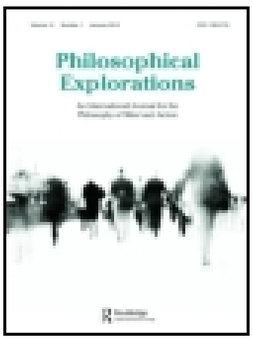

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Dissociative identity disorder and ambivalence

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While many theorists have argued that dissociative identity disorder (DID) is a case of multiple selves or persons in a single body, I maintain that DID instead should be understood as involving a single self who suffers from significant disruptions to self-consciousness. Evidence of overlapping abilities and memories, as well as the very logic of dissociation, supports the claim that DID results from internal conflict endured by a single self. Along these lines, I will maintain that alter-formation should be understood as the result of *extreme emotional ambivalence*. While it is true that subjects with DID exhibit volitional conflict, as Frankfurt [1988. *The Importance of What We Care About*. New York: Cambridge University Press; 1999. *Necessity, Volition, and Love*. New York: Cambridge University Press] maintains, I argue that these incompatible volitions have a deeper source: conflicting desires and affective stances concerning basic emotional needs that are not easily abandoned. A single subject turns to different alter-personalities as a way to cope with pervasive inner conflict while at the same time hiding contradictory impulses from herself.

Keywords: dissociative identity disorder; multiple personality; dissociation; ambivalence; inner conflict; personal identity

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) involves severe disturbances in self-consciousness, disruptions in memory, dramatic changes in personality state, and confusion surrounding identity. The subject comes to exhibit two or more distinct personality states that recurrently control behavior, with each one appearing to have autonomous control of the body at different times. Each of these coexisting personalities seems to be a fully integrated and complex unit with its own memories, behavior patterns, outlook, moods, ambitions, tastes, and habits.

Some theorists have expressed skepticism about whether DID actually exists, claiming that there appears to be no evident physiological or organic abnormality that would explain the disorder (Hacking 1991). Given the bizarre nature of many of the associated symptoms, some have concluded that apparent cases of DID are simply a matter of role-playing, a mere dramatic representation, or the product of therapy. Along these lines, Spanos (1994) describes how multiplicity can be created in an experimental setting, via hypnosis or past-life regression. I do not wish to dispute Spanos' claim that institutionalized contexts can play a role in encouraging, shaping, and legitimizing multiple identity enactments. The naming of alter-personalities, together with reification of metaphors such as "one part of me wanted to do it, but another part said no", may lead patients to construe

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themselves as possessing multiple selves (Spanos 1994, 155). Nonetheless, it seems clear that subjects with DID demonstrate extreme dissociation, that many instances of dissociation are not experimentally induced, and that this condition interferes with their ability to function effectively. For this reason, it is important to regard DID as a genuine disorder. But how, exactly, should we understand the claim that DID involves multiple personalities?

Many theorists have argued that DID is a case of multiple selves or persons in a single body. To support this thesis, they (a) account for the self in psychological terms, as some sort of subject of experience, memory, and action; and (b) describe the psychological fragmentation that occurs in cases of DID. For example, such theorists emphasize that alters exhibit a wide range of personalities and capabilities, have different memories, and are of different ages. Alter-personalities also sometimes speak in different accents and have varying styles of handwriting, and there is some evidence that they may even have different allergies. However, I will argue that despite such considerations, DID should be viewed as the disorder of a single self (a single subject of experience, memory, and action) who suffers from significant disruptions to self-consciousness. Both the existence of overlapping memories and abilities, as well as the very logic of dissociation, support the single self thesis. Moreover, the internal division that characterizes DID is best understood in terms of the conflicting desires and feelings of a single self. Different alters often express exaggerated moods (e.g. anger, nurturance, childishness, or sexiness) and have different affective competencies that equip the subject to deal with a range of social situations (Humphrey and Dennett 1989). Subjects' ability to "leave" their bodies temporarily, by way of dissociation, is adaptive in the sense that that it helps them to deal with overwhelming distress (Koch and Harvey 2012, 370).

I will propose that young children who develop DID experience extreme conflict that seems incapable of resolution and which concerns emotional needs to which they feel deeply attached. Suppose that Sue hates her mother and wants her to die, but also loves her mother and wants to have a close relationship with her. If these two contradictory desires both belong to Sue, then basic constraints of rationality demand that Sue rank or revise these desires appropriately. However, suppose that Sue feels so strongly attached to both of these conflicting desires that there is no way to achieve a well-integrated, unified perspective. In ordinary cases, subjects lessen this inner conflict via compromise, self-reflection, or the modulation of their desires and emotions. But suppose that Sue is five years old and finds herself unable to manage this inner conflict. Dissociation and compartmentalization result, and when taken to the extreme, have the potential to develop into DID. Along these lines, and through a discussion of Harry Frankfurt's work, I will maintain that alter-formation should be understood as the result of *extreme emotional ambivalence*. A single subject turns to different alter-personalities as a way to cope with inner discord without having to abandon any of her deeply held emotional needs.

