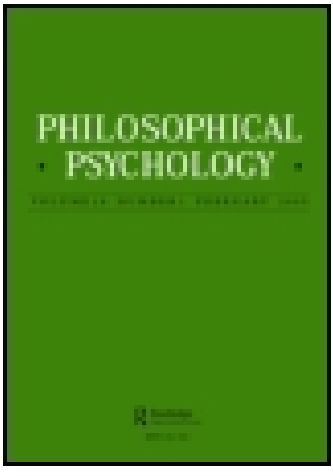

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Multiple personality and personal identity

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ABSTRACT *If personal identity consists in non-branching psychological continuity, then the sharp breaks in psychological connectedness characteristic of Multiple Personality Disorder implicitly commit psychological continuity theories to a metaphysically extravagant reification of alters. Animalist theories of personal identity avoid the reification of alternate personalities by interpreting multiple personality as a failure to integrate alternative autobiographical memory schemata. In the normal case, autobiographical memory cross-classifies a human life, and in so doing provides access to a variety of interpretative frameworks with their associated clusters of general event memory and episodic memory. Multiples exhibit erratic behavior because they cannot access reliably the intersecting autobiographical memory schemata that permit graceful transitions between social roles, behavioral repertoire and emotional dispositions. Selves, in both normal and certain pathological cases, are best understood as semi-fictional narratives created by human animals to serve their social, emotional and physical needs.*

Case studies of multiple personality attract the attention of philosophers in part because they purport to describe real cases of personal division, deltas in the stream of consciousness that can be studied empirically, without trotting out yet again hemispheric brain transplants and similar science fiction thought experiments. Daniel Dennett (Dennet & Humphrey, 1998) locates multiple personality within a narrative theory of the self, suggesting that in such cases the center of narrative gravity fractures, resulting in an unstable struggle for control by rival narrative centers, rather like shifting coalitions jockeying for power in a contentious, multi-party parliament [1]. Stephen Braude (1995, pp. 170–180) argues at length that alternate personalities constitute distinct apperceptive centers, or selves; Jennifer Radden (1996, see especially pp. 37–59) deploys a wide range of dissociative disorders to illuminate self-deception, akrasia and other forms of motivated irrationality; for Susan Hurley (1999, see especially pp. 121–129), multiple personality constitutes evidence for intransitive, partial unity of consciousness; and the centerpiece of Carol Rovane's (1998, pp. 169–179) ambitious fusion of Kantian and Lockean theories of personal identity is the rational reconstruction of group persons and Multiple Personality Disorder.

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In each case multiple personality is interpreted from within a psychological continuity theory of personal identity. For Derek Parfit (1984), a leading proponent of this view, connections between psychological states equivalent to the daily connectivity of the mental states of a normal human being constitute the identity of a person over time (pp. 204–209; the qualification concerning weighed psychological connections occurs in note 6 to Part III). Strong psychological connections such as hold between an experience and its subsequent recollection or motivation and the ensuing intentional act carry greater weight, as do self-referential reports of introspective awareness and distinctive beliefs, desires and preferences. Taken together, personal identity itself can be analyzed without remainder into a dynamic configuration of overlapping, non-branching, psychological connectedness. Psychological continuity theories can accommodate within the life of a single person conversion experiences, unexpected changes in social relationships and anticipated life altering turning points because adjacent psychological states can forge subjectively intelligible linkages between states of mind that differ markedly in content. Even so, psychological continuity theories cannot rule out breaks in the continuity of consciousness deep enough to generate steams of psychological connectedness sufficient to constitute separate persons. Indeed, many of the thought experiments taken to confirm psychological continuity theory are designed to make apparent the possibility of just such a result.

People with Multiple Personality Disorder seem to exhibit just the kind of radical discontinuity across states of mind that lead psychological continuity theorists to posit separate persons in other cases of divided consciousness. When a multiple switches between alternate personalities she takes on the emotional tone, behavioral repertoire, memory accessibility and social identity characteristic of a separate person, even to the extent of adopting a different name and referring to herself as a new person, all without benefit of an intervening transitional stage that might intelligibly link contrasting states of mind. Even more compelling from the standpoint of psychological continuity theory, multiples may claim co-conscious psychological continuity over the lifetime of the human being, living a subterranean existence, influencing events behind the scenes, waiting for an opportunity to control the common body.

