cannot prove it, that the self is more than its linguistic subjectivities. Take these away, and there is

still some mystic residue, some self before we talk, and after.’ (Clark 2010: 192) If the stubborn lack of evidence for this ‘mystic residue’ is acknowledged in the criticism of self-writing, but not then followed up, it can seem a blindness.

This thesis argues that it is not a weakness in the Humanist approach that it cannot authoritatively define the elusive self nor reconcile its contradictions. Rather, Humanist critics mostly fail by being embarrassed by the problem rather than internalising it. The point of deliberate eclecticism is that it can deploy Humanist approaches without being hostage to their inconsistencies. Deliberate eclecticism is designed to catch elusiveness without falling foul of its indistinctness. The rest of the chapter will illustrate how the over-reach of paradigms applies to the ‘post-modern’ critic of self-writing.

The next section is an analysis of Stanley Fish’s approach to authorial intent and volition. Fish examines the tensions between, on the one hand, authorial intention and authority (i.e., the degree to which authors’ intentions are autonomous and can be brought to bear on the text) and, on the other hand, what Fish has described as, *The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (i.e., that which mediates the author, the text and the reader). Fish considers how both affect the critical value of interpretation and interpretative processes. He reminds us that the ways in which we evaluate criticism (interpretation) are as important as the ways in which we evaluate literature. (This is important to the thesis as it develops its own evaluative methods.)

4. Stanley Fish: the ‘post-modern’ and ‘biographical intentions’

This section reviews the critic and theorist Stanley Fish’s analysis of biography in, *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Post-modern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Critic*. Fish uses biography as a term to describe a person’s back-story. Fish is useful because his reader-response theory is indicative of a popular approach in ‘post-modern’ theory: that the text and interpretation of the text do not come under the auspices of autonomous readers and writers, but are determined by an ‘interpretative community’. The analysis in

this section starts with a passage from Fish's, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*:

The basic gesture, then, is to disavow interpretation in favour of simply presenting the text; but it is actually a gesture in which one set of interpretive principles is replaced by another that happens to claim for itself the virtue of not being an interpretation at all. The claim, however, is an impossible one since in order "simply to present" the text, one must at the very least describe it ("I mean to describe them") and description can occur only within a stipulative understanding of what there is to be described, an understanding that will produce the object of its attention. (Fish 1980: 350)

The passage highlights how, in this mode of analysis, interpretation is not the product of an autonomous reader reflecting on a stable text that 'simply presents' its meaning (or the meaning the author intended it to present). Interpretation is, like the destabilised text and authorial intention, a fragile construction derived from and mediated by its contexts. Interpretation is 'stipulative'. It is trapped in that which it derives from. It is interpretation's antecedents that, 'will produce the object of its attention' (thus, interpretation 'produces' the text). Literary theorists and co-authors, Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, describe how a reader-response interpretation is, 'free from all question of the individuality of the writer, the reader or the critic' (Balibar and Macherey 1978: 95).¹⁰ As Fish points out, whichever entity controls interpretation – be that the 'interpretive community' or an individual reader – a form of description or 'stipulative understanding' will be produced.

The concept of the 'interpretive community' is useful to analysis of Fish's introduction, 'Biography and Intention' to, *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Post-modern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Critic*. In 'Biography and Intention', Fish considers the biography of a writer or reader and all the influences and contexts under which they live as crucial to the meanings to be found within the text:

¹⁰ For further reference to discussion of Fish's reader-response theory see bibliography for, M Abdulmohammad, 'Context and Constraints in Stanley Fish's Reader-Response Theory' (Abdulmohammad 2009: particularly the introduction to his thesis) and M Nussbaum's critique, 'Sophistry about Conventions' in, *Love's Knowledge* (Nussbaum 1990: 220-229).

It remains the case that from either the American or the continental perspective [here Fish refers to the new critical or formalist perspective], the question of meaning is rigorously divorced from questions of biography and intention. In what follows I would like to argue against that divorce not because it is inadvisable but because it is impossible. [Square brackets mine] (Fish 1991: 10)

The biography is 'impossible' to divorce from 'intention'. Fish goes on to describe who or what entity possesses such powers of 'intention', part of his explanation – rather usefully – depends on the idea that the inescapability of other minds in the minds of readers or writers is not a new critical perspective. It is as old as Humanism itself:

There has been no dearth of challenges to this notion, [the autonomy of self and its intention] and once again it is interesting to note that the challenges come from both formalists and antiformalists and that they are similar. When TS Eliot declares that the individual mind is merely a repository for the numberless phrases and images of a tradition and is only the medium in which “the mind of Europe” changes and develops... [he is] hardly distinguishable from Roland Barthes when he reports that life as it happens in his head is the result of “formulae inherited from a previous style”; or from Levi-Strauss when he asserts that men do not think myths, rather “myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact”; or from Foucault when he echoes Beckett by asking, “what matter who's speaking?” All of these authors or non-authors are making the same argument... Now it would seem that if the self has been thus dissolved, the notion of an intentional agent with a history and a biography must dissolve too; but in fact that is not at all the case... if the originating author is dissolved into a series of functions, if the individual mind is merely the tablet on which the mind of Europe...then we have not done away with intention but merely relocated them. [Square brackets mine] (Fish 1991: 13)¹¹

The crucial element for us is that Fish insists that there is always some form of intention at work in writing: ‘I don't care what you say, biography is here to stay.’ (Fish 1991: 15) But (as the idea of an autonomous self is 'dissolved') such

¹¹ According to Fish, TS Eliot wrote that 'the mind of Europe' was inside all Europeans; just as in the introduction to the thesis we found that Jean-François Lyotard (we could add here Foucault) wrote about how our heads were stocked by power elites. Even granted that there is some truth to these propositions, it seems fair to postulate that Eliot might think that European culture was part of a repertoire of ideas an author could freely deploy, whereas Foucault would rather emphasise such a culture's immobilising effect. Derrida, who we come to in the next section, makes a similar point in, he draws out (as Lyotard did) how the influences upon an individual's mind cannot always be linked to an identifiable source, influence can be abstract (Derrida 2001: 19).

intention has been 'relocated'. It is not to be found in the reader or author (who are 'repositories'). According to the passage above it seems the intention of the 'interpretative community' is brought to bear in biography.

Fish then explains that the location or 'originating agent' of intention does not matter:

In principle it does not matter whether the originating agent is a discreet human consciousness or the spirit of the age or a literary tradition or a culture or language itself... The choice, as I have said before, is not between reading biographically and reading in some other way... but rather between different biographical readings that have their source in different specifications of the sources of agency. (Fish 1991: 13-14)

Contrariwise, Fish moves on to say that: 'My only point is that criticism can only proceed when some set of answers to those questions is firmly set in place, when notions of agency and personhood, cause, and effect are already assumed and are already governing the readings we produce.' (Fish 1991: 15)

Fish's argument seems circular. He wants to say that it makes no difference whether a writer is self-describing, as an autonomous voice, or merely seems to be self-describing whilst actually being a cypher of the intentions of someone or something else. It surely makes a profound difference whether a person is expressing him or herself or is - in effect - an automaton? At the least, the idea of the autonomy of self is often discussed in order to face up to something real or illusory in the life of persons. It does not seem constructive to 'shift' agency or intentionality, arbitrarily from persons to, for instance, cultures. If it is the culture which is speaking though a person, then it really does matter that this means it is not the person's self doing the speaking.

Finally, Fish's concluding point, that intention should be fixed, seems at odds with his substantive point that intention can be mobile. Despite these incongruities, Fish's approach is helpful in that it illustrates descriptions of authorial 'intention' can be useful to understanding self-writing genres. The next section looks at how the deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, regarded the status and significance of

self, free-will, and voice in his own self-writing and in his criticism of autobiography.

5. Jacques Derrida: the 'post-modern' and 'otobiography', 'autothanatography', and 'heterography'

Derrida and the link between autobiography and deconstructionism

Jacques Derrida is a prominent example of a 'post-modern' critic and one who seems to have taken a keener interest, than Fish, in self-writing. He has certainly written more about autobiography. Derrida's approaches to autobiography are important to the development in the thesis of a useful critical approach to self-writing; they are a keen example of how self-writing is approached when traditional concepts of an autonomous self have been, as Fish described, 'dissolved' (Fish 1991: 13).

In his essay, 'That Strange Institution Called Literature' in, *Acts of Literature*, Derrida described what he found compelling in the autobiographical form:

What interests me today is not strictly called either literature or philosophy, I'm amused by the idea that my adolescent desire [...] should have directed me towards something in writing which was neither the one nor the other. What was it? "Autobiography" is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today. (Derrida 1992: 34)

Derrida seems to have been attracted to autobiographical forms because he thought they directed readers' and writers' attention to concepts that were both philosophical (about the self) and literary. It was, for example, a literary form that complemented key tenets of Derrida's theoretical agenda. It had the merit of being, according to Derrida, 'open' and 'enigmatic'. Derrida may have felt that such attributes complemented the spirit of the 'free-play' he describes in, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'. 'Free play' was an attempt to move beyond critical regard for unrealistically definitive meaning to a form of playful critical circumlocution. Derrida advised critics to remain 'open'

and 'enigmatic' in their efforts to manage the indeterminacy of meaning: 'If totalization no longer has any meaning... that is, language and a finite language excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of play... a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite... instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a centre which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions.' (Derrida 2001: 365)

Another example of Derrida's interest in autobiography - as both philosophical and literary theory - can be found in, 'Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name'. (The essay combines Derrida's preoccupation with Existentialism and Nietzsche with a study of Western subjectivity, post-Nietzsche and of autobiography.)¹² The main point here is that Derrida demonstrates that, for him, discussing autobiography is a useful vehicle for not only approaching Nietzsche's work (and Nietzschean and Existential challenges to traditional views on the self), but for exploring Derrida's theory of deconstructionism. Reflecting on autobiography was important to Derrida's deconstructionist theory; this may have been because it was in self-writing that his approaches found their most obvious challenge. Autobiography relates to the lived experience or sense of self and personal autonomy in a way that literary personae do not. It is, therefore and as has been observed, this form of writing that puts the deconstruction of self, free-will, and voice under most stress.

Further evidence for Derrida's interest in autobiography, and an insight into how he approached the form, can be found in the neologisms he invented to label it. He had at least six different neologisms for autobiography; such a large number indicates that it was an important form for him and the development of his theories.¹³ The neologisms were designed to highlight the traditional literary and or philosophical constructs Derrida felt needed to be deconstructed, including the idea of an autonomous self. The neologisms include: 'otobiography'

¹² As has been observed in the introduction to the thesis and in Chapter Two, the confluences between Existentialism and the work of the 'post-modern' critic are recognised by both 'post-modern' theorists and their critics. For instance in, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', Derrida describes his own affiliation with Existentialist philosophy (Derrida 2001: 370). And the critic, Edward Said, identifies how Nietzschean frameworks were adopted by Derrida (Said 1983: 185).

¹³ There are two other neologisms important to Derrida's deconstructionism and his literary criticism. The first is 'logocentric' which means: to catch the mistaken fusion of meaning with words. The second is 'phallogocentrism' which means: to catch the mistaken alignment of epistemology with an often dualistic and limited set of concepts and values.

[*otobiographies*] in, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and discussions with Jacques Derrida*; 'autothanatography' [*autothanatographies*] and 'heterography' in, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Derrida: 1987: 333); and 'circumfession' [*circonfession*] in, 'Circumfession' (Derrida: 1993).

The neologisms Derrida created contain both his deconstructionist vision of autobiography (and the self) and the residue of traditional labels for the form (i.e., 'biography' and 'ography'). He was unable to communicate his ideas on the form to a wider audience without centring his neologisms on the traditional and recognisable word: 'autobiography'. (This act of, what I have described as, 'centring', contradicts Derrida's concept of 'free play': in which there is no determinate place or centre for meaning.) Hence, each neologism contains a trace of the original word it is intended to redefine. This is an example of where Derrida's deconstructionism contains that which it deconstructs. It is a paradox that Derrida, as the next sections reveal, found 'tragic' (Derrida 1987: 81).

Derrida's contradictions

Derrida's critiques of autobiography productively explore the contradictions between Derrida's theoretical agenda and himself, and demonstrate how he is – I claim - outmanoeuvred by them. The texts concentrated on here are, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* and, *Writing and Difference*. The following passage, from 'Force and Signification' (an essay from *Writing and Difference*), is revealing because it takes us to the heart of an issue Derrida could not fully deconstruct or escape. Importantly, it is a ripe contradiction that supports the rest of this chapter's analysis. Derrida stated that meaning somehow lurks in language, or behind it (a 'post-modern' issue addressed in Chapter Four):

Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning... It is because writing is inaugural. In the fresh sense of the word, that it is dangerous and anguishing. It does not know where it is going, no knowledge can keep it from the essential precipitation toward the meaning that it constitutes and that is, primarily, its future. However, it is capricious only through

cowardice. There is thus no insurance against the risk of writing. Writing is an initial and graceless recourse for the writer, even if he is not an atheist but, rather, a writer. (Derrida 2001: 11)

One reading of the passage is that because 'writing is inaugural' (it has its own life distinct from speakers' or writers' intentions) it removes the self-writer from any hope of, firstly, a meaningful concept of self and, secondly, expressing such a concept in words the writer can claim autonomy and authority over.¹⁴ The other reading, however, says that until the writer comes along to express it meaning has no life. If this second case is true, then it is an open question how much the writer has volition in establishing meaning for what they write.

Derrida writes in, 'Force and Signification', in positively mystical and even religious terms about what imparts meaning to a text. At times, he implies that nothing as prosaic as power elites, patriarchies, or grammatical structures are at work. Rather, Derrida writes, something more like the mind of god may be at work. He seems to say that the self-writer may, if he or she can only get the self out of the way, fulfil some greater role, and it may be almost the universe or creation which takes over the writing and reading of texts.

The point here is that at this level of loftiness, it can be plausibly argued that Derrida joins the long tradition of (often Humanist) thinkers for whom creativity and interpretation are actually and finally mysterious. An example of this is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, 'The Eolian Harp', in which the harp is played by a creative 'spirit' or breeze and not directly by the musician and his creative abilities. Though he is famous for telling the world that writers and readers do not choose the meanings in a text, Derrida's writing on the 'involuntary' and on the hidden life of language is rich, poetic, and far from conclusive.¹⁵ In keeping with the claim

¹⁴ This reading is repeated in Derrida's essay, 'Plato's Pharmacy'. The essay is based on the Phaedrus dialogue in which the value of writing is discussed by Plato. The essay pays homage to classical antecedents for the 'post-modern' question of language's representativeness. Edward Said provides the following passage from 'Plato's Pharmacy': 'A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance the law of its composition and the rules of the game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible... they can never be booked, in the present, into anything that could be rigorously called perception.' (Derrida in Said 1983: 184)

¹⁵ The idea that Derrida is mystical in a 'traditional' manner is referred to by Edward Said, who describes Derrida's 'orthodoxy' as a 'negative theology' (Said 1983: 184). Derrida's theological terms contradicts his deconstructive and iconoclastic exercise. In another contradiction, between his suspicion of language and his use of it, Said observes, 'despite his insistent criticism of such terminalistic or barrier ideas as source and origin, Derrida's own writing is full of them... how... [can he] systematically place himself outside the logocentric world when every other writer somehow could not?' (Said 1983: 189)

developed in the previous two chapters that neither the Humanist nor the 'post-modern' are as theoretically stringent as their extremes, it can be comfortably asserted that Derrida is far from being a mechanical deconstructionist.

Derrida's chief contradiction (and one he recognised) was that he could write, 'I do write you', in the same entry as, 'I would like to erase all the traits of language' (Derrida 1987: 114). Derrida struggled with the contradictions between, on the one hand, his writing 'I' and his intent ('I do' and 'I would like') and, on the other hand, his suspicion of the communicative value of language and the credibility of traditional concepts of an autonomous self (especially the Humanist type). The contradictions feature in, 'Envois', the preface to, *The Postcard: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. In 'Envois' Derrida somewhat reluctantly addresses dated and fragmentary 'postcards' (*envois*) - to himself. He engages in a dialogue with his self.¹⁶

Derrida's 'Envois'

'Envois' – its postcard form, fragmentary style, disjointed syntax, and turns of grammar - was intended as a subversion of the idea that a person has an 'auto' (an 'I' or self) or a biography (a coherent history of that self).¹⁷ However, Derrida struggles to 'ceaselessly denounce' the idea that his 'postcards' to himself are simply 'questionable' 'filters' and so, on the 7th of September 1979, Derrida brings himself into his theorizing:

I consider questionable, as moreover, the grate, the filter, and the economy of sorting can be on every occasion, especially if they are destined for preservation, not to say for the archive. In a

¹⁶ Gannon cites two other works, by Derrida, that contain autobiographical traits: 'Circumfession' in, *Jacques Derrida* (Bennington and Derrida 1993) and *Veils* (Cixous & Derrida: 2001). For further reference see: (Gannon 2006: 484) Gannon's proposition usefully supports the idea that Derrida wrote about his self and was interested in ways in which to write about the self. It is my view that 'Envois', and the 'postcards' it contains, tackles Derrida's ideas of the pronoun, metaphysics, and of the autonomous self equally as well as *Veils* or 'Circumfession'. 'Envois' was selected for analysis in the thesis because it was written before the aforementioned texts ('Envois' were originally published 1980, translated to English from French, 1987). It is an early indication of Derrida's preoccupation with the issues of self and that it is early, and the same contradictions appear later, suggests these preoccupations stayed.

¹⁷ Neuman refers to *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* - in its entirety – as 'autobiography'. However, though one can readily link the 'Envois' section in the book to autobiography, it is not easy to link the autobiographical form to the essays. The companion essays to 'Envois' reflect on a selection of academic texts and include, 'To Speculate-on "Freud"' and, 'On the Whole'. The other essays are – in part – explorations of how a person is able to be truthful with themselves. Whilst this is an important perspective in analysing self-writing genres, in this chapter, the focus is on 'Envois'. These were Derrida's self-addressed; fragmentary and dated, and therefore diary-like, postcards, and have more relevance to self-writing criticism than the other essays in, *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*.

word, I rigorously do not approve of this principle, I denounce it ceaselessly, and in this respect reconciliation is impossible. It will be seen to what extent I insist on this on the way. But it was my duty to give in to it and it is up to all of you to tell me why. (Derrida 1987: 3-4)

In the conclusion to the postcard, written on the 7th of September 1979, Derrida claims outright responsibility for the postcard and signs it in his proper name: 'I assume without detour the responsibility for these envois for what remains, or no longer remains, of them, and that in order to make peace within you I am signing them here in my proper name, Jacques Derrida' (Derrida 1987: 5). And in the ensuing footnote to his name, Derrida writes:

I regret that you... do not very much trust my signature, on the pretext that we might be several. This is true but I am not saying so in order to make myself more important by means of some supplementary authority. And even less in order to disquiet, I know what this costs. You are right. Doubtless we are several, and I am not as alone as I sometimes say I am when the complaint escape from me, or when I still put everything into seducing you. (Derrida 1987: 5-6)¹⁸

By referring to himself Derrida is, in his words, with some 'disquiet', 'taking responsibility' for the postcards he sends - a choice and act that suggests the author felt he had a degree of volition, at least in his writing. In the passage from Derrida's postcard of the 7th of September 1979 (refer to Derrida 1987: 5-6 above), Derrida affects control over his 'several' selves by using the third-person pronoun, by addressing himself ('You are right'), he achieves a distance between the 'seducing you' (the deconstructed you) and the 'I' that resists seduction. The repeated use of the pronoun 'I'; the self-reflective pronouns 'myself'; and, most convincingly, his use of the third person pronouns 'you' and 'we', suggest that Derrida is very much in the throes of an inner-dialogue with a self-concept that has multiple dimensions ('doubtless we are several') and from which he wants to 'escape'.

¹⁸ The translator of 'Envois' (1987), Alan Bass, interprets the entire text as being very much taken up with the idea of how to handle the self. Bass relates – Derrida's idea of a postcard being sent, 'Envois' - to Heidegger's idea of the self as a gift that is both sent and withdrawn (Derrida 1987: XI). Again, we see the confluence between Existential ideas and the 'post-modern'. Bass's interpretation seems accurate, the self explored in 'Envois' is both revealed and concealed. Bass also discusses how private thoughts that are then made public, in a sent postcard or in a read diary, become public (Derrida 1987: XI).

As has been observed, Derrida did not confine self-examination to self-writing; he explored the idea of self in his wider theoretical work. In the following passage from, 'Force and Signification', Derrida's reckoning of the self is that it is 'performed':

What is first in question is the history of this consciousness itself... this aesthetic is indeed, if I may say so, a practiced preformationism [...] A theory of encasement was at the centre of preformationism which today makes us smile [...] when one is concerned with an art that does not imitate nature, when the artist is a man, and when it is consciousness that engenders, preformationism no longer makes us smile. (Derrida 2001: 25-26)¹⁹

The concept of self (when it is performed) is often conveyed through distrusted mediums (such as language) and as such its meaning (at least that which is revealed) cannot be trusted. And yet, Derrida also writes that in 'Envois' it was his 'duty' to give into 'filtering' information. It is a process he 'denounces' and cannot be reconciled with – even as he engaged in it. Derrida's stress is on deconstructionism but he cannot quite rid himself of tendencies akin to the Humanist, at the very least he cannot quite shake his awareness of self and his actions. Such contradictions – and Derrida's struggle to overcome them - are repeated throughout the 'Envois' and in, *Writing and Difference*:

You will tell me that this apparently disdainful detestation (it's not that) contradicts both my cult of postcards and what I state about the impossibility that a unique addressee ever be identified, or a destination either. Nor therefore an answer or a responsibility. And that this is not in tune with the fact that a letter, at the very instant when it takes place (and I am not only speaking of consciousness), divides itself, puts itself into pieces. Falls into a postcard. Well yes. This is our tragic lot, my sweet love, the atrocious lottery, but I begin to love you on the basis of this impossibility; the impasse devoted to fate cannot leave us to await anything from a chance to see it open itself one day. (Derrida 1987: 81)²⁰

¹⁹ Derrida refers to 'preformationism', this is a biological theory. Derrida's use of the term implies that rather than a sui generis assembly, consciousness of self is predetermined (in the sense it is determined by biological traits) and constructed.

²⁰ Further examples of Derrida's struggle to rid himself of his traditional sense of self can be found in 'Envois' when he writes of the self as an 'unspeakable... existence' which he then, rather paradoxically, goes on to describe in detail (Derrida 1987: 32). According to Derrida's deconstructionism it is 'r-i-d-i-c-u-l-o-u-s' (Derrida's punctuation) to attempt to write or to attempt to wrestle a stable meaning from indeterminacy, and yet he finds an active meaning for an 'I' or a 'me' that he 'accepts', 'divulges', 'hopes', 'publishes', 'thinks', 'feels', and 'lives' (Derrida 1987: 108). Derrida repeatedly returns to the self

Derrida writes of the traditional concept of self ('the unique addressee' in his self-addressed postcards) as a 'disdainful detestation' and an 'impossibility'. And he writes of the deconstructed self as 'fate', as something to 'love'. At the point at which he 'divides' the one from the other, they both, 'fall into a postcard'. Derrida is found in this 'atrocious lottery' to rally against the traditional (Humanist) concept of self and albeit begrudgingly handle it as his 'tragic lot' to do so (Derrida 1987: 81). Derrida's deconstructionism is not to be completed, especially when it comes to his self-concept. And according to the indeterminacy of meaning, as described by Derrida in his concept of free play, nor was it meant to be completed. There is no possibility of a theoretical 'destination' or description of the self.

Derrida shows, as this thesis has done, that at the heart of self-writing are concepts bearing on the discussion of self. He also helps illustrate that such concepts are a hybrid of contradictory and elusive ideas, including those that are, in Derrida's words, 'my sweet love', and those that are a, 'disdainful detestation'. Derrida makes a distinction here between concepts of self that are deconstructed and the, 'impossibility' of a 'unique addressee' (Derrida 1987: 81). (It is worth noting, as was argued in the previous chapter, that an addressee can be uniquely constructed, thus even in deconstructionism one can claim uniqueness, if not autonomy.)

Derrida is not alone in attempting to find ways of re-writing the self in, for instance, building new words (neologisms); adopting disjointed and fragmentary styles; and unconventional syntax that are intended to perform the trick of deconstructing the self without needing to reflect on the self. Susanne Gannon, in her article, 'The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing: French Post-structural Theory and Autoethnography', explores how 'post-modern' writers, including Derrida, have developed new ways of writing about the self. The writing practices Gannon describes are, 'discontinuous, fragmented, sparse' (Gannon 2006: 481). The post-structural writers and theorists Gannon cites (Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and

that he cannot escape as he deconstructs it. Returning to the essay 'Force and Signification' and, pursuing the identification of the tensions between Derrida's deconstructionism and his persistent sense of self, Derrida writes a self he wishes to out-perform and deconstruct and that he finds is an insistent 'incident' (Derrida 2001: 35).

Cixous) were united in wanting to find a way of writing that circumnavigated the traditional concept of self. They were, like Derrida, preoccupied with a concept they had decided should hold no value for them, other than as a symbol of the traditional modes of thought they had deconstructed.

Gannon concludes that post-structural self-writing is, 'both writing and destabilising the self at the same time.' (Gannon 2006: 491)²¹ However, such approaches (including deconstructionism) rarely fully acknowledge, analyse, and positively manage the theoretical disjuncture between that which is selected for deconstruction (is, 'destabilised') and that which remains (is, 'written' about). Gannon observes that in, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and discussions with Jacques Derrida*: '[Derrida] stresses that the dislocation of an author's life from his work and the fragmentation of identity that post-structuralism has provoked "doesn't mean that one has to dissolve the value of the autobiographical récit. Rather, one must restructure it otherwise".' (Derrida, *Otobiography* 1985: 45 in, Gannon 2006: 488) However, Derrida's deconstructed self reflects back on its deconstructed self and as such does not – even as it is 'restructured' - escape its final paradox: 'Writing about "oneself" is risky writing. It is difficult to write about the self and to be an escape artist from the self at the same time.' (Gannon 2006: 484)²² Barbara Johnson, in her translator's note to Derrida's *Dissemination*, describes the same paradox:

Grammatology is the study of the effects of this difference (that "being" is seen as present but is so often not present, that language is seen as actual but is so often not representation) which Western metaphysics has so systematically repressed in its search for self-present truth. [...] Derrida thus finds himself in the uncomfortable position of attempting to account for an error

²¹ In the article Gannon argues for the development of a form of autoethnography that represents and further troubles the self; this is exactly what her exemplars of post-structural autobiography tried to (unsuccessfully) achieve and, thus, her call for such a development would seem to be a repeat of their strategies.

²² Ihab Hassan in, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, identifies authors of fiction and plays who have experimented with their genres to achieve a re-writing of traditional and now discredited 'truths', including a re-writing of the concept of self. The quotation given is a sharp summary of this experimentation and resistance to traditional ideas of the self in broader literature, before and during 'post-modernism'. Hassan starts by describing Camus' literary attitude and how self-exploration is manifest in his style and form: 'He perceives the contradiction of the book: that it must use language and thought to render an absurd reality... Camus, therefore, resorts to analysis, discrete, and discontinuous impressions... the technique of Nonsense that both Hemingway and Kafka adapt to their own uses... The nominalism of the style – it goes further than Locke or Hume – denies any logic or relation in experience, The style reveals the action... With few exceptions – *Nausea* [Sartre], *The Stranger*, and *The Fall* [both Camus] – Existentialism tends to express radical thought in conventional literary form. Its ambitions are promethean, didactic or political... By contrast the literature that follows seems neutral, self effusive. Pretending to eschew ideology, protest and analysis it cultivates a certain flatness... This literature goes by many names... I simply use the generic term of "Aliterature".' (Hassan 1982: 160)

by means of tools derived from that error... By the same token to show the binary opposition of metaphysics are allusions is also to show that such illusions cannot simply in turn be opposed without repeating the same illusion. (Johnson in Derrida 1981: X)²³

The final sentence aptly describes the circular nature and crux of Derrida's problem in 'Envois'. Derrida's effort to, '[show] that the binary oppositions of metaphysics are illusions', (to use Johnson's phrase) was a 'tragic' and 'atrocious lottery' Derrida felt he must play (Derrida 1987: 81). Though Derrida's approach makes a plausible case for the deconstruction of an autonomous self, such a concept survives even this concentrated attack. That it survives indicates that different approaches and concepts have validity at different times.²⁴

In an interview with Richard Kearney (published in, *Debates in Continental Philosophy Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*) Derrida expands on why deconstructing the idea of self does not, paradoxically, affirm its existence:

I will take the terms "affirmation" and "prophetic utopianism" separately. Deconstruction certainly entails a moment of affirmation. Indeed, I cannot conceive of a radical critique which would not be ultimately motivated by some sort of affirmation, acknowledged or not. [...] I do not mean that the deconstructing subject or self affirms. I mean that deconstruction is, in itself, a positive response to an alterity which necessarily calls, summons or motivates it. Deconstructionism is therefore a vocation – a response to a call. The other, as the other than self, the other that opposes self-identity, is not something that can be detected and disclosed... the other precedes philosophy and necessarily invokes and provokes the subject. (Kearney 2004: 149)²⁵

²³ Johnson (as I have done) relates this philosophical ambition – to subvert the self in writing - to Derrida's broader theoretical work.

