

THEOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PLURAL SELF



LÉON TURNER

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Is the human self singular and unified or essentially plural? This book explores the seemingly disparate ways that Christian theology and the secular human sciences have approached this complex question. The latter have largely embraced the idea of the plural self as an inescapable, even adaptive feature of psychological life. Contemporary Christian theology, by contrast, has largely neglected recent psychological accounts of the naturalness of self-plurality, and has sought to reaffirm the self's unity in opposition to those postmodern theorists who would dismantle it.

Through an original analysis of recent theological and secular accounts of self and personhood, this book examines the extent of the intertheoretical disparity and its broader implications for theology's dialogue with the human sciences in general, and psychology in particular. It explains why theologians ought to take questions about the plurality of self very seriously, and how they overlap with many of the central concerns of contemporary theological anthropology, including the notions of relationality, particularity and human sinfulness. Introducing a novel psychological framework to distinguish various understandings of self-disunity, the author argues that contemporary theology's blanket condemnation of self-multiplicity is misconceived, and identifies a possible means of reconciling theological and human scientific accounts.

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To my parents, Gwen and Richard Turner

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Introduction

‘We know, or think we know, so much about man, about human nature – and yet we know so little. The terms we employ are names to cover our ignorance; they are abstracted descriptions which never give us the concrete wholeness of human lives nor explain the rich complexity of human experience.’

(Pfuetze, 1975)¹

Our understanding of the human self remains far from comprehensive. In fact there is still little or no general agreement about what selves actually are. Contemporary approaches are still very much afflicted by the same enigmatic paradoxes and contradictions that have plagued this subject for centuries. Simultaneously, it seems, the self is both ‘me’ and ‘I’; it is both the object of experience and the experiencing subject; it is both the source and the product of identity; it is immanent and physiological yet transcendent and immaterial; it is unique, singular and individual, but also universal, plural and relational. These are the sorts of issues that are referred to generically as ‘the problem of the self’.

The focus of this book is upon a single one of these paradoxes – the multiplicity and unity of self. The intuition we each have of ourselves as a unified and continuous person over time is seemingly amongst the most basic of all human experiences, but we perhaps ought not to take this for granted. Certainly, it has proved very difficult to explain, either philosophically or psychologically. This much can be deduced from the vast literature that is dedicated to the problem in one form or another. But even if a complete explanation of self-unity eludes us, can we not agree that a sense of disunity – a sense of being multiple rather than singular – would be profoundly abnormal?

This perception of self-disunity has a very long history. It is at least as old as the idea of the inner self, as the creator of the inner self, St Augustine, makes clear in his *Confessions*.² The biblical story of the Gerasene demoniac also brings the strangeness of self-multiplicity into sharp relief. According to the account in Mark’s gospel, Jesus casts out a number of demons from a man who, when asked his name, makes plain his disunity with the words, ‘My name is Legion, for we are many.’ Once the legion of demons (and so the disunity) have been expelled, the man returns to his right mind. The story has received a variety of allegorical interpretations, and it would clearly be a mistake strictly to interpret Legion’s condition in the terms of modern psychology, but the identification both of self-multiplicity with madness, and singularity with normality is striking nonetheless.

1 Pfuetze (1975) p.23.

2 St Augustine (1961), Book VIII.

Our ideas about the abnormality of self-multiplicity, however, may have to change. Amongst all the philosophical disagreement is an emerging acquiescence that a degree of self-multiplicity is the norm. The contemporary self has become destabilised, both theoretically and experientially, as modernity's individualism continues to retreat from the postmodern world. Individualism's gradual but relentless decline, and increasing contemporary scepticism about the unified self-creating person have both been charted in a number of influential works, including Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1992), Carver Yu's *Being and Relation: A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism* (1987) and Kenneth Gergen's *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Modern Life* (1991). Whereas the unity of the experiencing subject has always been philosophically problematic, a broad consensus suggests that the self's existential predicament became increasingly precarious as local communities and their idiosyncratic customs and traditions gave way to the globalised society. Individuals ceased to define themselves in simple monolithic terms as the range of competing demands upon their self-images proliferated. In the final decades of the twentieth century, the fragmenting process is supposed to have accelerated rapidly as technological innovations created new and more devastating ways to strip the self of its coherence. As the traditional sources of identity crumbled away, a novel and distinctive kind of identity emerged characterised by its multiplicity, mobility, ephemerality and superficiality.

As well as the obvious interest such dramatic change holds for sociologists and historians, philosophically, the conceptual dethroning of the unified essential subject evokes questions about the basic importance of continuity and unity to concepts of self and identity, and gives renewed impetus to critiques of the substantial self. Psychologically, this idea points to a hitherto unrealised malleability of developmental processes, and to the complexity of the relationship between the social fabric of reality and private experiences of self. For Christian theology, the implications seem even more severe, since the possibility of such change must be considered in relation to fundamental Christian ideas about our createdness in God's image, our enduring particularity as individual beings, and our relatedness to God.

From a psychological perspective, the unity of the individual has traditionally seemed so intuitively plausible that, historically, few have resigned themselves to a conception of the human being as an irredeemable plurality of completely autonomous sub-components. Even Hume, whose intimate self-reflection led him to the conclusion that no self existed behind the multitude of beliefs, desires, impressions and emotions that an individual human being is subject to, acknowledged that the positing of an enduring self-reflexively unified subject was an inescapable practical reality.³ Certainly, from the advent of modern psychology, self-unity has been a recurrent and popular theme. For example, William James, one of the pioneers of modern psychology, famously ascribed unity to consciousness

3 Hume 1941.

itself, whereas the symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead appealed to a concept of the generalised other to explain the intuitive sense of an underlying unity beneath the multiplicity of social selves.⁴ Yet both implicitly acknowledged that concepts of self-multiplicity and unity are not necessarily polar opposites, and most subsequent psychological theorising in this area has proceeded according to a subtle understanding of their interrelationship. Hence structural, processual and phenomenological explanations of self-unity have been combined in various forms, and with varying degrees of coherence, with concepts of self-multiplicity.

Contemporary theologians are broadly agreed that the extreme individualistic concepts of person and self that dominated modern secular thought until relatively recently require fundamental revision, but the theological response to the postmodern fragmentation of self is polarised. Some, such as the radically orthodox theologian John Milbank, and the ‘sea of faith’ movement (though they approach postmodern theology from very different perspectives) see great liberation in the dissolution of the metanarratives that have constrained modern theorising, and celebrate the disappearance of the unitary essential subject. Others are more suspicious and have sought to preserve a notion of unified and particular social personhood that strongly relativistic and individualistic theories forsake. It is in this context, in its pastoral concern for postmodernity’s unstable selves, that theology’s interest in the unity and fragmentation of the self has most often encouraged a dialogue with the human sciences.

Most frequently that dialogue has been geared towards understanding and remedying those distortions in the interrelationship of (post)modern individuals, society and culture deemed responsible for the self’s diminishing coherence. In this context, self-multiplicity is almost always treated as pathological in some sense, not as the natural even adaptive development that much of the human sciences now assume it to be. This is despite a concerted effort by several theologians to engage with contemporary psychology in formulating interdisciplinary theories of self and identity to rejuvenate contemporary theological anthropology. Notable works in this area include Wolfhart Pannenberg’s *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (1985) and his three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1991–7), and Alistair McFadyen’s *The Call to Personhood. A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (1990a). Several authors have even examined sociological and philosophical accounts of self-fragmentation from a theological perspective, notably Anthony Thiselton in *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning Manipulation and Promise* (1995), Vernon White in *Paying Attention to People: An Essay on Individualism and Christian Belief* (1997), and Stanley Grenz in *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (2001). However, in these works, as elsewhere, the theological assumption that a healthy self is always a unified self remains unquestioned. My arguments in this book strongly challenge this assumption.

4 James 1890; Mead 1934, 1981

There is, unfortunately, a dearth of theological literature that engages with alternative depictions of the self in recent secular thought, despite a resurgence of theological interest in personhood in the 1990s. Alistair McFadyen, Vernon White, Anthony Thiselton and Colin Gunton, for example, though each chastises modernity for its individualism, also fail to do justice to recent psychological and sociological accounts of the plural self. Rather, the unity of the self is more or less taken for granted. It is a presupposition of their work, not a reasoned conclusion. The failure constructively to engage with this dimension of secular accounts of personhood is mystifying given the potential implications of such radical conceptual revision for our understanding of anthropological doctrine. After all, if the concept of the true and unified self is replaced by a multiplicity of divergent self-images, who or what, exactly, bears God's image? If identities are transitory and fragmented, who or what is burdened by sin, and who is finally redeemed by Christ?

This book is not a philosophical investigation into the epistemological or ontological status of the self in recent theology or an attempt to position contemporary theological anthropology in relation to modernism or postmodernism in general. Nor is it a work of apologetics or systematic theology. It is primarily a critical evaluation of the recent relationship between theological anthropology and the human sciences with respect to the concepts of self, personhood and identity. I undertake three major tasks. First, I provide an extensive critical examination of recent human-scientific thinking about self-multiplicity and self-unity. Secondly, I aim to explain theology's reticence to engage with the concept of self-plurality as it appears in the contemporary human sciences through an original critique of contemporary theological anthropology's appropriation of psychological theories and concepts. Thirdly, using the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Alistair McFadyen to illustrate my arguments, I explore the possibilities for a constructive dialogue between contemporary theological anthropology and psychology on the unity of personhood. The brightest prospects for future dialogue in this area, I believe, are presented by narrative psychological approaches to identity. The notion of narrative identity has recently received considerable attention from the human sciences and although several theologians have already begun to engage with this body of theories, its potential to form a solid foundation for an interdisciplinary dialogue is far from being fully recognised.

The first chapter introduces the idea that there is no single unitary discourse of self-fragmentation. Concepts of self-fragmentation are themselves fragmented and confused by the multitude of different disciplinary contexts in which they originate and evolve. The central aim of this chapter is to situate these ideas in the context of recent theological engagements with the human sciences. Using Vernon White's book *Paying Attention to People* (1997) to illustrate the major areas of dialogue on this subject, I argue that self-fragmentation must be explored in the context of its concrete sociological and psychological manifestations, not just through abstract philosophical analysis. Theology's reticence to engage with contemporary psychological accounts of self-multiplicity, I suggest, lies in the

wish to retain a strong concept of the individual following the philosophical turn to relationality, and the mistaken assumption that the concepts of self-unity and personal particularity are co-dependent.

Chapter 2 tackles the problem of the fragmented self in modern social theory. Here, I explore the widespread ideas that people are now subject to greater fragmenting and destabilising pressures than ever before as a result of unprecedented sociocultural changes, and that the stable unified identities of pre-modernity are gone forever. I argue that there are stronger and weaker descriptions of the changes that characterise the contemporary era, and show how many have turned to concepts of narrative autobiography to explain how people can retain a sense of continuity in spite of the continuous flux of postmodern culture. Although it is widely agreed that the postmodern self has lost the essential unity eulogised by the moderns, it is also clear that many theorists do not necessarily problematise this predicament, and some even celebrate the multiplication of the self as adaptive and emancipatory.

Chapter 3 is divided into two halves. First, I offer support for the idea that, psychologically, self-multiplicity and self-unity can be conceived in a variety of different ways, which reflect very different agendas. I consequently introduce two broad theoretical distinctions in order to facilitate a nuanced understanding of self-multiplicity. On the one hand, I distinguish between representational and experiential theories of selfhood, and on the other, I distinguish between theories of diachronic and synchronic self-multiplicity. In the second half of this chapter, I explore the concept of self-multiplicity in relation to representational theories of self, particularly theories of cognitive schemata. I suggest that people naturally form a variety of enduring concepts of self, which remain relatively autonomous from one another. According to this way of conceptualising self-multiplicity, it is both inevitable and adaptive.

The fourth chapter examines multiplicity and unity from the perspective of experiential theories of self. I explore the possibility that all people, whether or not they suffer from psychological disorders have the capacity to experience themselves in very different ways from moment to moment. The analysis is led by a discussion of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). I argue that at any given moment, the 'normal' person has a unified sense of self, but that over the course of a life, individuals each construct a variety of relatively autonomous sub-personalities. What primarily distinguishes DID sufferers from normal people, I argue, is the fact that DID sufferers are unable to lay claim to their experiences in such a way as to be able to tell a single coherent life story. They lack 'narrative coherence'. Drawing upon a rapidly expanding psychological literature devoted to the construction of 'narrative identity', I explain how the 'normal' individual can still manage to retain a sense of singularity despite the plurality of self.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I reconnect my analysis of self-multiplicity and unity to the recent theological dialogue with contemporary psychology. Using the conceptual scheme developed in Chapters 3 and 4, my specific aim in Chapter 5 is to establish what sorts of self-unity are deemed important to these projects. My arguments here

are directed towards the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Alistair McFadyen, who, in their respective engagements with psychology, make very similar claims regarding the unity of self. Theologically, I demonstrate, both place their primary emphasis upon the continuity of identity. Their opinions on this matter, I suggest, are shaped significantly by their interpretations of the doctrine of *imago Dei*.

I turn to the explicitly psychological aspects of Pannenberg's and McFadyen's anthropologies in Chapter 6, and examine their respective theories of identity formation. Once again, both make similar strong claims regarding the unity of self and identity. Pannenberg's theory of identity formation, I argue, conflates different understandings of self and personal unity. Hence, although he wishes first and foremost to explain the individual's sense of enduring identity and the unity of the sense of self at any given moment, he also indirectly supports the idea that the self is representationally unified at any given moment and over time. This leads to a damaging inflexibility in his account of the sense of self, in which all forms of self-multiplicity are implicitly pathologised through their identification with sinfulness. McFadyen's theory of the individual in social relationships is subject to many of the same criticisms as Pannenberg's theory of identity formation. Although McFadyen employs a radically different concept of self and identity to Pannenberg, he also elaborates a theory of personhood that is too inflexible (by the general standards of contemporary psychology) to account for the radical changes to the sources of identity that characterise the postmodern era. Once again, I argue, this is due to a failure to recognise that self-unity and multiplicity can be described in a variety of different ways and are not necessarily incompatible concepts. Both McFadyen's and Pannenberg's theories of identity formation bring them within the purview of narrative psychology. I propose that a closer engagement with the concept of narrative identity might lead to the resolution of many of the difficulties that I identify with their theories.

In this final chapter, I summarise my conclusions regarding the status of self-multiplicity in the contemporary dialogue between psychology and theology. To date the dialogue has yielded some extremely beneficial insights, but it currently struggles to transcend its overriding concern with debunking modern individualism and the associated discourses of isolation, fragmentation and self-alienation. A greater specificity and systematicity is called for if it is to remain a genuine dialogue, and a more explicit engagement with narrative approaches to personhood is strongly endorsed.

Although this book is primarily concerned with debates about self-multiplicity and unity, it also engages with fundamental questions about the relationship between theological and secular scientific accounts of personhood. It seeks to reposition interdisciplinary work in this area in relation to wider cultural and philosophical issues, particularly those arising from the postmodern disintegration of the autonomous individual. Such a theoretically pluralistic approach to the study of the self hopefully makes a significant contribution to theology's ongoing dialogue with the human sciences. Despite the popular opinion that theological anthropology and the human sciences still have much to say to each other on the

subject of the self, the continued disregard for a significant body of psychological and social theory risks compromising the broader dialogue. The implications of the current imbalance extend far beyond the realm of abstract psychological concepts, and affect theological anthropology's ability adequately to address the dramatic sociocultural changes of the last 50 years. If it is to remain in touch with contemporary theorising, theological anthropology cannot afford to ignore these issues. Above all else, this book seeks to address and rectify this oversight.

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The Crisis of Identity: Diagnosing and Healing the Fragmented Self

Modern man is afflicted with a permanent identity crisis, a condition conducive to considerable nervousness.

(Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, 1981)

People are not what they used to be. In the existentially challenging narratives of the postmodern novel, the mechanistic computational metaphors of cognitive psychology and the post-traditional discourses of social theory, the concept of individual personhood has been gradually dismantled. There is no shortage of literature to remind us how profoundly the social and intellectual climate has changed, and how, as modernity meanders towards its apogee, the notion of the unified inner self that preoccupied generations of distinguished thinkers, has receded in significance. But not everyone is prepared to consign it to history just yet. Christian theology seems determined to rehabilitate it, and remains reluctant to embrace the plural self of the contemporary human sciences. That is not to say that personhood's modern transformation has gone unnoticed by Christian theologians, but most see it more as an aberration than an adaptation. As a result, a number of recent works have taken up the challenge of combating the rising tide of self-fragmentation and reinvigorating core Christian beliefs about the unity of individual personhood in relation to God.

Most of the recent theological anthropology to have addressed the perceived crisis of personhood in the modern world has tried to respond to three main sorts of threat. The first of these stems from modern essentialism's challenge to personal identity, and the second stems from postmodern relativism. Generally speaking, neither position is acceptable to contemporary theology, since the former abstracts the individual from the relationality and community that is so central to the Christian tradition, and the latter destabilises personal identity and problematises personal particularity. The third sort of threat issues from contemporary social theory's account of the progressive fragmentation of culture and society. According to this thesis, the fragmentation of the traditional systems of meaning and value, which were the bedrock of personal identity in days gone by, has compromised the individual's capacity to develop the type of self that is characteristic of authentic unified personhood as Christian theology typically understands it. People have been instrumentalised, objectified, and consequently distorted both by social institutions and by each other. They are isolated and fragmented. The enduring hope is that Christian theology can heal society's affliction and restabilise individual identity

by grounding individual being in Christian community and re-establishing the unity of personhood that modernity eulogised but utterly failed to secure.¹

In this first chapter I will situate the notion of self-fragmentation in recent theological discussions of individual personhood, and explain both the role that the secular human sciences have already played in raising theological concerns, and the role that they might yet play in its satisfactory resolution. Despite a flourishing dialogue between the human sciences and theology in other areas, there is a marked disparity between theological and secular thought, especially secular psychological thought, as regards the plural self. In the latter part of this chapter I hope to demonstrate why the absence of constructive dialogue here is so problematic. My initial aim, however, is to untie the concept of self-fragmentation from any single specific philosophical or sociological development. It is a complex multifaceted idea that impinges upon a variety of different philosophical, sociocultural and scientific discourses. The significance of this point is often overlooked by contemporary theology. Given the fundamental importance of the concept of self-unity both to the traditional Christian doctrines of human nature, sin and *imago Dei* and to contemporary theological accounts of the relationality of personhood, such an oversight is both surprising and potentially damaging. Indeed, it might be argued that questions surrounding the unity of self underlie each of the three sorts of threat mentioned above.

Self-Fragmentation in Modernity

The origins of the modern concept of self are elusive. Some have argued that a familiar concept of self can be discerned by the year 1200, although the Renaissance/Reformation period, both the early and late eighteenth century, and the late Enlightenment/early Romantic periods have also been candidates at one time or another.² Others are prepared to credit a single author with its creation, naming Descartes' *Cogito* argument of *The Meditations* as its definitive place of origin. Since self is a label that has been applied to so many things, it is likely that aspects of the concept of self arose in each of these eras:

[I]t is apparent from voluminous evidence that the 'self' described is different for each era and also fundamentally unlike the 'self' of people in the modern age of 'existentialism' and self-conscious concern with 'identity'. A progression from something closer to a group identity (in very early times) to an emergence of 'individualism' (at some point ranging from the later Middle Ages through the Renaissance to Romanticism, depending on whom one reads) to a relatively intense concern with 'self' (in the contemporary era) can be discerned.³

1 For example, see Gunton 1991b, 1993; Thiselton 1995; White 1997; Grenz 2001.

2 See, for example, Logan 1987

3 Ibid., p.15.

Logan argues persuasively that the predominant usage of the word ‘self’ in the early Middle Ages is to refer to the non-self-conscious sense of simply being distinct from others, denoted by the personal pronoun ‘I’.⁴ In other words, to make a statement of personal distinctness, not to reflect upon the inner-self, which is denoted by the pronoun ‘me’. It is generally agreed that the self as an object of introspection, or as subject, had fully emerged by the close of the eighteenth century.⁵

Whatever its genealogy, we can be certain that its development within the shifting currents of modernity was never straightforward. The profound philosophical, scientific, social and cultural transformations that signified modernity’s ascendancy have been credited with the gradual destabilisation and fragmentation of the self for a long time, though it is still uncertain whether reports of its final demise have been exaggerated.⁶ Charles Taylor’s seminal work *Sources of the Self* (1992) remains amongst the most elaborate of all philosophical attempts to situate the decline of unified selfhood within the broader context of the modern identity’s conceptual history. According to Taylor’s thesis the decentring of the self that emerged from the Enlightenment began once philosophy adopted a ‘stance of radical reflexivity’ – what he refers to as the ‘inward turn’. This stance, he claims, is definitive of the modern period, and the changes in the moral landscape that this development engendered began the confusion that has plagued the concept of self ever since.⁷ The difficulties intensified in late modernity, when the process of moral evaluation that was traditionally the epicentre of identity became simply a matter of introspection, and the ‘inner’ sources of the self prevailed over the ‘outer’ naturalised or theistic sources. Taylor observes:

Unlike previous conceptions of moral sources in nature and God, these modern views give a crucial place to our own inner powers of constructing or transfiguring or interpreting the world, as essential to the efficacy of the eternal sources. Our powers must be deployed if these are to empower us. And in this sense the moral sources have been at least partly internalized.⁸

4 Ibid., p.16.

5 Also see Lyons 1978; Pannenberg 1990; Taylor 1992.

6 Unsurprisingly, there is still a certain amount of disagreement over exactly when these processes began. See Hyman 2001, pp.33–8, for an extended discussion of this point.

7 Taylor’s complex analysis of the evolution of the self through art, literature and philosophy is committed to the principle that an intensification of our sense of inwardness and depth has been, ‘building up through the whole modern period’ (Taylor 1992, p.480). However, the modern conception of inwardness, Taylor, Gunton and others agree, was chiefly inspired by the works of St Augustine (see Gunton 1993, p.203n; Cary 2000). The radicalisation of this inward turn is correlated with the reinterpretation of Enlightenment and Romantic views of nature and reason, and the abandonment of traditional theistic moral sources.

8 Taylor 1992, p.455.

According to Taylor, neither the Cartesian rational self that controlled and unified experience, nor the expressive self of the Romantic period that sought to harmonise inner impulses with the external natural world, were able to withstand the exacerbation of the inward turn.⁹ Both these concepts of self depended upon a notion of unity that could not survive modernity's rediscovery of the infinite variety of experience. The ebb and flow of sensation moment by moment seemed ready to replace the idea of the inner self that held subjectivity together. Both Romantic and expressive concepts were strongly challenged by the idea that individuals can, as Taylor puts it, 'step outside the circle of the single, unitary identity, and ... open ourselves to the flux which moves beyond the scope of control or integration'.¹⁰ Modernity, however, has been unable fully to abandon its focus upon interiority and the continuing tension has now all but eroded traditional notions of identity: 'The modernist multileveled consciousness is thus frequently "decentred": aware of living on a transpersonal rhythm, which is mutually irreducible in relation to the personal. But for all that it remains inward; and is the first only through being the second. The two features are inseparable.'¹¹ Ultimately, Taylor argues, modernity must inevitably lead to the conclusion that people live 'on a duality or plurality of levels, not totally compatible, but which can't be reduced to unity'.¹²

Taylor has sometimes drawn sharp criticism for his restrictively narrow focus upon the contemporary self's origins in modernity's celebration of inwardness and the transformation of moral sources, but many of the themes he identifies with respect to the destabilisation of the unified self continue to resonate throughout contemporary thought.¹³ Recent commentators, including Jerrold Seigel in his comprehensive historical work *The Idea of the Self*, resist the temptation to articulate the intellectual history of the modern self in terms of a single metanarrative.¹⁴ He argues:

Those who speak about a 'modern self' in the singular have often claimed too much for it, or blamed too much on it. Instead we should recognize a range of different solutions to the modern problematic of the self, seeking to grasp them in light of the particular purposes they have been created to serve, and to put them into an intelligible

9 Ibid., p.462. As Taylor notes, this idea had already been explored by Nietzsche, but was revived and reinvigorated by the interest in the liberation of formless and disorderly experience that characterises the later stages of modernity.

10 Ibid.

11 Taylor 1992, p.481. Even in the classic modern social psychological works, the exterior world always plays a secondary role to the primary internal mechanisms. Referring to G.H. Mead, as the sociologist Robert Dunn notes, 'the shift to a mediatory outside social world became only the shaping context for what continued to be internal processes of self-formation, which Mead saw as the governing mechanisms of behaviour' (Dunn 1998, p.57).

12 Taylor 1992, p.480.

13 See, for example, Grenz 2001; Seigel 2005.

14 Seigel 2005.

relation with each other ... [it] obscures the variety of modern thinking on the topic, the motivations that have powered it, and often the real interest that contrasting meditations still retain.¹⁵

This principle is tremendously significant for understanding the problem of self-fragmentation. No single metanarrative could adequately capture the enormous multiplicity of theories of self, unified or fragmented, some of which compete with one another and some of which are complementary, but each of which contributes to our modern self-understanding. The notion of the fragmented self clearly has a complex history in which a range of different disciplines have played important roles. The historical and contemporary multi-strandedness of this concept has recently become an issue in some sociological circles where the idea that modernity's evolution can be characterised in terms of universal objectives or a unified outlook continues to recede.¹⁶ Here, at least, a conceptual re-evaluation of self-fragmentation has already begun. The sociologist of religion Linda Woodhead's preference, for example, is to cast the fragmentation thesis in such a way that is sceptical of catch-all generalisations and to expose subtler ways of understanding the changes that confronted society as early-modernity gave way to late-modernity and to postmodernity.¹⁷

The term 'fragmentation thesis' is uniquely Woodhead's, and is intended, it seems, to draw parallels with the much maligned 'secularisation thesis'. Just as certain explanations of religion's alleged failing significance in the modern world have been criticised for their simplicity and generality, she castigates the idea that a simple process, reflecting a single thread of cultural and philosophical development, underlies the break-up of the unified self. Her preference is for 'a more nuanced understanding of modernity, an understanding which recognises that modernity is not one thing and attempts to make sense of its diversity through a schematisation of its main cultural trajectories, currents or strands.'¹⁸ Hence, Woodhead presents a historical model based upon the sociological work of Tipton, Bellah and Heelas that suggests we understand the fragmenting pressures of modernity in the context of four main philosophical strands of selfhood: the authoritative, the liberal humanistic, the expressive, and the utilitarian. She argues that when the route to modern selfhood is understood in these terms, 'the cause of the fragmentation of the modern self is seen to lie in the large number of cultural possibilities which compete for the self in the contemporary context.'¹⁹

Differences between these strands of selfhood often manifest themselves as paradoxes. Kellner notes, for example, that identity is both self-reflexive and other-related, fluid and socially dependent, and yet also personal and seemingly

15 Ibid., pp.43–4.

16 See Dunn 1998, p.54.

17 Woodhead 1999, pp.56–7.

18 Ibid., p.57.

19 Ibid., p.66.

substantial. It is constantly novel, and yet capable of solidifying to the point of tedium.²⁰ Paradoxes such as these ensure that the inner tension experienced by modern individuals in their striving to know themselves is reflected both within and between different accounts of identity.²¹ In other words, the notion of identity is both a personal existential and a theoretical problem. In Taylor's, Woodhead's and Hall's analyses, these paradoxes are accommodated, if not resolved, by a model that recognises different strands of selfhood and different concepts of identity.²² Woodhead herself distinguishes between the bestowed self of the authoritative strand that is formed through relationships with a 'higher power' (be that family, friends or God), the rational self of the liberal humanist strand that is defined by its possession of a rational nature, and the boundless self of the expressive strand that strives to incorporate nature and God within itself. She argues that these strands of selfhood co-developed throughout the modern period, and argues that the fragmentation thesis is best understood as a conflict between them. Thus, it is reduced to a 'confusion generated by the plural modes of selfhood available to modern men and women'.²³

Woodhead is surely right to emphasise the plurality of competing strands of selfhood, and such a position does indeed detach the fragmentation thesis from the unilinear historical perspective upon which some of its less convincing formulations depend. However, by limiting her understanding of self-fragmentation to a confusion over 'modes of selfhood' she also constrains the explanatory power of her pluralistic analysis and even obscures those varieties of self-fragmentation that have been explored in other disciplinary contexts (for example, in contemporary psychology). Her genuinely complex multilinear account is definitely a convincing piece of social theory, but there is also a wider landscape that still needs to be explored. In this, Woodhead's analysis is certainly a useful tool, but it does not replace the need for more concrete discussions of fragmenting social forces, or an examination of those individual experiences of self-disunity that are not the result of being torn between competing ideologies. Self-fragmentation ought not to be understood exclusively in terms of 'identity crises'. Indeed, the notion that there are multiple equally penetrating discourses of self, should lead inexorably to the conclusion that there must be many different ways of depicting the fragmented or plural self.

20 Kellner 1992 p.142.

21 Ibid.

22 Hall offers a tripartite schematisation of the development of fragmented identity, which distinguishes between the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject (Hall 1992, pp.275–7).

23 Woodhead 1999, p.58.

Self-Fragmentation After Modernity

As critiques of early modernity's impoverished understanding of the individual have gathered momentum, more socially inclusive notions of the self and the construction of identity have emerged.²⁴ Scepticism about self-unity has increased accordingly as the number of theories of self and identity continues to increase and the idea that the self both endures through time and yet constantly incorporates new experiences into itself continues to vex psychologists, philosophers and social theorists. Even if recent theoretical contributions are simply the latest outworkings of problems that can be traced back over several hundred years, the demise of the unitary self seemed to accelerate towards the end of the twentieth century.²⁵ The years since the posthumous publication of George Herbert Mead's enormously influential writings *Mind, Self and Society* witnessed the radicalisation of the fluidity of the relationships between self, culture and society, but however much these intellectual developments encouraged the destabilisation of identity, they were only the precursor to a much more pernicious threat.²⁶ Now, postmodernism offers a new and potentially devastating epistemological and ontological challenge through its 'foregrounding of questions as to how different realities may coexist, collide, and interpenetrate'.²⁷

Postmodernism, of course, is itself very difficult to define, but if it has a foundational premise, it is Jean-François Lyotard's infamous 'incredulity towards metanarratives' – his rejection of the idea that all forms of knowledge might be systematically unified.²⁸ Metanarratives, according to Lyotard's classic formulation, are overarching schematisations of reality that control and direct smaller 'minor' narratives.²⁹ With the passing of modernity, he wrote, 'The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.'³⁰ Now, according to the philosopher Paul Cilliers, '[We] have to cope with a multiplicity of discourses, many different language games – all of which are determined locally, not legitimated externally. Different institutions and different contexts produce different narratives, which are not reducible to each other.'³¹ This is perhaps the most obvious distinguishing feature of the postmodern philosophical discourse of

24 For example, see Giddens 1991, 1994. Also see Bauman 2001.

25 See Taylor 1992; Grenz 2001; Seigel 2005.

26 Mead 1934.

27 Harvey 1989, p.40. Hence, Harvey notes, the postmodern novel is characterised by a shift from 'an epistemological to an ontological dominant' – from systematising a complex yet singular reality to understanding a multiplicity of life-worlds (p.41).

28 Lyotard 1984, p.xxiv.

29 Though, as Hyman observes, even Lyotard himself recognised that the rejection of all metanarratives is itself a metanarrative of sorts (Hyman 2001, p.25).

30 Lyotard 1984, p.37.

31 Cilliers 1998, p.114.

self and identity – its movement away from modernity's commitment to objective scientific methodology as a means of capturing an essential core to selfhood, and towards the notion of narrative-specific knowledge.

From this uncompromisingly sceptical perspective, even time seems less continuous, somehow less linear, than it appeared to the moderns and premoderns. History itself loses its coherence and everything is subject to a relentless process of revision and redefinition.³² At its most extreme, postmodernism 'swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is'.³³ Here, the subject is no longer strictly an individual but rather a dynamic construction of discursive processes.³⁴ Nothing holds experience together at all. Kenneth Gergen is typical of the sort of postmodern theorist who believes we must now come to terms with a world where the stability of identity has indeed been utterly eroded, and replaced by the existentially unsettling rhetoric of relativism. Gergen proclaims the revolutionary significance of the postmodern movement for the understanding of contemporary selfhood, though he suggests that it is yet to be realised in its entirety. Though this sort of understanding places him in illustrious company, it is amongst the more extreme depictions of the postmodern condition, and others would not wish to make the break from the modern so starkly.³⁵ He writes:

As we enter the postmodern era, all previous beliefs about the self are placed in jeopardy, and with them the patterns of action they sustain. Postmodernism does not bring with it a new vocabulary for understanding ourselves, new traits or characteristics to be discovered or explored. Its impact is more apocalyptic than that: the very concept of personal essences is thrown into doubt ... The postmodern condition more generally is marked by a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality – to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and the good ... Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in

32 For discussions of changing concepts of time in postmodern thought, see Harvey 1989; Taylor 1992; Bauman 1992, 2001; Hall 1992.

33 Harvey 1989, p.41.

34 Dunn 2000, p.114.

35 Whether postmodernity represents a genuine break from modernity or is merely an intensification of modernity continues to be fiercely debated. Although postmodern concepts of (non-) identity depend for their own self-definition upon the negation of their modernist counterparts, and should not, therefore, necessarily be considered in isolation from them, postmodernity's more extreme proponents are at pains to emphasise a discontinuity with modern thought. Others prefer to interpret postmodernity as an intensification of modernity. Hyman concludes that postmodernity does not react against modernity or replace it, but rather exposes its limitations. He writes, 'Thus, it may be said that the postmodern is not something that comes after the writing of modernity but is rather always already hiding in between its lines' (Hyman 2001, p.12). For well-articulated discussions of the possible continuities and discontinuities between modern and postmodern conceptions of identity, see Harvey 1989; Kellner 1992; Hall 1992; Dunn 1998. For a more general discussion of the relationship between modernity and postmodernity see Bauman 1992, 2001; Dunn 1998; Heelas 1998; Stehr 2001; Hyman 2001.

a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold.³⁶

Its project is certainly incomplete, but postmodernism has at least begun the process of dissolving personhood into a leaderless collection of socially derived roles. It has superseded modernity's focus upon personal autonomy by emphasising the minor, episodic narratives of socially constructed artificial realities, theories of negotiated meanings, and the ubiquitous 'other'.³⁷ Its practical impact in this area has been profound. That is clearly illustrated by the plethora of terms now commonly in use to describe the deletion of the transcendental subject from philosophical enquiry. For this, Derridean deconstructionism and the philosophical and sociological works of the French post-structuralists including Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard as well as Lyotard are all held equally culpable.³⁸ Contemporary crises of identity are readily explained away by such a philosophical turn, since the notion of identity itself can be redescribed within postmodernism as a simple artefact of modernity – the phlogiston of social theory.³⁹ Its breakdown is not really a problem because there never was such a thing in the first place. In this light Woodhead's fragmentation thesis itself would become a work of historical fiction because there never were any unitary selves to be fragmented and no identities to be gradually destabilised over time.

In many ways, then, unbridled multiplicity is a defining characteristic of postmodern theory. But although this radicalisation of multiplicity is distinctively postmodern, there is no reason to believe that self-fragmentation *per se* is exclusively

36 Gergen 1991, p.7.

37 Baudrillard coined the term 'hyperreality' to describe the kind of reality that we are forced to accept once we accept that the objective realities of modernity are but products of their own histories of portrayal (see Baudrillard 1988).

38 As the eminent phenomenologist and social philosopher Calvin Schrag observes, 'This motif has taken on a variety of formulations, to wit the "death of man", the "death of the author", the "deconstruction of the subject", the "displacement of the ego", the "dissolution of self-identity", and at times a combination of all the above ... This missive pertaining to the demise of man as a philosophically useful concept is to be understood according to Foucault, as the proper sequel to Friedrich Nietzsche's earlier proclamation of the death of God' (Schrag 1997, p.2). Foucault actually wrote, 'Rather than the death of God – or rather in the wake of that death and in profound correlation with it – what Nietzsche's thought heralds is the end of his murderer; it is the explosion of man's face in laughter and the return of masks' (Foucault 1970, pp.385–6).

39 Phlogiston is a substance that was invented to fill an explanatory void. As is well known, the seventeenth-century physician J.J. Becher proposed that combustion could be explained by an odourless, weightless, tasteless and colourless substance that he termed 'phlogiston', which was liberated during combustion. The theory was widely accepted for almost a century until phlogiston theory was deposed by current theories of combustion.

a postmodern concept or phenomenon.⁴⁰ As sociologists like Taylor, Woodhead, Hall, and the social and political philosopher Peter Dews all assert, the generic postmodern conception of self-fragmentation is but one way of encapsulating a problem that has been exposed in various different forms throughout the whole modern period.⁴¹ Many of these are grounded not in intellectual but in sociocultural historical developments. Unfortunately, this plurality of ways to understand the causes and possible manifestations of self-fragmentation is often disregarded.

As the sociologist Joseph Davis observes, 'A disjunction has opened between discursive and social practices, with identity instability and fragmentation read not through structural or institutional changes but through the instabilities and fragmented nature of language and interpretation.'⁴² Postmodernism's 'epistemological preoccupations' tend to detach concepts of identity from the social processes in which they are embedded, and downplay the relevance of empirical observation and evaluation in favour of discourse. Woodhead's analysis, for example, although it is appropriately pluralistic, appears artificially to separate the philosophical positions that underpin notions of self-fragmentation from the fragmenting social forces that modernist and postmodern writers argue are rampant in contemporary times.⁴³

Too often, as Davis argues, 'Discourse is prioritized over the dynamics of social relations; text and culture are prioritized over lived cultural conditions and sociohistorical context.'⁴⁴ There is now a groundswell of belief in the urgent need to expand the study of identity beyond the purely philosophical issues that have come to dominate the field in recent years.⁴⁵ Whereas accounts of self-fragmentation cannot wholly be determined by assessments of our current cultural

40 Actually, it would be very un-postmodern to tie self-fragmentation exclusively to the postmodern period, since to do so would entail a familiar postmodern paradox: although postmodernity is opposed to the idea that history has a recognisable shape or storyline, its very self-definition implies that it comes after modernity. Thus, it 'confers a degree of unity and coherence upon social evolution – yet unity, coherence, and evolution are just the sort of values postmodernism wants to abandon' (McClennan 1992, p.329).

41 Dews 1986; Hall 1992; Taylor 1992; Woodhead 1999.

42 Davis 2000a, p.3.

43 Woodhead justifies her approach by suggesting that the existence of such powerful fragmenting pressures is more often than not based upon 'anecdotal and autobiographical' evidence (Woodhead 1999, p.55).

