A Realist Aspect to the Interpretation of Selves

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The phenomenon that was until recently known as Multiple Personality Disorder has generated differing theoretical accounts of the metaphysical status of the alternative 'personalities' or 'identities' that are exhibited by subjects with the disorder. Some theorists have held that the phenomenon shows that we need to reconsider the status and nature of selves in general as it seems that it is possible for subjects to support, or give rise to more than one self. This has led some theorists to conclude that selves are fictions, whether in the 'multiple' individual or in those with a more conventional psychology e.g., Humphrey & Dennett (1998); Gillett, (1997); Hacking, (1991); Kolak, (1993). An alternative to this is to deny that alters are selves, and a popular strategy amongst clinician's advocating treatment of the disorder is to consider them to be 'aspects', 'segments', or 'parts' of a self. On this view, alters are to be seen as fragments that may be blended or fused together to add up to a single self of the sort exhibited by individuals without the disorder (Putnam, 1995). The other major alternative is to deny that alters are selves, and maintain that there is only one self even in the case of subjects who present with the disorder e.g., Brown, (2001) and Clark, (1990). There has been a general tendency for theorists to reduce the metaphysical status of selves to fictions if one holds that alters are selves; or alternatively, to reduce the status of alters to something less than selves if one wants to attempt to keep the self as a respectable notion. The question as to the metaphysical status of alters is thus related to the question as to the metaphysical status of selves.

1.1 The Reaction to Realism

The notion of a Cartesian Realist self as an entity to be found located within the subject has largely been discredited for two main reasons. The first problem arises with Descartes' notion of the *non-physical* soul-stuff that is said to comprise the self. It is problematic because it is postulated as an entity that is forever beyond the reach of objective scientific investigation *in principle*. It is considered to be a non-physical object that cannot be studied by science, yet it is also held to be influenced by and to effect changes to the physical realm. It thus violates the scientific assumption that the physical world is causally closed (that only matter can cause changes to matter). This belief is foundational to science because the methods for testing hypotheses involve manipulating dependent variables to measure resulting changes in independent variables to either falsify the hypothesis or to lend it support. If the physical world is not causally closed then it seems that there are variables and 'outside influences' that

would interfere with and confound experimental testing. Given the track record of scientific progress over the past few centuries, we may say that this lends support for the assumption that the physical world is causally closed. Dualism thus seems to be contra-indicated. Dennett, (1991) claims that accepting a dualistic conception of the mind (self) is therefore 'giving up'. It is giving up on the notion of a scientific understanding of our world. Most theorists now claim to work within a broadly naturalistic or materialistic framework, and so the notion of a Cartesian immaterial self is now held in disrepute. Dualism does not offer us an alternative explanation; rather it seems to preclude any possible scientific explanation.

The second reason for the reaction to Cartesian Realism (or Cartesian Materialism) is that the notion of the self as a concretely existing, unified, and simple entity to be found localised within the subject's brain does not seem to correspond to reality. The self, mind, or 'place where it all comes together' has eluded the best efforts of neuroscientists to pinpoint the area of localisation. Feinberg, (2001) writes that there is no place in the brain in which 'all the brain's activity converges on 'one pontifical cell'. He goes on to propose a *nested hierarchy* theory of self where diverse areas of the brain contribute to the consciousness and selfhood that are seen as emergent properties of the normally functioning human brain. He shows us through a series of case studies that the self is not an all or none affair. It can break down or malfunction to differing degrees, and it cannot be the sole product of any one localised region. It seems that the homunculus that is the self is not to be found in a localised region of the brain at all. No neuron, mental module, or pattern of activation seems to constitute a self. These varieties of realism are thus held in disrepute.

The materialistic intuition that there must be a physiological basis to the self is not disputed, all agree that the self is (somehow or other) a *product* of the brain. No one wants to deny that physiological changes are the physical *causes* of behaviour. Non-realists just want to deny that the self will turn out to be *identified with* those physiological changes. Accounts of how the behaviours that constitute the disorder arise have thus been offered in terms of competing mental modules (physical structures within the brain), or patterns of activation with respect to neurotransmitter levels. While there is little empirical evidence at this stage attempts have been made to show both that there *is* a physical basis that gives rise to the presence of the behaviours that constitute the disorder (which none but a dualist would deny), and to show *what* that physical basis is. Non-realists just part ways with realists in denying that the self

will turn out to *be* a particular part of the brain; a view that seems to be supported by science. Non-realists tend to emphasize the social and cultural aspects of the process of self-construction. These notions form the basis of their subsequent accounts. Non-realism about the self has thus emerged as the dominant position within psychology and indeed philosophy today.