²⁴ *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, was published, in French, only thirteen years after, *Writing and Difference*, about mid-way through Derrida's career. In 'Envois', Derrida writes that the, 'only affirmation', his 'only chance' at making 'something happen', is to absolve himself of the responsibility to write, if he does not write he will not slip into 'self' mode: 10 June 1977. 'Impossible to write today. Too unwell. You remember: everything had begun with the joyous decision not to write anymore, the only affirmation, the only chance (no more letters, no more literature), the condition, what one has to give oneself so that something finally happens.' (Derrida 1987: 30)

²⁵ Kearney discusses how Derrida deals with the 'other' as an affirmation of that which it is intended to bring into question. For further reference see bibliography for Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (Kearney 1994: 106). Derrida, took up this point in his essay, 'Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book', here he relates it to his idea of *différance*, an idea he developed from Ferdinand de Saussure: 'Life negates itself in literature only so that it may survive better. So that it may be better. It does not negate itself any more than it affirms itself: it differs from itself, defers itself, and writes itself as *différance*.' (Derrida 2001: 95) Derrida describes in, 'Envois', 'an alterity that is even more irreducible than the alterity attributed to opposition.' (Derrida 1987: 283) For further reference to Derrida's relationship between deconstructionism and writing and metaphysics see: (Kearney 1994: 109). For further reference to Derrida and traditional metaphysics, its overthrow, and its enchantment see: (Kearney 1994: 111-112)

In this passage deconstructionism is not an affirmation of the self or the 'other' (i.e., that which the self is not). Deconstructionism is a 'response' or a 'vocation'. It is a 'response' that falls somewhere between the idea of a self (that is 'not something that can be detected and disclosed') and the 'other' or 'alterity' (that, because it is different to self, 'invokes and provokes' self). The 'other', in 'Force and Signification': 'is not certain within the peace of the response in which two affirmations espouse each other, but is called up in the night by the excavating work of interrogation' (Derrida 2001: 35). And, somewhat in contradiction to Derrida's suspicion of the value of language, the 'response' can be found in: 'Writing [it] is the moment of this original Valley of the other within Being. The moment of depth as decay. Incidence and insistence of inscription.' (Derrida 2001: 35)

Derrida's argument - that 'consciousness' is present in as much as it is 'invoked and provoked' by its 'other' (i.e., the way in which the self knows itself because it knows what it is not) - seems tautological (Kearney 2004: 149).²⁶ Derrida, in 'Violence and Metaphysics', as he discusses the tautologies of the phenomenologists Husserl and Levinas, provides something of a repost to this criticism:

Bodies, transcendent and natural things, are others in general for my consciousness. They are outside, and their transcendence is the sign of an already irreducible alterity. Levinas does not think so; Husserl does, and thinks that 'other' already means something when things are in question. Which is to take seriously the reality of the external world. Another sign of this alterity in general, which things share here with others, is that something within them too is always hidden, and is indicated only by anticipation, analogy and appresentation. (Derrida 2001: 155)²⁷

Derrida in claiming that somehow the 'other' is a 'reality' that 'transcends' and lies 'outside' its counterpart (in this case, one's sense of self and language) is also claiming that the 'other' is split from its part in a tautology. However, in making this

²⁶ That Derrida is tautological is a criticism levied at his work by Edward Said: 'Derrida's endless worrying about representation involves him in a kind of permanent but highly economical tautology...' (Said 1983: 201) Said has described such tautologies as 'ellipses' and 'orthodoxies' (Said 1983: 191).

²⁷ For further discussion of the 'other' and its relation to one's view of the self, in this essay, see (Derrida 2001: 148). For discussion of the nature of consciousness see: (Derrida 2001: 8).

argument, Derrida uses the words 'transcendence' and 'irreducible'. These are often associated with the metaphysical – a traditional philosophical movement Derrida rallied against – and one that would seem to countermand his deconstructionism.²⁸

Derrida seems to remove himself from the need to hold onto a traditional idea of a tenable and significant self. He speaks of a self that is indescribable; a self that exists, in as much as it is a difference; and a self that is a 'preformed' construct. And yet repeatedly returns to the idea of self as a thing that has some degree of 'existence' or at least requires explanation or resituating:

To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, "operations" or "effects" of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it says it is. The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it. (Kearney 1984: 125)²⁹

Given the evidence it seems that often the starting point and centre for Derrida and deconstructionism is Derrida: (May 1979): 'This is the tragedy of myself, of the ego, in 'introjection': one must love oneself in order to love oneself or finally, if you prefer, my love, in order to love' (Derrida 1987: 195). The contradictory and elusive concepts of self Derrida confronts, are as tenaciously present as Derrida's theory. It seems that the great theorist of the non-self is actually a highly wilfully, determinedly, awkwardly, self-driven person. Even more interestingly, he is a theorist who never lets theory get in the way of an imperative to be true to insistent and inconvenient voices within himself.

²⁸ Derrida explains his position on 'identity' and the 'other' again in, 'A Certain "Madness" Must Watch Over Thinking': 'By beating around an impossible thing which I no doubt also resist, the "I" constitutes the very form of resistance. Each time this identity proclaims itself, each time some belonging circumscribes me, if I may put it this way, someone or something cries out: Watch out, there's a trap, you're caught. Get free [dégage], disengage yourself [dégage-toi]. Your engagement is elsewhere.' (Derrida and Ewald 1995: 275) In essence, Derrida wanted to escape language, and uses language to do so. And in escaping language Derrida thought he might escape defunct metaphysical concepts constructed, in part, by language. Said identifies how Derrida cannot deconstruct metaphysical concepts such as 'voice' or 'ontology' (the nature of self) without naming them (Said 1983: 196-207).

²⁹ With reference to free-will, in 'Force and Signification' Derrida writes how, 'the will to write reawakens the willful sense of the will: freedom, break with the domain of empirical history, a break whose aim is reconciliation with the hidden essence of the empirical, with pure historicity... A way out that can only be aimed at, and without the certainty that deliverance is possible. (Derrida 2001: 13-14) The reference to the 'will to power' is from Nietzsche's book by the same name and though Derrida doubts deliverance to it, in a Nietzschean mode, he at least aims to fulfil his sense of will. For further reference to Nietzsche's text see: (Warburton 2010: 174-181).

Derrida and a 'deliberate eclecticism' of approach

Derrida's criticism of autobiography has been productive in terms of the contradictions and ambiguities it identifies for the self and self-writing. It is perhaps a more obtuse account than, for example, Hassan's or Neuman's, but it is also the broadest and goes right to the heart of the tensions self-writing can expose. In *After Derrida*, the literary critic, Nicholas Royle, perhaps picking up on the fact that Derrida's theories have been described as indeterminate (by not least Terry Eagleton 1996: 45, 66, 74, 126, and 133) argues that Derrida is not advocating indeterminacy, but undecidability as a critical approach:

To talk about undecidability is not to suggest that making decisions or judgements is impossible but rather that any and every judgement is haunted by an experience of the undecidable, the effects of which remain unread. For the critic and the reader, to encounter the unreadable is not to bring reading to an end, but rather to acknowledge the demand that reading cannot stop, that reading begin again, that reading always and necessarily belongs to another time. (Royle 1995: 161)³⁰

Royle rightly observes that: 'To classify a text, or a moment in a text, as indeterminate is to put an end to the question of judging: it is, in a sense, the opposite of undecidability.' (Royle 1995: 161) Derrida seems not to be making a philosophy of undecidability, he is simply undecided. He is undecided whether he can fully shut-down his complex sense of both a deconstructed and Humanist self to 'resituate' the subject (Kearney 1984: 125).

³⁰ In *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Eagleton describes how Derrida is not carefully teasing out differences (for example, those between the notions of self and 'other') and exploring possibilities (for example, the possibilities of what comes after the deconstructed self). In Eagleton's view, it is more likely that Derrida is asking his reader if there is any determinate meaning at all for the self (Eagleton 1996: 124). In *After Theory*, published exactly twenty years after, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Eagleton went on to describe how the post-structural model's attack on traditional Humanist or epistemological ventures, infinitely deferred the legitimate search for meaning to some 'other' (Eagleton 2004: 180-210). It is easy to see why one would fall into this crude characterisation of Derrida. Derrida observed in, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences': 'All these destructive discourses [Nietzsche, Heidegger and Freud] and all their analogues are trapped in a...circle. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the form, the logic...of precisely what it seeks to contest...from the moment anyone wishes to show this...he ought to extend his refusal to the concept and to the word sign itself – which is precisely what cannot be done.' (Derrida 2001: 354). However, Eagleton when he considers Derrida's work in detail, notes subtleties rather than general characteristics (Eagleton 1996: 114, 116, 121, 124, 127-128, 145, 164, 191, 196, 199, 203, and 211). Taylor argues that, 'nothing emerges from his [Derrida's] flux worth affirming, and so what in fact comes to be celebrated is the deconstructing power itself, the prodigious power of subjectivity' (Taylor 1989: 489).

In *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Edward Said remarked that the critical mode he wants to endorse, 'is awareness of the differences between situations, awareness too of the fact that no system or theory exhausts the situation out of which it emerges or to which it is transported.' (Said 1983: 242) It is this awareness that 'no system or theory exhausts' a 'situation' that is also important to the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism developed in the thesis. It is comparable to the approach Derrida described as 'free play' (Derrida 2001: 365).

However, a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism would advocate that at different times and for different reasons far from there being what Derrida describes as - 'a [missing] centre' - there are multiple centres for meaning that may be argued, at different times and according to the robustness of their evidence and explanations, to have some semantic credence. The discerning or high-functioning fallibility, identified in the previous chapter, of a deliberate eclecticism of approach is further described in the next two chapters. High-functioning fallibility means the ability to claim inconclusiveness, or what Derrida described as 'a missing centre' for meaning, whilst remaining critically decisive and evaluating a range of evidence and explanations.

Derrida is distressed by his 'tragic lot' (Derrida 1987: 81). This angst is due to his too often becoming entrenched or tangled in needlessly but insistently declaring and defending ideological extremes. These are theoretical extremes which do not find echoes in the other experiences and evidence that Derrida clearly finds. There is a conflict between his desire to deconstruct his self, free-will, and the volitions of his authorial voice, and the inveterate presence of such notions as he signs his name or postulates, seemingly freely, on this or that theory. If his 'undecidability' were deliberately eclectic, it would not have been so 'tragic' (Derrida 1987: 81). Though he wanted to deconstruct he found himself handling multiple perspectives, methods, and strategies (at different times and for different reasons), including traditional ones.

As was asserted in Chapter Four, deliberate eclecticism serves both the limits and potential of enquiries into the issues surrounding reflection on the self. It prompts the writer and or critic to acknowledge the fallibility of their arguments when

interpreting seriously amorphous material. Such acknowledgement releases critics from clumsy authoritativeness and definitiveness to unashamedly, systematically, and clearly describing such fallibility and their approaches to it. The approach also prompts critics to impartially review a range of evidence and explanations as they develop their arguments; allowing them to remain open to the strengths and weaknesses of internally contradictory and competing ideas. Such deliberate openness protects critics from falling foul to oppositionalisms. In this chapter, critics' emphases in their approaches to the concept of self and self-writing fell on the Humanist (for instance, Misch's) and on the 'post-modern' (for instance, Derrida's) and each account aspired to being authoritative. However, when it comes to tackling ineluctably ambiguous issues such authoritative partisanship is undone. Chapter Six is an analysis of how critics of diary fare as they analyse the same dilemmas.

CHAPTER SIX

Critics of diary and the self

Contents

1. Introduction: diary criticism
2. Jochen Hellbeck: historicism
3. Philippe Lejeune: 'antifictions' and 'genetic study'
4. Patricia Meyer Spacks: 'the ambiguity of experience'
5. Susan Sontag: 'discursive... hermeneutics' or an 'erotics of art'?

Diary entry from Mary Powell, John Milton's wife:

1643 – [W]as avised to ask Mr Milton why, having had a university Education, he had not entered the Church. He replied... because he woulde not subscribe himselfe Slave to anie Formularies of Men's making.

Extract from a letter to John M Murray from Katherine Mansfield:

5/10/20 - I dare not keep a journal. I should always be trying to tell the truth. I feel I must not. The only way to exist is to try and lose oneself - to get as far as possible away from this moment... So it's stories or nothing. (Mansfield 1954: 552)¹

1. Introduction: diary criticism

Chapter Five was an analysis of the approaches critics of autobiography and biography have adopted as they negotiate competing and internally contradictory

¹ Powell's entry illustrates a seventeenth-century woman's reflection on the ways in which mankind is 'subscribed' to by social and cultural contexts or by 'formularies of men's making'. It seems Milton felt he had the freedom not to subscribe to such 'formularies'. These reflections are in keeping with the analysis in the thesis of a concept of self that describes it as self-asserting or as a cultural construct. In the second extract, Mansfield bemoans the lack of truth in her self-reflection (in her journal). She concludes that fictions are all we 'have'. Echoing Howe's observation, in Chapter Three, that the notion of self is an 'effective fiction' (Hassan 1988: 420) and the view of Derrida, in Chapter Four, that language is a poor imitation of an already suspect truth: language is – at best – a description of a fiction of self, not a fact. Mansfield takes the view that rather than attempting fact, one might accept that all self-description is fiction, however honest an account was intended to be. Mansfield's description of existing only when one has lost the self, echoes Sontag's desire, in her diary, for a 'less consciousness-laden consciousness' (Sontag 2013: 290). It is an idea also referred to in footnote to the diary extracts at the beginning of Chapters Two, Four, Five, and Seven.

views on the elusive notions of self, free-will, and voice. Evaluation (in this and the previous chapter) of the strengths and weaknesses of existing critical approaches to self-writing advance the critical approach developed in the thesis: deliberate eclecticism. Chapter Six is an exploration of how diary critics fare as they negotiate the ambiguities surrounding discussion of the self, free-will, and voice. The ways in which diary critics have negotiated (or failed to negotiate) ideas pertaining to the self and free-will and the conflicts between and within accounts of such elusive issues (including Humanist and 'post-modern' accounts) builds on the analysis in the previous chapter.²

In the introduction to the thesis Julie Rak described how diaries have been regarded by academics as the less interesting literary relative to their more widely published cousin, the autobiographical form. Rak remarked that the literary merit of diaries was seen as a secondary effect to their being historically interesting accounts of interesting people (Rak in Lejeune 2009: 22). More recently, in criticism that often deploys the approaches of the 'post-modern', diaries have been prized as promoting the important but ignored voices of the marginalized by, for instance, feminist or post-colonial critics.³ As the previous chapter explored and is expanded on here, this respect for the autonomous voice is at odds with a fundamental of the 'post-modern'; namely, that powerful entities or hegemonies, such as imperialism or patriarchy, invent and control that voice.

Regard for a type of voice that is assumed, to some degree, to be autonomous can be traced back to Humanist critics' early attempts to elevate the form's academic and literary profile. Rachel Feldhay Brenner in, 'Writing Herself Against History: Anne Frank's Self-Portrait as a Young Artist', identifies a Humanist approach to the diary form as early as 1946:

² A self cannot, as Chapter Three and Chapter Four explored, be accurately labelled a notion, phenomena, idea, entity, concept, fallacy, or abstract. In one sense a self can be loosely defined as all these, however it is also none of these. It is never a phenomenon as usually understood (as locatable, or identifiable), nor is it just a concept - it is something more than an idea, since we ascribe to it actions, thoughts, and motives which we have to assume are in some sense practicable, even real, if invisible. The self is always elusive (not least because it may well be a fiction and is not, other than perhaps to the neuroscientist who links the idea to a brain function, tangible) and discussion about it - its conceptualisation - may be called contradictory since it is full of discussants and accounts which flatly contradict one another.

³ The first section, of the introduction to the thesis, laid out the critical background for self-writing (especially diaries). It identified critical trends and their contexts and key proponents from the last one hundred years.

The reading of the *Diary* as a lesson in liberal-humanist Weltanschauung was established very early. *The Critical Edition of the Diary* quotes the 1946 response by the writer Jan Romein. “How [Frank] died, I do not wish to ask”, Romein says, “The way she died is in any case not important.” What is important, according to Romein, is that Frank’s fate makes us reject fascism... the reception of the Diary as an edifying, universal message to humanity contributed its classification as... literature. [Brenner’s italics and punctuation] (Brenner 1996: 105)

Brenner’s essay on Anne Frank’s diary asserts that the strength of Frank’s voice and its significant ‘liberal-humanist’ message to ‘humanity’ contributed to the diary’s ‘classification as literature’. Frank’s is an example of a diary that has been accorded literary value by mid-twentieth-century academics because it champions the power of an individual’s voice. Such a voice has an important ‘universal message for humanity’. Humanist or ‘post-modern’ in their overall approach, the end goal for many critics is to celebrate and draw forth marginalised voices.

In the last chapter it was found that, according to some ‘post-modern’ criticism, self-writing is to be praised as a counter-narrative to patriarchal or imperialist hegemonies and dominant cultural ‘grand-narratives’.⁴ This, however, is the very same criticism of self-writing that can also be found arguing for the significance of strong voices. That diarists’ narrative voices can be strongly autonomous is frustrated by ‘post-modern’ preoccupations with what the diary critic Jochen Hellbeck describes as, ‘uncertainty... and indeterminacy’ and, ‘the question of diary’s [language’s] representativeness’ (Hellbeck 2004: 621).⁵ In essence, ‘post-modernist’ criticism seems to deploy a Humanist class of autonomous self, at least when it takes the form of a dissident counter. Derrida’s problem (in Chapter Five) was slightly different. He could not relinquish descriptions and experiences of an autonomous self he felt to be theoretically defunct and indeterminate. Derrida’s self-concept remained stubbornly useful as, for instance, a subject of deconstruction.⁶

⁴ The terms hegemony, ‘grand-narrative’, and counter-narrative and how they are used in the analysis of self-writing were first explored in the introduction to the thesis. For further reference see: (Gusdorf in Olney 2014: 28), (Neuman 1992: 214), (Lejeune 2009: 20), and (Purvis and Longstaff 2008: 197).

⁵ The ‘representativeness’ of the diary hinges, in this case, on how language forms that which it articulates, this idea was introduced in Chapter Four and explored in Chapter Five.

⁶ In Chapter Five, Neuman and Derrida were shown to have discussed autobiography, not diaries. It is worth noting that the diarist, writing in private and aspiring to being honest with their self, might write about their contradictory and elusive experiences more frankly than an autobiographer eyeing up their potential audience.

To employ a mixture of competing approaches is not in itself a critical weakness. Nor is it a critical weakness to be forthright about one's critical ambivalences (for example, the type of critical ambivalence one might have about the ambiguities of self and the uncertain process of reflecting on the self). However, a lack of clarity as to which approach is being deployed - when and why - can obfuscate an already complex critical issue. The amorphous notion of an inviolable and autonomous self, as described in self-writing and its criticism, though contentious appears also to be ineluctable and thus, out-manoeuvres competing partisan theoretical agendas, for all their usefulness. As Chapter Three and Four described neither the Humanist nor 'post-modernist' is able to be quite as thorough-going as the labels might advertise. Beyond the conflicts between the two each contains internal contradictions.

The self, its elusiveness and the irreconcilability of competing and internally contradictory approaches to it, can be effectively navigated using the critical approach of, what this thesis has described as, deliberate eclecticism. This approach readily confronts the unavoidable elusiveness at the heart of discussion of the autonomous self and is designed to manage the competing and contradictory perspectives on it. It does so, by identifying and interrogating the often difficult terms and issues pertaining to conceptualisation of the self; by being clear that its strategy, for managing complex material, is to interrogate and judiciously select at different times and for different reasons, the critical strengths of often competing and conflicted perspectives. The approach reminds critics to carefully and calmly adopt, analyse, and possibly discard theories, as they maintain a lofty overview of the critical terrain; of multiple critical paradigms; and of the advantages of a range of vantage points. The approach is designed to look at theories without bias and at ambiguities without being unduly 'dazzled' (to use Hassan's term, Hassan 1988: 422).

This chapter is an analysis of how current diary critics negotiate elusive ideas of self, including the contradiction that the self and its voice are felt to be both autonomous and culturally constructed. The chapter starts with an analysis of Jochen Hellbeck's recent historicist approach to diaries written in Soviet Russia

and then focuses on the criticism of two well-established diary academics: Philippe Lejeune and Patricia Meyer Spacks. Finally, Susan Sontag's appreciation of the form, in both her critical essays and in her own diary-writing, is analysed. The chapter is an investigation into how each critic approaches the conflicts within and between Humanist and 'post-modern' accounts of the diary form, the concept of self, and of the degree to which authorial intent can be described as volitional. Again, the critics who use both methods; are honest about their limitations in the face of difficult subjects; and are careful not to slip into parodying or needlessly defending an ideological enterprise are found to be most useful.

Though the focus of this chapter is how critics of diary manage issues surrounding the discussion of self, free-will, and voice, it is worth noting some aspects of form, style, and rhetoric critics have also been found to address. Firstly, diaries are written by real people and about real experiences. Diaries cannot, unless they are deliberately employed as a fictional device, be read as, for example, novels. (The differences between diaries as fiction and as accounts of a person's lived experiences were explored in Chapter One.) Diaries have beginnings, middles, and ends but not in the same ways as a novel. As Lejeune points out in his essay, 'How do Diaries End?': 'The diary is virtually unfinishable from the beginning, because there is always a time lived beyond the writing, making it necessary to write anew and one day this time beyond will take the shape of death.' (Lejeune 2009: 191) Diaries are often written without an 'ending' in sight: diarist's rarely plan how their diary will end. Diaries do have characters, almost as a novel or play might, but the crucial difference is they will be or were a living person. Diarists who write privately might write in code. Even if they do not, for the sake of brevity, they may leave out contextual information that a future reader has to imagine. All these nuances of form, style, and content affect the ways in which a diary is written, but also how it is read.

Diarists employ a range of rhetorical devices. A critic of self-writing might look for: 'parataxis' or the placing of the poignant alongside the prosaic (for example, the loss of a loved one alongside the washing up); 'epiphany'; 'prophetic prolepsis' or the anticipation of possible problems in order to solve them in advance; 'foreshadowing' (similar to prolepsis); and they may also seek the 'hamartia' or

tragic flaw of the diarist. These are all rhetorical devices used, wittingly or not, in diaries. Of course, it might be argued that the novelist, like the speech-writer, deploys rhetorical tricks for their audience; a diary-writer is more likely to be doing so to recapture the sense of the event or thought being portrayed. Having analysed the diary form's critical back-ground, the next section turns to Jochen Hellbeck's historicist approach to the form.

2. Jochen Hellbeck: historicism

Jochen Hellbeck, an academic who has focused on the study of diaries from Russia during the early to mid-twentieth century, adopts an essentially cultural historicist approach to diaries. It is an approach that is associated with the 'post-modern' (and is also labelled in literary criticism, 'new historicism'). This type of approach is, 'not interested in asserting the transcendent or *autonomous aesthetic value of literary* texts but, to use Marxist terminology, in researching the contexts of their production, consumption, and status.' (Cuddon 1991: 583) Thus, it is an approach that deliberately steps aside from considerations of authorial autonomy and what value such an elusive concept might lend a text; instead the focus is on the site of production for texts and how texts are consumed. In the essay, 'The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response', Hellbeck describes how the approach can circumnavigate the difficulties inherent in critiquing the 'bedevilling' diary form:

In terms of its genre features and as a historical source, the diary has bedevilled literary and historical scholars alike... At least equally frustrating has it proved for historians to work with the diary's personal testimony, which promises sincere, private testimony, yet which at closer sight reveals manifold connections to conventions governing the public world. The relationship between the diarist's subjective voice and objective reality, and the question of any given diary's representativeness as a record of individual experience, are further complicating issues. These questions are formulated in such ways that they cannot be conclusively answered, as they produce residues of uncertainty, openness, and indeterminacy. However, if we shift the question toward an interrogation of the very categories grounding our understanding of diaries and motivating our questions on them, we gain firmer ground. A cultural historical approach to the subject could demonstrate how categories such as history, self,

and privacy, often accepted as an unquestioned syntax of the diary across time and space, are constructions of an age, highly malleable in meaning and identifiable only through careful contextualized analysis. (Hellbeck 2004: 621)

It is Hellbeck's opinion that the 'objectivity' and 'sincerity' of a diarist's subjective voice is tested by its, 'manifold connections to conventions governing the public world'; 'the constructions of an age'; and the questionable, 'representativeness of the diary form' (the issue of language's value as a reliable communicative tool has been discussed in section three of Chapter Four). Hellbeck proposes that 'careful contextualised analysis' provides 'firmer ground' for the critic seeking to understand such complexities.

Hellbeck supports the assertion in the thesis that the diary form - by being usually written by a person about their personal experiences, regularly, privately, and without regard for formal literary conventions - offers a unique opportunity to analyse the concept of self. And, in particular, an opportunity to study challenges posed to the 'sincere, private testimony' of the self. Hellbeck's work reflects, in part, the broader preoccupation of many critics of self-writing: that is how private and subjective testimony is manifest in the 'public world'. As has been explored in the thesis, the relationship between private and public spheres can draw one to consider the question of personal autonomy, the diarist's power to delineate their private voice from its public utterance and significance. As Hellbeck points out, such complex questions produce 'indeterminate' and 'uncertain' interpretations. There is a danger here, identified in Chapter Four, that if all interpretations are equally suspect they all have equal interpretative status. This is the type of relativism we return to and discuss in the next chapter because it impacts on the work of the critical approach advocated in the thesis: deliberate eclecticism.

Hellbeck, having identified that the concept of self and a perspective that is subjective are 'significant' and 'frustrating' or 'bedevilling' forces in diaries, goes on to suggest that dwelling on the subjective nature of the diarist 'naturalizes' the meaning of diaries: 'If we use temporality and subjectivity to guide our analysis we risk naturalizing their meaning, and we lose appreciation of their significance as historically contingent objects of analysis.' (Hellbeck 2004: 622) If by naturalization

Hellbeck means that analysing the subjective in diaries risks conforming it (and the diary form) to a woefully under-representative and reductive version of richly complex views on the self, then it seems anomalous to then insist that the subjective perspective conform to a 'historically contingent' approach. Hellbeck insists it is not 'individual authorship' that is evidenced in the diary, but 'testimony' about a historically and culturally constructed self: 'What these "ego documents" have in common is not the formal parameter of individual authorship, but the fact that they produce testimony about the self and how it acquires a particular meaning in a given historical context' (Hellbeck 2004: 623).

Hellbeck goes on to describe how:

[The] diary brings the researcher closer to the most interesting, though ultimately elusive threshold separating text and life, literature and history. With its punctuated, irregular, and messy appearance, the diary may not be as noble and accomplished a form of self-presentation as the memoir, but for an understanding of autobiographical practice it is a rich, most complex, and infinitely rewarding source. (Hellbeck 2004: 628-629)

Though Hellbeck's observation that diary-writing can bring the researcher close to an 'ultimately elusive threshold' might be an accurate reflection of the diary form's importance (it is what has been argued in the thesis), he does not fully acknowledge that such 'elusiveness' is lost if *all* explanations of subjectivity are reduced to historical processes (nor does Hellbeck fully acknowledge the difficulties of achieving such a detailed and comprehensive historical analysis). If elusiveness is to be praised and preserved it cannot be entirely reduced to historical or sociological analysis, whatever other benefits they have. Hellbeck finishes by explaining what insights he intends to gain from a cultural historicist approach to diaries:

My proposal is to cultivate awareness both of the metaphorical and Existential levels of meaning that may inhere in a given self-narrative. This may well be an agenda, however, that no single scholarly specialist can fully execute. In tangible ways the present forum has shown how different scholarly interests in one and the same source type can yield very different connections and clusters of significance. It seems to me that historians and literary scholars continue to evince different sensibilities,

notwithstanding the recent convergence of the disciplines and their professed inter- and cross-disciplinary engagement. Upon reflection, this may be something to be celebrated, rather than deplored. (Hellbeck 2004: 628)

Hellbeck is correct in his observation that 'no single scholarly specialist' can do full justice to the many issues deliberately introspective writers present as they reflect on complex material. For instance, a historian might find historical evidence for a particular habit of dressing and a sociologist might find sociological details on eating habits. Even in light of this observation, it is possible to argue that the critic who manages a type of self, that is viewed to be elusive and that exhausts analysis, with a number of sometimes competing and internally contradictory interpretative strategies (including but not beholden to historical analysis) is able to be open to an inexhaustible variety of ideas.