44 Davis 2000a, p.6. It is the significance of the specific character of concrete relations that develop within particular discourses that Davis wants to bring into clearer focus. He does not want to downplay the importance of philosophical discourse per se. Drawing on the work of Craig Calhoun, Davis writes, 'Identity politics, with its prioritizing of categorical identities ... allows a kind of abstraction ... from the concrete interactions and social relationships within which identities are constantly renegotiated.' As a result, 'complex notions of persons or networks of concrete social relations' are downplayed and the 'capacity for an internal dialogicality' is effectively denied' (ibid.).

45 For example, also see Kellner 1992; McClennan 1992; Dunn 1998.

condition any more than they can be determined through discourse alone, they might still usefully be constrained by a socioculturally grounded appraisal. Robert Dunn, an American sociologist who has charted the receding importance of social bonds in the formation of identity, writes:

Despite an abundance of concern about identity ... hardly any serious analytical attention has been given to the underlying social and historical causes of the identity crises of our time, both collective and personal, or the broader structural conditions of social change behind these crises. The relative absence of such perspectives in recent theoretical discussions is in part a manifestation of the pervasive influence of postmodern and poststructuralist discourses in academic theory.⁴⁶

Through the efforts of theorists such as Dunn and Davis, recent social theory is beginning to address these shortcomings.

We must conclude that the idea of self-fragmentation is not the simple product either of any single epistemological or metaphysical position, or any single line of historical and cultural development. The approach to the unity and fragmentation of self that will be advanced in this book depends upon the principle that they can be conceptualised in many different ways, and as the result of many different processes, both in theological and human scientific contexts. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I will examine some compelling sociological and psychological evidence that broadly supports some abstract philosophical assessments of the modern self's loss of unity, but it must be remembered that these are distinct, if not mutually exclusive, forms of analysis.⁴⁷ I do not wish to drive a wedge too firmly between them or absolutely to unify them. Arguably, it is attempts to prioritise singular dimensions of concepts of self and identity over all others that are responsible for much of the confusion that currently pervades the field. Although I strongly support Dunn's and Davis's ambitions of broadening the scope of enquiry into more concrete forms of social analysis, therefore, I wish primarily to clarify the variety of specific ways in which self-fragmentation might be understood and explore the possible relationships between them. It is, after all, the absence of conceptual specificity that I believe is so damaging to recent theological anthropological approaches of the self. Despite the recent surge of interest in interdisciplinarity and dialogue, theological anthropology has not accorded recent developments in the human sciences, especially those of empirical and theoretical psychology, the attention they deserve. The question that we must begin to tackle is: why such a prominent idea has been at best ignored, and at worst summarily dismissed, by

46 Dunn 1998, pp.17–18.

47 The necessary separation of the human sciences and epistemology is a well-rehearsed theme that I will not elaborate upon here, suffice to say that despite the blurring of the boundary between the two in recent years, they have not yet merged into one discipline (see Hekman 1990; Lyon 1994; Lee and Newby 1995).

those who, among other things, are so keen to extol the relevance of theological visions of personhood to a secularising world?

Relational Being and the Crisis of Identity

Since theological anthropologists mostly take the conceptual unity of self and personhood for granted, their opposition to the existential problem of self-fragmentation and the related theoretical notion of the plural self are rarely made explicit. The reasons for this aversion must be teased out from an analysis of other more prevalent disputes upon which these issues indirectly impinge. One of these in particular has commanded considerable attention in recent years – correcting the identification of self with a simple unchanging asocial essence. Since the earliest days of philosophy's interest in the relationality of personhood, the modern individual's search for identity in and between the various demands of particular social roles has always also been a struggle to unify a self riven by internal conflict.⁴⁸ It is no surprise, then, that the area of recent theological anthropology in which issues relating to self-unity and fragmentation have been most prominent is the running debate over the social constitution of the self and the theoretical relationship between individuals and their social world – between the one and the many. The very fact that they can be discerned in such a significant contemporary theological debate hints at the theoretical importance of a critical dialogue with contemporary secular thought.

In his book *God and the Self*, the philosopher Wayne Proudfoot develops a useful tripartite classification of the variety of theoretical unities of personhood that theologians have turned their attentions to over the years.⁴⁹ He distinguishes between the 'monistic', the 'individualistic' and the 'social' conceptions. The monistic conception, he argues, denies the finite person any integrity of its own. Personal significance is gained only from being part of a whole, which is the ultimate unity. The concept of the individual entity, here, is characterised by estrangement, which can only be overcome at the end of life, that is to say, beyond 'the structures of finitude'.⁵⁰ The individualistic conception asserts that the individual finite substance has its own integrity, is unified in itself, and is a basic constituent of reality. Private, reflexive knowledge of self is considered primary and freedom and autonomy are emphasised in the goal of life, which is the self-actualisation of individual perfection. By contrast, the social conception assumes that all knowledge of self and others is socially and culturally mediated over time, which is an essential constituent of the metaphysical system. Individuals develop through self-differentiation from others and situating themselves in the social and natural world. Here, the notion of community is fundamental. People are internally

48 See Dunn 1998; Seigel 2005.

49 Proudfoot 1976.

50 Ibid., p.24.

unified, but they acquire this unity as part of a community: 'A person is a system of social relations as well as an individual entity.'⁵¹ Clearly, it is variations on this theme that dominate contemporary theological thought. That is not to say it is a new idea. As Proudfoot observes, what might broadly be termed a social conception of reality can be observed in early nineteenth-century thought, and its proliferation has accompanied the ascension of the social sciences.⁵²

In the twentieth century, Karl Barth, Martin Buber, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, to name but a few, have made social accounts of personhood central themes of their anthropologies. The principle that individual persons are formed in community has become a basic presupposition of most contemporary Christian theological approaches to the self and identity.⁵³ In Woodhead's analysis, framing the self in terms of this meta-principle – as bestowed or received in some sense – distinguishes this strand of selfhood conceptually from the rational self of the Enlightenment, the boundless self of the 'expressive revolution', and the effective self of utilitarian individualism. According to this conception, true selfhood 'is not the natural inheritance or achievement of an individual and it demands an attitude not just of passive obedience, but of receptiveness, openness, gratitude and (possibly) faith'.⁵⁴ Woodhead's articulation of this idea is broad and not intended to signify a homogenous body of theories. It is better understood as referring to a set of common assumptions that underlie a general way of theorising about the self.

Inevitably, what differences there are between approaches to personal relationality extend across the whole spectrum of theological theories of identity, ranging from debates over basic epistemological and metaphysical premises to critiques of contemporary identity politics. Different ideas of relationality inevitably entail different approaches to the unity and disunity of the self. Certainly, some postmodern theological critiques of identity have emerged, such as those from the radical orthodoxy movement, which emphasise fragmentation and the flux of relationality to the complete exclusion of traditional concepts of enduring and unified selves and identities.⁵⁵ At the other extreme are those that still cling to the

51 Ibid., p.21.

52 Ibid., p.26.

53 See Shults 2003. Although, as Schwöbel acknowledges, some strands of revived Cartesian dualism and extreme reductive materialism still reject this possibility (Schwöbel 1991a). There are, for example, a few theologians who, by reviving forms of substance dualism grounded in biblically derived ideas of an eternal disembodied soul, seek to discredit social constructionist models of identity (See Duvall 1998; Moreland 1998).

54 Woodhead 1999, p.59.

55 Radical orthodoxy, the postmodern theological movement spearheaded by John Milbank, presents one way of resolving contemporary theology's problem with respect to ideas of self-fragmentation. The radical orthodox position is accepting of the basic relationality of persons and dismissive of the idea of the substantial enduring self. Certainly, radical orthodoxy has attracted a great deal of attention over the last ten years, and has engaged thoroughly with the human sciences. However, radical orthodoxy's general

idea of a substantial and essential unified self, and those, such as the Anglican theologian Harriet Harris, who are adamant that ‘Recognition that we develop as selves and that we gain self-awareness through relations does not justify either ontological or normative claims that personhood is relational.’⁵⁶ Yet there are still many who wish to secure both the unity of the self and its relational basis, and who therefore strongly oppose both the relativism and fragmentation inherent to postmodernism as well as the essentialism of modernity. Although theological anthropology’s reasoning about personhood usually tends towards the abstract and philosophical, the ethical undertones of its concern with interpersonal relationality have encouraged hypotheses about the nature of the modern social world to be presented alongside more familiar ontological claims.

Colin Gunton, whose writing exemplifies theological anthropology’s recent embrace of the philosophical turn to relationality, undertakes just such a social analysis. Although his work, and the work of his close theoretical ally John Zizioulas, is philosophically and theologically complex, those ideas that are relevant to the main themes of this book can be concisely summarised.⁵⁷ Gunton’s evaluation of his own anthropological project incorporates a typical assessment of the importance of a reinvigorated Trinitarian theology.⁵⁸ Central dimensions of ancient and modern thought, he argues, have failed adequately to conceive of, or

approach to the human sciences is to criticise them as anti-theological and nihilistic. Since I am primarily concerned in this book with the constructive engagement of theology and the secular human sciences, and radical orthodoxy makes no attempt to participate in this sort of dialogue, this movement will receive only scant attention here. Hyman offers an engaging evaluation of radical orthodoxy in relation to other postmodern theologies (see Hyman 2001).

56 Harris 1998, p.233. Harris makes two main objections to defining the concept of personhood purely in terms of relationality. First, she sees potential ethical problems regarding the ontological status of persons who do not manage to sustain, or are not capable of sustaining, normal or (what might be perceived as) ideal relationships. This sort of claim, I believe, is very similar to the objection I raise in later chapters regarding the propriety of defining personhood in terms of self-unity. Secondly she makes the common complaint that personal identity must be more than a fragmented series of relationally constructed social roles.

57 Gunton 1991a, 1991b, 1993; Zizioulas 1985, 1991. Gunton’s philosophical theology of personhood, especially as it is espoused in his book *The One, the Three and the Many*, is geared precisely towards the twin objectives of justifying the intrinsic relationality of the individual, and curing a contemporary social malaise (Gunton 1993).

58 Grenz insists that this is a vital role of contemporary theological anthropology, observing that ‘The rebirth of trinitarian theology has opened the door for the doctrine of God, understood now as the delineation of the relationality of the trinitarian persons, to take its rightful role within anthropology, which role it had abdicated to the human sciences. In short, the retrieval of the doctrine of the trinity has paved the way for a fully theological anthropology’ (Grenz 2001, p.16).

practise relationality, emphasising instead only the many or the one.⁵⁹ Recognising the push of modernity towards individual disengagement from other people and the wider world, Gunton criticises the instrumental objectification that stems from the failure to understand people in essentially relational terms.⁶⁰ Disengagement, for Gunton, encourages the tendency to engage with others only as stepping stones to one's own self-realisation, and not as integral parts of one's own being. This, he presumes, has engendered alienation and social fragmentation to the extent that a conceptual revision of humanity's habitation of reality has become an urgent requirement if instrumentalism is to be left behind. Only an enriched understanding of our place in the world based upon a revised theoretical doctrine of relationality that is grounded firmly in Christian Trinitarian theology will suffice. 'Without a philosophy of engagement ...' Gunton contends, 'we are lost.'⁶¹

Clearly Gunton's ambitions are partly pragmatic, but his concrete ethical concerns are tightly bound to his understanding of the conceptual problems afflicting contemporary accounts of personhood.⁶² It is, after all, a new philosophy of engagement that he is seeking. Deeming more traditional theological accounts insufficient to heal the fragmentation that modernity inspires, he argues:

To be sure, and as a result of Augustine's trinitarian thought, there are relational elements in the concept of the person, but it is chiefly a vertical relationality. The relation to God is rightly held to be constitutive of human being, but the relation to other persons is ontologically irrelevant rather than, as it ought to be, consequent upon, albeit to that extent secondary to, the primary relation, that to God. According to this tradition of thought, I really am when I am related to God, not quite really so when I am related to other human beings and the earth.⁶³

His aim is to elevate the status of human interpersonal relationality in theological concepts of personhood, in contrast to those older concepts, which, by identifying self with mind, reason or will, left little room for the purely human sphere of relations to play a constitutive role.

More specifically, he wants to encourage an understanding of human persons as particular persons-in-relation, and this notion of particularity connects theological opposition to the idea of the fragmented or plural self to accounts of human relationality, albeit indirectly. As Michael Welker argues, 'key anthropological

59 Gunton qualifies this statement: 'By relationality I do not mean what is sometimes taught, that things can be known only in so far as they are related to us, but rather the realistic belief that particulars, of whatever kind, can be understood only in terms of their relatedness to each other and the whole' (Gunton 1993, p.37).

60 Gunton borrows this phrase from Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (Taylor 1992).

61 Gunton 1993, p.15.

62 His overall concern is 'to aid a process of healing the fragmentation which is so much a feature of our world' (Ibid., p.7).

63 Ibid., p.52.

concepts (the individual, the I, the subject) *mediate between the individual as a "unique one" and the individual as "an example or representative of the species"*.⁶⁴ The duality of meaning inherent to these terms is essential to the understanding of our common genetic and cultural heritage and establishes the parameters of the possible variability between distinct individuals. Generally speaking, of course, the human sciences explain individual differences in terms of discrete social, physiological and psychological developmental histories. This is not a trivial observation; the temporal contingency of the individual being is a principle that stands behind all theories of personal identity, irrespective of the specific framework in which the theories are based. Theologically, this is crucial. Whereas psychologists and sociologists might be interested in individual differences, Christian theologians make the much stronger point that each individual is necessarily completely unique; no two individuals ever have been or ever will be identical.⁶⁵

Existentially, we can acknowledge, as Zizioulas does, that the desire to answer the question 'who am I?' is 'a primordial cry, stemming from the fact that man is faced with a *given* world, and thus forced into self-assertion always via comparison with other beings *already* existing', and also that the 'I' itself is a 'claim of being in a unique and unrepeatable way'.⁶⁶ It is, as White says, as much an ethical as an existential claim:

Whatever basis and conception of individual uniqueness is adopted, its significance for the value of individuals is enormous. A unique centre of consciousness and subjectivity generates a sense of value in various ways ... For there is a compelling connection between the perception of uniqueness, irreplaceability and mattering ... Such notions (taken together) help convey the very meaning of human existence.⁶⁷

In the Christian tradition it is as distinct individuals, as well as a species as a whole, that human beings are compelled to respond to God's call.⁶⁸

64 Welker 2000, p.96. Original italics.

65 The Christian struggle to establish the uniqueness of individual personhood extends back at least 1400 years to Boethius. Boethius' concept of persons as individual substances of a rational nature (*Rationalis naturae individua substantia*) is usually presumed to have 'provided the impetus' for western philosophy's subsequent grounding of unique identity in the self (Grenz 2001 pp.65–7). Also see Schwöbel 1991b; Habgood 1998.

66 Zizioulas 1991, pp.34–5. Original italics.

67 White 1997, p.32.

68 Gunton's thinking has been very influential in this area, but theological anthropologies grounded in the concept of perichoresis differ over how the image of the Trinity should be conceived. Gunton discusses the image of God in the context of the relationships that exist between the three persons of the one God, whom are each, individually, also a one. Moltmann sees the image of God in the unity of human society as a whole – as one society, constituted by many individuals.

One of the many reasons why Trinitarian theology's recent revival is so attractive to theological anthropology is the neat explanation it provides of individual particularity. From this perspective, particularity is guaranteed by the unique patterns of relations that constitute the individual human. In a bold philosophical move, Gunton and Zizioulas both seek to ground relationality ontologically in a Christian theological understanding of the term 'person'. As Schwöbel argues, 'The question is not primarily how reflection on human personality can offer grounds for the affirmation of divine personality, but rather how the insights concerning the character of divine personhood can be creatively applied to elucidate the understanding of human personhood.'⁶⁹ Their renewal of a perichoretic understanding of the triune God places Gunton and Zizioulas amongst the pivotal contemporary figures of a revolution in theological anthropology. Just as the persons of the Trinity are each particular and yet revealed through their interrelations, they suggest, so are human persons. Hence, Gunton writes, 'if persons are, like the persons of the Trinity ... *hypostases*, concrete and particular, then their particularity too is central to their being.'⁷⁰ Personhood and relationality are conceived as ontologically coincident; there is no being but being-in-relation. Here, it is the relations themselves that are the constitutive, and the distinctive features of individuals.

Such an understanding of relationality, although Gunton mobilises it specifically against the unrelatedness of essentialism and the dissolution of particularity that characterises communitarianism, also guards in some respects against the fragmentation that is inherent in postmodern relativism. Individualism failed to account for personal particularity because the self was conceptualised as an unchanging essence that stood apart from the social world, and which could therefore only be understood in terms of very general characteristics; its representativeness was emphasised at the expense of its uniqueness. Gunton asks, 'If you are real and important not as you particularly are, with your own distinctive

69 Schwöbel 1991a, p.13. This is, obviously, in direct opposition to the so-called 'psychological models' of the Trinity, such as that espoused by St Augustine. For Gunton, also, such models seem to lead away from the kind of relational understanding of humanity that he is trying to foster. He writes, 'Augustine's quest for the Trinity within the soul, the inner Trinity, risks reducing the Trinity to theological irrelevance, for it becomes difficult to ask in what way the doctrine of the Trinity may in other ways throw light on the human condition' (Gunton 1991a, p.49).

70 Gunton 1993, p.196. The distinguished Scottish theologian Thomas Torrance emphasises Gunton's point about the primacy of the human-God relationship, and simultaneously qualifies the analogy between the persons of the Trinity and human persons. He writes, 'Applied to God "Person" must be understood in an utterly unique way appropriate to his eternal uncreated and creative Nature ... We must think of God, rather as "personalising Person", and of ourselves as "personalised persons", people who are personal primarily through onto-relations to him as the creative Source of our personal being, and secondarily through onto-relations to one another within the subject-subject structures of our creaturely being as they have come from him' (Torrance 2001, p.160).

strengths and weaknesses, bodily shape and genetic pattern, family history and structure, loves and sorrows, but as the bearer of some general characteristics, what makes you distinctively you becomes irrelevant.⁷¹ But particularity is also diminished if individuals are deemed to be constituted entirely by their relations at any given moment. In such a case, the person becomes an interchangeable node in a network of relations; there is nothing distinctive about any given individual in the network other than their location in that network. Defending the particularity of personhood also entails a tacit rejection of strong individualistic and postmodern relativistic critiques of personhood on the grounds that they cannot account for personal particularity in terms of the unique historical situatedness of each human being.⁷² In both cases particularity is compromised by the denial of the individual's diachronic constitution and thus its unique history of experience.⁷³ There is simply no room for a notion of self-development. This is central, for people are not just incidental to their historical situation; they are both the products of their histories and the shapers of their futures. Hence, the unity of the individual life, conceived as an enduring continuity through time, is indispensable to theological accounts of relational yet particular personhood.

So, there is one sense in which the theological struggle to defend concepts of the individual-in-relation against the dual threats of relativism and individualism can be recast in terms of the philosophical struggle to defend the conceptual unity of the individual over the lifespan.⁷⁴ Recent theology's implicit opposition to notions of self-plurality is thus partially revealed in its discourse of personal relationality, albeit in a rather ancillary manner. The contemporary problem of the disunified

71 Gunton 1993, p.46.

72 Referring to the postmodern critique of the concept of personhood, Schrag writes, 'This motif has taken on a variety of formulations, to wit the "death of man", the "death of the author", the "deconstruction of the subject", the "displacement of the ego", the "dissolution of self-identity", and at times a combination of all the above' (Schrag 1997, p.2).

73 Proudfoot is making a closely related point when he observes, 'Participation of the part in the whole and the immediate encounter between individuals are not temporal processes' (Proudfoot 1976, p.26). Both monistic and individualistic concepts of self are finally compromised by their atemporality.

74 We must recognise, however, that despite a general family resemblance underlying these sorts of relational approaches to personhood, they are by no means homogenous. Gunton, Zizioulas and Schwöbel affirm the indispensability of personal continuity indirectly through their perichoretic understanding of the triune God. Pannenberg takes a different approach by making an explanation of the apparent continuity of personhood throughout personal development a primary goal of his anthropology and seeking theological significance in the anthropological data itself (See Pannenberg 1985). Alistair McFadyen, on the other hand, establishes the importance of personal continuity in theological terms, and then goes on to describe how this might be understood psychologically (McFadyen 1990a). Despite their differences, the concept of personal continuity is essential to each and every one.

self thus appears to be of greater significance than might be expected, given its sparse coverage in the theological literature. All this is not to say, of course, that specific anthropologies do not value self-unity for other reasons as well, or even make explicit claims about self-unity conceived in an entirely different manner. Nor does this brief account explain precisely what it is about individuals that can truly be said to be continuous over the lifespan. The various possible explanations of this continuity will have very different implications both for the plausibility of the theory itself and its compatibility with recent human scientific accounts of personhood, where a degree of self-disunity is almost universally accepted. Nevertheless, a means of accounting for the continuity of the individual is a basic requirement for a theological anthropology that cares about particularity.

We have now arrived at the question at the very heart of this book. Given the apparent conflict that theories of the discontinuous fragmented self pose to a core element of Christian anthropology, are not theologians justified in clinging to concepts of self-unity, and expressing their antipathy towards the undercurrents of secular philosophy that threaten them? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the difficulty with addressing this question is that it does not have one single categorical answer. And therein lies the primary problem with this area of the recent dialogue with the human sciences. Unfortunately, theological anthropology typically either rejects or ignores the possible plurality of self in apparently blissful ignorance of the many conceptually distinct dimensions of this vastly complicated idea, some of which are wholly compatible with that understanding of self-unity that theology finds indispensable. Through neglect like this theological anthropology isolates itself from the human sciences, while simultaneously attempting to engage them in conversation for the greater good of all concerned. Far from encouraging constructive dialogue, such an attitude towards contemporary secular thought has the potential to incubate further the suspicion with which the disciplines too often regard each other. Practically speaking, the human sciences may come to resent theology's self-conferred authority to speak about the human condition and the solution to its problems, and theology's mission to evangelise the benefits of the stability and ethical coherence of the Christian way of life will be all the more difficult as a result.

Paying Attention to the Human Sciences: The Fundamentals of Dialogue

In the remainder of this chapter, my intention is to prepare the ground for an analysis of contemporary theological anthropology's unsatisfactory and rather ambiguous relationship with secular accounts of the fragmented self. To these ends, I will use an insightful and ambitious book, *Paying Attention to People*, by Vernon White, both to illustrate the major dialogical themes, and to highlight those vexatious issues that require further critical attention. White offers a clear and concise summary of a wide range of contemporary philosophical theological approaches to the inherent relationality, individuality and fundamental unity of

human persons, and articulates much of the received wisdom of the field. It is also extremely unusual in one very important respect – it tackles the problem of self-fragmentation head-on in an interdisciplinary context, rather than relegating it to a side issue in the debate over the social basis of personhood that is, nevertheless, his primary concern. Better than any other substantial theological text, then, White's book captures the essence of the dialogical themes with which I am predominantly concerned here, and though I will subsequently develop then in a different direction to White, it nevertheless provides an excellent introduction to the field. I want to focus upon two especially important areas in which White comes into contact with the human sciences. First, White appropriates a body of philosophical and sociological theory to support the notion that modernity's individualistic outlook and its concept of the self-creating asocial person is the ultimate cause of self-fragmentation. Secondly, assuming self-fragmentation to be a pathology of the contemporary individual, White turns to the human sciences to identify the means by which personal identity might be reunified. The ensuing discussion points to the pressing but often unrealised significance of a third, less prominent, area of dialogue, which I will return to in later chapters – the role that psychological theories of self-development have played in supporting theological accounts of relational personhood.⁷⁵

White, whose project has very clear pragmatic objectives, uses Gunton's and Zizioulas's ontological reconceptualisation of the social subject as the basis of a theological cure for the 'crisis' of identity that pervades the (post)modern world. He tackles each of the major challenges that I identified above – the fragmentation advanced by the postmodern social constructionists (though he does not name them as such), as well as that inspired by the misguided teachings of the modernists. For White, they are all aspects of the same problem, which he contextualises in a single historical narrative. According to White, the failure of extreme forms of individualism to deliver social or individual fulfilment has precipitated a flood of anti-modernist critiques in recent years and the consequent opaqueness and destabilising rhetoric has led to even deeper 'pangs of personal anxiety about our existence'.⁷⁶

He argues that the need to justify morality in the face of the decline of traditional forms of behaviour and social practice, further proliferated the ontological ideas of individual autonomy that were already present in ancient philosophy. The subsequent rise of the idea of the autonomous self in the absence of shared systems of meaning has led to the corruption of core moral ideas of individualism, which, although they have the capacity to be 'powerful ingredients in a positive moral and social vision', can also be 'catalysts to fragmentation'.⁷⁷ Thus, in a world where the stable traditions of a bygone society have been displaced by a profusion of

75 More frequently, however, the appeal to psychological theories, particularly theories of self-development, is merely implicit.

76 White 1997, p.6.

77 Ibid., p.55.

disparate subcultures, and common moral systems founded on a stable Christian concept of the individual have been corrupted, people find it more difficult to maintain a coherent and consistent sense of self. White elaborates:

If indeed our individualism has driven us into fragmentation and isolation, if we are therefore suffering metaphysical unease about our very identity; if we have been forced to become fractured people flailing around desperately for new horizons of meaning and relation; then these profound conceptual and ontological confusions will also have made us psychologically and socially unstable.⁷⁸

Underlying White's thesis, it is clear, is the unspoken belief that the inviolable ontological unity of each individual person (the subject of his philosophical theological discourse) does not preclude the possibility that people can experience themselves as disunified (the subject of his human-scientific analysis of individualism). Following Gunton and Zizioulas, he grounds individual being in the God-humanity relationship, but also suggests that senses of self and identity can become distorted as a result of sociocultural machinations. Given that White's main interest is in applying the insights of philosophical theology to a practical sociocultural/psychological dilemma, the importance of encouraging a balanced dialogue between his theological and human-scientific analyses of personhood is clear. The argument that I will begin to develop here, is that this dialogue can be significantly enhanced by the examination of theories of self and identity that fall outside the scope of White's thesis.

His reasons for attempting to ground personhood in a Christian ontology are straightforward. He wants to situate his belief that 'The originality and uniqueness of each individual is a presupposition of Christian belief in our createdness' within a 'coherent tradition of wider beliefs which can still command respect, motivate allegiance and engage positively with our present state.'⁷⁹ Echoing Gunton again, he argues that an ontology of relationality grounded in theology provides support not just for the unity of personhood, but also, derivatively, for the values and meaning to life that so many observe, but which few attempt to defend.⁸⁰ He asserts:

78 Ibid., p.57. This comment seems explicitly aimed at secular critiques of identity, but it also captures his attitude towards the sort of postmodern theology that is characteristic of John Milbank and radical orthodoxy. His relatively brief engagement with postmodernism leads to the charge that postmodernists 'often simply side-step ...' the question of ontology and thus, for White must fail to address personhood in its individual dimension.

79 Ibid., pp.87–8.

80 It is clearly a central aspect of White's thesis (and for those that agree with him) that *only* the specific kind of Christian theological ontological framework that he endorses is capable of meeting the challenges of securing the enduring substantive particularity of persons-in-relation.

Without any explicit appeal to theology ... the sort of ontological stability which could be construed for individual persons seems strictly limited ... [A] firm, realist, theological foundation secures the identity of persons in the most radical way conceivable. For if *God* is the inescapable ground of all being, and if God-given personhood is the irreducible and unique aspect of each human being, then there is stability indeed.⁸¹

Ultimately, his reasons for promoting this particular notion of personal stability boil down to a conviction in the Christian responsibility to spread Christian thought beyond the confines of the Christian community, and lead back to the therapeutic message that underpins his work: 'In doctrinal terms the nature of this ontology, rooted in the personal God of all, revealed in Christ ... drives us to speak and act beyond our selves ... That is why we cannot acquiesce in our fragmentation, even though we may properly rejoice in our differences.'⁸² It is a message that White believes is worth spreading, since it might offer a solution to the anxiety and instability that he believes characterise our contemporary condition.⁸³

White's thesis, however, bears some common hallmarks of this kind of theological study: a very slippery notion of self-fragmentation, and a certain ambiguity about how, precisely, such fragmentation manifests itself in the individual. This, of course, is to be expected given the lack of attention that recent theology has generally paid to the psychological understanding of this concept. Self-fragmentation often seems to be the villain of the piece as far as theologians are concerned, but its misdemeanours are far from self-evident and it is never really satisfactorily unmasked. Indeed, it is sometimes unclear whether self-fragmentation is the villain at all or merely the hapless stooge of some greater malevolent theory. Some indication of what White believes self-fragmentation to entail emerges in his discussion of the ground-breaking social and moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's argument that the modern individual's moral and social personas have become separated. Like MacIntyre, White supposes that this is a consequence of the dissolution of the shared moral system of traditional society. He recognises the society that MacIntyre critiqued in 1981 in his own portrait of late 1990s' society and the contemporary fragmentation and isolation of individuals.⁸⁴ MacIntyre's account of the transition between traditional stable identities and contemporary

81 Ibid., p.94. Support for the importance of the theological grounding of the self is, as White himself notes, easy to come by. Keith Ward writes, 'if there is no such God as the foundation and goal of being, then the soul becomes an inexplicable anomaly in the universe ... and once you start to think that, any sense of the unique dignity and worthy of human life is in danger of collapsing' (Ward 1985, p.162; cited in White 1997, p.95). Stephen Clark simply writes, 'If God is dead, so also is the self' (Clark 1989, p.37).

82 White 1997, pp.89–90.

83 He continues, 'For in a world of lost and fragmented people any tradition which can offer a substantive narrative of meaning, motivation, belonging, which can engage credibly with our current situation and deepest moral intuitions, *any such a tradition should seek allegiance*' (Ibid., p.91).

84 Ibid., p.50. See MacIntyre 1981.

fragmented identities remains amongst the most influential of all such accounts, and White depends upon it for his own ideas of how stable identities specifically are chained to stable traditions.

Believing that self-fragmentation was not a problem of the premodern world, MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, writes:

In many pre-modern, traditional societies it is through his or her membership in a variety of social groups that the individual identifies himself or herself and is identified by others. I am brother, cousin and grandson, member of this household, that village, this tribe. These are not characteristics that belong to human beings accidentally, to be stripped away in order to discover 'the real me'. They are part of my substance.⁸⁵

This passage captures White's attitude to the concept of premodern identity well. This, and the singularity of personhood that is its defining characteristic despite the plurality of social roles that a person might adopt, becomes his paradigm case of self-stability.⁸⁶ For White, modernity's denial of the self's intrinsic relatedness can be held solely responsible for engendering a deep sense of fragmentation in contemporary individuals. The modern focus upon disengaged autonomy has inspired the concept of a private self that is conceptually distinct from our social roles and relations, meaning that we have 'set up an internal sense of alienation from ourselves, and mental strain is the price that is paid'.⁸⁷ Though White bases this analysis specifically upon MacIntyre, it is a widespread notion in modern thought.⁸⁸

Self-alienation, then, is one way in which White understands self-fragmentation, and the closest he comes to articulating another is through his summary of contemporary alternatives to abstract concepts of the disengaged self. Here he criticises the philosopher Derek Parfit's widely disseminated ideas from his book, *Reasons and Persons*, in which Parfit argues that the continuity of the individual person is unimportant.⁸⁹ White objects to this proposition on moral and conceptual, but above all, intuitive grounds. He argues:

Common sense also reminds us that we simply cannot sensibly think ourselves out of being some sort of enduring, unitary subject of experience. After all, our very capacity

⁸⁵ MacIntyre 1981, p.33.

⁸⁶ This is a common assumption. Dunn similarly describes this idyllic life in the following way: 'In traditional society, identity is largely pre-given through membership in the group and community, determined externally by systems of kinship and religion. In traditional cultures, identity is more or less fixed at birth and integrated into relatively stable structures of custom, belief, and ritual' (Dunn 1998, p.53).

⁸⁷ White 1997, p.50.

⁸⁸ See Baumeister 1986, pp.59–95. As Kelly notes, it is simply a 'version of the communitarian rejection of the atomistic individual in favour of a socially constituted moral identity' (Kelly 1994, p.132).

⁸⁹ See Parfit 1984.

for conceptual thought presupposes an ability to correlate and compare particulars (to gain a 'universal' or generic sense), *over a period of time*.⁹⁰

Self-fragmentation, at this point of White's thesis, is identified with a sense of self-discontinuity – a sense of not being the same continuous person over time, but rather of being different people at different moments. He battles against this concept of self-fragmentation more than once, but simultaneously seems to doubt that it is possible at all. The knowledge and experience of our continuity are, for White, self-evident facts. He suggests that Parfit's theory, if widely accepted, would dissolve any theoretical notion of secure and enduring personal identity, but he does not take seriously the possibility that a person's sense of his or herself as unitary could be affected. Consequently, he chooses to dismiss Parfit's thesis along with other psychological theories that fail to secure personal unity and continues his search for an ontological framework that can.⁹¹ For my own purposes, decisive questions remain to be addressed: if we are unable to escape the feeling of being unitary and continuous beings, then exactly what does fragmentation entail? What is it that needs to be healed?

The second aspect of White's work that I wish to draw attention to is his assumption that the fragmented self (however it is conceived) is pathological or, at the very least, problematic in some sense. His ideas about the existentially challenging experience of self-fragmentation are grounded much more firmly in his theoretical analysis than they are in his sociocultural critique. On the strength of his reading of MacIntyre, he assumes that feelings of unease necessarily accompany the theoretical pluralisation of social roles that challenges the idea of the unified self. Thus, he ties the alleged experience of fragmentation extremely tightly to his theoretical discourse of fragmentation. His assessment of this condition seems to amount to no more than the suggestion that it causes 'mental strain'.⁹² Whereas 'existential angst' and 'instability of identity' are terms that evoke concrete pathologies of personhood, such ideas are presented more as theoretical conflicts with sacrosanct theological presuppositions than in a detailed analysis of the conditions themselves.

I do not so much wish to disagree with White's idea that self-alienation (or what he specifically understands as self-alienation) is a source of mental anguish, as to critique the implicit argument that all post-abstract theories of self which permit a degree of fragmentariness are incompatible with ideas of personal continuity. This is, perhaps, to paint the postmodern condition with an overly broad brush. White, like many others, opposes a general concept of self-fragmentation to the unity and continuity theologians value so highly, but as I will show in Chapters 2 and 3, there are good psychological and sociological reasons for believing that not all ideas of

90 White 1997, p.67.

91 Ibid., pp.63–71.

92 Ibid., p.50.

fragmentation and unity are diametrically opposed. In fact, many understandings of the late-modern/postmodern identity explicitly reject this idea.

A further, more general concern relates to White's description of the causes of self-fragmentation and the means by which he proposes to resolve the contemporary identity crisis. Although he does implicitly distinguish between different concepts of self-fragmentation, he rejects the concept that arises from Parfit's theories as impossible, leaving only the shadowy notion of self-alienation to describe a broad range of contemporary identity crises. This, the only type of fragmentation he is prepared to admit is a reality in the late-modern world, is clearly identified as symptomatic of a social malaise that '*arises inexorably from a particular and entirely inadequate assumption about how the individual is formed: namely, as self-originating, in all his or her most significant characteristics*'.⁹³ In short, it is a consequence of modernity's obsession with the autonomy of the self. White takes the relationship between the dissolution of stable communities and the fragmentation of individual selfhood for granted, along with the idea that in each case fragmentation is a pathological distortion of the way things ought to be (the way God intended them to be).

Consequently, and this is also true of several other recent theological projects, his solution to the modern problem of identity focuses upon transforming its social sources. This has two clearly related aspects. First, he wishes to show conclusively that Christian theology provides an ontological framework that theoretically secures the individuality and the continuity of personal identity. Secondly, he wishes to reverse the intellectual and sociological trend towards fragmentation by spreading his message, and thereby restoring the kind of stable (Christian) community upon which he believes stable identities depend – 'an overall social framework, rather than a subculture'.⁹⁴ He suggests that the realisation of our concrete yet relational particularity, and the subsequent reinvigoration of traditional (Christian) moral sources of selfhood, will allay the existential anxiety of individual persons by mediating between the fragmenting effects of a plurality of subcultures, and restore (a premodern) stability both to individuals and to society at large.

Although few have claimed to offer a complete cure for the existential angst White identifies, historically, there have been many similar attempts to relieve the symptoms.⁹⁵ As Dunn observes, the rise throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of 'various notions of "authenticity" serving to disclose the possibilities of human wholeness as salvation from modernity's unruliness ...' has consistently encouraged attempts at 'recreating and strengthening community and the forging of new relationships between the community and the individual'.⁹⁶ Despite recent theological concern with the relational constitution of personhood that betrays a certain postmodern ambition, White's solution to self-fragmentation seems to be

93 Ibid., pp.58–9. Original italics.

94 Ibid., p.77.

95 See Dunn 1998; Davis 2000b; Vanhoozer 2003.

96 Dunn 1998, pp.54–9.

cut from the same modernist cloth as his problem.⁹⁷ Once again, within the scope of his book this is an entirely coherent conclusion, and White argues the point extremely well, but my own aim here is to explore other ways of understanding the disunity of self and perhaps even other solutions to the existential trepidation that accompanies the postmodern world.

Some of the ways in which I diverge from White's thesis are set out in the brief discussion with which I began this chapter. Self-fragmentation cannot simply be explained by modern philosophy's failure to attribute a sufficient degree of relationality to the concept of the human self. Historically, there is no single philosophical pathway that leads inexorably towards self-fragmentation. Below, the extent of my divergence will become even more apparent as I argue that the disunity of self is not solely the result of the collapse of traditional communities, the dissolution of shared systems of meaning, nor the consequence of a simple theoretical misconception. Neither is it necessarily a sign of mental illness or distress, or even always a cause of anxiety. It can be variously conceived as all these things, but cannot be reduced to any single one of them.

White modestly admits that the primary limitation of his work is its resolutely theoretical character. What I want to suggest is that engagement with a broader range of human scientific data and theories provides a crucial supplement to the sort of theological project that White has undertaken. Clearly, his primary focus is upon providing a new and positive social vision based on the recovery of the moral values, which he supposes form the basis of all concepts of the individual as an enduring particular, than upon specific theories of self-development. White acknowledges the psychological dimension of his project, but his critique of modernity, the specifically modern pathology of self-fragmentation, and the corruption of individualism with which it is correlated, are both too philosophically general and too sociologically narrow to do justice to contemporary psychology. More than anything else, White's theory is lacking an explicit theory of identity formation, through which his concept of self-fragmentation – its causes and effects – might be clearly expounded. If so much is to be made of the continuity of personhood through the experiences and transformations that give rise to a personal history of experience, we had better be able to explain the vicissitudes of the developmental processes themselves. Without such an explanation, precisely how relationships constitute the individual in everyday social life – how they threaten or affirm self-unity – is troublingly unclear and the notion of relational personhood remains merely abstract philosophical conjecture.

