Med Health Care and Philos
DOI 10.1007/s11019-013-9515-z

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

A philosophical defense of the idea that we can hold each other in personhood: intercorporeal personhood in dementia care

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Abstract Since John Locke, regnant conceptions of personhood in Western philosophy have focused on individual capabilities for complex forms of consciousness that involve cognition such as the capability to remember past events and one's own past actions, to think about and identify oneself as oneself, and/or to reason. Conceptions of personhood such as Locke's qualify as cognition-oriented, and they often fail to acknowledge the role of embodiment for personhood. This article offers an alternative conception of personhood from within the tradition of phenomenology of the body. The article presents a phenomenological analysis of joint musical activity in dementia care and outlines an intercorporeal conception of personhood based on this analysis. It also provides a philosophical basis for the idea that others can hold us in personhood, and it questions a strict one-body-one-person logic that has pertained in much personhood debate.

Keywords Personhood · Intercorporeality · Dementia · Phenomenology of the body · Music · Joint activity

Introduction

There is a shift in recent dementia research from a focus on the individual's loss of abilities to how individuals can use their remaining capabilities in joint activities (e.g. Hellström et al. 2007). Such joint activities evoke philosophical questions with regard to bodily dimensions of social cognition (Fuchs and De Jaeger 2009; Froese and Fuchs 2012). A detailed analysis of joint activities *also* evokes questions of how to understand personhood.

This article offers a phenomenological analysis of joint musical activity in dementia care. It also presents an intercorporeal conception of personhood based on this analysis and provides a philosophical basis for the idea that others can hold us in personhood. The intercorporeal conception of personhood harmonizes well with empirically oriented research on what interactions in dementia care make possible.

The article is divided into four sections. The first part presents four possible conceptions of personhood. This is done in order to situate the intercorporeal conception within the larger personhood discussion and in order to show why this alternative conception can prove useful. The second part of the article focuses on joint musical activity in dementia care. Previous studies of musical engagement have examined how individuals with dementia can express themselves through music even though they may have difficulty to remember things and/or express themselves verbally (e.g. Hammar et al. 2011). As one such example, Pia Kontos (2010) has discussed bodily expression and embodied selfhood in relation to a film clip where Gladys Wilson, an elderly lady with dementia, and Naomi Feil, a therapist, interact through music.[1] I will describe some

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[1] I thank Pia Kontos for showing this film-clip during her presentation *Alzheimer expressions or expressions despite Alzheimer's?: Philosophical reflections on selfhood and embodiment* at the Dementia, Identity, Personhood conference, Linköping University, Sweden (September 13–15, 2010) and for letting me describe the film-clip in this article. The clip is part of a presentation of a therapy called Validation Therapy; the therapy's aim is to understand and affectively respond to the needs that the individual is trying to express. The film clip is available at http://www.memorybridge.org/documentary.php and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=csSj_Ot8gE8.

Published online: 25 September 2013

scenes from it. The third part of the article offers a different analysis of the film clip than the one by Kontos (2010). I see the film clip as an example of a joint musical activity and present a phenomenological analysis of such activities. The third part also contains the discussion of an intercorporeal conception of personhood, and provides a philosophical basis for the idea that others can hold us in personhood. The fourth part discusses some possible criticisms that may be directed towards this conception. It questions a strict one-body-one-person logic that has come to dominate much philosophical reasoning (compare Weiss 2009). One clarification is needed by way of introduction. I will not discuss moral personhood (see Beauchamp 1999), nor what a normative principle of respect for persons could imply in dementia care.

Varieties of personhood

Personhood conceptions can be differentiated into various kinds. The overview that I offer here draws on Laitinen's (2007, 6) distinction between monadic conceptions that hold personhood to depend only on the individual's capabilities, dyadic conceptions that hold persons to be "necessarily participants in practices where they are regarded as persons," and mixed conceptions according to which persons need to have a set of individual "person-making" capabilities and be regarded as persons by others. To this I add some qualifications and differentiate between: (1) *monadic cognition-oriented* conceptions of personhood, where a person is an individual with a set of capabilities that necessarily involve cognition; (2) *mixed cognition-oriented* conceptions, where a person is an individual with a set of capabilities that necessarily involve cognition and who participates in practices where s/he is regarded as a person by others; (3) *dyadic* conceptions, where persons are individuals who stand in relations to others who regard them as persons (and this is both a suffiscient and necessary condition for personhood); and (4) *monadic body-oriented* conceptions, where a person is an individual with a set of capabilities that reside on pre-reflective bodily levels of existence. In accordance with this terminology, the intercorporeal conception of personhood that I argue for qualifies as a *mixed body-oriented* conception of personhood.

Monadic cognition-oriented conceptions of personhood

In monadic cognition-oriented conceptions of personhood, a person is an individual with capabilities for complex forms of consciousness that involve cognition such as the capability to remember past events and one's own past actions, to think about and identify oneself as oneself, to reason, to act on reasons, and to form second-order volitions such as wanting to prevent oneself from acting in accordance with one's immediate but dangerous desires (e.g. Raz 2006; Locke 2001; Frankfurt 1971). More capabilities may be added, but the capabilities that are deemed necessary (though not necessarily sufficient) involve cognition.