Indeed, it is difficult to see how a psychological continuity theory of personal identity can avoid the implication that a single human life could be host to two, 10 or 100 alter persons, each with an origin to be celebrated, a demise to be mourned, and from a moral point of view, each an end in itself, a repository of individual rights and a person deserving of equal concern and respect. Nor is it clear how the clinical goal of integration of personalities can be understood or justified within psychological continuity theory. As the symptoms that licensed the metaphysical judgment of separate personhood recede over the course of therapy, there may be no countable number of person-making streams of psychological connectedness. Some alters may perceive this process as threatening and actively resist integration. Such a reaction should be understandable to a psychological continuity theorist since each alter counts as a separate person, but to whom does the therapist owe allegiance? Alters can be convinced to share the goal of integration, but therapists do not usually

enable the choice of a patient to destroy himself because the patient is convinced that doing so serves some higher purpose.

This metaphysical prolificacy and moral perplexity can be avoided if psychological continuity theories of personal identity are rejected in favor of an Animalism which defines the identity of actual persons in terms of the continuity of life of human organisms capable of self-representational thought. The appeal of Animalism is diminished for many philosophers by a number of objections and apparent counterexamples that cannot be addressed in an essay on the proper interpretation of Multiple Personality Disorder. In this essay, I will argue only that some of the metaphysical excesses of psychological continuity theories can be avoided if people who exhibit the symptoms of Multiple Personality Disorder are understood as human beings who maintain their unitary personhood through various forms of disordered awareness.

Specifically, I will argue that Multiple Personality Disorder can be interpreted as a breakdown in an intricately structured autobiographical memory system, without recourse to independently existing selves understood as apperceptive centers, duplicated unities of consciousness or multiple persons. Autobiographical memory enables most people to juggle effortlessly an array of autobiographical memory schemata, deploying first one than another as the occasion arises, but in some cases, most dramatically in multiple personality, the schemata become strangely out of joint, leading to disordered awareness within and erratic behavior without. My argument for this conclusion falls into three stages. I first describe the features of multiple personality that tempt philosophers, therapists and multiples themselves to reify alters; next, I survey the evidence from the cognitive sciences relevant to the failures in autobiographical memory that give rise these features. I then offer a deflationary interpretation of the language of multiplicity that locates Multiple Personality Disorder within human sciences.

The reification of alters

The fictionalized bestseller *Sybil* and its companion teledrama brought to the attention of thousands of troubled people a language of multiplicity that makes sense of their lives (Schreiber, 1973). In post-Sybil America, recurrent bouts of amnesia, disorientation and failed personal relationships can lead to therapeutic recovery of memories of severe physical, emotional and sexual abuse in early childhood. The patient comes to understand that some people, especially children victimized by trusted caregivers, have the ability to mentally "leave" the scene of traumatic events by "splitting" into other inner selves called "alters" to whom they can "hand off" an otherwise unbearable experience. Alters express ownership of the behavioral and emotional resources with which to cope with the trauma and may subsequently come to have their own names, personal history and sense of self. They may even vie with one another for control of the common body. The losers retreat into the audience of the theater of consciousness where they "listen in" and try to influence behind the scenes the mental life of the "regnant self," all the while awaiting their

chance to initiate a "switch," "come out" and pursue a private and often contrary agenda.

People diagnosed with Multiple Personality Disorder display two forms of behavior which strongly suggest that what are called alters should be treated as independent centers of phenomenal experience, agency and self-awareness. Given the right stressors or therapeutic cues, a multiple may undergo a rapid transformation in personality profile, as if an entirely different person were present, with new social skills, vocabulary, memories and name. Certain stimuli elicit specific personality profiles: a multiple might switch to a child alter at the toy store in the mall and shift to an aggressive alter when mugged in the parking lot. The transition can be utterly convincing and well beyond the abilities of all but the most skilled actor to mimic. Second, multiples claim to enjoy a form of co-conscious introspective access to minds subjectively experienced as separate. This enables them to engage in a peculiar form of social interaction in which the normal expectation of the privacy of mental fails to hold. A multiple may claim that alters negotiate for control of the common body, carry on conversations, conspire to protect vulnerable alters, and in general build interpersonal relationships with one another. The first behavioral anomaly makes it difficult to interact with a multiple without acting as if one were dealing with several different persons; the second obliges the multiple, and those attempting to understand her, to interpret her inner life as a group project.