I have chosen to focus upon White's work here, partly because it illustrates the distinction between abstract philosophical and sociocultural or psychological concerns, but also because it typifies a particular theological anthropological approach to the self that has grown in popularity in recent years. Such approaches make dialogue between theology and the human sciences a more or less central

97 See Dunn 1998 for a good summary of similar approaches to the problem of self-alienation.

theme, but could be improved by paying attention to the subtleties of human scientific theories themselves. The concepts of self-fragmentation and self-unity are frequently grafted into this dialogue without a clear recognition of what these concepts mean or how they have developed within their parent disciplines. Hand-waving in the direction of the human sciences will not do. What is required, if theology is successfully to engage with the human sciences and offer a balanced interdisciplinary account of fragmented or unified selfhood, is a detailed understanding not just of contemporary psychological theorising, but of how society is changing, and how these changes have impacted upon processes of identity formation.

Of course, other theological anthropologies have emerged that are as concerned as White, Gunton and Zizioulas with the idea of relational being, and which are also geared towards securing the particularity of human persons as unique individuals, but which engage more specifically with psychological theories of identity formation. Alistair McFadyen, for example, in his book *The Call to Personhood*, deems both exclusively collectivist and exclusively individualist concepts of the person to be unattractive propositions, though he supposes that each retains useful pointers.⁹⁸ McFadyen's analysis extends beyond the broad appeals to sociological ideas of self-fragmentation that characterise so much of this field, and relates our contemporary social and individual predicaments to disruptions of small-scale dialogical relations. This is the most obvious benefit of his psychological approach: the ability to articulate clearly the processes by which he assumes identity is formed and, therefore, to develop a comprehensive account of personhood in terms of concrete interactions. I will have considerably more to say about his work in later chapters.

Although most wish to reject the modernists' conception of the self-creating person, the principle that individual persons are wholly unified beings is alive and well. Human scientific accounts of self-fragmentation and the fragmentation of society ought thus to be of genuine theoretical concern to theologians. My intention in this chapter has not been to describe in fine detail the various ways in which self-unity is important theologically; that particular discussion must wait until Chapter 5. Rather, I have attempted to show its fundamental significance in contemporary theological anthropological discourses of the modern individual's distressing predicament, and introduce several central ideas upon which a critique of the widespread theological attitude towards self-fragmentation can be based. I have also suggested that the philosophical threat to the unity and continuity of individual personhood is considerable, yet assessments of our current predicament (and its history) take place in more discourses and upon more levels than the purely philosophical. Hence, there is much to be gained from an examination both of explicitly psychological theses and concrete analyses of the effects that sociocultural pluralism and the engines of modernisation have had upon processes of identity formation. However, by emphasising the importance of engagement

98 McFadyen 1990a.

with the human sciences, I do not mean to endorse a positivistic approach to the analysis of self-fragmentation, or to prioritise human scientific over philosophical approaches to these issues. Rather, my aim is to caution against the tendency to abstract and generalise sociological and psychological theories in philosophical analysis. The following chapter will provide a concrete example of the dangers of this sort of generalisation, as I assess the possibility that societal change leads inexorably to radical and irreconcilable self-fragmentation.

The Destabilisation of Identity in Contemporary Social Thought

Identity sprouts on the graveyard of communities, but flourishes thanks to its promise to resurrect the dead.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualised Society*, 2001)

My intention now is to begin exploring the issue of self-fragmentation in more detail, beginning with an examination of the alleged impact of radical societal change upon the early modern identity. The increasing complexity of the social world that has accompanied the birth of a technologically global society is one of the key cultural developments to be repeatedly identified by various social theorists as the primary cause of the contemporary identity problem. In one important sense the world is more unified than ever before, but this type of global unity comes at the expense of localised communal coherence. As the premodern social fabric is cut into pieces, so are the selves that ultimately depend upon it. Four main themes dominate this chapter. The first of these is the broad consensus that exists amongst social theorists that people are increasingly unable to experience themselves as simple unitary beings in the late-modern/postmodern age. The second concerns the novel understanding of self-fragmentation in relation to the changing social sources of identity that are suggested by a variety of distinctive social and cultural developments. The third theme is the lack of unity in postmodern social theory as regards the fragmentation of self. There are weaker and stronger depictions of what is often referred to as the postmodern condition and only the strong formulations seek to dissolve all concepts of self and identity. The notion of personal continuity, when understood as an autobiographical project, is not incompatible with postmodern depictions of profound social and cultural change. My final theme concerns the existence of positive constructive, as well as negative deconstructive, repercussions of the pluralisation of self in postmodernity.

The transformation of the contemporary identity is, very plainly, a vastly more complex subject than this discussion can do justice to, so we must be clear about its scope and ambition. Since my aims are primarily to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the idea that the self is not a simple unified entity and delineate some of the most significant sociocultural themes to have arisen in the dialogue between theology and the human sciences in this context, there are some notable theoretical absences in the ensuing discussion as far as the wider notion of the fragmented self is concerned. I have not engaged deeply with postmodern discourses of power, manipulation and suspicion, or with certain political and

economic meta-processes that have driven the development of modern society. This is not because I have any doubt about the importance of these types of analysis in understanding aspects of contemporary identities. It is simply because my focus is much more specific. I am concerned, first and foremost, with how various sociocultural transformations of the postmodern era may have compromised the individual's experience of being a singular and unified being. More specifically, I am concerned with how changes in the types of relationships that people form in contemporary society, and changes in the ways those relationships are conducted, affect the stability of the individual self. In the interests of clarity, I have chosen to follow several recent authors in employing a useful terminological distinction between 'postmodernism' and 'postmodernity', which reflects the academic division between political, epistemological and theoretical discourse and sociocultural analyses. 'Postmodernism', in Dunn's words, refers to a reasonably well defined 'series of theoretical and epistemological claims or positions'.¹ The term 'postmodernity', on the other hand, refers to '*an objective sociohistorical condition rooted in material and technological change and corresponding transformations in the production and consumption of culture.*'²

The Fragmentation of the Social World

A number of closely interrelated themes characterise contemporary commentators' portrayal of the changing social world. Societies are undoubtedly larger now and more complex than at any other time in humanity's history, but it is not just the simple scale of social systems that has changed. Just as importantly, as the eminent British social theorist Anthony Giddens suggests, contemporary social systems exhibit unprecedented degrees of plasticity and multidimensionality. These factors have significant destabilising effects upon the formation of identity.³ Late modernity, Giddens argues, has made itself known in the conspicuous and rapid erosion of the security provided by traditional moral values and ideas of truth and objectivity. Traditions, according to prevailing opinion, are themselves now isolated and insecure, and the social practices and rituals through which premodern life was structured are gradually being forsaken. This predicament is articulated clearly by another sociologist, Nicos Mouzelis: 'Traditional orders are characterized by codes of 'formulaic truth' that routinise social conduct in a meaningful, emotionally satisfying manner ... "Detraditionalisation", on the other hand ... creates a situation where routines lose their meaningfulness and their unquestioned moral authority.'⁴

1 Dunn 1998, p.2.

2 Ibid. Original italics.

3 See, for example, Giddens 1991, 1994.

4 Mouzelis 1999, p.83.

As far as concepts of social fragmentation are concerned, detraditionalisation goes hand in hand with globalisation, the widespread assumption being that society's destabilisation has been exacerbated by the globalising technologies that enable instantaneous interpersonal communication across vast distances in the absence of shared traditions. Encounters between individuals from different social backgrounds and different cultures, in conjunction with the diminishing importance of traditional ways of structuring social practices, lead to the further blurring of cultural boundaries and an ever-increasing number of novel perspectives through which to participate in the social world. With increasing interpersonal connectivity comes a reduction in local social coherence and fragmentation is the inevitable result.

Exploring the effects of the global media upon social fragmentation and the dissolution of traditional concepts of identity is a popular contemporary occupation. As David Harvey, author of the influential *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, observes, an abiding fascination with 'the new possibilities for information and knowledge production, analysis, and transfer' is a defining characteristic of most postmodernist writers.⁵ Lyotard, Baudrillard, Gergen, Bauman, Giddens and others have all made much of this idea, relating the advance of such technology to an even more radical reconceptualisation of the fragmented self in contemporary society.⁶ Bauman, for example, writes:

[T]he message conveyed today with great power of persuasion by the most effective cultural media, the message easily read out by its recipients against the background of their own experience, is a message of the essential indeterminacy and softness of the world: in this world, everything may happen and everything may be done, but nothing can be done once and for all – and whatever it is that happens comes unannounced and goes away without notice.⁷

These unprecedented technological and sociocultural transformations are all testament to the relentless modernising streak that characterises the current phase of modernity (though many, such as Bauman, would be happy to substitute the term 'modernity' for 'postmodernity' or 'late-modernity'), and distinguishes it from all other historical forms of human cohabitation. The postmodern world is defined by its enthusiasm for change – the dismantling of the old to make way for the new and improved, and the inability to stand still for a moment.⁸

5 Harvey 1989, p.43.

6 See Lyotard 1984; Baudrillard 1988; Gergen 1991; Bauman 1992, 2001. Globalising technologies take many forms. For example, in this bracket Gergen includes such disparate technological leaps as the building of railways, cars and aircraft, the development of the postal service, the spread of television and radio broadcasting, and, latterly, the indispensability of email, teleconferencing and the internet (Gergen 1991, pp.48–68).

7 Bauman 2001, p.83.

8 See Bauman 2001 (esp. pp.103–4); Kellner 1992.

Typical assessments of postmodern consumer culture suggest that we are now at the mercy of advertisers and lifestyle gurus promoting a multiplicity of products and emphasising the importance of novelty and change above all.⁹ Modernisation enables, even encourages, a perpetual barrage of ephemeral and superficial information soundbites and lifestyle messages, each of which sells a dream of self-improvement, individual self-sufficiency, and encourages transience and the participation in a plurality of life-worlds.¹⁰ No end-point to this destabilising process is readily identifiable, and as the pace of the development increases and society becomes more and more complex, both local communities and the broader society will continue to lose coherence. In short, with the demise of the structures of traditional society and traditional social practices, a new fragmented social order has arisen, founded on a multiplicity of perpetually changing perspectives.

This is only a snapshot of contemporary social theory, and the extent to which these generic themes are causally implicated in society's fragmentation differs between theorists. Accounts of social upheaval also vary both in the degree and the significance of the social modification inherent to the postmodern era, though no one seriously doubts that things have changed markedly. Huyssens, for example, writes:

I don't want to be misunderstood as claiming that there is a whole-sale paradigm shift of the cultural, social, and economic orders; any such claim clearly would be overblown. But in an important sector of our culture there is a noticeable shift in sensibility, practices and discourse formations which distinguishes a post-modern set of assumptions, experiences and propositions from that of a preceding period.¹¹

This more moderate view is deemed appropriate by those who argue that at least some aspects of social identity retain a degree of stability, and that postmodern culture, though it appears shallow and superficial on the surface, still trades on deeply meaningful symbols and ideologies.¹² It is this weaker (and, many argue, more compelling) sociological position that I wish to explore – an approach which accepts that the underlying social processes of identity formation have been

9 Dunn, for example, relates modernisation to the concept of cultural commodification. Referring to the sociohistorical impact of consumption-oriented culture, he claims that attachments to consumer goods, and the plurality of possible styles they represent, have replaced social ties as the primary structuring principle of identity (see Dunn 2000).

10 For extended discussions of the global media's and technology's impact upon contemporary culture, see Harvey 1989; Gergen 1991; Kellner 1992; Dunn 1998.

11 Huyssens 1984, p.39. Similarly, the British sociologist Bernice Martin argues, 'Fortunately, there are other ways of conceiving of postmodernity which retain a foothold in philosophical realism, that is, in the assumption that there is indeed a social reality "out there", not, to be sure, quite so unified nor so totally transparent and amenable to demonstration as the classical social sciences sometimes supposed, but documentable nevertheless' (Martin 1998, p.104).

12 See, for example, Best and Kellner 1987; Kellner 1992; Dunn 2000.

transfigured, but rejects the idea that such transfiguration has resulted in, or is correlated with the absolute dissolution of traditional modes of self-understanding.¹³ Whether or not one agrees with those who argue that the contemporary period is truly a 'degenerate phase' of modernity, it is agreed that society is now subject to a hitherto unprecedented degree of fragmenting and isolating pressures.¹⁴

Bearing in mind that there is always more than one way to view a particular concept or to tell a particular story, we must be wary of framing the advancement of modernity in overly simplistic terms of a simple transition from stable premodern to unstable postmodern identity. The intricacies of the changing face of identity defy description purely in terms of such general and all-encompassing theories, which divorce the idea of self-fragmentation from the individual processes of identity formation in which it is rooted.¹⁵ Hence, alliances between a variety of theoretical discourses and more concrete, empirically grounded and smaller-scale explanations are now widely encouraged.¹⁶ This notwithstanding, the meta-processes I have outlined are recurrent features of sociological discourses of the self and identity over the last 25 years. They point to fundamental social changes, and, since individuals are formed in the cauldron of society, such changes are pertinent to understanding our current predicament even if they are not themselves wholly sufficient explanations.

The question that still needs to be answered, however, is precisely how the fragmentation of society impacts upon the individual's sense of his or herself? Given that selves and identities are always social products to a degree, it seems safe to assume that there will be some sort of impact, but how exactly is this manifest in a personal context? Once again opinions on these matters are divided, but some especially influential notions do recur throughout late-modern and postmodern

13 As well as Dunn's work in this area, Bauman's observations regarding the continuing roles of intellectuals and 'interpreters' in directing the path of social change, Giddens' and Jürgen Habermas' well-known sociological and epistemological critiques of postmodern absolutism, and even Gergen's proposition that identities have not yet been fully compromised by postmodern life, all contribute to this less extreme perspective in which philosophical realism still has its place.

14 Thiselton 1995, p.11.

15 Woodhead, for instance, objects to 'a unilinear view of the history of modernity ...' on the basis that generalisations about identity in premodernity, modernity and postmodernity are insufficient to capture the cultural diversity or the subtleties of identity formation in each of these periods (Woodhead 1999). Dunn and Davis, as I have already mentioned, are opposed to the isolation of discourse from concrete observations of contemporary social processes (Dunn 2000; Davis 2000a). Other criticisms have been levelled at inadequately detailed portraits of the individual in this process. The environmentalist Peter Dickens, for example, is critical of the scant attention Giddens pays to the complexities of interpersonal relationships, as well as his conflation of 'meaning-of-life questions', with the practical day-to-day aspects of life, which are all grouped together under the general rubric of 'life-politics' (Dickens 1999).

16 See Dunn 2000; Davis 2000a.

social theory. Most notable, perhaps, is the idea that, in contemporary society, human identities are segmented into independent ‘snapshots’ that resist unification into any sort of broader life context.¹⁷ The palimpsest identity has become the norm, characterised by an endless stream of ‘new beginnings ... painted one over the other’.¹⁸ This is the kind of identity, Bauman argues:

[I]n which forgetting rather than learning is the condition of continuous fitness, in which ever new things and people enter and exit the field of vision of the stationary camera of attention, and where the memory itself is like video-tape, always ready to be wiped clean in order to admit new images.¹⁹

The central argument behind this sort of claim is that the ephemerality and sheer complexity of the contemporary world problematises the formation of a unified personal identity to the extent that we must all now live with a plurality of inner voices ‘singing different melodies, different verses, and with different rhythms’.²⁰ Amidst the wreckage of traditional society, people lead experimental lives plagued by ‘epistemological uncertainty’ and ‘ontological angst’.²¹ In understanding how radical cultural change has brought about such startling changes to individual identity two issues are particularly important: the transformation of interpersonal relationships and the reflexivity of the postmodern identity. I will address each of these in turn.

The Transformation of Relationships

Of the presumed causes of postmodern personal instability and fragmentation, the rapid expansion in ‘the number of ways people stand in relation to their social and material environments’ is undoubtedly amongst the most significant.²² The postmodern period has witnessed even greater changes to the traditional patterns of relationship that earlier phases of modernity had already begun to erode. According to Dunn, for example, ‘modernity created a plurality of new “life spheres” by means of institutional processes of differentiation. Family, work, religion, education, the state, and other sanctioned patterns of social organization became sources of competing claims on the self.’²³ In modernity, the pluralisation of social roles that accompanied the decline of traditional communities, inasmuch as they challenged the a priori unity of the rational self, became a central theoretical and existential

17 Bauman 2001, p.83.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Gergen 1991, p.83.

21 O’Brien 1999, p.29.

22 Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone 1999, p.98.

23 Dunn 1998, p.56.

problem. However, with the globalisation and further detraditionalisation of society that characterises postmodernity, the traditional common ground and the role-based identities that it permitted have all but disappeared. People clearly now have the opportunity to experience vast numbers of interpersonal relationships with people across the world and can adopt any number of roles at any given time. As the ways in which we relate to others have changed, so have the ways in which we experience ourselves.²⁴ Society has had to become accustomed to, what Gergen refers to as, the ‘postmodern consciousness’ – a sense of impermanence and disunity.²⁵

The new species of person that now inhabits the western world has been given many names. Giddens, for example, describes the late-modern individual as *homo optionis*, on account of the enormous number of choices that need to be negotiated at every turn. *Homo optionis* lives its life in the absence of shared systems of meaning, where relationships are a constant struggle to find points of contact, and each interaction is a step into the unknown. In the absence of external points of reference, interpersonal interactions generate new ways of acting and understanding, and increase the number of specific social contexts with which people are familiar. For Giddens, roles and the expectations that accompany them have become impermanent and malleable. Both the social world and the individual are caught up in a process of continual reconstruction, where further change and social upheaval lurks round every corner. Selves, which for Giddens are the constructs that ground the sense of being in the world through the monitoring of behaviour, are fractured through the multiplicity of identities through which they engage with other people. Uncertainty and anxiety are inevitable.

Gergen has perhaps done more than any other to raise the profile of self-multiplicity in recent sociological and social psychological discussions of the self and identity. Indeed, Gergen was the first mainstream theorist to suggest that the pluralisation of personality was a positive social adaptation that met the demands of modern ways of interrelating.²⁶ For Gergen, ‘social saturation’ – conceived in terms of the dramatic increase in the number of each individual’s personal relationships – is the primary instigator of self-fragmentation. As always, globalising technologies and the transformation of contemporary ways of relating are prominent themes. He argues that through the acquisition of ‘multiple and disparate potentials for being’ people develop the capacity to hold increasingly complex and frequently conflicting opinions that prioritise different issues and depend upon different value

24 The increased interest in the psychology of relationships over the last ten years reflects the wider concern with changing patterns of relationship and the pressing need to understand the roles that relationships play in the formation of identity (see Fletcher and Fitness 1996; Baumeister 1997; Hinde 1997; Abrams and Hogg 1999; Rowan and Cooper 1999).

25 See Gergen 1991.

26 See Gergen 1972.

systems.²⁷ Ultimately, maintaining a committed (or dedicated) singular identity becomes nearly impossible, and individuals resign themselves to subsisting moment-by-moment in a swirling sea of relations: 'As the traditional individual is thrust into an ever-widening array of relationships ... the self vanishes fully into a stage of relatedness. One ceases to believe in a self independent of the relations in which he or she is embedded.'²⁸ Gergen is not suggesting here that the single continuous person is simply forced to wear an ever-increasing number of 'hats' in his or her daily life. He is suggesting that, as we become more and more immersed in extensive networks of relations, our experiences of ourselves as enduring and continuous people are abandoned altogether.

From this perspective, people are no more than 'imitative assemblages of each other'.²⁹ We learn how people act in particular situations through our observation and experience of specific sorts of interaction. We identify with the characters of television soap operas, films, plays and novels, as well as those we interact with personally on a day-to-day basis. Relationships with all these people become integral parts of our own lives, and each relationally constructed persona becomes a latent self awaiting expression – ready to be called into action as the situation arises. Thus, we each become a cast of characters and cease to conceive of ourselves as enduring subjects playing social roles; instead, our temporary role-playing characters themselves are ascribed a degree of autonomy and independence.³⁰ In Gergen's opinion, 'as social saturation adds incrementally to the population of self, each impulse toward well-formed identity is cast into increasing doubt. Each is found absurd, shallow, limited, or flawed by the onlooking audience of the interior.'³¹ The inevitable result is 'multiphrenia' – the division of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments. When the postmodern consciousness is fully realised, he suggests, individuals will cease to be either unified or continuous. Gergen, as we shall see, may be overstating his case somewhat, but his arguments resonate throughout contemporary social theory.

Inasmuch as the term 'persona' signifies limited context-specific modes of action, interaction, communication and interpretation, it is a motif that permeates Bauman's concept of the 'palimpsest identity', Giddens' '*homo optionis*', and Gergen's 'saturated self'.³² Robert Lifton, recognising the modern necessity of continual adaptation to novel surroundings, described this almost chameleonic

27 Gergen 1991, p.71.

28 Ibid., p.17.

29 Ibid., p.71.

30 Also see Rowan and Cooper 1999; Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone 1999.

31 Gergen 1991, p.73.

32 These are just three prominent examples. Berger, Berger and Kellner's 'homeless mind', and their 'plurality of social life-worlds', as well as Braidotti's 'nomad' also make much use of this concept of situation-specific identity (see Berger, Berger and Kellner 1981; Braidotti 1994).

ability in terms of the 'protean' self (after the Greek god Proteus).³³ Since people's environments are constantly changing, so they need to adapt by producing more and more context-specific personas and shifting between them as the moment demands. But for those such as Gergen, who suppose that this creative process reflects a genuine fragmentation of self, there is no core enduring persona to dominate the others and each takes turns masquerading as the genuine self. Whereas the social roles of premodern and early modern societies were themselves well defined according to traditional social practices and customs, the personas of late-modern/postmodern society are fleeting, and as likely to be constructed in relation to a particular lifestyle or fashion as to something as well established as a socially recognised position (such as teacher or mother). Indeed, it is just this latter category of social roles that have receded in importance with the rise of modern consumer culture.³⁴

Contemporary consumer culture is also commonly supposed to have compromised the personal sense of being an active agent in an ontologically prior world. People have become the passive victims of media-driven fads and trends that are symptomatic of the 'artificial' or 'virtual' world of images promulgated by socially disengaging media like television and the internet.³⁵ Established means of conversation have transformed beyond recognition with the rise of email, text messaging and internet chatrooms, so that relationships themselves now seem strangely depersonalised and 'non-social'.³⁶ The common social ground upon which stable relationships were formed has been replaced by superficial relationships to objects and the lifestyles they signify, and traditional ideas of identity are thus further dissolved by what the sociologist Axel Honneth describes as the 'fictionalisation of reality'.³⁷ Honneth continues: 'the atomised individual becomes an imitator of styles of existence prefabricated by media.'³⁸ Similarly, Dunn suggests, 'With each changing style, a new self-image is constructed', further weakening conventionalised social roles and encouraging the construction of identities 'in relation both to consumer goods ... and media images such as film stars, advertising persona, television personalities, and functional media characters'.³⁹ The inescapable denouement is the dissolution of the institutionalised

33 Lifton 1993.

34 See Dunn 2000.

35 See especially Turkle 1995.

36 Ibid., p.122. In considering the perilous state of the individual in contemporary society Berger, Berger and Kellner, for example, in their extensive critique of identity in the face of modernisation, *The Homeless Mind*, also make the 'pluralisation of social life-worlds' a key theme. They also refer, however, to the problems caused by the 'anonymity of social relations' and 'bureaucracy' (Berger, Berger and Kellner 1981).

37 Honneth 1992, p.165.

38 Ibid.

39 Dunn 2000, p.116. A model of self-fragmentation based upon Dunn's idea of cultural commodification would seem to pose a threat to Gergen's explanation of fragmentation, if not his broader idea of the fragmented self. Dunn himself criticises Gergen and Lifton for

social self and the rise of the fragmented identity of the consumer. As Bauman argues, ‘whatever else the new pragmatics is good at, it cannot generate lasting bonds, and most certainly not the bonds which are presumed to be lasting and *treated* as such.’⁴⁰ As well as increasing in number, then, personal relationships are much less secure than they used to be, and characterised by superficiality and instability.

Reflexivity and the Demands of Contemporary Life

Adding to the fragmenting pressures of contemporary life and feelings of personal instability is the exceptional responsibility that individuals have to shoulder, and the sheer number of demands placed upon them. Which is not to say, of course, that the premoderns lived blissful and uncomplicated lives; people have always had demands placed upon them to a greater or lesser extent. The demands of the contemporary social world are unique, even if they are not necessarily weightier, but, in contrast to earlier times, society offers little assistance in navigating its perils. Each new social interaction carries with it a multiplicity of novel passageways into the future, and no common rules exist to help the individual adjudicate between different courses of action. Gergen’s own conclusion is depressing: ‘Daily life has become a sea of drowning demands, and there is no shore in sight.’⁴¹

The contemporary pressure upon the individual is nowhere more evident than in the constant struggle to locate him or herself in relation to the past, the present and the future – the persistent struggle for identity; the challenge of being one and the same person in each and every relationship. It is this particular struggle that thematises my discussion up to this point, since it reflects both the absence of traditional forms of identity, the plurality of different (sometimes contradictory) ways that individuals might experience themselves, and the social isolation caused by the decline of communities. Without the support of society individuals must seek their own meaningfulness in the reflexive construction of identity. Bauman, in noting the recent surge of interest in how and why we seem so fascinated with the stories we tell about ourselves and our lives, sees the personal responsibility for our own identities as a key aspect of our current predicament. He declares:

We are all individuals now; not by choice, though, but by necessity. We are individuals *de jure* regardless of whether we are or are not individuals *de facto*: self-identification,

failing to account for the problematisation of the self under the conditions of the type of postmodern culture he describes – namely the commodification of culture and the loosening of the social determinants of identity that these conditions imply (see Dunn 1998, p.250). Dunn’s primary criticism, however, is that Gergen is describing a cultural change that began in modernity not postmodernity – a criticism that Dunn himself is unable to avoid entirely.

40 Bauman 2001, p.86.

41 Gergen 1991, p.75

self-management and self-assertion, and above all self-sufficiency in the performance of all these three tasks, are our duty whether or not we command the resources which the performance of the new duty demands (a duty by default rather than by design: simply, there is no other agency to do the job for us).⁴²

It has been suggested, however, notably by Dunn, that critiques of modernity have overstated the decline of communities, and that new forms of communal experience can easily be discerned in global culture.⁴³ According to this perspective, those same technologies that promote transience and change can, by their ubiquitous presence, provide surrogate communities of shared meanings and experience. Television, and the other global media, Dunn suggests, ‘turns privatised consumption into the primary source of identity and shared culture’.⁴⁴ Though the media encourages individual immersion in an artificial or simulated world, it is a world that provides shared systems of meaning to its consumers the world over. People everywhere recognise and desire the products of famous manufacturers such as Coca-Cola and Nike, and no one is ever far from a McDonald’s restaurant. These are common symbols conveying a common message to the corners of the earth. Baumeister even suggests that the mass media pre-empt the chance of individuality. He writes:

What goes on in your mind when you watch a particular television show is probably close to what goes on in the minds of the millions of other viewers ... Advertising is an intrusive and impersonal form of tampering with the inner self. A successful advertisement will instil an identical desire (for a certain product) within the psyches of millions of persons.⁴⁵

Dunn and Baumeister are not alone in this belief. Giddens, for example, objects to the postmodern focus upon fragmentation, ‘because it fails to appreciate new forms of common experience’.⁴⁶ Globalisation, according to Giddens, through

42 Bauman 2001, p.105.

43 He argues that ‘classical social theory has exaggerated the decline of community by failing to recognize a transformation from communities that were more “concrete and immediate” into those whose boundaries are more distant, abstract, and diverse ... At the same time, the forces of modernization have actually *widened* the dimensions of community, expanding its scope ... These arguments imply that under modernity community does not so much vanish as persist in altered forms’ (Dunn 1998, pp.59–60. Original italics).

44 Dunn 2000, p.123.

45 Baumeister 1986, p.82.

46 Giddens states, ‘I prefer to understand contemporary social change through the concept of post-traditional, rather than post-modern, society. In a post-traditional context common frameworks of experience are organised by the institutional clusterings governing modern life, including the modern media and financial institutions – and their interconnections – which in many ways do create a unitary framework of experience and action ... I find the sole emphasis on fragmentation unsatisfactory’ (From ‘An Interview With Anthony Giddens’, in O’Brien, Penna and Hay 1999, p.198).

its compression of time and space, leads ultimately to modernity becoming a shared global experience (albeit a shared experience of continuous change and instability). Other writers have similarly rallied around the related belief that cultural homogenisation is an inevitable product of globalising forces and the disembedding of the social system.⁴⁷

The emergence of new forms of communal experience, however, does not indicate the means of a possible return to premodern stable forms of identity (which correspond to single well-established and defined social roles), but rather serves to emphasise the profound differences between the premodern and postmodern worlds with respect to the ways people interact with each other and their environment. A global culture, however homogenised, cannot offer what local communities can. Even if we admit the possibility that shared systems of meaning will continue to proliferate in postmodernity, the social sources of identity have still changed beyond recognition. In fact, as Bauman argues, identities may now even serve as surrogates for the traditional community:

‘Identity’ owes the attention it attracts and the passions it begets to being a surrogate of community: of that allegedly ‘natural home’ which is no longer available ... and which for that reason can be safely imagined as a cosy shelter of security and confidence, and as such hotly desired. The paradox though, is that in order to offer even a modicum of security and so to perform its healing role, identity must belie its origin, must deny being just a surrogate, and best of all needs to conjure up a phantom of the self-same community which it has come to replace. Identity sprouts on the graveyard of communities, but flourishes thanks to its promise to resurrect the dead.⁴⁸

Subtle variations of this account exist, but the picture that Bauman conjures so vividly, of isolated, insecure and fragmented individuals, left clinging to the concept of their own identities to give them purpose and meaning, is the iconic image of postmodern personhood. Being a person is truly more difficult than it used to be.

In addition to postmodern epistemological threats to self-unity, then, a uniquely postmodern sociological discourse of fragmentation is readily identifiable. This associates changes in culture, social structure and social practices with the transformation of self and identity, and concludes, at the very least, that contemporary identities are less stable and unified than premodern identities. Here, the concept of self-fragmentation describes the inevitable plurality, disunity, ephemerality and superficiality of an individual’s modes of self expression and experience. Anxiety, detachedness and insubstantiality are also recurrent themes. So, does all this mean the concept of the unified self must be totally abandoned? Things are not quite as clear or simple as that. The relationship between recent social and cultural developments and the fragmentation of self is neither self-evident nor

47 See, for example, Featherstone 2000; Stehr 2001.

48 Bauman 2001, p.151.

straightforward. Some theoretical discourses of self do seem to detach the notion of self-fragmentation from historical, sociological or psychological developments. For Lyotard and the other French post-structuralists, for example, the unified self is merely an invention of modernity – part of modernity's quest for absolute knowledge and its penchant for the construction of totalising metanarratives. It is a modern myth founded on misconceived notions of objectivity and the dominance of natural scientific methodologies. What is more, weaker understandings of postmodernism do not necessarily dismiss all possible concepts of self-unity, and the dramatic social changes of postmodernity have not yet made the need for some form of identity any less pressing. In fact, there is more than one notion of identity and more than one notion of self-unity at stake here. There is at least one way of thinking about identity that suggests postmodern people can still enjoy a degree of self-continuity, despite the pluralisation of their selves. In this, the idea that they have the capacity to construct their own identities reflexively, there is at least a vestige of hope that fragmentation is not all there is.

From Fragmented Society to Fragmented Individual?

Heuristically, it is perhaps helpful to divide the sociology of self-fragmentation into two distinct yet interrelated theses. First, at the macro level of understanding, it is supposed that the fracturing of traditions, conceived as meta-social processes, has led to the disintegration of the traditional resources from which stable premodern identities were formed – shared systems of meaning and value. Secondly there is an individual-focused sociology, which incorporates notions of societal change, but which grounds the dislocation of self and identity in the individual experience of fractured relations and a concomitant breakdown in mutual understanding.⁴⁹ Together, these two discourses contribute to the widely held belief that individuals are no longer able to experience themselves as singular unified entities, but rather as plural, disunified and discontinuous.

Can it be concluded, then, that societal fragmentation has led inexorably to the fragmentation of the individual? Although they are extremely closely related in the eyes of many theorists, the relationship between societal change and individual self-fragmentation is complex and must be treated with great caution, given the many different ways in which self-fragmentation might be described. Identity might be portrayed as hopelessly fragmented, regardless of whether or not recent changes

49 This duality reflects the classic 'two sociologies' problem – the long-running dispute over the relationship between 'agency' and 'structure', which many have suggested necessitates a separation between a sociology of social wholes or social systems, and one of individual human action. As Dunn notes, this problem is at least as old as Marxism (Dunn 1998, p.58). Lee and Newby argue that what the presence of the two sociologies really shows is that 'we cannot study everything at once. If we do, the result will be a wholly unnecessary philosophical perplexity' (Lee and Newby 1995, p.323).

in the structure of society have exacerbated this process. Extreme postmodernism provides the most obvious illustration of this principle, but there are other theories of self-fragmentation that are not firmly grounded in simple accounts of societal change.⁵⁰ For example, Woodhead, as I explained above, suggests a theoretical framework according to which self-fragmentation is equated with the difficulty of choosing between competing modes of selfhood at any given moment.⁵¹ Whereas the possibility of a choice between these different modes might itself be portrayed as a consequence of the pluralisation of the social sources of identity, Woodhead herself denies that the sources of identity were ever as simple as some contend. Her understanding of self-fragmentation is divorced from any particular strand of philosophy or sociological development, depending instead upon the co-evolution of many different strands of thought. Contemporary psychology, as I will explain in Chapters 3 and 4, also offers numerous ways of thinking about self-multiplicity that are conceptually distinct from theories of societal change, even if they are not difficult to reconcile with sociological observations of postmodernity.

MacIntyre, by contrast, links the fragmentation of personal identity to the deterioration of community and the evanescence of shared ways of judging what is good or right.⁵² Consequently, he argues, individuals have become isolated from the common stories that used to thematise individual lives. Giddens also makes a causal connection, linking self-fragmentation to the vast number of choices facing *homo optionis* in a detraditionalised and globalised world.⁵³ The same is true of Dunn. Like Woodhead he is critical of those who see nothing but unity in modernity, but he still suggests that self-unity has ultimately been imperiled by the postmodern replacement of traditional social and communal bonds by ephemeral relationships between consumers and products.⁵⁴ Although their respective portraits of the fragmented self are quite different, MacIntyre, Giddens and Dunn all tie fragmentation very tightly to radical social and cultural change.

Each believes that personal identities are less stable than they used to be, and each is pessimistic regarding the restabilisation of society. This is significant, since without such a restabilisation identities could never again be formed according to stable traditions and systems of meaning – they could never be unified in the sense that they once were. MacIntyre is especially despondent, believing that

50 Though it might be argued that the social conditions that made postmodernism possible are inextricably connected to the postmodern epistemological preoccupation.

51 To illustrate her point that self-fragmentation results from being forced to choose between different strands of selfhood Woodhead asks, ‘should women prize freedom above all things (liberal humanist) or should they nurture relationality and connectedness (authoritative)?’ (Woodhead 1999, p.67).

52 MacIntyre 1981.

53 Giddens 1991.

54 He writes, ‘identity in modernity has led an agitated existence, more divided and problematic than many postmodernists have supposed, however mythologized by modernists and postmodernists in unifying notions of Western individualism and the rational ego’ (Dunn 1998, p.52).

contact with pluralism irreparably damaged the prospects for this sort of self-unity. Instead, he looks to the cohesiveness of specific localised subcultures to supply what little personal integration they can – ‘local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.’⁵⁵ Giddens’ vision of the globalised society similarly precludes any possibility of returning to the stable traditional identities of the past.

Gergen’s thesis of the saturated self, on the other hand, seems to tread a much finer line as far as the relationship between social and personal fragmentation is concerned. He simultaneously links self-fragmentation to the postmodern cultural condition and uses his analysis to provide concrete empirical support for a postmodern epistemology. Explaining self-multiplicity in terms of social saturation, as Gergen does, suggests that it is radicalised by contemporary society’s complexity, but also presupposes that the self is multiple whenever an individual develops a plurality of relationships, however few. Given Gergen’s ontological scepticism, and his resolutely social-constructionist epistemology, which implies that individual self-images and episodic identities are context dependant, he is led to deny the metaphysical possibility of simple unified selves even in premodernity. What is rapidly disappearing now, in Gergen’s opinion, is the possibility of believing in a unified self, or of experiencing oneself as a being with a singular personality. According to Gergen’s thesis, as multiphrenia gathers momentum, people will not only become unable to form stable and continuous identities, they will no longer care.

Regardless of the fact that there is as much diversity within the generic categories of late-modern and postmodern understandings of self as there is between them, there is some common ground in thinking about self-fragmentation. Even those, like Kellner and Woodhead, who reject unidimensional and over-generalised accounts of these ideas, accept that a degree of societal and individual fragmentation has occurred in modern times. Even Giddens’ ‘structuration theory’, the most idiosyncratic (yet still amongst the most influential) of the theories I have described, identifies certain causal pathways that are common enough in the works of other modernist and even avowedly postmodern writers. The social fragmentation exalted by postmodern social theorists differs significantly from the fragmentation inherent to late modernity, but sociologically and psychologically, if not philosophically, this is only by degrees. There is no disagreement whether the self and identity are subject to fragmentation at all, only about whether fragmentation is all there is.

Two firm conclusions can now be drawn. First, it seems that among the many ways in which self-fragmentation can be described, postmodern cultural analyses provide distinctive explanations and ways of thinking about self-fragmentation that differ significantly from earlier modern conceptions that bound this condition to the idea of self-alienation. Though ‘alienation’ is itself a term with multiple meanings,

55 MacIntyre 1981, p.264.

those authors I addressed in Chapter 1 conceived of self-alienation as a product of the modern pluralisation of a person's social roles and the conflict this causes between a person's sense of being autonomous, unified and self-creating.⁵⁶ White and others still see self-alienation in the contemporary world, reflected in the rise of mental illness and the separation of an individual's private life from his or her public face. The self-fragmentation of postmodernity, however, is not a disjunction between a private authentic or core self and a multiplicity of public social selves, but rather, primarily, a disjunction between many equally viable selves, all of which are formed in and through extrapersonal interactions in constantly evolving sociocultural environments. Though in many respects the societal change of the late-modern/postmodern period merely radicalises the fragmenting processes that began in modernity, the new sources of identity that characterise postmodernity are significantly different to those of all earlier periods.⁵⁷ The self-fragmentation engendered by technological globalisation is simply not a part of earlier modern discourses of self-alienation in which the determinants of identity, though greatly pluralised, were still conceived as relatively stable and well defined social roles and statuses. There is a broad, if usually implicit, consensus that the social sources of identity have changed as much as the ways in which identities are theoretically conceived.