The current emphasis on non-realism with respect to the self may be seen as a reaction to these discredited varieties of realism outlined above. Because the everyday term 'self' is taken by most theorists to refer to one of these realist selves, and seeing as it turns out that these realist selves do not exist, some theorists have concluded that this shows us that selves do not exist at all. Most go on to construct a theory of what the self 'really' is, though regard themselves to be non-realists in that (a) they want to divorce themselves from the above varieties of realism, and (b) they believe that the self that they go on to talk about is contrary to our commonsense way of using the term. We may instead take the line that the everyday term 'self' does not refer to a thing to be found within the brain (or even an immaterial thing not to be found within the brain). This seems the most plausible line to account for the everyday term 'self' because the brain must be irrelevant to what we mean by 'self' as most of us do not have the opportunity to look inside the individual's brains that we attribute self-hood to. Yet we can and do consider individuals to have selves. What we do have access to, and what therefore seems the most plausible to consider with respect to self-hood is the behaviour (especially the verbal behaviour) of subjects. This is not to say that the self *just is* a collection of behaviours, but it is to say that behaviour must surely be more significant to our everyday usage of the term than the inner workings of the brain, or even the presence of an (invisible) soul. At this stage it is enough to note that one can allow an aspect of realism with respect to the self - and not just the funny kind of 'realism' claimed by those who maintain that it is okay to go on talking about selves even though they don't really exist[1]. The behaviour is real, and so realism may be able to get a toehold if it is plausible that behaviour is a necessary part of self-hood, and with respect to the everyday usage of the term 'self' I think that it must be.

[1] This 'funny' kind of realism is indeed considered to be a 'realist' position in Graham (2002). One can only surmise that it is indeed difficult to find varieties of realism that are still alive and kicking.

Here what is of interest is given that subjects with typical psychology have one self (in that we typically attribute one self to them); is it then the case that individual's with MPD (or as it is now called Dissociative Identity Disorder) have more than one self? Or alternatively, do they not even exhibit one until they are fused? Or, is there but one all along? Even if it turns out that different alters are correlated with different transmitter levels, or different mental modules that gain control of the motor cortex or language production areas, this does not show us that alters are selves for the same reasons that data on brain activity cannot show us the one self in the brain. The data will not help us with that 'decision', it can only provide a physiological account of *how* the phenomenon occurs; it may be able to tell us the neurophysiological *cause* of the behaviours that constitute the disorder. But it cannot show us the neurophysiological self or selves in the brain; and thus it cannot tell us what the phenomenon amounts to.

Whether the phenomenon amounts to an individual's having more that one self or not is not going to just emerge from the physical facts. We have the physical facts that show us that the phenomenon occurs, the physical facts that even the most ardent sceptics about the disorder do not deny - and now a decision needs to be made on theoretical grounds as to what the phenomenon amounts to; it is this that has been the main subject of dispute, and this is what I will be concerned with here. The phenomenon usually seems to be interpreted as not implying that the subject has more than one self (usually because of some assumption that necessitates a one-one correlation between selves and brains / bodies), or as showing the fictional side to selves because there turns out to be more than one. I will go on to argue that whether there are one or many selves is largely a matter of interpretation, though in order to maximize rationality it may be more charitable to view these subjects as having more than one self - and to see alters as selves with equivalent metaphysical status. Just because it is indeterminate how many selves there 'really' are, this does not imply that selves / alters are purely fictional; there is a realist aspect to them that needs to be emphasized in this current climate where non-realism prevails.

1.2 Dennett's Metaphysics of Mind

The philosopher Daniel Dennett is best known for his account of intentional states such as belief and desire. He claims in 'Real Patterns', (1998) that he attempts to achieve 'the mid-

point between realism and anti-realism' regarding the metaphysical status of intentional states (or alternatively of the mind). It is worthwhile at this point to take a detour into Dennett's metaphysics of mind, as I will go on to maintain that on Dennett's account of what selves are, the same metaphysical status must apply to them as well. Dennett, (1987) claims that intentional states are visible when we take the *intentional stance* towards a system's behaviour.