Critics, who adopt the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism, may well be capable of juggling different disciplines and adopting different interpretative stances, as they select, analyse, evaluate, and apply the strengths of each. Hellbeck assumes that only the methods of the 'post-modern', in the shape of 'contextualised analysis', can come to the rescue of his 'bedevilled' critic. The mutable character of many diary forms, of concepts of the self, and of aspects of criticism need not 'bedevil' the critic. These tensions can be perceived as matters of interest rather than threat, especially if the critic is not dictated to by the extremes of a particular agenda or a single critical approach. (In this case an approach that is bias to historical contextualisation of the self.) Hellbeck's approach is drawn out in, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. In this book he, again, usefully makes the point that the freely willed voice of the individual versus the construction of such a voice is an issue in the critical discussions of diaries. Hellbeck's research and his discussion of the issue shows us that diary forms (often heralded as supporting an individual's claim to a private and autonomous type of self) can also be used to subjugate the individual.

To conclude the analysis in this section, Hellbeck reminds the reader of how self-reflective writers and self-writing often take critics to the heart of questions bearing on the discussion of self and free-will. He also claims that such questions cannot

be conclusively answered but are vital to understanding ourselves, the past, and our socio-political lives. However, rather than being 'bedevilled', as Hellbeck suggests critics of self-writing are doomed to be (by, for example, the inherently unquantifiable conflict between notions of an autonomous self and that of a non-volitional self), the critic might deal with multiple, sometimes competing and internally contradictory, interpretations with a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism. Lejeune's approach, analysed in the next section, is also focused on how the 'private' and 'sincere' self-writer's voice is asserted in the self-narrative. He, like Hellbeck, often evaluates self-writers' voices in relief to their cultural contexts. Lejeune's preoccupation is less with the historical contexts and specifics of constrictive political regimes (such as the Stalinist regime Hellbeck analysed) that mediate self-writers and their texts, and more with comparing self-writing texts with their satellite records (such as letters and biographies related to the self-writer).

3. Philippe Lejeune: 'antifictions' and 'genetic study'

Philippe Lejeune is a diarist (an unpublished one) and an acclaimed diary critic. He takes an approach to the diary form that is, according to Julie Rak's introduction to his book, *On Diary*, 'interdisciplinary' (Rak in Lejeune 2009: 18). Lejeune deals with both Humanist and 'post-modern' ideas in his criticism and is fully conversant in the critical approaches such disciplines have applied to the diary, including the type of historical or contextual approach described in the previous section. Lejeune's work has often sought to connect the diary to the subject of 'identity' and to define the individual's voice within the diary as relatively uninhibited and uncompromised. In this way Lejeune might be described as interested in preserving notions of an autonomous class of self, as Jeremy D Popkin remarks:

[Lejeune] proudly affirms his identity as a diary-writer, because the diary, unlike the autobiography, allows for change and growth. This for Lejeune is the essential attraction of diary-writing: it is a realm of freedom, whose practitioners can decide for themselves how to behave, and then change the rules as they please. Diarists, can, like Lejeune himself, start and stop keeping their journals. They can write about anything they want. They can

keep their texts to themselves, share them with intimates, aspire to see them published, share them with the world... or destroy them. They can think of themselves as authors in training, and use the exercise of diary-writing to polish their skills... The only constraint on the diary that Lejeune accepts is that of time. (Popkin in Lejeune 2009: 5-6)

Popkin describes Lejeune as a diarist and critic with a full awareness of his (and his fellow diarists') personal freedoms. Rak agrees and describes Lejeune as trying to, 'connect the growth of diary-making as part of the development of western subjectivity and of gender identity... I see a respect for what ordinary people produce and think about in opposition to social prejudice' (Rak in Lejeune 2009: 18). She goes further and describes how Lejeune characterises diarists as, 'other, ordinary, silent producers of culture who create their own logic of expression... [and]... poets of their own acts' (Rak in Lejeune 2009: 19). Lejeune - despite this celebration of the power of individuals to oppose 'social prejudice' as self-asserting 'silent producers' creating 'their own logic' - seems to also see diarists as a class of 'post-modern' victim, engaged in a radical struggle of self-invention and self-description in their own right. He does not draw out this internal contradiction in his criticism and neglecting to do so under-mines the critical coherence of his insights.

Whilst Lejeune is powerfully Humanist in his view that the self matters, he is 'post-modern' in seeing persons as heavily influenced by their social, political, and cultural contexts. Lejeune is more often than not 'post-modern' in his analytical mode. Though the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism suggests that multiple strategies are valuable to the critic, it is also argued that the usefulness of a critical strategy's deployment depends on systematic analysis of the terms and issues associated with it and clear explanations and evidence for judging it suitable on a specific occasion.

Lejeune's view of diaries as textual spaces in which people exercise their personal freedoms is neatly summarised by a term he adopts: 'antifiction' (a term first introduced in Chapter One). According to Lejeune, the diarist, often writing in private and according to rules they define, exercises their 'liberty' (in the terms of the thesis their autonomy) in the diary:

The fact that diary is antifiction obviously does not mean it is antisubjectivity... Nor does it mean that the diary is anti-art... All language is shared and every narrative is a construction. What distinguishes fiction from its opposite, and gives the word its meaning, is that someone exercises the liberty of inventing rather than setting out to tell the truth. (Lejeune 2009: 203)

It is Lejeune's celebration of the anti-establishment 'liberty' of diaries that led Popkin to write the following (here, we detect a slight resistance to aspects of Foucault's ideas):

Where Foucault would probably have seen the transgressive tendency of diaries to be a counter-discourse or counter-memory practiced by individuals who had been taught by their societies to confess and therefore be a subject, for Lejeune these confessions can form a counter-tradition of subjectivity which influences the development of private life, but is not completely subsumed by the training of the proper self practiced by institutions... The confession is to the future or to the beloved page, but not – and this is important – to any authority. *If anything diaries evade authority.* [Italics mine] (Popkin in Lejeune 2009: 19)

It is worth noting that whilst some diaries are dissident there are others that are not. To the list of people Neuman found (in the previous chapter) to have been stereotyped by the 'post-modern' – such as women and colonized people – one might say that Lejeune adds diarists. Again, Lejeune is keen on the idea that diarists' voices are autonomous. However, he rather inconsistently employs 'post-modern' methods and terminologies which deconstruct diarists and diaries.

The following description of Lejeune's methods alludes to their (post-modern) Foucauldian character:

Lejeune's methods recall for me... Michael Foucault's later work on the care of the self and the origins of self-hood in confession... Foucault's examination of archival documents about ordinary lives which form the foundation of educational and medical discourse that regulated everyday sexuality, has a parallel to Lejeune's theorizing – from archived diaries – of the development of diary discourse. (Popkin in Lejeune 2009: 19-20)

Lejeune's 'examination of archival documents' what might be termed his unpacking of the introspective text is an attempt to get at the 'truth' of the diarist. He tests diarists' authenticity using extraneous material (what he calls, 'pre-texts'): archives, letters, biographies, histories, newspaper articles, and other people's diaries. He describes this as 'genetic study' (Lejeune 1991: 1-11). According to Lejeune, 'genetic study' can help decipher whether the writer is being honest with themselves and the reader:

From the reader's point of view, the autobiographical text does not relate to its pre-texts in the same way as texts of fiction, poetry or idea do. Acquaintance with the pre-text of a novel or poem is interesting to specialists who analyse the mechanism of creation, but such knowledge in no way modifies the manner in which the reader perceives the text; it may even hamper him when reading. The reverse is true in the case of autobiographical texts. (Lejeune 1991: 2)⁷

Lejeune supposes that philological readings or 'genetic study' help interpretations of 'psychological and aesthetic' constructs, 'thanks to pre-texts, we can study in vivo the psychological mechanisms of memory and the way the building of the self-image evolves through time, and according to the destination of the text.' (Lejeune 1991: 3) It appears that 'pre-texts' can help reveal an authenticity, or completeness of self, a diarist might aspire to but rarely, if ever, enjoys.

Yet, paradoxically, Lejeune employs the 'pre-text' or 'genetic text' method to find a truth he also claims does not exist. Lejeune describes how the experience of self that an introspective writer is concerned with is: 'No longer merely... a more or less reliable expression of a pre-existing truth, but... a creation of the self through language – both on a psychological and aesthetic level.' (Lejeune 1991: 3) Lejeune's methods are 'post-modern', but the goal is Humanist. Though both traditions are useful, at their extremes the two often conflict and in their more nuanced form are often internally contradictory. Lejeune's criticism tends to deploy competing approaches with a seeming lack of awareness as to their contradictoriness. This leads to a confusion of methods in the writing and perhaps in the reader.

⁷ I do not agree that autobiographical texts do not relate to their pre-texts in the same way as novels or poetry; this depends on the reader rather than on Lejeune's opinion.

A critical approach of deliberate eclecticism can help the critic navigate these difficulties. I advocate that using a variety of interpretative strategies, in a manner that clearly identifies and handles their individual nuances and their opposing weaknesses and strengths, is necessary when dealing with the elusive nature and content of deliberately introspective writing. It is important to explain why one is adopting a certain approach and how it fits into a particular critical framework. The significant hanging question is: why are diarists free here and not free here?

4. Patricia Meyer Spacks: 'the ambiguity of experience'

In Chapter One it was observed that throughout a long academic career Patricia Meyer Spacks has often returned to the concept of self and writing about it. This section is an analysis of Spacks' examination of the diary form and the discussion of various notions of self in, 'How to Read a Diary' and, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (both published in 2003). Her early career demonstrates an interest in feminist studies and though feminism has remained important to her work it has not dictated her criticism of self-writing. Like Lejeune and Hellbeck, Spacks is interested in how a diarist's concept of self is composed. She explores a notion of self that is experienced as private, 'inner', and capable of self-governed thoughts, intentions, and action; she also explores how a self can be described as the creature of more public contexts or circumstances. As Spacks adopts these different perspectives she does not clutter her text with jargon or neologisms and is frank about her critical ambivalences: 'Diaries... inevitably convey the ambiguity of experience.' (Spacks 2003: 62) In 'How to Read a Diary', Spacks is clear why she believes the diary form is significant and why it has literary and personal value for readers and writers: '[The diary] can uncover unexpected ways of achieving personal dignity. It can redefine authenticity.' (Spacks 2003: 48)⁸ So, though Spacks is aware of 'the ambiguity of experience', she accords a degree of respect ('dignity' and 'authenticity') to the type of self and voice she finds in self-writing:

⁸ Spacks returns to the matter of a writer's ability to be 'authentic' in their description of the private self in, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 8).

Eighteenth-century novels remind their readers in many ways of the layers of disguise that envelop the personality, hinting that the attempt to share all thoughts and feelings amounts only to a final disguise. Diaries may substantiate the point, inviting their readers to invent a personality for the voice that speaks through them. Whether they ostensibly reveal an inner life or confine themselves to external detail, they provide wonderfully ambiguous material for interpretation... Yet the fantasy of intimacy they encourage makes the reader believe in the possibility of “knowing” another consciousness on the basis of its language - the possibility that will, I hope, always lure readers. (Spacks 2003: 62)

That Spacks is keen to uphold the possibility that one may ‘know’ the ‘inner life’ of a diarist – that one might hear diarists’ voices as they intended them to be uttered - is not to say she is a thorough-going Humanist. She accepts deliberately introspective writing can be difficult territory. However, within such a literary terrain she hears the ambiguities, the contradictions, and – most loudly - the voice, of each diarist. We can find at least two examples of Spacks’ evaluation of different approaches to self-writing in, ‘How to Read a Diary’:

We assume that diarists set down what they do not want everyone to know, perhaps what they don't want anyone to know. [...] To uncover the relentless triviality of a writer's everyday life may confirm the value of a reader's mundane daily career. A diary can reveal the importance of commentary unspoken. It can uncover unexpected ways of achieving personal dignity. It can redefine authenticity... The diary gives one scrappy raw material for a story rather than the story itself. The story depends more on the reader than on the writer, though the reader would not be in a position to construct it without the writer's clues. (Spacks 2003: 48-55)

Spacks is clear that one can read between the lines of the text (or deconstruct it, in ‘post-modern’ terminology) for its historical or social contexts, but also for what it reveals about the writer. She advocates deconstructing a text to extract diarists’ underlying meaning, ‘the commentary unspoken.’ (Spacks 2003: 48) Spacks does not deviate too far from the text, though she often employs external perspectives to explain it, such as the cultural historicist principles deployed by Hellbeck. Spacks lays out her views on the self, including her ambivalences and she determinedly upholds that the ‘scrappy raw material’ of a diary can reveal an

author's 'authenticity' and 'dignity': the writer and their voice are inveterate parts of the text. Spacks seems to utilise what she finds are the merits of a Humanist approach in conjunction with 'post-modern' approaches.⁹

Spacks has studied the concept of self in literature for over forty years. Her first academic book on the subject was published in 1976. It focused on the variety of self-descriptions found in eighteenth-century novels and autobiography: *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*. In *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (2003), Spacks draws out why she thinks the 'post-modern', in the form of Foucauldian approaches, and more traditional views of 'private consciousness' can sit alongside each other, even as they do not integrate:

Foucault and his successors have abundantly demonstrated how internalized principle polices private consciousness, it remains conceivable that the individual polices private consciousness, it remains conceivable that the individual in privacy might at least explore some marginal realm of personally rather than publically ordained standards... Self clarification doesn't need to be simply for the good of the public. It can be for the good of our own hearts. (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 5)

Spacks describes how 'public' or external contexts (historical, social, political, or otherwise) can encroach on 'private' or internal experience. Spacks' contention is that a person is never entirely private (even their innermost thoughts will include traces of their interaction with the world outside their consciousness): 'Privacy... if considered historically, often demands focus on the way people expose and guard themselves in relation to limited numbers of others.' (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 4) However, Spacks goes on to assert that a diarist – who more often than not writes in private and keeps their writing secret - is able to cultivate 'private' as well as 'publicly' influenced mental spaces: '[D]iaries are the private space in which people work out their intimate relationship with themselves and their intimate relationships with others. Without the privacy of the diary the diarist, the private diarist, loses a space in which to explore, improve on, and fetishize this

⁹ For further discussion of Spacks' 'interdisciplinary' approaches, see bibliography for, Swenson and Lauterback, *Imagining Selves: Essays in Honor of Patricia Meyer Spacks* (Swenson and Lauterback 2008: 9 and 11).

relationship.’ (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 20-24)¹⁰ This is perhaps due to diary-writing being conducted in private and without the intention of its being revealed to the public gaze.

Spacks observes that a diarist’s consideration of the public sphere, outside their ‘inner life’ (Spacks 2003: 52, 59, and 62), is not necessarily in conflict with a privately conceived notion of, or experience, of self. Reflection on the ‘other’ can be an important part of self-development: ‘It is not just a question of improving one’s interaction with the public but one’s interaction with oneself.’ (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 2) Spacks carefully, and in an almost Humanist manner, declares her admiration for the legal scholar Charles Fried’s description of a self that has a form of private life: ‘To respect, love, trust, feel affection for others and to regard ourselves as the objects of love, trust, and affection is at the heart of our notion of ourselves as persons among persons, and privacy is the necessary atmosphere for these attitudes and actions, as oxygen is for combustion.’ (Charles Fried, in Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 205)¹¹ According to Spacks, though one’s notion of self is ‘policed’ by public influence and our concept of ‘ourselves’ is as ‘persons among persons’, a person can achieve physical privacy (at the very least) and (to a degree) an internal dialogue that is conducted in the manner of its being private (i.e., with an internal and hypothetical interlocutor, and not an external entity). Spacks refers to a person’s internal dialogue as, ‘self-clarification’ and as an act that is, ‘for the good of our own hearts.’ (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 4-5). Analysis of Spacks’ critical approaches reveals that in her view the habits of the ‘post-modern’, including the deconstruction of texts and the contextualisation of the self-concept, need not monopolise criticism, or ‘self-clarification’. A single theory need not be a totalizing force in the critical process.

Spacks’ research illustrates that to deconstruct a text or the concept of self and to reveal the contexts that have influenced them (historical, cultural, social, or otherwise) is a habit thinking people have practiced in some form or other for

¹⁰ Spacks describes the core of her thesis in, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*: ‘It is my thesis that privacy is not just one possible means among others to insure some other value, but that it is necessarily related to ends and relations of the most fundamental sort: respect, love, friendship, and trust. Privacy is not merely a good technique for furthering these fundamental relations; rather without privacy they are simply inconceivable’ (Spacks 2003: 205)

¹¹ For further reference see bibliography Fried, ‘Privacy’ (Fried 1968: 475-493).

centuries. And they have done so in conjunction with other evaluative processes. To contextualise and to identify the influences upon a text or a person is not the critical preserve of the 'post-modern' and nor does it prohibit other evaluative approaches. As she observes in her evaluation of the concept of privacy in the eighteenth century:

I have been surprised and enlightened, though, to discover how sharply twentieth-century theoretical discussions of privacy formulate the precise issues that attract the eighteenth-century imaginative writers... Problems of personhood, intimacy, and autonomy lie at the centre of novels or poetry from the earlier period. Problems of control over information help to explain the structure and content of diaries. (Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 24)

he nature and content of self have, for centuries, been considered elusive from multiple and often competing and internally contradictory perspectives. Spacks is valuable in her nuance and her lack of prejudice or partisanship in looking at a range of approaches to self-writing and the discussion of the self. However, Spacks is prone to default to a self that is more a species of Humanism than it is of the 'post-modern'; her account of the 'authentic' self that honestly 'polices' itself in the oxygen of a type of 'inner' privacy and for the 'good of its own heart' is attractive (Spacks 2003: 48 and Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 5 and 22). But, there is, as we have found in Chapter Four, something to be said for a view of the self which is more Existential and even null. Spacks did not set herself the task of producing a theoretical strategy with which to approach the ambiguities of reflecting on the nature and content of self in self-writing. This thesis proposes that a deliberate eclecticism of approach allows that the romantic and the cynical; the pragmatic and the sceptical; or the optimistic and the pessimistic can usefully be allowed full and competitive scope by turns.

5. Susan Sontag: 'discursive... hermeneutics' or an 'erotics of art'?

Susan Sontag kept a diary from early adolescence until her death and wrote critically about the diaries of others. Sarah Churchwell, writing in the *Guardian* on Sontag's first volume of diaries, comments that for Sontag the personal and the

professional, the private and public, sit side-by-side: '*Reborn* makes plain that [she] sprang fully formed from her own forehead; the notebook outlines her efforts to will herself into critical existence... And it is that developing critical intelligence... that dominates the pages of *Reborn*.'¹² The critical reflections, in both Sontag's personal diaries and her professional essays or books, show her to have used her diaries as criticism (as well as self-criticism).¹³

Sontag's 'personal' suspicion of the critical tools of her generation, that is to say, what she took to be the over-theoretical and ideological extremes of some 'post-modern' theories is explicit in her diaries:

3/1/78 I'm not thrilled anymore by literary criticism as auto-critique – the construction of methodologies, the deconstruction of texts. Criticism that is about itself. "Illness as Metaphor" [her own essay] is an attempt to 'do' literary criticism in a new way but for a pre-modern purpose to criticise the world. It's also "against interpretation" – once again. With a subject, instead of a text... So many modern ideas thought to be liberating to some class or relationship or just aspiration have turned out to be more enslaving than not. (Sontag 2013: 453)¹⁴

If Sontag was wary of 'post-modern' critical methods, she was also wary of the critical tools of earlier generations:

3/26/65 "Ekistic" group – interested in programming. A 'sensory mix'. What are the sensory mixes of the future? Completely non-political. Total break with Matthew Arnold (exclusively literary – literary as criticism of culture) critics of the past. Hence, also distance between high and low culture (part of Matthew Arnold's apparatus) disappears. Feeling (sensation) of a Jasper Johns painting or object might be like that of the Supremes. (Sontag 2013: 78)

¹² The reference for this extract can be found in the bibliography see, Churchwell's review, in the *Guardian*, '*Reborn*, The Lust to Write', (2009).

¹³ It is worth noting that Sontag's diaries were found, in Chapter Two, to be an example of the deliberately introspective diary as a vehicle for self-discussion of a kind that is, at least, intended by the writer to be spontaneous (anyway, not much edited later if at all). Her diaries are also fragmentary and an exercise in self-improvement. In this case, and in Chapter One's case of writing as exercise in the work of Wittgenstein and Epictetus, self-writing is at the heart of the process of producing an analysis by doing it. Marcus Aurelius would also have approved, we can suppose.

¹⁴ The reference to 'auto-critique' is from Sontag's diary and was written ten years after the publication of 'Against Interpretation'. The fact that Sontag later returns to her early critical observations illustrates a commitment to continuously reviewing one's reasons for certain approaches and is consistent with the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism advocated in the thesis.

In 1978 Sontag wrote that 'deconstructionism' did not 'thrill' her. In fact, Derrida might well have approved of Sontag's awareness of the limits of words. Derrida might have seen this as the deconstructionist's proper fear of the 'logocentric'.¹⁵ It is also the type of language-centric suspicion identified in Hellbeck's 'post-modern' inspired analysis of the, 'question of representativeness' in diary-writing (Hellbeck 2004: 241, in section two of this chapter).

In an interview, with *LA Weekly*, Derrida said: 'I don't want to disclose the most personal aspects of my life while improvising... in a foreign language.'¹⁶ Sontag and Derrida felt language was somehow 'foreign'. Sontag writes in her diary how:

8/20/64 Words have their own firmness. The word on the page may not reveal (may conceal) the flabbiness of the mind that conceived it. > All thoughts are upgrades - get more clarity, definition, authority, by being in print - that is, detached from the person who thinks them. A potential fraud - at least potential - in all writing. (Sontag 2013: 19)¹⁷

Using the same phrase Derrida used in his interview ('foreign language'), Sontag observed three years later: 8/12/67 'It still feels 'inauthentic' somewhere to me. It wasn't my destiny, my native language. I expatriated myself. My choice of course; but somewhere I knew I was speaking a foreign language.' (Sontag 2013: 229) She felt that her language was constructed, in her words, a 'foreign' entity, from which she herself was 'expatriated'. Contrary to this, she also felt there was, at least, the 'potential' for - some degree - of 'native' 'clarity, definition, and authority' of 'thought' and 'language' (Sontag 2013: 19). It is worth noting that Sontag writes about a 'native' facility for language in her diary where she perhaps felt freer to explore herself than she did in her more public writing.

Sontag's critical stance, as explored in her diary-writing and exemplified above, resonates throughout her professional criticism. In 'Metaphors Kill: Against

¹⁵ Chapter Five illustrated that 'logocentric' is a neologism intended to capture the mistaken fusion of meaning with words. Words do not convey meaning, in the sense that meaning is expected to denote some form of reality or truth.

¹⁶ The reference for this passage can be found in the bibliography see, Derrida's interview with Kristine McKenna, in *LA Weekly*, 'The Three Ages of Jacques Derrida' (2002).

¹⁷ Following on from this suspicion of language's 'representativeness', Sontag wrote in her diary that she experienced difficulties in finding her own voice or language and asserting it within 'specific tonal systems': 2/15/70 'One doesn't speak language, one speaks (at any given moment) a particular language. One doesn't make music-in-general, but operates, at any given time, within a specific tonal system.' (Sontag 2013: 271-272)

Interpretation and the Illness Books', Jay Prosser describes Sontag's suspicion of complete submission to 'modern ideas':

One has only to think of what was happening in art – critical and academic interpretation [if the writer is referring to 1966 then he is referring to the rise of semioticians working in deconstructionism and post-structuralism] in terms of the contemporary turn to the signifier, and how this in turn resulted in explanations of signification, to see how anti-conventional is Sontag's position against interpretation. Certainly there is anti-intellectualism in her stance against interpretation... Sontag is in alliance with the art against the interpreters. [Square brackets mine] (Prosser 2010: 191)

'Against Interpretation', an essay in Sontag's collection by the same name, is where she describes how an 'erotics of art' (Sontag 2013a: 14) is the celebration of aesthetic responsiveness or intuition over 'criticism that is about itself' (Sontag diaries 2013: 454):

Works of art... refer to the world - to our knowledge, to our experience, to our values. They present information and evaluations. But their distinctive feature is that they give rise not to conceptual knowledge which is the distinctive feature of discursive or scientific knowledge (e.g. philosophy, sociology, psychology, history) but to something like an excitation, a phenomenon of commitment, judgement in a state of thralldom or captivation. Which is to say the knowledge we gain through art is an experience of the form or style of knowing something, rather than knowledge of something (like a fact or a moral judgement) in itself. (Sontag 2013a: 22)¹⁸

In a diary entry from late 1963 (the year before *Against Interpretation* is published), Sontag describes intellectual exercises as 'ecstasy', she writes: 1963 'Intellectual wanting like sexual wanting' (Sontag 2009: 318). If this diary entry is read alongside the following passage from 'Against Interpretation', we find a direct correlation between her enjoyment of 'intellectual ecstasy' and the praise she has

¹⁸ Sontag's views on a 'thralldom' or 'captivation' with art (Sontag 2013a: 22) and the perversion of this by over-laboured interpretation is reminiscent of the following passage in, *What is Literature?* Here, Sartre (somewhat ironically offering his interpretation) interprets that literature should not be interpreted, or that it is beyond full interpretation: '[T]he work of art is not reducible to an idea; first, because it is a production or are production of a being, that is of something which never quite allows itself to be thought, then, because this being is totally penetrated by an existence, that is, by a freedom which decides on the very fate and value of thought. That is also why the artist has always had a special understanding of Evil, which is not the temporary and remediable isolation of an idea, but the irreducibility of man and the world of Thought.' (Sartre 1967: 115)

for an interpretative approach founded on an 'erotics of art': 'Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content. So we can see the thing at all... In a place of hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.' (Sontag 2013a: 14) Sontag's use of diary as criticism complements the assertion in the thesis that the diary as an often informal, private, extempore, and spontaneous type of writing can encourage and prompt 'raw' and intuitive critical responses ('raw' is a word used by both Sontag and Spacks in their examinations of diary-writing Sontag 2013a: 41 and Spacks 2003: 48). So, as well as encouraging critics to take up the challenge of analysing the nature and content of self-concepts, the diary-form encourages them to do so in ways that are 'raw' and responsive; that is, in a style of criticism Sontag favoured.

Sontag was an advocate of close reading or drawing oneself close to the 'style and form' of writing, art, and film. Sontag – in her diaries and her professional criticism – encourages critics to nurture the 'rawness' of their responses and a close 'intimacy' with their material (Sontag 2013a: 41). She wanted to avoid dampening this type of responsiveness with over-interpretation. It is a responsive (in her terms 'erotic') form of criticism. Or, to put it another way, it is an interpretative responsiveness that is in keeping with the type of 'fullness', 'transparency', and 'authenticity' of self she describes herself as wanting to achieve (Sontag 2013a: 41 and 2013: 280).¹⁹ Sontag's balancing act between critical reason that is analytic and that which is responsive is returned to in the next chapter.

Typically of Sontag's subtlety and contradictions she was keenly aware of contemporary methods of interpretation and employed them. For example, despite her suspicion of the extremes of the 'post-modern', she evidently harnessed the

¹⁹ As was illustrated in Chapter Two Sontag admired Existentialist philosophy. Heidegger and Sartre, amongst others, made distinctions between self-knowledge gained through reflection and a self that is known in pre-reflective modes. Sontag was concerned that over-analysis would distance one from the potential fulfilment of being a 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280) – what Sartre called a self 'being-in-itself'. It is an idea found in diaries but also in philosophy and literature. It has been referred to in footnotes to the diary extracts, at the beginning of each chapter in the thesis, including those in Chapters Two, Four, and Five. Hassan identifies the same idea at work in Franz Kafka's fiction: 'Self-apprehension [...] a quest for questlessness.' (Hassan 1982: 121 and 137). However, as Sontag has observed consciousnessless consciousness can be 'passive'. 'Questlessness' cannot – in this view – also be a quest.

methods of structuralism. Seeking to reveal the subservience of traditional views of common sense to bourgeois ideals, she made this comment in her diary:

9/3/74 Common sense... is always wrong. It is the demagoguery of the bourgeois ideal... all polls of opinion must be superficial. They reveal the top of what people think, organized into common sense. What people really think is always partly hidden. Only way to get at it is through study of their language – a study in depth: its metaphors, structures, tone. [...] Duchamp: “There is no solution because there is no problem.” Cage, too. Stein. Nonsense! Modernist-nihilist-wise-guy bullshit. There are plenty of problems. (Sontag 2013: 407)

Sontag does not seem to have completely distanced herself or her criticism from interpreting art or literature according to its ‘content’ (Sontag 2013: 14, 43, and 435). Sontag was ‘against interpretation’ that was ideological and unconvinced that criticism’s primary job was to reveal that which is ‘always hidden’. However, despite her critical ambivalences Sontag wanted to develop, understand, and draw out her approaches and responses to art. She did not shy away from forming opinions and judgements that were also sympathetic, intuitive, and responsive. In an interview with Evans Chan, conducted just before her death, Sontag clarified it was not interpretation she wanted to avoid but reductive interpretation or that which became ideological and not material for further discussion: ‘I’m for complexity... I don’t want to think anything theoretically in that sense... If I’m against interpretation, I’m not against interpretation as such, because all thinking is interpretation. I’m actually against reductive interpretation, and I’m against facile transposition and the making of cheap equivalences.’²⁰ Sontag reminds the diary reader to beware slipping from useful and insightful interpretation into ‘facile’ or ‘cheap’ work. Prosser writes that Sontag found that: “‘Some metaphors’ and ‘sometimes’ being against interpretation are significant qualifications [to an approach that is ‘Against Interpretation’] Sontag would seem to be not against metaphor and interpretation per se but rather against particular metaphors and interpretation on particular occasions.’ [Square brackets mine] (Prosser 2010: 194) If Sontag was wary of over-thinking material and of problematizing it she was also a keen and self-critical analyst. One might argue that she aimed for an economy of

²⁰ The reference for this interview can be found in the bibliography see, Chan, ‘Against Postmodernism, etcetera - A Conversation with Susan Sontag’, (2000).

theory, and the deployment of theory only of the quality and in the quantity which helped response and interpretation.