Secondly, and perhaps most obviously, it is apparent that theorising about self-fragmentation at the abstract philosophical level does not replace or preclude the need for human scientific accounts of its instantiation or the way in which it is experienced by the individual, though these distinct discourses may complement one another.⁵⁸ Social theorists, working with the idea that identity is a wholly social construct, have attempted to understand how changes in society have affected individuals' senses of themselves as unified beings, without speculating

56 The theologian John Macquarrie, in his work of theological anthropology *In Search of Humanity*, argues that, "Alienation" is an atrocious word' (Macquarrie 1982, p.107). Quoting Frank Johnson, he writes, 'Most terms which possess scientific bite are characterized by a reasonable specificity of denotation, a clarity of meaning within particular disciplines, and an absence of serious internal paradox or ambiguity. None of these belong to the word "alienation"' (ibid.). I am primarily concerned here with how this term has been used to describe the sense of discomfort that results from the challenge to the concept of an asocial unified self.

57 Dunn 1998, p.88. Dunn, as I have already mentioned, sees the dominant cultural change as shifting the primary determinants of identity from social bonds to commodities. Here, I am widening Dunn's analysis to include the proliferation of social attachments in the cultural change, though the nature of these relationships, it is clear, have also changed significantly with the rise of globalising technologies.

58 Indeed, voicing one of many common criticisms of the inconsistencies of postmodern epistemology, Martin objects to the 'epistemological turn which denies any possibility of access to a reality beyond situated discourse but which nevertheless traces cultural transformations to documentable, observable technological changes' (Martin 1998, p.104).

metaphysically about the self's ultimate nature. Nor is the sociology of self-fragmentation itself undivided. It is multi-stranded, and the causal pathways of self-pluralisation can be framed in several different ways. Bauman conveys an important message when he writes:

Sociology is itself a story – but the message of this particular story is that there are more ways of telling a story than are dreamt of in our daily story-telling; and that there are more ways of living than is suggested by each one of the stories we tell and believe in, seeming as it does to be the only one possible.⁵⁹

To summarise the argument to this point, although self-fragmentation is not an altogether new problem and the rise of fragmentation cannot be seen purely as the product of recent social processes, some ways of talking about fragmentation are legitimately founded upon observations of sociocultural changes that are unique to the late-modern/postmodern period. Pastiche personalities are the inevitable outcome of the fragmentation of individuals into a multiplicity of socially constructed situation- and relationship-specific personas. In Chapter 1, I argued that White and other theologians envisaged a healing of the fragmented individual through a retrieval of communal grounds of being and the reconceptualising of individuals as particular beings-in-relation. From the perspective of contemporary social theory, this would seem to be an impossible dream. It is widely agreed that the processes of fragmentation are irreversible and socially and culturally endemic – there is little hope of restoring the sorts of identities that characterised premodern society, since the social world has been irrevocably transformed through global modernisation. Hence, a philosophical reconceptualisation of the ontological unity of the person cannot be sufficient to reunify individuals' experiences of themselves. In postmodernity, the idea of the authentic self has been displaced absolutely, leaving only the pastiche personality. But does this necessarily mean that all possible conceptions of enduring identity have been, or must be, abandoned? Perhaps not.

The Continuity of Identity in the Postmodern World

There are many who suppose that the new fragmented social grounds of selfhood, have not completely debunked traditional concepts of identity, though its deepest meaning – 'sameness' – has all but disappeared from postmodern discourse. Some extreme postmodern descriptions of the person in the flux of relationality are as totalising as the modernist descriptions they seek to transcend and do indeed attempt to eradicate all talk of selves and subjects, but not all broadly postmodern positions are so absolutist and final proclamations of the death of the subject may

59 Bauman 2001, p.13.

be premature.⁶⁰ Postmodernism is united in its rejection of the permanent, asocial autonomous subject – the concept of an enduring ‘I’ that is identical and stands behind episodic experience – but most (including some extremists) find a place for the ‘I’ of the individual discursive moment, even if it is just a short-lived grammatical convenience. Just as there are less extreme, but still intrinsically postmodern interpretations of contemporary society and culture, so there are less dismissive portrayals of the person within this culture that retain a place for the concept of the active individual agent. Hence, although individual identity has been modified considerably by sociocultural change, the fragmentation of individuals into environment-specific personas might not have consigned it to history quite yet.

Giddens, the phenomenologist Calvin Schrag, and the narrative theorist Dan McAdams, for example, suggest that the individual personas of discrete moments need not necessarily be conceived independently from one another. Rather, they suggest, the telling of a personal story links these momentary ‘I’s together into a coherent life narrative or narrative identity (I will elaborate upon this idea in Chapter 4). These theorists are united in the belief that the process of modernisation itself is a process of individuation, but they do not identify the concept of the individual with concepts of stable, unified or essential identity. The self is still fragmented – still essentially plural – yet a sense of continuous identity is also possible, inasmuch as it is recast as the continuous life story of a particular singular being.

In Giddens’ opinion, for example, the external referential systems of the premodern world may have disintegrated, but they have been replaced by internal systems of meaning that are developed autobiographically. This internalisation of society’s referential systems – this reflexivity – forms a major part of Giddens’ account of the late modern world and ultimately reinforces his conviction of contemporary society’s multidimensionality.⁶¹ For Giddens, although individual identities no longer reflect traditional moral and social systems and do not mature according to them, the concept of identity is far from redundant. The life-worlds of the individual have been pluralised and identities are constructed relatively and personally, not according to premodernity’s stable systems of meaning, but they *are* constructed. This constructive process, he asserts, is the life-project. If *homo optionis* is to bear the uncertainty and anxiety of detraditionalised society then a path must be plotted through life via the reflexive construction of an idiosyncratic identity.⁶² The person must actively embrace the instability of social practices

60 See Giddens 1990; McLennan 1992.

61 See Giddens 1991, 1994.

62 Giddens’ account of reflexivity is extremely technical and idiosyncratic. Detailed discussions of this concept can be found in Clark, Modgil and Modgil 1990; Hekman 1990; O’Brien, Penna and Hay 1999. Giddens uses reflexivity in at least two different senses. Here, I am referring to Giddens’ use of the term to imply the use of knowledge and information to define one’s place in the social world (See Giddens 1991).

in the making of a chameleonic identity or resign him or herself to a mundane, routinised existence of compulsive and meaningless behaviour.

Not everyone agrees that the formation of a continuous identity is possible in the postmodern world, let alone necessary. Gergen in particular offers an extreme interpretation of the contemporary predicament, suggesting that such a demand will cease to be necessary in the future when the postmodern consciousness is fully realised, even if it is still necessary now. What is unquestioned, however, is that contemporary culture still pushes its members to project themselves into the future. This is implicit in almost every aspect of individual life, from dinner arrangements to marriage and pension plans. Hence, even Bauman, who emphasises the episodic nature and discontinuity of contemporary life so strongly, finds room for a qualified concept of identity, introducing the term 'identification' to replace 'identity', which still carries overtures of a solid core to the self. He writes:

Perhaps instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalising world to speak of *identification*, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged. There is little chance that the tensions, confrontations and conflicts which that activity generates will subside.⁶³

Bauman, therefore, in his description of the processual nature of identity distinguishes the contemporary individual from the premodern individual, whose identity was simply given, but which emphasises the continuing need for a sense of continuity. What is more, he grounds this need in the modernisation process itself, arguing, 'The frantic search for identity is not a residue of preglobalization times which are not yet fully extirpated but bound to become extinct as the globalization progresses; it is, on the contrary, the side-effect and by-product of the combination of globalizing and individualizing pressures and the tensions they spawn.'⁶⁴ Importantly, neither Bauman's nor Giddens' view of the individual subject entails a return to the inwardness of a rationalist Cartesian epistemology, a dualist ontology, or the conceptual renewal of modernity's self-sufficient asocial person. Reflexivity may be a defining feature of the postmodern identity, but there is a crucial distinction, as Kerr notes, between the autonomous self of modernity that is endowed with the (seemingly Godlike) power to create itself, and the self that is formed in and through society, but which chooses a specific path for itself. In criticising the non-realist Anglican theologian Don Cupitt's concept of the individual (what Kerr describes as the 'solitary individual with the God's-eye view'), Kerr writes, 'There is all the difference in the world between making the rules one's own, critically and responsibly, and making one's own rules.'⁶⁵ On a similar note, Bauman argues that 'We are critically predisposed, but our critique

63 Bauman 2001, p.152.

64 Ibid.

65 Kerr 1986, p.17.

is, so to speak, “toothless”, unable to affect the agenda set for our “life-political” choices’.⁶⁶

So, not all species of postmodernism are cut from the same cloth. But even those that continue to make space for the individual lead to a concept that is so different from the individual of premodernity that they are scarcely comparable. The person of this strand of postmodern philosophy enjoys the singularity and continuity of a reflexively constructed life story that gives a sort of unity to the episodic narratives of a particular life. Terms such as ‘essence’ and ‘core-self’ remain alien to the postmodern vocabulary, and there is still no room for a ‘hidden inside’ to the person or an over-arching unified subject that stands behind the mask of a particular social role, but there is space for a personal history of experience. To conclude this chapter, I want to focus upon one final issue that remains ambiguous in the preceding discussion: is the instability and fragmentation of individuals in the contemporary world universally seen as a problem? If it is a problem, how might it be rectified? In Chapter 1, I explored how modernity’s concept of the abstract disengaged self paradoxically both encouraged and simultaneously problematised its pluralisation. Overcoming this pluralisation was the goal of White’s critique of the modern identity. In doing so, he implicitly pathologised all concepts of self-fragmentation and sought renewed grounds for stable communal identities. With this in mind, we can identify another very significant distinction between the postmodernists, and authors, such as White, to whom self-unity remains extremely important.

Pessimism and Optimism in Secular Discourses of Self-Fragmentation

Modernism, Dunn suggests, is characterised partly by the struggle to unify the self in the face of fragmenting pressures, both theoretical and social, by restoring its authenticity through the rehabilitation of traditional communal grounds of being.⁶⁷ Whatever else we might say about the postmodern view of fragmentation, it does not carry with it the moderns’ yen for unity. Indeed, just as the drive to recover authenticity can be held partly responsible for the modernist problematisation of identity, as Dunn argues, the continuing search for identity problematises the postmodern condition. Philosopher Paul Cilliers writes, ‘Those who have a nostalgia for a unifying metanarrative – a dream central to the history of Western metaphysics – experience the post-modern condition as fragmented, full of anarchy and therefore ultimately meaningless. It leaves them with a feeling of vertigo.’⁶⁸ But

66 Bauman 2001, p.99.

67 He writes, ‘It is not unexpected ... that identity should have become such a preoccupation in the intellectual atmosphere of postmodernism, since the problematisation and deconstruction of identity is a precondition for arguing against modernist epistemological beliefs’ (Dunn 1998, p.52).

68 Cilliers 1998, p.114.

Cilliers also argues that, 'those who embrace postmodernism find it challenging, exciting and full of uncharted space'.⁶⁹ Referring to coterminous expressions of anxiety and excitement in the fragmented postmodern era, he concludes, 'Which of these two evaluations apply is often determined by whether one feels comfortable without fixed points of reference.'⁷⁰ Like many of postmodernism's critics, however, Cilliers does not make a distinction between its stronger and weaker manifestations. Such a distinction is crucial when considering variations on the theme of self-fragmentation, and is made commonly enough elsewhere.⁷¹

Whereas all are agreed that premodern sources of stability and security have been (to a greater or lesser extent) eroded, not everyone mourns their passing. Certainly, the necessity of constructing a variety of personas means that personal cohesiveness is more of a struggle than at any other time in social history, but there is no need for an overwhelmingly pessimistic attitude. The range of choices available in the reflexive project of constructing identity can also be interpreted as emancipatory, and the individual may still find stability amidst the social flux. Bauman, Giddens, Gergen, Lifton and Honneth, then, are amongst the more optimistic of postmodern writers (though Giddens prefers the term post-traditional), seeing opportunities everywhere for revival, renewal and the creative construction of new self-images. They have a broadly positive attitude to the possibilities presented by the demise of tradition and rigid social roles. Davis summarises this optimism well: 'In these celebratory versions of postmodernism, the performative ability to transcend and reconstitute one's self is the very definition of freedom.'⁷²

Significantly, hope for the future is not grounded in the vain modernist hope of an eventual return to stable premodern identities, but in a celebration of the postmodern fragmented condition itself. Giddens' *homo optionis*, for example, may be subject to extreme fragmenting pressures, but it is alive and kicking and making its own way in the world. The fragmentation Giddens describes is a product of sociocultural changes so severe that they force us to reconsider traditional ideas about the formation of identity, but his primary project (especially in his early writings) – the overcoming of the classic sociological dualism between structure and agency and the reintroduction of the subject into social theory (contrary to the premises of structural-functionalism) – still depends upon concepts of shared knowledge and orderly structure in human action. Yes, the world as he sees it has been transformed, perhaps even to the point of unrecognisability, but the enormous significance of the construction of identity – the 'life project' – is retained. Whereas he is broadly postmodern in his rejection of foundationalism and the epistemological certainty that is wedded to scientific claims of objectivity, ultimately Giddens acknowledges the need for and the benefits of a relatively enduring component in the formation of individual identities. In this he is not

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 See Harvey 1989; Hall 1992; McLennan 1992; Dunn 1998; Bauman 2001.

72 Davis 2000b, p.156.

alone. Indeed, it is the failure to construct a viable autobiography that condemns the individual to a 'mundane and routinised existence'.

Giddens' discourse of the self can thus be read optimistically as a celebration of change and social diversity as well as an epitaph for the premodern stability of identity. But it also warns of the continuing ubiquity of the anxiety that surrounds issues of personal identity. With the relaxation of the institutional bonds that used to structure premodern social practices and unify personal identity, the individual is free to be who he or she wants to be, to realise him or herself through the ideology of his or her choosing (and with the aid of any number of self-improvement handbooks). But this freedom comes at a price, as Giddens' theory attempts to explain, since life in the late modern world is shot through with restlessness and distress as a direct consequence of the uncertainty that prevails. The freedom to choose is thus a double-edged sword, and the decline of traditions and rigid ways of being that accompanies the fragmented culture of late-modern society are as likely to be celebrated as genuinely liberalising and positive as they are to be condemned for their transitoriness and chaos. Such ambiguity is as present in the extreme postmodern analyses of societal fragmentation as it is in the more cautious depictions, though this point is also often overlooked or deliberately ignored.⁷³

Bauman is relatively sanguine about postmodern thought, though he is also aware of the great danger it poses. Although he expounds a more extreme theory of fragmentation than Giddens, he is making a very similar point when he speaks of the transformation of identity 'from a "given" into a "task"'.⁷⁴ And yet he continues to see enormous promise in this concept of identity, and through it the establishment of a new and positive individualism:

There seems to be a genuine emancipatory chance in that postmodern condition of ours; the chance of laying down arms, suspending border battles waged to keep the stranger away, taking apart the mini-Berlin Walls erected daily and meant to keep people at a distance and separate. This chance does not lie in a celebration of a born-again ethnicity and in genuine or invented tribal tradition, but in bringing to its conclusion the 'disembedding' work of modernity, through focusing on the right to choose one's identity as the sole universality of the citizen/human, on the ultimate, inalienable individual responsibility for choice.⁷⁵

Certainly, Bauman suggests, uncertainty and anxiety are rampant in contemporary society, but this situation might also signify grounds for optimism:

73 Thiselton is a prime example of an author whose concern to defend a more traditional concept of identity results in an unrepresentative portrait of the postmodern condition. His extremely generalised summary focuses solely upon fragmentation, anxiety, despair and oppression at the expense of postmodernity's celebration of diversity and its emancipatory optimism (see Thiselton 1995).

74 Bauman 2001, p.144.

75 Ibid., p.95.

Unpredictability breeds anxiety and fear ... [but] one can make things better than they are, and need not settle for what there is since no verdict of nature is final, no resistance of reality is unbreakable ... Anxiety and audacity, fear and courage, despair and hope are born together.⁷⁶

A similar ambiguity is expressed by Gergen, who refers to the angst and sense of chaos that accompany multiphrenia, while emphasising the opportunities that this condition presents for promoting self-expansion in an unsettling world. Accordingly, he deliberately refrains from characterising it as an 'illness' of any kind.⁷⁷ In fact, in his most famous work, *The Saturated Self*, he sees greater promise in postmodernity than either Giddens or Bauman. When the postmodern consciousness is fully realised, he suggests, sacrificing the idea that the same enduring 'I' lurks behind different experiences will free human beings from the 'severe stresses of multiphrenia'.⁷⁸ From this perspective self-alienation is not conquered through the restoration of common stable systems of meaning, or through the discovery of an authentic enduring self, but through the acceptance that persons are fundamentally plural. Inner peace will accompany the acceptance of defeat in the personal struggle to be unified. Gergen attributes a pointed quote to the Arabian poet Sami Ma'ari: 'Identities are highly complex, tension filled, contradictory, and inconsistent entities. Only the one who claims to have a simple, definite, and clear-cut identity has an identity problem.'⁷⁹

Not everyone will feel comfortable with such extreme positions as Gergen, who at times appears to seek release from the angst of multiphrenia through the abnegation of personal responsibility. But there are milder expressions of hope for the fragmented self that retain ideas of personal continuity and all the existential security that comes with it. Despite its description of radical social upheaval, the pluralisation of life-worlds and personas, enduring scepticism about the possibilities of objective knowledge, and even the uncertainty and instability that accompanies the contemporary condition, postmodern social theory is not necessarily negatively predisposed towards fragmentation. To the contrary, both the fragmentation of society and culture and the fragmentation of identity often receive positive or, at least, ambiguous reviews.⁸⁰

76 Ibid., p.141. However, he continues, 'The proportion in which they are mixed depends on the resources in one's possession. Owners of foolproof vessels and skilled navigators view the sea as the site of exciting adventure; those condemned to unsound and hazardous dinghies would rather hide behind breakwaters and think of sailing with trepidation. Fears and joys emanating from the instability of things are distributed highly unequally.' (ibid., p.142) Success or failure in the modern world, he is arguing, must depend to a certain extent upon the individual.

77 Gergen 1991, p.74.

78 Ibid., p.156.

79 Quoted in Gergen 1991, p.155.

80 See particularly McAdams 1997; Ashmore and Jussim 1997; Dunn 1998.

This conclusion might seem surprising given the infamy of certain psychopathologies that are defined according to the breakdown in the sense of self-unity that they precipitate. Psychologists often explicitly identify sound mental health with concepts of self-unity and integration. Conditions such as multiple personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder have come to dominate psychotherapeutic understandings of self-fragmentation, and interest in these conditions has sporadically surfaced in philosophical analyses of the (im)possibility and (un)importance of self-unity. Although 'pathology' is also a concept that can be understood in many different ways, much of psychology has actually ceased to see self-multiplicity as pathological.⁸¹ As Featherstone argues:

This postmodern, anti essentialist critique of identity thinking is something which emphasizes that instability and lack of fixity should not necessarily be seen as pathological and signs of an identity crisis. This contrasts with some of the theories of identity in the past, as, for example, in the 1950's, when the maintenance of a stable centered self was seen by psychologists as important for mental health.⁸²

As I will argue in the following chapter, though, this conclusion depends very much upon the type of self-fragmentation that is under the microscope.

Rappoport, Gardner and Boone see the normalisation of self-pluralism as a distinctively postmodern contribution to concepts of mental health, suggesting that 'What *is* new, and essentially postmodern, is the idea that pluralism is not necessarily bad, or something to be reduced or eliminated in favor of hierarchical integration.'⁸³ This, of course, is to speak of the possible pathology of self-fragmentation only as a mental illness. In the context of a particular social, historical and philosophical climate there are many more ways in which self-fragmentation might be considered to be correlated with a social malaise, even if it is not a direct product of that malaise.⁸⁴ Although some may celebrate the emancipation

81 Though there are undoubtedly certain conditions that might be considered abnormal or pathological in all cultures at all times, these are both extreme and relatively rare cases. Attitudes to the majority of conditions that are currently considered to signify mental 'abnormality' have changed considerably over the years and are still changing, as the constant revising and updating of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals of Mental Disorders (DSM) clearly shows. Furthermore, attitudes to mental health issues vary significantly from culture to culture, as well as from era to era, and some conditions are defined entirely in relation to societally delineated notions of what is socially 'acceptable'.

82 Featherstone 2000, p.54.

83 Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone 1999, p.96. See also Fee 2000.

84 Although postmodern epistemologies invalidate appraisals of self-multiplicity as pathological by precluding the conceptual possibility (historical or contemporary) of normal stable or unified identities, postmodern cultural analyses and the place of the singular human person within that culture lead to a variety of assumptions regarding recent transformations in experiences of individual self-stability. Discussions of the uncertainty, ontological angst and fear that pervade contemporary life are very much part of modern

from institutional determinism that postmodern individuals enjoy, others, such as the Anglican theologian Anthony Thiselton, associate self-fragmentation with a climate of suspicion and manipulation. In this discourse Foucauldian discourses of discipline, power, and the submission of the self disarmed by the negation of rational dialogue predominate.⁸⁵ However, the focus of this book is squarely upon the conceptualisation and experience of self-fragmentation as opposed to its wider political and ethical constraints, so it is in terms of mental disorder that I shall most often refer to the possible pathology of this condition in subsequent chapters.⁸⁶ Particularly, I shall argue in Chapters 5 and 6, it is this notion of pathology that resonates throughout contemporary theological anthropology's idealisation of self-unity.

Psychology offers further ways of understanding the fragmented individual in isolation from sociological and cultural meta-processes. Even if we succeed in charting the relationship between societal change and self-fragmentation in isolation from abstract modernist discourses of self-alienation, this is just the starting point for any analysis of the pathology of self-multiplicity.⁸⁷ The sociology of the fragmented self can offer useful insights into the relationship between society and individuals, and it illustrates potentially beneficial aspects of self-multiplicity, but uncertainty and anxiety, optimism and excitement, are only very general and vague concepts as far as the study of mental health is concerned. To understand the naturalness or pathology of self-multiplicity in terms of the structure and experience of individual persons, it is necessary to delve deeper into human psychology. Mental health is, after all, the domain of psychologists, and no

discourses of pathology. Though the relationship between structure and agency remains a central problem for sociology, the processual, ephemeral nature of modern society, exposed through discourses of detraditionalisation, globalisation and reflexivity are closely related to these concepts of individual pathology, implying, even, a society-wide pathology of sorts.

85 See Thiselton 1995. See also Foucault 1970; Bauman 1992; Hall 1992; Berry and Wernick 1992.

86 It is widely agreed that postmodernity challenges the very concept of pathology by suggesting the social construction of pathologies and the sociohistorical situatedness of diagnoses. A central question of Fee's book *Pathology and the Postmodern* is, therefore, 'Is it possible to discuss mental pathology as a socio-historical and linguistic construction and as a "true" debilitating condition?' (Fee 2000, p.2).

87 As a means of grounding fundamental changes in the basic ways in which identities are formed, the sociological critique of contemporary society is not sufficient. Rather, it offers valuable insights into the complexification of identity formation in the modern world when compared with other historical periods. One aspect of this complexification, albeit an extremely significant one, is the decreasing coherence of the unified self. Hence, even if sociologists cannot provide evidence that there has been a dramatic qualitative change in the psychological processes through which people form their identities and senses of self, they are at least entitled to argue that, according to widely accepted ideas of what the stability of identity means, contemporary identities are less stable now than ever before.

amount of anecdotal sociological evidence will shed any light upon the possibility that some degrees of fragmentation are experienced as less troubling than others.

We must bear in mind, however, that there is a complex interplay between sociological and psychological accounts of self-fragmentation if the concept of pathology in this context is not to become completely vacuous. To dispense with a sociological understanding would be to remove the concepts of pathology and mental health from their cultural moorings, and to condemn the concept of self to the sort of autonomous existence that is now almost universally rejected.⁸⁸ To rely solely upon sociological descriptions of self-fragmentation would be to neglect both the role that individual psychological and biological processes play in the construction of self and their relation to the wider world of social interaction and communication. Sociological and psychological conceptions of self-fragmentation must be examined side by side with the philosophical, historical and theological if we are to achieve anything like a rounded view of this contentious subject. Thus, I do not mean to privilege psychological modes of explanation over the sociological or the theological. I am merely suggesting that an understanding of different types of discourse might provide more detailed answers to the questions at the heart of this book. It is surely the case that personal and sub-personal psychological as well as sociological perspectives on these issues will further clarify the ways in which concepts of self-fragmentation problematise the particular notions of self-unity that theological anthropologies hold so dear, and thus help to identify the extent of the secular human sciences' convergence and divergence with explicitly theological concerns.

Let me conclude by summarizing how this discussion of recent social theory might contribute to our understanding of self-fragmentation. There is a sense in which the cultural developments of the second half of the twentieth century have fragmented the self in unprecedented ways, even if many of them are not unique to the late-modern/postmodern period. There may still be common grounds of experience in the globalised world, but these are very different to the stable communities of premodernity, and are themselves diverse and perpetually in transition. With the changing face of communal ways of being, and in the presence of technological globalisation and the mass media, people form greater numbers and different types of relationships. This enables a new understanding of the instability and pluralisation of identity, which is practically and theoretically distinct from the pluralisation of social roles that began in modernity. Self-fragmentation has come to be understood in terms of a pluralisation of independent, situation-specific and relatively superficial selves, not as the disjunction between an authentic private self and a person's social roles. Individual persons are continually under reconstruction and, as the 'population of the individual self' continues to expand, personhood has

⁸⁸ It is certain that ideas of mental health are, to a certain extent, culturally mediated. For more general critiques of the sociocultural basis of psychopathology in postmodernity see Fee 2000.

become a fluid condition; it is more of a process than a stable centre of being.⁸⁹ Contemporary personhood is revealed in its adaptability to new situations and its capacity for change.

However, we must remember that there are several different ways of conceiving of self-fragmentation and its causes, and that not all of these tie self-fragmentation tightly to concepts of societal change. Nor do all broadly postmodern positions equate the reality of self-pluralisation with the dissolution of the concept of identity or the personal need for a sense of continuity. I have suggested that individuals might be fragmented to the extent that the idea of a unified, pre-formed essential self can no longer be entertained, but that a sense of continuity can still survive. To explain this continuity, we must appeal to the idea that situation-specific selves might be related to each other over the course of that individual's life through an active process of identity construction. This notion of the 'narrative identity' is amongst the most important and influential ideas to arise out of recent discussions of modern society's fragmenting forces and the plight of the individual in episodic life. Its promise lies in its potential to reconcile the multiple sources of identity that compete chaotically for attention in the fragmented social world with the proliferation of seemingly autonomous personas, and the intuition that each person has of being essentially the same person through time – the self-reflexive sense of having a personal history of experience. This, in Giddens' words, is the life-project – a highly qualified understanding of identity, which is better described as being a process of identification rather than an unchanging essence.

Not everyone agrees that self-fragmentation is the existential nightmare it is sometimes supposed to be. According to some theorists, it can be seen as a liberating and socially adaptive feature of the human being. Indeed, the chameleonic ability to mutate according to particular surroundings would seem to be a positive asset in the perpetual flux of modern life. This, however, is as much a question for psychologists as for sociologists, and will be tackled in much greater detail in the following two chapters as I explore the naturalness of self-plurality and disunity in contemporary psychology.

89 This is Gergen's term (Gergen 1991).

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The Problem of the Self and its Representation

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself.

(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

(Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, 1855.)

Whereas sociologists have addressed the implications that the demise of traditional social structures and the fragmentation of systems of value have for the stability of identity, psychologists have sought to explain the disunity of self and identity in terms of biological, cognitive and developmental psychological processes. Before proceeding to describe these processes and their wider implications for the concept of personhood, I must draw attention to an important terminological difference that exists between the majority of sociological discourses and psychological theories of self. Sociological discourses of identity often use the terms ‘self-fragmentation’ and ‘self-multiplicity’ interchangeably, but, psychologically, the term ‘fragmentation’ carries undertones of pathology that, as I will argue below, not all psychologists wish to emphasise. In the psychological literature, the terms ‘multiplicity’ or ‘plurality’ are most often substituted where the disunity of the self is explored on less value-laden grounds.¹ This terminological distinction is subtle and does not usually reflect a distinction in the subject matter that underlies psychological theories of the unity or disunity of personhood. Rather, it is evidence of individual biases in perspective.

Although psychological studies of self-multiplicity are not completely independent modes of analysis to those presented by social theory and philosophy, since contemporary psychology is itself embedded in sociocultural and philosophical discourses, they do offer unique insights that can be largely divorced from concepts of societal change and the destabilising rhetoric of (post)modernism. Specifically, psychology sheds light on how intrapersonal psychological structures and processes are implicated in theories of self-multiplicity and self-unity. This does not imply an isolation of individual psychological phenomena from their

1 McAdams observes that whereas the term ‘multiplicity’ tends to be used to refer to models of self that advocate an adaptive perspective of multiple selves, the term ‘fragmentation’ tends to be used when it is discussed in the context of pathology (McAdams 1997).

sociocultural sources, just a switch in focus from social context to the individual consequences of that context.

White's primary concern was to critique the abstract self of modernity, hence he focused on one particular idea – the extrapersonal relational basis of identity – which he believed to hold the key to the resolution of our contemporary predicament. I intend to show both that the theoretical problems of the self run much deeper, and that, from a psychological perspective, contemporary theories of self-fragmentation are more complex than anti-modernist discourses of self-alienation can capture. Since theological engagement with psychological ideas of the plural self has been so scarce, my initial objective must be to develop a framework within which a subtle dissection of the concepts of self-multiplicity and unity is possible. With this in mind, I will introduce two crucial theoretical distinctions in this chapter. The first is between two broad categories of theories of self – representational and experiential theories. The second is between two ways to understand self-multiplicity in relation to these theories – synchronically (in any given moment) and diachronically (over a period of time). With the aid of this conceptual scheme, I eventually hope to show that not all forms of self-multiplicity are necessarily incompatible with all forms of self-unity. The humanist psychologists John Rowan and Mick Cooper provide a concise description of the sort of moderate position that I wish to argue for here:

The essence of a self-pluralistic approach is the proposition that an individual can be conceptualised as a plurality of qualitatively distinct selves as well as a one: an interpenetrative, dialogical constellation of 'subselves', 'subpersonalities', 'ego-states', 'voices', 'parts', 'roles', 'alter egos', 'potentials', or 'selves' and 'others'. In this respect, a self-pluralistic perspective moves on from modernism's unified self, but it does not go so far as to kill off that subjectivity entirely. Rather, it postulates an individual who encounters his or her world from a plurality of positions, through a plurality of voices, in relation to a plurality of self-concepts, yet who still retains a meaningful coherence, both at the level of the constituent pluralities and at the level of the total system.²

To begin with, however, my ambitions are limited to defending three specific claims. First, not all theories of self-multiplicity or self-unity attempt to ask or answer the same questions. Rather, the study of the self is the study of a variety of different issues, which cannot be captured by a single overarching reductive theory of what the self essentially is. Secondly, when considered in terms of self-representations, the self is synchronically and diachronically plural. That is to say that many different, largely autonomous self-representations simultaneously inhere in the individual, and that these do not merge into a unified self-representation over time. My third key claim is that the construction of a multiplicity of self-representations can be seen as an inevitable product of normal psychological functioning; it is neither pathological nor problematic.

2 Rowan and Cooper 1999, p.2.

Is There a ‘Problem’ of the Self?

One might expect a compelling psychological account of self-fragmentation to be impossible unless we are able, first, to define what is meant by the term ‘self’. Unfortunately, theological, philosophical and human-scientific discussions of the self seem to share a common problem – they often find it difficult to escape the terminological muddle surrounding this ubiquitous yet elusive concept. This is implicit in Taylor’s and Seigel’s intellectual histories and Woodhead’s and Dunn’s arguments that at least four distinct strands of selfhood co-developed in modernity, but the inclusion of a psychological perspective increases the number of concepts of self still further. Hence, it is common for people to complain about the confusion that arises from the application of a limited number of terms to a large number of different concepts, processes and structures, and still further difficulties arise when assumptions are made about the universality of specific accounts of the self, as exceptions are never difficult to find.

Consequently, boundaries between concepts such as ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘self’, ‘ego’ and ‘self-consciousness’ (to name but a few) have become blurred. Most are agreed, though, that human beings can be discussed in the terms of several categories, each of which refers to aspects of the person that differ in their inclusiveness. ‘Ego’, for example, is usually used in a more restrictive sense than ‘self’ or ‘person’. ‘Person’ is typically the most overarching of all these terms, but, as Kathleen Wilkes observes, ‘there is a lot of competition for a “pole position” notion.’³ Commonly, ‘person’ denotes the sum total of the human individual when considered as a whole – including the physical body, the mind, a personal history of experience, and the reflexive sense of self.⁴ The distinguished philosopher and psychologist Rom Harré, for example, uses ‘person’ to refer to ‘a human being as a social and psychological being, as a human organism having a sense of its place among others of its kind, a sense of its own history and beliefs about at least some of its attributes’.⁵ Michael Apter, though he would surely agree with Harré’s description, places his emphasis on the sense of individual distinctness evoked by the concept of person, suggesting that each is also a unique entity both spatially and temporally, exhibiting ‘A sense of personal distinctness, a sense of personal continuity, and a sense of personal autonomy’.⁶ The term ‘self’, according to Harré’s definition, emphasises the interior world of the individual. It has typically

3 Wilkes 1999, p.25.

4 However, as Teichman notes, there are dangers with such broad definitions of persons, which can lead to definitions that include, ‘... machines, chimpanzees, and dolphins’ (Teichman 1985).

5 Harré 1998, p.73.

6 Apter 1991.

done duty, he says, 'for the many aspects of personal being that appear in personal and private regard'.⁷

It is extremely important, however, to note that these various concepts do not just differ in terms of inclusiveness. The extent to which a particular term adequately describes a particular concept is dictated by more than just the number of individual attributes that need to be covered. The ego of psychoanalytic psychology is not just a smaller portion of the concept of person than the cognitive psychological concept of the self. These are parts of completely different ways of understanding the psychological life of the individual human being, even if psychoanalysts also at times use the term self, and even if psychoanalytic psychology is ultimately compatible with cognitive psychology. And yet these terms are often used interchangeably with little or no concern for their historical, psychological or philosophical distinctiveness.⁸ Frustration with this state of affairs often boils over, but very little progress has ever been made in sorting out the theoretical tangle.

This problem, as Gergen claims, has been compounded by postmodern anti-realist discourse. Noting the gradual decline of discipline-specific languages describing small slices of reality, Gergen argues that the modern ideals of truth and objectivity have been steadily eroded by the blending of previously distinct terminologies. Although modernity fostered the multiplication of competing perspectives, he argues, these soon began to merge with one another, challenging the 'modernist intelligibility that had generated the chaos of competing voices' and undermining each discipline's claims to objective knowledge of a specific area of reality:⁹

As disciplinary vocabularies strengthened, they began to threaten adjoining disciplines through annexation. Thus, chemistry could annex sections of biology, biology could claim sectors of psychology, psychology attempted to reduce sociology to its terms,

7 Harré 1998, p.73. One important caveat, though, must be firmly made at this point: the definitions offered above must be seen as specific to the Western, essentially Christian world, in the latter half of the twentieth century. Concepts of person have changed much over time and those features of the person that are taken for granted in the modern Western world, such as the extent to which they are attributed individuality or perceived to be personally autonomous, are not always so evident in pre-modern thought, or in non-Western cultures. Although I am primarily concerned here with certain contrasts between contemporary Christian theological and psychological anthropologies, I am aware that those concepts are not necessarily representative of the whole gamut of person research.

8 Welker's concern is with the relationship between 'the inner' and 'outer person' when he writes, 'In general, modern common sense seems to mix up the person, the individual, the singularity of the body, the subject, the self, the "I", and other phenomena and concepts' (2000, p.96). Welker is undoubtedly right, though the confusion seems to go much deeper even than this.

9 Gergen 1991, p.88.

sociology claimed expertise in linguistics, linguists claimed that their work could replace sections of philosophy, and so on.¹⁰

Suddenly, the self could be described in any one of a number of languages (or through a mixture of all of them), from theories of cognitive architecture to moral philosophy, none of which could claim to be more appropriate than any other.

Establishing similarities and contradictions between particular theories of self would be made much easier if everyone could agree on a specific terminology, but it is certainly not the case that all conceptual disparities between different theories of the self can all be simply reduced to terminological disparities. There are major substantive differences between current theories of what really appears in ‘personal and private regard’, never mind the centuries of debate about what constitutes the sum total of the human individual.¹¹ As the philosopher Eric Olson suggests, ‘the word “person” is problematic enough that anyone who relies on it in philosophical discussion had better say what she means by it. There is a good deal of dispute about its definition, and about whether it can be defined at all.’¹² Still further difficulties arise through the possibility that not all aspects of selves or their development are universal, despite the fact that a sense of self is commonly believed to be a pancultural phenomenon. The sheer depth of the confusion is exposed in the simple observation that most of these theoretical terms and concepts have been labelled unhelpful, or even completely redundant at some stage or another.

Rising to the challenge of clarifying the nature of the infamous ‘problem’ of the self, Olson takes up the theme of theoretical pluralism, simultaneously suggesting how we might avoid becoming bogged down in the terminological confusion and yet continue to ask interesting questions about the human being. His advice is simply that we stop worrying about it all:

I doubt seriously that there is any such problem ... My trouble is that a problem must be a problem about something: even if there are no selves, there must at least be some problematic idea or concept of a self, if there is to be a problem of the self. As far as I can see there is no such idea. What is a self? For every answer to this question, there is another answer not only incompatible with it, but wholly unrelated. There is virtually no agreement about the characteristic features of selves ... There are not even any agreed paradigm cases of selves, things we could point to or describe and say, “A self is one of those”.¹³

10 Gergen 1991, p.87.

11 Harré has also spent a lot of time and effort trying to dissect the various meanings of ‘self’ that people tend to confuse (Harré, 1998). He concludes, ‘The study of no aspect of humanity is so marked by muddled thinking and confusion of thought as this one.’ (Harré 1998, p.2). This confusion similarly is addressed by Levin and Ashmore and Jussim among others (Levin 1992; Ashmore and Jussim 1997).