1. The multiple selves thesis

DID involves dramatic disruptions to subjectivity and self-awareness: different alter-personalities appear to have distinct senses of themselves, distinct centers of self-consciousness, and different body images, and sometimes even are of different ages and sexes (Braude 1995, 66). The subject with DID seems to be both aware and not aware of the same experience at a given moment and suffers from blackouts, time lapses, and inexplicable happenings (Radden 1996). In addition to these severe gaps in autobiographical memory, each alter-personality seems to experience certain mental and bodily changes

from an outsider's perspective, as if they happened to someone else, and often refers to another alter-personality's mental states as "his" or "hers". The disordered awareness found in DID commonly includes (a) total unawareness of states the subject could be expected to have experienced (amnesia), (b) "disowned" experiences of states the subject could be expected to have experienced, and (c) "nonagential" experiences of states the subject could be expected to have experienced (Radden 1996). There often is some sort of epistemic or phenomenological barrier that prevents one alter-personality from gaining access to the conscious mental contents of other alter-personalities. Subjects may report that they sometimes have access as an observer to the thoughts and activities of another personality, or that they have access to conversations between other alters. This confusion surrounding identity is accompanied by dramatic changes in personality and disruptions to memory. Each alter-personality seems to have its own set of beliefs, desires, values, and goals, which are expressed in what appear to be distinct patterns of motivation, agency, and behavior (Radden 1996, 35).

Such considerations have led numerous theorists to conclude that DID is a case of two or more persons or selves in a single body. Following Matthews (2003), I will refer to this supposition as "The Multiple Selves Thesis" (MPT). Arguments for MPT come in various forms, but the basic idea is that if there are two centers of consciousness, or points of view, or unified and independent mental systems, then there are two different thinking beings. Tye (2005), for example, maintains that "each person is the subject of the psychological states making up a single, appropriately complex, belief/desire/memory/conscious stream of experience bundle" or "person-level psychological framework" (141). With each different psychological framework, there is a different person. In instances of DID, one brain constitutes two or more persons, and there are multiple subjects of appropriately complex psychological bundles. Similarly, Graham (1999) points to the profound discontinuities in autobiographical memory that characterize dissociative identity disorder. He maintains that these dissociative splits and amnesic gaps make it highly implausible to conceive of DID as involving a single self and concludes that there is no one determinate self that struggles over time to maintain itself in the face of trauma or turmoil. Instead, there are different selves in the same body, and each one has different sorts of epistemic access to the same information. Because these selves have vague boundaries and cannot be neatly demarcated from one another, we cannot tell precisely how many selves there are in cases of DID. However, the fact that these selves are "fuzzy" need not force us to abandon the notion that these selves are real and that there is more than one of them present.

Insofar as they focus on the unity and continuity of experience and memory, both Tye and Graham present Lockean arguments for the multiple selves thesis. Rovane (1998), on the other hand, presents a Kantian argument. She maintains that a person is essentially a locus of agency – a network of overlapping and interlocking plans and projects – and a sphere of rational unity. Ordinarily, a person's plans are informed by the past and directed toward the future, and her various projects and preferences are at least partly integrated with one another. In cases of DID, however, there is a human being comprised of more than one sphere or rationality, each with its own particular projects and goals. This makes it possible to engage with alter-personalities as if they were distinct persons with distinct rational points of view (Rovane 1998, 169); and it also makes it impossible to engage rationally with all of that subject's intentional attitudes. This yields the impression that one is dealing with a number of separate and distinct people.

Lastly, in their narrative account of DID, Hardcastle and Flanagan (1999) likewise approach the issue of selfhood and multiplicity in psychological terms. They describe self-models as the pictures we have of ourselves, our pasts, and our futures. Because

how we end up representing ourselves depends on linguistic, familial, and community relations, our selves are socially constructed to some extent. However, insofar as they are constrained by the world around us and subject to correction by others, these narratives are not entirely confabulated. Typically, these narratives are complex, with different strands fitting together only uneasily with one another, and sometimes our various plans, projects, and desires are in tension. However, most people still are able to weave the different strands of their story together to form single, integrated narratives. A single self that is complex and has a wide range of plans, projects, and desires, but can grasp the connections between these narratives, is *multiplex*. In some cases, however, as plans, projects, and desires increasingly conflict, it is no longer possible to grasp the connections between different segments of the narrative. Narrative unity falls apart, and "we begin to tell more than one story about more than one self instead of complicated and often incoherent stories about solitary individuals" (Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999, 652). In cases of DID, there is no longer a single self struggling to maintain narrative coherence, but instead *multiple selves in a single body.*

2. Challenges to the multiple selves thesis

The previous discussion highlights just a few of the many theorists who, on psychological grounds, have argued that DID is a case of multiple selves inhabiting a single body. However, even once we accept a broadly psychological conception of the self, there are some serious concerns that should be raised about MPT. For one thing, allowing that a single human life could be host to numerous persons, selves, or loci of agency is in tension with commonsense. Certainly, if a more conservative explanation is available, it is to be preferred (Kennett and Matthews 2003, 47). Another reason that the multiple selves thesis is undesirable is that it appears to invite some very troublesome ethical questions. If each alter counts as a separate self or person, then to whom does the therapist owe allegiance (Brown 2001, 436)? According to MPT, if the "core personality" gains access to the states of some other alter, this can be understood as a process of coming to seem to remember the experiences of another person. In the event that integration occurs during therapy, and some alter-personalities disappear, does this mean that persons have been killed? In addition, once we accept the claim that more than one self can inhabit a single body, we may be forced to say that other less striking examples of psychological disunity and discontinuity (e.g. bipolar disorder) are instances of multiplicity.