The balance of the interpretative and analytic with the responsive and 'erotic' was something Sontag also wanted to apply to her self-reflection:

2/18/70 I don't want to make my wisdom a product I'm packaging for my own use, and that of those I love. But how do I break free, let go? I know I'm afraid of passivity (and dependence). Using my mind, something makes me feel active (autonomous). That's good. What I want to fall away from the activity are my procedures of self-manipulation. I want to stop "aiming" myself, just aim... But I can't do it yet. I'm too scared. I think I must fear somewhere that spontaneity - following the lead of feelings much more than I do - will lead, at least in me, to passivity. This can't be so, but I won't really know until I have the experiences. It's all a question of really feeling inside myself, so I don't always worry that I should get out, go behind, and push. (Sontag 2013: 291)

Sontag, according to the diary entry above, was richly conflicted on balancing self-reflection that was analytical ('packaged', 'manipulative', and 'aimed') with 'spontaneity' and 'following the lead of feelings'. She was aware there were merits to her 'aiming' and 'packaging': including feeling active, autonomous, and 'using my mind'. Such 'aiming' was, somewhat paradoxically and uncomfortably for Sontag, a necessary component of self-awareness: one cannot know one's self, or reflect on the nature and content of one's notion of self, without, to some degree, 'aiming' at it.

Sontag explored the tensions between a self she experienced as self-observing and analytical and her more 'spontaneous' and 'feeling' sense of self in an essay on the French writer, Antonin Artaud; a fellow 'victim of consciousness'. In this essay Sontag describes the tension as a, 'Divine Tragedy of Thought' (Sontag 2013b: 18). There is a 'tragic' and 'divine' tension (in Sontag's approaches to literature or art and to herself) between what she thought was too laboured, analytical, and 'consciousness-laden' (Sontag 2013: 290) and what she thought was responsive, 'open-ended', 'raw', and 'authentic' (Sontag 2013: 274, 2013a: 41, and 2013: 229). The tension is both divine and tragic because the two modes (one, responsive and one, analytical) both test and rely on each other.

Intertextual analysis of Sontag's diaries and her criticism shows that she felt her consciousness to be tragic because her 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280) would be unlikely to win out over her 'packaged' self (Sontag 2013: 290): her 'authentic' self was doomed to be inauthentic. In this sense Sontag's approach is critical, without wanting to be, and by being critical it is not 'native' or responsive enough (Sontag 2013: 16).²¹ Sontag, a little like Derrida in Chapter Five, was agitated by her consciousness. Sontag may have been a little less caught up in these contradictions - and their tensions - if she had been able to remain, in her terms, critically 'open-ended', i.e., open to the strengths of a range of competing interpretations, at different times, and for different reasons (Sontag 2013: 274). Deliberate eclecticism is proposed as such an approach.

Having considered Sontag's personally- and professionally-maintained critical nuances, we turn to her criticism of diaries. In 'The Artist as Exemplary Sufferer', Sontag takes the reader through a piece of self-writing she found particularly compelling: 'Recently Pavese's diaries from the years 1935 to 1950, when he committed suicide at the age of forty-two, have been issued in English.' (Sontag 2013a: 41) Pavese was a twentieth-century Italian novelist, poet, critic, and deliberately introspective diary-writer. In her commentary Sontag reveals herself, not merely as a diarist herself, but as a writer who thought deeply and seriously about the diary form and its importance to its writers and to literature.

Cesare Pavese's use of the diary form was in some ways quite like her own, not least in being introspective. It happens that Pavese's diaries are Existential in the extreme: they are a sort of prolonged suicide note, chronicling pride and self-loathing until his death by overdose. Sontag remarks that Pavese refers to himself in the second person (as 'you'). Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag used the same self-reflective device. The distancing effect of the second person pronoun is part of what Chapter One described as the 'exercise' characteristic of many

²¹ It is worth noting that Spacks, and Sontag are both preoccupied with the significance of being 'authentic'. Spacks describes how the diary is an important literary form, in large part, because it supports diarists' ability to attain an authenticity of self they might be less able to find in other forms of writing (Spacks 2003: 48). In her diaries, Sontag uses the term 'authentic' to describe the type of self she wants herself to be, at least six times between 1964 and 1980 (Sontag 2013: 422, 297, 280, 278, 206, and 184). It is also a term used to describe a favourable type of self in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Heidegger's *Being and Time*, see footnote one of Chapter Two.

deliberately introspective diaries. The play on pronouns creates a grammatical space in which the self can in syntax and theory, at least, reflect directly back on itself.

Sontag provides some contextual analysis for Pavese and then explains that this is not her real interest. Sontag also remarks the diaries can be read without the type of 'pre-texts' Lejeune described in section three of this chapter: 'They can be read without any acquaintance with Pavese's novels, as an example of a peculiarly modern literary genre—the writer's "diary" or "notebooks" or "journal".' (Sontag 2013a: 41) After a brief summary, Sontag sets aside the deconstruction of the social, political, and cultural contexts Pavese was subject to and concentrates on how his writing is diaristic and how he manages to write with such 'rawness' in a distinct and 'authentic' voice.

Sontag describes how the diary form is judged to be significant because it is (to use a selection of the terms developed in Chapter One) often written privately, spontaneously, and extempore. She writes that the value of diaries, to their readers, lies in the 'rawness' of the form's content. Diaries are where a writer can peel back the layers of 'masks' or 'ego' that otherwise cloud the fullness of, what Sontag describes as, the 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280):

Why do we read a writer's journal? Because it illuminates his books? Often it does not. More likely, simply because of the rawness of the journal form, even when it is written with an eye to future publication. Here we read the writer in the first-person; we encounter the ego behind the masks of ego in an author's works. No degree of intimacy in a novel can supply this, even when the author writes in the first-person or uses a third person which transparently points to himself. (Sontag 2013a: 41)

She implies that even when they are written, 'with an eye to future publication' diaries can act as a writer's confidante. This is an example of her understanding that diaries show-case writing that is not obviously or primarily for public consumption (an important element in the private characteristic of most diaries, as discussed in Chapter One). Even if it is a conceit that this is writing for the writer's own sake, it is an effective conceit and an operational one. As Sontag notes, there is a contemporary appetite for this stripped-down or behind-the-scenes expression

of a person. (From the list of characteristics for the diary form, suggested in Chapter One, frankness and honesty might be added to Sontag's description of what distinguishes the form.)

Sontag then goes on to propose that 'modern readers' are interested in the unexpurgated suffering of the writer because it is, as it were, professional. The suffering is well-developed and it is put to good use. The writer's suffering is 'exemplary', by which she seems to mean both special and an example to us. This sort of self-interrogation, according to Sontag, is what the religious used to find in saints, and secular moderns find in writers. We admiringly look to them, when they are being self-revelatory, for instruction and comfort:

Most of Pavese's novels, including the four translated into English, are narrated in the first-person. Yet we know that the 'I' in Pavese's novels is not identical with Pavese himself [...] The journal gives us the workshop of the writer's soul. And why are we interested in the soul of the writer? Not because we are so interested in writers as such. But because of the insatiable modern preoccupation with psychology, the latest and most powerful legacy of the Christian tradition of introspection, opened up by Paul and Augustine, which equates the discovery of the self with the discovery of the suffering self. For the modern consciousness, the artist (replacing the saint) is the exemplary sufferer. And among artists, the writer, the man of words, is the person to whom we look to be able best to express his suffering. (Sontag 2013a: 42)

The writer is the exemplary sufferer because he has found both the deepest level of suffering and also a professional means to sublimate his suffering. As a man, he suffers; as a writer, he transforms his suffering into art. The writer is the man who discovers the use of suffering in the economy of art as the saints discovered the utility and necessity of suffering in the economy of salvation.

The next passage shows Sontag's approval of Pavese's self-awareness – which is very similar to Marcus Aurelius' – that if one properly 'owns' one's suffering, it is robbed of much of its power. This follows the Stoic conception that a third party cannot damage one since, viewed properly, the damage is much more a matter of self-harm to the one who seeks to inflict it than it is one of harm to its intended

victim. So, Sontag (consistent with her use of the idea of 'workshop' just noted) also touches on issues of privacy and spiritual exercise and links these to self-writing. (These were highlighted as important characteristics of the diary in Chapter One.)

The unity of Pavese's diaries is to be found in his reflections on how to use, how to act on, his suffering. Literature is one use. Isolation is another, both as a technique for the inciting and perfecting of his art, and as a value in itself. And suicide is the third, ultimate use of suffering - conceived of not as an end to suffering, but as the ultimate way of acting on suffering. [...] To choose a hardship for ourselves is our only defence against that hardship [...] Those who by their very nature can suffer completely, utterly, have an advantage. This is how we can disarm the power of suffering, make it our own creation, our own choice; submit to it. (Sontag 2013a: 43)

Sontag's suggestion that the 'exemplary sufferer' may actively choose to 'create', to 'act on it', or to 'submit' to their suffering is yet another return to the idea that a class of self which is described as strongly autonomous is important to deliberately introspective texts. In this perspective of the 'exemplary sufferer' (somewhat ironically given the sufferer's experience of helplessness) concepts of personal autonomy have a semantic currency equal to that of the influences on that person (in Sontag's words the 'things in general' that are 'imposed on us'). The sufferer, to a degree at least, chooses to suffer.

Self-reflection in the diary is not usually formed into something designed – or anyway, specially organised - for public consumption. As such it is writing that conforms to the idea that some diary-writing does its work by being an exercise, done in private, for its own sake (an argument made in Chapter One). It can be a sort of spontaneous writing-out or working out of thoughts and feelings, in the manner of practice rather than a document prepared for others to read. In the next passage, Sontag is showing us that Pavese, in putting himself on display in a spontaneous and unedited way, lets us see a special soul, as it were, undressed. She seems also to have assumed that the merit of this sort of exercise (whether intended to be so by the diarist in their own case) is some sort of self-improvement (spiritual, psychological, or moral) for the reader. She also notes that Pavese, whilst obviously self-absorbed, is ultimately engaged in, 'the heroic quest for the

cancellation of self', a classic expression of the hope that only self-interrogation can defeat solipsism, and especially the very solipsism it may embody. (An analogy might be with prayer.) She may have drawn this conclusion partly from the previously mentioned use by Pavese of the second person pronoun in referring to himself, in which the writer seems to express a desire to work on him or herself as an object:

[Pavese's] uninhibited display of egotism devolves into the heroic quest for the cancellation of the self. [...] Pavese, who used the "I" so freely in his novels, usually speaks of himself as "you" in his diaries. He does not describe himself, but addresses himself. He is the ironic, exhortatory, reproachful spectator of himself. The ultimate consequence of such a bracketed view of the self would seem to have been, inevitably, suicide. The diaries are in effect a long series of self-assessments and self-interrogations. They record nothing of daily life or observed incidents; nor is there any description of family, friends, lovers, colleagues or reaction to public events (as in Gide's Journals). (Sontag 2013a: 43)

Sontag seems to accept that Pavese was an individual with some autonomy, at least over his own suffering and 'self-assessments'. Sontag is interested in Pavese the 'man' and how his being a 'spectator of himself' translated into the 'rawness of the journal form' (Sontag 2013a: 41):

It might be said that there are two personae in the diary. Pavese the man, and Pavese the critic and reader. Or: Pavese thinking prospectively, and Pavese thinking retrospectively. There is the self-reproachful and self-exhortatory analysis of his feelings and projects; the focus of reflection is on his talents - as a writer, as a lover of women, and as a prospective suicide. Then there is all the retrospective comment: analyses of some of his completed books, and their place in his work; the notes on his reading. Insofar as the 'present' of Pavese's life enters the diaries at all, it is mainly in the form of a consideration of his capabilities and prospects. Apart from writing, there are two prospects to which Pavese continually recurs. One is the prospect of suicide [...] The other is the prospect of romantic love and erotic failure. (Sontag 2013a: 44)

Though far from being exclusively Humanist (she is too aware of the inherent contradictions in both traditional and contemporary modes of discourse to have been comfortable with such a critical label) Sontag allows Pavese a self to

'spectate', 'suffer', and utter. Sontag rather lovingly allows the artist the power of his or her own creative voice. Sontag's assertion that writers, to some degree, lay claim to styles and voices that are arrived at through *causa sui* thought and action is found in her diaries as criticism as well as her professional criticism: 8/24/64 'Great art has a beautiful monotony - Stendhal, Bach. (But not Shakespeare.) A sense of the inevitability of a style - the sense that the artist had no alternatives, so wholly centred [her spelling] is he in his style.' (Sontag 2013: 21) Sontag's comparison of the merits of different approaches to criticism and self-reflection are returned to in the next chapter.

Sontag was, helpfully to this thesis, well-versed in the subtleties of Humanist and 'post-modern' approaches to the discussion of self, free-will, and voice. Sontag's title for a collection of essays, *Where the Stress Falls*, captures the idea that when dealing with multiple, often contradictory, approaches to elusive material it is indeed a question of 'where the stress falls' (i.e., what perspective one is going to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of and possibly, for a time, adopt, whilst managing to hold in mind that other perspectives have merit). This idea is important to the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism proposed in Chapter Four. Sontag saw the merits of a variety of critical approaches, she suggests that the ideal critic: 10/15/65 '[S]ubjects himself, allows himself to be bombarded by contradictory stimuli. He has to remain open.' (Sontag 2013: 134) However, following the metaphor suggested by Sontag's use of the word - 'bombarded' - one might say she felt besieged as well as a little 'dazzled' by contradiction (to use Hassan's phrase, Hassan 1988: 422). This thesis claims that a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism has been designed as a means of releasing critics from balancing 'contradictory stimuli'. It proposes that rather than being on the receiving end of contradictory ideas one can deploy them. Sontag might have felt less 'bombarded', if she had freed herself to deploy the qualities of different interpretative stances, at different times and for different reasons (at times examining content for 'bourgeois ideals' and, at others, enjoying the 'erotics' of a text and hearing the quality of the voices contained).

The last four chapters have established that the Humanist or 'post-modern' approaches to the idea of self are notoriously confusing and internally confused.

They are not definitive values for the self, free-will, and voice. This thesis concludes that the competing views of the Humanist and 'post-modern', and many others, are important, for all that they are irreconcilable. In a field as contradictory and elusive as that of self-reflection and writing about it, final victory cannot be accorded to any particular side. What the criticism in Chapters Five and Six revealed is that Humanist and 'post-modern' methods of critique, often aspire to a partisan simplicity. Critics want to be definitive or authoritative and, sometimes, decline instead into confusion. The elusiveness (of the nature and content of self) cannot be negotiated away. Where critics do not fully acknowledge the inherently difficult nature of issues surrounding the self, free-will, and voice and assert how, and with what judiciously selected and carefully explained approaches they intend to handle such complexity, there is a lack of clarity in the often internally conflicted arguments they propose.

In the interests of a particular theoretical enterprise or of being authoritative or definitive Neuman, Hellbeck, and Lejeune were liable to miss the nuances in their chosen theory or approach. They upheld the autonomous voice of an individual in his or her self-narrative and used 'post-modern' methods, terminology, and perspectives to do so. However, the logic of 'post-modern' methods leads inexorably to ideas that fundamentally oppose the existence of an autonomous self. There is an impulse in self-writing criticism to recognise and combat hegemonies of language or culture and this is a typically 'post-modern' critical trend. Its outcome, the rescuing of the individual voice or narrative from the throes of cultural influence, harks back to the Humanist traditions of early critical evaluations of the form. That is, critics of self-writing often have a Humanist goal, but use 'post-modern' methods to achieve it.

What became apparent with close reading, but what is not always frankly addressed, are striking similarities rather than inalienable differences. In Chapter Five, Ihab Hassan and Georg Misch were found to be most sympathetic to the view that the self-writer has some claim to an autonomous type of self and voice (but have some respect for self, free-will, and voice being non-volitional constructs). For another example Shirley Neuman was most sympathetic to a deconstructed concept of self (but had some respect for its voice and autonomy

and is keenly aware of the flaws of the 'post-modern'). The problem is not that critics employ a range of interpretative methods: it is that sometimes they are not clear about the nuances of the method they adopt or when or why they adopt a particular method. Importantly, criticism of self-writing does not seem to systematically lay out how it intends to manage a key issue in self-writing: competing and internally contradictory views on the (ineluctable and elusive) self, free-will, and voice.

A further contradiction, found particularly in 'post-modern' approaches to self-writing, is that a residue of the self-concept lingers in its dismissal. Derrida was the most committed deconstructionist. And yet the experience of autonomy and self and its (to a degree) volitional voice persisted in his autobiography and in his criticism of the form, even as he deconstructed them. In Chapter Six, Spacks and Sontag are the clearest in laying out the dilemma of competing critical paradigms. They were less confusing than Derrida and less partisan than Neuman, Hellbeck, and Lejeune. However, neither set out to produce a robust analytical framework with which to manage the competing interpretative strategies that informed their work. And, though far from partisan, neither quite relinquished a preference (what can be described, perhaps, as a yearning) for certain interpretative styles. (Spacks for an approach to the self that allows for the cultivation of an 'inner' life and Sontag for a responsiveness of approach that is not over analytical, or 'consciousness-laden', Spacks *Privacy* 2003: 205 and Sontag 2013a: 14)

It is proposed in the thesis that the self and writing about such a notion require a critical approach that can be clear, open, and honest about contradictory ideas and critical ambivalences. The approach developed in this thesis is an advance on the challenges faced by current critics of self-writing and is labelled: deliberate eclecticism. To be analytically open and impartial it is necessary to manage the different facets of competing and contradictory perspectives, explanations, and evidence. This is not a licence to avoid forming robust arguments or to avoid making judgements and interpretations; neither is it a matter of finding a middle way through alternate views, rather it is a matter of accepting and manoeuvring within - at different times, and in different moods and for different purposes and reasons - the status of very different views of the self and writing about the self. A

critic who can, as Sontag describes, 'remain open' is one that can perhaps best achieve what I have called a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism. Deliberate eclecticism is liberating because it unpacks arguments that it accepts as on-going and it does so willingly. A deliberate eclecticism of critical approach is intended, by the thesis, to encourage and motivate productive analysis and criticism as it handily sits at the forefront of critics' minds. It is dexterous and discerning, and avoids both undue partisanship, on the one hand, and, as is expanded on in the next chapter, crude relativism, on the other.

The last four chapters have provided an analysis of the following: terms pertaining to the discussion of self, free-will, and voice; the complexities of reflecting on the nature and content of oneself; how critics of self-writing have managed issues surrounding the discussion of the notion of self and the degree to which a person's utterance and intention can be described as free; and how the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism is intended to manage such issues. Armed with the insights of this investigation we can return to and expand on the intertextual analysis of the deliberately introspective writing of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag. In Chapter Two, our case studies introduced key ideas relating to self-reflection: namely, questions as to the nature and content of self and the degree to which a person has the capacity to think, speak, and act with free-will. For Aurelius and Sontag the existence and autonomy of the self are in dispute and are the cause of agonised self-reflection. The critical approach of deliberate eclecticism is a response to their personal angst about the self. It is an approach that uses judicious promiscuity, openness, impartiality, balance, and analytical rigour to ease the angst of ambivalence. In Chapter Seven, close intertextual analysis of the pair's reflections on the self strengthens the argument for deliberate eclecticism. Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag wondered whether there could be a vantage point from which the self could view itself and others autonomously, truthfully, and comprehensively. As the discussion in Chapter Seven of the matter of critical value illustrates, Aurelius and Sontag were eclectic in the way they adopted different perspectives at different times. They did not, however, set out to be deliberately eclectic and their reflections on the notion of self are often uncomfortable and angst-ridden.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Intertextual analysis of Aurelius and Sontag: their angst about self and a critical approach of 'deliberate eclecticism'

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1. Introduction
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7. Critics' reason and critical relativism in deliberate eclecticism
8. Self-writing as exercise and criticism as exercise

Diary entry from Katherine Mansfield:

Yes, that's it. To do anything, to be anything, one must gather oneself together and "one's faith make stronger". Nothing of any worth can come from a disunited being... I was trying with all my soul to be good. [...] I am a sham. There is nothing worse for the soul than egoism. (Mansfield 1954: 294)

Diary entry from Richard Rogers, a sixteenth-century puritan:

28/2/1588 I have perceived my selfe to be stirred up here of late to more waspishness and bitterness of speech, then 7 yeares before... I found through examination, diverse blemishes in my selfe, which if they be not purged out, I witness against my selfe that they remaine to trouble me the more after this sight and acknowledging of them. (Ward and Rogers 1933: 82)¹

¹ To 'Know thyself' (according to the Delphic dictum analysed in Chapter Three), or in Mansfield's terms, 'to gather oneself together', can be positive, it can help one 'be good'; Aurelius and Sontag were both acutely aware of this idea. To 'Know thyself' can, however, also be described as having the potential to become egotistical. Sontag was concerned (as was explored in the previous chapter and is expanded on in this) that self-examination-as-self-improvement might be egotistical. However, she was more concerned that over-analysis would distance one from the, 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280). (This is the idea of self-transcendence, as characterised in Existential thought, and explored in the diary excerpts at the beginning of Chapters Two, Four, Five, and Six.) Richard Rogers – writing over 500 years before Mansfield and Sontag – was as concerned to fashion the self - to improve upon it - and found it as hard to do so. His was a puritan self-fashioning and its success was measured according to the rules of the church. Even after extensive self-examination, Rogers' troubles and angst remained. All three, very different diarists, found that self-reflective exercise as self-improvement was a difficult course to follow.

1. Introduction

In Chapter One it was established that deliberately introspective diaries - by being so devoted to self-reflection - uniquely energise and enable the critic (indeed, any reader) to confront and make choices about how to manage the elusive idea of self (or, manage what is taken to be an illusory notion of self) and self-writing. In Chapter Two, the deliberately introspective writing of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag was shown to bear a selection of characteristics found in the diary form (as defined in Chapter One). Crucially, their writing is acutely self-reflective. Intertextual analysis of Aurelius and Sontag introduced, for the thesis, terms and issues relating to the discussion of self, free-will, and voice. Chapters Three to Six were an analysis of the ways in which different traditions, disciplines, and critics of self-writing have discussed such ideas. Equipped with this analysis it is now possible to achieve a more thorough intertextual analysis of our pair.

Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing poignantly illustrates that the idea and experience of oneself is nuanced and difficult territory and has been so across millennia.² In Chapter Two it was found that, perhaps surprisingly, there is more to compare than to contrast in our case studies.³ A message from that finding seems to be that the nearly 2,000 years separating Aurelius and Sontag have not radically altered the ways in which the concept of self is theorised or experienced now. Across historical, temporal, linguistic, geographical, professional, political, philosophical, and gender differences Aurelius and Sontag are similar in having experienced the self and free-will as profound, yet perplexing, issues. The pair addressed issues, if not terminologies, that epitomise elements of Humanist and 'post-modern' approaches to the self.

² Chapter Three was an examination of multiple views of self-hood and self-reflection from both contemporary and classical writers and philosophers. The chapter elucidated on the argument in the thesis that the concept of an autonomous self is elusive and is the subject of often competing and internally contradictory ideas.

³ Neither Aurelius nor Sontag use all the diary characteristics outlined in Chapter One's spectrum of characteristics. However, they use a permutation of these characteristics and are more importantly, deliberately introspective. Chapter Two laid out the themes exemplified by Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing they were: what it is to be a public and a private person living in accordance with and in defiance of intellectual, social, and cultural frameworks; what it is to know a type of self and voice that are also described as autonomous and to know the aforementioned frameworks that therefore perhaps influence and then inhibit such freedoms; what it is to think about and experience one's own sense of free-will and self; and what it is to want to improve morally, intellectually, and spiritually through understanding oneself in a written exercise.

Obviously, Marcus Aurelius did not have to hand some of the analytic approaches available to our own contemporaries or to Susan Sontag (including, the 'post-modern' approaches explored in Chapter Four). Aurelius would not have used terminology associated with the 'post-modern'. However, Chapters Two and Three illustrated that he had a full complement of the sorts of doubts and beliefs about the self which have fascinated successive generations. Sontag, a woman well-versed in 'post-modern' modes of analysis, wrote about herself and the world in much the same terms as did Aurelius about himself.

Aurelius and Sontag shared an active, questing unease as to their faith in the self and its free-will. They did not find it possible to reconcile contradictory ideas and experiences. Nor were they able to calmly reflect back on an experience of self that seemed to occupy a cognitive blind-spot and to defy interrogation by both subjective and objective (in the sense that one can share and compare ideas with a third-party) reasoning. They enjoyed interacting with the ideas and people around them: their dialogue with culture, society, and politics had its benefits. On the other hand, at different times and for different reasons, they felt their autonomy to be jeopardised by its dialogue with the world. Our pair would have liked to place faith in philosophical solutions for the problems of the self and they were united in being unable to do so. (Sontag favoured Buddhist and Existential ideas of self-transcendence and Aurelius favoured Stoicism's ideas of self-development, i.e., *oikeiosis*.) Despite sensing that their self was half-hidden, indirectly-known, and partially-developed, neither Sontag nor Aurelius could depose the experience of such a notion or, it seems, avoid describing it. A full deposition of the self in theory and in practice would perhaps render all self-writing as bathetic: self-writers write and critics of self-writing critique as though there were a self or, at least, a complex and illusory idea of one. Aurelius and Sontag explored the gap between much of the theory they found on the self and their lived experience of their concept of self. Interpretation of Aurelius' and Sontag's exploration of the concept of self, in particular their exploration of the theory and practice of (or lived experience of) self and self-description, supports the aim of the thesis.

In this chapter, intertextual analysis of Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing supports the development of deliberate eclecticism, the

critical approach to self-writing advocated in the thesis. The complexities and confusions of Aurelius' and Sontag's discussion of the self and personal autonomy seem to require, invite, and inform the development of a particular critical tool kit. Aurelius and Sontag wavered as to the inviolability of their personal autonomy. They also wavered as to the perspicuity of their reasoning powers and in their opinion of the value of the judgements of others. Aurelius was at times a conformist Stoic and at other times a highly questioning one; at times Sontag was a highly intellectual and analytical critic and at others a responsive, 'spontaneous', and intuitive one (Sontag 2013: 95, 282, and 290-291).

Aurelius' and Sontag's confusion remind us of the fallibility of human reflection and self-reflection. But their uncertainties also remind us of the merit of deploying different points of view as we try to understand elusive subjects. Prompted by the insights garnered through intertextual analysis of Aurelius and Sontag, this chapter will argue that the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism offers what is labelled in the thesis as 'high-functioning fallibility'.

2. What self?

Marcus Aurelius' and Susan Sontag's experience of the self was not only intellectual and theoretical. It was emotional and practical. The experience of self and its opportunities and challenges had profound personal, moral, and spiritual implications for the way they lived. According to Sontag's son and the editor of her diaries, David Reiff, it is the contradictions Sontag found in her thinking that made her writing interesting:

One of the most striking things about this volume is the way in which my mother moves between different worlds. Some of this had to do with her deep ambivalence, and with contradictions in her thought that, to me, far from diminishing it, in fact makes it deeper, more interesting, and in an ultimate sense, quite resistant to... well, to interpretation. (Sontag 2013: X)

Despite the complexities of reflecting on the self and the resistance of its equivocal nature and content to satisfactory and complete description, both asserted that

they experienced a self. Neither Aurelius nor Sontag were tortured, in an extreme 'post-modern' manner, by the idea that maybe their self did not exist at all. They both felt that the self was a thing to know and discuss and in some important sense to invent, transform, or transcend.

Sontag took the idea of self seriously: 8/28/64 'What one is, is the idea one has of oneself.' (Sontag 2013: 23) Sontag felt her personal autonomy mattered, not least to the range of her 'inner' thoughts: 5/27/78 'Imagination: - having many voices in one's head. The freedom for that' (Sontag 2013: 459); and to her creativity: 4/29/80 'One must oppose communism: it asks us to lie – the sacrifice of the intellect (and the freedom to create) in the name of justice.' (Sontag 2013: 514) Sontag felt, at times, that she had some autonomy or some freedom to live in defiance of, what she describes in her diaries as, 'the psychic forms of my culture'. (The 'psychic forms of my culture' Sontag refers to include 'familyship', 'patriarchy', 'fascism', and 'capitalism', Sontag 2013: 274, 380, 390, and 515-522.) She thought that a person had, to a degree, the ability to think and act in self-governed ways that were, somewhat ironically, a duty and 'oppose[d]' restrictive political regimes (such as 'communism', Sontag 2013: 514). In keeping with Sontag's evaluations, current critics of self-writing, in Chapters Five and Six, were found to have also been keenly alert to the personal autonomy of the self-writers they analysed.