12 Olson 1999, p.52.

13 Ibid., p.49.

Following a discussion of the many different incompatible ways in which selves have been described and discussed, Olson concludes that the problem of the self is really about a variety of issues, none of which need to use the word 'self' at all.¹⁴ They can be distinguished according to the sorts of question they ask. Questions like: 'What sorts of things are you and I?' 'What does it take for you and I to persist through time?' 'What is it for one's mental contents to be unified, and to what degree is this ordinarily the case?' 'What is self-consciousness, and how does it relate to consciousness in general?' 'How do these issues relate to moral responsibility?'¹⁵ Other questions that would not look out of place on Olson's list include 'Can the mind be compared to a computer program?' 'How did self-consciousness evolve?' 'What does it mean to say that my sense of myself is distorted?' Perhaps, then, different notions of self would not necessarily be taken to be mutually exclusive if it were recognised that they are answers to different sorts of questions. This is an idea that is beginning to be widely recognised in the psychology and philosophy of identity.¹⁶

We might object that the questions Olson raises and his own preferred terminology are actually no less problematic than the concept of 'self'. Terms like 'consciousness', 'mental contents', and even 'I' and 'me', are subject to similar theoretical divisions to those that characterise the study of the self. Furthermore, it is undoubtedly unrealistic to ask that the word 'self' be removed from our everyday language altogether.¹⁷ So how, in the face of such conceptual chaos, is the study of the self to progress? In this regard, Olson's discussion would seem to lead to two simple propositions. First, what are popularly called 'theories of self' are not necessarily theories about precisely the same thing, though they might conceivably be about specific aspects of the same thing.¹⁸ Secondly, the attempt to construct a single overarching theory of self or personhood that does justice to the many aspects of human psychological, social and physical being that have traditionally been subsumed under the same generic banner will be futile.

As Danziger notes, it is clear that 'The topic of the self is different from many other psychological topics in that psychology has to share it with a number of other disciplines, sociology and psychiatry, to mention only the most obvious ones'.¹⁹ A single academic discipline cannot hope to address all of the

14 Olson himself readily admits that this is not strictly a new idea. Amongst the progenitors of his critique he cites F.H. Bradley (1893), *Appearance and Reality*. London: Allen and Unwin; A. Flew (1949), 'Selves', *Mind*, 63. 355–8; S.E. Toulmin (1977), 'Self-Knowledge and Knowledge of the "Self"', in T. Mischel (ed.) *The Self: Psychological and Philosophical Perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell.

15 Olson 1999, p.59.

16 See Levin 1992, pp.203–9, for a similar analysis.

17 Strawson and Pickering agree with this point (Strawson 1999, p.1; Pickering 1999, p.63).

18 Levin, Ashmore and Jussim, and Gallagher also make precisely this point (Levin 1992; Ashmore and Jussim 1997; Gallagher and Shear 1999b).

19 Danziger 1997, p.137.

questions that characterise the broad study of the self. It is only to be expected that physiological psychology and moral philosophy or theology, for example, will give different sorts of answer to the ontological question of what sorts of things you and I ultimately are. It also seems obvious that cognitive psychology will struggle to relate its schematic representations of social roles and personal attributes to concepts of personal fulfilment. Cognitive psychology explicitly shies away from such value-laden concepts – and evolutionary psychology has little of much interest to contribute to the philosophical debate over the continuity of the sense of self. A variety of foci and even conflicting theses are the inevitable consequences of exploring an area that impinges upon so many areas of human activity. Different questions about self and personhood arise out of different philosophical, psychological, sociological and even theological and religious agendas. Different emphases reflect the different fundamental concerns of different authors and different theories evolve in response to innovations within different fields of research.

In a nutshell, we might conclude that overarching theories of *the* self, whilst they may be internally coherent, will always be too narrow and too restrictive. This emerging recognition that subject-specific concerns will dictate particular discourses of the self has led many to conclude, as Gallagher and Shear do, that ‘the problem of the self is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon like consciousness itself, and that no one discipline on its own will be able to capture it in an adequate way’.²⁰ Rather, theories should be specifically oriented towards distinct attributes of personal being, in acceptance that they cannot be generalised into complete all-inclusive theories of the self. In this era of multiple discourses, the theoretical diversity that surrounds the study of the self cannot be overlooked. In this respect, as in so many others, the problem of the self has a distinctly postmodern flavour. Calvin Schrag, in his widely feted *The Self after Postmodernity*, articulates these ideas clearly:

What thus appears to be at issue is a multiplicity of profiles and perspectives through which the human self moves and is able to come into view. The insinuation of diversity and multiplicity across the spectrum of human affairs is indeed something that we have learned from our postmodern experience and that itself needs to become a topic for discussion.²¹

Olson’s own views might be usefully interpreted as a cautionary note; a caution that is implicit in the works of several other recent authors.²² With respect to the concerns of the first two chapters of this book, such caution can be exercised by recognising both the many questions that must be asked about the self other than

20 Gallagher and Shear 1999, p.xi.

21 Schrag 1997, p.1.

22 See, especially, the edited volumes by Ashmore and Jussim (1997), Gallagher and Shear (1999), and Rowan and Cooper (1999).

whether or not it is autonomous or self-creating, and the many ways of interpreting the impact of societal change upon the self that resist the simple conclusion that it is now irreparably fragmented. We must ask, ‘what is fragmented?’ and ‘how is it fragmented?’, not just ‘is it fragmented?’ And we ought not to be surprised by the range of answers we receive. Unfortunately, the cautious approach that Olson’s arguments endorse is still relatively rare in the recent theological anthropological literature that has addressed the concept of self.

Although I have no interest in calling for the abolition of the word ‘self’ from the human sciences or theological anthropology, Olson’s thesis points towards an attractive means of exploring problems of the self in an interdisciplinary environment. My concerns are with how the human sciences and theologians have used the terms ‘self’ and ‘person’ in relation to different concepts of self-multiplicity and unity and how they interact with one another, not with the metaphysical legitimacy of those concepts *per se*. Nor do I intend to attempt the reduction of a plurality of discourses of self to one meta-discourse. Taking Olson’s arguments to heart, my intention is to explore some of the specific questions that contemporary theological anthropology seeks to address through its theories and concepts of self, and the extent to which its theoretical objectives and existential anxieties overlap with those of the human sciences. In an interdisciplinary context, where the aim is explicitly to set ideas from totally different fields of study in relation to each other, treating different theories and concepts of self-multiplicity and unity as attempts to answer subtly different anthropological questions, some of the inevitable terminological confusion can be swept aside and the moments of consonance or dissonance between a range of approaches can be brought more clearly into focus. The indispensability of an approach that enables such intricate discrimination between different applications of broadly similar terms will, I hope, become perfectly clear once we have witnessed the sheer variety of ways that psychologists have conceptualised the inner disunity of the human individual.

Psychological Models of Self-Fragmentation

Almost from its inception, experimental and theoretical psychology have recognised the inherent multiplicity of the self. In modern psychology this idea owes a large theoretical debt to the work of William James, who conceptually divided the ‘whole’ self into ‘I’, (the ‘pure ego’) and ‘me’ (the ‘empirical self’) components.²³ He further subdivided the ‘empirical self’ into three constituent parts, which he claimed were organised hierarchically – the spiritual self at the

23 James is usually credited with introducing the self and identity as a subject of scientific analysis, as he was the first to suppose that it could be subject to the systematic empirical research procedures that until then were the preserve of the natural sciences (see James 1890). He developed the idea of a multiplicity of selves, though the apparent disunity of the self, soul or person was not an original psychological discovery. Rather, it is an

top, the (plural) social self in the middle, and the material or bodily self at the bottom.²⁴ Although James's idiosyncratic view of the 'whole' self's divisibility has not withstood prolonged theoretical criticism, the principle that the pronouns 'I' and 'me' refer to conceptually distinct aspects of the person is still foundational in a lot of contemporary literature on the subjects of self, identity and consciousness. Zahavi points to the significance of this principle when he writes, 'no matter how complex or differentiated the structure of self-awareness is ultimately shown to be, if the account given is unable to preserve the difference between the first-person and third-person perspectives, unable to capture its referential uniqueness, it has failed as an explanation of self-awareness.'²⁵

For James, a degree of multiplicity is an inevitable consequence of the fact that people form impressions of themselves by internalising the impressions that they believe others have of them. Hence his famous observation that a person could be considered to have 'as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him and carry an image of him in their mind'.²⁶ This idea was duly elaborated in the theories of the symbolic interactionists Charles Cooley and especially George Herbert Mead. It continues to form the basis of the vast majority of contemporary social psychological models of the self. According to these theorists, the self can be described as a multiplicity, developed through the subjective interpretation of the reactions of others in a social context, and continually reconstructed on the basis of new social experience.²⁷

A host of other branches of psychology have more recently contributed to the diversity of concepts of self-multiplicity.²⁸ Just as different points of focus and even conflicting conceptions of self inevitably emerge as a consequence both of the particular agendas of psychologists and the sheer number of contexts in which the study of the self is relevant, so do different psychological concepts of

idea that is firmly grounded in many centuries of philosophical and theological tradition, appearing in a clearly recognisable form as early as Augustine's *Confessions*.

24 This hierarchy reflects his view that the material body is the foundation for all other selves and that the spiritual self is the apex of a person's individuality, comprising their 'thoughts, dispositions, moral judgements, and so on', which he considered to be '... the more enduring aspects of the self' (Harter 1996, p.2).

25 Zahavi 1999, p.13.

26 James 1890, p.294.

27 The theory of the social construction of the self finds early and elegant expression in Cooley's famous concept of the 'looking-glass self' – the idea that an individual comes to know him or herself only by assimilating the reactions of others towards him or herself into a self-image (see Cooley 1902).

28 Social psychology occupies a particularly important place in the contemporary study of the self as advances in empirical methodology, including more precise data-gathering procedures and more sophisticated data-analytic methods, have reinvigorated the scientific study of the self. Research in this area has mushroomed in recent years. See, for example, Higgins 1987; Hermans and Kempen 1993; Bracken 1996; Rosenberg 1997.

self-multiplicity.²⁹ Lancaster, for example, whose aim is explicitly to clarify the biological substrates of human psychological being, understands multiplicity in terms of neuropsychological models of the multiplicity of brain functions.³⁰ Other biologically constrained concepts of self-multiplicity derive from famous studies of so-called ‘split-brain patients’, who simultaneously exhibit two very different personalities as the result of the surgical division (cerebral commissurotomy) of the two hemispheres of the brain.³¹

Without doubt different psychological discourses lead to different ways of understanding the unity and multiplicity of self, but there is also plenty of room within a single discourse for a range of different agendas and concepts to be expressed. The field of cognitive science is especially prone to theoretical disunity about these things. Cognitive scientists, most of whom are as committed to physiological explanations of psychological phenomena as neuropsychologists are, have focused upon explaining the mind’s construction in terms of multiple, independent, physiologically instantiated ‘modules’, each of which governs distinct sorts of psychological process.³² These functional theories of cognitive multiplicity have in turn influenced several diverse fields of psychology. The evolutionary palaeo-archaeologist Steven Mithen, for example, bases his account of the origins of the self, or self-consciousness, upon the modular multiplicity that he assumes underpins the mind. The unique capacity for self-reflexivity, he assumes, is a relatively recent human development enabled by the flow of information between several distinct mental modules. His aim is to explain the origin of this capacity in terms of the evolutionary pressures that would have acted upon the early hominids, including the rapid expansion of their societies and the selective advantages bestowed on those who learned to use tools.³³ It is an interesting, if occasionally speculative story, which culminates in the emergence of a sort of psychological unity out of a structure that was initially disunified both mentally and physiologically. Since his primary interest is in explaining the origins of symbolic art and culture, which he believes are the ultimate expressions of the unified mind, Mithen’s account of the self deviates from many others within cognitive science, even those that are built upon some of the same basic theoretical suppositions.

29 Brook is making a similar point when he suggests that ‘Unity of consciousness ... is only one of the relevant kinds of mental unity. Others include: cognitive unity (ability to bring a vast range of cognitive resources to bear on a single problem), unity of focus (ability to focus resources, including attention, on an objective), and unity of behaviour (ability to keep all our vast repertoire of bodily motions and dispositions coordinated). Even within unity of consciousness a distinction needs to be made between unity of simple consciousness and unity of consciousness itself’ (Brook 1999, p.43n).

30 Lancaster 1997.

31 See Sperry 1977; Eccles 1989; Toates 1996.

32 The concept of the functionally divided mind represents a key theoretical bridge between biology and psychology. See Elman et al. 1996.

33 Mithen 1998, p.8.

Dan Dennett, for example, shares Mithen's understanding of mental modularity, but he diverges from him in his final rejection of psychological unity. Dennett's primary allegiance, in this case, is to a model of mind that repudiates the existence of a central superordinate self, and instead emphasises the idiosyncratic roles of specific cognitive subsystems. For Dennett, a sense of self-unity is attainable, but it amounts to nothing more than a convenient abstraction – a passively constructed 'centre of narrative gravity' that helps orient the person in the physical world.³⁴ The mind itself remains very much divided. Inasmuch as both Mithen and Dennett attempt to elucidate the relationship between brain, mind and self-consciousness, their theoretical agendas share certain similarities, as do their understandings of the cognitive structure upon which the self supervenes. However, they reach very different conclusions about self-multiplicity and self-unity.³⁵

Cognitive psychologists have also contributed to this expansive literature in a variety of ways. Amongst the most important is their demonstration of the existence of multiple schematised self-concepts that collectively direct individual behaviour and allow predictions of the likely outcome of events based upon previous experience.³⁶ These psychologists (especially in the formative years of the discipline), in an attempt to demonstrate the validity of a computational metaphor, were driven by the need to describe mind and self in terms of subsystems and programmes. In this context the field of artificial intelligence and cybernetics programs have also become relevant to the study of the self.³⁷

And there are still further ways of conceptualising self-multiplicity. Psychoanalytic and object-relational theories concern themselves with the processes of intrapsychic splitting and dissociation, which they suppose can lead to the construction of complete distinct sub-personalities within an individual.³⁸ Psychoanalytic interests in this field are mostly focused upon the possibility that a unified personality might break up over a period of time as a consequence of traumatic events or the failure to resolve intrapsychic dilemmas. Other clinical psychologists also engage with the multiplicity of individual personalities through the analysis and treatment of specific conditions such as schizophrenia and various

34 See Dennett 1991.

35 Dennett 1991. A similar view of the multiplicity of the self is taken by Minsky 1986.

36 For example, see Markus 1977; Wilcox and Williams 1990; Eysenck and Keane 1990; Hinde 1997.

37 Dupuy argues that the concept of the plural and internally conflictual self owes a substantial theoretical debt to cybernetics. He writes, 'If one reads contemporary cognitive philosophy on consciousness and the self, one cannot help but be struck by its constant use of social and political metaphors, even electoral ones ... Cybernetics heralded all this, as the first harbinger of a new philosophy. But it was to a large extent unaware that it bore this message, because it never acknowledged the contribution made by established – sometimes long established – disciplines to the analysis of its chosen subject: the life of the mind' (Dupuy 1994, p.161).

38 For example, see Klein 1948; Grotstein 1997, 1999; Perlow 1995; Rowan 1999.

personality disorders including ‘borderline personality disorder’, and ‘dissociated identity disorder’ (formerly known as ‘multiple personality disorder’). In all these cases, an explicit contrast is drawn between non-pathological and pathological forms of self-multiplicity or personality dissociation. Here, the dominant themes are therapy and pathology, and multiplicity is most often treated as a subjective experience of disunity – a significantly different context to that of the cognitive psychologists and cognitive scientists, whose primary goal is to explain the underlying structural multiplicity.

Even from this very brief survey it ought to be clear that there is extensive agreement amongst psychologists of all descriptions that human persons are, at some level, disunified, although the precise sense in which that disunity is conceived varies between theorists, and sometimes even between theorists who share other theoretical commitments. There is no single theory or agenda that unifies psychological concepts of self-multiplicity, even if there is some common ground in other areas. For example, contemporary psychologists are almost unanimously agreed that selves are formed in and through experience of the extrapersonal world. However the self is actually conceived in modern thought, the idea that it is an autonomous, unchanging and unified essence of personhood has been totally abandoned. This at least opens up the possibility of a certain theoretical continuity between psychologists and social theorists regarding the reality of self-fragmentation in the contemporary world. That is not to say that recent sociological theories of self-fragmentation are ultimately psychological in nature. They each bring something unique to concepts of individual disunity. In fact, the chief benefit of psychological theorising in this respect is arguably that it crystallises certain distinctions between different sorts of fragmentation that cannot adequately be represented by sociological or epistemological arguments. This is crucial if we are to heed Olson’s warnings about constructing overly general theories of self.

Given the breadth of the topic and the variety of positions that different theorists hold, clarity is of the utmost importance, both as regards the nature of the distinctions I wish to draw between different concepts of unity and multiplicity and the scope of the claims that can be made on the basis of such distinctions. There are obviously many possible ways to distinguish between different theories and concepts. Those I have chosen here are certainly among the most significant in the last 20 years of philosophical and psychological thinking about identity, and yield especially interesting insights in a theological context.³⁹ Specifically, I propose to assess ideas about the unity and multiplicity of the self in the context of two broad types of contemporary psychological theory. The first type concerns what might be described as ‘representational theories of self’.⁴⁰ These theories

39 See Olson 1997, for an assessment of the ubiquity of these issues in contemporary philosophy of identity.

40 The term ‘representational theories’ has been chosen over other viable candidates including ‘structural theories’ in order to capture this diversity. Not everyone who makes claims about self-representations makes the cognitive structure of those representations

concern the manner of the conscious or unconscious representation, organisation and psychological processing of self-relevant information. They attempt to answer diverse theoretical questions regarding the conceptual structure of the self such as how people acquire concepts of themselves, how information pertaining to these concepts is organised, how much of this information is conscious at any given time, and whether this information coheres into a unified whole 'self-concept', or a multiplicity of contributory 'self-representations'. The second type of theory attempts to answer existential questions about the *sense* of self. These are about the various ways that self and others are experienced and are, therefore, related to ways of being in the world: do people experience themselves differently according to different social relationships and social contexts, or is there some sort of common experiential basis to all their senses of self? Clearly, these two types of theory are intimately interrelated, and some questions will specifically conjoin the two (such as how a particular self-representation affects the sense of self at any given moment), but the distinction remains valid nonetheless.

Furthermore, with respect to each of these types of theory, I want to distinguish between concepts of synchronic and diachronic unity and multiplicity.⁴¹ The question of whether the self-concept is unified from moment to moment, then, would be a question about the diachronic unity of self-representations, whereas the extent of its unification at any given time would be a question about the synchronic unity of self-representations.⁴² Decoupling these two understandings of self-unity admits the possibility that personhood might be unified in some respects, yet simultaneously plural in others. The argument of Chapter 4, for example, will be that people tend to have a unified sense of self when considered synchronically, and yet seem to experience themselves in a number of vastly different ways diachronically. By making such a distinction, unity ceases to be an inflexible monolithic concept and concepts of personhood assume a theoretical dynamism that they are otherwise denied.

Interestingly, the distinction between diachronic and synchronic notions of unity reflects a distinction between the respective concerns of modern and postmodern theories of self. Clearly, the idea that the self is not a single static

explicit, and not everyone who has detailed the cognitive structure of the self is interested in how, or to what effect, that structure becomes the object of reflexive consciousness.

41 Such a distinction would not be relevant if the self were considered to be the unchanging transcendental subject of experience as in the Cartesian tradition. However, I am concerned here with how the self is portrayed in contemporary psychology. As Radden notes, most of social science in the twentieth century is based upon primary assumptions about the self, especially its developmental nature, that preclude the Cartesian concept of self, which encompasses a unifying principle that ensures perfect and continuous identity throughout a person's life (Radden 1999).

42 In making this distinction, I take my lead from the philosopher of mind Galen Strawson's work (Strawson 1999). However, its significance is also recognised elsewhere (see Braude 1991; White 1991; Ashmore and Jussim 1997; Olson 1997; Radden 1999; Rowan and Cooper 1999).

essence or underlying substrate of being, but rather changes over time, is not novel. It characterises, amongst other things, the transition from dualist to monist or physicalist theories of self, and is a central premise of contemporary psychology. Indeed, one of psychology's primary goals over the last century has been to clarify the nature of this development. But self-development was traditionally considered to be a purely diachronic evolutionary process instigated by worldly experience, which shaped a person's self-image and determined subsequent behaviour. Behind the early modern problem of identity is the desire to connect successive selves or self-concepts to one another in a bid to explain the sense of self-continuity – to account for why individuals believe themselves in the evening to be the same person that woke up in the morning. Among the many changes in perception that late-modern or postmodern psychology has encouraged, is the idea that the problem of identity is not limited to explaining the plurality of a person's various concepts of self and identity over time, but also to understanding the plurality of selves that are fighting for expression simultaneously. Contemporary cognitive psychology, to which we now turn, strongly supports the idea that such a battle is indeed continuously taking place beneath the surface of our conscious lives.

Multiplicity and the Representation of Self

From this point, the focus will be upon the concepts of self-multiplicity and self-unity as they are manifest above the level of cognitive architecture, and not the details of how they might be described in neuropsychological or cognitive scientific terms.⁴³ This is the level at which theology has maintained an interest in the unity of self and, as such, is the level at which any dialogue between theology and psychology must occur. This is not to say that cognitive architecture is not of any relevance to modern theological anthropology, but this is not the place for that discussion since multiplicity at the cognitive architectural level has little bearing upon multiplicity at the conceptual or experiential levels. Because the nature of the relationship of mind to brain is not yet a matter of undisputed fact, there is no reason to doubt that a multiplicity of discrete mental modules is entirely compatible with notions of synchronic and diachronic experiential and representational self-unity and multiplicity. Of primary concern for the remainder of this chapter is rather the issue of how personally relevant information is organised within the individual mind, and whether or not this information forms a single coherent whole, or discrete self-representations that can function independently from one another to a certain extent.

The fact that each person is capable of forming a multiplicity of self-representations, which are neither synchronically nor diachronically unified, can be clearly illustrated through a discussion of one particular hypothetical cognitive

43 The evidence for the localisation of some psychological capacities in specific brain areas is extremely strong (See Elman et al. 1996; Fodor 1981, 1998).

structure – the schema – that is very widely supposed to play an important part in the organisation of self-knowledge.⁴⁴ The idea of the self as a passive subject of experience has been in recession since psychology's earliest days as an empirical academic discipline. Similarly, the idea that the self-concept is a simple monolithic entity is now dreadfully outdated. The development and popularity of schema theories has coincided with a mass of empirical support for the idea that the self is complicit in the interpretation of experience and the active structuring of behaviour.⁴⁵ Though early cognitive theories of self formulated in terms of scripts and prototypes were widely criticised for their rigidity and inability to represent complex information, contemporary models that prioritise the flexibility of psychological structures and processes above all else have reinvigorated the field in recent years.⁴⁶

Central to the idea of the schema is the notion that information is 'stored in networks of modular units within hierarchical systems'.⁴⁷ The clinical psychologist Drew Westen observes that, in its simplest form, a schema can be conceived as 'an organised knowledge structure that aids processing of information about a given domain'.⁴⁸ Collectively, schemata are presumed to be plastic (that is to say flexible and easily adaptable), multi-layered cognitive entities that serve both to represent relationships between specific concepts and govern and predict behaviour on the basis of previously organised knowledge and experience. Hence, some think of them as 'structures of expectations'.⁴⁹ It is important to stress the fact, however, that even the strongest theoretical articulations of knowledge structures do not claim exhaustively to have explained the processes involved in the mental categorisation of objects and relational information. Their ambitions do not stretch beyond the simple elucidation of the central cognitive structures and mechanisms involved, and they are, broadly speaking, perfectly content to concede the possibility that these may in turn be complemented by other processes. How the specific concepts of each schema relate to one another depends on the nature of the context

44 The idea that information can be represented in schematic networks is compatible with either connectionist or computational models of cognitive architecture. In this respect they differ only as regards what they perceive to be the appropriate level of implementation. Computationalists argue that implementation takes place at the representational level, whereas connectionists suppose it takes place at the neuronal level (See Fodor 1998, pp.145–9).

45 Though the dynamism of the self is much older than cognitive psychology's adoption of schema theory as an explanatory framework, the need for empirical support of this principle has motivated more recent research. As Markus and Wurf noted in 1987, 'The unifying premise of the last decade's research on the self is that the self-concept does not just reflect on-going behaviour but instead mediates and regulates this behaviour' (Markus and Wurf 1987, p.299).

46 See Bracken 1996.

47 Hinde 1997, p.24.

48 Westen 1992, p.3.

49 Chafe 1990, p.82.

in which they were experienced and how they are subsequently deployed in its understanding.

Distinguished psychologists Hazel Markus, Paula Nurius and Daphna Oyserman have collectively spearheaded the proposal that the self is more accurately described as a collection of interrelated self-schemata, each of which organises and encodes particular pieces of information about perceived personal knowledge or interpersonal relationships.⁵⁰ According to this model, multiple representations of self exist, not all of which are available at any one time. To the contrary, Markus prefers to emphasise ‘working, on-line’, or ‘accessible’ self-representations whereby the whole self-concept is a dynamic structure that remains continually active.⁵¹ Hence, as Mandler notes, ‘previously activated schemata interact to facilitate and/or inhibit other [mental] structures and schemata.’⁵² Oyserman and Markus argue that some conceptions are ‘tentative, fleeting and peripheral, others are highly elaborated and function as enduring, meaning-making, or interpretative structures that help individuals lend coherence to their own life experiences’.⁵³

Different representations of self can be equated from this perspective with certain patterns of self-relevant, context-dependent information. An individual might, for example, construct a variety of distinct self-schemata on the basis of their experiences as a teacher, a mother, as someone who enjoys gardening, and as the victim of a traumatic event. The number of potential self-schemata developed in this way is theoretically infinite. Depending upon the demands made of an individual in a given situation, be they social, emotional, intellectual (etc.), one or more of these self-schemata could become active, and subsequently guide behaviour until the immediate context changes sufficiently to require the activation of another (perhaps very different) self-schema.⁵⁴ They might simply be described as ‘dispositional structures’, and they are never completed; the process of constructing, dismantling and reconstructing specific schemata continues from their cognitive emergence to their ultimate demise, however that is brought about.⁵⁵

Empirical support for the existence of self-schemata has been garnered from experimental procedures that measure attention and response times to closely related information. It is hypothesised that if information relating to a specific situation

50 Markus has done the most significant work in this field. See Markus 1977.

51 Oyserman and Markus 1993.

52 Mandler 1984, p.41. It must be noted, however, that whereas testimony to the co-existence of multiple self-representations is very widespread and generally accepted throughout contemporary psychology, detailed expositions of their conceptual interrelatedness are much less common.

53 Oyserman and Markus 1993, p.191.

54 Andersen et al. 1992, and Westen 1992 both offer several examples of situational changes resulting in schema changes. Westen’s focus is upon changes in current affective dispositions, whereas Andersen discusses schematic activation in the context of anxiety.

55 Radden 1999, p.347.

or routine is schematised then that information should be selectively attended to in greater depth once the relevant schema has been triggered, and response times for the recognition of closely related information should be significantly reduced. Markus argues:

If a person has a developed self-schema, he should be readily able to (a) process information about the self in the given domain (e.g., make judgments or decisions) with relative ease, (b) retrieve behavioral evidence from the domain, (c) predict his own future behaviour in the domain, and (d) resist counterschematic information about himself. If a person has had relatively little experience in a given domain of social behaviour, or has not attended to behaviour in this domain, then it is unlikely that he will have developed an articulated self-schema.⁵⁶

Researchers have consistently found strong evidence that such biases do exist.⁵⁷ Not only is this interpreted as evidence for the existence of self-schemata *per se* but, specifically, for the co-existence of several autonomous self-schemata in any individual. If schema theory accurately represents the organisation of self-relevant information in human psychological life, a plurality of schemata must necessarily simultaneously inhere. Indeed, one of the conditions of one or more specific schema's activation in any given situation is the inhibition of information that is not relevant to that situation.

Although it finds its most comprehensive exposition in cognitive psychology, schema theory's influence is extremely wide, having infiltrated many branches of the human sciences from neuroscience and cognitive anthropology to psychoanalytic psychology. As well as providing a bridge between human psychology and the philosophy of mind, the concept of the schema has the potential to mediate between distinct schools of psychology, although dialogue between different psychological schools remains very much a minority concern. Several psychologists have argued, for example, that it may represent a means of uniting the insights of cognitive psychology with object relations theory.⁵⁸ I am not suggesting that schema theory can be relied upon to bring coherence to such an unruly concept as the self, but its pertinence to psychoanalytic models (such as that proposed by the object-relations theorist Ana-Maria Rizutto) confirms that belief in the simultaneous instantiation of a multiplicity of self-representations is certainly not exclusive to cognitive psychology.⁵⁹

56 Markus 1977, p.65.

57 See Markus 1977; Markus and Nurius 1986, 1987; Wilcox and Williams 1990; Westen 1992. Augoustinos and Walker, however, are more cautious, citing several schema studies that have offered conflicting evidence. Nevertheless, schema theory continues to be a dominant theme in social-cognitive psychology (see Augoustinos and Walker 2000).

58 See Horowitz 1988; Colby and Stoller 1988; Westen 1992; Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991.

59 The object-relations theorist Ana-Maria Rizutto argues that, throughout development, object representations undergo transformation as a result of the continuous

To a certain extent, this conception of self-schemata as fluid open-ended ways of networking self-relevant information supports some postmodern notions of self, and contradicts individualistic concepts of the unified abstract self. As far as cognitive psychology is concerned, there is no unchanging material or immaterial core to the person that stands behind various experiences, and no single psychological faculty that adequately characterises the self. Rather, there are many self-representations formed through interaction with the world that are synchronically instantiated and which vie for expression in any particular circumstance, but never all find expression simultaneously. Some are used more often than others, but no single one of them might be construed as *the* self, or even as the core self. Indeed, schema theory does not in itself incorporate ideas that any particular self-representation may be more genuine or authentic than any other. We should be wary, though, of overemphasising the complicity of psychology and postmodern philosophical discourse in the dissolution of the self. These are very different sorts of discourse. Although cognitive psychology superficially seems to corroborate some postmodern ideas about personhood, it does not support extreme postmodernist ideas that reject all ideas of autonomous subjects – it simply pluralises the subject. Some self-representations, it can be shown, might even be relatively stable and enduring while still remaining autonomous. First, though, I want to say a little more about the extrapersonal basis of specific schemata.

Self-Representations and Social Selves

The possibility that multiple self-representations inhere in the individual at any given moment has received more attention in one context than most others – the idea that this sort of plurality arises out of, and is reflected in, a person's need to assume a variety of different social personas at different times over the lifespan. Indeed, social psychology has a long history of trying to establish that personal or occupational roles are relatively enduring aspects of personality that possess

need for mental reorganisation. Because their earlier forms are not discarded, they come to exist as 'multi-layered memories'. She stipulates that since objects are always perceived in relation to one's self, representations of objects are inexorably connected to representations of self and, as such, are endowed with 'personal meaning'. Memories of object representations are subject to the same processes governing storage, interconnectedness, and retrieval etc., as memories of oneself. So, a hugely complicated mental framework (what Shafraanske refers to as the 'internal relational matrix') is thus constructed in which any single representation is potentially connected to a limitless number of other representations, each of which has the potential capacity to evoke a variety of intense emotional responses, each associated with different elements of self and other object representations from different developmental stages (Shafraanske 1992). At any specific time a representation (that may or may not be fitting for the circumstances) may be brought forth and subsequently transformed (Rizutto 1979).

significantly different attributes.⁶⁰ Typically, these are the terms in which theories of self-multiplicity are expounded in academic psychology. The clinical psychologist John Altrocchi even defines 'self-concept differentiation' as: 'The degree to which one sees oneself as having different personality characteristics in different social roles.'⁶¹ Similarly, Wyer and Srull propose that multiple self-representations describe specific domains of experience such as self-as-father or self-at-parties.⁶² For the schema theorists, in contrast to those modern individualists that ensored unitary concepts of self and identity, these roles are relatively autonomous dispositional self-structures, each of which entails the activation of situation and role-specific schemata dedicated to the performance of particular behaviours.

Relationships, particularly close relationships have a peculiarly strong influence upon representations of self.⁶³ It has even been suggested that particularly close relationships determine self-representations to the extent that the partners of these relationships are partially assimilated into one's representations of oneself.⁶⁴ Supposedly, the degree of similarity that one shares and the manner in which one differentiates oneself from others depends on the closeness of the relationship.⁶⁵ The implications of this research for synchronic (and diachronic) representational multiplicity are significant since different close relationships might well lead to the formation of quite incongruent co-existent relationship-specific self-representations.⁶⁶

Notions of representational multiplicity, however, should not be restricted solely to divisions within the person arising from the pluralisation of social personas

60 See Rosenberg and Gara 1985; Wiley and Alexander 1987; Rosenberg 1997; Altrocchi 1999; Rowan and Cooper 1999.

61 Altrocchi 1999, p.173.

62 Wyer and Srull 1989.

63 Interestingly, Smart distinguishes between four kinds of relationship: formal, informal, personal role-anchored, and self-anchored relationships. These correspond to the constructions of four different types of self-concept, which he appeals to in order to explain the relationship between a person's diachronous selves. However, I do not believe that any subsequent theorists have adopted Smart's distinctions (Smart 1976).

64 See Hinde 1997.

65 In summarising this point Aron and Aron observe that '... cognition about self versus other is on a continuum from self through close others to non-close others' (Aron and Aron 1996, p.325). They cite a number of studies in support of this. First, that there was little disparity between subjects' recall rates of adjectives relevant to their own lives or their mother's life. Secondly, that the time taken to describe the relevance of certain adjectives to a person increased linearly from self through close other to non-close other. Thirdly, based on a previous study showing that, when interpreting actions, people tended to make dispositional attributions about strangers but tended to make situational attributes about themselves, it was shown that subjects were less prone to making dispositional attributions about people the closer their relationship to them. Also see Ostrauskas 1977.

66 Gergen's assessment of the implications of the increasing number of interpersonal relationships in the postmodern world supports this assessment (Gergen, 1991).

or roles and dispositions. Considerable empirical support has been garnered for the consideration of several other influences upon the formation of the pantheon of self-representations. Rosenberg, for example, elaborates a concept of ego that includes interests, religious and ethnic affiliations, and particular interpersonal relationships among what he considers to be 'the multiple aspects of self, readily identifiable by an individual'.⁶⁷ Further distinctive self-representations include those that are differentiated from one another temporally (past, present and future selves), and spatially (core and peripheral selves) as well as along evaluative dimensions (positive, negative, desired and undesired selves).⁶⁸

Markus and Nurius, for example, describe the concept of self-schemata in terms of 'possible selves', by which they mean 'conceptions of the self in future states'.⁶⁹ They suggest that:

These constructions of potential selfhood are deft blendings of the representations of one's roles and social categorizations (self as worker, spouse, parent) with views of one's particular features, attributes or habits. The repertoire of possible selves contained within an individual's self-system are the cognitive manifestations of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats.⁷⁰

This distinction not only reinforces the principle that many different representations of self are simultaneously extant, but also emphasises the active agency of the individual in shaping his or her own future. Markus and Nurius, in linking possible selves to motivational processes, go as far as suggesting that representations of possible selves are the most significant aspects of the self system in 'shaping and fuelling behaviour'.⁷¹

Although self-representations are formed in relation, therefore, understanding the self in this way does not entail a conception of the individual person as a simple receptacle into which information is poured, nor as an autonomous self-creating being. Self-representations do not develop simply through the passive absorption of experience, but also through the active manipulation and interpretation of this experience as the basis of understanding or re-evaluating past, present and future concepts of self and the extrapersonal world. New or updated self-representations are always subjective constructions based upon a range of context-specific experiences, as they are perceived and interpreted in relation to past and future self-representations. Each might therefore be seen as more than the sum of the information that it represents, given that it is itself a history of previous experience and a template for future action.

67 Rosenberg 1997.

68 See Markus and Wurf 1987, pp.302–6.

69 Markus and Nurius 1987, p.157.

70 Ibid., p.158.

71 Ibid., p.159.

At any given moment, then, what has traditionally been assumed to be a single superordinate and unified self-representation appears to be plural when considered in the context of the most recent empirical research and theories in this field. That is to say, 'it' is actually synchronically multiple. Although some self-representations could be more complicated, more resilient and more generally relevant than others, any number of them could potentially find expression in any given situation and serve to guide behaviour in that situation. Those schemata that are not currently active do not disappear. Rather, they are on standby, ready for deployment as and when an appropriate situation arises. With this observation, the idea of the simple sequential developmental process of *the* self-representation, although it seems intuitively plausible, is cast into doubt. Rather, we can conceive of a multitude of self-representations co-developing over time, often retaining central characteristics of earlier representations, but perpetually changing. No two successive self-representations are ever the same.

Synchronically, there seems little reason to doubt that the represented self is best described as a plural disunified structure, but can the same be said of the represented self in its diachronicity? It is almost universally agreed that it can. Many of a person's multiple self-representations persist throughout an individual's life, continuing to organise experience and direct behaviour accordingly, although the total number of possible self-representations may continue to grow unabated. Peripheral self-representations are continually developed throughout the course of a person's life, and some are discarded, but many of them continue to remain accessible, even when they are unlikely to be called upon to guide behaviour in the future. As Markus and Nurius argue, 'The majority of our self-conceptions are of this more tentative variety. Self-conceptions like "My paper is three weeks late", "I made a fool of myself last night", "I could win a fellowship".'⁷² There is a limited notion of diachronic unity to be found in the observation that certain self-representations are continuously modified over time (they are not simply constructed and discarded moment by moment) but the unification of different representations is a very different thing. There are no grounds for assuming that these gradually merge into a unity. Rather, they remain distinct and relatively autonomous. Even outside cognitive psychology, the bulk of research into the representation of self over time supports this point.⁷³ It is, for example, a central premise of psychoanalytic and object-relational theories of regression. Ultimately, there would seem to be no good grounds for assuming that self-representations collectively form an orderly unified structure either synchronically or diachronically.