Switching results in swings in assessed social status and appropriate forms of behavior much more rapid and dramatic than that exhibited by a non-multiple who finds herself abruptly placed in an unexpected social role. Most multiples have at least one child alter, many exhibit personalities of the opposite sex, and it is not uncommon for a multiple to switch to a polar opposite—from apathetically non-responsive to verbally or physically aggressive or from a painfully shy and inhibited teenager to a flirtatious and physically demonstrative barfly. The therapist who acquaints herself with each alter may arrive at alternative and incompatible diagnoses. A multiple might exhibit at various times symptoms of clinical depression, narcissism and borderline personality, coupled on other occasions with alternating suicidal thoughts and sociopathic tendencies. The therapist may have little choice but to treat her encounters with a multiple as group therapy sessions (Spira, 1996, pp. xxi–xxiv).

Moreover, the switching itself is not plausibly interpreted as a deliberate change in behavior in response to changed circumstances. Non-multiples might take a moment to reassess a situation, but a multiple in the midst of a switch gives no hint of rational deliberation. The switch might be initiated by rapid fluttering of the eyelids, or an upward roll of the eyes followed by a momentary unresponsive trancelike state [2]. Upon emerging from a switch, a multiple may touch the furniture and her clothes, look quickly around the room, size up the social situation and proceed to introduce herself. Recognizable personalities recur, who name themselves as separate persons, remember events from a distinctive first person perspective and claim self-referential ownership of their actions and experiences. At this point, effective social interaction, not to mention simple good manners, requires one to treat the new personality as if she were a new person.

This kind of behavior cannot establish all by itself that a human being could host a number of distinct persons. Only if there is reason to think that alters sustain a stream of psychological connectedness independently of executive control of the body does psychological continuity theory imply that multiple personality is a case of multiple personhood. Otherwise the language of multiplicity could be interpreted as nothing more than a metaphorical description of rather strange behavior. Many alters do claim simultaneous awareness of the subjective states of the regnant alter, often in the form of an interior dialogue between observer and participant selves concerning outward behavior. Typically the lines of introspective access are asymmetrical. The presenting personality may need to be introduced to the many selves she hosted over the years; other alters may be privy to the thoughts of some but not all of their confederates; and sometimes one alter plays the role of author omniscient, holding back herself but keeping track of everyone else. Some alters even claim a life history all their own, complete with details of illicit love affairs and grand accomplishments plainly at odds with the objective biography of the multiple.

The case of a multiple called "Garrett" vividly illustrates the phenomenon (Stout, 2001, pp. 142–158). Like most multiples, Garrett came to exhibit alternate personalities in response to severe and chronic physical, psychological and sexual abuse in childhood. At age five, Garrett's father was killed in an automobile accident and his care given over to an "Uncle Dean," who proceeded to torment Garrett and his younger brother "Lef." Uncle Dean often inflicted savage beatings upon one brother in retribution for the other brother's real or fabricated infraction of a household rule, culminating in an incident in which Garrett was forced to watch and take responsibility for Uncle Dean kicking to death his brother. Among Garrett's alters are "James" the unknowing child, "Gordon" the protector of the boys, "Willie" the repentant sinner; and "Abe" the suicidal adult who internalized the guilt projected upon Garrett by his uncle. Garrett tells his therapist that these, and other alters, are with him always, talking incessantly:

> Constantly, constantly, constantly. Sometimes I'd do almost anything to drown them out. What they argue about mainly is that they all want to come out all the time. Like here, with you, right this very second, James is whining and whining and begging to come out. He thinks you're nice, motherly or something. And Gordon. Gordon wants be out because he thinks he's the only one who knows how to deal. He thinks the rest of us can't take care of things. Willie wants to convert me, and everyone in the world, for that matter. He's an unbelievable pain. And Abe. You know about Abe. He wants to die. He talks to me a lot. It's really hard to keep him in. He wants me to stop coming here, you know.

The structure of autobiographical memory

Autobiographical memory is the cognitive system through which persons gain access to their pasts and construct a sense of who they are (Conway, 1992). Episodic memories of specific experiences are nested within a hierarchical structure that

includes general event memory as point of entry and lifetime period memory at the most abstract level. Lifetime period memory is the person's knowledge of her social and bodily identity together with a skeletal structure of memories of blocks of time and turning points in her past, and memories of settled intentions, plans and projects for the future. The key point regarding lifetime period memory for understanding multiple personality is that non-multiples cross-index alternative overlapping sequences of lifetime periods. For example, I cross-classify the 1980s as the lifetime period when I was a graduate student, as the lifetime period when I lived with Nancy, and as the years of my father's heart disease and death. I access different schemata for different recollective purposes, cross-checking for accuracy and meaning.