Another central problem with MPT is that it is implausible and appears to be in tension with available evidence. For example, the *overlap* among various alter-personalities indicates that apparent multiplicity arises only against the backdrop of a persisting set of traits and mental capacities. There is evidence suggesting that the dissociative barriers between these different points of view are not absolute and that the psychological break is only partial (Braude 1995, 105). First, despite the fact that autobiographical memory is disjointed and discontinuous in cases of DID, semantic memory (i.e. memory of various sorts of factual information about the world) usually remains very much intact. Indeed, the reason why subjects with DID are able to survive in the world is that their memories of non-autobiographical facts continue to be utilized (Kennett and Matthews 2003, 44).

Second, the capacities, traits, skills, and language capabilities of the various alters often overlap, and there is no clear thing that each alter does in isolation from what other alters do (Braude 1995, 185). Although the capacities of alter-personalities do vary to some extent, it is not clear that such variation is that much more extreme than the variation found among non-DID subjects whose capacities co-vary with changes in mood and circumstance

(Kennett and Matthews 2003, 44). In addition, human abilities involve subsidiary abilities, such as motor and perceptual skills, which are used to execute other capacities as well; and traits involve a web of dispositions that overlap in complex ways with other dispositions. This means that the sorts of capacities and personality traits thought to distinguish one alter from another cannot truly be isolated. To see this, note that when an alter expresses its characteristic functions (e.g. dealing with a particular type of social situation), it usually must draw on a range of abilities and dispositions that are shared with other alters (Braude 1995, 171). These capacities and traits therefore might be viewed as "overlapping and interlocking parts of a single individual's full range of dispositions" (186–187). Furthermore, as Deeley (2003) notes, alter-personalities do not exhibit skills or competencies that are not available to the host, and this is because there is a single brain and living body that imposes deep constraints on the possible forms of subjectivity and agency that can occur. For example, alters will be unable to speak fluent Arabic if the subject with DID has not had exposure to Arabic; and if the subject is six years old, none of the alters will have access to the knowledge and skills of an adult. In order to act out the persona of a particular alter, subjects must "possess the requisite schemata or bodily skills", and these skills cannot surpass the knowledge and competencies of that particular subject (Deeley 2003, 164).

Third, although there may be amnesic barriers between the alter-personalities, these barriers are far from static. Information acquired by one alter-personality typically influences the memories and capacities of other alter-personalities, one alter's ignorance about another may be dispelled, and one alter may report having heard the voice, or observed the actions, of another alter. This suggests significant sharing of knowledge and awareness among different alter-personalities.

Moreover, there is broad agreement among psychologists that the core symptom of DID is pathological dissociation, which "is experienced as an involuntary disruption of the normal integration of conscious awareness and control over one's mental processes" (Spiegel et al. 2011, 826); and the very *logic of dissociation* suggests that there is a single self in cases of DID. To say that x is dissociated from y is to say that a barrier exists between x and y, or that some information is blocked from a subject's self-reflective awareness. However, the dissociation found in DID should not be understood simply as a shunting aside of information or mental states that the subject does not register. Instead, it should be understood as a matter of *compartmentalization*, which is an attempt to establish boundaries between various aspects of self, so that some emotions and memories are dissociated from the subject's psychological history. This allows subjects to distance themselves from memories, thoughts, and feelings that they cannot handle. From the standpoint of one alter-personality, these mental states (e.g. the subject's anger at her father) will be subjectively alien; but from the standpoint of another alter-personality, these emotions will be highly personally salient. Thus, what become dissociated (whether this includes desires, knowledge, memories, dispositions, or behavior) are things the subject *already* has registered; and it is impossible for a subject to block conscious awareness of states that she already has registered unless these are *her own mental* states. Braude (1995) calls this "the ownership assumption". In this way, the phenomena of extreme dissociation seem to require that there be a single self present to do the dissociating.

Perhaps a proponent of MPT might insist that although there is a single self at the outset that does the dissociating, extreme dissociation ultimately results in the creation of multiple selves. However, both the extensive overlap between alters as well as the tendency to turn to particular alters in order to handle specific social situations suggest that this is not the most

plausible interpretation of the available evidence. Moreover, although gaining access to dissociated memories and knowledge may be difficult, dissociation is reversible at least in principle. The accessibility of dissociated states suggests, once again, that these are the self's own states; and if we suppose that these are different psychological facets of a single person, we can view integration as the painful process of coming to remember various of one's own previously hidden experiences. However, it is difficult to understand what "integration" would entail if we view alters as distinct and separate persons.

Of course, it is important to acknowledge that although these mental states do belong to the subject, a corresponding *sense of ownership* is lacking. As a result of this loss of a sense of ownership, dissociated mental states typically are subjectively hidden, but it remains possible for them to be retrieved via therapy. And although it appears as if the subject approaches the world from a distinct point of view at different moments, it is important to keep in mind that these points of view are not wholly distinct. There are no clear "ego boundaries" that neatly demarcate alter-personalities and separate one alter from another. Therefore, while it may make sense to continue speaking of "alters" in genuine cases of DID, it is crucial that the language of multiplicity be understood figuratively rather than literally. The "personalities" or "person-stages" exhibited by subjects with DID are best viewed as symptomatic of an extremely fractured mode of self-awareness.