> Here is how it works: first you decide to treat the object whose behaviour is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs it ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on these same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in light of its beliefs. A little practical reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in many – but not all – instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; and that is what you predict the agent will do… Any object – or as I shall say, any system – whose behaviour is well predicted by this strategy is in the fullest sense of the word a believer. What it is to be a true believer is to be an intentional system, a system whose behaviour is reliably and voluminously predictable via the intentional strategy.

There are thus three aspects to intentional states. The first is the (real) behaviour (or patterns in behaviour) that they are inferred from. The second is the theorist's decision to view the behaviour from the intentional stance. It is at this point that the 'real patterns' in the system's behaviour become visible to the theorist. The third aspect is an assessment as to the truth of the attributions on the grounds as to whether the future behaviour lends support to the theory, or disconfirms it. Dennett, (1987) separates the realist aspect from the fictionalist aspect maintaining that: "While belief is a perfectly objective phenomenon (that apparently makes me a realist), it can be discerned only from the point of view of someone who adopts a certain predictive strategy, and its existence can be confirmed only by an assessment of the success of that strategy (that apparently makes me an interpretationist).' Many took Dennett's early account of intentional states to be instrumentalist, or fictionalist in flavour because of his focus on attributions over reality, and his emphasis on behaviour rather than the brain. His response was 'Real Patterns', (1998) where he emphasized the realist aspect to intentional

states. He claims that 'the success of folk-psychological prediction, like the success of any prediction, depends on there being some order or pattern in the world to exploit… The pattern is discernable in agent's (observable) behaviour when we subject it to 'radical interpretation' from the intentional stance'. He maintains that the pattern is objective; it is real because it gives us 'predictive leverage we can get from no other method', (1998).

Dennett's methodology is interesting in that he attempts to characterise both intentionality and self-hood from an objective, third person perspective. While there may or may not be a distinctive conscious experience that all selves have (the very suggestion is notoriously disputed); and while qualia may or may not play an important part in determining beliefs or desires; we do not have this kind of access to another individual's mind. In the case of DID one might think that the question as to how many selves there are could be conclusively settled if only we could know how many centres of consciousness there were – but the search for even one of those in terms of neuroscience has proved vastly more difficult than the simple idea suggests. It has proven difficult to the point where based on the lack of scientific evidence many theorists want to deny that selves are real at all.

We are unable to determine the qualia of another, and so if one held on to qualia as the determining factor as to whether a subject really was a believer or a self there would be no way we could ever know because we could not access the required evidence – we would remain in a solipsistic position with respect to others being conscious, being believers, or being selves. Dennett may be considered to be offering us a more satisfactory line with an alternative way out. He steers clear of elusive qualia for determining evidence, instead redirecting the kind of evidence required by focusing on what we all do have access to – behaviour. Our everyday notion of the self cannot refer to private subjective experiences for the same reasons it cannot refer to goings-on in the brain. We lack the required access to either and so they cannot play a role in the way in which we choose to apply and withhold the concept of selfhood, (or mind) to others.

Because of Dennett's methodology he is less interested in the question as to whether a subject *really* has beliefs (or a self), he claims that the only kind of realism we should be interested in

should be based on utility value[2]. He claims that 'we think beliefs are quite real enough to call real just so long as belief-talk measures these complex behaviour-disposing organs as predictively as it does', (1998). He rephrases the question as to whether a subject really has a self or a mind, into the question of when we may say that our attributions of selfhood / intentionality are true. He thus focuses on the process of making attributions and he claims that the truth of the attribution can be assessed on pragmatic grounds. They can be assessed for truth with regard to the objective matter of how successful they are in predicting the (objectively) occurring behaviour of a subject.

1.3 Dennett's Account of the Self

So if the self is not a real thing to be found within the brain, or a distinctive qualitative experience what is it? Dennett, (1992) maintains that a self is an abstractum, like a centre of gravity.

> A self is also an abstract object, a theorist's fiction. The theory is not particle physics but what we might call a branch of people-physics… The physicist does an interpretation, if you like, of the chair and its behaviour, and comes up with the theoretical abstraction of a centre of gravity, which is then very useful in characterizing the behaviour of the chair in the future, under a wide variety of conditions. The hermeneuticist or phenomenologist--or anthropologist--sees some rather more complicated things moving about in the world--human beings and animals--and is faced with a similar problem of interpretation. It turns out to be theoretically perspicuous to organize the interpretation around a central abstraction: each person has a self.

Being just any old 'intentional system' is not sufficient for selfhood however, as Dennett, (1987) allows that oil refineries and thermometers qualify as 'intentional systems', or 'true believers' (which some think shows that his account of intentional states is inadequate).