Episodic memory of one's personal past is dynamically constructed on line within this larger meaning-conferring structure. The retrospective reconstruction of the past comes to the forefront in times of crisis, when the events of a lifetime demand wholesale reinterpretation. A woman discovers the habitual philandering of her husband and what was once remembered as innocent banter between her mate and a female friend now is recalled as infidelity and betrayal; an adolescent learns of his parents long planned divorce and comes to remember family holidays, vacations and birthdays as forced exercises in pretended civility; a father struggling to come to terms with the tragic death of his child remembers their last conversation quite differently before and after he hears the news.

The content of episodic memory also depends upon the format in which events are recalled. Most people can recall an experience either as an observer, from a third person point of view, looking down on one's self as events unfold; or as a participant, from a field or first person point of view, seeing things as they looked when it happened. Recent events tend to be recalled in a field format; more remote experiences in an observer format, although most people can shift back and forth effortlessly. How one formats episodic memories alters their emotional saliency and their retrieval pathways to other episodic memories. If, for example, you remember the last wedding you attended from a field perspective, you are more likely to feel empathy for the bride and groom and to recall perceptual details of the pew in which you sat. An observer formatted version would have a more objective, camcorder quality.

One of the most well established results in the science of memory is the Cue Specificity Principle: some aspect of the state of mind of the person experiencing an event encodes an access pathway to the right engrams in long term memory (Tulving, 1983). Recollection occurs when a retrieval environment reinstates the encoding cue. The cue could be sensory or perceptual: a long forgotten face evokes fond recollections of an old friend; the smell of Grandma's cookies releases a memory movie of childhood Thanksgivings; Proust's taste of Madeleine calls forth remembrance of things past. Or the cue could be affective, or pharmacological, or semantic. People who are depressed remember sad times; alcoholics can't remember where they put that bottle until they've had a drink or two; a memory may remain on the tip of the tongue until just the right word is spoken. All episodic memories are state dependent in the sense that something in the retrieval environment, either

an external stimulus or an inner state, must activate the reconstruction of the engram. Shallowly encoded episodic memories may lay dormant for years awaiting just the right retrieval cue. Elaborative encoding, in contrast, lays down a broad range of access cues by which episodic memories can be recalled faithfully, clearly and reliably.

The phenomenological record stored in long term memory is fragmentary under the best of retrieval conditions. People extrapolate a plausible rendition of the experience from the accessible engrams, cross-checked episodic memories, objective sources and the larger structure of autobiographical memory. People who have suffered frontal lobe and hippocampal trauma must cope with a radically incomplete phenomenological record. They tend to confabulate at all levels of autobiographical memory. They fill in the gaping holes in memory with imaginary details believed to be true. One patient relates on successive occasions barely recognizable accounts of the accident that caused his neurological trauma; another remembers general events inconsistently, first claiming to be an expert golfer, then disclaiming much experience with the game. A stroke victim recounts a family history out of kilter with reality, insisting in the presence of his wife of 30 years that he is a newlywed. When shown old wedding pictures, he says the groom is his brother who looks a lot like he did years ago; when presented with his grown children, he replies with a sly grin, that you don't have to be married to have kids. There's a thin line between extrapolation and confabulation, a line most us cross on occasion and but which for others becomes an habitual form of coping (Braddeley & Wilson, 1986).

General event memories are thematic composites of repeated activities or extended events indexed by lifetime periods. All those driveways shoveled merge into a mass of cold and white and aching backs; hundreds of hours of assembly line tedium collapse into an amorphous image of factory work space and unbearable boredom; countless failed attempts to explain the ontological argument congeal into a composite class picture of blank incomprehension. General event memory, like lifetime period memory, provides flexible access to personal memories by cross-classifying types of experience. Inferential access to general event memories of a dinner date under the headings, "having a bit too much to drink," "making clever remarks" and "trouble with relationships" might lead to more adaptive behavior in the future. General event memories are usually more reliable than episodic memories, but still are susceptible to error due to state dependent retrieval, confabulation, self-serving reconstruction and selective amnesia.