3. A Frankfurt-style account of emotional ambivalence

What I am recommending is that the disordered self-awareness found in cases of DID should be interpreted as evidence of severe inner turmoil within a single self. Indeed, it is only by positing a single subject that undergirds the apparent disunity that we can explain not just the pervasiveness of overlapping abilities among alters, but also the *adaptive function* of alter-formation. Children who endure psychological, physical, or sexual abuse at the hands of trusted caregivers may attempt to "leave the scene", psychologically speaking, by handing off their traumatic experiences to inner selves (alters). However, this ability to block out certain kinds of information can be taken to the extreme and become maladaptive, particularly when what are being dissociated are the subject's own memories and deep-seated desires and emotions. Whole chunks of experience become split off from the subject's conscious awareness by virtue of being assigned to another alter who has the resources needed to cope with the trauma. What I am proposing is that the creation of particular alter-personalities is explained most plausibly by pointing to different aspects of a single subject's experiences, needs, and interests. Along these lines, Cohen (2004, 224) characterizes DID as developmental breakdown that usually takes place in the first several years of a child's life. Because young children do not yet have a relatively stable structure of preferences and convictions and have not yet developed mechanisms for "working through" their conflicting feelings, they are especially vulnerable to the sort of extreme dissociation that characterizes DID. Once we understand DID as a response to the experience of conflicting needs, interests, urges, and feelings, it is natural to conclude that "dissociation has become the dominant coping mechanism of *that one subject*" (Braude 1995, 179).

To further make sense of the disruptions to self-awareness that characterize DID, I propose that alter-formation should be understood as an effort to cope with extreme ambivalence and pervasive inner conflict. But how should we understand ambivalence? One highly influential account comes from Frankfurt (1999), who maintains that ambivalence "is constituted by conflicting volitional movements and tendencies" (99) that cause a subject to be inclined in two contrary directions. Central to this account is Frankfurt's notion of

second-order volitions. Frankfurt maintains that due to their unique capacity for self-reflection, persons are able to form second-order desires with respect to their first-order desires. That is, they can not only want to x, but also want to want to x. However, this wanting to have the first-order desire need not entail wanting that first-order desire to actually be satisfied. Second-order desires become second-order volitions when the agent not only wants to want to x, but also wants the desire to x to move him all the way to action, to "provide the motive in what he actually does" (Frankfurt 1988, 15). In this case, the agent wants the first-order desire in question to be not merely one of his desires, but his will.

In cases of ambivalence, however, an individual has two or more opposing higher order volitions. Such an individual is drawn not only toward the object he seems to want, but also away from it. In such cases where there is tension within the volitional complex, Frankfurt suggests that the individual himself is "divided". Insofar as ambivalence involves volitional impairment and a divided will, the ambivalent agent is similar to the person who holds contradictory beliefs: "the ambivalent agent's higher order desires are organized in such a way that he could not possibly satisfy all of them" (Svolba 2011, 222). Working within the general framework of Frankfurt's account, there seem to be two ways to understand ambivalence (Swindell 2010): it might involve either difficulty with *forming a psychic position* toward one's desires (i.e. identifying with or outlawing a particular desire), or difficulty with *ordering one's desires* (i.e. forming a will).

The first possibility is that the subject has difficulty forming a psychic position toward her desires. This concerns whether a subject identifies with or outlaws particular desires. To identify with a first-order desire is to "acknowledge that satisfying it is to be assigned some position in my preferences", that I "accept it", that I make "no determined effort to dissociate myself from it" (Frankfurt 2006, 8), or perhaps that I identify more strongly with the desire and regard it with "welcoming approval" (Frankfurt 1988). To outlaw a desire is to feel like I am a "bystander" to it; it makes "no sense" to me; it feels as if it is an "unacceptable intruder"; and I try to "suppress it or rid myself of it entirely" (Frankfurt 2006, 9–10). Forming a psychic position toward one's desires appears to occur at the reflective level on Frankfurt's account: an agent reflects on his first-order desires and then either identifies with (approves of) or outlaws (tries to rid herself of) them. *Ambivalence at the level of identification* occurs when the subject cannot *decide* whether she identifies with the desire in question.

However, according to Svolba (2011), it is unclear that this sort of inner conflict actually qualifies as ambivalence on Frankfurt's account. This is because, according to Frankfurt, ambivalence occurs downstream from the agent's identification, and an agent who is conflicted about whether to identify with a desire should not be described as ambivalent. Instead, the conflict of ambivalence involves a difficulty in deciding which, *among the desires a subject unequivocally identifies with*, he wants to be effective in action. According to Svolba's interpretation of Frankfurt, then, ambivalence always occurs at the level of willing. But is this an accurate interpretation? At moments, Frankfurt does describe ambivalence as if it occurred at the level of identification. For example, he says that ambivalence occurs when part of the subject loves something, and part of her is opposed to her loving it (Frankfurt 2004, 91). And elsewhere, Frankfurt says that the ambivalent subject "is inclined in one direction, and he is inclined in the contrary direction as well; and his attitude toward these inclinations is unsettled" (Frankfurt 1999, 100). Setting aside the debate about how best to understand Frankfurt's preferred view, I maintain that the inability to settle on or reject a particular desire does indicate internal conflict and uncertainty about which desires the subject wants to guide her actions. Thus, regardless of what Frankfurt himself thought, it seems clear that ambivalence can indeed occur at the "level of identification".