Sontag, 5/21/75 'made the distinction between activities which were slavish, practical - one knows why one performs them: they're useful, necessary, obligatory - and activities which were free, voluntary, gratuitous' (Sontag 2013: 383). There was a distinction, and something of a contradiction, between activities she performed of her own free-will and those she believed she was compelled to perform by societal or cultural convention, those that were, 'necessary and obligatory'.⁴ Despite Sontag's opinion that knowledge of the autonomous self was

⁴ Sontag recognised that the discussion of one's personal freedoms was not a modern contrivance. She remarks that the idea can be identified as early as Homer's tragic heroes: 8/30/64 In ancient religion all significant behaviour was acc[ord]ing to a divine prototype... A) Homer on volition (cf. Snell [the German classicist Bruno Snell, author of *The Discovery of Mind in Greek Philosophy and Literature*] B) Tragedy A causal analysis A god wills > humans act No conception of roles. Modern idea of individuality < > role-playing (i.e., self-consciousness) (David Reiff's punctuation, Sontag 2013: 28). (Sontag's remark accords with the arguments for Homeric concepts of individual decision-making capacities made by classicists Shirley Sullivan and Christopher Gill, for example, in Chapter Three) In Chapter Two, it was illustrated that Sontag saw that

indirect and variable and often shrouded in doubt, she dealt with and wrote about a self that was felt to exist. Not only were there tensions between her and the society she lived in, there were 'inner' tensions that existed within herself:

8/12/67 The inner life is too complex, too various, too fluid... we're stuck with a soft but still largely determinate (especially determinate with regard to size + dimension + shape) material presence in the world—almost wholly inadequate to these processes which then become 'inner' processes. (i.e., far from wholly manifested, needing to be discovered, inferred; capable of being hidden, etc.) Our bodies become vessels, then - and masks. [...] Which becomes a habit - becomes installed, to then re-influence the 'inner life.' (Sontag 2013: 233)

Sontag experiences her 'inner life' as in conflict with her 'material presence', this was a tension that merely exacerbated already 'complex' "'inner" processes'.⁵ Sontag's reflections on the self illustrate that (though elusive and variable, even, illusory) it was a significant issue for her. In the entry below, Sontag treats the self as an 'inevitability' in writers' material and, simultaneously, observes the inherently contradictory and complex business of what the self might be. Can it confidently reflect back on itself? Is it a reasoning thing? Is it also a promiscuously emotional thing? Are there forces outside it, or is it all 'inner'?

2/9/77 The only material that seems to have any character of inevitability is the writer's own consciousness. 18th century: 'reason' not motivational distinction between a sentiment and passion/emotion; sentiments are calm passions (e.g. benevolence, self-interest, sympathy) - see [the Earl of] Shaftesbury, [David] Hume, and Rousseau - discovery of the plasticity of the emotions [In the margin:] imagination as a moral faculty Compare the Greeks: reason is motivational emotions are of two types - those expressing the person + those understood as invasive, alien (we don't make this distinction - everything is 'inner'). [Reiff's brackets] (Sontag 2013: 416)

Sontag's 'inner' self was sometimes felt to be uncomfortably and uncontrollably variable. Thus, her sense of an autonomous self was, contrarily, felt to be in the

for a woman to behave too freely would – by 'cultural definition' – meet with disapprobation (Sontag 2013: 281). She saw the social restrictions on her freedoms as a woman (Sontag 2013: 314).

⁵ Mind-body duality was introduced, in Chapter Three, as a Cartesian-type binary of the 'inner' mind and the physical body. The concept of an embodied self – a self that is conceptualised as both psychological and physical – was also explored in Chapter Three. It is an idea Sontag was familiar with: 11/26/65 'Knowing has to do with an embodied consciousness (not just consciousness) – this is the great neglected issue in phenomenology from Descartes + Kant through Husserl + Heidegger – Sartre + Merleau-Ponty have begun to take it up.' (Sontag 2013 : 151)

control of others and out of her control. Our self is not always within our control and a person's claim to have complete free-will over the self, let alone the world, is a lingering question.⁶

That same centrality of self, the obstinacy of such an amorphous notion, is at the core of Marcus Aurelius' deliberately introspective writing. This is, like Sontag's, a self that is felt to exist and yet slips from view when one reflects on it. Aurelius wrote doubtfully about his self: 'What are you, yourself?' (Book 8.40) But behind this doubt was its opposite: belief. Asking the question - 'What are you, yourself?' - is both questioning oneself and a reassertion of the experience of self. The idea that there is no-self, explored in some Humanist and much 'post-modern' philosophy and literature, is challenged by Aurelius: 'Nothing proceeds from nothing, just as nothing returns to nothing, so our intelligence also has come from some particular source.' (Book 4.4)⁷ In the following entry Aurelius reflects on the many different 'me's' he could be at any one time, but at no point does Aurelius doubt that the consciousness he reflects on are parts of 'me': 'Examine yourself as follows: what is presently to be found in that part of me which is called the ruling centre? And whose soul do I have at present? That of a child? That of an adolescent? That of a woman, of a tyrant, of a domestic animal, of a wild beast?' (Book 5: 11) It is worth noting that Aurelius' use of a variety of first-person and second-person pronouns, in both their subjective and objective cases, is the type of self-reflective grammatical technique Sontag observed in Pavese's self-reflection and diaries in the previous chapter.

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag accepted that introspection, or to 'Know thyself' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.18.17), is an important and unavoidable personal, moral, and intellectual mission of being human.⁸ Sontag believed that in

⁶ Schopenhauer, in particular, dealt with the idea of unruly, self-rule. See introduction to the thesis, footnote 11 for further references.

⁷ The idea - 'nothing proceeds from nothing' - endures. The idea precedes Aurelius' comment. An early example of it can be found in the Greek philosopher Parmenides' work circa 530 BC. It recurs around one thousand and six hundred years, after Aurelius writes about the idea, in Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*. King Lear says that 'nothing can come from nothing' (*King Lear* Act 1, Scene 1).

⁸ Michael Foucault was interested in the idea of 'training consciousness' in classical and contemporary contexts. In 'Technologies of the Self', referred to in the introduction to the thesis, he distinguishes between the intentions of the Delphic edict to 'Know thyself' as a form of care of the self, and the contemporary equivalent that stresses the self-reflective: 'just as there are different forms of care, there are different forms of self.' (Foucault 1988: 19) Classical concepts of 'Know thyself', according to Foucault, had an ethical (rather than an egotistical) emphasis. Contemporary self-knowledge is, according to Foucault, solipsistic. It has a moral dimension, for instance, in theological contexts (where someone might confess themselves and their sins to a diary). However, this is not, according to Foucault, caring for the self, this is knowing the self

the past such 'training' of the self was a social requirement and that exchanges between the self and society were - in certain contexts – positive. Her description of an advantageous relationship between the individual and their society needs to be balanced with Sontag's wariness of, 'the forms of my consciousness, the psychic forms of my culture' (Sontag 2013: 274): 2/15/70 'Before the "school" [before eighteenth-century schooling methods in the West] there were collective forms of training consciousness in all traditional societies: ritual, pilgrimage, begging, silence, liturgy' [Square brackets mine] (Sontag 2013: 272). In yet another nuance to Sontag's appraisal (of the relationship between the 'inner' self and the 'collective' or 'culture' she was a part of) she saw that there were disadvantages for the individual who did not take - even a small part - in 'collective forms' of engagement (Sontag 2013: 272). These were loneliness and an infringement of useful social 'rituals' and rules: 12/7/77 'Everyone talks of rights (human rights, etc)... There is only one social thinking... or individualism... a profoundly asocial view of the world... The lonely figures everywhere – who uphold the asocial position' (the entry is written extempore and is scrappy, Sontag 2013: 440).

Chapter Three included discussion of various types of human interdependence between 'inner' and 'outer', 'public' and 'private'; from both classical and contemporary perspectives. A Stoic type of self-knowledge that led to self-development (oikeiosis) included the idea that behaving well towards your own self, and towards others', supported the health of the individual as well as society. Aurelius practiced this Stoic form of self-improvement in his *Meditations*.⁹ The more contemporary philosophies of Strawson and Taylor described how a person's self-definition - in part - relied on awareness of self and awareness of others. In this view, the social aspect of being a person included being aware of one's affect on others. This in turn supported awareness of one's ability to autonomously evaluate and select how to react or behave towards others and informed one's moral outlook, both of which informed how the person viewed their

so as to punish the self. It is a self-obsessive knowledge of self. Christopher Gill offers insightful critique of Foucault's views on these issues, see: (Gill 2006: 334-5)

⁹ Sontag's interest in classical Greek philosophy is clear in her diaries, she refers to Aristotle at least five times. For further reference see: (Sontag 2013: 50, 103, 417, and 421). And to classical Greek thought, more generally on numerous occasions. For further reference see: (Sontag 2013: 28, 48, 188, 416, 448, and 468).

self (Strawson 2008: 14). Aurelius' and Sontag's view of the relationship between the individual and society is explored in depth in section three of this chapter.

Though Sontag approved of certain types of self-examination and 'training', she was aware of the dangers of self-absorption (Sontag 2013: 272): 2/15/70 'Dialectic of the relation between conscious and consciousness: - function of language (language promotes consciousness/ an increase of consciousness is not only philosophically debilitating (cf. Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground, Nietzsche), but, more importantly, morally debilitating)' (Sontag 2013: 271). Sontag's introspection could be masochistic. So, in another contradiction of the self, as described by Sontag in her deliberately introspective diaries, introspection was something that could be both a help and a hindrance to the improvement and equanimity of self.¹⁰ Self-criticism can also be found in Marcus Aurelius' self-commands which held equal amounts of advice and accusation.¹¹ Like Sontag, Aurelius' self-criticism was often sharpened by his awareness of social obligation. At Book 5.10, Aurelius writes how it is not easy to 'bear oneself': 'Turn next to the character of your associates, of whom even the most agreeable are hard to endure, not to mention the fact that it is not at all easy even to bear with oneself.' (Book 5.10) He was always his own best critic: 'Will there ever come a day, my soul, when you are good, and simple, and at one, and naked, and clearer to see than the body which envelops you?' (Book 10.1)

It is perhaps a surprise to find that Marcus Aurelius writing almost 2,000 years ago had, firstly, a strong sense of a sentient self and, secondly, that his notion of a self was a puzzle of contradictions, including the idea that the self is something that can be controlled and is out of one's control, or that the self is what one thinks it is and what one learns from another. He is a surprise because he discusses such dilemmas of self, in detail, so early. Sontag is a surprise because, immersed as

¹⁰ Further examples of Sontag's description of the type of self-reflection that borders on egotism, the type Mansfield referred to at the beginning of this chapter, can be found throughout Sontag's diaries. Sontag criticises herself for a fetishisation of the self and morality: 2/18/70 'I've made a moral criticism of my moral consciousness. Meta-idolatry... This entry seems to be devoted to self-criticism—I mean, meta-self-criticism.' (Sontag 2013: 290) And 2/15/70 'I make an idol of my moral consciousness. My pursuit of the good is corrupted by the sin of idolatry.' (Sontag 2013: 272).

¹¹ The *Meditations* had instructional value for Marcus Aurelius. He used the phrases 'you must' and 'I must' as self-commands. He was commanding himself to remain attuned to his self-control and reason and he was so according to Stoic philosophical principles. Stoicism advocated practicing one's free-will and reason in accordance with natural Reason so that one might be eudemonic or reach full oikeiosis (see Chapter Three for further reference). This desire to fulfil the potential of the self is rather like Sontag's desire to be in the, 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280).

she was in 'post-modern' discourse, she discusses herself in much the same way, so recently.

3. Whose self?

As was alluded to in the previous section, Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag wrestled with the degree to which the autonomous self was independent of or dependent on the outer world. They detected that the world influenced their self (to the point where the outer in some sense formed their inner being), and that their actions affected those around them. Chapter Two introduced the idea that both were, in different ways, significant public figures with public functions beyond those of people less high profile. Aurelius was an emperor and Sontag was a professional critic. One's public self must be in large part a public confection or conceit: one adopts personae fit to meet and work in the world. However, this becomes a private as well as a public affair; Sontag describes dressing her mind in the same way she dressed herself to meet the world: 'Not to give up on the new sensibility (Nietzsche, Wittgenstein; Cage; [Marshall] McLuhan) though the old one lies waiting, at hand, like the clothes in my closet each morning when I get up.' [Sontag's punctuation] (Sontag 2013: 73) Aurelius and Sontag conducted themselves in public in a certain way. Both saw that they also thought of themselves in ways that were externally influenced. Aurelius exemplifies the struggle to maintain autonomy of thought whilst meeting external duties and circumstance: 'In all that you undertake, you must look on things and act in such a way that at the same time you ensure that the duties imposed on you by circumstances are accomplished and your powers of thought are fully exercised.' (Book 10.9)¹² And in characteristically self-critical and intellectually-critical mode, Sontag wonders to what degree the individual and society are separate:

12/7/77 What we call nihilism (now) I simply thought. Everyone talks of rights (human rights, etc) [...] There is only social thinking (accepting 'society') or individualism - a profoundly asocial view of the world. The lonely figures everywhere - many of whom wouldn't have liked each other - who uphold the asocial position. Oscar Wilde. Benjamin. Adorno. Cioran. (Sontag 2013: 440)

¹² Self-preoccupation is, in the context of eudemonia, also a social mission: to be good and to flourish one must demonstrate virtue inwardly and outwardly.

Aurelius and Sontag felt that the world was also coherently to be discussed as 'out there' and defined as somehow separate from the self. Sontag thought there would be no 'outer' bodies if some part of the person was not meant to be 'inner'. Her inner part was her 'subjectivity': 8/12/67 'The transformation of my subjectivity. If the outside corresponded to the inner life in people, we couldn't have "bodies" as we do.' (Sontag 2013: 233) Aurelius, in characteristically Stoic language, challenged the 'outside' to have an affect on him: 'Let anything from outside that so wishes happen to the parts of me which can be affected by this event; for it is up to them... But I myself, if I do not suppose that anything bad has happened to me, have yet to suffer any harm; and it is open to me not to make that supposition.' (Book 7.14)¹³ Aurelius and Sontag accepted the idea that the self has inherited traits. As Aurelius observed in the passage above, the 'outside' affected 'myself'. The following section illustrates, that the pair return often to the ways in which the 'inner' self and the 'outer' world complement, but also conflict with each other.

Marcus Aurelius and his world

At times, Marcus Aurelius accepted that he was a man and type defined by his contexts: he seemed content to fulfil his imperial duties; the expectations of his peers, family, and friends; and to live in accordance with social conventions. In Pierre Hadot's opinion Aurelius would have been well-versed in and unavoidably bound to classical Greek philosophical and literary rhetoric and rules, particularly those of Stoicism:

In antiquity, the rules of discourse were rigorously codified. In order to say what he wanted to say, an author had to say it in a specific way, in accordance with traditional models, and according to rules prescribed by rhetoric or philosophy. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, for instance, is not the spontaneous outpourings of a soul that wants to express its thoughts

¹³ This is a typically Stoic reflection on one's own autonomous and decision-making powers in a predetermined and providential natural order.

immediately, but rather an exercise accomplished in accordance with definite rules. (Hadot 1998: IX)¹⁴

There were and are 'rules' in society. There are also consequences for not adhering to these rules. Knowledge of the rules, and that of breaking them, filters into individual cognition. However, one may still sense oneself ignoring such rules or acting and thinking in defiance of, or in obedience, to them. Aurelius' self-reflection is hardly well-described as normative: it neither adhered to set philosophical ideas on the self nor seems to have evolved according to a coherent design. Marcus Aurelius evidently conformed to classical literary conventions when he chose the form hypomnemata for his *Meditations*. At other times, Aurelius seems to have stood outside both literary and social convention. He wrote about his own thoughts and views and adopted unconventional attitudes; he also questioning what he had learnt or observed. Georg Misch wrote that Aurelius' intellectual and literary originality came once he had broken with the conventions of classical rhetoric: 'Original as it seems to us, this intellectual attitude came, as it were, automatically to him after he had made the breach with rhetoric and decided in favour of philosophy.' (Misch 1950: 446) As shall shortly become apparent, Aurelius was both capable of living in, 'accordance with definite rules' and of being 'original'.

Aurelius was deeply conscious of his duties as a Roman, an emperor, and a man. In Chapter Two, we found his peers and subsequent biographers believed him to be serious on all those fronts. He was certainly explicit that just as being, for example, a Roman helped define him, so he must also live out that role in action:

At every hour devote yourself in a resolute spirit, as befits a Roman and a man, to fulfilling the task in hand with a scrupulous and unaffected dignity, and with love for others, and independence and justice; and grant yourself a respite from all other preoccupations. And this will be achieved if you perform every action as though it were your last, freed from all purpose and wilful deviation from the rule of reason, and free from

¹⁴ In this passage, Hadot is describing Marcus Aurelius' adherence to Epictetus' three part rules on how to deal with 'impressions' (Hadot 1998: 232). The three part rule was applied by Stoics as they attempted to remain 'Stoical' (a term still used in contemporary parlance) in the face of adversity – or in the face of adverse emotions that were painful to experience, internally.

duplicity, self-love, and dissatisfaction with what is allotted to you.
(Book 2.5)

Aurelius' concern with how to 'Know thyself' - internally - had a public dimension and it was one that he had to gracefully accept would remain thankless: 'It's a king's part to do good and be ill-spoken of.' (Book 7.36)¹⁵ In Chapter Three, responsibility to others in conjunction with one's responsibility to oneself, were described as Stoic tenets. Such tenets were in keeping with the Delphic edict to 'Know thyself'. There was a reciprocal dialogue between the individual and the collective and this was an emulation of Stoicism's holistic cosmic design: man and world and divine acted together. Marcus Aurelius' writes repeatedly of the benefits of cosmic submission:

Constantly think of the universe as a single living being, comprised of a single substance and a single soul; and how all things issue into the single perception of this being, and how it accomplishes all things through a single impulse; and how all things work together to cause all that comes to be, and how intricate and densely woven is the fabric formed by their interweaving. (Book 4.40)¹⁶

Stoicism taught, and Aurelius appears to have accepted, that the human world is a subset of a much larger providential cosmos, whose rules one must attempt to perceive and obey. And yet, even as Aurelius tried to be a good Stoic, the Stoic creed itself instilled and demanded a degree of rebelliousness or at least autonomy on the part of man. Stoicism can be described in contemporary terms as a compatibilist philosophy. Aurelius' writing shows a man entirely capable of questioning a philosophy he also admired.

Whilst the Stoic cosmos was providential (its rules and outcomes predetermined by divine reason) at Book 12.3, Marcus Aurelius seems to accept Epictetus' claims for the power of a person's free-will as an integral part of the self.¹⁷ Aurelius encourages himself to practice his freedom of will or more precisely (and a little

¹⁵ In Chapter Two, it was observed that Marcus Aurelius was acutely aware of his responsibility to those around him (Book 9.42). In addition to these social and political responsibilities, Aurelius felt he had a philosophical and moral responsibility to consider his role in the world.

¹⁶ Further philosophical and classical Greco-Roman descriptions of the natural order can be found at (Books 7.9, 9.8, and 9.22).

¹⁷ See Chapter Three, section nine, for discussion of the Stoic conception of self.

paradoxically) he encourages himself to strive for volitional and well-reasoned choice-making in line with Stoic principles. He seeks to train his will to put away from itself - 'the vortex outside' - and thinks that if he can achieve this separation he will, 'die in calm'. He wanted to be his own man, exercising his own reason and acting accordingly:

There are three things of which you are composed: body, breath, and mind. Of these the first two are your own in as far as it is your duty to take care of them; but only the third is your own in the full sense. So, if you put away from yourself... all that is attached to you independently of your will, and all that the vortex whirling around outside you sweeps in its wake, so that the power of your mind, thus delivered from the bonds of fate, may live a pure and unfettered life alone with itself doing what is just... then you will be able to pass at least the time that is left to you until you die in calm and kindness. (Book 12.3)

One could say Aurelius respected and often wanted to conform to Stoic philosophy. However, something in him – perhaps a stubborn sense of autonomy – made him a rebel:

Realities are concealed, so to say, behind such a veil that not a few philosophers, and those of no mean quality, have supposed them to be wholly beyond our comprehension, while even Stoics themselves find them hard to comprehend; and every assent to sense impressions is subject to alteration – for where are we to find a person who is never subject to error? (Book 5.10)

It is commonly agreed that Marcus Aurelius was not an original philosopher, in the sense that he was not deliberately carving out his own type of philosophy. It is also agreed that he was a fairly good pupil of Stoicism.¹⁸ He was not consciously replacing conventional philosophical theory (or rebelling against Stoicism) with a wholly new self-created theory. However, he thoroughly absorbed those aspects of Stoicism which permitted or mandated self-sufficiency in thought.

¹⁸ Pierre Hadot and Christopher Gill take the view that Marcus Aurelius was not developing his own type of philosophical theory. In Gill's introduction to his translation of *Meditations* Books 1-6, in the *Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers* (2013) series, Gill takes the view that Aurelius has a clear goal for his *Meditations* and that this goal is, in part, directed by Stoic learning and the quest for oikeiosis. Gill prefers not to over-schematise Aurelius' *Meditations* by creating a forced alignment of the entries with Stoic doctrine (as developed by Epictetus). Gill focuses on Aurelius' overarching ambitions for 'oikeiosis' and 'eudemonia' (explained in depth in Chapter Three) and does not see the *Meditations* as systematically advocating a single philosophical stance. This differs from Hadot's approach. Hadot describes, in depth, how Marcus Aurelius follows Epictetus 'three-part' philosophical exercise of dealing with outside 'impressions' (Hadot 1998: 101-183).

As this section has illustrated, Stoic philosophical theory added to Aurelius' self-description and he questioned its authority. He saw that there was a tension between his belief in various philosophical truths and his ambivalence about them. (It was a tension he noted rather than a dilemma he did much to resolve in his *Meditations*.) The classicist Elizabeth Asmis in, *The Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius*, succinctly summarises the overriding sense Aurelius gives of his philosophical perspectives:

Marcus Aurelius has an unshakable belief in his intellectual self. For the rest, he has a range of beliefs, carrying different degrees of conviction and admitting much variation. Reflecting upon Stoic ethical doctrines in a broad philosophical context, he mixes doubt with conviction and makes additions and alterations. His philosophical statements are ever-changing responses to his circumstances; they are fluid, yet remarkably coherent as an expression of his faith in human reason. (Asmis 1989: 2252)

As Asmis indicates, Aurelius reflected on Stoicism in a, 'broad philosophical context'; that he did so illustrates he was keen to learn from others. He also felt that he himself was capable of intellectually robust thought. That he did so indicates he had some faith in the autonomy of his reasoning powers. This is demonstrated, for example, when he experimented with competing thoughts and theories and made choices about which he preferred. Though Aurelius tended to favour Stoicism, he also looked to Epicurean philosophy for moral and spiritual guidance. Epicureanism was commonly seen as running against the grain of Stoicism and is referred to in the *Meditations* with both approval and disapproval.¹⁹ It was a philosophy that believed in a world that could accommodate the indeterminacy of chance. Contrariwise, Stoics believed that the world was wholly providential (in the sense of being divinely Reasoned). At Book 4.27, Aurelius dwells on the distinctions between Stoic and Epicurean world views and the order that 'subsists' in him: 'Either an ordered universe or a heterogeneous mass heaped together which forms no proper order, or can it be that a certain order subsists in you, but disorder in the whole, and that too when things are distinct and

¹⁹ Though the two philosophies were seen as opposing, Christopher Gill has written extensively on how the two converge. For further reference see: (Gill 2006: 177).

yet intra-fused and bound together by a common sympathy?' (Book 4.27) Aurelius evaluated two opposing cosmological philosophies: the Reasoned or unreasoned universe.²⁰ He wondered which of the philosophies was more convincing and weighed up explanations and evidence for both.

Marcus Aurelius felt both that he had some intellectual autonomy and enjoyed learning from others. But he was concerned that his thoughts, emotions, and appetites were not his to control or were too much a consequence of what others thought. He felt he was too much at the beck and call of others' opinions of him: 'You ill-treat yourself. O my soul; and no occasion will be left for you to do yourself due honour. For the life of every one of us lasts but a moment and yours is almost done, and yet you have no respect for yourself, and allow your happiness to depend on what passes in the souls of other people.' (Book 2.6) He asked himself if his over-dependence was because he paid too much attention to, and mishandled his experiences of, the material world: '[I]s it that perhaps bodily things still have a hold on you? Reflect that the mind as soon as it draws in on itself and comes to know its own power no longer associates itself with the motions be they rough or smooth.' (Book 4.3) He reminded himself to remain focused and not allow himself to be distracted from his eudemonia (defined in Chapter Three to mean 'human flourishing') by 'externals': 'Dig within; for within you lies the fountain of good, and it can always be gushing forth if only you always dig.' (Book 7.59) It was important to Aurelius that he exercise his sense of personal autonomy and reason because, as Chapter Three emphasised, developing these faculties augmented one's potential for eudemonia and positive self-development. According to Stoicism, Aurelius' powers of reason were, to a degree, his own. However, as has been observed in Chapter Three, his powers of reason were an off-shoot of the natural Reason that was the Stoic cosmos: so man could, potentially, master his own reason, but was granted this freedom by another authority. In Epicurean philosophy the final arbiter of man's reason was chance, so even in this philosophy Aurelius' reason was not entirely his to control, but even so Aurelius

²⁰ A closer reading reveals that, though Aurelius was keen to explore alternatives, he starts with and returns to the principle that universal nature is Stoical. Hadot writes that Aurelius' appreciation is distinctly Stoical and that he only introduces Epicureanism as a means of comparison (Hadot 1998: 150). However, that Aurelius makes the comparison at all supports the idea that he was capable of original thought.

wrote as though he were confident in his capacity to try and reason for himself, even if that reasoning was fallible.

The *Meditations* hold further examples of Marcus Aurelius' inclusive approach to philosophy. The degree to which Aurelius was or was not a Stoic is not of primary interest. Central to our purpose is establishing Aurelius as inquisitive and open-minded. He was not a confused syncretist nor was he an automaton. In his *Meditations* Aurelius gave voice to personal philosophical reflections. He received, reasoned with, and generated a range of experiences and theories. That he weighed up various philosophical evidence and explanations indicates that, despite his personal doubts as to his intellectual powers and the extent to which they had been formed by the views of others, he felt he had some intellectual autonomy.

It was the moral and spiritual significance of 'Know thyself' that led Marcus Aurelius to examine so assiduously how he himself and his morality were formed: to what degree 'bodily things' or 'other people' influenced his self and his evaluations of what that self was and should be. If Aurelius could better control and reason with this interface (between his opinions and those he found in the world) he felt that maybe he could correctly and confidently form himself into a happier and more virtuous man.

Susan Sontag and her world

Like Marcus Aurelius, Susan Sontag was conscious of how the world impacted on one's conception of self: 'I am my history' (Sontag 2009: 56). However, she concludes this entry with: 'In my moral desire to understand my past, to be fully conscious I become precisely what my history demonstrates that I am not – free.' (Sontag 2009: 56) The passage is contradictory: she claims she is both free and not-free. It contains in it two competing senses. On one hand, there is Sontag's sense of 'freedom', from her background. On the other, is her sense that she is her 'history'. Theology, philosophy, and society all had an influence on Sontag's self-reflection. Sontag describes how: 2/17/70 'Protestant culture proposed the self as a mystery to the self. Hence, the rise of introspection, the keeping of journals.'

(Sontag 2013: 280)²¹ 'Protestant culture' subverted the 'full authentic private self', or the type of self Sontag felt to be valuable (Sontag 2013: 280). Introspective diary-writing is described in this entry as a means of preserving oneself from theological ideology. However, as we found in Hellbeck's analysis of Soviet era diaries, in the previous chapter, diaries can be a tool of the powerful state, as well as the self-writer, or in Sontag's case, a tool of church and synagogue:

2/17/70 Protestant-Jewish culture uses work. One is allowed to tune out on the full authentic private self in work - in the fulfilment of the routines of a vocation, a profession, a job - because itself is a moral imperative: satisfying the requirements of the discipline of the self and the necessity to relate communally to others. Work is experienced as discipline - the background of which is asceticism - even though it also gives pleasure. (Sontag 2013: 280)

Asceticism (self-control) is not, in Sontag's view, a diminution of the self; it is the self's necessary role in the world. (Asceticism is a classical term that might well have been familiar to Aurelius.) Sontag posits that the self has inherited obligations to fulfil particular 'communal' and 'moral imperatives' and can set aside obsessive self-examination and simply 'tune in' to its 'routine' roles (that is once - what she describes as the - 'full authentic private self' has been tuned out, Sontag 2013: 280). She mentions the 'pleasure' derived from 'disciplining' the self in accordance with the Protestant work-ethic.²² As becomes clear, though Sontag recognised that the contexts in which she lived influenced her self-reflection and perhaps – at times – had certain merits, she also felt some freedom to not submit to (or unintentionally derive pleasure from) prescribed roles.