John Locke's formulation in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* exemplifies this. A person is a "thinking, intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking" (Locke 2001, 268). A person is a being with the capacity for complex forms of consciousness such as reflection and reflective self-awareness that persist over time. Locke also discusses whether an individual qualifies as the *same* person over time, i.e. at one point in time and at a later time (say, 10 years later). What matters in this regard is that the individual remembers and "carries with him" his consciousness of his past life—irrespective of whether he has undergone drastic bodily changes such as a fictitious body-switch and now "has" someone else's body (as in Locke's example where a prince and a cobbler change bodies).

This highlights the difference and overlaps between personhood and personal identity discussions. Even if someone no longer qualifies as the same person as before, she or he may still qualify as a person. In Locke's case, however, one of the criteria for personal identity-over-time comes close to a criterion for personhood: a person is an individual who can consider herself as herself in different times and in order for this person to qualify as the same person at two times she must be aware of herself in the past as herself in the present.

More recent monadic cognition-oriented conceptions of personhood hold capability to actively participate in deliberation (Raz 2006) or memory or capability to think about oneself as oneself over time (Brock 1988) as necessary for someone to qualify as a person. Some also present descriptions according to which a person is an individual that has "sufficient" capabilities for complex forms of consciousness such as capabilities for rationality, autonomy, self-awareness, linguistic competence, intentional action, sociability and moral agency (DeGrazia 2005, 6). Also the latter conception would qualify as monadic because personhood depends on individual capabilities only; it qualifies as cognition-oriented because of the focus on capabilities that involve cognition.

Monadic cognition-oriented conceptions succeed in doing justice to the value that many individuals attribute to capabilities for thinking and remembering events over time. Such conceptions also have a tendency to down-play the importance of the body, except for the brain. This

becomes clear when scholars discuss the future possibility of having one's brain surgically removed from one's present body and transplanted into someone else's body (from whom the brain has already been removed). Scholars then ask whether we, if we after having undergone such transplantation and still remember our past lives, wouldn't qualify as the same persons as before. In discussing this, deGrazia (2005, 19) answers affirmatively that this would indeed be the case, and adds that there is a basic intuition that "the person goes where the consciousness goes." Whereas this may be a common intuition, the reasoning nevertheless builds on the assumptions that the new brain-body entity would be conscious and that it makes sense, at all, to think of this individual as the same rather than a new person.

Mixed cognitive-oriented conceptions of personhood

Mixed cognitive-oriented conceptions of personhood hold capabilities that involve cognition *and* certain relations with others who treat them as persons as necessary for someone to qualify as a person. Laitinen's (2007) approach exemplifies this. "Person-making" capabilities include

> sophisticated mental powers or sophisticated variants of subjectivity (intentionality, self-consciousness, reason and deliberation, rich emotional life including possible existential anxieties and fear of death, conceptions of value, free will, reflection and second order attitudes, conceptual thinking) as well as related sophisticated forms of agency and interaction (free action, giving and taking of responsibility, responsiveness to moral requirements, norms and reasons of other kinds, joint action, communication). (Laitinen 2007, 5)

A person needs to have such capabilities to a "sufficient" degree *and* certain relations with others who treat her or him with interpersonal recognition. Laitinen draws on the tradition of Hegel and Axel Honneth and holds recognition to be crucial for human development: relations of recognition are seen both as an adequate response to the individual with the said capabilities *and* a pre-condition for personhood.[2] Laitinen quotes Daniel C. Dennett to exemplify the idea that others' way of seeing and treating an individual matter for her or his personhood:

> Whether something counts as a person depends in some way on an *attitude taken* toward it, a *stance adopted* with respect to it […] [I]t is not the case that once we have established the objective fact that something is a person, we treat him or her or it in a certain way, but that our treating him or her or it in this certain way is somehow and to some extent *constitutive* of its being a person. (Dennett quoted in Laitinen 2007, 2)

Laitinen's version is a *mixed* conception of personhood. It makes social relations of recognition and a set of individual capabilities necessary for someone to qualify as a person. Since many of the capabilities that he mentions involve cognition, I see this as a mixed cognition-oriented conception of personhood.

Dyadic conceptions of personhood

A dyadic conception of pesonhood, as Laitinen (2007) uses the term, make others' recognition of the individual as a person a necessary and sufficient criterion for personhood (in contrast to the conception above, where others' recognition in this regard is a necessary but not sufficient criterion). If others don't treat me as a person, I will not qualify as a person. In this way, it leaves open the question of whether just any being can qualify as a person if treated as a person by others.