It is also plain to see how sociological accounts of the impact of radical social change upon the fragmentation (or pluralisation) of self can be readily understood in psychological terms as the rapid multiplication of situation specific self-representations. For whatever reason, the rapid increase in the numbers of diverse types of relationships people are likely to form, leads to the further pluralisation

72 Ibid., p.163.

73 See McAdams 1985; Cooper 1999, for a summary of such studies.

of disparate self-representations. The contextual specificity of different self-representations (for example, self-as-daughter and self-as-global-communications-manager) can only lead to their greater autonomy from one another, and a common behavioural or cognitive theme that might unite them becomes harder to discern. The large number of self-representations that are likely to be constructed are themselves open to radical revision or can be sloughed off as the need arises, without any lasting deleterious repercussions. New self-representations will quickly take their place. Sociologists' claims about the increasing ephemerality and superficiality of selves in the modern world are not difficult to explain when the self-system is conceived as a collection of self-schemata as opposed to an enduring singular entity.

Yet conceptualising self-multiplicity in terms of the independence and plurality of self-representations leads to a naturalisation of this condition that is not implied by those theories that cite the erosion of social metanarratives as the underlying cause of self-fragmentation. The number of specific self-representations a person is likely to construct may inevitably increase as a result of globalising social forces, and they might be more disparate as a result of the corresponding dissolution of shared systems of meaning (the person might become more fragmented), but self-multiplicity itself does not depend solely upon societal change. Rather, the above discussion points towards a way of understanding self-fragmentation that suggests it is a psychological inevitability. It is simply a consequence of natural and universal psychological processes. The logical implication of accounts such as Markus and Nurius's is that the self just could not be any other way.

So, a number of important principles emerge from this initial examination of the self in contemporary psychological thought. The represented self, as a collection of diverse and seemingly independent self-representations, can be portrayed as both a synchronically and a diachronically plural structure. Self-representations are largely autonomously functioning parts of a complete self-system with specific context-dependent roles to play in the orientation of the individual towards objects, other people and the broader extrapersonal world. Some of these representations are peripheral and transient and some are more central and enduring, but they are not structurally unified at any given moment and do not merge into a unity over time. A mature pluralised self-system, characterised by a wide diversity of self-representations is both an inevitable consequence of the schematisation of information gleaned from experience and, although it is not merely a consequence of radical societal change, it is arguably a necessary prerequisite of living in the complex modern world. It must be emphasised that these are not controversial issues in contemporary psychological theories of identity. Specialist self-schemata enable the efficient processing of information in relation to specific tasks and contexts, which would not be possible (according to cognitive psychologists) if the self were an undifferentiated monolithic entity. Not only is self-multiplicity seen as unproblematic in many representational theories of self, it is seen as positively essential.

For my current purposes though, what representational theories of self such as schema theory fail to address is just as important as what they succeed in addressing. Schema theory alone cannot account for the apparent psychological innateness of the self-system and does not support any specific model of cognitive architecture.⁷⁴ It is not in itself a theory of consciousness and does not address notions of conscious experiential unity or disunity, though some have used the computational metaphor that underlies schema theory as a basis for rejecting the idea that consciousness is an ineffable qualitatively distinct phenomenon.⁷⁵ Nor is it a theory geared towards explaining sociohistorical changes in the processes of identity formation as a result of fluctuations in social and cultural movements – the primary extrapersonal determinants of identity. For example, schema-theory does not aim to explain how consumer culture inspires self-representations that differ qualitatively from those grounded firmly in historically stable traditions. I do not mean to suggest that theories of self that do address issues such as these are not important, only that if these issues are to be tackled, we must seek a supplementary means of understanding.

74 See, for example, Elman et al. 1996; Johnson 1997; Fodor 1998.

75 See Dennett 1991 for example.

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Experiential Multiplicity, Narrative Identity and Pathologies of Self

In what does the unity of a single life consist? The answer is that its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life.

(Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 1981)

I have so far outlined a particular understanding of self-multiplicity that does not problematise it, and which seems to complement contemporary social theory's critique of identity, but which does not annihilate the concept of the experiencing subject. From the self-pluralistic perspective that I am advocating, however, representational theories are only partial explanations, and there are other more existentially weighty issues that still need to be addressed. How, for example, are people's experiences of themselves related to the plurality of their self-representations? Is it possible that all of us are capable of experiencing ourselves in entirely different ways from moment to moment as postmodern social theorists would have us believe? Are there good psychological grounds for distinguishing between normal and pathological forms of self-fragmentation? In answering these questions, a change of focus is necessary. These are the sorts of issues that are addressed by experiential accounts of the self and those humanistic psychological theories that have sought to explain the person and personality, not as unified wholes, but as conglomerates of sub-personalities.

The broad thrust of this chapter's arguments is that not all forms of self-multiplicity can be considered to be symptomatic of an underlying pathology. Rather synchronic and diachronic representational multiplicity and diachronic experiential multiplicity can be seen to be inevitable results of normal and (presumably) universal psychological processes. In other words, I mean to establish that it is just as normal to experience oneself in a range of different ways over time, as it is to form and maintain a range of different mental images over a period of time. The complexity of the topic, however, requires the introduction of further technical terms and distinctions. In particular it will become necessary to make a distinction between personal and sub-personal analyses of experiential unity, and between the concepts of unity and singularity. Unfortunately, this cumbersome multiplication of terms is unavoidable if we are to maintain a level of specificity that enables us to discriminate between several concepts that are too frequently conflated.

I will begin by considering the possibility that an individual person might not have a unified sense of self at any given moment. At first sight, it would seem to

be a straightforward, empirically verifiable issue; if people are able to report a sense of being disunified moment by moment then the matter is settled. As ever, things are not nearly so simple. After all, in what sense could a person experience themselves as disunified? Everyone is familiar with the sensation of being ‘in two minds’ about something, but does simple indecision really entail a sense of disunity? What about the inability to retain a single focus of attention? Could drunkenness, then, be described in terms of disunity? Both of these examples have some limited merits – they both describe inner disunity of a sort – but both are transitory experiences and neither says much about the unity of the self. There is, though, a much deeper sense of inner disunity corresponding to a sense of self-plurality, whereby a single subject claims to be aware of thoughts and feelings that do not belong to them. This phenomenon has sometimes been studied in the context of the psychiatric condition formerly known as ‘Multiple Personality Disorder’, which is now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). Multiple and distinct autonomous self-representations may be the norm in individual mental life, but at the representational level the notion of self-multiplicity refers only to fragments of the whole self-system. In cases of DID, another perspective on personal multiplicity comes to the fore – the possibility that an individual person comprises not just multiple representations of self, but several whole discrete personalities. Such a notion challenges intuitive views of the unity of personhood to a much greater extent than the idea of multiple self-representations.

In the second section of this chapter, I will argue that all people, whether or not they suffer from dissociative conditions, necessarily experience themselves in very different ways from moment to moment – we are all diachronically experientially multiple. Over the course of an individual life, multiple relatively autonomous sub-personalities are constructed, which can be seen as enduring dispositions towards experiencing oneself in certain context-specific ways. However, I will also argue that the normal person enjoys a sense of being a singular person over time. The intrinsic value of the distinction between diachronic singularity and diachronic unity is revealed in the distinction between the whole alternate personalities of the DID sufferer and the sub-personalities of normal persons. This leads me, in the third section, to a discussion of the concept of narrative identity. People are, to a certain extent, the stories they tell about themselves, and it is through the telling of stories that people acquire a qualified sense of personal unity. This form of unity is better described as personal singularity, and it is the lack of this sense of singularity that truly characterises the distinctive form of multiplicity that inheres in dissociative disorders.

Dissociative Identity Disorder and Synchronic Experiential Unity

A discussion of DID serves as a useful guide through the maze of terminologies, methodologies and concepts that have proliferated in experiential approaches to the plurality of self. There is much to be learned from a close analysis of precisely how

and why we consider the phenomenological life of DID sufferers to be so different to non-DID sufferers. The process of isolating the distinguishing features of DID in relation to other sorts of multiplicity both provides a convenient framework for studying different conceptualisations of experiential self-multiplicity, and facilitates a contrast between its normal and pathological forms. It also brings the explanatory value of the conceptual distinctions between synchronic and diachronic dimensions of representational and experiential unity and multiplicity into clear relief. But before proceeding further, I ought to justify the decision to use a subject as controversial as DID to illustrate anything at all about everyday life. Although it is currently receiving a great deal of attention (as the recent glut of cases in North America shows), many psychologists and philosophers are deeply suspicious of the claim that DID is a genuine mental disorder.¹ There are doubts about its diagnostic criteria, the methodology used to study and treat the condition, the trustworthiness of the patients' subjective reports of their experiences, and the theoretical justifications for the existence of such a condition. It has even been suggested that DID might be no more than a discourse-specific way of describing people in whom certain unusual psychological attributes are manifest, not as a clinical condition characterised by the emergence of multiple discrete personalities.² I am not concerned here with whether or not DID is a genuine psychopathological condition and will not evaluate the evidence for its existence. As the philosopher of science Ian Hacking observes, the things that DID illustrates about the possible pathologies of the sense of self have their roots in other philosophical and psychological debates, which do not depend upon the reality of the condition.³ Here I am solely concerned with how DID illustrates profound differences between distinct ways of understanding self-multiplicity and unity in relation to diachronic and synchronic considerations.⁴

Rowan observes that there are (at least) 25 synonyms for 'subpersonalities', including 'ego states, subelves, subidentities, identity states, alter-personalities,

1 See Hacking 1995; Apter 1991, for an assessment of the recent increase in the number of DID cases in North America.

2 Referring to the resurgence of DID as a psychiatrically recognised phenomenon in the United States, Hacking suggests that 'prototypical multiple behavior' could be 'the way in which a certain class of adults in North America will behave when treated by therapists using certain practices, and having certain convictions' (Hacking 1995, p.227).

3 Hacking states, 'The phenomena may certainly illustrate some claim about the mind that is held for reasons quite independent of the phenomena. If so, would not the phenomena be supporting evidence for the philosophical claim? No. I maintain that they furnish no evidence at all. They add nothing but colour. The sheer fact that there is a real-life illustration often seems like evidence, but the doctrines that are illustrated are rooted in principles unrelated to multiple personality, and unsupported by its existence.' Hacking 1995, pp.222-3.

4 DID's role in this chapter is therefore to be understood more in terms of a thought experiment through which the normality of the co-existence of relatively autonomous sub-personalities in an individual person might be established.

deeper potentials and so on'.⁵ Whereas the idea of sub-personalities is in itself uncontroversial, the extent to which distinct and autonomous whole personalities might co-exist in a single individual, entailing genuinely distinct experiential perspectives from moment to moment, necessitates a further, quite different conception of self-multiplicity.⁶ Typically, it is assumed that such a condition is qualitatively different from a single unified person experiencing themselves behaving differently in different situations. This is more than an incidental observation; this principle underpins both psychiatric models of the disorder and treatment programs.

DSM-IV (the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, authorised by the American Psychiatric Association, published in 1994), lists the diagnostic criteria of Dissociative Identity Disorder as:

- A. The presence of two or more distinct identities or personalities or personality states (each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving, relating to and thinking about the environment and self).
- B. At least two of these identities or personality states recurrently take control of the person's behavior.
- C. Inability to recall important personal information that is too extensive to be explained by ordinary forgetfulness.
- D. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g. blackouts or chaotic behavior during alcohol intoxication) or a general medical condition (e.g. complex partial seizures). *Note:* In children the symptoms are not attributable to imaginary playmates or other fantasy play.

These criteria clearly reflect the American Psychiatric Association's concern with self-multiplicity as a pathology of the sense of self as opposed to the represented self. Practically and philosophically, these two types of theory of the self relate differently to the concepts of multiplicity and unity. Central to the diagnosis of a condition as DID is evidence of the temporarily dominant personality's suppression of other possible personalities. This is implicit in criterion C, which refers to the common inability of a particular personality to recall what the other personalities experienced while in control. The criteria do not merely define cases of successive switching between self-representations, since individual self-representations can in no way be considered to be personalities. Indeed, criterion A explicitly rules out

5 Rowan 1997, p.12.

6 Braun (1986) made a similar point in response to calls from Coons (1984) and others to revise psychiatric nomenclature to refer to 'personality fragments', or 'personality states' instead of alternative 'personalities'. Braun argued that the nomenclature should reflect a distinction between alternative personalities and personality fragments, both of which he assumes exist. This distinction was incorporated into DSM-IV in 1994.

this possibility by including (what amounts to) self-representations amongst the contributory elements of personalities.

Interestingly, DSM-IV does not explicitly refer to the possibility that more than one personality at a time can be the subject of the same experience – in other words, the idea that a person can be synchronically experientially plural. There is a notable theoretical polarisation over the question of whether this is possible and the running debate over this particular issue raises several points that are relevant to my current concerns. The main themes are well illustrated in a recent exchange between Galen Strawson and the philosopher Kathleen Wilkes, who has herself devoted considerable attention to the theoretical implications of DID for concepts of self, personhood and identity.⁷

Strawson argues that:

any candidate for being an experience of the mental self as synchronically multiple at the present moment will have to be an episode of explicitly self-conscious thought, and there is a crucial (trivial) respect in which no such episode could be experience of the mental self as synchronically multiple.⁸

This, he supposes, is the fact that self-conscious experience must always be experience from a singular point of view. In this, if apparently not much else, Strawson implicitly agrees with Rom Harré's conceptualisation of the self as a singular embodied perspective, which is the centre of all personal experience.⁹ Even if the self-conscious experience in question were really an experience of other personalities being present, it would still be necessary to ask who had the experience and, according to Strawson, the only possible answer is that it was the experience of a single subject who was aware of the presence of others – 'The experience that there are many selves present is necessarily experience from some single point of view.'¹⁰ From this perspective, synchronic experiential multiplicity or disunity is impossible, however many personalities might reside within an individual and regardless of whether or not a single person retains a continuous sense of self from moment to moment. Diachronic experiential multiplicity, for Strawson, is inevitable, but it corresponds to the rapid switching between different senses of self, not in the experiential multiplicity or disunity of any given moment. In any particular moment, however brief, he believes that people must experience themselves as singular beings.¹¹

Wilkes, by contrast, believes that cases of DID have provided firm evidence of the phenomenon of co-consciousness. This refers to the idea that more than one distinct personality can co-exist within a single physical space (body), all of which

7 In chapters 1, 2 and 28 of Gallagher and Shear 1999a.

8 Strawson 1999, p.12.

9 See Harré 1983, 1998.

10 Strawson 1999, p.13.

11 Ibid.

are distinct centres of awareness, and who can all simultaneously be the subjects of the same experience and, perhaps, each other's thoughts and feelings as distinct from their own. Wilkes criticises Strawson's approach for its inability to take such data into account.¹² She refers both to clinical studies of DID, and to studies of other dissociative disorders, the sufferers of which report the belief that their feelings and impulses really 'belong to someone else'.¹³ All of these cases, she contends, support the idea that several selves can somehow be, 'simultaneously present', in a single individual.¹⁴ Although, as the DSM-IV criteria suggest, co-consciousness is not a condition that characterises all cases of DID, Wilkes's point is that several different personalities with distinct senses of self can simultaneously be subjects of the same experience and yet have different feelings about that experience.¹⁵

These two perspectives illustrate the complexity of the relationship between the experiential singularity of an individual subject and experiential unity. Strawson's argument is that experiencing oneself as co-conscious with other personalities would effectively be to say, 'I am experiencing myself as one subject among many', which would still imply that a single subject were having the experience. Strawson identifies the singularity of the person with a singular locus of consciousness or centre of awareness, in which case synchronic experiential unity and synchronic experiential singularity are indistinguishable. As Brook notes, 'synchronically, a self must have *unified* consciousness, and *unity* of consciousness at a given time requires a single conscious being at that time.'¹⁶

Wilkes's discussion of DID can be adapted to enable a fine distinction between these two concepts. If several autonomous personalities can co-exist in any given individual, each of which is able simultaneously to be the subject of the same experience, then it would seem that several loci of consciousness and so several senses of self might be operative at any given time.¹⁷ Theoretically, there could be a collection of personalities, each of whom simultaneously and independently could say, 'I am experiencing myself as one among many'. In cases of DID, it seems that

12 Wilkes 1999, p.34. Accounts of co-consciousness are common in the DID literature. Braude (1991), (1992), Radden (1999), and Wilkes (1981, 1999) all make significant use of this idea in their respective discussions of synchronic experiential multiplicity. The case of co-consciousness differs markedly from the divided consciousness of those patients who have undergone surgical commissurotomy as a treatment for extreme epilepsy. Some studies of these patients report extraordinary findings regarding the capacity of the two hemispheres of the brain to function as totally independent persons, but they do not appear to be aware of each other's thoughts or feelings even though they may be the subjects of the same experience simultaneously (See Toates 1996).

13 Wilkes 1999, p.34.

14 Ibid.

15 For details of specific case studies in support of Wilkes's point, see Braude 1991; Braun 1986; Grotstein 1997; Hacking 1995; Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999; Radden 1999; Rowan 1990; Rowan and Cooper 1999; Wilkes 1981, 1999.

16 Brook 1999, p.44. Original italics.

17 See Braude 1991; Wilkes 1999.

the person, when considered as a whole, could be synchronically experientially multiple. This conclusion depends upon each autonomous personality being treated as singular conscious subjects in their own right, each with a distinct sense of self.¹⁸ These subjects are distinguished from each other by virtue of their distinctive personal histories, which in turn depend on the ability of each subject to distinguish between their own experiences and those that belong to another one of the co-existent subjects. The conclusion that a singular subject must necessarily be synchronically experientially singular is both obvious and reasonable, but this does not entail the collective synchronic experiential unity of all possible personalities, which might continue to co-exist in a single body as autonomous and singular subjects. In the case of the DID sufferer, the synchronic unity and singularity of any particular sense of self is not sufficient to ground the synchronic experiential unity of the person.

This point has far-reaching implications for the rest of this study, so let me clarify the argument so far. I have appealed to two important distinctions that are central to understanding the possible self-plurality of DID sufferers: first, between personal and sub-personal levels of analysis, and, secondly, between unity and singularity. With respect to the DID sufferer, at any given moment a variety of different personalities might inhere, each of which necessarily is synchronically experientially singular and is also, therefore, synchronically experientially unified. However, the DID sufferer, when considered as a whole, exhibits no synchronic experiential unity, since the personalities remain distinct, and might even be aware of each other's distinctive thoughts and feelings at any given time. So far, so good. The distinction between singularity and unity makes a useful contribution to our understanding of pathological forms of dissociation, but can it also enhance our understanding of the non-pathologically-divided self? I believe it can, albeit indirectly, by showing one extremely important difference between DID sufferers and non-DID sufferers.

Sub-Personalities, Social Roles and Diachronic Experiential Multiplicity

The arguments of this study so far would suggest that we ought not to rush into a very strong distinction between what is normal and what is abnormal as regards the notion of self-multiplicity.¹⁹ As Braude notes:

18 Indeed, unless at least one personality is able to experience itself as one personality among many, then there would be no grounds at all to suggest that this individual human being is synchronically experientially multiple.

19 The distinctions I draw here are meant as broad category distinctions and not firm exceptionless rules. Hence, I use the term 'normal person' advisedly, as synonymous with 'non-DID sufferer'.

Dissociative phenomena and mental disunities come in many varieties, and in numerous degrees within each variety. In fact, like psychological phenomena generally, they tend to resist neat classification. One can always find or imagine borderline cases that straddle different categories, no matter how useful those categories may be in systematizing the domain in question.²⁰

Even so, there is an important distinction to be made between the sorts of plurality that characterise DID sufferers and non-DID sufferers respectively, but first we need to understand exactly what is entailed by the common claim that even non-dissociative personalities are really better described as collections of sub-personalities.

Clinical diagnoses of DID depend upon the idea that alternate personalities are more than the functional parts of a singular person, which are more typically referred to as sub-personalities.²¹ Sub-personalities are sometimes assumed to exist on a continuum of dissociation from transient altered states of consciousness (such as drunkenness or hypnotic states) to multiple personalities. Rowan, for example, defines them as 'semi-permanent and semi-autonomous regions of the personality capable of acting as a person'.²² Confusingly, the idea that a person might be constituted from many co-existing sub-personalities seems to carry many of the same implications for ideas of synchronic and diachronic experiential unity as the idea of a co-existence of alternate personalities. Since sub-personalities, inasmuch as these represent different context-specific identities (or 'role-identities', 'identity states', 'social identities', 'situated identities' etc.) also underlie different senses of self, the normal person would seem to be diachronically experientially plural. Clearly, in the case of the DID sufferer a successive switching between alternate personalities entails a similar diachronic experiential plurality.²³ How, then, might sub-personalities be distinguished from alternate personalities? Are sub-personalities unified in a way that alternate personalities are not?

Whereas the evidence for the existence of a continuum of dissociative conditions is questionable, there is almost unqualified clinical, experimental and common anecdotal support for the existence of sub-personalities.²⁴ The clinical psychologist Mick Cooper writes:

20 Braude 1991, p. 83.

21 The usefulness of the categories 'sub-personalities' and 'alternate whole personalities' is unquestioned in clinical practice as a means of understanding the difference between pathological and normative psychological phenomena.

22 Rowan 1997, p.11.

23 It is also true that DID sufferers are not synchronically representationally unified or singular either. However, given that non-DID sufferers share this predicament, it is not possible to distinguish between the two on this basis.

24 See Mead 1934; Lifton 1973; Rosenberg and Gara 1985; Markus and Wurf 1987; Braude 1991; Hermans and Kempen 1993; McAdams 1997; Rosenberg 1997; Harré 1998; Cooper 1999; Rowan 1990, 1999; Radden 1999; Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone 1999;

it is by no means uncommon for individuals to describe their subjectively-felt lived experiences in fundamentally self-pluralistic terms. Within the consulting room, clients (both from a clinical and subclinical population regularly – and quite spontaneously – talk about experiencing different ‘parts’/ ‘sides’/ ‘aspects’ to themselves: for example, their ‘vulnerable side’, their ‘critical part’, their ‘inner adult’.²⁵

Such accounts are as common as they are uncontroversial. At different times of their lives, it seems, people are capable of both conceiving and experiencing themselves in very different ways – they are diachronically experientially plural. But opinions are divided over whether these qualitatively different successive experiences of self reflect genuinely autonomous sub-personalities or merely social roles, which, as I explained in the previous chapter, tend to be conceptualised as different aspects of the same (singular and unified) personality.

Discussing self-multiplicity in ways that allude to multiple sub-personalities has been a mainstay of social and clinical psychology for over a hundred years. William James, George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley in their own ways each attempted to account for the qualitatively variable and social-context-specific self-experiences of the individual, which more recent theorists have come to describe explicitly in terms of sub-personalities.²⁶ Each of these theorists, however, clung to the idea that the person as a whole is ultimately unified, though by grounding the self in social interaction they also strove to transcend the modern problematisation of identity, which had its roots in setting a unified private self against a plurality of modes of social expression. Contemporary theorists like Cooper have begun to suggest that sub-personalities represent more autonomous ways of being, entailing genuinely distinct and (potentially) enduring senses of self.

There have been other significant theoretical changes over the years. The self-pluralistic approach in contemporary psychology embraces the recent movement in the other human sciences towards thinking about self in terms of agency and process rather than static categories. To borrow Cooper’s words again, what is being proposed ‘is that many – if not all – individuals, encounter their world though a variety of different “modes” ... These modes of Being are not “things” within a “psyche”, but stances: tendencies towards particular constellations of behavioural, affective, and cognitive acts-in-the-world.’²⁷ The psychologists Hermans and Kempen, for example, have proposed a theory of the ‘dialogical self’, according to which the self is constituted by a multitude of different ‘I-positions’, each possessed of a unique ‘voice’.²⁸ Harré outlines a theory of personhood that is ‘a shifting and changing pattern of modulating dispositions and powers, coupled

Wilkes 1999. For subpersonalities as ‘subsystems’, see White 1991; Dennett 1991; Hacking 1995.

25 Cooper 1999, p.53.

26 James 1890; Cooley 1902; Mead 1934.

27 Cooper 1999, p.66.

28 See Hermans and Kempen 1993; Hermans 1999.

moment by moment to ephemeral manifestations of those powers in public and private actions.’²⁹ Importantly, in each of these cases selves are not seen as distinct autonomous entities, but rather as dispositions towards experiencing oneself in different ways in different contexts, which develop in and through social interaction. Those who speak of self-multiplicity in terms of sub-personalities generally assume that the switching between them may be instantaneous, radical, and relatively enduring, or partial and ephemeral.³⁰

From this perspective, just as the multiplicity of self-representations appears to be a psychological inevitability, variation in the ways people experience themselves over time also appears to be an inescapable fact of human psychological life. Extreme social change may have increased the ‘population of the self’, but there is seemingly nothing new about diachronic experiential multiplicity. It is not, perhaps, a uniquely postmodern condition. Nevertheless, the postmoderns have traditionally shouted the loudest about these things. Gergen’s account of multiphrenia – the sense that a plurality of largely independent voices are simultaneously fighting for expression in the normal person – arguably remains among the most strident expositions of such a theory, and continues to be among the most radical. He himself anticipates a complete divorce between the languages of traditional psychological discourse and postmodernism in the near future, which would presumably spell the end for all talk about the social roles of a single person.

Understanding self-multiplicity in terms of social roles need not be seen as antithetical to understanding it in terms of autonomous sub-personalities. Rather, within the framework that I am sympathetic to, multiple social roles can be understood simply as less enduring, more temporary dispositions than sub-personalities. This is not to introduce a whole new theoretical category of self-pluralisation; it is just to make a distinction between enduring and transient patterns of behaviour. It is, for example, the sort of distinction that Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone intend when they argue that ‘Common experience suggests that a pluralistic sense of self goes beyond role playing’.³¹ Using the example of a newly qualified teacher who feels that the pedagogical role initially feels artificial, they suggest that it is only after considerable experience that such a role is internalised to the extent that it begins to feel quite natural.³² Sub-personalities, they continue, which are characterised by their autonomy,

29 Harré 1998, p.8.

30 See Markus and Wurf 1987; Gergen and Gergen 1988; Braude 1991; Gergen 1991; McAdams 1985, 1997; Cooper 1999; Rowan 1999. Even Gergen, who suggests that all senses of an enduring ‘I’ will be extinguished in time as multiphrenia gains momentum, acknowledges that, for the time being at least, multiple and enduring senses of self are the norm.

31 Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone 1999, p.102.

32 Ibid.

should be seen as developing only once a role becomes ‘a relatively independent dimension or alternative form of self.’³³

This position represents a sort of ontological middle point between the extreme social constructionist positions of postmodern psychologies, which suggest that the sense of self is wholly dissolved and reconstructed moment by moment, and the self of modernity that is singular, unchanging, and experientially unified. According to this halfway position, the sense of self is diachronically multiple – there is no single unchanging sense of self – but different senses of self might still correspond to relatively enduring sub-personalities. Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone choose to summarise the social roles vs plural self issue by suggesting that ‘they are probably coterminous rather than dichotomous.’³⁴

Both the continuities between social roles and subpersonalities, and the principle that diachronic experiential multiplicity is normative can be illustrated by exploring the relationship between sub-personalities and representational theories of self-multiplicity. It is to be remembered that, at the experiential level, sub-personalities are no more than distinctive dispositional ways of experiencing oneself in relation to the world. But, as Cooper notes, what is pivotal to each of these ‘modes of Being’ is:

the existence of a specific, qualitatively discrete self-concept, and it is this that differentiates a ‘mode’ of Being from a mood or emotion. This self-concept, however, need not necessarily be the explicit object of attention – indeed, in most instances it will be at the fringes of phenomenological awareness. Rather, the experienced-self-concept can be considered more akin to a somewhat ephemeral – almost ghostly – sense of ‘me-ness’, an ineradicable presence through which the individual acts towards their world.³⁵

John Rowan simply identifies sub-personalities with the self-representations that Markus and Nurius describe as self-schemata.³⁶ This, I think, is to occlude the important distinction I want to maintain between two different ways of thinking about the self. However, as structured systems of personally relevant information, self-representations can be understood as the cognitive structures that lie behind a person’s capacity to experience themselves in terms of a variety of sub-personalities. As such, they guide behaviour under different circumstances, and continuously undergo modification as a result of new experience. Markus and Wurf use the term ‘dynamic self-concept’ to describe the interrelationship of cognitive representations of self and the various roles performed by distinct sub-personalities.³⁷ According to this model, the ‘working self-concept’ is that

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Cooper 1999, p.66.

36 Rowan 1990, pp.171–3; Markus and Nurius 1986.

37 Markus and Wurf 1987, pp.314–29.

collection of self-representations that are relevant to the person's current activity, and is only ever a subset of the total number of self-representations that are theoretically available. These representations, they argue, vary in structure and function and according to the context in which they become active. Some come 'on-line' automatically, whereas others are 'wilfully recruited or invoked in response to whatever motives the individual is striving to fulfil'.³⁸ The chief value of this model is its presentation of a framework 'that guides the interpretation of one's social experiences but that also regulates one's participation in these experiences'.³⁹ It offers a means of understanding the relationship between specific self-representations and the influence they might have upon lived experience and the sense of self, even if a structural cognitive account of the sense of self is itself not possible. All this is not to suggest that there is a one-to-one mapping of self-representations to sub-personalities, since sub-personalities may depend upon the simultaneous activation of several self-representations to greater or lesser degrees. Cooper's 'discrete self-concept', which underlies a specific 'mode of being', is itself a multiplicity of self-representations.

A person's various sub-personalities, therefore, might be very different from one another. There is certainly no guarantee that any two particular sub-personalities might share a particular self-representation, since the sub-personalities that underlie particular senses of self are context-specific. Although Markus and Wurf suggest that some self-representations are more central than others, there could conceivably be situational contexts in which even the most central or common self-representations have nothing to do with a particular sub-personality. Indeed, this is more likely than ever before in contemporary society given the social transformations of the late-modern/postmodern period, and the increased diversity and number of relationships in which people must participate.⁴⁰ An individual person's capacity to switch between a variety of sub-personalities, each entailing qualitatively different senses of self, leads to the conclusion that people are inevitably diachronically experientially multiple.⁴¹ It is often assumed that dividing momentary senses of self so sharply from one another has extreme implications for concepts of personhood inasmuch as it seems to be in explicit contradiction to (what is commonly supposed to be) people's experiences of themselves as continuous singular centres of experience with enduring identities.⁴² Certainly, it represents a seismic shift in psychology as it has in the other human sciences, but it need not be cataclysmic. If we accept that there are several

38 Ibid., p.314.

39 Ibid., p.323.

40 As well as interpersonal relationships, however, Rowan lists internal conflicts, fantasy images, the personal unconscious, the cultural unconscious, and the collective unconscious as possible sources of distinct sub-personalities. Rowan 1999, pp.12–13.

41 Rowan reaches just such a conclusion (Ibid.)

42 This is a common supposition, but many doubt that it is true. See Gergen 1991; Rowan 1999; Wilkes 1999.

different ways to conceptualise the plurality of selfhood, it can be argued that the multiplicity of the sense of self over time does not necessarily sound the death knell for all psychological ideas of personal unity. In support of this idea, let us return to consider the highly unusual experiential life of the DID sufferer.

The autonomy of (at least some) sub-personalities both reinforces the idea that people are diachronically experientially multiple, and further obfuscates the distinction between sub-personalities and alternate personalities. This in turn makes the challenge of distinguishing between dissociative and non-dissociative personalities more difficult. Both sub-personalities and alternate personalities, it seems, could each underlie synchronically singular and unified senses of self. Furthermore, both normal persons and DID sufferers are capable of experiencing themselves differently from moment to moment, and both specific sub-personalities and specific alternate personalities are treated as whole unified persons by others. It seems that no distinction is possible between alternate personalities and sub-personalities purely on the strength of an analysis of the synchronic and diachronic multiplicity or unity of self-awareness. So what other possible grounds could there be for establishing a difference between them?

The key to the distinction lies in understanding exactly why it is that alternate personalities manage to appear to themselves and other people as distinct centres of awareness. What seems certain is that, at the very least, alternate personalities can each assert their own sense of autonomy and tell different stories about themselves in a way that sub-personalities cannot. This simple idea, that alternate personalities in a single body construct autonomous autobiographies, offers an attractive means of describing the distinctive self-multiplicity of DID sufferers. It is the idiosyncrasies of their discrete histories that enable the therapist to discriminate between different alternate personalities at all, and it is this, I propose, that truly distinguishes DID sufferers from normal persons – not the number or nature of their self-representations, the degree of difference in the successive ways they experience themselves, or the psychological connectedness of different structures, concepts or sensations. Rather, DID sufferers are distinctively plural inasmuch as they are unable to retain a sense of diachronic singularity, or a sense of being a singular person over time.⁴³

This point is crucial and demands further, more detailed explication. Clearly, ‘personhood’ is a concept that cannot be simply identified with one or more centres of awareness in isolation from a wider history of personal development. Charles Taylor writes:

43 Harré argues that the physical body as the centre of perceptual awareness plays a key role in identifying personal experience as belonging to a particular person (Harré 1983, 1998). However, the sense of being a singular person depends upon considerably more than just having a continuous physical body, and this is graphically illustrated by studies of DID patients.

My sense of myself is of a being who is growing and becoming. In the very nature of things this cannot be instantaneous. It is not only that I need time and many incidents to sort out what is relatively fixed and stable in my character, temperament, and desires from what is variable and changing, though that is true. It is also that as a being who grows and becomes I can only know myself through the history of my maturations and regressions, overcomings and defeats. My self-understanding necessarily has temporary depth and incorporates narrative.⁴⁴

Taylor's belief in some kind of diachronic self-unity is shared by most contemporary psychologists. The unity that he refers to, however, is not the structural unity of the self, or the possession of a single undifferentiated or unchanging sense of self, but the sense of being a single person over time.

A perceived ownership of previous senses and representations of self is widely believed to be a fundamental aspect of normal personhood, but this does not entail a synchronic or diachronic representational or experiential unity. Synchronically, even a self-representation that represents a life-history will still only be one representation amongst many, and will not inspire a unification of self-representations over time. Furthermore, a person's sense of self at any given time is a sense of being different in some respects to all earlier experiences of self.⁴⁵ It is a sense of being in the unrepeatable moment. Yet people are also to a large extent (perhaps entirely) the products of their previous experiences, and they hold the potential for future development. They plan for their futures and celebrate or bemoan their pasts. These are ideas that depend upon the ability to experience themselves over time as singular continuous entities. In Taylor's words, they depend upon the narratisation of experience. This idea is well established in social theory and the philosophy of identity, as I have already noted, and has recently been clearly articulated by Donald Polkinghorne, Dan McAdams, Rom Harré and a number of contemporary psychologists.

According to narrative theories of identity, people *are* to a certain extent the stories they tell about themselves. I will expand this idea in much greater detail below, but before I do, I want to explain exactly how setting personhood in the wider context of personal experience offers a means of distinguishing between sub-personalities and the alternate personalities of the DID sufferer. With respect to sub-personalities, Braude argues, however differently a person acts, thinks, or feels about him or herself from moment to moment:

[T]hose changes generally 'refer' or apply to the same center of self-awareness, even from that person's subjective point of view. That is, not only would an outsider say that

44 Taylor 1992, pp.50–51.

45 In many ways this point is closely related to that made by Zizioulas that the 'I' must always assert itself via comparison with other extant beings (Zizioulas 1991, p.34). The momentary awareness of oneself is as much an awareness of changeability as of sameness.

the changes were changes in the same individual, but that person generally experiences the changes in that way and would refer to successive states as 'mine'.⁴⁶

In the context of narrative approaches, Braude's observation enables the conclusion that the normal person, unlike the DID sufferer, is able to tell a life-story in which he or she is the only subject. All a person's representations and senses of self, though they might be correlated with distinct sub-personalities, are claimed as elements of a singular personal history. Alternate personalities, if they exist at all, are limited to constructing independent autobiographies, and are not able to incorporate each other's experiences into their own personal autobiographies. Even in cases of co-consciousness, a specific personality's experience of knowing what another personality was thinking (or how it was feeling) is not sufficient to make that experience its own. Though each personality might have its own sense of diachronic experiential singularity, it is no more likely to lay claim to another personality's experiences than are two normal people to claim each other's experiences for their own.⁴⁷ Whereas sub-personalities enjoy a degree of synchronic and diachronic independence from one another, they belong to each other in a way that alternate personalities do not. Thus, it is primarily through the idea of a personal history, albeit a personal history of a multiplicity of senses and representations of self that the distinctive qualities of normal persons that separate them from pathologically divided persons, can be understood. As the philosopher William Stern declared in his famous treatise on personal psychology in 1938, 'The person is a totality, that is, a *unitas multiplex* ... it is the *consonance* of multiplicity with the personal whole and of the person with the world that makes human life possible.'⁴⁸

Narratisation and the Diachronic Singularity of the Person

The anxiety and uncertainty precipitated by postmodern life arguably makes a sense of continuous identity more desirable than ever, though the dissolution of traditional community means that individuals are landed with the sole responsibility for overseeing the development of their own futures. I have already suggested that such concepts as Giddens' 'life project' and Bauman's notion of 'identification' offer a degree of stability to the otherwise hopelessly vulnerable and fragmented

46 Braude 1991, p.70.

47 Though the sense of diachronic experiential singularity that any specific alternate personality might have is likely to be very different to that enjoyed by a normal person. This is inevitable given the long periods of inactivity and amnesia that each alternate personality is forced to endure. The occurrence of such periods are central to the diagnosis of DID. For an account of the qualitative difference between normal persons and alternate personalities in this respect, see Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999.

48 Stern 1938, p.73.

self. Narrative identity is thus a crucially important concept both for understanding pathological manifestations of self-multiplicity, and for understanding the last refuge of self-unity in contemporary philosophy, psychology and sociology. What I intend now, then, by focusing upon the most detailed and systematic approach of its kind, is to clarify the concept of narrative specifically from a psychological perspective, and its relationship to other ways of thinking about the self. Amongst the chief contemporary proponents of this approach is Dan McAdams, though the central themes of his project have been tackled by several others.⁴⁹ First, however, we must be clear about what is not being claimed by the majority of theorists who see distinctive value in this concept.

The phenomenologist Calvin Schrag, in his assessment of postmodernism's proposed abandonment of the language of the self, suggests that agreeing with its critique of the 'classical substance-theory of the self and the modern epistemological or foundationalist construal of self as transparent mind', does not necessarily entail 'a jettisoning of every sense of self'.⁵⁰ His attitude to the self is not, therefore, nearly as dismissive as some postmodernists and he reserves a role for the self as it is revealed through discourse: 'a self that has already spoken, is now speaking, and has the power yet to speak, suspended across the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future.'⁵¹ Though Schrag himself is intent on reconciling talk of self-unity with a strong postmodern epistemology, the discursive approach to the understanding of self has been taken up by others with explicitly psychological agendas.