Autobiographical memory is one of several forms of explicit human memory, memories that involve a subjective sense of recollection. Semantic, or declarative, memory enables a person to retrieve factual information in a linguistic format, usually without accompanying affective content; perceptual recognition enables people to navigate their social and physical environment, sometimes effortlessly, sometimes through a conscious effort to bring to mind the identity of a vaguely familiar face or object. Source forgetting normally erases the episodic memory of the time the information was acquired: I cannot remember how I learned Paris is the capital of France or when I first wore my blue shirt. In contrast, lifetime period memory secures the sense of pastness to autobiographical memory while the rich

interpretive context of reconstructive episodic and general event memory enables the human being to construct an evolving sense of personal identity.

Explicit memory systems operate in conjunction with implicit forms of memory, memories that influence how people think and act without any awareness that they are remembering. Infants and young children, for example, acquire a great deal of information without ever knowing its source. As children acquire language skills they impose a narrative structure upon their experiences, but even in adult life much learning continues to occur beneath the reach of conscious awareness. Procedural memory normally encodes the acquisition of skills such as how to catch a baseball, read a book or speak a foreign language, without the person herself being able to recall exactly how or when she learned it. Behavioral dispositions, emotional saliencies and somatic responses also can be stored non-linguistically in implicit memory and reinstated given the right retrieval cues. Implicit memories are activated when people are primed by the outside world or their own internal state to respond in ways experienced as adaptive in the past, whether or not current circumstances warrant repeat performances of those emotions, sensations and behavior. Autobiographical memory normally will attempt to make sense out of primed implicit memory responses, often through plausible but inaccurate extrapolations from general event memory.

Multiple personality as a failure in autobiographical memory

The thesis of this essay is that one can avoid reification of alters if multiple personality is reinterpreted as a failure to integrate alternative autobiographical memory schemata. In the normal case, alternative autobiographical memory schemata cross-classify a human life, and in so doing provide access to a variety of interpretative frameworks with their associated clusters of general event memory and episodic memory. Densely interconnected autobiographical schemata help people make sense of experience and respond appropriately to their social and natural environment. Multiples exhibit erratic and sometimes bizarre behavior because they cannot access reliably the intersecting autobiographical memory schemata that permit graceful transitions between social roles, behavioral repertoire and emotional dispositions.

Dissociation is the mechanism by which rigidly segmented clusters of psychological states take on the appearance of alternate personalities [3]. A dissociative state occurs whenever a person suspends attention to the time, place or social context of the current environment and as a consequence fails to associate normally co-conscious emotions, sensations, memories or behavior. Dissociation is a perfectly normal function of the human mind. Anyone who has been drawn into a movie has dissociated their emotional state from their current social environment; anyone who has wondered where they got an angry bruise has dissociated their sensations from their physical environment; anyone who has driven miles while absorbed in thought has dissociated perceptual recognition from episodic memory. Children are particularly adept at dissociation, losing themselves in endless hours of fantasy and pretend games.

Survivors of extreme psychological trauma have extreme dissociative reactions. Specifically, dissociation can be an effective coping strategy for a child who finds herself in a radically hostile situation with no safe haven and no adult protection. Experiences that normally would be encoded as episodic memories, categorized as emblematic of a type of experience or period of time, and integrated into the child's life narrative may be shallowly encoded as lifeless semantic memories or highly charged implicit memories of sensations, emotions and images dislocated in time and space and severed from the child's emerging sense of her social identity. Years later, similar images, emotions or sensations can reinstate these implicit memories of pain, fear and associated motor responses, without an accompanying sense of something being remembered. It feels like the trauma is happening all over again, here and now. In extreme cases, activated implicit memories of feelings and behavioral impulses can initiate a non-rational switch to the stereotypical personality profile of an alter (Siegel, 1996).

The appearance of co-consciousness emerges from the psychological barriers dissociation erects between memory systems. Secondary enactments of the trauma might be encoded as episodic memory, but in the absence of accessible lifetime period or general event memory, the multiple is led to confabulate an alternative life story, taking as materials culturally available prototypes, associated elements of childhood fantasy and plausible sounding extrapolations from present circumstances. When subsequent events in the life of the multiple are reconstructed repeatedly as episodic memories, first from the perspective of one then another dissociated cluster of autobiographical memories, it can come to seem, from the inside and to an observer, that one human being speaks in the voices of many.