Dyadic conceptions are, to say the least, rare. Some theologians have elaborated thoroughly relational conceptions of personhood (for an excellent overview see Zizioulas 1975; see also McFadyen 1990; Buber 2004) that come close to dyadic conceptions. Building on the Christian conception of the Trinity, Richard M. Gula (1989, 65) explains that "the Trinitarian vision sees that no one exists by oneself, but only in relations to others. To be is to be in relationship." Persons are persons-in-relations and others' (God's and/or fellow-beings') recognition of the individual *as a person* is emphasised. However, while emphasising the relational dimension of personhood, these theologians also discuss capabilities that make openness to others possible—and the conceptions should therefore qualify as mixed. Two other examples of potentially dyadic conceptions come from anthropological works. Marcel Mauss (1985) suggests that the Pueblo Indians see membership of a clan and specific roles within the clan as that which constitutes personhood, and Marilyn Strathern (1988:13) suggests that persons in the Melanesian sense are not regarded as "unique entities" but are "as dividually as they are individually conceived […] persons are frequently construed as the plural and composite site of the

[2] Laitinen also introduces the concepts of potential persons and potential capabilities in order to make his point, and suggests that we should recognize someone's personhood if she belongs to the group of potential persons (and she does so if she has the potential to develop capabilities such as those above). If this is the case, we should respond to her potential personhood by recognizing her "as a person" since others' recognition in interactions with the individual are needed for her or him to develop the capabilities in question and become a person.

relationships that produced them." In both of these cases, persons are inherently social: they are composed of social relations with others and these relations make them persons. Yet the Melanesian conception of personhood could be read as opening up also for individual capabilities for personhood (persons are, after all, not only dividually conceived). And perhaps some individual capabilities are needed in order for an individual to be able to perform a specific role in a clan in the Pueblo Indians's case.

Still another example of a conception that starts off as dualistic can be found in the context of dementia research. This is the case when Tom Kitwood (2008, 8) elaborates on the work of Martin Buber and defines personhood as a "standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being, by others, in the context of relationship and social being." He also, however, discusses "depersonalizing" processes through which someone's personhood may be "degraded," for example if someone is not allowed "to use the abilities that they do have" (Kitwood 2008, 46). Thus Kitwood (though emphasising dyadic dimensions of personhood) also seems concerned with the individual's capabilities—when it comes to the possible degradation of personhood.

Why these conceptions are not enough

There are very few "pure" dyadic conceptions of personhood, for evident reasons. According to such conceptions, anyone or anything qualifies as a person if she, he or it participates in a practice where others treat this being or thing as a person. If no other criteria are added (as they indeed are added in the theological cases as well as in Kitwood's discussion), personhood resides in the eyes and actions of the beholder. If others don't see me as a person, I will not qualify as one; if others see physical objects such as pens or bikes as persons, they will qualify as persons. This makes dyadic conceptions problematic.

Monadic and mixed cognition-oriented conceptions, however, result in other problems. While cognition certainly is important for personhood, it is unclear why capabilities that involve cognition should be *necessary* for someone to qualify as a person. Furthermore, a narrow focus on cognition combined with a dismissal of the role of embodiment for this very cognition is at odds with recent research in cognitive neuroscience, developmental psychology and phenomenological strands of philosophy (see Gallagher 2005; Thelen et al. 2001; Clarke 1997; Damasio 1994; Varela et al. 1991). Despite the differences between these strands of research, they all examine how cognition is *necessarily embodied*: the individual's unique sensory-motor capabilities enable her or him to interact with others, and cognition "arises from bodily interactions with the world" and "depends on the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with particular perceptual and motor capacities that are inseparably linked and that together form the matrix within which reasoning, memory, emotion, language and all other aspects of mental life are meshed" (Thelen et al. 2001, 1). If this view is accepted, it becomes strange not to mention or merely dismiss the role of embodiment (with the exception of the brain) when discussing capabilities for personhood.

The role of embodiment for what an individual can be and do becomes particularly relevant in the light of recent dementia research. Such research shows how individuals who no longer can remember their name or past events still have a bodily know-how with regard to how to engage with others. Kontos (2005, 565), for example, shows how individuals with dementia "carry and project their bodies with coherence" on pre-reflective, bodily levels of existence and have a certain "style of content to bodily movements and gestures." This is also the starting-point in Matthews' (2006) discussion of how an elderly lady with dementia no longer can remember her name but still expresses her kind attitude towards others, in gestures and other forms of body language, and this in ways that are typical for her and that persist over time. Why, Matthews asks, shouldn't this remaining bodily know-how be relevant with regard to whether this individual is seen as the same person as before? Why shouldn't it also matter for the discussion of personhood?

Monadic body-oriented conceptions of personhood

Body-oriented conceptions of personhood can be seen as a reaction to the focus on cognition in many discussions of personhood. They start in an analysis of the role of embodiment for what an individual can be and do as in the work of Merleau-Ponty (2006[1945])[3] on everyday interactions where we seem to act on the basis of a tacit pre-reflective bodily know-how.

This bodily know-how enables co-ordination of body-parts in movement for the sake of action. We need not think about how to walk, when walking, and at work here—Merleau-Ponty suggests—is an implicit, practical awareness of our bodies, motion and space and a system of practical and pre-reflective sensory-motor skills that enable smooth and seamless engagement with others and the world. Furthermore, and whereas we may learn new sensory-motor skills, and whereas the tacit bodily know-how can be continuously modified, repeated motor activity may also result in certain actions or patterns of behaviour becoming "sedimented" into our bodies. Sedimentation, for Merleau-Ponty, is the result of the fact that an "attitude

[3] Maurice Merleau-Ponty first published *Phénoménologie de la perception* already in 1945. Hereafter, however, I will refer to one of the more recent translations of this work, published in 2006.

towards the world, when once it has received frequent confirmation, acquires a favoured status for us" (Merleau-Ponty 2006[1949], 513, 469, 382). It implies that past experience can feed into, and restrict, our bodily becoming, and it can result in the subject's developing a certain style of being, i.e. a certain habituated manner of engaging with others and the world, which gives bodily existence stability without stagnation.