Harré and the psychoanalytic psychologist Michael Apter, for example, both draw attention to the central importance of considering 'who' is speaking (the 'who' of discourse) when understanding the experiential dimension of personhood. By focusing upon this existential question, instead of more common metaphysical questions about human nature, they offer a perspective on the self that has been mostly absent from traditional approaches to the problem of self-multiplicity and self-unity.⁵² In Polkinghorne's words, 'The emphasis changes from "what am I" to "who am I?"'⁵³ Although it is a rapidly expanding area of research, it

49 See McAdams 1985, 1993, 1997. Also see Sarbin 1986; Polkinghorne 1988; Harré 1998; Ochs and Capps 2001.

50 Schrag 1997, p.9.

51 Schrag continues, 'the self lives through a multiplicity of changing profiles and a plurality of language games in which it holds court, but not without some sense of self-identity – some sense of the same self being present to itself in its remembered past, its engaged present, and its projected future (Schrag 1997, p.17).

52 That the question of 'who?' has been overlooked in the majority of philosophical approaches to the problem of identity is a point that is made forcefully by Apter (1991). Apter engages in an analysis of the implications of this question for a concept of momentary identity. He argues that whereas the question of 'who?' has been largely absent from philosophy, it was a question of 'primary importance to philosophically-oriented medical psychologists and psychiatrists' (Apter 1991, p.221).

53 Polkinghorne 1988, p.151.

remains relatively unexplored in relation to the extreme pathologies of the self such as DID. Braude and Harré have recently begun to redress this imbalance, but issues relating to ‘co-consciousness’ and diachronic and synchronic experiential multiplicity (where the chief criterion of self is a ‘centre of awareness’) still dominate theoretical, if not clinical, discussions of personality dissociation.

Harré insists ‘The self as an expression of the singularity of the point of view of the embodied person in perception ... is always singular for every human being, in all cultures. If there are exceptions they are in the realm of myth and mysticism.’⁵⁴ ‘Does the question “Which person am I? Perhaps you?” make any sense?’ asks Harré. Plainly not, he argues:

I do not grope my way to the bathroom mirror each morning to check whether I am the same person today as I was yesterday. What would it be like to discover I was not? To suggest this is already to presuppose a surviving ‘I’. At most I might realize I was not the same kind of person I thought I was yesterday.⁵⁵

Conditions such as DID might, as Wilkes argues, preclude this experiential continuity to a certain extent, but the way that the ‘ordinary’ person uses ‘I’ in relation to the questions of ‘who’, and ‘which person’ presupposes a notion of personal singularity and continuity.

The burgeoning psychological literature addressing the problem of how identity may remain continuous in spite of a diachronic multiplicity of senses and representations of self has, as Harré notes, been focused upon one dominant idea – ‘the organizing narrative’.⁵⁶ This means, essentially, that every person who uses the personal pronoun ‘I’ uses it in such a way as to somehow claim experiences for him or herself and index them as events in a personal history of existing. As Schrag observes, ‘The introduction of narrative constitutes a critical supplementary perspective in any account of the who of discourse.’⁵⁷ It is narrative that provides the context in which individuals situate themselves and others, and which supplies meaning to personal interactions. Without the plots of narrative constructions, there is no sense to discourse, or possible frame of reference for the social individual.⁵⁸

Theodore Sarbin in his pioneering work on narrative psychology argued that human psychology itself is narratively structured, by which he means that the

54 Harré 1998, p.8.

55 Ibid., p.84.

56 Ibid., p.87. For recent psychological discussions of narrative see Harré 1983, 1998; Sarbin 1986; Polkinghorne 1988; Braude 1991; Ashmore and Jussim 1997; McAdams 1993, 1997; Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999; Ochs and Capps 2001. For contemporary accounts of the historical development of the concept of narrative in relation to the study of the self, see Polkinghorne 1988; Brennan 1999; Grenz 2001.

57 Schrag 1997, p.19.

58 Ibid., pp.19–20.

characteristic feature of human mental life is its propensity to relate things to each other in a storied way.⁵⁹ Human beings, he claims, cannot help but impose structure on the objects of their thoughts and perceptions, and narrative, he assumes is the central ordering principle. In relation to self and identity, specifically, the process of narratisation is the ongoing construction and recounting of a singular life story. It is the unique indexing of autobiographical episodes as referring to the history of a particular person, leading to a sense of being diachronically singular. Leading, in other words, to a person's sense of having been, and continuing to be, a continuous single person over time, regardless of the many different senses of self and self-images that may have materialised in different ways at different times. For these theories, the important question is not whether the self should be considered in representational or experiential terms, but how the person might be conceived in processual terms.⁶⁰ This leads to a qualified conception of self-unity – the unity that subsists in a person who lays claim to all of their self-representations and various experiences of self as their own. This is to say no more than the representations and experiences belong to a single if very complex story.⁶¹ In addition, the process of narratisation gives rise to a person's sense of distinctive uniqueness – of being different to all others by virtue of owning a particular life-story.

Notions of narrative identity, it must be realised, can sometimes tread a fine line between structure and process. Hence, with reference to personal narratives, the clinical psychologists Hardcastle and Flanagan write:

We turn the intentional stance inward as it were, and direct it toward ourselves, constructing a self-model which aims to capture the world-organizing and action-guiding features of our identities through time. These self-models are the pictures (or a series of pictures) that we have of ourselves, of who we are, how we got there, and where we were going. The self then is actually a self-representation, a particular perspective or point of view regarding our life events that we use to predict, control, and explain ourselves to ourselves and to others.⁶²

Here, narrative identity appears as a representation to be both reflected upon and used to guide action – in other words, much like the concept of the schema. It is possible that the narratised self might appear as an object of reflection in this way, but, significantly, such a concept is distinct from the way McAdams, Harré and Schrag, for example, speak about narrative. For them the idea of narrative identity is used to refer to the intermingling of past, present and future to give the sense of

59 Sarbin 1986.

60 As I argued in Chapter 3, however, the terminology of the philosophy and psychology of identity is extremely confused, and what I have chosen to call diachronic singularity is often referred to as diachronic unity.

61 See Polkinghorne 1988; McAdams 1997; Harré 1998; Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999; Crossley 2000a.

62 Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999, p.649.

being a singular person over time. Clearly, the very concept of identity incorporates notions of the passage of time.⁶³ But whereas classical psychological approaches have sought to reveal the particular shape of personhood at any particular moment by tracing its developmental pathways (and this is still the case in the majority of psychotherapeutically oriented psychologies), contemporary notions of narrative identity have accorded renewed significance to the as yet unrealised dimensions of personality. This is acknowledged in clinical psychological literature as well as the theoretical literature. Without a past, as Donald Polkinghorne argues in his seminal work *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, identity appears groundless and unhappiness is inevitable, but 'If a person fails to project a hopeful story about the future, he or she undergoes a second kind of unhappiness, a life without hope.'⁶⁴

The person is revealed in the act of telling stories, and this narrative act simultaneously shapes those stories. The person is not just what we tell stories about. As Schrag argues, 'the scripting of self retains an open texture, informed by possibilities that the self has not yet actualised, subject to a creative advance toward the future, and as such it should never be construed as simply the sedimentation of past habitual responses.'⁶⁵ Similarly, Bauman comments 'One lives one's life as a story yet to be told, but the way the story hoping to be told is to be woven decides the technique by which the yarn of life is spun.'⁶⁶ Hardcastle and Flanagan's narratised self is just that – narratised; it is the story of a life already lived, not a life that is in the process of being lived. As such, it is but one self-representation amongst many possible self-representations. Narrative identities are not atemporal cognitive structures.

Nor are narrative identities immutable. Although the narratisation of identity does explain the means by which people can establish and maintain a sense of personal continuity and singularity, a multiplicity of stories might be recounted by a particular person over the course of a life. This is the point that Harré is making when he observes, 'From a psychological point of view, one's effective past is not what happened to one, but which fragment of autobiography is salient at some particular juncture in one's life.'⁶⁷ From the perspective that I am advocating here,

63 This is despite the fact that 'identity' is sometimes used interchangeably with terms like 'name' or 'character' to refer to distinctiveness over and above sameness. Distinctiveness itself implies participation in a temporal process, since it is always partially because of their different histories that things are distinguishable.

64 Polkinghorne 1988, p.107. Also see Crites 1986. That the absence of a remembered personal history of experience gives rise to unhappiness, even despair, is clearly evident in the anguish suffered by amnesiacs, and others suffering from psychological conditions that prevent the conscious association of previous and current events. Brook makes this point well, when considering the necessity of personal continuity in relation to Strawson's claims to the contrary (Brook 1999).

65 Schrag 1997, p.40.

66 Bauman 2001, p.8.

67 Harré 1998, p.146.

a multiplicity of possible stories is precisely what would be expected given the multiplicity of sub-personalities that necessarily inheres in each and every person. Inasmuch as these are dispositions towards experiencing self in a particular way, they are also dispositions towards telling the story of an individual life in particular ways at particular times.

It is obviously possible, even expected, that people describe their experiences of particular events to different people at different times, in keeping with the particular self-images that they wish to establish (consciously or unconsciously) in the mind of whoever is listening. This draws attention to the fact that narratives are actively not passively constructed:

Narratives are not a simple reflection of the events themselves. They are a construction ... The properties of narratives are imposed on events to make them comprehensible and memorable. Thus, the seeing of events as a narrative involves the creative and inventive activity of the storyteller ... [Narratives] represent events in comprehensible form and thereby make those events into objects of consciousness, reflection, and analysis.⁶⁸

It is also a well-researched psychological phenomenon that recollections of events are strongly influenced by factors introduced at the moment of their recounting, including the identity of the listener. All this is entirely in keeping with the processual nature of narrative identity that proponents of this theory defend. To have a narrative autobiography is not to tell a singular story about one's life, but to recount the details of one's life as if they all belonged to the narrator. From one telling of a particular story to the next, the story is revised, but the sense of personal diachronic singularity established in the telling of the story remains.

One final point must be made absolutely clear regarding my claims about narrative. Self-narratives are not purely the products of autonomous self-creating people. To suggest that personal narratives are free from outside influences would be to remove the individual from his or her social context and to defeat a central object of describing personhood in narrative terms. Personal narratives, as Harré insists, 'depend for their structure as much on the conventions for narrating lives as the historical verisimilitude of their accounts of the events they describe'.⁶⁹ They are far from accurate or objective accounts of remembered experiences and are necessarily formed according to particular narrative traditions. To quote Polkinghorne once more, 'Cultures ... provide specific types of plots for adoption by its members in their configurations of self. These plot outlines are carried and transmitted in the culture by mythic stories and fairy tales, by tales of heroes and by dramatic constructions.'⁷⁰ Hence, one would expect that people from different places at different times would narrate their own personal autobiographies in

68 Olson, 1990, p.101.

69 Ibid.

70 Polkinghorne 1988, p.153.

different ways – an observation that has clearly had important implications for postmodern theories of the malleability of history.

Yet narratives are also very personal life-stories. Discriminating between the conditions in which people form their personal histories and the personal histories themselves, Bauman argues, “conditions”, whatever else they may be, are things that happened to one, came uninvited and would not leave if one wished them to go, while “life narratives” stand for the stories people spin out of their own doings and neglects.⁷¹ Stories may be spun out of a person’s own doings, but they are essentially social. Self-narratives are formed in dialogue and have a purpose – the presentation of a particular self-image to oneself or to another. Personal narratives must be distinguished, therefore, from narrative traditions, though the two largely presuppose the existence of one another. This principle was implicit in the arguments of Chapter 2, where I related the dissolution of traditions and traditional sources of identity (which might be interpreted as narrative traditions) to the fragmentation of the individual, yet proposed that the individual retained the capacity for a degree of personal continuity. I have already argued that people can tell a variety of different stories about their lives, and there is no reason why these stories should be based upon a singular narrative tradition. Indeed, in the complex contemporary world, individuals are very likely to draw upon more than one narrative tradition in the writing of their autobiographies. After all, postmodernity has transformed, perhaps irrevocably, the rules of story-telling themselves.

Crucially, I am proposing that a narrative account of personal continuity supplements other understandings of self rather than replaces them. In this respect, I differ from Harré’s discursive psychological approach, though I agree with his emphasis upon the importance of narrative autobiography in overcoming homuncular understandings of selfhood. In *The Singular Self* – the clearest statement of his more recent discursive psychological theories – Harré proposes a model of the person in which he describes selves as ‘useful fictions’.⁷² Understanding selves simply in terms of self-representations or sub-personalities would indeed be to reduce the idea of self to a ‘useful fiction’, but this is not what I have proposed. These are different ways of understanding aspects of the complete person, and they can themselves be studied as relatively independent dimensions of personhood. Nevertheless, both representational and experiential theories do make significant contributions to the understanding of qualitatively different aspects of the self, and they need not be reduced to entirely fictional status in order to make way for theories that emphasise people’s enduring senses of singularity.⁷³

In an attempt to avoid the multiplication of sub-personal entities, Harré rejects the sub-personal psychological level altogether, claiming persons to be the fundamental particulars of the social world. For Harré, persons are cultural artefacts; they are complex products of discourse. His own opinion is that psychology is a

71 Bauman 2001, p.6.

72 Harré 1998, p.10.

73 Archer makes a very similar point (Archer 2000).

dual science, focused jointly upon the social world and the biological substrates of the brain that are assumed to mediate cognition and which exist prior to it. Hence, he writes, 'The biological, experiential and introceptive attributes of a person are the necessary characteristics of one entity – without any of which it would not exist as such – but that entity is logically prior to and not the mere aggregate of these three sets of characteristics.'⁷⁴ Though not quite as radical as some social constructionists, Harré denies the causal efficacy of cognitive processes and structures, believing that cognitive processes do not govern people's experiences of the world.⁷⁵ It is rather the opposite, he contends; discourse structures our experiences of ourselves and the world.

Harré's rejection of cognitive psychology is grounded upon a presupposition of the unity of the individual person, which is itself based upon the idea that persons have singular points of view, and a singular location in space and time. To admit the complexity of the cognitive level, he assumes, would be to admit the possible multiplicity of the person and to reify the self. And yet he does see the value in isolating different ways of talking about the self, including the notion of the self-concept. For Harré, the self-concept is 'a unique set of distinctive attributes, taken as a whole', which he frames in terms of the theories people come to hold about themselves as a result of social interaction in a broader context of social structures. He argues:

By believing the theories in which concepts like the self have a place, we so structure our experience as to create them: different theories, different mental organization ... To realize that one is a person is to learn a way of thinking about and managing oneself. It is not to be prompted to make some kind of empirical discovery.⁷⁶

Clearly, he is not opposed to the principle that a person's experiences and memories are, in some way, structured (though he tends to dodge the question of exactly how they are structured), and he agrees that people are possessed of certain dispositions towards holding certain beliefs about themselves, but he is also very suspicious of enduring aspects of self, preferring to emphasise flux and transience. Thus Harré's understanding of the self-concept is, 'the sum total of personal attributes conceived as a totality' at any given moment.⁷⁷

Primarily, his aim is to discredit the idea that selves are 'entities' of any kind, and in this respect I am largely in agreement with Harré's thesis. What I have described as self-representations and sub-personalities are not strictly 'selves', but

⁷⁴ Harré 1998, p.77.

⁷⁵ Harré writes: 'Of course the invention of models of human functioning using the concepts of overt mental activity could hardly be objected to. It is the elevation of such models to the status of a real inner world of causal mechanisms that is in question' (Harré 1998, p.31).

⁷⁶ Harré 1983, pp.19–22.

⁷⁷ Harré 1998, p.8.

are rather, respectively, partial and autonomous representations of a whole person, and dispositions towards experiencing oneself in particular ways at particular times. Though Harré has frequently challenged Baars's idea of a central processor that operates behind a multiplicity of sub-personal entities, comparatively few cognitive theories of personhood support Baars's ideas.⁷⁸ Indeed, the approach to self-multiplicity that I am advocating here, and the humanistic approach adopted by Rowan, Cooper, Rappoport, Baumgardner, Boone and others, is one in which no central processor exists. I have argued that what distinguishes sub-personalities from the alternate personalities of the DID sufferer is that, inasmuch as they are states of the single person, they effectively 'own' each other. They are largely distinct from each other, but they are not all owned by an independent supreme dictator. Postmodern psychology may be 'post-cognitive' (to use Harré's term) in that people are no longer seen as autonomous machines, nor as the possessors of 'objective knowledge about the world', but there is no need to dispense with the cognitive level of understanding persons altogether.

Harré has spent at least the last 25 years arguing for a psychology that transcends the sort of cognitivism that smuggles Cartesianism in through the back door, but it has been argued, notably by Olson and the psychologist John Pickering, that the 'second cognitive revolution' he envisages constrains rather than liberates psychology.⁷⁹ To move beyond the totalising concepts of personhood that were characteristic of certain strands of modernity, a variety of accounts must be considered. The prioritisation of one particular understanding of personhood or self to the exclusion of all others, regardless of what that understanding might be, is just another form of reductionism. Nor does Harré's exclusion of the cognitive level of explanation realise his goal of finally debunking essentialism, as Burkitt notes, because of his continuing reliance upon a Vygotskian genetic endowment that governs cognition at the biopsychological level.⁸⁰

To summarise, concepts of narrative identity do not correspond to superordinate structures of the mind, to a stream of consciousness, or to the structural unity of self-representations. Nor does the narratisation of personal experience correspond to diachronic experiential unity. Narrative identities are not atemporal cognitive structures, and they are not asocial or immutable. They are the stories we tell about ourselves. The answer to the question of 'who' in narrative terms is, as MacIntyre observes, 'I am the subject of a history that is my own and no one else's'.⁸¹ Although there is undoubtedly some tension between discursive psychology and the social

78 Baars 1988.

79 Olson 1999; Pickering 1999.

80 Burkitt 1992, pp.73–82. Burkitt notes that Harré, in maintaining a separation between personal and social being, has very little extra to offer the debate over the relationship between individuals and society than Mead. If Harré has a distinctive contribution, it is in his use of contemporary cognitive theories that ground cognition in the physical substrate of the brain.

81 MacIntyre 1981, p.202.

cognitive approach I have adapted here, the concept of narrative identity remains a valuable tool in understanding the sense a person has of being a singular person over time, and has been adopted by psychologists and philosophers outside the fields of discursive and narratological psychology.⁸² The question of how narrative identity can be understood in relation to the representational and experiential theories of self that I described in the previous chapter still remains to be answered.

‘Selfing’: Dan McAdams’ Narratisation of ‘Me’

Perhaps the most detailed and systematic psychological approach to the construction of narrative identities is that of Dan McAdams, who constructs his theory in terms of the traditional Meadian concepts of ‘me’ and ‘I’, which correspond to the subjective and objective aspects of personhood.⁸³ Mead broadly agreed with James that the ‘I’ was both individualistic and creative, being ‘that part of the self, rooted in the biological equipment of the organism, which we identify with impulse, freedom, creativity, subjectivity; those aspects of individual behaviour and experience which are over against the social or objective situation and which can and do change society.’⁸⁴ The ‘me’, in Mead’s thought, corresponds to the image a person has of him or herself that is derived from the internalisation of the attitudes expressed towards him or her by other people, and is thus closely conceptually related to James’s ‘social self’. It is a self-representation that underlies, and yet is distilled from, a particular persona.

Breaking with the received wisdom of his times, Mead argued that personal individuality was not solely grounded in the ‘I’. Rather, he supposed that individual selfhood was constituted by both the ‘I’ and ‘me’ components. For Mead, the social derivation of the ‘me’ did not compromise the distinctive particularity of the single self: ‘The fact that all selves are constituted by or in terms of social process and are individual reflections of it ... is not in the least incompatible with, or destructive of the fact that every individual self has its own peculiar individuality, its own unique *pattern*.’⁸⁵ Mead’s thought has, however, been extensively criticised for its dependence upon a concept of ‘I’ that was not socially mediated, but which stood as an unchanging, biologically determined centre of spontaneous action, and stood behind the construction of the self.⁸⁶ McAdams’ theory of narratisation retains the distinction between ‘me’ and ‘I’, but recasts them in a way that makes them interdependent upon one another in the processual formation of identity.

82 See Mandler 1984; Polkinghorne 1988; McAdams 1997

83 McAdams 1997, p.56.

84 Pfuetze 1975, p.91.

85 Mead 1934, p.254.

86 For example, see Pannenberg 1985; Burkitt 1992; Levin 1992; Valsiner and Van Der Veer 2000.

McAdams discusses the 'I' in process terms as 'selfing'. Remaining faithful to the Jamesian concept of the 'I' as the 'process of being a self', McAdams, following Blasi, defines the verb 'to self' in the following way:

To self – or to maintain the 'stance' of an I in the world – is to apprehend and appropriate experience as a subject, to grasp phenomenal experience as one's own, as belonging 'to me'. To self, furthermore, is to locate the source of subjective experience as oneself. Thus, selfing is responsible for human feelings of agency, the sense that one is potentially a causal agent in the world.⁸⁷

Such a conception of 'I' is not new. As well as the obvious Jamesian similarities, this definition remains in accordance with the description of the ego of Freudian psychoanalysis as negotiating, 'compromises among the conflicting forces of instinct, superego, society, and reality'.⁸⁸ Moreover, it is entirely consistent with the notion of personhood as a process of becoming a person who is a unique singularity. But such a concept of process in McAdams' account neither contradicts nor replaces representational theories that make specific structural claims about the self system in the way that Harré advocates. As Ivana Markova argues, 'although it is important to conceptualize the self as process, it is also essential to acknowledge that a process can be understood properly only in relationship to a structure.'⁸⁹

The logic behind this concept of the 'I' is that the process of experiencing one's material and social world changes the 'me' in some way, which, in turn, exerts a significant influence on how one's material and social world is experienced: 'the "I" reflexively creates a modern "me" for which the "I" assumes authorship and responsibility.'⁹⁰ So what precisely happens to the 'me'? McAdams explains:

[T]he 'me' is a motley collection of self-attributions ... For many adults in contemporary modern societies, unity in the 'me' is rather a cultural expectation that arises when one seeks to move from a self-list [such as myself as a father, myself as a friend etc.] ... to a more patterned and purposeful integration of the 'me'.⁹¹

This purposeful integration takes the form of the construction of a narrative to one's life story. Such a narrative synthesises the synchronic and diachronic elements of the 'me' into a coherent diachronically singular whole so that one's experience of 'me' in the past leads to the 'me' of the present, which in turn sets the stage for the 'me' of the future. That one's prior experience has a significant influence on one's present experience – the 'I' – needs no justification; it is the premise upon which the whole of developmental psychology is predicated.

87 McAdams 1997, p.56. Also see Blasi 1988.

88 Ibid., p.57.

89 Markova 1987, p.75.

90 Ibid., p.61.

91 Ibid., p.60.

There is no shortage of support for the idea that this is how one's life is given coherence and purpose.⁹² We must be absolutely clear, though, that this is a continuous process that never culminates in the birth of a person. Persons are not static things. Rather, personhood is a perpetually evolving process of becoming. In this way it is possible to see narratisation as the process of laying claim to experiences and organising them into a unique pattern, which is effectively one's autobiography. Conceiving of personal unity in this way, in terms of a continuous process rather than the possession of a particular quality or essence, also offers an extremely congenial theory of personal individuality. For the narrative theorist, individuality subsists in the unique organisational pattern of a person's multiple self-representations and senses of self. The ancient personal qualities of individuality and uniqueness thus continue to be essential intrinsic aspects of this burgeoning theory of the construction of identity.

Identity, then, is not strictly the unification of senses or representations of self. 'Narratisation' is the answer to a different sort of question to that of whether or not people conceive of, or experience themselves in different ways from one moment to the next; it is the answer to the question, 'how do people create and maintain their senses of themselves as continuous beings?' Indeed, the sense of diachronic singularity, which narratisation enables, implies little or nothing about the co-existence of multiple representations or senses of self at all. It certainly does not entail the idea that the self as a whole is destroyed and reconstructed from moment to moment, though several have chosen to frame the process of selfing in this way.⁹³

Narratisation does not structurally unify self-representations into a coherent whole, or unify senses of self from moment to moment; it merely allows someone to trace the course of transitions from one self-representation and one experience of self to another, creating a life-story that is neither a unifying self-representation or a sense of self. In this respect, it might even be portrayed as a reversal of more traditional ways of conceiving personal unity and identity. As Brennan notes, 'Surely, it can be argued, a number of psychological states are not made mine simply by being connected in various ways, rather a certain collection of states are given unity by being one and all mine.'⁹⁴ Stern's concept of the *unitas multiplex* is evident once again in this sort of account – the multiplicity of personhood is integral to the totality. The conclusions that I have drawn from narrative theories

92 Including MacIntyre 1981; Scheibe 1986; Polkinghorne 1988; Britton and Pellegrini 1990; Giddens 1991, 1994; Harré 1998; Hermans and Kempen 1993; Humphreys and Dennett 1998; Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Ochs and Capps 2001.

93 Strawson offers a theory of the momentary self that accords with this idea, though he does not specifically relate it to the concept of narrative autobiography (Strawson 1999). Harré also seems to lean towards thinking about self-representations in this way (Harré 1983, 1998).

94 Brennan 1990, p.144.

of identity are entirely compatible with the conclusions of the previous two chapters. Psychologically, an individual person might be constituted by multiple self-representations when considered synchronically or diachronically, and pass through multiple senses of self when considered diachronically, yet still manage to construct a coherent, singular autobiography. Arguably, this, the sense of being a singular continuous person, is the most basic of all achievements of personhood. As Harré observes, it is nothing other than ‘the uniqueness of personhood, since each person has his/her own unique point of view in the world of things and events, with which, for the most part, a person’s point of action is closely associated.’⁹⁵

To conclude this exploration of experiential self-multiplicity I must now return to the central question of this chapter. If normal people can form multiple, largely autonomous self-representations and are capable of experiencing themselves in very different ways at different moments, and yet under ordinary circumstances also experience themselves as singular and enduring persons over time, then are there any grounds for distinguishing between pathological and ordinary forms of multiplicity? Are some forms of self-multiplicity deemed to be less problematic than others? An understanding of how psychologists do or do not problematise concepts of self-multiplicity is central to the overall thesis of this study, given the general disdain that theological anthropologists have for all its possible forms in their continued wrestling with the modern concept of the unified and autonomous self. Answers to these questions will provide a platform from which to assess the competence with which explicitly psychological ideas of self-unity and multiplicity are handled by some contemporary theological anthropologists.

Self-Multiplicity and Psychopathology

Sociologists and philosophers of the postmodern, I claimed above, have rejected the idea that self-multiplicity should necessarily be seen as symptomatic of pathology. Rather, when conceived in certain ways, self-multiplicity is widely interpreted as unproblematic, and sometimes even as advantageous. Furthermore, psychologists and some sociologists agree that the personal experience of being singular over time is unaffected by some forms of self-multiplicity. Just as it is unwise to make sweeping generalisations about what the self is, however, so judgements about the normativity or pathology of self-multiplicity should be treated with caution. Some, but by no means all, forms of self-multiplicity should be deemed problematic or pathological from a psychological perspective. Given that the naturalness of diachronic and synchronic representational multiplicity is almost unquestioned, as is the pathological nature of DID, it appears that the interesting questions in assessing the pathology of self-multiplicity relate to the different ways in which sub-personalities find expression in everyday life and the fluctuations in the stories people tell about themselves.

95 Harré 1998, p.112.

Although no firm lines of demarcation can be drawn between pathological and adaptive manifestations of sub-personalities, it may be possible to distinguish between more or less pathological and more or less adaptive ways of structuring behaviour according to distinct sub-personalities. This was precisely the goal of Altrocchi's review of research into individual differences across dimensions of self-complexity, self-concept differentiation and self-concept clarity. Altrocchi defined self-complexity as a function of the number of aspects that one uses cognitively to organise knowledge about the self and the degree of relatedness of these aspects, and self-concept differentiation was defined as the degree to which one sees oneself as having different personality characteristics in different social roles. Finally, self-concept clarity was defined as the extent to which the contents of the self-concept, or self-beliefs, are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable.⁹⁶ Although individuals were found to differ widely across all of these dimensions, Altrocchi concluded that there is a pronounced difference between individuals as regards the degrees of diachronic separation that their sub-personalities were subject to.⁹⁷ But irrespective of the degree of separation, sub-personalities were shown to be categorically different to whole alternative personalities, which represent instances of genuine dissociation. These observations lend support to the idea that there is no continuum between normal and pathological dissociation, and hence no continuum between normal diachronic experiential multiplicity and pathological diachronic experiential multiplicity.

Gergen, who argues explicitly that self-multiplicity is not a purely pathological condition, is perhaps the most vocal of those who argue for the adaptive functionality of sub-personalities. In an article entitled 'Multiple Identity: The healthy, happy human being wears many masks', Gergen advances the idea that the existence of multiple selves is a necessary part of human life in the postmodern world.⁹⁸ The ability to maintain a variety of personas simultaneously, and to switch between them successively, both reduces stress and enables an efficiency that would be impossible if persons were monolithic unidimensional entities. He continues this line of argument in *The Saturated Self*,⁹⁹ and others have followed in his footsteps.¹⁰⁰ The adaptive advantages of multiple self-representations are also widely emphasised by schema theorists. Indeed, some go as far as to argue that the schematisation of information is the only possible way to make sense of the human capacity to process such enormous volumes of data.¹⁰¹ Consequently, multiple self-representations and the specific sub-personalities they underlie are

96 Altrocchi 1999, pp.172–4.

97 Measured according to Bernstein and Putnam's 1986, 'Dissociative Experiences Scale'.

98 Gergen 1972.

99 Gergen 1991.

100 For example, see Linville 1987; Boone 1995; Cooper 1999; Rappoport, Baumgardner and Boone 1999.

101 For a clear summary, see Eysenck and Keane 1990.

conceived as extremely efficient ways of dealing with the organisation of many different kinds of personally relevant information. They enable the immediate location of an individual in a specific social context and serve to direct specific patterns of behaviour on a more or less automatic basis.

What begin as distinct sub-personalities may nevertheless become pathological when they become the sole focus of a person's life. Such is the case in instances of obsessive compulsion where a specific activity is pursued to the detriment of all other aspects of a person's reality. In this case, sub-personalities function much more like multiple personalities. Indeed some have argued that this is a possible trigger for the sort of severe dissociation that leads to the construction of multiple personalities.¹⁰² That multiple personalities might be born from sub-personalities is Hardcastle and Flanagan's hypothesis. Although their concept of narrative is flawed, as I argued above, their framework for understanding the relationship between normal and pathological forms of multiplicity can be extrapolated to suggest an extremely helpful understanding of DID in relation to the concept of narrative I have described in this chapter. They suggest that when people lose control of the stories they tell about themselves, and confuse fantasies and other wholly fictional self-narratives with better founded memories: 'the strands of their stories are jumbled and disjointed.'¹⁰³ When this happens, people stop narrating their lives from a singular point of view and begin to tell stories about more than one individual. Without a systematic interpenetration of the various possible life-stories of a singular individual, Hardcastle and Flanagan argue, 'narrative coherence' is lost, and the result is DID.¹⁰⁴

The possible disruptions and deformations that personal narratives might be subject to have also had a significant influence upon the understanding of many other psychological disorders. Arguably, the biggest growth area in narrative psychology is in self-help books and psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalytic psychotherapy, where the central importance of coherent and consistent personal narratives has long been recognised.¹⁰⁵ The difficulties of living with disruptions in life stories caused by conditions such as amnesia, schizophrenia,

102 See Rowan 1999. Interestingly, even the emergence of whole alternate personalities might be seen as somehow adaptive. For example, where DID is linked to extreme trauma, the creation of alternate personalities has been seen as a psychological defence mechanism, shielding the individual from potentially greater psychological damage.

103 Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999, p.650. Though Polkinghorne does not refer explicitly to DID, he describes similarly negative consequences from a failure of narrative to correspond to experienced reality (Polkinghorne 1988).

104 Ibid., p.653. Crossley uses the term 'narrative incoherence' to describe breaches in narrative identity (Crossley 2000a, p.539).

105 Polkinghorne makes this point well (Polkinghorne 1988, pp.119–22). Crossley discusses another, non-psychoanalytic, approach, which also makes use of the concept of narrative in understanding psychopathology. In Crossley's opinion, the narrative psychological approach represents a new and distinctive psychotherapeutic paradigm (Crossley 2000b).

and serious physiological illness as well as the dissociative disorders are very well documented.¹⁰⁶ Ernest Keen, for example, develops a theory of narrative incoherence around the idea of ‘cataclysmic narratives’ – narratives that destroy the coherence of an individual life-story.¹⁰⁷ Although Keen does not relate narrative incoherence to DID specifically, he offers a fascinating account of other possible consequences for mental health, including, especially, paranoia. Dan Siegel, who describes the failure to integrate experiences into a single coherent self in terms of narrative disruption, even goes on to describe a neurophysiological model of this condition.¹⁰⁸

Yet the ability to revise personal narratives in the light of traumatic experience can also be seen as adaptive. Indeed, it is in such reconfigurations of self-narratives that the personal importance of maintaining coherent narratives becomes most apparent. As Crossley observes, ‘Our taken-for-granted assumptions about and towards time are only made visible when a “shock” or a “disruption” occurs, throwing them into sharp relief.’¹⁰⁹ A person’s ability to reconsider their concepts of themselves, and to begin to tell new sorts of stories is widely seen as an invaluable strategy in coming to terms with the condition – ‘a process through and by which the individual attempts to re-establish a moderate degree of “ontological security” and a renewed sense of meaning, order and connection to his or her life.’¹¹⁰

Broadly speaking, there is a consensus amongst psychologists that some forms of multiplicity are pathological and that others are non-pathological and, perhaps, even adaptive. It seems senseless, though, to make a categorical distinction between the pathological, normal, adaptive or maladjusted nature of sub-personalities. Rather, in any given instance, the nature and appropriate description of specific sub-personalities in a specific individual should be determined through the independent analysis of that individual. As a rough guide, synchronic and diachronic representational multiplicity is usually seen as ‘healthy’, inevitable, and potentially adaptive psychological development. It is certainly the norm in the contemporary world. Similarly, experiencing oneself in different ways over time, and according to different environments, is widely regarded as non-pathological. It is also to be expected that people will tell a number of different stories about themselves to different people at different times, and, as long as they retain ownership of their personal narratives, and these do not drift too far into fantasy, this should be seen as part of a normal process of situating themselves in different

106 For example, see Keen 1986; Rowan 1990; Davison and Neale 1994; Frank 1995; Siegel 1999; Crossley 2000a.

107 Keen 1986.

108 Siegel 1999, p.310–37.

109 Crossley 2000a, p.539.

110 *Ibid.*, pp.541–2. The parallels between the clinical importance of the life-affirming narrative, and the importance that Vernon White places upon the evangelisation of the Christian message that we are all unified in the image of God ought to be clear. The social and psychological value of such narratives is a universal theme.

environments. However, the establishment of complete alternative multiple personalities and the consequent lack of 'narrative coherence' is universally regarded as a pathological state. In such a state the person loses their sense of being a singular person over time.¹¹¹

My goal in this and the previous chapter has been to situate psychological understandings of multiplicity and unity in relation to each other and in the context of broader questions about whether self-multiplicity should be seen to be problematic. The approach to the self that I have advocated here is one that cannot be described by any over-arching theory, or by any particular terminological scheme. In accordance with critiques such as Olson's and Gallagher's, I have limited myself to discussing specific dimensions of the self (representational and experiential, synchronic and diachronic), and how different theories of self diverge and converge across these dimensions.¹¹² I have argued that the individual person has not one self-representation but many, and that these are neither unified at any given time, nor merge into a unity over time. I have also suggested that people experience themselves in different ways at different times, and that, although each person has the potential to experience him or herself in a number of ways at any given moment, whichever sense of self inheres at any particular time is necessarily unified.

A supplementary perspective is provided by theories of the narratisation of personal identity, which enables a sense of being a singular person over time. There is a very significant sense in which persons are the stories they tell about themselves, but that is not the only way to describe them. Persons also have collections of self-representations (whether they are schemata or role-identities or other forms of self-representation), and are predisposed towards acting and experiencing themselves in different ways at different times by virtue of a multiplicity of enduring sub-personalities. The concept of narrative offers a distinct and valuable way of understanding how personal experiences are structured over the course of a person's life, but it neither precludes nor replaces understanding persons in terms of self-representations or sub-personalities.

It should be clear by now that the understanding of self I am advocating is not postmodern in the extreme, but it is also a far cry from modern individualistic concepts of an unchanging essence or unity of consciousness. I have been describing a self that lives under the cultural conditions of postmodernity, but which is not dissolved into fiction. Persons are singular but not unified, plural in important ways, but not in all conceivable ways. They are possessed of relatively enduring attributes and characteristics, yet they are fundamentally open to change,

111 Whatever the theoretical status of DID, few would deny that some distinctive differences exist between DID sufferers and non-DID sufferers. Although DID is not universally agreed to result in the genuine dissociation of discrete alternate personalities, all would surely agree that DID is a pathological condition, whether or not it is at the extreme end of a theoretical continuum of dissociation.

112 See Gallagher and Shear 1999b; Olson 1999.

and are experiencing change in postmodernity in hitherto unprecedented ways, as the social sources of identity shift away from traditional social roles to the ephemeral world of superficial relationships. So, what are the implications of this understanding of self for contemporary theological anthropology? This is the question with which the remainder of this book will be concerned.

The Unity of the Person and the Doctrine of *Imago Dei*

Those who make a promise that they can keep only many years later, or over a whole life, have to retain their identity if they are to meet the promise.

(Wolfhart Pannenberg *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, 1994.)

In the opening chapter, largely through a critique of Vernon White's work on identity, I identified four potentially problematic areas of theology's recent treatment of self-fragmentation following the turn to relationality. The psychological and sociological analysis of the last three chapters seems strongly to support those claims. First, the concept of self-fragmentation is clearly far more complex, and can be understood in many more ways, than recent theological anthropology typically supposes. Secondly, the widespread theological tendency to pathologise all possible concepts of self-fragmentation is not supported by the contemporary human sciences. Thirdly, despite theology's conspicuous defence of the unified self, and its hostility towards the idea of self-plurality, the human sciences suggest that the self need not be understood as either unified or multiple; in some respects, it might be both unified and multiple. Finally, there appear to be good reasons for remaining sceptical about the possibility of re-unifying the contemporary self. Since there clearly are ways of conceptualising self-multiplicity that are independent of societal change, neither a social nor a philosophical nor a theological revolution will lead to the reunification of self in all possible senses. There can be no return to a blissful premodern simplicity because radical changes to the social sources of the self have affected both the diversity of ways that people understand themselves and the means by which they reach that understanding.