The temptation to attribute co-consciousness to a multiple can be resisted. Consider the case of Renee, the social identity of a multiple, who adopts the persona of Stella to describe a traumatic incident from childhood:

> It was Easter. And she was 11 … I was watching … but she didn't know it … I've been with men, but I wouldn't do nothing like that with my own father … She was a complete wreck … Well, I can see that it was hard for her to take. (Confer & Ables, 1983, p. 137)

Stella seems to be a first person witness to an episode in the life of Renee, but a closer look reveals that this could not possibly be the case. Since "Stella" had "been with men" other than her father, and 11-year-old Renee had not, either Stella dissociated from Renee after the rape or the Stella persona existed before the rape but her consensual sexual experiences came later. Either way, Stella could not have co-consciously experienced Renee's rape in the way she describes. Rather, Renee uses the adult perspective she segments as Stella to remember the trauma without cueing painful implicit memories encoded in childhood.

Apparent co-consciousness of this kind can be described coherently if it is understood as a deficit in autobiographical self-consciousness. Recall that episodic memories may be recollected in either an observer or a field format, and that how one remembers affects the emotional saliency of the memory and its retrieval pathway potential. A multiple who entertained simultaneous observer and field

memories would have both a first person and a third person recollective experience of the same event. It would seem to her that she participated in an experience and observed the experience at the same time. The adult Renee habitually recollects childhood sexual abuse in the observer format she calls Stella, because doing so allows Renee to achieve some emotional distance from memories that would be unbearable if recollected from the point of view of a participant.

Similarly, the memory report of a multiple to have co-consciously witnessed childhood emotional abuse from an adult sensibility cannot be an accurate portrayal of the event as experienced by a child. Garrett's reports of co-consciousness can be redescribed as alternating observer and participant recollective formats of the memories of a single person. Garrett's case is more complex because "Uncle Dean" perpetrated a variety of horrors upon his nephews. Different forms of abuse prompted dissociation into distinct implicit memories and consequent autobiographical scaffolding. Garrett now reconstructs his life from multiple perspectives, each of which presents itself as uniquely correct.

The language of multiplicity should be understood as a therapeutic device, or as a literary or cinematic metaphor. "Switching" can be viewed as state dependent autobiographical memory. Given the right cues or stressors, a multiple gains access to one autobiographical memory schemata, and loses access to another. When a multiple dissociates, she does not literally "leave" the scene of the trauma, or "hand off" the experience to another substantial self. Multiples do not normally go limp or become catatonic in response to stress. They cope as best they can, but they shallowly encode both the episodic memory of abuse and the form of behavior that gets them through it. Repeated episodes of abuse are shallowly encoded as general event memories of social interactions believed to be adaptive. Perhaps a repertoire of flirtatious or jocular behaviors works well for repeated incidents of sexual abuse; angry and aggressive responses might deflect effectively physical abuse; introverted or passive behavior may be the best way a child can deal with the emotional double bind created by an abusive caregiver.

An alter "comes out" when the internal or external retrieval environment cues recollection of a set of implicit memories and their associated behavioral repertoire. The multiple then reconstructs episodic memories in an emotionally acceptable form, confabulates the scaffolding of lifetime period memory necessary to make sense of her recollections, and updates the schemata as accessible experience accumulates. Multiples construct alternative autobiographical memory schemata just as normally integrated people do, but fail to cross-index or cross-check for coherency, consistency and reality testing. Different alters may have access to alternative versions of the same episodic and general event memories, but each variation upon a theme occurs within one of many autobiographies operating in parallel. Confabulated life stories proliferate and influence behavior in inappropriate and conflicting ways because each functions in rational independence from the rest.

"Alters" can be understood as shallowly encoded state dependent autobiographical memory schemata. The very act of naming alters encourages the multiple to reconstruct her autobiographical memory schemata as the life histories of distinct individuals. Indeed, the condition is all but invisible until alters name themselves

and assert self-referential ownership of distinct mental lives. With the helpful prompting of therapists, fellow multiples and multobiographers, a multiple can retroactively describe her recollective experience as co-consciousness [4].

Non-realists understand the therapeutic goal of integration not as fusion of pre-existing selves but as the successive deconstruction of dissociative barriers and reconciliation of alternative autobiographical memory schemata. Implicit memories of abuse must be retrieved, by hypnosis or amytal if need be, examined in the light of adult sensibility, reconstructed as episodic memories representative of general events and incorporated within a unified structure of lifetime period memory which accommodates the elements of psychobiographical truth at the center of the confabulated life stories of an alter. Integration takes place within long term therapy, extending over many years. The therapist needs to chart the pattern of dissociation of each alter, trace the dissociated cluster to its historical source and assist the multiple in reality testing and reconciliation of competing narratives.