This is the case for Matthews' elderly lady whose gentle mode of interaction with others has become part of her sedimented bodily style of being. This style of being can remain over time *even* if the lady no longer remembers her name or can articulate a sense of who she is, and it is a "very familiar characteristic" for those who have known her for a long time. And this, Matthews holds, should matter for personhood discussions.

Matthews (2006, 174) argues for a *gradual* conception of personhood, where we "gradually become the persons we are, in the sense of the complex and very distinctive individuals that adult human beings tend to be." We develop as persons through processes that fine-tune our individuality: we have an identity from birth and this identity gradually becomes more distinctive and more "personal" as we experience new situations, accumulate memories of these experiences and reflect on them. Such experiences—and our reactions to them—can feed into our bodily style of being. In this way, the capability to reflect upon past experience is central to what a person is, *as* are explicitly bodily dimensions of human existence that express our individuality. Furthermore, just as we may gradually become persons, we may also gradually loose our personhood. However, Matthews says, fragments of our individuality can remain in our bodily style of being; our bodily style of being can express a now fragmented but once much fuller personhood. This is the case with the old lady with dementia who still qualifies as a person in this reasoning (though not in a "full" sense)—because she still can express herself on bodily levels of existence.

I understand Matthews' conception as a *monadic body-oriented conception of personhood*. Matthews' discusses persons as body-subjects along the lines of Merleau-Ponty's reasoning, and emphasises that a person is "not a 'subject' loosely attached to a 'body'" (Matthews 2006, 173). Instead, a person is "a unified being who expresses […] thoughts, feelings, and so on, in bodily form—in speech, in gesture, in behaviour, in interactions with their environment" (ibid.). This concern with embodiment makes the conception qualify as *body-oriented*. It also seems to qualify as *monadic*. Others' recognition of the individual as a person is not described as a precondition for personhood, even though Matthews emphasizes the role of others in supporting someone's sense of self in dementia care and even though he says that what we mean by "a 'person' is an actual human being, with whom we can have certain kinds of dealings and relationships—someone like ourselves, to whom we can relate as 'another self', that is with whom we can converse and cooperate" (Matthews 2006, 172). I see Matthews' conception as promising, and I will now take it one step further and present an intercorporeal conception of personhood via an analysis of joint musical activities.

Making music together in dementia care

Recent dementia research indicates that individuals with dementia can retain capabilities for singing and other forms of music-making even though they have lost some cognitive capabilities (e.g. Chatterton et al. 2010; Ridder 2003). This has motivated examinations of the use of musical therapy (Clair 2002) and other forms of musical engagement in everyday activities in dementia care (Sixsmith and Gibson 2007; Mathews et al. 2001; Götell et al. 2003) such as getting dressed in the morning (Hammar et al. 2011). Musical improvisation between caregivers and care receivers has been shown to increase involvement, break isolation and enable individuals with dementia to express themselves. Furthermore, it has been suggested that "personal songs", i.e. songs that have meant a lot to the particular individual, can be particularly enabling and serve "as a means of expressing and containing intense feelings and make it possible to share these feelings with another person" (Ridder 2003, 34).

Consider now some scenes from the film clip entitled "Gladys Wilson and Naomi Feil" that I see as an example of a joint musical activity (endnote 1). As the film clip starts, Gladys is sitting alone in an armchair in her room. Her eyes are shut, but she moves one of her arms slowly up and down, touching one of the arms in the armchair. Gladys is described as "virtually non-verbal." In the next shot, Naomi has entered the room. She faces Gladys, leans forward towards her, touches her hand and greets her with the words "Mrs Wilson. Hello." Gladys doesn't open her eyes, but she reaches forward to Naomi's arm and holds it while Naomi sits down. Naomi asks "Can you see me good?" At this, Gladys opens her eyes a bit, closes them again, holds on to Naomi's hand and moves her own and Naomi's hand up and down, repetitively.

As the film unfolds, Gladys holds both of Naomi's hands, and Naomi is half-standing face-to-face with Gladys, who remains seated. Moving very close to Gladys, Naomi says that she can see a tear in Gladys's eyes. She touches Gladys's cheek gently, first with one hand and then with both hands, and asks "Can you let me in a little bit?" She then passes her hand over Naomi's hand, arm and cheek. At this, Gladys straightens herself up and starts to

clap her hand fast to the armchair, regularly and audibly. Naomi says "I think I can be with you and Jesus for a minute" and she starts to sing "Jesus loves me, yes I know …" At this, Gladys slows down the pace of her hand clapping the arm, and attunes the beat to the pace of Naomi's songs. Still somewhat later into the film-clip, Gladys beats faster, and this time Naomi follows the changed rhythm, singing faster and more vividly. Gladys also shifts from clapping her hand to the armchair to clapping Naomi's arm, and her eyes are now open. When the song ends, Naomi takes up a new one, and just as before she takes the lead by singing. This time, however, Gladys starts to take turns with Naomi. When Naomi sings "He's got the whole world" Gladys responds by whispering "in his hands." And when the song is coming to an end, Gladys slows down the pace of her beating, returns to making her beat by clapping the arm of the armchair instead of Naomi's arm.