[2] Dennett does not separate his metaphysics from his epistemology. It is often claimed that what there is is a separate matter from whether we can come to know of it or not, so this may be a criticism of his methodology. On the other hand a mark of a good scientific theory is supposed to be that it is subject to empirical disconfirmation and that notion seems to show that metaphysics and epistemology are intimately connected so perhaps this is to be seen as strength rather than a weakness of Dennett. This is controversial.

Intentional states aside, we most decidedly do not want to hold that these things qualify as having selves, and (arguably) we would not expect animals to have selves – although some sort of 'rudimentary self' is plausible. Dennett considers that

> Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee and co specifics with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spider webs into self-protective strings of narrative. Our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition is not building dams or spinning webs, but telling stories--and more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others--and ourselves--about who we are… There is a further similarity between the spiders, the beavers, and us. Spiders don't have to think, consciously and deliberately, about how to spin their webs; that is just something that spider brains are designed to get spiders to do. And even beavers, unlike professional human engineers, do not consciously and deliberately plan the structures they build. And finally, we, (unlike professional human storytellers) do not consciously and deliberately figure out what narratives to tell and how to tell them; like spider webs, our tales are spun by us; our human consciousness, and our narrative selfhood, is their product, not their source.

Language thus enables self-representation, and we may say that this is necessary for fully-fledged self-hood. We tell others, and of course ourselves about ourselves: Our likes and dislikes; our plans and expectations; our explanations and memories. We thus take the intentional stance towards our own behaviour, as others take it towards ours, and in taking it towards ourselves we are creating ourselves.

Dennett, (1991) claims that our narratives, or the stories we tell others and ourselves about who we are are spun by us, or more specifically by our brains. He emphasises that he is not implying one conscious agent talking another one into existence - that most decidedly would be begging the question and would lead to an infinite regress of selves / story tellers. He claims that our stories are instead spun by the 'unconscious' or unaware neurones in our brain. He uses the example of the termite colony to show that what can seem to be highly

integrated and coherent group behaviour - even to the point where some theorists have posited a ‘group soul’, is in actuality the behaviour of many independent organisms ‘largely doing their own thing’. No miraculous powers of communication or ‘group soul’ needs to be called on to explain their apparently harmonious collaborative behaviour - they just all independently do what they were designed to do and the apparent collaborative behaviour of them taken as a group is just an emergent result of them doing - on an independent level - what they were designed to do. Of course the apparent collaborative behaviour of the resulting group enhances the chances of survival of the individuals within the group - but this just goes on to show that that individual behaviour was indeed beneficial both to the individual - and to other individuals (the group as a whole).

This parallels the human brain in that the brain, instead of being a simple, unified thing, or even an organised collection of simpler modules is simply (on the physical level) collections of individual neurones, each one doing its own thing. Dennett’s ‘Multiple Drafts’ model of consciousness, (1991) has consciousness presented as emerging in the brain when patterns of activation persist for long enough. It is like several lines of thought run concurrently and what actually makes it to consciousness is the ‘noisiest’, or most persistent line. There are struggles for ascendency and the track, or stream is subject to change. This puts conscious thought (and indeed unconscious thought) subservient on brain processes - conscious thought depends on which brain process is the ‘loudest’ at any given time, but this account requires no conscious editor to chose between the lines of thought. The result is consciousness that has emerged from simpler organic processes that are not themselves intelligent conscious agents. Dennett does not want to say that there is a conscious self that is an active narrator in the process of self-construction - such a postulate wouldn’t help anyway because we are thus led to asking the question, but what or who spun that conscious self into existence? (and so on ad infinitum.) The very point is to stop the infinite regress at the first step. Our stories are spun by us, but they are not spun by ourselves, they are spun by our brains.

1.4 Indeterminacy and Implications for Realism

Dennett is very keen to emphasize the realist side to intentional states and he shies away from classification as an instrumentalist regarding the mind. It seems that one could argue

(although Dennett does not) that we should not completely abandon realism with respect to the self on the same grounds that we should not completely abandon realism with respect to intentional states. The realist part to Dennett's account of intentionality is the objective behaviour, and objective patterns in behaviour that both gives rise to the inference (intentional states) that are used to explain and predict (when viewed from the intentional stance), and the objective behaviour, and objective patterns in behaviour, that supports, or disproves the attribution. I think that the realist aspect to intentional states must also apply to selves, even though Dennett seems quite happy to regard them as fictions. It seems to be consistent with Dennett's overall line to likewise claim that the realist part to the self is, once again, the objective behaviour (or objective patterns in behaviour), and I think that the stance he takes on one must apply to the other also, as he has pointed out that they are intimately related – they are both theorists' constructs designed for and maintained by their utility in the prediction and explanation of behaviour from the intentional stance.