An additional influence on Sontag, with more relevance to her self-reflection than Protestantism, was philosophy, particularly that of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre (philosophers who can be loosely labelled 'Existentialist'). She mentions Nietzsche and Sartre on forty occasions in her second volume of diaries; she has 'aspirations' to their descriptions of morality and both are part of her 'private

²¹ See Chapter One for reference to the rise of the puritan diary form. Todd described the genre as one of self-fashioning; in the 1500s religious individuals choose to practice the strength of their belief in their diaries. For further reference see: (Todd 1992: 239). The entry at the beginning of this chapter is from Richard Rogers' puritan diary, in which he bemoans his inability to fashion himself fully according to religious principles.

²² The remark brings to mind Foucault's power model. In *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, Foucault describes how the 'slave' willingly submits to the dominating force of another's power and, in some cases, derives pleasure from this submission. For further reference see bibliography for Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (Foucault 1976: 85).

pantheon' (Sontag 2013: 271). (Existentialist perspectives, pertinent to the work of the thesis, were expanded on in Chapter Two.) Sontag's blending of Existential philosophical ideas with her personal self-reflection reminds us that Aurelius turned to Stoic philosophy in his. An important tenet of Nietzsche's, Heidegger's, and Sartre's philosophies, for Sontag, was the idea of the self's potential to transform itself (the significance of the transformation of the self, for Sontag, is explored in detail in section six of this chapter).²³ Sontag, borrowing from Existential philosophers' terminology and ideas, remarks on a PhD proposal devoted to exploring the self and its 'transcendence' and 'manipulation':

8/7/66 Harvard [Throughout the 1960s, Sontag, who had left Harvard having completed her coursework and exams for a PhD but without writing her thesis, toyed with the idea of doing one.] Thinking about self-transcendence in modern French philosophy (Blanchot, Bataille, Sartre) More precise thesis topic: Self-Consciousness, Consciousness of Self, and Self-Transcendence in Contemporary French philosophy [Henri] Bergson, Sartre, Bataille, Blanchot, Bachelard role of self-manipulation role of language and silence role of art, images (sight) role of religion role of concrete erotic relations role of objectivity, impartiality. [Reiff's brackets] (Sontag 2013: 198)²⁴

As well as juggling theological and intellectual influences Susan Sontag was buffeted by 1940s social prejudices, some of which were introduced in Chapter Two. In 1949, Susan Sontag is working towards, 6/29/49 'acceptance of my homosexuality'. She did so in a society and period which were intolerant of homosexuality (Sontag 2009: 40). The following passage is an excerpt from a conversation she has with 'F' (the diaries do not tell us who 'F' was), and sums up the impact of societal conventions on Sontag's sexuality: "Your only chance of being normal is to call a halt right now. No more women, no more bars... You won't like it at all at first, but force yourself to do it... it is your only chance. And during that time don't see any women".' (Sontag 2009: 44)

²³ Chapter Two included an analysis of what Existentialism, especially the philosophies of Heidegger and Sartre, meant for Susan Sontag. A key precept for Sontag was the 'project of self-transformation' (Sontag 2013: 315). The link between this 'project' of cultivating a 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280) and Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophies of 'sein'/'da-sein' (Heidegger) and the being 'in-itself'/'for-itself' (Sartre), have been explored in the footnotes to the diary excerpts at the beginning of Chapters Two, Four, Five, and Six. It is worth noting that the idea that the self is ever 'private' would seem to contravene Heidegger's idea, one he inherited from Husserl, that 'da-sein' is very much a 'being-in-the-world'. For further reference see bibliography for Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre 1992: 130, 295, 723, and 791) and Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996: 26-29, 32-39, and 226). For further discussion of these ideas see: (Warburton 2010: 210-221) and (Scruton 2002: 61, 63, 72-82, 189-199, 269-280, and 269-274).

²⁴ For further reference to Sontag's views on 'self-manipulation' see, 'The Death of Tragedy': (Sontag 2013a: 132).

Susan Sontag saw that - to some degree - her background had channelled her in a particular direction: 1/16/65 'Becoming inhuman (committing the inhuman act) in order to become humane... realizing that one must go against one's instincts (or training) in order to get what one wants' (Sontag 2013: 70). The passage reminds us of Aurelius' regret at having to: '[B]lot imagination; put a curb on impulse; quench desire; ensure that your ruling centre remains under its own control.' (Book 9.7) Sontag was also pleased to find that despite her training: 2/17/70 'I can analyze the cultural (Jewish, American, psychoanalytic, etc.) forms of my consciousness, not just their sources in my individual psychobiography.' (Sontag 2013: 274) It is clear that, occasionally, Sontag was confident about her autonomy and her powers of self-description. In 1949, Sontag enjoys something like an epiphany: 5/25/49 'A thought occurred to me today - so obvious, so always obvious! It was absurd to suddenly comprehend it for the first time - I felt rather giddy, a little hysterical: - There is nothing, nothing that stops me from doing anything except myself.' (Sontag 2009: 29) In this moment, 'nothing' could stop her from being whom she wanted; except, in another contradiction of the self, herself.

Sontag is aware of the influence of 'training' and 'history' and equally aware of her own 'freedoms', she is interested in this on an intellectual level as well as a personal level (Sontag 2013: 272, 2009: 56, and 2013: 459):

4/26/80 Two ideas - "the idea of the artistic vocation, of the artist who has renounced worldly ambitions in order to dedicate himself/ herself to values that cannot be realized by commercial society" and the idea of cultural or artistic iconoclasm, the artist's alienation from society, art as transgression, adversary art, avant-garde - these have been conflated. Both seem irrelevant or unreal to most artists now. Both are scorned by art critics. But they're not the same. (Sontag 2013: 511)

The idea that the artist, renouncing ambition and 'commercial society', is producing transgressive art is a conflated trope of alienation that Sontag thought outdated and badly judged by 'art critics'. In Sontag's view, the artist is not the same as society; they are different beasts and not necessarily locked in conflict. Sontag, using language redolent with structuralist intent, wrote: 4/27/71 'The

“sacred” + the bourgeois myth of the solitary alienated artist-creator are antithetical. Experiencing the sacred is the opposite of being alienated. It is being integrated. Always implies relations to others—“a public”.’ (Sontag 2013: 320)²⁵ Susan Sontag lamented that the often over-simplified analysis of the ‘inner’ and ‘full authentic private self’ and its dialogue with its contexts meant that: 2/25/79 ‘There are no exciting theories of relation of society to self (sociological, historical, philosophical) Not SO—no one is doing it’ (Sontag 2013: 280 and 486). A further example of Sontag’s appreciation of the complex dialogue between oneself and society can be found in her view that the self can be interpreted as differentiating itself from the other by dint of its knowledge of the other, as Sontag remarks when comparing two actresses: 8/24/64 ‘They highlight each other by their differences.’ (Sontag 2013: 22)²⁶

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag illustrate that their reflection on an autonomous self-concept is composed of multiple contradictory and elusive ideas. They experience a self. However, they are not sure exactly what that self is. The verisimilitude of concepts of self and autonomy are often brought into question. They experience the self as in harmony with the world, but also in conflict with it. This conflict is not confined to that between the ‘outer’ and ‘inner’, it is within the ‘inner’ as well. Importantly, they feel a responsibility to understand the nature and content of self so as to live better and better explain their actions and experiences, not least to themselves.

An argument in the thesis has been that deliberately introspective writing is often praised by critics for the ways in which it celebrates, augments, and draws forth autonomous voices; and for the ways in which it nourishes, in Spacks’ terms, the self-writers’ ‘dignity’ and ‘authenticity’ (Spacks 2003: 48). In Sontag’s terms, this

²⁵ Sartre explores the relationship between the artist and their intended audience: to have a reader and to earn money the writer is forced to conform to bourgeois expectations. For further reference see bibliography for Sartre, *What is Literature?* (Sartre 1967: 121-136). For Sartre the artist is only free in a ‘classless’ society, here it is not so much a problem of the ‘other’ more a problem of the form of that ‘other’ (Sartre 1967: 156). Reading the literary opinions of Sartre, a philosopher Sontag admired, in conjunction with the passage in which she addresses the relationship of the artist and their audience or society adds another dimension to Sontag’s view. Where Sartre sees an almost unwitting subservience, on the part of the artist, Sontag sees a shift toward a less simplistic view of the artist in the world, perhaps, like Sartre’s, also structuralist and iconoclastic, but almost certainly also dialogic or multilateral.

²⁶ Sontag’s use of the word ‘difference’ reminds us of Neuman’s ‘poetics of differences’, an approach to self-writing described in Chapter Five. Différance is a term and an idea common to the ‘post-modern’: it is the differences between oneself and ‘others’ that enables self-identification and it is the difference between words (or signs) and that which they signify that bring the adequacy of language into question.

type of writing, especially that which is conducted in private, is a space where the 'full authentic private self' can flourish (Sontag 2013: 280). For these reasons critics of self-writing have described it as being valuable and important for writers and readers. Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag explore challenges that the autonomous and 'full authentic private self' must address and overcome (Sontag 2013: 280). Assuming for the moment that the self is autonomous, Aurelius and Sontag show us that it is unavoidably in dialogue with other autonomies, selves, contexts, and influences. They also show that delineating one's 'full authentic private self' (as described by Sontag) from the 'other' is not an easy or zero-sum game (Sontag 2013: 280).

4. Free-will: Aurelius' and Sontag's autonomy

Susan Sontag and Marcus Aurelius addressed the idea of their free-will at some length and found it an important but confusing concept. It was salient to Aurelius as he formed judgements on how to govern Rome and to Sontag as she chose ways to critically evaluate art. In turn, they were both judged according to the strengths of their arguments. In this way their active intentions, freely willed or not, were connected to them, not least by others, and made their responsibility. At the end of this section their reflection on how their autonomy mattered to them contributes to analysis of whether it matters that the critical approach to self-writing developed in this thesis is the result of free interpretative choices, or not.

Aurelius' autonomy

Marcus Aurelius, as a Stoic, an emperor, and a soldier, was highly aware of the issue of acting autonomously and taking responsibility for one's actions. And he at least sometimes believed that he could and should (Book 9.7). Aurelius praised his will as being an active and 'powerful' part of him: 'Realize that you have something more powerful and more divine within you than the things that give rise to your passions and set you moving like a puppet.' (Book 12.19) He asked: 'What need is there for conjecture when it is within your power?' (Book 10:12) He asserted: 'I remain a free agent and none shall prevent me from doing what I will: and my will is to act according to nature of a rational and sociable creature.' (Book

5.29) In accordance with Epictetus' Stoic doctrine, he boldly stated: "No one can rob us of our free-will", said Epictetus' (Book 11.36). These passages and phrases, and there are many more, highlight the centrality of Marcus Aurelius' conception of his self as having free-will.

However, he also chastised himself for not exercising his free-will and accepted his weaknesses: 'Why then are you troubled? Say to your ruling centre: are you dead, have you gone to ruin, have you become a wild beast, or are you a play-actor, are you running with the herd, are you feeding with it?' (Book 9.39) At Book 7.20, Aurelius worried that his will might overcome him: 'One thing alone worries me, that I myself may do something that the constitution of man does not wish, or otherwise than it wishes it, or which it does not wish at this present moment.' (Book 7.20) At Book 8.39, Aurelius described how it is this free-will that can sometimes 'pit itself against pleasure': 'In the constitution of a rational creature I see no virtue that pits itself against justice; but I see one that can pit itself against pleasure: self-control.' (Book 8.39) So, curiously, he was worried that the virtue of self-control might damage one aspect of the self's fulfilment. In any case, there is a limit to his self-chastisement because to some extent he accepts that there is a limit to his personal responsibility. Even as an emperor, he accepts that he is a slave to a providentially designed cosmos (a cosmos that has a plan for him over which he has little sway); to circumstance; to history and to his social, political, and cultural contexts: 'You were born a slave, you have no voice.' (Book 11.30)

Sontag's autonomy

It has already been remarked that Sontag wrote about how she was her 'history', but also her 'freedom', and that she was uncertain whether she could be both: 'I am my history... in my moral desire to understand my past, to be fully conscious I become precisely what my history demonstrates that I am not – free.' (Sontag 2009: 56) For Sontag, feeling productive was synonymous with the idea that she could exercise free-will: 2/17/70 'Using my mind, something makes me feel active (autonomous). That's good.' (Sontag 2013: 291, her brackets) However, Sontag did not always feel her 'mind' was within her control: 'Just when I think I am regaining my control, recovering myself, it [her self-control] rises up and gives me

a wallop below the belt.' [Square brackets mine] (Sontag 2009: 202) Sontag, like Aurelius, describes how the process of taking responsibility for one's actions is intimately bound up with the degree to which one is in control of oneself.

5. Critics' autonomy and a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism

In this section we apply the issues of free-will explored above to the problem of whether the critic has autonomy. The sharpness of Aurelius' and Sontag's expression of the dilemmas of choice-making and voice help any writer reflect on these issues. In particular, for our purposes, they help us reflect on the ability of critics to formulate autonomous thoughts as they move through the critical exercise. It has been found, in Chapters Three and Four, and in our review of Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing, that a person's free-will is far from absolute. The idea that a person is self-governing and makes *causa sui* judgements (of themselves or of texts) is as resistant to authoritative and unqualified definitions as the nature and content of self. However, the self and free-will have been explored (in Chapters Five and Six) as significant issues in the criticism of self-writing. The issues also figure in examinations of the critical process: a critic who claims a degree of free-will is in a stronger position to also claim that their critical judgements are the product of autonomous thought and reason and, thus, have the value, at least, of being theirs.

This type of meta-criticism is also prompted by Derrida's dissolution of what he saw as the traditional and out-dated idea of a fixed meaning for selves with free-will and then his, paradoxical, assertion of his will in his critical theories. If, following a broadly Humanist view, the critic is granted autonomy then it can also be conceded that he or she owns the process of developing a critical perspective. Conversely, a strict 'post-modern' view would be more inclined to deny such ownership or control to the critic. As Stanley Fish described intention is 'relocated.' (Fish's analysis of authorial 'intention' was examined in Chapter Five, Fish 1991: 13.) It can be observed that most critical perspectives will have taken into consideration current or previous critical perspectives, and in this way criticism is often or usually influenced by the perspectives of others.

Inspired by Aurelius and Sontag and their highly energised discussion of their autonomy and its dilemmas, and as part of the development of a method of critique, this thesis proposes that it is not useful to favour either an approach that advocates for the autonomy of the critic or an approach that dissolves this autonomy (after all neither extreme has been achieved conclusively in the Humanist or 'post-modern' approach). A deliberate eclecticism of critical approach would remind itself that though there are not complete interpretations there are moments in which one interpretation may be argued to be, or seem more, valid than another. Aurelius was at times a conformist Stoic and at other times a highly questioning one; at times Sontag was a highly intellectual critic and at others an intuitive one. These are the dilemmas of wrestling with complex issues that must remain open to a range of interpretations.

That these reflections on free-will (or the lack of it) are significant to developing ideas about the critic is highlighted by the post-colonial literary critic, Edward Said and the Marxist literary critic, Terry Eagleton (both of whom have been referred to and analysed in the thesis, particularly in Chapter Four). Both have been interested in what authority is granted to critics and their critical judgements. Edward Said, describes texts, writers, and critics, as worldly subjects, determined by multiple factors: 'Texts have ways of existing, both theoretical and practical, that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place and society; in short, they are in the world, and hence are worldly. The same is doubtless true of the critic, as reader and as writer.' (Said 1983: 35)

However, and running somewhat contrary to this idea, he was keen to uphold the idea that writers' voices and critical judgements are distinctive and not easily 'reduced' to a collection of circumstances: 'What makes style receivable as the signature of its author's manner is a collection of features variously called idiolect, voice, or more firmly, irreducible individuality.' (Said 1983: 33)²⁷ Said is, somewhat paradoxically, in the position of deconstructing 'voices' and 'society' (in a 'post-modern' manner) whilst, celebrating (in a Humanist manner) the individual's autonomous 'voice'. As was demonstrated in Chapter Four, he took this critical

²⁷ Matthew Clark's work on the self in literature was analysed in Chapters Three and Four, he agrees with Said that an 'author's manner' is discernible. For further reference see: (Clark 2010:10).

route in an effort to rescue the colonized voice from imperialist hegemonies. In Chapters Five and Six, the critics of self-writing, Lejeune, Neuman, and Hellbeck, were also found to have used contradictory critical approaches, without explaining why or in what way the lack of congruency improved their criticism. This is relevant to assessing the critical value of an interpretation; Said argues that critical analysis, to be valuable, must relate to and be anchored in the text and the author's specific location. Thus, firstly, allowing multiple readings (described by Said as 'contrapuntal' readings) which because they are anchored to the text cannot be infinitely multiple and, secondly, allowing some agency to the text and the writer or critic:

What has struck me very forcibly is that... dealing with a text as a significant form, in which - and I put this as carefully as I can - worldliness, circumstantiality, the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are incorporated in the text, are an infrangible part of its capacity for producing and conveying meaning. This means that a text has a specific situation, a situation that places restraints upon the interpreter and his interpretation not because the situation is hidden within the text as a mystery, but rather because the situation exists at the same level of more or less surface particularity as the textual object itself. (Said 1983: 39)²⁸

Said was probably concerned to find a way of reconciling his understanding that writers and critics are in some sense socially-determined in their texts, with his belief that they are also in some sense autonomous. Said, Aurelius, and Sontag all seem keen to grant a degree of autonomy of action, or voice, whilst also pursuing the idea that no voice is entirely 'free'.

Terry Eagleton observes that literary judgements are subjective and always (to borrow Said's phrase) 'enmeshed in circumstance' (Said 1983: 35). Thus, unlike

²⁸ For Said the author and text are not lost in interpretation or discourse, they are an 'infrangible' part of it. This softly compatibilistic dialogue - between the powerful affect of the world and of the agency of the writer, the text, and the reader - permits a range of mediated interpretations prompted by the interplay of these entities. Said argues that our readings may be multiple, but are not infinitely multiple. Some interpretations, and their contradictions, their attackers and defenders, are profounder than others. Said suggests 'contrapuntal readings'; interpretations that consist of a range of interpretations are, 'part of the same composition, but are each distinct.' (Said 1993: 66-67 and 318)

Said, Eagleton seems to be keener to see the critic (and or general reader) and their criticism as socially (or otherwise) determined:

We can drop once and for all the illusion that the category literature is objective, in the sense of being eternally given and immutable... I do not mean that it is unstable because value judgements are "subjective"... Facts are public and unimpeachable, values are private and gratuitous... it will not do to see literature as an objective, descriptive category, neither will it do to say that literature is just what people whimsically choose... for there is nothing whimsical about such kinds of judgements: they have their roots in deeper structures of belief which are apparently unshakeable. (Eagleton 1996: 9)

Said, Sontag, and Aurelius, it has been argued, wanted to be free to grant personal autonomy - in some degree – to themselves or to writers. Eagleton, at least in the mode he adopts here, regards this as an ambition seriously vitiated by 'deeper structures'. The critical approach of deliberate eclecticism would suggest that, given such unreserved elusiveness (and contradictoriness), critics remain open to a range of approaches.

Beyond the question of whether critical judgments are the product of an autonomous voice or of social influence, further questions remain as to their status. One question is whether judgements are reasonable and another is what raises one above another. Aurelius' and Sontag's reflections on their claims to make rational and reasoned judgements about the self and their views on the status of the intellectual, personal, philosophical, or moral judgements of others energises and informs the discussion of how critics can claim that their evaluations have critical merit. The next section explores the ways in which Aurelius and Sontag reasoned with their self as they tried to understand it and improve upon it. In section seven the insights gained, in section six, are deployed as the critical approach advocated in the thesis is expanded on.

6. Reason: Aurelius' and Sontag's self-knowledge as self-transformation

This section is an analysis of Marcus Aurelius' and Susan Sontag's similar attempts to harness the nascent power of self-knowledge and choice-making

(free-will) into something more like self-creation. They reasoned with the self and attempted to identify and know it in order to improve it. For example, Sontag refers to intellectual reason at least thirty times in her diaries and Aurelius refers to it on almost two hundred occasions. They wanted to know the self so as to improve their experience of it and to be better socially, professionally, intellectually, and morally. Their introspective exercise was not an exercise in vanity. The methods they adopted to their self-improvement; the ways in which they evaluated their methods; and their views on the strengths and weaknesses of their powers of reason inform the critical approach developed in the thesis: deliberate eclecticism.

Sontag described her self-improvement as ‘transcendence’ and ‘metamorphosis’ of the self and as moral obligation (Sontag 2013: 64). Her diaries illustrate that she discerned two key reflective routes to her ‘full authentic private self’ and both were problematic (Sontag 2013: 280). In Chapter Six both modes of self-knowledge, and their processes, were applied to the critical approaches she wrestled with. Sontag struggled to balance the merit of analytical and ‘consciousness-laden’ (Sontag 2013: 290) approaches to the self, with the merit of responsive or, what she describes in her diaries as, more ‘spontaneous’ approaches (Sontag 2013: 282 and 291). On one hand, she was uncertain as to the benefits of ‘over-laboured reason’ (Sontag 2013: 290). On the other, Sontag saw ‘healthy reason’ as a ‘fundamental human act’ (Sontag 2013: 135).²⁹ Evidently, Sontag took her personal and professional powers of discernment or ‘healthy reason’ seriously; partly because she considered her critical exercise and her intelligence to be an exercise of her autonomy (Sontag 2013: 135, and 285).³⁰

Aurelius was concerned with a special form of moral Stoic self-improvement: ‘oikeiosis’ (introduced in Chapter Three); i.e., the fashioning of oneself in accordance with natural Reason and one’s own innate reason. In conformity with this Stoic idea, *The Meditations* were, in part, the articulation and exercise of an autonomous re-shaping of the self in line with reason. ‘The rational soul’ was

²⁹ For further reference to Sontag’s use of the term ‘serious’ in her diaries see: (Sontag 2013: 21, 68, 110, 190, 251, 279, 282, 285, 288, 301, 407, 420, and 435). For further reference to Sontag’s use of the word ‘reason’ see: (Sontag 2013: 3, 11, 43, 64, 71, 96, 106, 122, 135, 140, 151, 185, 213, 223, 276, 285, 290, 290, 299, 345-383, 405, 416, 435, 436, 447, 474, and 486).

³⁰ For further reference to Sontag’s use of the terms ‘freedom’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘volition’ (terms she uses over twenty times in her diaries) see: (Sontag 2013: ‘freedom’: 297, ‘autonomy’: 53, 95, 211, 227, 248, 249, 353, 361, 369, 381, 390, 453, 459, 514, 521, and ‘volition’: 27).

Aurelius' goal: 'The properties of the rational soul are these: it sees itself, it articulates itself, it shapes itself according to its will.' (Book 11.1) Aurelius had the Stoic's respect for a cosmos designed by natural Reason and for human reason. Importantly, reason, autonomy, and self were intimately bound together in Stoic estimations of self-hood, and they were so in Sontag's.³¹ It is important to note that Aurelius' and Sontag's confidence, that self-transformation was an enterprise worth undertaking, might seem at odds with their anxieties as to their freedom of manoeuvre.

Marcus Aurelius: 'Know thyself' as self-improvement³²

As has been described in this chapter and Chapter Three, Marcus Aurelius' ability to improve his self was rooted in self-knowledge. Pierre Hadot directly links Stoic ideas of 'Know thyself' to self-transformation and in keeping with the principles for eudemonia and oikeiosis (discussed in Chapter Three) takes the additional step of linking self-transformation to morality:

Thanks to its freedom of judgement – which also implies freedom of desire and of the will – it [the self] stands apart from the flux. The self then, identical with the guiding principle, is raised above the web of destiny...For Aurelius and the Stoics... it is the self's awareness of itself which transforms it, making it pass in succession from the domain of necessity to the domain of freedom and from the domain of freedom... to morality. (Hadot 1998: 113)³³

³¹ In Chapter Three, it was illustrated how Stoics considered natural Reason to be the cosmos and that humans had an innate capacity to enter into this reason if they practiced their freedom to do so. See glossary or Chapter Three for a description of 'oikeiosis', the term for this form of Stoic self-development.

³² To 'know thyself' required knowledge, as has been explored throughout the thesis critical reason or knowledge is not always conceived of as fixed or reliable. This epistemological question is important to anyone making critical judgements or evaluating the self. At Book 5.10, Aurelius questions whether 'reality' is accessible to even the best philosophers, including the Stoics. At Book 6.13, Aurelius writes that though man may have the faculty of reason it is imperfect and may cheat him by being 'false'. Aurelius questions his ability to perceive 'truth' through the use of his (subjective) senses and faculties. However, at Book 4.26 he describes having 'sound reasoning' and at Book 4.4 he describes how, 'if intelligence is common to us, reason too is common to us.' In summary, Marcus assumes he has the faculty of reason and that the reasoning faculty within him is often compromised. This struggle with the verity of our reasoned judgements and reasoning processes persists in philosophy, but also in criticism, especially when human reasoning is considered to be subjective. Reasoning, whether for literary or philosophical ends, is perhaps deductive, reductive, inductive, comparative, shared with a third party or purely subjectively contrived. It can guide, sustain, and comfort us and help create digestible slabs of information. But, there will always be dimensions of human life that elude it. For example, philosophers and neuroscientists, such as Nagel, Greenfield, and Searle in Chapter Three section two, helped illustrate that though we may have standards by which to test and measure realities we may still hold that – ultimately - reasons and realities are bound to be subjective. Thus, even the testing of our ideas through discussion with others, or the data we might test as evidence for our ideas, may still be – ultimately – subjectively contrived (i.e., not independent or real beyond the borders of our minds). However, as Aurelius' reasoning indicates, the practice of reason will carry on regardless and, at different times and for different reasons, one's certainty of a critical judgement will oscillate.

³³ Richard Sorabji, describes how the significance of 'Know thyself' (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995: 1.18.17) in Stoicism was, in part, due to its usefulness to self-transformation. For further reference see: (Sorabji 2006: 51 and 201).

Aurelius' ability to reason was morally important. Aurelius felt that if he could reason correctly with the evidence and explanations before him, he could be confident of his moral evaluations. Aurelius' self-reflection had a moral emphasis which (as Hadot remarks) was in keeping with ideas of eudemonia and oikeiosis: 'Only pay attention, and resolve to act rightly in your own eyes in all that you do; and keep in mind these two points, that how you act is of moral significance, and that the material on which you act is neither good nor bad in itself.' (Book 7.58) The quality of his evaluations (of what his self was or of what was moral) depended on their rightness or intellectual coherence. The degree to which he felt them to be arrived at autonomously lent them added personal significance. This was especially true of Stoicism, in which a person's ability to reason well and then to make good judgements, was intimately bound with the strength of their will. (Again, both 'reason' and 'will' were considered fundamental, if usually half-developed and tricky, aspects of the Stoic self.)

Edward Jeremiah argued, in Chapter Three, that 'Know thyself' and oikeiosis required 'laws', 'self-control', and 'cultivation', what Sontag has referred to as 'asceticism' (Jeremiah 2012: 19 and 117-118). Marcus Aurelius approved of these principles: 'You will soon be dead and you are not yet simple, or unperturbed, or free from the suspicion that things from outside can harm you, nor are you yet gracious to everyone, nor do you yet believe that wisdom lies in one thing alone, in acting righteously.' (Book 4.37) However, he was not sure he would be able to live up to them:

Will there ever come a day, my soul, when you are good, and simple, and at one, and naked, and clearer to see than the body which envelops you? Someday will you enjoy a loving and affectionate disposition?... Will there ever come a day when you are so much a member of the community of gods and human beings as neither to bring any complaint against them nor to incur their condemnation? (Book 10.1)

Aurelius was not always clear on how to improve himself morally or spiritually: he was not clear on what was right reason. He looked to objective opinion for answers (i.e., he looked beyond his subjective reason and attempted to stand

outside himself and consider other points of view).³⁴ He could not help but wonder whether his reason was *sui generis* within him or was a providential (Stoic) natural Reason he partook in, somewhat in the manner of a passive vessel or channel.

At Book 5.33, Aurelius doubted his own powers of perspicuity: '[O]ur senses are dull and easily deceived by false impressions and our poor soul itself.' (Book 5.33) He wanted: '[R]est from the recalcitrance of sense and from the impulses that pull us around like a puppet and from the vagaries of discursive thought.' (Book 6.28) Thus, Aurelius' faith in the power of reason, his own and others', was far from stable. Aurelius, far from having an invariable and Stoic faith in his or anyone else's subjective reason, felt its limits. Also, he questioned the merit of the philosophical theory he learnt and he questioned his own ability to discern its merit. Aurelius reminds the critic that theories have at least two weaknesses. Firstly, they are only ideas, and so, unless they are put into practice, have no effect, good or bad. Secondly, they are merely human inventions, as fallible as any other such, let alone products on whose truthfulness there is seldom agreement.