This is not simply a matter of not knowing what one's ends actually are, as Svolba (2011) asserts, but rather being unsettled about whether to identify with or reject a particular desire. As a result of this unresolved conflict regarding what the subject cares about, she loves something but wishes that she did not love it (or hates something but wishes she did not hate it). And if this sort of conflict (i.e. conflict at the level of identification) does not qualify as ambivalence on Frankfurt's account, then this suggests that his account is too narrow.

In addition, putting too much emphasis on the will may lead us to overlook other important aspects of ambivalence. While I do not deny that ambivalence has a volitional dimension, this is not the only defining dimension of such inner conflict. In cases of extreme ambivalence, conflict is widespread and involves various elements of the psyche, including not just volitions, but also bodily feelings, impulses, and patterns of attention. Thus, it is not simply that the ambivalent subject is volitionally conflicted, but also that she *feels torn* and *pulled in different directions.* However, there is a worry that Frankfurt's volitional account downplays the affective dimension of ambivalence. According to this account, ambivalence is not, fundamentally, a feeling that a subject has, but rather a conflict within the agent's will. But would it make sense to suppose that a subject is ambivalent if she *never* feels torn or conflicted? An utter lack of conflicting feelings instead would seem to indicate apathy or indifference.

Another worry about Frankfurt's account concerns its emphasis on reflective evaluation and the endorsement of desires. In order to form a psychic position toward her desires, the agent reflects on her first-order desires and then either identifies with (approves of) or outlaws (tries to rid herself of) them. I have argued that ambivalence occurs either when the subject cannot *decide* whether she identifies with the desire in question, or there is a conflict among the desires with which she identifies. It appears to follow from this account that young children are incapable of ambivalence by virtue of their inability to reflectively evaluate, and then identify with or outlaw, particular desires. It is difficult to deny, however, that young children can be pulled in conflicting directions and feel conflicted about what they want; and it also may turn out that ordinary adults can experience ambivalence *pre-reflectively*, that is, without having higher order motivational states of which they are reflectively aware. This may occur, for example, if someone feels especially attached and committed to particular first-order desires, and wants them all to be effective in action despite the fact that they conflict with each other.

As Marino (2011) notes, to have a positive valuation for something (to care about or value it) is to have a particular affective stance toward it. What Marino (2011) calls "valuational inconsistency" is a case in which an individual has an inconsistent evaluative stance, and is divided not merely about what she wants, but also about what she feels is worth wanting (41). This is not simply a matter of wanting something (since some desires do not reflect what one cares about) or judging it to be good (since valuation is largely affective rather than cognitive). Instead, these desires are ones that in some sense the subject identifies with, even if she does so un-self-reflectively; and they also are ones that the subject approves of, in the sense that she takes them to be worth having. (Again, this need not involve a self-reflective judgment to the effect that the desires in question are worth having.) Ambivalence is one type of inconsistency, which involves valuing A and not-A, such as when one both loves and hates the same person. But valuational inconsistency also arises when a subject has valuations for A and B that are inconsistent in the sense that they "essentially conflict", that is, when "there is no possible world in which A and B co-exist" (Marino 2011, 44). One example is the individual who values a life of security

and contemplation, and also a life of adventure and risk. It is important to note that Marino's emphasis on the importance of what we care about is very much consistent with Frankfurt's account. However, while Frankfurt emphasizes that ambivalence involves volitional conflict and the self-reflective endorsement of desires, Marino puts more emphasis on the affective component of ambivalence and rightly acknowledges that valuation can occur pre-reflectively. Still, more might be said about the conflicting feelings involved in ambivalence.

I maintain that if we understand ambivalence as *emotional*, then we can understand how this inner conflict involves not just volitions and evaluations, but also bodily feelings, impulses, and patterns of attention. Indeed, because emotion involves a range of components, understanding ambivalence as an *emotional* phenomenon (Koch 1987) allows us to investigate the different aspects of internal discord. Koch (1987) gives the example of Peter, who is deeply ambivalent about his relationship with Sandra. In part, this ambivalence involves bodily feelings: the thought of seeing her sometimes makes him feel chilled and tightened, and at other times it makes him feel warm and light-hearted. In addition, the conflict concerns desires and impulses: he has both a desire to lightly stroke Sandra's hand and a desire to rage at her. His ambivalence also concerns patterns of attention: sometimes Peter is obsessed with thoughts and images of Sandra, and at other times, he is quite oblivious to her (Koch 1987, 264). Thus, it appears that Peter feels different things about (roughly) the same object (Sandra) at the same time, and constructs "opposed points of view which are homomorphic enough to touch him, but unable to carry the field and eradicate the others" (Koch 1987, 267). Thus, at one level (from one perspective), he may feel quite enthusiastic about precisely that which, at another level, dismays him (Koch 1987, 265).

To understand how this is possible, we need to look more closely at the phenomena of attention (Koch 1987, 268): one set of feelings and desires may temporarily dominate and occupy the foreground, while other (conflicting) feelings and desires remain in the background. The dynamic psyche is apt to turn its attention, slowly or abruptly, to one or the other of these conflicting feelings and desires. However, it is not simply that the subject's feelings and perspective *change* from one moment to the next. Instead, emotions endure in consciousness, so that particular feelings and desires remain in the background even when we are not attending to them (Koch 1987, 268). And in some cases, it may even appear that conflicting feelings and impulses are ocurrently firing and perhaps "coming from different directions" (Koch 1987, 266).