The film clip interfolds Naomi's explanation of why she acts the way she does. She explains that Gladys has a background in the Baptist Church and that she chose to sing this particular song because she knew that this kind of religious music meant a lot to Gladys. She also explains that she tried to move with Gladys.

A phenomenology of joint musical activity: intercorporeality

In the perspective of phenomenology of the body, objects in the world do not appear in a neutral manner to the subject nor only through what actions they make possible. Objects also appear in a certain affective mode, as attractive or repulsive, and as inviting us to different responses such as getting closer or withdrawing (Merleau-Ponty 2006; Ahmed 2006). If we perceive the first tulip in May as beautiful, we may want to get nearer to it; if we perceive a certain situation as almost ungraspable we may want to shy away from it. In perceiving an object in a particular way, we position ourselves in a certain way towards it or, if one so likes, the object orients us towards it. That which attracts us can make us want to get nearer and that which appears unpleasant can make us turn away. In this way, perceived objects and situations can be said to call for specific responses.

This reasoning has been further elaborated via Merleau-Ponty's (2006, 5) conception of the lived body as "our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions" and his example of the other's anger. When meeting an angry individual, I need not start to think about how I look and feel when I myself am angry in order to understand that this other is angry. Rather, the other's anger manifests itself through facial, gestural, interoceptive etc. changes. Anger is in his face, in the sharpness of his voice, in the rushing heart-beat—and I can see and sense his anger with my body and respond to it in an immediate and pre-reflective way. As put by Käll (2009), not only are my lived body and that of the other our bodily expressions; our bodily expressions can also thoroughly form the shared space in-between us.

This can be exemplified with the interaction between Gladys and Naomi. Their interaction illustrates how self and other can express themselves with their bodies, perceive each others' bodily expressions, respond to that which they perceive in a direct way, and how expressions/responses can form and saturate the shared space between them even when few words are said. Naomi sees a tear in Gladys's eye and responds to this perceived object by reaching forward, saying that she sees the tear, touching Gladys's cheeks and wiping away the tear. The tear draws Naomi physically closer to Gladys. Furthermore, Naomi's response to this bodily expression is likely to inform Gladys' experience of the situation in some way: Gladys straightens her back and starts to beat the arm of the chair rhythmically and faster. In other words, two bodily subjects express themselves through posture, touch, eye contact and movement and by so doing create a shared space of *dynamic intercorporeal engagement*.

The concept of the intercorporeal is introduced by Merleau-Ponty (1968) in relation to the discussion of intracorporeal touch, where my one hand touches the other hand that touches an object, and intercorporeal touch in the handshake. Despite the differences between the cases, they highlight phenomena such as the double sensation of touching and being touched and reversibility. In the case of the handshake, both self and other find themselves in the position of self *and* other, and touch is reversible across bodily beings. Though self and other remain different, the handshake highlights the way they "belong to the same system of being for itself and being for another … [both] are moments of the same syntax" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 83, see also 141–143). Yet Merleau-Ponty's point is even stronger. He states that he wants to outline a "wholly new idea" of subjectivity where self and other are not seen as rivals, but where the other is seen as "caught up in a circuit that connects him to the world, as we ourselves are, and consequentially also in a circuit that connects him to us—and this world is *common* to us" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 269).

Scholars have used the concept of intercorporeality in somewhat different ways. Commonly, it has been used to denote the non-discreteness of bodies, how self and other are formed in interactions with each other, and how the self always contain traces of the other (Weiss 1999; Shildrick 2008; Diprose 2008). It has been used in order to highlight the basic openness to others that makes for example a

parent and a small child able to mimic each other's bodily movement and eventually incorporate traces of the other's body language into their own bodily being-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 116–123). Once incorporated, the behaviour has become part of the child's and/or parent's pre-reflective bodily mode of engaging with others and the world.

I will use the term *primordial intercorporeality* for this basic intercorporeal openness between self and other that serves as a basis for the self as constituted by its social relations with others: the other's pattern of acting and, indeed, patterns of interacting can through repetition become an integrated part of the self's mode of existence and co-existence. Importantly, however, my main concern here is with what face-to-face joint activities (where self and other are intensively aware, connected and sensitive to each other as in Gladys and Naomi's joint musical activity) make possible. I use the term *intense face-to-face intercorporeality* in order to differentiate this from the basic primordial intercorporeality.

Joint musical activity

Joint activities are commonly seen to require two subjects with a shared goal, we-intentions (both subjects should have the intention to act together with the other), a strategy to reach the goal and a commitment to support of the other's role in the joint activity (see Toumola 1995; Bratman 1992). There are also, however, joint motor activities which best can be described as activities where participants engage with each other and their surroundings, in the present, without explicitly having discussed the goal and the strategy. Participants coordinate their actions in time and space and act on the basis of a habituated know-how concerning how to act together (compare Seeman 2009).