In 'The Self as a Centre of Narrative Gravity', (1992) he writes that selves may be indeterminate and that 'this indeterminacy is a fundamental property of fictional objects which strongly distinguishes them from another sort of object scientists talk about: theoretical entities, or what Reichenbach called illata--inferred entities, such as atoms, molecules and neutrinos. A logician might say that the 'principle of bivalence' does not hold for fictional objects.' A worry is that here he is creating a distinction between theoretical, or inferred entities (such as centres of gravity), and fictional entities (selves) on the grounds of indeterminacy. Concreta too can be indeterminate though, and we do not want to regard them any the less real for it. There may be no fact of the matter as to where one mountain ends and another begins if they are side by side, however this does not show us that mountains are fictions. Dennett also allows that intentional states can be indeterminate, yet he explicitly regards them to be theoretical entities, and he is keen to emphasise the realist aspect to them. Does the principle of bivalence hold for intentional states? What about questions regarding where one mountain ends and another begins? Indeterminacy need not imply non-realism.

1.5 The Indeterminacy of Intentional State Attributions and Attributions of Selves

Dennett provides an account of two rival theorists Smith, and Jones who are attempting to predict the behaviour of the same subject. He claims that they 'agree on the general shape of this individual's collection of beliefs (and desires etc.) but because of their different idealizations of the pattern, they do not agree point for point'. He claims that they might predict different behaviours, and so it would seem that one interpretation might emerge as the better (that is to say more useful one) but that that might not be the case in principal. He claims

> 'I see that there could be two different systems of belief attribution to an individual that differed substantially in what they attributed – even in yielding substantially different predictions of the individual's future behaviour – and yet where no deeper fact of the matter could establish that one was a description of the individual's real beliefs and the other not. In other words, there could be two different, but equally real, patterns discernable in the noisy world. The rival theorists would not even agree on which parts of the world were pattern and which were noise, and yet nothing deeper would settle the issue. The choice of a pattern would indeed be up to the observer, a matter to be decided on idiosyncratic pragmatic grounds', (1998).

Let us consider selves to be attributions that are made on the basis of a subject's behaviour (especially their verbal behaviour where they attribute a self to themselves). Because of the indeterminacy of attributions it follows that different theorists could have differing theories as to how many selves there are with respect to one individual. One theorist could maintain that there was one self, and another that there was many. There may be no further fact of the matter that could decide between these two interpretations (the only facts that come into play here are behavioural – we do not need to worry about brain states or qualia).

In 'Speaking for OurSelves', (1998) he writes: suppose, at different times, different subsystems within the brain produce 'clusters' of speech that simply cannot easily be interpreted as the output of a single self. Then – as a Bible scholar may discover when working on the authorship of what is putatively a single-authored text – it may turn out that the clusters make best sense when attributed to different selves.' Interpretation seems to be all-important, and the factor driving our interpretation is the desire to make the 'best sense' out of the behaviour (including verbal behaviour) of the subjects. It seems that a major factor

in deciding whether one or many selves are present is a matter of interpretation. Suppose a system's behaviour taken as a whole appears only minimally consistent - erratic, changeable, inconsistent, even unpredictable – a lot of noise must be budgeted for. But there may be more useful patterns there for the discerning of the innovative observer. Perhaps there may be discernable pattern in the noise, and the subject may be predictably unpredictable so to speak. A system, for example, may be better viewed as not just one system, but as several different systems, the unpredictability may lie more in uncertainty as to which system may be in control at a given time (although patterns may be discernable here too). The multiple systems view could have predictive leverage over the single systems version in that it budgets for considerably more pattern and less noise, that is to say it is more useful, not more real.

One thing that the intentional stance requires is a 'rational decider' there needs to be a rational decider to co-ordinate the beliefs and desires and to act from there. With respect to a self we seem to be making the attribution that the rational decider is largely the same, and is largely consistent over time. That seems to mean that the content of the beliefs and desires is largely the same as well. In terms of the decision to view the subject as having one or many selves we may say that it is more charitable to maximize rationality, and rationality can be maximized by viewing the subjects as having separate centres of narrative gravity that are internally largely consistent but mutually incompatible. The alternative is that rationality is not optimal and we have to budget for more noise. In the descriptive sense it may be practical to consider these subjects to have more than one self.