Despite his doubts about the autonomy and rightness of his (and others') reasoning powers, Aurelius elected to favour some ideas over others. For instance, he favoured the work of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus with many more references than he did Democritus, the Atomist. And he tested both philosophies using what he describes as his powers of reason. Aurelius felt empowered enough by the fidelity of his judgement to express a preference for the intellectual merit of the Stoic description of 'reason'. He favoured Stoic ideas to such a degree that his *Meditations* have been described by some, including Hadot and Gill, as an expression of this Stoic bias. Aurelius, in accordance with his wanting to develop his powers of reason, also hoped that: 'Thoughts such as these reach through to the things themselves and strike to the heart of them, allowing us to see them as they truly are.' (Book 6.13) Aurelius had high hopes for good reason; he wanted it to bring him to the truth: 'I seek the truth, which has never caused harm to anyone;

³⁴ In Chapter Three, intertextual analysis of contemporary classicists, Epictetus' philosophy, and Marcus Aurelius illustrated how though one's subjective reason takes precedence in Stoic philosophy, the perspectives of others were deemed helpful to the Stoic seeking to better 'Know thyself' and the world. One could develop one's subjective powers of reason by referring to third parties (one could attempt objective measures).

no, the person who is harmed is one who persists in his self-deception and ignorance.’ (Book 6.21)

In essence, confronted with competing ideas, Aurelius remained pragmatic and commonsensical enough to insist on his ability to reason and develop toward a greater balance and understanding. And, importantly, this development had moral connotations: ‘When you are thwarted, return to the struggle and be well-contented if for the most part your actions are worthier of human nature.’ (Book 5.9) Aurelius comforted himself with the idea that though his drive for self-improvement might not be ultimately successful – or aligned with natural Reason - he was at least trying, and in the very exercise of good intentions he was achieving something worthy.

Susan Sontag: ‘Know thyself’ as transcendence

Susan Sontag was, like Marcus Aurelius, intellectually, spiritually, and morally preoccupied with the self. She was particularly interested in transcending the self.³⁵ The evidence for Sontag’s preoccupation, with this type of self-development (or the potential for it), is threaded through interviews she gave and her diaries and criticism. It is also found in other peoples’ knowledge of her. David Reiff described, in Chapter Two, how in her diaries Sontag, ‘self-consciously and determinedly went about creating the self she wanted to be.’ (Sontag 2009: X) In an interview, Sontag explained that, ‘[the] idea of surpassing oneself is the deepest theme in my work’ (Poague 1995: 205). In an entry from her ‘1965’ diaries Susan Sontag writes that her ‘greatest Subject’ was, ‘looking for self-transcendence or metamorphosis.’ (Sontag 2013: 64)³⁶

Sontag never questioned that her self-improvement was important: 8/7/66 ‘Over-arching the whole question of the “first self” versus the “second self” (my new being, into which Irene initiated me) was the larger framework: the visionary self was never questioned.’ [Sontag’s brackets] (Sontag 2013: 235) According to

³⁵ The influence of Existential philosophy on Sontag’s conception of self-transcendence has been explored in Chapter Two, and in the first footnote to Chapters Two, Four, Five, Six, and Seven.

³⁶ Sontag’s editor remarks that her diaries, ‘in the 1960s were dated haphazardly or not at all’ (Sontag 2013: 59).

Sontag, her ability to transcend the self was also a matter of autonomy: of having the self-control and power to affect such a change. It was through harnessing the ability of her 'first self' to change to her potential 'second self' that Sontag could hope to achieve her freedom: 'The enterprise construes the self as the locus of all possibilities... only through becoming fully conscious may one be free.' (From Sontag's introduction to, *A Barthes Reader*, Barthes 1993: XXXIII)

Reflecting on her diary-writing, Sontag wrote that it was: 'Superficial to understand the journal as just a receptacle for one's private, secret thoughts... in the journal I do not just express myself more openly than I could to any person: I create myself'. This self was described by Sontag as, 'a project, something to be built.' (Sontag 2009: 166-167 and 117) Sontag asked herself: 8/7/68 'Why don't you want to be what you are?' (Sontag 2013: 258) She answered that: 2/12/70 'I want to be better than I am' (Sontag 2013: 266), and 8/7/68 'I want to be good? Why? I want to be what I admire.' (Sontag 2013: 258) Like Marcus Aurelius, Sontag's self-improvement had a moral dimension.³⁷

Marcus Aurelius struggled to realise his Stoic aspiration to oikeiosis. His duty to eudemonia, his right reason, and his engagement with his free-will were all felt to be on-going projects. Sontag felt that her self-improvement was also hard to achieve: 10/3/64 'Subject: the second birth of the self - Through the mad "project". Shedding the past—exile—aborting the self.' (Sontag 2013: 35) She wrote about these issues with the same levels of doubt and belief in her own abilities to reason with herself and the abilities of the people she learnt from as were entertained by Aurelius. A key impediment for both was that their introspection was a contradictory matter of the self looking back on itself. Aurelius wonders what his self is: 'What are you yourself?' (Book 8.40) and Chapter Three discussed the issue of how the self could get a handle on itself.

³⁷ Again, Susan Sontag refers to her 'self' as a 'project' – the success of which is measured in the self's 'authenticity' – Sontag's use of the words 'project' and 'authenticity' is linked to Sartre's terminology in *Being and Nothingness*. Sontag refers to the 'project of self-transformation' over ten times in volume two of her diaries and to the 'authentic self' at least four times (Sontag 2013: 315 and 278). For further reference to the significance of these terms in Sartre, and in Heidegger, see footnote one, Chapter Two.

However, Sontag seems to assume that self-reflection is not a problem: 1965 'The dissociated consciousness (cf. [Sartre's] *Les Mots*) that sees itself, is a spectator of itself. acts > "acts" agent > "agent" "I" am playing the part of myself.' [Reiff's brackets] (Sontag 2013: 65) As Chapter Six illustrated, Sontag's problem was the idea that being self-reflective implied embroiling oneself with consciousness (becoming 'consciousness-laden', Sontag 2013: 290). Sontag aspired to a 'full authentic private self' (Sontag 2013: 280, 'authentic' is a word she often used to describe the type self she aspired to). Sontag glimpsed this type of being-in-onself in a third-party, Carlotta, her lover: 2/17/70 'Carlotta never asks herself if she has behaved "authentically", never scrutinizes herself to see if her actions really correspond to her feelings, never despairs of being in touch with her "real" feelings. She experiences her problem not as one of knowing what she really feels, but of living with—and not being torn to pieces by—the (contradictory) feelings she has.' (Sontag 2013: 280) The type of authenticity Sontag aspired to did not require aggressive asceticism (self-control): 8/12/67 'My feeling of being "seconds" that was too radical a conversion of my being; I violated myself; it wasn't organic, it was too much of an act of will (me leaping ahead, hoping the rest of me with all the baggage would in good time follow after, catch up).' (Sontag 2013: 228) Sontag felt that aggressively 'willing' the self to transcend the self would jeopardise the authenticity – the 'organic' nature of - the 'project' (Sontag 2013: 228 and 290).

Thus, a difficult contradiction in Sontag's self-reflection is that she found it impossible not to 'supervise' herself as she attempted to improve herself:

1957 Life is suicide, mediated being self-conscious. [...]
 The private life, the private life. [...]
 Being self-conscious. Treating one's self as another. Supervising oneself.
 I am lazy. I am vain. Indiscreet. I laugh when I am not amused.
 What is the secret of suddenly beginning to write, finding a voice?
 (Sontag 2009: 157)³⁸

³⁸ Sontag feels she is removed from 'real feeling' by an over-abundance of 'intelligence'. In addition to the tension between too much and too little self-awareness and too much and too little intelligence, Sontag here laments too little ambition and boldness: 4/19/77 'I want to write something great. I'm not ambitious enough. (It's not just a question of becoming truly intransigent.) I want to be good, liked etc. I'm afraid of allowing real feeling, real arrogance, selfishness. [...] I have more than enough intelligence, learning, vision. The obstacle of character: boldness. Ruthlessness.' (Sontag 2013: 425)

Sontag was interested in the problem that consciousness and self-analysis were an unavoidable component of self-reflection; she wanted to get beyond that into 'real feeling' and being:

2/18/70 I feel as if I've discovered the limits of my own unspontaneous, will-driven, decision-craving, anticipatory, linear, discourse-dependent style of feeling and acting. [...] I profess to have detected the ravages of reason in myself. But am I not over-powering with the labour of reason the glimpse I've had of a more organic, less problematic, less consciousness-laden view of the world? The elements of Carlotta's view of the world I've sounded out exist in these pages only as packaged by my reason. It sounds as if I were not just proposing one more project for myself. This entry seems to be devoted to self-criticism - I mean, meta-self-criticism. (Sontag 2013: 290)

In this and the previous chapter, Sontag has been shown to have feared the consciousness of being less 'consciousness-laden' (Sontag 2013: 290). She also feared its results. Sontag felt that being in the fullness of her 'organic' self might at times be 'intolerable', or 'lead in me to passivity' and thus subvert the 'active (autonomous)' intellectual autonomy she so enjoyed: 2/18/70 'I know I'm afraid of passivity (and dependence). Using my mind, something makes me feel active (autonomous). That's good. What I want to fall away from the activity are my procedures of self-manipulation' (Sontag 2013: 290-291).³⁹ If we remind ourselves of the findings in Chapter Six, there is a common thread in her personal and professional approaches to self-reflection and criticism.

Professionally, Sontag wanted to achieve a balance between what she described, in 'Against Interpretation', as approaches that foster analytical 'conceptual...discursive knowledge' and approaches that are 'spontaneous' and 'organic' (as she might say), or an, 'excitation...captivation... [and an] erotics of art' (Sontag 2013a: 14 and 2013: 290). Sontag thought critical responses (to art,

³⁹ Sontag's alienation from what she conceived of as her authentic self translates into an alienation from the text in her essay, 'On Style'. Here (once again combining the professional insight with a personal one) alienation from art runs dangerously and 'painfully' against the grain of 'experience and our humanity': 'Then so far as the work is successful and still has the power to communicate with us, we experience only the individuality and contingency of the style. It is the same with our own lives. If we see them from the outside, as the influence and popular dissemination of the social sciences and psychiatry has persuaded more and more people to do, we view ourselves as instances of generalities, and in so doing become profoundly and painfully alienated from our own experience and our humanity.' (Sontag 2013a: 29)

film, and literature) that over-intellectualised or over-emphasised the importance of identifying how an object or subject was 'constructed' did not serve interpretation well. They 'over-powered' and 'enslaved' interpretation (Sontag 2013: 454). And she describes approaches to the self as, on the one hand, an 'over-powering labour of reason', or a 'linear discourse dependent style', and on the other, as 'authentic' and 'spontaneous' (Sontag 2013: 290).

Sontag's critical essay, 'The Anthropologist as Hero' (from, *Against Interpretation*), expands on these observations. In this essay, Sontag declares her suspicions of a secular and Humanist type of 'reason': 'Then there were the secular humanists – impartial, respectful, hands-off observers who did not come to sell Christ to the savages but to preach "reason", "tolerance", and "cultural pluralism" to the bourgeois literary public back home.' (Sontag 2013a: 75) In 'The Death of Tragedy', from the same collection, Sontag refers to 'Christian' reasoning. By this she means the type of reason developed by medieval scholars as they built on the work of classical Greek philosophers:

As everyone knows there was no Christian tragedy, strictly speaking, because the content of Christian values... is inimical to the pessimistic view of tragedy... In the world envisaged by Judaism and Christianity, there are no free-standing arbitrary events. All events are part of the plan of a just, good, providential deity... their will to see meaning in the world, prevented a rebirth of tragedy under Christian auspices – as, in Nietzsche's argument, reason the fundamentally optimistic spirit of Socrates, killed tragedy in ancient Greece (Sontag 2013a: 137)

It is the false promise of Christian good sense in adversity that, according to Sontag, is the scourge of tragedy. Here, Sontag is endorsing a Nietzschean form of Existential defiance of man's access to good reason. Sontag's argument is based on a critique of Christian (and therefore classical Greek) concepts of reason and objectivity and a Christian, providential cosmos. (These concepts bear comparison to the Stoic cosmological and epistemological views encountered in Chapter Three.)

In contrast to Sontag's scepticism about the possibility of good reason, she enjoyed being and was keenly intellectual. Top of her list of 2/15/70 'Qualities that turn me on' was, '1. Intelligence' (Sontag 2013: 269):

2/17/70 C has become the first big intellectual event (this past week)... I feel a big gain in wisdom, in perceptiveness... A breakthrough of intelligence like this - perceptions not only verbalized, but spun out into a long, searching, open-ended discourse - makes me know I'm alive and growing... I feel once again, and I rejoice, that I'm not busy dying - I'm still busy being born. (Sontag 2013: 274)⁴⁰

As Sontag weighed up the value of employing different types of critical reasoning (Christian and 'analytical' or 'spontaneous' and 'organic') her observations neatly inform this thesis. The next section is a reflection on the ways in which Aurelius' and Sontag's views on their own powers and limitations of reason inform a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism. The section is a crucial part of the argument for deliberate eclecticism.

7. Critics' reason and critical relativism in deliberate eclecticism

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag both felt they had the ability to reason within a range of contradictory ideas and they felt this intellectual exercise might be supported by what they learned from the reasoning of others. However, contrary to this seeming faith in their own and others' critical abilities, Aurelius and Sontag doubted the veracity of both.⁴¹ Aurelius, as has been illustrated, was sure that some realities were beyond the reaches of reason, his or anyone else's. Aurelius' and Sontag's reflections on reason are pertinent to understanding the ability of the critic to reason. On one hand, the critic is able to work within a range of evidence

⁴⁰ Sontag multiple views on the value of one's intelligence, included the idea that intelligence was only really necessary when there was a problem to solve: 11/29/65 'Intelligence is not necessarily a good thing, something to value or cultivate. It's more like a fifth wheel – necessary or desirable when things break down. When things go well, it's better to be stupid.' (Sontag 2013: 152)

⁴¹ This chapter has discussed the ways in which Aurelius and Sontag weighed up the various flaws and merits of their own, and others', evaluative processes and evaluations. These are important reflections in a thesis that aims to develop a critical approach. The pair took seriously their own intellectual abilities and the benefits of a collegiate approach to learning. Aurelius learnt from Epictetus that one's ability to reason well was enhanced through dialogue with one's peers (*Epictetus' Discourses* 1995 3.21.5). As we have found, according to Stoicism, the world is a useful testing ground for one's philosophical convictions, it is where theory can be put to the test. As was expanded on in Chapter Three, in Stoicism it was accepted that objective perspectives (i.e., perspectives that were not obviously subjective contrivances) could be useful, though it was first-person subjectivity which had the final say. Sontag, as has been illustrated in section three of this chapter, learnt from her peers and read widely. They also had serious doubts as to their own and others' reasonableness, or perspicuity.

and explanations as he or she works towards a robust critical opinion or judgement. On the other hand, critics' negotiation of their reasoning faculty is subject to the same dilemmas of faith and doubt as Aurelius' and Sontag's. These are important reflections as we further develop a critical approach to self-writing: deliberate eclecticism.

Sontag shows us that as well as being intellectually reasonable and analytic in their approaches critics can aspire, as she did, to a matching spontaneity of response. The non-specialist reader (or the reader who has little agenda and is able to be more spontaneous) is perhaps in a better position to handle eclecticism than the professional critic. What Sontag has called - 'auto-critique' - is less important to the 'ordinary' reader (even the critic away from a professional analytical role) who wants, 'to see more, to hear more, to feel more' (Sontag 2013a: 14). To be over-laboured and over-analytical or to helicopter above writing and to, 'package [writing] with reason', to paraphrase Sontag, is not always valuable to critics; especially to the critic of introspective writing with all its attendant complexities (Sontag 2013: 290).⁴² It is claimed that a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism is important to critics and especially critics of self-writing. It is deliberate eclecticism that might help critics to navigate multiple interpretative approaches (to manage the merits Sontag found in the contradictory approaches she described, i.e., the 'spontaneous' and the seriously intelligent and critical). It is also a useful critical approach to contradictory ideas about the self (such as concepts of self that allow for its autonomy of voice and those that want to deconstruct this idea).

It is worth noting that the writer and their writing will seldom be lifted above the fray. Susan Sontag and Marcus Aurelius were deeply embroiled in the battle of conflicting responses, ideas, experiences, and feelings. We as readers, and as critics, variously enjoy, appreciate, and learn from the very confusion of a writer's failure to organise his or her thoughts and responses about the self. The non-specialist reader is under little constraint to be logical, or to come up with

⁴² There is a link between Sontag's descriptions of responsive modes of criticism, 'spontaneity' of self, and the spontaneous diary entry (also referred to in Chapter One as a characteristic of some diaries). All require an unguarded type of self-reflection or critical reflection.

operating principles or evidence for his or her opinions. The professional critic, however, often operates under pressure to be logical, systematic, declaratory, and to deliver strong well-reasoned and well-evidenced arguments.

Deliberate eclecticism is proposed as a useful approach to contradictory and indefinite material. It is an approach open to a range of responses and ideas. Such openness is preferable to prescriptive analysis of ultimately elusive material. It also liberates critics into a high-functioning fallibility. This is not a critical vacuum. Freed from the performance of critical authority and certainty, the critic nonetheless remains in the business of making judgements; evaluating material and arguments; refining critical sensibilities and subjectivities; and sharpening discernment. Aurelius' and Sontag's reflections on the fallibility of reason might lead one to think that all judgements are relative. (This is the type of relativism identified as relevant to 'post-modern' accounts of the self and of literary judgement and discussed in Chapter Four.) In this view no one fallible judgement is any more convincing or stable than another.⁴³ However, Aurelius and Sontag were not crude relativists; they believed that some judgements were more veracious and compelling than others. As the next section explores, deliberate eclecticism and its high-functioning fallibility is an attempt to pay due regard to the strengths and weaknesses of a wide range of views. It strengthens the idea in the thesis that it is possible to remain intellectually muscular, decisive, and serious, and to enjoy what Sontag described as, 'open-ended discourse' (Sontag 2013: 290).

Critical relativism

Susan Sontag and Marcus Aurelius preferred some judgements over others; they weighed their subjective judgements against the judgements of others; they imagined at times that their ability to reason was their own, and at others that their

⁴³ In another instance of the role subjectivity can play in the relative value accorded critical literary judgements we can refer to Sartre. 'Primary subjectivity' is a term used by J-P Sartre in, *What is Literature?*. For further reference see: (Sartre 1967: 136-137). The term 'primary subjectivity' was employed by Sartre to expand on the idea that modern literature was, in part, a move toward story-telling in which the, 'substance of the tale is the subjectivity which perceives and thinks the universe.' From this standpoint the subject is always right, but only because it cannot be proved wrong. Subjectivity was also the subject of Terry Eagleton's critique of the authority of critical judgement, it was his view that subjective judgement is not the result of a subject's unadulterated and privately contrived cognition, it is always impinged upon by the opinion of others. However, as the intertextual analysis of Aurelius and Sontag helps the thesis draw out, despite these difficulties, criticism happens and can be argued to be as sophisticated and as high-functioning as its fallibility permits.

reason was an off-shoot of their interactions with the world (it was not their own, autonomous reason); and whichever view they took they wrote about exercising reason in the professional or personal judgements they made.

In a 1996 post-script to, *Against Interpretation*, Sontag writes that though she wanted to work toward an 'erotics of art', she did not want to do away with 'critical intellect' or the idea that a critic – after evaluating a range of evidence and explanations – might arrive at a more-or-less well supported critical judgement:

To call for an erotics of art did not mean to disparage the role of the critical intellect...When I denounced (for instance, in the essays on science fiction films and on Lukács) certain kinds of facile moralism it was in the name of a more alert, less complacent seriousness... Now the very idea of the serious (and of the honourable) seems quaint, 'unrealistic', to most people and when allowed – as an arbitrary decision of temperament – probably unhealthy, too. (Sontag 2013a: 312)

Given that there are no certainties in criticism it becomes important to find a way of talking about the competing merits of critical evaluations, without succumbing to a crude relativist position. It is clear that intellectual 'seriousness' was very important to Sontag. Seriousness of intent could work against the intellectual laziness of 'facile moralism' or 'complacency'. Sontag took the view that serious critical investigation, though sometimes 'quaint', could lend credence to critical judgement. Sontag used the word serious at least thirteen times in her diary, between 1964 and 1980, to describe literature, people, and elements of her own work that she admired and thought seriously intellectual.

Again, Sontag's observation supports the assertion in the thesis that there are some critical judgements that, though fallible, are better argued than others (or, less rigorously, more deeply felt and believed than others, for example, neither Aurelius or Sontag could determine what their freedoms were, but felt they exercised some). Aurelius and Sontag took seriously their duty to arrive at well thought-out judgements as to how to behave, what to think, and who they wanted to be. They remained analytical enough to make serious judgements whilst entering whole-heartedly, often ambivalently, into the contradictions they faced. They also saw that these judgements changed – as new evidence or experiences

came in. Both felt themselves to be angst-ridden as they reasoned with complex material. They were not, what this thesis has described as, deliberately eclectic. However, in the spirit of eclecticism they navigated a range of interpretations and at different times felt more inclined to argue one case over another.

Aurelius and Sontag illustrate that the equivalence of many competing interpretations or competing ideas is well handled with what the thesis has described as a deliberate eclecticism of approach. This does not mean critics are condemned to a type of crude relativism that, recognising that there is no final answer, then leaps to the idea that therefore all attempts at an answer have equal weight. The critic does not have to believe anything that comes along. To acknowledge, for instance, that neither the notion of an autonomous self nor that of a constructed self has a monopoly on the truth does not mean that either is nonsensical. Likewise, it is possible to move between critical schools and critical habits of thought whilst enjoying and learning from each in its turn; neither falling into partisanship, nor into a refusal to evaluate competing claims. There is reason to suppose that one or other judgement or critical approach has reckonable value. The inevitable fallibility of theories does not mean they are redundant or endlessly relative; they can usefully be submitted to an on-going process of testing, discussing, supporting, and abandoning. Intertextual analysis of Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective writing has prompted the argument, in the thesis, that critical judgements can be assessed seriously, if provisionally, in a critical exercise.

8. Self-writing as exercise and criticism as exercise

Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag valued writing as exercise and its habituality became an exercise in self-reflection. In Chapter One, written exercise was noted as a characteristic and function of diary-writing. In Chapter Three, it was observed that philosophy is often considered to be an exercise, a way of life, in which the doing of philosophy is its own outcome. In this view, philosophy is merely or at least primarily the activity of philosophising. It was also observed that the Stoic was encouraged to exercise their commitment to Stoic principles using a number of methods, including attempting to 'Know thyself' in written exercises (*Epictetus'*

Discourses 1995: 1.18.17). Aurelius' and Sontag's quest for self-knowledge was a continual exercise. Sontag wrote her diaries habitually, from her teenage years to almost the end of her life, and it appears (according to brief geographical references in the *Meditations*, which have enabled the dating of at least two of the books) that Aurelius wrote his *Meditations* over the course of several years.

Aurelius and Sontag used their diary-writing as a method of working things out for themselves. That is: they were not working toward a coherent, large piece of writing. Rather, their work was spontaneous (each entry was an outpouring of feelings and ideas) and it was extempore (the entries were left untouched to stand for themselves, as they had been put down). This method of working contributes to the idea that they were, in rather similar ways, undertaking what the Stoic philosophers described as exercise. That is: they were using – in their case as self-writers – their jottings as a sort of routine or habit in an on-going effort to train their sensibility, rather (and Aurelius uses this idea) as athletes might train their bodies.

Marcus Aurelius' introspection and writing as exercises

Marcus Aurelius does not talk directly about the role his self-writing plays in his self-improvement. However, that the entries seem so random and are so repetitive indicates that the act of expressing and re-expressing thoughts and feeling, re-working their form a little, but really not much, was useful to him. He was well aware of the classical and Hellenistic Greek philosophical traditions' focus on the need for regular intellectual, moral, and even spiritual self-training. It is explicit – in his writing – that Aurelius considered self-training and self-knowledge a prerequisite for the person seeking reason and rightness.

Aurelius was aware that he wanted to habituate himself in private, and by regular introspection, to certain attitudes that would armour and equip him to behave properly as events in the world demand. In Book 5.5, he is explicit on this subject:

Are you compelled to grumble, to be grasping, to flatter others, to heap criticism on your poor body, to be ingratiating, and boastful, and restless in your mind, because you were created without the

necessary gifts? No, by the gods, you could have been released from all of this long ago, and then have been open to only the one charge, if indeed that, of being somewhat slow in your mind and slow in the uptake; and even in that regard you should exercise yourself instead of neglecting your faults and taking comfort in your dullness. (Book 5.5)

And again at Book 6.13:

Thoughts such as these reach through to the things themselves and strike to the heart of them, allowing us to see them as they truly are. So follow this practice throughout your life, and where things seem most worthy of your approval, lay them naked, and see how cheap they are, and strip them of their pretences of which they are so vain. (Book 6.13)

Though Marcus Aurelius sometimes felt himself to be intellectually compromised and though he may not have always been able to see the heart of 'things themselves' the value of the *Meditations* for Aurelius was in the act of their writing. Aurelius was a man of action and thought. He was an intellectual in the sense of caring about the value of philosophy and his own thoughts. But he did not claim to understand everything, or indeed anything much. He was a pilgrim, perhaps finding some comfort in the very journey and hopeful of being useful to the world and his self. Aurelius decided that the way to corral all his doubts and glimpses of clarity was in a frequent, more or less regular, private, honest introspective text whose merit was not that it was clear or laid out a treatise. His work was a sketch pad, an exercise.

Susan Sontag's introspection and writing as exercise

For Susan Sontag, writing introspectively was an exercise and it was an important part of her exercise of self:

The function of writing is to explode one's subject - transform it into something else. (Writing is a series of transformations.) Writing means converting one's liabilities (limitations) into advantages. For example, I don't love what I'm writing. Okay, then - that's also a way to write, a way that can produce interesting results. (Sontag 2013: 408)

Sontag felt writing to be a liberating force: 9/18/67 'My neurotic problem isn't primarily with myself... but with other people. Therefore writing always works for me, even lifts me out of depressions. Because it is in my writing that I (most) experience my autonomy, my strength, my not needing people.' (Sontag 2013: 237) However, she also found writing a challenge: 2/18/70 'A failure of nerve. About writing. (And about my life - but never mind.) I must write myself out of it. If I am not able to write because I'm afraid of being a bad writer, then I must be a bad writer. At least I'll be writing. Then something else will happen. It always does.' (Sontag 2013: 490)

Sontag's opinion of her diary-writing as exercise was contradictory. In her series of essays, *Where the Stress Falls*, Sontag wrote: 'My books are not a means of discovering who I am, either; I've never fancied the ideology of writing as therapy or self-expression' (Sontag 2013c: 152). Conversely, she wrote in a 1961 diary entry: 'I write to define myself—an act of self-creation—part of the process of becoming—in a dialogue with writers I admire living and dead, with ideal readers.' (Sontag 2009: 260)

Aurelius and Sontag may have sought solace and not altogether found it in their deliberately introspective writing, however, they continued to value writing as a spiritual and intellectual exercise. It was a process and an effort. In taking up the challenge of wrestling with complex material they put the issue of the elusive self centre stage in their own lives and in their writing. As they patrol the issue they put down insights for successive readers. Aurelius' and Sontag's highly introspective texts and the elusive and contradictory nature of the self-concepts they confronted, underline the point that at the heart of introspective writing are nebulous notions of self and to tackle difficult concepts seriously and in all their complexity is to be in a good position to critically evaluate self-writing.

Aurelius and Sontag took issue with their contradictory experience and exercise of self and in doing so developed a semantic currency and cohesion for this experience. The questions, the frictions, and the contradictions they found in their experiences were their own sort of answer. The exercise of writing and the exercise of self, in Aurelius and Sontag, becomes, in the thesis, criticism as

exercise and the exercise of criticism. Criticism is an on-going activity and each critical interpretation shares in this critical continuum.

Criticism as a process not a prescription

Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Susan Sontag's diaries do not have a narrative arc, or a single or several arguments headed toward single or several conclusions. Indeed, their very form and many of their observations, suggest to us that reading them may be usefully seen as an on-going exercise. A good way of looking at both reading and interpreting such texts – and perhaps any text – might be to sharply attend to one's process, rather than the promise of some finished product.⁴⁴

Interpretation can be a celebration of the value of the activity of interpretation and not merely of the value of its promise to deliver a 'definition' of quality or a finite approach to finding quality. Interpretation that is conclusive may be a worthwhile theoretical ideal, but it is seldom a good reading or working habit. The practice of interpretation is a development rather than a denouement. Literary criticism will continue as long as new interpretations arrive. In criticism as in introspective writing the activity or process may be the whole point, rather than some pat conclusion. I claim that whilst this is particularly true of the interpretation of self-writing, since this is an arena which is especially liminal, it is true of literary discussion in general. The approach of valuing interpretation as a rather open-ended activity does not entail non-critical readings or readings that do not make interpretative choices. Rather, it does imply a critical reading that is critical of itself; a deliberately introspective reading, one might say.