Koch's account helps to make sense of how inner conflict can persist for long stretches of time, even in non-pathological cases. In part, this is because even once a subject has decided which of her conflicting desires she wants to be effective action (to be her will), she may continue to *feel torn* in a bodily and affective sense. And it also may turn out that all of her conflicting impulses (even the ones she has outlawed) will continue to impact her behavior in subtle or not-so-subtle ways. In other words, it is unclear that a subject always can escape ambivalence through Frankfurt-style wholeheartedness, that is, by identifying with one or the other of the relevant incoherent desires and deciding that this is the desire she wants to be effective in action. One could argue, then, that ambivalence is fully resolved only when either or both of a subject's conflicting emotions vanish or become negligible permanently. This will require not just the rejection of a particular judgment or the outlawing of a particular desire, but also a pronounced change in a subject's feelings and patterns of attention. As a result, the extreme and pervasive inner conflict that constitutes this sort of ambivalence often is not easily dissipated.

4. Alter-formation and extreme ambivalence

In the previous section, I argued that ambivalence can occur either at *the level of identification* or at *the level of willing*. *Ambivalence at the level of identification* occurs when the subject cannot decide whether she identifies with the desire in question. This inability to settle on or reject a particular desire indicates internal conflict and uncertainty about which desires the subject wants to guide her actions. In contrast, *ambivalence at the level of willing* occurs when a subject has difficulty deciding which, *among the desires a subject unequivocally identifies with*, he wants to be effective in action. The ambivalent subject is inclined in two contrary directions (Frankfurt 1999, 100).

I argue that both forms of ambivalence contribute to the extreme dissociation and alter-formation that occurs in cases of DID. First, there is ambivalence at the level of identification. The subject with DID both accepts a desire and tries to rid herself of it, and those desires that seem like "unacceptable intruders" are handed off to an alter-personality. There is no coherent psychic position taken toward certain desires; instead, there is compartmentalization and extreme dissociation. However, to claim that a subject has difficulty *deciding* which of two conflicting desires she wants to identify with at a particular time might be misleading. While the subject with DID may very well form second-order volitions (i.e. desires to the effect that particular first-order desires be effective in action), these second-order volitions do not necessarily amount to a voluntary, self-reflective endorsement. In fact, children who suffer from abuse and extreme inner conflict may be too young to engage in explicit self-reflection about which of their first-order desires to endorse; and even among ordinary adults, identifying with or outlawing particular desires is not always voluntary in the way Frankfurt claims (1988, 64–8). Furthermore, among subjects suffering from DID, this sort of self-reflection and voluntary identification would make it difficult for them to hide their inner conflict from themselves. It is precisely because these individuals do *not* self-reflectively *decide* to identify with or outlaw particular desires that they are able to do both simultaneously, from the standpoint of seemingly distinct alter-personalities. For example, one alter-personality embraces the desire to obey her parents, while another outlaws the desire to obey and instead embraces the desire to rebel. In short, the subject "escapes" inner conflict via extreme dissociation and compartmentalization. Admittedly, this mode of "escape" is unlikely to prove adaptive in the long-term, but in the short term, it may be the best, and perhaps the only, way for subjects to satisfy their conflicting desires and needs.

Along these lines, Ross and Gahan (1988) describe how the subject with DID lives according to a number of central paradoxes which are derived from childhood double binds. On the one hand, this subject is guilt-ridden, blames herself for the abuse she has suffered, and wants to punish herself. On the other hand, she may protest that she does not deserve such treatment. The subject may love her caregivers and also hate them. Perhaps she is angry and feels she has been wronged, and yet also feels guilty for the abuse. She has both a desire to lash out in anger, and also a desire to suppress the anger. She wants to comply so that her caregivers will love her, and yet she also wants to rebel and defy them. She wants to remember the traumatic event, but also wants to forget it. Now, it may be true that "part of the drive to the formation of separate personalities [is] the need to maintain a complex network of incompatible cognitions which arise from the abuse" (Ross and Gahan 1988, 233). However, these incompatible cognitions have a deeper source: conflicting desires and affective stances concerning basic emotional needs for love and connection. The subject deals with conflicting desires and feelings about her caregivers, as well as her own reactions to the abuse, by compartmentalizing them. The

dissociation of certain desires and feelings serves as a means of escaping from emotional pain and dealing with internal conflict. One alter-personality views the abuse from a distance, while another knows all about it in the most intricate details.

Such an individual has a kind of "internally divided self", which may result in an apparent proliferation of alter-personalities, each exhibiting its own distinguishable agenda that emphasizes different aspects of the subject's memories, experiences, and desires. This leads to the emergence of certain standard types of alters/personalities, which appear frequently: In at least three quarters of the reported DID cases, there is a child personality which often retains or protects the subject from pain or trauma (Braude 1995, 40). This may reflect a desire to forget the abuse and retain one's innocence. Often, there is a persecutor alter-personality who torments one or more of the other alters. This might be understood as an expression of the individual's self-hatred, and her desire to self-punish or lash out at feelings of weakness or vulnerability. In many cases, there are pairs of dichotomous personality types present, such as hostile/friendly ones, aggressive/passive ones, promiscuous/prudish ones, and rebellious/obedient ones. These internal dichotomies reflect the subject's conflicting urges and emotions. One might say that subjects with DID continually change their minds about which thought-line and set of desires to identify with (Clark 1996, 25), and thus engage with and make sense of the world from different perspectives at different times. This "division of emotional labor" allows them to deal with a range of contradictory experiences and desires and thereby navigate through their social surroundings (Humphrey and Dennett 1989).