Conclusion

The break in self-consciousness multiples suffer is no less real for being located within the sciences of memory. The jarring transitions between opposing personality profiles, the subjective experience of co-consciousness and the amnesic gaps multiples experience over a lifetime and within momentary consciousness are sufficiently robust to commit standard forms of psychological continuity theory to the reification of alters. Psychological continuity theorists might respond in two ways: they could treat this form of divided consciousness as further confirmation of the Lockean distinction between a man and a person; or they could elevate some form of psychological connectedness to the status of a self that unifies the consciousness of ordinary persons, but fractures in the life of a multiple.

George Graham (1999a,b) cautiously endorses the first option. He suggests that a study of multiple personality confirms the introspective conviction that we are essentially mental selves but undermines the intuition that selves are entirely determinate entities. Just as alters fade in and out, merge in therapy and split once again under stress, normal selves may be fuzzy entities with indeterminate boundaries, origins and endings. The elusive character of reified alters suggests to Graham a principle of ontic ignorance: the objective essence of the self may be cognitively closed to us because we lack the conceptual equipment for self-understanding.

An Animalism that holds that actual persons are self-aware members of the species *Homo sapiens* rejects both of Graham's intuitions: persons are not essentially mental selves and selves are not determinate entities. If one can resist the temptation to reify alters, why should one not resist the temptation to reify the self? The same psychopathology that calls into question the determinate identity of selves casts doubt upon their independent existence. Extreme dissociative reactions lay bare the origin in fantasy of the psychic artifacts that function as alternative selves; maintenance of the cognitive barriers separating disconnected autobiographical memories

reveals the fragility of these mental constructs; and the success of integration therapy demonstrates just how ephemeral these selves are.

The second response is exemplified by the Fictionalism defended by Daniel Dennett (1991, pp. 412–430) and Owen Flanagan (1992, pp. 191–211) among others. On this view, the self in both normal and pathological cases is a mental model concocted in childhood and continually updated and revised in an effort to make sense of the experience of being one individual among others. Autobiographical memory itself functions as the central organizing principle of the sense of self, arranging a lifetime of experience along a narrative theme that confers meaning and direction to a human life. What Dennett calls "the center of narrative gravity" and Flanagan "self-represented identity" exists only as a virtual entity embedded in a complex dispositional structure of the human brain. Alters no less than normally integrated persons string their sense of personal identity along culturally available narrative hooks. Garrett's alter Gordon is the angry one, James is the innocent one, Abe the responsible one, and Willie the one who has been Saved and will save the world. Self-organizing narrative themes may be more transparent in a multiple but are no less constitutive of selfhood for those who can who can collect their experience around a single center of narrative gravity.

This essay can be understood as an indirect argument for Animalism from an application of the narrative conception of the self to Multiple Personality Disorder. Narrative selves are abstractions that could not exist independently of the human animals that create them. Being a person or a self is something human beings do in the normal course of psychological development but it is no more constitutive of their identity than other normal human activities such as parenthood and learning to talk. Just as one remains the same individual whether or not one becomes a parent or loses the power of speech, one's individual identity persists through alterations and disruptions in self-understanding. This account of multiple personality as a failure of autobiographical memory locates the condition squarely within the normal workings of the human mind. It is one way the construction of a self can go awry in a human animal. Animalism may be open to compelling objections, but the theory has certain advantages in the explanation of human psychopathology. That may be reason enough to give it a second look.

Notes

[1] Owen Flanagan (1994) develops an alternative narrative self-account of Multiple Personality Disorder.

[2] The description of switching is taken from the standard textbook on MPD (Putnam, 1989, pp. 120–125).

[3] The American Psychiatric Association's *Daignostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, IV* redefines Multiple Personality Disorder as Dissociative Identity Disorder. Since the change in nomenclature does not affect the philosophical issues addressed in this essay, I retain the more familiar usage.

[4] Ian Hacking (1995) argues persuasively that almost all contemporary reports of co-conscious awareness of episodes of child abuse must be retroactive redescriptions because the language of multiplicity simply was not available in the childhoods of many of today's multiples.

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