The latter view resonates with Merleau-Ponty's reasoning on how motor skills can be performed without the subject's having to think about how to act, once the skills have been incorporated into her or his lived body. This can take place when dancers through repeated practice have learnt how to dance together with others. They can perform the activity of dancing in a smooth manner and be fully engaged in the here and now of the dancing precisely *because* they now have a pre-reflective bodily know-how concerning how to move their bodies in relation to space, rhythm and the movements of others. Furthermore, this bodily know-how can feed into perception and make space stand forth, to the subject, as a space for dance—and as inviting (compare Malmqvist and Zeiler 2010).

This goes for participants who have learnt how to act and interact in musical engagement as well. Through habituation, they can learn how to use their bodies in musical engagement together with others, and this can form their perception of a certain situation as one of joint musicing. This can also be formulated in a way that highlights the inter-bodily dimension of this know-how. Through habituation, patterns of interaction can come to rest on bodily and pre-reflective levels as an "intercorporeal memory" of "how to share pleasure, elicit attention, avoid rejection, re-establish contact" in interaction with others (Froese and Fuchs 2012, 9). Such memory can also be more specific and involve know-how concerning how to interact in joint musical activities.

Now, it would not be possible to have an intercorporeal memory if there was not first a basic openness to others and the world, i.e. a primordial intercorporeality. This is the case since intercorporeal memory, as understood here, is the result of incorporation of self-other interaction into the subject's lived body. Yet something more is at stake. An intercorporeal memory of how to engage with others can certainly enable joint musical activity, but this very activity also enables participants in it, such as Gladys and Naomi, to express themselves in ways that they could not outside the interaction. Indeed, I suggest, the intense face-to-face intercorporeality of these kinds of joint activities can make a set of intercorporeal capabilities spring forth. And this should matter for the discussion of personhood. I will take this reasoning in a number of steps.

First, three features are commonly emphasised in the analysis of joint motor activities. In order for an activity to qualify as joint, individuals need to engage with each other and the world in a joint fashion. There need be a joint attention where participants are at least pre-reflectively aware of them attending to the same object in or feature of a particular situation. Scholars also underline the importance of experiences of "*us* as a common cause: as enjoying a sense of acting together" in order for an activity to qualify as joint (Seeman 2009, 504). Furthermore, joint activities presuppose two individuals who are capable of shifting *from* attunement to each other *to* experiences of the other as different from the self (when the other acts in unexpected ways also in shared activities or there may simply be misunderstandings where self and other do not act as jointly together as before) and *back again* to attunement. Without this to-and-fro movement, self and other would "melt into each other" on an experiential level (Fuchs and De Jaeger 2009, 471). From within the perspective of phenomenology of the body, a smooth to-and-fro movement becomes possible because participants can perceive each others' bodily expressions and gestures in a direct manner and attune and respond to each other on bodily, pre-reflective levels of existence and co-existence. This makes participants in joint musical activities able to act "together simultaneously in specific dimensions of time" (Schütz 1976, 162). Finally, joint motor activities make subjects experience the situation and behave differently from how they would experience it and would behave

outside the interaction. Within the joint activity, Fuchs and De Jaeger (2009, 476) suggest, the coordination of gestures, movement, and gazes can gain such "a momentum that it overrides the individual's intentions and common sense-making emerges." This being the case, meaning is "co-ordinated in a way not necessarily attributable to either of them [the participants]. We could even say: Who each is within the interaction is already affected by the other" (ibid.).

This can be applied to the case of Gladys and Naomi. However, in the case of Gladys and Naomi, their joint musical activity is *deeply asymmetrical*. There is an asymmetrical estrangement in the sense that Gladys is no longer able to do things that she could before (whereas this is not the case for Naomi) and an asymmetrical vulnerability that results from the asymmetry in help-needs.

In the film clip, Naomi takes the initiative to the musical engagement and seeks Gladys's attention, and Gladys seems only gradually to attend to Naomi: they only gradually establish "attention contact" (Gomez 2005). Still, and despite the somewhat hesitant way in which this takes place, the attention to each other's signs of attention can be seen as a pre-reflective process of social attunement through which they can experience themselves as "we." Furthermore, both Gladys and Naomi exercise basic capabilities for the to-and-fro movement (of attunement, response, differentiation and attunement) that makes an encounter shared rather than a case of merging. This movement does not require reflective thinking. And while listening and attuning to the musical expression they also *form and create* this expression *through* the to-and-fro movement. They listen to the musical expression in the activity of co-creating it: Gladys starts beating the pace of Naomi's song, Naomi attunes her song to Gladys's beat and they create the music through this to-and-fro movement. This is the case even if their capabilities for doing so are unevenly distributed. Even though Naomi does have a clear agenda (this was a film clip intended to show how communication was possible) and steers the musical activity in the beginning, Gladys speeds up the rhythm and Naomi attunes to her beat. Despite the asymmetry, they "co-inhabit the lived time of the musical piece" (Krueger 2011, 19) that they create together. And even if Gladys cannot verbally explain how she engages in this shared activity, she still exercises a fragmented know-how concerning how to do so. Gladys's beating materializes the rhythm of the music into bodily movement and Naomi sings. For Gladys, an intercorporeal memory of how to engage in this particular activity can enable her to perceive this situation as one of musical interaction where she "knows" how to interact even if she has lost many cognitive capabilities, i.e. if she has an intercorporeal memory of how to do so.