Criticism can be an exercise just as diary-writing can be an exercise. Again, Sontag's criticism as well as her introspective writing helps us in this idea. Sontag's enquiries into the self were lively and continuous: they were a spiritual, moral, and intellectual exercise. She argued that at the centre of 'great art' and 'great criticism' there is an on-going process of 'dynamic contemplation'. In her diary she wrote: 9/10/64 'All great art contains at its centre contemplation, a

⁴⁴ In Chapter One, we referred to Wittgenstein's philosophical exercises in the form of short aphoristic notes.

dynamic contemplation.’ (Sontag 2013: 33) Her criticism was also a continued effort.⁴⁵ Sontag continually adjusted her own critical stances.

Almost all human explanations over-reach in an ambition to be tidy or conclusive or all-encompassing. Interpretation can guide, sustain, and comfort us and help create digestible slabs of information, however, there will always be dimensions of human life that will elude them. Interpretations are readings in search of proof. Proof is tough, because it is an assertion of truth. So, it would seem, prudent in the predominantly qualitative world of the humanities, to settle for identifying and discussing varieties of evidence which fall short of conclusiveness, but may be usefully suggestive. Inquiries carried out within this critical process may be explained, evidenced, tested, benchmarked, and defended, but can never be completed. Interpretation is necessarily fallible, but it can do useful work; it can have, what has been labelled in the thesis, high-functioning fallibility. Interpretative responses can be a strong, defensible, honest, and proactive part of an on-going critical continuum.

The intertextual analysis in this chapter illustrates how Aurelius and Sontag experienced an elusive self. Despite its obviously complex nature and competing and internally contradictory accounts of it, both asserted that they had a self. Contrary to this they both wrestled with the degree to which oneself and its autonomy was independent of, or could be separated from, the outer world. They detected that the world influenced their self (to the point where the outer in some sense formed their inner being), and that their actions had an affect on those around them. They found that the self was in harmony with the world, but also in conflict with it. However, the conflict is not confined to the one between the outside world and the inner person, it is a conflict within the person. Neither the emperor Marcus Aurelius, nor the literary critic Susan Sontag, could remove themselves from public life. And the perceived interface between their ‘inner’ life and the world outside could cause as much angst as their ambition to ‘Know thyself’ and improve it. They felt a responsibility to understand the nature and content of self so as to

⁴⁵ Again, a neat counterpoint to criticism as exercise and writing as exercise, is found in Sartre (who we know Sontag admired), for whom the on-going activity of criticism, however flawed, is an assertion in itself: ‘Thus, there is no question as to the writer’s renouncing the idea of survival; quite the contrary, he is the one who decides it; he will survive so long as he acts.’ (Sartre 1967: 156)

better explain both their actions and their experiences. In vastly different circumstances and at different times and for different reasons they shared a range of perspectives on their self. They compared these perspectives with those of others and they explored them in their introspective writing; they did not, however, achieve an easy relationship with what they found.

Though Sontag and Aurelius continued writing introspectively for large parts of their lives, it is doubtful their written exercise finally made them what they hoped it might: 'authentic' (Sontag 2013: 280) or, in Aurelius' case, eudemonic. In one of Aurelius' final entries he is still asking his self why he is not able to employ his (Stoic) reason in his judgements: 'Cast out the judgement, and then you are saved. So what is preventing you from casting it out?' (Book 12:25) The approaches of our pair to the idea of an autonomous self can be described, on analysis, as instructive and, often, as eclectic. However, their approaches were not quite deliberately eclectic. Aurelius and Sontag did not aspire to and certainly did not often attain a calm eclecticism of approach to the problems they discussed.

CONCLUSION

For the subject of literature has always been man in the world.
(Sartre 1967: 156)

1/4/66 All the options are lying about, barely used, hardly thought
about or discussed by writers or critics. (Sontag 2013:168)

[T]he incomprehensible is incomprehensible and we know that
already. (Kafka 1947: 11)¹

In this thesis I have proposed and refined a critical approach for critics of self-writing. The approach is a response to and a means of navigating ambiguity and the often competing and internally contradictory discussion of ambiguous material. The thesis honed in on writing that is preoccupied with the experience and description of self, free-will, and voice. These issues are, arguably, as elusive as they are ineluctable. Self-writing uniquely prompts, energises, and enables discussion of the richly complex issues of self. In the thesis it has been discussed whether the concept of self (if it is granted, at least, a degree of rationale) is self-defined or socially designed; whether it can reflect on itself and the degree to which such self-reflection can be described as private, invariable, reliable, or comprehensive; whether the self has the ability to think, reason, speak, and write with autonomy; and whether it can control itself.

In the thesis it was demonstrated that the idea of an autonomous self, explicitly or implicitly, informs the class of attributes and status critics accord self-writers and self-writing. Critics of self-writing were found to be concerned with the degree to which self-writers' voices and self-writing are 'autonomous' (Purvis and Longstaff in EGS 2008: 197); emancipated or self-possessed (Neuman 1992: 219); 'private' (Hellbeck 2004: 621, Sontag 2013: 280, Spacks 2003: 47 and 57, and Sapcks *Privacy* 2003: 169-195); an expression of the 'inner' (Spacks 2003: 52, 59, and

¹ The extracts emphasise aspects of the arguments for a critical approach of deliberate eclecticism to self-writing. Firstly: critical evaluations of elusive or, in Kafka's terms, 'incomprehensible' subjects (such as the autonomous type of self) are fallible. Secondly: that self-writing show-cases a subject (the self) critics will face elsewhere in literature; and what Sartre describes as a key, 'subject for literature': 'man in his world'. Finally, Sontag's diary entry highlights the on-going nature of critical enquiry, as well as its fallibility (Sontag 2013: 168). However, she also suggests that there are critical 'options'. We can remain open to both the fallibility of criticism and our critical 'options': an awareness of both is what was termed in the thesis as a high-functioning fallibility. As Kafka writes, paradoxically we continue to know things; at the very least, 'we know... already' the limits of our comprehension.

62); 'unique' (Derrida 1987: 33, 81, and 192), 'authentic' (Sontag 2013: 280 and Spacks 2003: 48), 'sincere' (Hellbeck 2004: 621), 'dignified' (Spacks 2003: 48), or 'raw' (Sontag 2013a: 41 and Spacks 2003: 48). These attributes or terms illustrate what, for critics, sets self-writing forms apart as important to readers and writers alike. However, the elusive nature of the self and free-will was also found to frustrate and resist critical attempts to define self-writers' utterances according to these characteristics. The analysis in the thesis found that critics utilised these terms in their very different - sometimes opposing and often internally conflicted - approaches to self-writing. Based, in part, on this investigation and the critical strengths and weaknesses it revealed, the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism was proposed as an advance on current approaches to self-writing and as a useful analytical tool for critics.

It was found, in Chapter One, that reflection on notions of self and autonomy reaches an apotheosis in the deliberately introspective form of diary. In Chapter Two, the tense business of self-reflection was amply revealed in Marcus Aurelius' deliberately introspective *Meditations* and Susan Sontag's equally introspective diaries. Across vast disparities (most obviously two millennia and gender) they approached the autonomous self and its multiple, complex, and often contradictory experiences in similar ways. The disparities between Aurelius and Sontag added piquancy to the poignancy of their similarities. That the pair have so much in common across such different eras amplifies an argument in the thesis: the problems of satisfactorily and directly fathoming ideas of self and free-will presented much the same problems to people over the course of two millennia. These are enduringly elusive ideas. This insight (garnered through intertextual reading of Aurelius' and Sontag's deliberately introspective texts) also supports the idea that critical approaches to the self and its volitions that do not fully acknowledge with calm, impartial, and methodical consistency the inveterate opaqueness of such issues are liable to be as angst-ridden as the writing of our case studies.

Chapters Three and Four defined the terms and issues bearing on discussion of the self and free-will. (These were introduced by the touchstones for the thesis, Aurelius and Sontag, in Chapter Two.) The examination (in Chapters Three and

Four) covered a range of views, including classical concepts of self. It was shown that, throughout history, philosophers and critics of every kind have struggled with competing and internally contradictory ideas of self. The concept was found to often be discussed in crude dialectics of, for example, self or non-self, freedom or determinism, private or public, mental or physical, and culturally constructed or self-governing and self-determined. On one hand, and at the extremes of the 'post-modern', the self has been dismissed as a myth.² In this view, if the self and autonomy of thought, intent, action, and voice are anything, they are a network of (often too varied to be fully determined) constructs and influences. On the other hand, and in the strictly Humanist view, the self is a plausible phenomenon (or, at least, an inviolable idea) and has free-will and has, as a consequence, been accorded, 'status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority.' (Lacey in OCP 1995: 375)

It was also illustrated, in Chapters Three and Four, that Humanism and 'post-modernism' can rarely be as thorough-going as would be convenient to simple discussion. Though the traditions seem to confront each other they contained their own contradictions and often considered elements of the other view. The paradigms offered by the Humanist and 'post-modern' have strengths and weaknesses and, at their opposing extremes, cannot both be right. There is no clear winner between Humanist and 'post-modern' approaches to the conceptualisation of self and the discussion of whether a self has free-will over thought, action, and voice. In the face of such nuanced and contradictory evidence and explanations, it seemed plausible to propose that the concept of self and all its complexities might usefully be labelled a hybrid (The word hybrid was used in its general sense to denote a concept of self that is composed of different, often contradictory elements. It was not used in its post-colonial or multi-cultural rhetorical context.) When it comes to richly contradictory and elusive concepts it is fallacious to adopt an unflinching position, as such a range of views is welcome.

² The nullity of the concept of self – and running concomitantly to this nullity, the indeterminacy of meaning – was found to be an amelioration of philosophies and literature that are older than the 'post-modern', including the philosophical schools of Scepticism and Existentialism, and the literature of Kafka and the Marquis de Sade.

In Chapter Four, 'deliberate eclecticism' was proposed as a critically liberating and intellectually robust approach to competing and internally contradictory perspectives on the elusive notions of self and autonomy, as they are found in self-writing. The first principle of the approach is that it is open to a range of contradictory and elusive ideas (for example, the approach is open both to the idea that the self is a rational concept, and not; or that that persons think, act, and write in ways that are autonomous, and not). When dealing with elusive material it is recommended the critic remains open, but not indistinctly so. Elusiveness, though obviously not measurable, can be examined and even – to some degree – explained, or at least the robustness and sophistication of a range of explanations can be discussed. The approach acknowledges that at different times and for different reasons one is going to deploy different ideas and that these vantage points will be selected with a judicious promiscuity. With this openness in mind the approach is free to look at theories without undue partisanship; it will adopt, analyse, and possibly discard theories. Deliberate eclecticism is designed to manage competing strictly Humanist and strictly 'post-modern' explanations for the self. In their more nuanced modes, the approach can also manage the internal contradictions and ambivalences of the Humanist and 'post-modern'.

The second principle is that the approach is comfortable in the knowledge that there is little hope of a definitive answer when dealing with contradictory and unsettled ideas. Following on from this, deliberate eclecticism describes how critics can remain aware of their critical fallibility whilst taking up robustly argued positions. Without being prescriptive, the critic is free to weigh the strengths of different evidence and explanations and then argue for and hold, for a time, a critical position. In Chapter Four, this critical mode was characterised as one of high-functioning fallibility and as harnessing a sophisticated form of relativism. (Both ideas were first introduced in Chapter Four and the arguments for their critical strengths were expanded on in Chapter Seven.)

Deliberate eclecticism has the merit of simplifying elusive matters, without being simplistic. It encourages critics to manage, with equanimity and surefootedness, contradictory paradigms and approaches. It also prompts critics to be alert to partisanship; to crude relativism; and to the internal factions in superficially pat

ideas. It advocates criticism of self-writing that consistently and fully acknowledges the rich complexity of its material and sharply evaluates explanations and evidence of that material. Critical approaches that seek to - deliberately or inadvertently - reconcile competing paradigms, or to subsume the complexity of reflecting on personal autonomy and self, in the extremes of one or other tradition, lose sight of the richness they set out to interpret. It is concluded that though the problems of describing a self that proves elusive are challenging there is no need to be critically immobilised.

Following on from the analysis, in Chapters Three and Four (of historic and contemporary attempts to qualify the volute self and to establish the degree to which a person has free-will), the Humanist and 'post-modern' traditions were found, in Chapters Five and Six, to be followed, in varying degrees, by the criticism of self-writing. The elusive notion of an autonomous self, even when its resistance to interpretation was partially or fully acknowledged, was found to have perplexed, 'oppressed', or 'bedevilled' critics, or prompted ultimately futile reconciliatory approaches to irreconcilable extremes (these terms were employed by Hassan 1982: 175 and Hellbeck 2004: 621). A lack of critical clarity on the terms and issues to be addressed in self-writing, and what approaches to deploy to these complex issues, meant that terms often affiliated with the Humanist tradition, such as those deployed by Lacey, namely, 'authority', 'status', and 'power', were found also to have been adopted in 'post-modern' criticism (Lacey in OCP 1995: 375). If the 'status' and 'power' of a self-narrated self-narrative is not demolished by 'post-modernism' - in as much as the autonomous self is considered obsolete - it is certainly deconstructed by its logic. The thesis found that current criticism has not developed a way to effectively manage the elusive issues surrounding the concept of self, or the competing and internally contradictory perspectives applied to it.

In Chapter Five, the deconstructionist Derrida (on first glance a clear example of a literary theorist and philosopher intent on deconstructing traditional Humanist views of the self) was shown, in both his analysis of the autobiographical form and postcards ('envois') he wrote to himself, to unsuccessfully attempt to rid himself of the Humanist-type self. It was argued that at the very least he was unable to rid

himself of some awkward ideas about the self. His deconstructionism seemed to have foundered on his stubborn awareness of his own deconstructed self and critical autonomy. A stubborn awareness Derrida described, in a postcard to himself, as his 'tragic lot': 'Well yes. This is our tragic lot, my sweet love, the atrocious lottery, but I begin to love you on the basis of this impossibility; the impasse devoted to fate cannot leave us to await anything from a chance to see it open itself one day' (Derrida 1987: 33, 81, and 192). Even whilst Derrida acknowledged the elusiveness of an autonomous type of self, he did so from a biased position. His bias compelled him to seek to uncouple the self from any other description than deconstructionism. He had determined – in theory – that the self and assumptions of free-will are implausible and indeterminate and, therefore, defunct. However, he could not – in practice – determine his escape from the self, even as he deconstructed it. Derrida's failed attempt to deconstruct the self, as he deconstructed it, amplifies the findings in Chapter Three: that the concept of an autonomous self is as ineluctable as it is elusive.

There was also the problem, in current criticism of self-writing, that an unsystematic deployment of conflicting approaches can dilute the force of a critical argument. This is particularly apparent when a critic adopts an essentially Humanist perspective, on the notion of self, using the methods of the 'post-modern'. At the heart of the 'post-modern' (as Derrida illustrated in Chapter Five) is suspicion of the Humanist position and the inviolable and autonomous class of self it is often taken to stand for. In Chapter Five, Shirley Neuman was shown to be a feminist critic of self-writing and 'post-modern' in her general approach. Yet, she had a tendency for admiring women diarists or autobiographers for their courage and self-assertion. Her admiration presupposed her female writers' individual autonomy and was an essentially Humanist response. Jochen Hellbeck (in Chapter Six) was found praising diaries for the ways in which they empowered the individual. He also described how a writer's sense of self was strengthened as it was composed within a narrative structure; a narrative over which the individual was seen as having some structuring agency. Simultaneously, he described diaries as tools of a Soviet State fashioning willing individuals in accordance with communist views and favoured a cultural historicist approach which posits that diaries and diarists are culturally constructed.

Current critics of self-writing were often found, in the course of analysis in the thesis, to be somewhat paradoxically in the position of deconstructing traditional notions of the self and free-will, in a 'post-modern' manner, whilst also celebrating the efficacy and volition of a, as might be termed Humanist, voice and its self-narrative. It was found that critics seldom had a useful or systematic approach to ambiguous notions of the self and free-will, or to discussing the various dimensions of their accounts. The criticism of self-writing often contained contradictory critical arguments and stumbled over partisanship; possibly as part of an effort to develop an all-embracing, definitive, or authoritative account or theory (such as, Derrida's deconstructionism or Neuman's 'poetics of differences'). As such the criticism was over-ambitious in its claims and goals, or merely muddled. Criticism that does not clearly outline the approach or approaches adopted and the ways in which they are used is in danger of further obfuscating an already difficult issue. The attempts of theorists and critics of self-writing - from whatever critical position - to be clear on the self have been useful, but have also led the thesis to develop a studied scepticism as to their success in what can too often become a winner-takes-all, zero-sum battle of the paradigms. The thesis asserts that deploying irreconcilable vantage points need not be problematic, if the means and the ambitions of critical arguments are clear.

As the thesis developed its critical approach, those critics who better acknowledged the contradictory and often incomplete and amorphous character of discussions surrounding the self and free-will were found to be the more clear-headed and practical. Susan Sontag (in her diaries as criticism, and her professional criticism) and Patricia Meyer Spacks (in, 'How to Read a Diary' and in, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*) keenly attended to what they both called the 'raw' voices of the diarists they analysed. They were alert to the ways in which diarists' voices were constructed and influenced (for example, culturally, socially, or linguistically). As they dissected and drilled down into their subject they were not distracted from responding directly and sensitively to diarists' voices. The often unrefined, ill-defined, and spontaneous self-reflection of the diarists they analysed remained so even as it passed through Spacks' and

Sontag's critical filters.³ Both of them both know and feel the ambiguity of the self; both know and feel the dilemma of there being competing and conflicted critical paradigms. But neither sets themselves the task of developing a strategy for unpicking and then managing the complexities of competing views on the self. Deliberate eclecticism is designed to systematically manage these complexities with sophistication.

Armed with the research from Chapters One to Six, it was possible to return to Aurelius and Sontag. In Chapter Seven, intertextual analysis of the pair's reflections on the experience of a self that was sometimes felt to be autonomous amplified and expanded on the principles of deliberate eclecticism. The sharpness of Aurelius' and Sontag's expression of the dilemmas of choice-making and voice were found to help any writer reflect on these issues. Importantly, the quality and emphasis of Aurelius' and Sontag's self-examination prompted reflection on the ability of critics to make autonomous choices about the critical exercise. Any critic and especially the critic of self-writing confronts the problem of the autonomy of the self in two acute forms. Firstly, critics will find they are led to consider whether the diarist has volition or not. Secondly, critics will then be led to consider whether the critical voice is itself autonomous or not. In the first case, as Chapters Five and Six evinced, critics often want to admire the subversive qualities, of self-writers and their narratives (as we have seen, other qualities attributed to self-writers have included courage, uniqueness, dignity, rawness, sincerity, or authenticity).⁴

However, such criticism often employs contemporary literary approaches which call into question the autonomy of the author in his or her self-writing. That is to say that even 'post-modern' critics treat their subjects as persons with some assumption of free-will, rather than social (also cultural or linguistic) automatons or

³ Sontag's criticism has been found, in the thesis, to complement aspects of the critical approach of deliberate eclecticism. For example, in Chapter Six, Sontag was found to be open to a range of critical approaches; in an interview with Evans Chan she emphasised her commitment to working with both responsive and analytical forms of interpretation. So, whilst 'Against Interpretation' as 'auto-critique', she was not against all interpretation. Sontag's comment, in her diaries, on the benefits of 'open-ended' discourse amplifies the previous point (Sontag 2013: 274). As does her recommendation that the critic be, 'open to contradictory stimuli' (Sontag 2013: 134). Finally, the title to a collection of Sontag's essays, *Where the Stress Falls*, complements the idea in the thesis that in different contexts, for different reasons, and with different evidence the stress of one's interpretation may, for a time, fall on one or other of a range of interpretations, but this is a stress that may flex and change, it is not static.

⁴ For further reference to the use of these terms when describing the attributes of self-writers see: 'courage' (Lejeune 2009: 21), 'unique' (Derrida 1987: 33, 81, and 192), 'dignity' (Spacks 2013: 48), 'rawness' (Sontag 2013a: 41 and Spacks 2003: 48), 'sincerity' (Hellbeck 2004: 621), or 'authenticity' (Spacks 2003: 48).

cyphers. In the second case, critical writing almost always assumes the autonomy of the critical voice. Critics who deny the autonomy of the writer seem to be in a logical bind; after all it is hard to know what status to give their criticism if they themselves are automatons. In any case - like Aurelius and Sontag - few write as though they seriously doubted their own autonomy. Inspired by Aurelius and Sontag and their highly energised discussion of their autonomy and its dilemmas and as part of the development of a method of critique, this thesis proposed, in deliberate eclecticism, that it is not useful to favour either an approach that advocates for the full autonomy of the critic or an approach that entirely dissolves this autonomy.

Intertextual analysis in Chapter Seven revealed that Aurelius and Sontag also examined the strengths and weaknesses of theirs and others' ability to reason with contradictory and elusive ideas. As such the pair, in addition to informing the thesis as it examined personal autonomy, provided fertile ground for examining critical reason. Setting aside whether Aurelius and Sontag could legitimately claim autonomy and even what their views on autonomy were, the thesis noted that they made critical judgements in the sense of being evaluative. However, they also recognised the fallibility of their evaluations; Aurelius was, at times, a conformist Stoic and at other times a highly questioning one. Sontag was at times a highly intellectual critic and at others an intuitive one. Aurelius and Sontag were eclectic in the way they adopted different perspectives at different times. Though they remained aware of the vulnerability of interpretation, they wrote as though they eschewed crude relativism: they were prepared to declare people or ideas to be good or bad, or better or worse than one another.

Deliberate eclecticism is comfortable with the knowledge that within its recognition of critical fallibility it is possible, in an evaluative mode, to make well-reasoned and evidenced judgements, as much as it is possible to be critically relativist. (In the manner, for example, that Aurelius and Sontag weighed up various types of experiences, reasons, and explanations and described a self they felt to be both unknowable and known.) The approach does not forbid relativism. It does not forbid any perspective in matters that are contradictory and elusive. However, it resists crude relativism. It does so by accepting that as much as in some critical

modes criticism can be relativist, in some others it should be permitted that it can be self-assured and evaluative. Deliberate eclecticism does not imply that the critic should be incapable of asserting a view or opinion as they face the fact that all definitions and conclusions are fallible. The approach advocates a form of discerning, high-functioning fallibility. Deliberate eclecticism prompts us to impartially lay out and review the evidence, terms, and issues that form the basis of an evaluation; form our own well-argued explanations, evidence, and justifications, and to be open to the strengths and weaknesses of a range of arguments, knowing that one or other will take precedence and be legitimised at different times.

Intertextual reading of our two deliberately introspective writers suggested that, though they did not achieve it, mastering eclecticism is a sort of ideal in understanding. The analysis in the thesis of the problems of reflecting on elusive notions of the self and free-will; of competing philosophical and critical confusions as to how to define and approach such issues; and of the often angst-ridden self-reflection of Marcus Aurelius and Susan Sontag illustrated how deliberate eclecticism matters. Indeed, the issues of self and personal autonomy and approaches to them are so contradictory and elusive that there is what one might call an: 'eclecticism imperative'. The thesis concludes that when dealing with contradictory, variable, nebulous, and usually qualitative material it is sensible to refuse to commit permanently to one or other of the teams of intellectuals who do battle on this field.

Though not a new critical approach, deliberate eclecticism is fresh in the sense that it is here suggested as a continual point of return; has been inspired by direct consideration of deliberately introspective texts; and is not an approach that has been explicitly advocated or systematically and consistently applied in self-writing criticism elsewhere. The approach was designed as a response to self-writing and as an approach to its analysis. However, deliberate eclecticism has broader applications, beyond the scope of this thesis. It can be applied to any genre or discipline that at some point comes back to the self, including wider literature, sociology, psychology, neuroscience, and politics.

In conclusion, the idea of criticism as an on-going exercise, in a critical continuum, in which there may be moments of interpretative clarity, was developed as the result of considering diary-writing as an on-going exercise. Aurelius and Sontag approached their deliberately introspective writing with a strong moral imperative; they were driven to emotional, as well as intellectual and ethical, self-improvement. The thesis illustrated that Aurelius and Sontag viewed their self-writing, self-knowledge, and self-improvement as intertwined. Crucially and in addition to this, they felt that the process of self-writing was in and of itself valuable. The thesis claimed that, rather similarly, the work of criticism is an on-going process: that is the thesis recommends criticism as exercise.

Just as Susan Sontag, throughout her life, deployed her diary as part of the processes of her professional criticism, this thesis has deployed the deliberately introspective diary, and other forms of self-writing as its steer for the development of a critical approach to writing that is about the issues of self, free-will and voice. Discussing self-writing in a serious way takes one quickly to challenging places, but this thesis concludes that they can quite quickly become fruitful by forcing one to accept that in this area, as in so many others, there are no certainties and that developing subtle but robustly critical responses with a keen sense of eclecticism is a useful way of navigating uncertainty.

GLOSSARY

The glossary expands on classical terms that are perhaps unfamiliar to contemporary readers and establishes dates for the periods discussed in the thesis.

Classical

The term 'classical', following the date lines in, *The Oxford History of the Classical World* (1986), denotes a period of time from the Classical Age of Greece (c478 BC-323 BC) to the fall of the Roman Empire (circa 476 AD). In this thesis, classical includes and subsumes the narrower periods of the Classical Age of Greece (c478 BC - 323 BC); the Hellenistic period (323 BC - 31 BC); as well as the Roman Principate and Empire (31 BC - 476 AD). The usages of classical implicitly or explicitly exclude the pre-Classical Greek Age, often called 'Homeric' (>800 BC). The term Archaic will be used to denote the works and ideas after the Homeric period dating from the period c800 BC - 478 BC. To attempt something like clarity, the term classical will be used with care and sometimes attached to date references.

Compatibilism

Simon Blackburn, a philosopher referred to in the thesis and one who has had a long career teaching philosophy to students and lay persons, explains that compatibilism asserts, 'that everything you should want from a notion of freedom is quite compatible with determinism. In particular, even if your action is caused, it can often be true of you that you could have done otherwise if you had chosen.' (Blackburn 2008: 147)

Contemporary

In this thesis the term 'contemporary' denotes belonging to or occurring in the last fifty to seventy years and when so deployed can be taken as applying to the current period. Renaissance, Enlightenment, or other periods will be used as they are commonly understood. Contemporary refers to contemporary ideas which have been formulated in our own century and the last, but which often contain the residue of or reflection on ideas from other centuries.

Eudemonia

Eudemonia was an important idea across all classical philosophical schools and meant the flourishing or good life (Cooper and Cooper 1975: 89). The philosophical concept of eudemonia started as an essentially Socratic ideal (Socrates is mentioned by name at least six times in the *Meditations*) but a wide range of philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, and the Epicureans, as well as the Stoics, viewed man's *raison d'être* to be his eudemonia. Eudemonia and its consideration included man's responsibilities to state and community.

Hegemonikon

A Stoic's mental-physical responses, including 'reason', were co-ordinated in a central 'governing faculty' or hegemonikon. The hegemonikon was situated in the heart. Gill's glossary to Epictetus' *Discourses* describes it thus: 'Hegemonikon controlling or governing part; control centre of an animal's psychological (and psychophysical) life; in effect, the brain, though placed by the Stoics in the heart; in human beings thought to be rational in its functioning.' (Gill in Epictetus 1995: 336)

Hypomnemata, plural or Hypomnema, singular

Hypomnemata are part of a family of classical literary forms, including ephemerides and commentarii, devoted to 'aiding' memory. Hypomnemata were, 'originally notes to aid memory in which content tended to prevail over form, and [which] identified material lacking literary pretension to be stylishly embellished by historians eventually resorting to it, more generally, however the hypomnemata... covers quite a wide semantic area ranging from mere notes from the royal chancellery to proper historiographic works.' (Bearzot 2011: 39-40) Bearzot in, 'Royal Autobiography in the Hellenistic Age', directly ties the contemporary diary form to hypomnemata and ephemerides in which the personal experiences of the author are the first focus.

Oikeiosis

'[A]ppropriation, familiarization, self-extension; the process of development by which an animal makes the world "its own" (oikeiosis); in human beings, a process of ethical development which leads ultimately to a sense of community with all human beings, as rational animals.' (Gill 1995: 336)

Prohairesis

'[C]hoice/ capacity for choice; the term is used by Epictetus as a general term to signify human rational functions, especially attending to impressions and giving (or withholding) assent.' (Gill 1995: 336)

Relativism

Simon Blackburn describes how relativism is: 'The permanently tempting doctrine that in some areas at least, truth itself is relative to the standpoint of the judging subject... Relativism is frequently rejected on the grounds that it is essential to the idea of belief or judgement that there are standards that it must meet, independently of anyone's propensity to accept it. Inability to make sense of such standards eventually paralyses all thought... Much post-modernist thought may be regarded as a somewhat abandoned celebration of relativism.' (Blackburn 2008: 327)

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