In addition, subjects with DID have difficulty *ordering* their desires and thus experience ambivalence *at the level of willing*. An individual who suffers from this sort of ambivalence "has a conflict among the desires that she identifies with and has trouble ordering them, i.e. deciding which one of these conflicting desires she wants to be effective in action at a particular time" (Swindell 2010, 26). As a result, there is an unresolved conflict within what a person cares about, such that she loves something but wishes she did not love it (or hates something but wishes she did not hate it). This amounts to division within the "volitional complex": the subject is "simultaneously on both sides of the struggle within himself" (Frankfurt 1988, 138). Now, it is important to note once again that in early childhood, reflectively endorsed desires (preferences) may not yet be a present, and a stable sense of self or self-concept likely has not yet formed. This is because young children have not yet committed themselves to, or self-reflectively identified with, particular desires or pursuits; nor have they developed strategies for organizing the various elements of the psyche. The upshot is that "early in life our sense of self is somewhat primitive and our personalities are still relatively malleable" (Braude 1995, 47). Thus, it is not clear that ambivalence always involves a conflict among desires that a subject *identifies with*, at least if identification is understood in a voluntary or self-reflective sense. But, as noted previously, it is possible for a subject, prior to explicit self-reflection, to feel especially attached to two or more conflicting desires and to want for them to be effective in action. Arguably, the difficulties that DID subjects encounter with respect to both identification and will formation *must* occur prior to self-reflection in order for this extreme inner conflict to remain undetectable. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that for most people, the need to love and trust one's caregivers is central to one's overall psychological makeup and capacity for cognitive functioning. When basic needs that cannot easily be abandoned cannot all be met, it may be difficult for a subject to achieve overall integration among her various desires and emotions. Indeed, valuational inconsistency that emerges early on in life, and which involves basic needs related to bonding with care-takers, is especially apt to produce the profound sort of dissociation found in DID.

As mentioned already, when you identify with a desire, you desire that it not be extinguished and that it move you to act (Frankfurt 1988). Identification with conflicting desires therefore can be paralyzing or lead to other disruptions of agency. It is notable that alter-personalities often vie for control of the body, and thus sometimes are described by theorists as "competing personalities" (Braude 1995, 67). For example, alters sometimes intervene in the lives of other alters by destroying their school work, spending their money, or hiding their things. This lack of a coherent will also is evidenced via the phenomenon of *waverings*. Radden (1996) presents the following example based on a report provided by a clinician: a subject is grocery shopping, filling her cart with the staples of an adult diet. The next moment, she reaches for several brightly colored packages of children's cereal even though she lives alone. This can be understood as the impulse of a distinct alter-personality, and this "apparently aberrant and alien impulsive intervention reflects a wavering in the steady course of the reigning adult self's agency" (Radden 1996, 244). Subjects with DID are incapable of settling on a single course of action, and there are interruptions and anomalies in the flow of control linking the subject's cognitive states and desires to their execution. It makes sense to understand such interruption and struggles for control as the outward signs of inner conflict.

It is worth noting that even among ordinary subjects, we can find instances of *conflicted acts*, that is, cases in which one aspect of the subject's intentional action seems to contradict or conflict with another aspect (Koch 1987, 271). For example, Peter might take Sandra's hand but turn his face away; and he may speak reassuringly as he holds her hand, but squeeze so hard that it hurts her. Here, the conflicted self "contrives to construct an act that speaks with two voices" (Koch 1987, 272). In instances of wavering in DID, the conflict is even more pronounced and there is an apparent reification of these two voices. Using Frankfurt's preferred terminology, one might say that the subject with DID identifies with both of two conflicting desires and wants both to be effective in action; and handing off the desires to two seemingly separate alter-personalities may be the subject's attempt to accomplish this. Along these lines, Murray (2001) maintains that secondary personalities offer a way for children "to act out impulses that would be unacceptable to the primary personality" (238). Subjects with DID in a sense "hand off" these desires to an alter-personality; and they also "hand off" some of the intense feelings associated with the traumatic experience they have undergone. The alter-personality, in turn, exhibits a willingness to act on desires that may be unacceptable to the subject. This "handing off" of desires and actions to different alter-personalities therefore can be understood as the subject's attempt to mask contradictions and resolve inner conflict without abandoning any of her deep-seated needs and desires. In some sense, then, alter-formation can be viewed as a reification of the "parties to the conflict", such that they come to be viewed as distinct and separate selves.