Gladys and Naomi also create meaning together within the musical activity. The togetherness of the activity is formed on the basis of Gladys' and Naomi's responses to each other: the rhythm and the patterns of the interaction make them "act and react in ways that they could not foresee […] The interaction process gains a 'life of its own'" (Fuchs and De Jaeger 2009, 471). Neither of them could foresee how the interaction would work or what music it would result in, even though Naomi did start singing a particular song. Indeed, Naomi and Gladys can be seen as forming part of joint interface with the world in this activity—focused as they are on each other.

I will take this reasoning one step further. As long as we focus on each individual in this interaction, it makes sense to discuss capabilities that each of them needs to have in order for them to engage in it: capabilities for bodily expression, attunement and response to the other together with the other are then seen as belonging to each of the subjects. This, however, can down-play how Gladys and Naomi can be able to do more things within the interaction than alone: certain capabilities seem only to be there when they act together. Indeed, whereas Gladys has major difficulty in expressing herself outside this shared space of intense interaction, she can express herself *through* the joint activity *together* with Naomi. The interaction, I suggest, results in intercorporeal capabilities: these capabilities spring forth through and in the interaction. They can be understood as properties of the self-other-world interaction rather than of each individual participating in it: the intercorporeal capabilities are realized within the relation between a feature of the world, such as the qualities and structure of the piece of music, and self and other who express and make the musical piece together.

It is perhaps no coincidence that this is particularly clear in cases of making music together. Music is phenomenally heard and felt with one's whole body, and it is encompassing and directional. As noted by Don Ihde (2007), it can fill space, penetrate my awareness, take me out of myself, direct participants in the musical engagement towards each other and immerse them in the musical here and now. Ihde (2007, 157) also suggests that even if music can be understood as "sound calling attention to itself," music that we listen to does not take place outside the musical participants in any simple sense: to listen is to "be dramatically engaged in a bodily listening which 'participates' in the movement of music;" indeed, "involvement and participation become the mode of being-in the musical situation."

I suggest that the directionality and involvement of music—the way it involves the whole body rather than only cognition—can shed light on the interaction between Gladys and Naomi. Musical activities can open up the world to its participants in distinct ways and enable them to engage with others and the world on levels that does not require a wide range of cognitive capabilities. Furthermore,

what world the music can open up to hinges on the quality and structure of the music: a cheerful world, a world of melancholia etc. In this way, musical activity can enable some bodily expressions more than others.

Because of the asymmetries between self and other in cases such as that of Naomi and Gladys, the joint musical activity can have more radical implications for Gladys than Naomi. Gladys has little ability to express herself verbally and perhaps she cannot remember past events, but through the joint musical activity she can express herself with her body in interactions with others in a way that is meaningful both to herself and others.

An intercorporeal conception of personhood

Let me now return to the personhood discussions. Matthews's reasoning implied that individuals who can express themselves on bodily levels of existence in ways that are typical for them qualify as persons in a basic sense, even though they have lost the capability to remember past events or to identify and talk about themselves as themselves. I will take this as a starting-point. However, if we accept Matthews's idea of a graded conception that sees also a fragmented bodily style of being as indicative of personhood, why then shouldn't intercorporeal capabilities also qualify as person-making? These capabilities spring forth in self-other joint activities and enable individuals who cannot express themselves without others' support to do so in interactions.

This matters for the intercorporeal conception of personhood. Through the joint activity, and even if I can no longer take the initiative to it, I may be able to express myself on bodily levels together with others: I may know how to engage in musical expression when drawn into and immersed in songs that I have known well in my past—and thus qualify as a person in a very basic sense. This also means that others can act in ways that *maintain my personhood* by interacting with me in ways that enable me to express myself. This idea is sometimes expressed in dementia research (see Kitwood 2008), but often so without being given a philosophical basis. Such a basis can be given via the concept of an intercorporeal personhood.

In contrast to many other conceptions of personhood, this one builds on the idea that intercorporeality is a crucial feature of human existence and co-existence: we develop as individuals in close relations with others, and self and other contain traces of each other. Because of this, it should come as no surprise if basic patterns of interaction can reside on bodily levels of existence and enable joint musical activities even when we may no longer be able to remember past events.

As a conception of personhood, the intercorporeal version is *graded* and *body-oriented* (just like Matthews's conception). It is also explicitly relational (more so than was Matthews's version). While verbal language or memory does matter for personhood, these are not necessary criteria for an intercorporeal personhood. What matters is that individuals can express themselves on bodily levels of existence and co-existence, in ways that are typical for them, even if they *only* are capable of expressing themselves in interactions where others take the initiative. In relation to the different kinds of personhood conceptions that I outlined in the first part of the article, the intercorporeal conception qualifies as a mixed body-oriented conception.[4]

Intercorporeal personhood in dementia care

Historically, Gail Weiss (2009, 22) notes, the physical boundary of the human body has served as a practical and theoretical means for distinguishing one person from others. A basic one-body-one-person logic has underpinned this reasoning: one person has one body only; and if a person experiences that there are other persons in her or his body, then she or he may have a psychiatric illness. The one-body-one-person logic becomes apparent when its accuracy is questioned, as in cases where conjoined twins share one body and primarily others suggest that the twins should be separated.