The attribution of one or many centres of narrative gravity may be indeterminate – there may be no further fact of the matter that could decide between the competing hypotheses of multiple centres of narrative gravity and an ardent refusal to describe the subject's behaviour in this manner. Even if one hypothesis explained and predicted more behaviour and less noise than the other both would 'get rich' as Dennett puts it, simply by one budgeting for more noise. The noisier pattern would make allowances for 'unpredictable' behaviour, whereas the other would see pattern in the noise. Even though one may emerge as having more pattern Dennett explicitly states that it does not follow that it is more real. So with respect to intentional states if there are two competing belief-desire ascriptions that predict behaviour then they must be both true (in that they are both derived from the theorists valid

interpretation of real pattern), and so as to the question as to whether the subject really has one or more selves there too there may be no fact of the matter.

There seems to be no reason why a single brain or body cannot give rise to more than one self in principal unless one adheres to some sort of biological notion of the self that restricts selves and bodies (or brains) to a one-one correlation necessarily. Brown, (2001) does this with his account of MPD by holding an Animalist account of the self where there is one self per human animal. His motivation for this is to avoid 'moral problems' (unspecified) that he believes may result in taking alters to be selves, and he takes the 'reification' of alters to be 'metaphysically extravagant'[3]. Aside from these two motivations, however, he does not provide an argument for animalism and a one-one correlation; rather this presupposition motivates his account. Biology has traditionally had less to do with the notion of a self, however, and more to do with the related notion of a person, which seems to also be the notion more tied up with moral rights and responsibilities. Those who are inclined to take some sort of biological line might find commissurotomy a more likely phenomenon with respect to challenging ones intuitions that selves and brains must enter into a strict one-one correlation.

If it turns out that different mental modules are responsible for the different patterns in behaviour that constitute the alters then this would seem to be a similar sort of case though. Or perhaps one specifically wants to attempt to draw a bodily criterion into the notion of self (as Brown does). The problem with this is that the body is obviously not sufficient as a criterion when one considers the possibility (in principal) of body swaps and the inclination most of us have to say that the self 'follows' the brain, and is no different for a different body. The bodily criterion here thus seems to be irrelevant – many claim that it is not necessary - with respect to the self. This is not, of course, support for the claim that disembodied selves are possible. Presumably it is necessary for there to be some sort of physical basis that gives rise to the self; it just does not seem to be terribly relevant which body it is.

[3] Although it does not seem to be metaphysically extravagant as the claim is that there are simply more tokens of selves than we previously realised – it is not another kind of 'stuff' different in kind that is being postulated. The criticism of metaphysical extravagance may be better applied to those who view alters to be different in kind from selves.

So the three main alternative positions that we began with were that (a) selves are fictions, (as explicitly endorsed by Dennett); (b) alters are somehow 'lesser than' selves in terms of metaphysical status, and when fused together result in a self; and; (c) alters are not selves. It was also noted that the metaphysical status of selves seemed to slide towards non-realism when alters were considered to constitute selves. Here I have attempted to show that it is a plausible alternative to disagree with both tendencies. Realism of the Cartesian variety may well be untenable, but behaviour must be the basis of our attributions of selfhood to others and so it seems implausible to maintain that selves are purely fictions when the behaviour is real. As well as arguing for a realist aspect to selves I think that it is inconsistent to maintain that alters do not constitute selves. I suspect that the motivation behind the attempt to reduce their status has more to do with an underlying assumption that selves and bodies must be correlated in a one-one fashion necessarily – an assumption that does not seem to follow from any a-priori necessity.

I think that there is a decision to be made as to whether we view these subjects as having one self or many. We are understandably biased towards positing one centre of narrative gravity wherever possible, as one seems sufficient for explaining and predicting the behaviour of the majority of the population. In some cases, however, there may be a predictive and explanatory advantage to positing more than one self to a subject. This interpretation may be seen as more charitable with respect to maximising the subjects' rationality, and explaining and predicting more of their behaviour. On Dennett's account this does not imply that this interpretation is 'more real', but I think that if more of the behaviour can be explained and predicted then we have good reasons for considering the multiple systems version of the intentional stance a better theory of these subjects' behaviour than the alternative.

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