In ordinary cases of ambivalence, subjects are aware of their inner conflict and mixed feelings and this modulates each of their conflicting attitudes. For example, attitudes may blend somewhat. Ed's dislike of his job may be dampened or modified as a result of his positive beliefs about supporting his family. In other cases, one of the conflicting attitudes is embraced or endorsed as preferable and the other one may begin to diminish in strength or disappear altogether. In cases of DID, however, awareness of inner conflict is lacking and a subject clings to conflicting desires by way of forming the delusional belief that some of her mental states belong to someone else. Indeed, this lack of self-awareness and self-insight is precisely what is needed in order for the subject to maintain her "obfuscations and defences" (Wells 2003, 300). Alter-formation provides the subject with a means to avoid having to address these inconsistencies and face up to inner conflict.

It is important to acknowledge that while most studies have found extremely high rates of childhood abuse or trauma among subjects with DID, such experiences should not be viewed as either necessary or sufficient for DID (Spanos 1994). After all, extreme dissociation can occur in the absence of childhood abuse, and, of course, many (perhaps most) instances of childhood abuse do not lead to the development of DID. It is clear that some children are more prone to dissociation and the creation of imaginary friends than others, and that a variety of factors (including family of origin, birth order, genetics, and intelligence) (Cohen 2004, 225) may impact the extent to which someone tends to dissociate. However, this hardly shows that the correlation between abuse and DID is merely apparent or coincidental. They are linked by virtue of their shared connection to extreme ambivalence and dissociation, and it is easy enough to see why abuse, trauma, or extreme neglect during childhood might result in internal conflict. I have suggested that the subject with DID has conflicting desires and affective stances, many of which pertain to deep-seated emotional needs that cannot be abandoned easily and that ordinarily play a crucial role in a child's development of self. Young children do not yet have a structure of preferences and convictions that they can turn to as they attempt to cope with traumatic experiences, nor have they developed mechanisms for resolving conflict. At later developmental stages, once the sense of self has become more robust, abuse and trauma are far less likely to result in DID (though, of course, they may contribute to other disorders).

Alter-formation therefore can be viewed as one possible way of responding to an intolerable situation and attempting to adapt (Braude 1995, 177). Different alter-personalities develop to cope with different situations (Cohen 2004, 223), so that rather than rejecting any of her feelings or desires, all of which reflect deep-seated desires, the subject approaches her surroundings from what seem like different points of view at different moments. Along these lines, Wells' (2003) patient Mary reported that she liked her ability to change her psychological reality whenever it was unpleasant. Although she recognized that "opposite thoughts" were a problem, she also found this expression of opposites "strangely comforting". I hypothesize that distributing different tasks and activities to different alters initially is used as a defense against trauma, and once it proves to be rewarding, it may become a child's habitual way of dealing with life's challenges.

Some theorists have found it quite implausible to view DID as some sort of coping mechanism gone haywire. Graham (1999), for example, rejects the idea that there is a single subject who turns to multiple selves as a way of dealing with childhood incest, abuse, or otherwise unendurable distress. This first reason that this sort of explanation falls short, according to Graham, is that there is no reason for subjects to erect barriers around or misattribute non-distressing events, and yet they do (1999, 167). However, the idea is that it is distressing events that lead to the creation of these barriers; and once these barriers are present, memories and knowledge of non-distressing events will be compartmentalized along with the distressing information. This helps to sustain the illusion that there exist multiple selves, so that dissociation can continue to serve its self-protective function. Once there is compartmentalization and extreme dissociation, all sorts of apparent mental division likely will follow. Graham's second objection is that this extreme dissociation seems quite flawed as a coping strategy. He asks, "why would a single self settle upon and persist in [DID] when a less psychodynamically complex and emotionally disturbing strategy makes more rational sense?" (1999, 168).

It is unclear what sort of alternative strategy Graham has in mind. While dissociation is indeed psychodynamically complex, it also is quite common, and even ordinary subjects use it as a way to adapt and cope with their surroundings, for example, in the form of automatic or overlearned behaviors (behaviors we can perform without apparently thinking or

paying attention to them) (Braude 1995, 102). The extreme dissociation found in DID typically emerges in early childhood, before a stable sense of self has formed (Cohen 2004). Like other defense mechanisms, dissociation can be understood as "a routine for nullifying, neutralizing, or at least forestalling the damaging or debilitating effect of facing up to a certain subject matter of acting on a 'dangerous' impulse" (Bach 1994, 61). It makes sense that subjects might attempt to deal with things that are difficult to face up to simply by *not facing up to them*. Although extreme dissociation may heighten and intensify emotional disturbance over the long term, it may be in the short-term interests of the child in the sense that it allows her to compartmentalize unpleasant parts of her personal history, cope with trauma, and thereby survive. In fact, there are all sorts of coping strategies that appear to help in the short term but often end up leading to greater psychological distress in the long run. Alcohol, drugs, and overeating are all examples.

Before concluding, I should note that my proposed account resonates with the one presented by Radden (1996), who characterizes DID as entrenched and extreme self-deception. She maintains that among some subjects, self-deception becomes a long-term disposition, and becomes so entrenched that it results in distinct personalities. However, while Radden seems sympathetic to some version of the multiple selves thesis, I have argued against the claim that there literally are multiple selves present in cases of DID. In fact, the very concept of self-deception entails the existence of a single self who attempts to hide its conflicting agendas from itself. (If there truly are multiple selves present, then DID would turn out to be more like lying to or hiding information from someone else than it is like self-deception.) Moreover, my proposed account helps to make sense of the nature of this self-deception by suggesting that what the subject hides from herself is extreme and pervasive inner conflict.

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