The intercorporeal conception of personhood can question the one-body-one-person logic from another angle. This somewhat provocative statement needs to be qualified. The idea is not that the couple in the joint activity become one person. While personhood is constituted and expressed jointly, within the interaction, this is not a case of merging. Rather, the joint activity makes it possible for the participants in the activity to qualify as distinct yet thoroughly relational persons *because* it allows both of them to express themselves as unique-subjects-acting-together in a joint fashion. At the same time, however, the intercorporeal conception of personhood does question the assumption that capabilities that are necessary for personhood are the *property of one single individual only*. As we have seen, some are intercorporeal, they are properties of the self-other-world interaction rather than of each individual participating in it, and spring forth only in joint activities. In this sense, the intercorporeal conception questions a narrow focus on one-body-one-person as that which settles the personhood discussion.

What then about the situation after the interaction, when Naomi has left the room? The analysis of the joint activity between Naomi and Gladys focused on what became

[4] Just like other mixed conceptions, it sees a set of capabilities and relations as necessary for someone to qualify as a person.

possible within the joint interaction: something more and different than when each of them was alone. Again, some clarification is needed. While *more* is at stake than individual capabilities for joint activities, this is not to say that each of the participants need not *also* have individual capabilities for intercorporeal memory. Whereas the joint activity make it possible for Gladys to express herself in ways that she could not do alone nor could take the initiative to do together with someone else, both Gladys and Naomi nevertheless need to have some basic capabilities for joint musical activity, such as capabilities to engage in a basic attunement and to-and-fro movement. Now, such capabilities remain also when not expressed in action—and when each of them is alone. Yet they would not be exercised outside the situational whole of the joint activity; indeed Gladys *has not* the capability to trigger the exercise of her capabilities to joint musical activity.

At this stage, we face two alternatives: either personhood requires the exercise of capabilities that spring forth in the self-other-world interaction of joint musical activity or it is sufficient that an individual—when placed in such a situational whole—can do so. The former approach would lead to the conclusion that an individual can be held in personhood in specific situations and fall "out of" personhood when no longer in these situations. The latter approach would imply that someone, because she or he *can* be held in personhood in interactions, indeed qualify as a person also when not in such interactions. I suggest that this is the most sensible route to take and my argument is based on an analogy with an individual without dementia who sleeps. Just as it would be highly implausible to assume that we, when sleeping, no longer qualify as persons because we do not exercise capabilities that are deemed necessary for personhood, I suggest that Naomi and Gladys need not exercise the intercorporeal capabilities that spring forth in the joint activity in order to qualify as persons when no longer in this activity.

Four other clarifications may be helpful. First, surely there are cases of dementia care that are not as harmonious as the case of Glady and Naomi. Individuals with dementia may express and act towards others and their situational whole with anger and violence. Also angry gestures (if the individuals with dementia no longer can express themselves with words) can qualify as expressions on bodily levels of existence and co-existence that are typical for these individuals in their present situation, and thus significant of personhood in Matthews's sense above.

Second, some may hold the intercorporeal conception of personhood to be open to a criticism that has been directed at Kitwood's work, namely that "in postulating that personhood can ultimately be sustained, he prevents the initiation of a grieving process that should begin with the involution of the sufferer" (Davis 2004, 377). This is not what I argue for. We may well grieve *and* engage in activities that help others retain a fragmented personhood. The point is not to pretend that there are no losses.

Third, some others may also criticize the intercorporeal conception on the basis that it is too inclusive. Arguably, more individuals would qualify as persons if an intercorporeal rather than a cognition-oriented conception were used. This criticism may be based on the assumption that persons should be conceptualized as a priori capable of autonomous choice. If capabilities for autonomous choice include the capability to think about what I really want and act on the basis of the result of this reflection, and if persons are seen as a priori capable of autonomous choice, then the intercorporeal conception simply will not be helpful. In my view, however, this criticism calls for a critical analysis of the interrelation between the concepts of personhood and autonomy (rather than for a cognition-oriented conception of personhood).[5]

Finally, an intercorporeal conception of personhood has implications for the way dementia care should best be organized if we want this care to promote personhood. From within a monadic cognition-oriented conception of personhood, there may not be very much that staff in dementia care can do in order to help individuals with dementia to remain in personhood. If they lose the necessary cognitive capabilities, they will not qualify as persons. Much more can be done from the perspective of an intercorporeal conception. Even if professionals and relatives who engage in dementia care face many difficult situations and even if resources of different kinds are often scarce, dementia care should preferably be organised in such a way as to increase the possibilities for individuals with dementia to express themselves in interaction with others as persons.

Acknowledgments This research was made possible thanks to two projects: the project Dementia and Personhood, funded by the Swedish Council for Working-Life and Social Research, and the program Dementia: Agency, Personhood and Everyday Life, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. I am grateful to both of these.

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[5] Proponents for the view that persons *per definition* are capable of autonomous choice may agree with MacIntyre's (1999:99) statement that "independent rational" individuals are also dependent upon a community that enable them to develop the capabilities necessary for making these choices in the first place (see also Friedman 2000 for a related discussion).

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