

Extended Body, Extended Mind: The Self as Prosthesis

Susan Stuart

Glasgow University, United Kingdom

s.stuart@philosophy.arts.gla.ac.uk

According to Kant [1781/87 & 1929] the most we can say about ourselves is that we are logical subjects of thoughts, necessary for the very possibility of coherent cognition. We look for the self, we reflect, and we find no thing, nothing that is the bearer of properties, and we try to conjure it up in the concept of a soul or mental thing [Descartes 1968], or a bundle of discrete perceptions [Hume 1739]. But we are looking in the wrong direction and must reorientate ourselves.

Self-consciousness requires the existence of a perceiving and conceiving being that acts and interacts with other objects and organisms in, what must at least appear to be, an objective world. It requires embodiment and embeddedness within its world; it is 'fallen'

[Heidegger 1962], necessarily adaptable, necessarily technological, extending itself through the use of tools, restoring lost functions and replacing lost organs and limbs. But also enhancing and reconfiguring itself, augmenting its capabilities and pushing itself further into its world and away from the first place we look. The self is not the body.

The self is not the mind. The self is active agency within the world; it is prosthesis.