Ultimately, then, certain aspects of White's approach to self-fragmentation are clearly at variance with the recent human sciences, despite the fact that his identification of a 'social malaise' is based exclusively upon secular accounts of self and identity in contemporary society. Very general terms such as 'anxiety' and 'instability' characterise his description of the disunified self in modernity and postmodernity, as they characterise most other contemporary theological descriptions, but precisely what is meant by self-fragmentation is usually mysterious. The same can be said of the relationship between the fragmented and unified states of any specific individual over time. But White is certainly not alone either in his problematisation of the disunified self, or in the conceptual difficulties he faces.

The fact that Christian theology seems actively to strive against some concepts of self-multiplicity and simply ignores others suggests that something has gone awry with this general area of its dialogue with the human sciences. If the conversation is to be successfully redirected, we must first isolate the sources of the discrepancy. Unfortunately, given the many different ways in which self-unity and self-multiplicity can each be understood, the identification of points of interdisciplinary convergence and divergence is not a straightforward process. We must determine the specific sorts of self-unity that are theologically important, and ascertain exactly why they carry such significance before the conversation can proceed.

Perhaps the greatest deficiency of a theological project such as White's, I suggested, is the lack of an explicit theory of identity formation, without which it is impossible to do justice to such a complex idea as self-fragmentation. In the wake of theology's turn to relationality, as it has become clear that the transcendence of modernity's individualism is a common goal of much contemporary thinking, psychological theories of self and identity formation have become more relevant than ever before. The virtues of an interdisciplinary approach to personhood have crystallised and some have even tried to demonstrate the relational co-dependence of human beings implied by a particular reading of Christian doctrine by describing the role of the interpersonal sphere in self-development. For some time now there has been an almost unanimous consensus that the self develops over time in a social environment. Whether one believes that this process is constrained by certain universal processes or not, in some important sense the self is the product of a particular history of experience. To deny its changeability over time would be to isolate it from its experiences of God and the social world, and thereby deny its particularity. This, current opinion holds, was modernity's primary anthropological misconception and one of the greatest attractions of theological anthropology's turn to relationality is its explicit refutation of this essentialist thesis. There can be no such thing as a static core of personhood if we are each the historically contingent products of our relationships, and so we can no longer understand the self as a set of abstract attributes or dispositions. Whether it is conceived in representational or experiential terms, the self cannot be understood in isolation from the processes, structures and social context that guide development, since they are all inexorably intertwined.

If one seeks to do more than make ontological claims about the interdependence of individual persons, and describe people in their relation to actual social currents and structures, then one must first understand the developmental processes that shape our ways of being in the world and the ways in which they can be transformed.¹ Given the apparent extent of the theological interest in the condition of the social world and its fragmented anxious citizens, it is clear that a regard for

1 The term 'developmental processes' does not strictly refer, here, to the subject matter of what is typically referred to as developmental psychology, though much of developmental psychology is relevant to our current concerns. Rather, I use this term in

personal ontology is accompanied by more existential concerns. Certainly, if we are to understand contemporary thinking about the unity and multiplicity of self, we must pay close attention to the specific ways in which individuals develop in, and are transformed by, their environment. As far as White's own thesis is concerned, a concrete account of the individual processes that he imagines are involved in the dissolution of self-unity would have gone some way to addressing the conceptual opacity I identified, even if it would not have alleviated other difficulties with his sociological and philosophical theses. My aim in the next three chapters is to extend the analysis of self-multiplicity to explore other theological anthropologies that do systematically engage with psychological theories of identity formation.

Psychology and the *Imago Dei*

Theology's idealisation of personal unity has a long history, stretching back at least as far as the work of St Augustine, whose *Confessions* explicitly pathologises the sense of inner disunity in a way that continues to resonate with contemporary thought.² The idea that the healthy person is internally unified retains its grip on modern theological anthropology regardless of modern philosophical and sociological developments. Gunton, for example, states, 'the human mind seeks for a principle of unity, for that which holds things together. It is the almost unanimous conviction of the human race ... that there is something which holds things together.'³ Thiselton, focusing specifically upon the diachronic unity of personhood, writes, 'What is fundamental in theology, finds resonance in all human experience, namely the identity of the self through time.'⁴ For Pannenberg, 'human unity carries over into self-consciousness, and it makes itself felt at every point in the form of anxiety about the self and of care with regard to its self-affirmation.'⁵ Further recent expressions of the indivisible wholeness of persons are not at all hard to find.⁶ Nobody seriously entertains the possibility that a single person might have many largely discrete selves. Everyone seems to agree, in fact, that individual persons are (under normal circumstances) psychologically and psychosomatically unified at any given moment of their lives, and are the bearers of continuous and unified identities throughout their lives.⁷ Having identified a

a much broader sense to refer to those psychological processes involved in the continual transformation of self-representations and experience.

2 St Augustine (1961).

3 Gunton 1993, p.179.

4 Thiselton 1995, p.74

5 Pannenberg 1985, p.106.

6 For example, see Anderson 1982; McFadyen 1990a; Macquarrie 1982; Grenz 2001; Schwöbel 1991b; Welker 2000.

7 The psychosomatic unity of the person – the unity of the body and mind – is perhaps an even more popular topic than the psychological unity of the individual in the theology–

number of different ways of framing the multiplicity of self, however, we are now in a position to explore this uncontested theological maxim in more detail.

Attempting to understand the rationale behind Christian theology's attachment to the concept of the unified self brings us into direct contact with the doctrine of *imago Dei*. Quite simply, this is because of its unparalleled historical significance to Christian deliberations upon personhood, including those relational approaches where the gravity of self-unity has been articulated so keenly in recent times.⁸ Indeed, authors including Gunton, McFadyen, Schwöbel and White have made relational interpretations of the image central components of their respective anthropologies.⁹ It is through analogy to the perichoretic triune God, they believe, that personhood can be seen to be an intrinsically relational concept.¹⁰ To quote White once more, 'if God himself only exists *qua* God in mutual relation to others, then we, analogously (and made in his image) must accept that we are similarly formed out of others, and the Other.'¹¹ Not everyone is as committed as Schwöbel and White to this perichoretic understanding of the image, but the theological prominence of a range of interpretations that accommodate relational concepts of personhood cannot be denied.¹²

It is, of course, the self's exposure to the flux of relationality in recent thought that makes self-unity such a problem in the eyes of the human sciences. When the subject of reflexive consciousness was conceived as an asocial essence

science dialogue. With very few exceptions (see, for example, Duvall 1998; Moreland 1998) there is agreement that the person is best described as a psychosomatic unity, and that this position has a solid basis in scripture (for example, see Anderson 1982; Macquarrie 1982; Brown, Murphy and Malony 1998; Gregersen, Drees and Görman 2000).

8 It is, after all, 'to the doctrine of creation – be this protologically or eschatologically understood – that theology has tended to look for its understanding of human being as a creature of God' (Alsford 1995, p.203). Similarly, Anderson writes, 'It is not too much to say that the core of the theological curriculum itself is contained in the doctrine of the *imago Dei*' (Anderson 1982, p.70).

9 Trinitarian theology has blossomed spectacularly in recent years. So much so that David Cunningham writes, 'so prevalent have such studies become that the phenomenon begins to look not so much like a renaissance as a bandwagon. Once threatened by its relative scarcity in modern theology, the doctrine now seems more likely to be obscured by an overabundance of theologians clustered around it' (Cunningham 1998, p.19). For some, such as Schwöbel, the principle that 'human being as relational being is rooted in the relationship of the triune God to humanity', is *the* distinctive thesis of Christian theological anthropology (Schwöbel 1991b, p.142).

10 Schwöbel himself is convinced that the uniquely Christian doctrine of the Trinity offers the most appropriate means by which those who wish to espouse a distinctively Christian approach to personhood 'can engage in dialogue with the rich diversity of non-Christian and secular views of reality' (Schwöbel 1991a, p.10).

11 White 1997, p.123.

12 In practice this has tended to be at the expense of the idea that the image of God represents a structure of human nature, though this sort of interpretation does not necessarily conflict with relational understandings of personhood. See Grenz 2001.

of personhood, its unity could not be called into question. Philosophically, sociologically and psychologically, as I have already shown, recognition that the self is not pre-given, but is rather formed through interaction with the environment, is among the most important influences upon the proliferation of theories of self-plurality.¹³ Once we recognise that the self is determined in some important respect by that which is other to itself, once we recognise its constructedness, then the modernists' problem of how to explain the self's changeability is superseded by the problem of accounting for its sameness over time. In other words, how should we understand the relationship between the dynamic developing self and the identity of a person over his or her lifetime? This is the question that has drawn theology directly into conversation with psychological theories of identity formation – a relationship that ought not to appear extraordinary given the complex interdisciplinary history of this doctrine's relationship to concepts of self and personhood.¹⁴ It is also the question that has shaped theological attitudes towards self-unity.

As we shall see presently, the *imago Dei* has been at the heart of a number of approaches to this enduring conundrum, and a close reading of the apposite arguments will also help us to identify the sorts of self-unity that are theologically important.¹⁵ Just as enlightening, as far as the theological understanding of self-unity is concerned, are the ways in which pathologies of identity have been related to the corruption of the divine image following the rejuvenation of theology's interest in relationality. The prevalence of such pathology is revealed within declarations of the tension between the redeemed and initial (fallen) states of personhood. As Kevin Vanhoozer argues:

From a theological perspective ... the disproportion or fault-line that threatens to rip human being apart is not that of body and soul, nor finitude and infinity, but rather the tension between what men and women were originally created and destined to be, on the one hand, and what they have actually become, on the other.¹⁶

13 See Taylor 1992 and Grenz 2001 for clear discussions of the historical significance of this idea.

14 Grenz observes, 'As the Christian tradition developed in conversation with Western philosophical trends, many thinkers came to read the *imago Dei* passages through lenses that were increasingly colored by the concern for the construction of the individual self' (Grenz 2001, p.183).

15 Once again, it is unsurprising that the divine image should be at the centre of things. After all, as Grenz notes, 'Thinkers in the Western tradition have pursued the age-old quest for personal identity by attempting to construct the self. From the patristic era to the present, Christian theologians have responded to the challenge posed by this search for an identity producing self by appealing to the biblical concept of the *imago Dei*' (Grenz 2001, p.141).

16 Vanhoozer (2003), p.162.

Precisely what is understood by the ideal, if only ever aspirational, form of personhood varies considerably between particular theological anthropologies, but the belief that the divine image's corruption (Vanhoozer's 'fault-line') somehow reflects a perversion of the proper ways of relating to oneself, to other people, and to God is very widespread indeed. It is taken to signify a distortion of God's intention for humanity – a denial of the social grounds of personhood whether or not these are established ontologically by the image itself.¹⁷ Where relations with others are assumed to be the building blocks of individual identity, the corruption of the image has been portrayed psychologically as the formation of individual personhood in isolation from, or in contradistinction to community.¹⁸ It represents a disordered psyche, a sort of psychological disunity that results in the decoupling of the private self and its public manifestations. In short, the individual's sinfulness is closely identified with self-estrangement and self-alienation, both of which proceed from inappropriate or distorted developmental processes.

If the fundamental brokenness of human beings as sinful creatures can be conceived as a specific pathology of identity, psychological theories of identity formation have the potential to contribute constructively to theological understanding. Locating the self in a social and developmental psychological context allows theologians to elaborate upon the movement between corrupted and redeemed personhood in concrete terms by describing a psychological transformation with both personal and interpersonal dimensions. Such psychological theorising cannot and does not seek to replace specifically theological interpretations of the human condition, but it offers a way to understand individual persons that both supplements theological discourse and reconnects it to contemporary secular thought. At least, that is often the stated goal of dialogue with psychology and the other human sciences. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the notion of psychological disunity seems to carry some historical and contemporary theological significance, psychology's potential contribution to the subject has not been explored as fully as it might have been.

Of most immediate importance, perhaps, is the distinction psychology formalises between personal and sub-personal types of analysis. This is crucial since it permits a differentiation between different sorts of unity and multiplicity that is not often made explicit in contemporary theological anthropology. It enables us to ask whether it is the unity of the individual as a whole (in which the image of God is instantiated) that is theologically essential, and whether there are also good reasons for defending an indivisible unity of self and identity at a sub-personal level.¹⁹ These are questions that must be addressed if this specific dialogue with

17 As in, for example, Pannenberg 1970, 1985, 1994; Anderson 1982; Macquarrie 1982; McFadyen 1990a, 2000; White 1997; Grenz 2001; Cunningham 2003.

18 For example, Pannenberg 1985; McFadyen 1990a.

19 Strawson offers a useful heuristic for this sort of distinction. He asks whether self-unity is best considered as the sort of feature that a single marble might have, or whether it is more like the sort of unity that inheres in a pile of marbles (see Strawson 1999, p.8).

psychology is to be advanced, and theology's disquisition into the plight of modern personhood is to resonate with the human sciences more generally. Although a large number of distinct theological discourses apparently draw upon concepts of self-unity, in exploring its relationship to notions of self-fragmentation the works of two theologians who have engaged with theoretical psychological processes of identity formation in great depth are particularly useful: the anthropological works of Wolfhart Pannenberg, particularly his *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, and Alistair McFadyen's groundbreaking *The Call to Personhood*. The arguments of these two authors will constitute the bulk of the ensuing analysis, which begins by examining their theological justification of personal unity, not the psychological theories that supposedly justify unity in any other sense. Such arguments might be described, as Shults suggests in his analysis of posfoundationalism in Pannenberg's anthropology, as arguments 'from above'.²⁰ Arguments 'from below', those that begin in psychology and work upwards towards theological understanding, are the concern of the following chapter.

Pannenberg and McFadyen: Two Recent Theological Psychologies of the Self

I have chosen to illustrate the arguments of the next two chapters through the works of Pannenberg and McFadyen for several reasons. First and foremost, it is because of the explicit interdisciplinarity of their respective anthropological projects. Each purports to accord equal attention to secular human scientific and theological thought in the belief that they are far more than simply compatible. Rather, they assume the disciplines are able, in some sense, to inform one another in a constructive way. Both understand persons as individual particular entities that are shaped by their interpersonal relationships within complex sociocultural systems and both have engaged deeply with secular theoretical psychology in order to supplement their theological concepts of personhood. Significantly, both of their projects stay very much at this theoretical level; neither seeks to engage any specific body of psychological research. Rather, both make strong philosophical claims about the nature and structure of self, which they subsequently elaborate upon in psychological terms as they systematically develop their broad overarching anthropological frameworks. All this is not to say, however, that their theories of self and personhood are identical. Indeed, it is as much because of the contrasts between their approaches as the similarities that they make such interesting partners in this particular conversation.

As far as their understanding of the proper way for theology to engage the human sciences is concerned, Pannenberg and McFadyen differ markedly. This is also true as regards their respective motivations for exploring the interaction at all. In 1991 Schwöbel noted that Pannenberg's project was 'the most comprehensive attempt to develop a theological anthropology in the context of contemporary

20 Shults 1999.

reflection in the human sciences.²¹ The same can still be said today, and the sheer breadth of his anthropological project remains unsurpassed.²² The theological grounding of Pannenberg's concept of the person is presented most transparently in his ambitious *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, and his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, though its evolution is clearly traceable through his much earlier works *Jesus – God and Man*, and *What Is Man*.²³

According to Pannenberg, 'fundamental' theological anthropology:

turns its attention directly to the phenomena of human existence as investigated in human biology, psychology, cultural anthropology, or sociology and examines the findings of these disciplines with an eye to implications that may be relevant to religion and theology.²⁴

In his decision to treat secular anthropological theories as preliminary conclusions requiring further theological investigation, Pannenberg's methodology entails an integration of theology and philosophical psychology that McFadyen actually cautions against. He is strongly motivated by the desire to demonstrate the contribution that Christian theology has to make to secular anthropology – to explain the deeper explicitly theological meaning of secular anthropological theories and concepts and show that people are inherently religious creatures. Quite simply, as Peters argues, 'The two fields must finally deal with only one domain of knowledge if they are to understand reality.'²⁵ Hence, his methodology searches out unity and coherence at every turn, whether by theological or secular psychological argumentation.²⁶

McFadyen believes that theology and psychology should retain their theoretical independence to a greater extent than Pannenberg. According primacy neither to theological nor psychological models of personhood, he prefers instead to see them as 'mutually informative', and accepts that each may change the other in dialogue. Whereas Pannenberg seeks out 'universal truth', McFadyen is driven by the desire to heal a contemporary malaise, which, like White, he believes to be a consequence of inadequate understandings of individuality. The malaise itself is explained in terms of the distorted forms of communication that he believes take

21 Schwöbel 1991b, p.145.

22 Pannenberg's approach to the natural sciences has been extensively critiqued elsewhere, and those arguments will not be rehashed here, where the focus will solely be upon Pannenberg's psychological claims in relation to the multiplicity, singularity and unity of the self and identity. See, for example, Albright and Haugen 1997; Schwöbel 1989; Stewart 2000.

23 Pannenberg 1968, 1970, 1985, 1991, 1993, 1997.

24 Pannenberg 1985, p.21.

25 Peters 1997, p.293.

26 Stewart makes this point forcefully in a critique of Pannenberg's apparently modernist ideals (Stewart 2000, p.22).

place in contemporary relationships. Describing a widespread failure of people to treat each other as free independent individuals, McFadyen suggests that this pernicious status quo is perpetuated by the social structures that govern individual and social life. Through his prescriptive theological understanding of the ideal form of interpersonal communication, McFadyen hopes to further understand how stable and authentic identities might be built upon genuinely dialogical relationships.

Pannenberg and McFadyen's firm commitment to relational understandings of self, personhood and identity provide a further reason for engaging with their work in exploring notions of self-unity and multiplicity. Although both want to emphasise the social construction of the individual, they offer very different philosophical, psychological and theological accounts of human relationality. Pannenberg leans upon the philosophical anthropology of Herder, Scheler and Plessner to establish personhood's relational disposition, whereas McFadyen draws upon the theologies of Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Jürgen Moltmann in demonstrating what he refers to as human ex-centricity. These divergent influences are displayed very clearly in their treatments of the *imago Dei* and the concept of sin – the two historically dominant strands of theological anthropology. Both resist the identification of the image of God with a single specific psychological structure or capacity. Pannenberg conceives the image of God eschatologically as human destiny to fellowship with God, and McFadyen understands it in terms of the relational, communicative essence of human being.²⁷

Since the human sciences' growing awareness of the self's social constructedness played such a significant role in their movement towards the idea of the plural self, we might expect Pannenberg's and McFadyen's psychological accounts of the relational constitution of the self also to lead them away from the concept of self-unity. This is not the case. Despite their very different understandings of precisely what the self is and how it is formed, both make similar claims about its singularity and structural unity, and thus their conclusions are at odds with those of secular psychology. Explaining this divergence from secular thought exposes some of the misunderstandings and conceptual conflations that often afflict theology's dialogue with psychological theories of self, and reveals the extent to which theological preconceptions (which are seemingly independent of specific denominational and ontological commitments) shape McFadyen's and Pannenberg's psychological projects.

From a psychological perspective, Pannenberg's and McFadyen's theories of the self are as different as their theologies; they draw their influences from entirely distinct though perhaps not incompatible sources. Pannenberg picks his way through a diverse range of psychological accounts of the self, from the pragmatists William James and George Herbert Mead to the psychoanalysts Freud,

27 These two interpretations of the image, as Grenz observes, represent the two major contemporary alternatives to the enlightenment vision of the *imago Dei* as rationality or free will (Grenz 2001, pp.173–82).

Erik Erikson and Heinz Hartmann. Never purely psychological, his discourse is suffused with philosophical critique drawn from the works of Kant, Heidegger, Fichte and Sartre among others. His own account of the self and personhood, however, is presented mostly in the terminology of psychoanalytic psychology. By contrast, McFadyen relies heavily upon the terminology and discursive or social constructionist psychology of Rom Harré. Once again, however, despite considerable terminological and conceptual differences, the fact that these very different approaches lead to very similar ideas about unity and singularity serves to demonstrate the obdurateness of these principles in contemporary theology, and their independence from specific interpretations of personhood. A close examination of their respective psychologies, furthermore, particularly those theoretical problems against which the notion of self-unity is mobilised, highlights other shared assumptions and points towards a possible means of reconciling theological and psychological concerns.

One final common feature of their respective projects makes them especially congenial partners in conversation; both deal directly with pathologies of identity in both psychological and theological terms. Inner psychological disorder, characterised by the failure to construct a genuine and continuous unified identity, is a recurring theme throughout their work. Their discussions of such pathological manifestations of personhood lay bare the theological influences that help shape their psychological concepts of fragmentation and unity. At the same time they enable a direct comparison between theologically grounded and wholly secular notions of the naturalness (or unnaturalness) of self-multiplicity. Pathologies of the self, it should be clear, raise fascinating questions about the relationship between the concepts of self-unity and personhood, and a number of difficulties with McFadyen's and Pannenberg's respective theories arise in relation to their treatment of this contentious topic.

Pannenberg and the Image as Human Destiny

Beginning with Pannenberg, then, in what specifically theological context does the concept of self-unity arise? Wholeness, incompleteness, and part-whole relationships are all central themes of Pannenberg's treatment of personal identity and a great deal of space is devoted to their explication both in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* and his *Systematic Theology*.²⁸ They are intertwined with two other especially prominent themes, both of which are closely related to his understanding of the *imago Dei*. The first of these centres upon the notion

28 As Shults has argued, however, despite a basic unity of method, they are treated slightly differently in these two works (Shults 1999).

that human beings are naturally ‘exocentric’ or open to the world, and the second concerns the temporal constitution of personhood.²⁹

In his *Systematic Theology*, Pannenberg begins his exposition of the image with the statement: ‘Basic to the personality of each individual is the destiny of fellowship with God.’³⁰ His vision of the image as human destiny rests upon the Pauline statements that speak both of Jesus Christ as the image of God, (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; cf. Heb. 1:3) and of the transformation of believers into this image (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18). Similarly crucial to his project is the separation he maintains between the concepts of ‘the fulfilling of our divine likeness in and by Jesus Christ on the one hand, and the OT statements about Adam’s divine likeness on the other’.³¹ Whilst expounding the history of the Christian theological debate over the interpretation of Genesis 1:26, Pannenberg sides with those who believe the image of God is actualised only in Christ. A difference must be assumed to exist, he argues, between the degrees of likeness to the divine image denoted by the terms ‘being the image of God’ and ‘being created *according to* the image of God’, and the distinction between ‘original’ and ‘copy’ that these terms imply. It is not, however, a categorical distinction. This is central, since it implies that whereas Adam can be said to have borne a certain likeness to God, the image only achieves its fullness in Jesus Christ, in whom the original was manifest.

Of Genesis 1:26, he writes:

When the text speaks of humans representing God, the point is that humans are according to God’s image, but not to the same degree. In the early days of humanity the likeness was perhaps still imperfect. Through sin there was then increasing distortion in individuals. Only in Jesus, as Christian anthropology sees it, did the image of God appear with full clarity.³²

Since Pannenberg understands Christ to be the proleptical realisation of God’s eschatological self-demonstration, the image of God must also, for Pannenberg, be conceived in eschatological terms. Thus, the image of God describes humanity’s destiny to fellowship with God at the end of history, and Christ, as the eschatological new man, is the ultimate demonstration of the fulfilment of that destiny. In this way Pannenberg gives the Pauline statements about Christ as the image of God general anthropological significance. This account presents a vision of the human person in which the temporality of being is central. His understanding of the diachronic dimension of personhood, then, is implicitly related to his understanding of the image of God, and, given the synthesising agenda that he sets himself, a concern

29 The term ‘exocentricity’ is borrowed from Plessner, though he also explores the same idea in the work of Herder and Scheler (Pannenberg 1985, p.37ff).

30 Pannenberg 1994, p.202.

31 Ibid., p.210.

32 Ibid., p.216.

with temporality also dominates his psychological theorising – his eschatological grounding of the image means that personhood is conceived as perpetually in a process of becoming, as opposed to a static possession or quality.³³

Incompleteness and Openness

To be created in the likeness of the image, for Pannenberg, is to be created as somehow incomplete, yet with the potential to achieve wholeness at the eschaton. Earthly human being can only be a fragment of the true human being, which is given in its final communion with God. His understanding of the original imperfection of humanity, in contrast to the pre-Reformation anthropological tradition that stems from Origen and Athanasius, encourages a similar developmental understanding of the likeness to God. This is a matter of degree for Pannenberg, yet always stands implicitly related to full similarity to the image, hence his rejection of Irenaeus' (and later medieval Latin scholasticism's) categorical distinction between the two. Humanity can be seen to be moving gradually towards the image of God, as it becomes more *like* the image.

However, Pannenberg denies that the realisation of the image of God can be achieved through purely human powers, and so rejects the possibility of hominisation (in the sense of self-improvement or self-perfectibility) purely through moral action in the manner eulogised throughout the Enlightenment.³⁴ This claim will prove to be crucial in understanding how Pannenberg conceives individual self-unity. He argues that creaturely life must be 'inwardly moved' by its destiny, and that this signifies a disposition towards fellowship with God, which is not present as a goal but as 'an indefinite trust that opens up the horizon of world experience and intersubjectivity, and also in a restless thrust toward overcoming the finite'.³⁵ It carries with it a moral imperative that Pannenberg

33 Clearly, such a processual view of personhood finds sympathy in many quarters. Macquarrie, for example, writes 'Perhaps one should speak not of a "human being" but of a "human becoming" ... We could say that we are all *becoming* human, in the sense that we are discovering and, it may be hoped, realizing what the potentials of a human existence are. Yet, it is true that we already *are* human, because these potentialities already belong to us' (Macquarrie 1982, p.2).

34 'The goal for which human beings are destined is one they cannot reach by themselves. If they are to reach it, they must be raised above themselves, lifted above what they already are. But they must also be *participants* in this process, and this in interaction with their world and their fellow human beings, who, like them, are on the way to their own human destiny. And the harmonious working of all these factors is guaranteed solely by the fact that in all of them God himself, the origin and goal of our destiny to communion with him, is influencing us' (Pannenberg 1985, p.58. Original emphasis).

35 Pannenberg 1994, p.228. This indefinite trust is also given a psychological foundation. In the feeling of a limitless basic trust that the human infant gains from its perceived symbiotic unity with its mother, Pannenberg identifies the origin of a sense of complete security. As the infant becomes independent, this sense of security comes to depend

describes as 'a condition of remaining in hope of the fellowship with God that God himself grants'.³⁶

But these arguments are not simply dogmatic. They are firmly grounded philosophically by the concept of exocentricity (*exzentrizität*), which is fundamental to his entire anthropology. It simultaneously explains humanity's incompleteness and anchors it in a transcendental reality, thereby introducing the religious thematic into the most fundamental aspect of human being. Humanity's original endowment, he suggests, stands in relation to its destiny in its essential 'openness' to the world, or its ability to be 'centred' outside itself – in its exocentricity. For Pannenberg, this is an innate structure of human psychology that precedes experience, and is the definitive characteristic of specifically human psychology.³⁷ The objectivity of perception, he argues, shows how people can exist outside themselves both by being present to all objects as other and by distancing themselves from those objects.³⁸ The ability to transcend every possible object (and therefore oneself) is cited as a precondition for being able to perceive an object in its determinacy, since if an object can be perceived as finite then its finitude has already been transcended, through its very differentiation from its background.³⁹ Hence he writes, 'In grasping the finite there is always a nonthematic sense of the infinite as that which is other than the finite.'⁴⁰ The capacity for self-transcendence thus becomes the hallmark of the human.

Pannenberg moves swiftly from these preliminary anthropological conclusions to examine the implications that the concept of exocentricity has for theological anthropology, and concludes that human beings are simply open to the infinite that

upon God. He believes basic trust to be a central aspect of both healthy infant and healthy adult personalities, believing this claim to be confirmed by 'the fact that every subsequent act of identification and independent identity formation represents a new actualization of that trustful self-opening to the world which was formed in early childhood. The identifying of oneself with something always requires courage and trust in the soundness of that with which one involves oneself' (Pannenberg 1985, p.229).

36 Pannenberg 1994, p.224.

37 He writes, 'in the essential structure of the human form of life exocentricity is nonetheless the most generalised and to that extent fundamental characteristic of the properly human' (Pannenberg 1985, p.63).

38 The human person, he writes, is capable of, 'a transcending of the whole sphere of projective perception, but one that nonetheless is based on the perception of the object *as* other and in which the existence of the perceiver is initially grasped as one object among others. If I am able to grasp the individual object *as* this individual object and thus as other in relation both to other objects and to myself, I must have reached beyond the individual object and acquired a perspective in which it can be viewed together with others and which by its very generality is of a higher order than the individual object and embraces this simultaneously with others' (Ibid., pp.67–8).

39 Pannenberg acknowledges the Hegelian influence upon this conclusion (Ibid., p.70).

40 Pannenberg 1994, p.196.

is beyond the world, or what he describes as ‘an openness to God which alone makes possible a gaze embracing the world as a whole’.⁴¹ In his assessment of the importance of trust as a basic dispositional need of humanity, he argues that the ‘theme of God’ is inseparable from ‘the living of human life’. Inasmuch as basic trust can be connected to the structural openness of life, there is, he argues, an implicit reference to God. Basic trust is directed to ‘that agency which is able to protect and promote the self in its *wholeness*’.⁴²

Pannenberg’s exposition of the exocentric existence of humanity enables him to connect the finite to the infinite, the immanent to the transcendent, and questions of human reality and destiny to divine reality. Importantly, it is also the intrinsic exocentricity of humanity that is responsible for what he considers to be the inherent conflictual condition of the human self – the ‘brokenness of human nature’, which is experienced as the disjunction of the self from itself (‘non-identity’, ‘self-alienation’, or the ‘estrangement’ of the person from himself). Egocentrism, which is an explicit denial of exocentric destiny to fellowship with God, is identified with the other dominant theme of traditional theological anthropology – the concept of sin. It is through the concept of sin, therefore, that he is able to contrast the disunity of the individual in the present moment, with the transcendent movement towards human destiny that is represented by his concept of individual wholeness. I will return to this idea in the following chapter.

Wholeness and Unity

Part-whole relationships pervade Pannenberg’s discussion of the human condition. The concepts of wholeness and fragmentariness, which in this context at least are distinguished primarily on temporal grounds, provide the background against which he is able to describe the normative and ideal (or final) states of human being.⁴³ Although his idea of wholeness provides a means of relating individual personhood, salvation, and the image of God, and thus introduces the religious thematic into his anthropology, it is an extremely broad concept that does not correspond to any one of the forms of unity that I have described so far. Rather, his explanation of the procession towards the wholeness that is both the realisation of the image of God and the actualisation of the human blends several more specific concepts of unity together. However, in accordance with the framework developed in Chapters 3 and 4, these concepts can be teased apart by the recognition that they relate to different ways of thinking about personhood and figure in different types of part-whole relationship.

41 Pannenberg 1985, p.69.

42 Ibid., p.234.

43 The postmodern theologian Brian Walsh, in a review of *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, also notes Pannenberg’s frequent appeal to part-whole relationships, but does not expand upon this point in relation to the unifying properties of his concept of ‘wholeness’ that depends upon his interpretation of the *imago Dei* (See Walsh 1986).

The most fundamental of the psychological unities Pannenberg describes is the concept of continuous identity, which he takes to be a well-supported principle of developmental psychology. This sort of unity is inherent to his idiosyncratic understanding of exocentricity and wholeness, since it is clearly a prerequisite of continual participation in the process of becoming. Its importance is summarised concisely by his observation: 'Those who make a promise that they can keep only many years later, or over a whole life, have to retain their identity if they are to meet the promise.'⁴⁴ Hence, the formation of identity becomes the primary structuring principle of Pannenberg's thinking in the second part of his *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, where he builds upon his abstract concept of the individual to describe the construction of personhood in the social world.

As well as the continuity entailed by the concept of identity, Pannenberg also finds room for a notion of internal unity at any given moment, which he also justifies on purely theological grounds. This is to be expected since, although true wholeness is irreducible to any form of purely internal unity, humanity's creation in the likeness of the divine image means that all aspects of present life must be understood in the context of this relationship.⁴⁵ He writes, 'selfhood never achieves definitive manifestation in life. It does not yet appear who we truly are, but we exist now as persons.'⁴⁶ For Pannenberg, the concept of the true self corresponds to the wholeness of a life in its entirety from its beginning to the end of history. But wholeness is also manifest at any particular moment as personality (or personhood); the term 'person' signifies the human being 'in its wholeness, which transcends the fragmentariness of its reality-at-hand'.⁴⁷ At any given moment, he is suggesting, individuals experience themselves as fully integrated totalities of their whole life histories, and though they are also incomplete, the whole is 'already present in the fragment'.⁴⁸ The continuity of selfhood signifies the unity of a single continuous life, grounded in its relation to its destiny to fellowship with God – in other words, it is a concept that implies diachronic singularity. The unity of the person, by contrast, implies the synchronic experiential unity of personality at any given moment, which necessarily includes an anticipation of its final destiny – an awareness of its projected identity – and so transcends its 'reality-at-hand' through its relation to the wholeness of selfhood. As such, 'person' signifies the

44 Pannenberg 1994, p.202. This example of his support for the idea of personal continuity from his *Systematic Theology* seems carefully worded to echo his concern both with the dialogicality of individual being and with the true wholeness which appears to each individual only in promissory form.

45 In his *Systematic Theology* he writes, 'We must understand our present life, and especially our personality, in terms of this future destiny. It is thus that our future destiny now manifests itself. All other aspects are secondary to this one' (Pannenberg 1994, p.224).

46 Ibid., p.200.

47 Pannenberg 1985, p.235. Although individuals are already somehow their selves, true wholeness must include the future as well as the past and the present. The concept of person, he argues, is a bridge between the past, present and future.

48 Ibid.

experience both of being an unfinished history and of moving towards completion – the experience of being a momentarily unified part of a whole continuous self. Pannenberg explains:

In the person the whole of the individual's life 'appears' in the present. Although in every present moment the life of the human being is partly already past and partly still future, yet in that moment it is at least implicitly present as a whole.⁴⁹

Pannenberg's anthropology is both conceptually and terminologically unusual in many ways, but particularly in its subversion of the more common psychological depiction of the relationship between person and self by associating the broadest possible notion of completeness with the latter. Nevertheless, it seems as though Pannenberg's concept of personhood, when examined 'from above', anticipates a notion of personal-unity that corresponds in some significant ways to the concept of narrative identity described in the previous chapter. This interpretation is supported by Pannenberg's positive appraisal of the ego psychologist Erik Erikson's concept of personal wholeness, whereby unity is preserved through continuous reintegration moment by moment.⁵⁰ However, aspects of Pannenberg's thought are also revealed in his discussion of sub-personal psychology (of the relationship of the ego to the self) and apparently conflict with narrative psychological models. These lead to strong ideas of self-unity that I will have cause to question in the following chapter, when I come to discuss the details of his psychological account of identity formation.

The idea that the wholeness of the person is manifest in any given moment and yet is also oriented to the future also grounds Pannenberg's assertion that the individual cannot be totally determined by the social environment. He expresses the 'for-itselfness' of individual personhood, which is also the capacity to transcend the social situation, in terms of personal freedom. This in turn corresponds to the reference to God that is inherent in his concept of basic trust, and therefore, he argues, it must also be connected with the idea of wholeness 'insofar as this wholeness points not only beyond the fragmentariness of the individual's reality in any given moment but also beyond earthly life, which will be broken off in death, to a fulfilment in the beyond'.⁵¹ Since personal wholeness involves the anticipation of the true self in the future, persons are free in spite of their inherently exocentric nature and their consequent social constructedness. Once more, the extent to which his anthropology is dominated by his focus upon the future-orientedness of all aspects of human individuality is clear. People are created with the capacity and the obligation to achieve their destinies and, although their running progress in this enterprise might be more or less evaluated, fellowship with God – the ultimate unity – is something to be achieved at the eschaton, not before.

49 Ibid., p.240.

50 Ibid., p.235.

51 Ibid., p.241.

In his belief in the freedom and continuous identity of the individual, Pannenberg is in line with the vast majority of recent theological anthropology, where the concept of the individual-in-relation has recently been a rallying point for both anti-individualist and anti-postmodern theses. Even those who agree that identity is socially constructed typically deny that the individual is wholly determined by the social world, but rather takes something of what he or she already is into each social interaction and relationship. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this is deemed essential if the concept of individual personhood is to maintain the boundaries that guarantee its particularity, though these are no longer the boundaries of radical individualism.⁵² Personal relationality and distinctiveness, the argument goes, must be held in constructive tension, so the desire to safeguard personal particularity always leads to the rejection of those ontologically sceptical postmodern accounts, which both annihilate the concept of enduring identity and compromise individual autonomy.⁵³ As Gunton argues, 'To be a person is to be constituted in particularity and freedom – to be given space to be – by others in community.'⁵⁴ Although Pannenberg is more equivocal than Gunton and others regarding the use of the doctrine of perichoresis to establish either the unity of the Godhead or the intrinsic relationality of human personhood, his anthropology strongly endorses this understanding of the relationship between the individual and community.⁵⁵

Overall, Pannenberg presents a distinctive Christian theological interpretation of the quest for personal wholeness, though neither the idea of the quest itself nor the idea that personhood's unity is grounded in its relation to the transcendent

52 In some ways, the theological perception of the postmodern threat to personal particularity is closely related to that which accompanies modernity's emphasis upon self-sufficiency, since both entail the isolation of individuals from each other. This point is made forcefully by a number of contemporary theological anthropologists (see McFadyen 1990a; Gunton 1991b, 1993; White 1997). Where the modern individual perceives him or herself as a private and self-creating being, this alleged isolation stems from self-centredness and the denial of the social foundations of personhood. But it is equally severe in postmodernism, where the relational basis of the person is recognised, but where common systems of meaning and notions of objectivity are stripped away. In both instances isolation is alleged to lead to personal disengagement, self-fragmentation, and the narrowing of the 'quality of human existence' (White 1997, p.53).

53 Postmodernism, it is assumed, has resolved this tension on the side of relativism, and consequently the person has become 'an opaque product of variable roles and performances, which have been imposed upon it by the constraints of society and by its own inner drives or conflicts' (Thiselton 1995, p.121). This is evident in our contemporary predicament, suggests Thiselton, where modernity's self-assured and optimistic person has been replaced by the passive observer who is at the mercy of manipulative groups and individuals, and who is powerless in the absence of its previous conviction in its own active agency.

54 Gunton 1991a, p.59.

55 Pannenberg 1991, pp.317–19.

are uncommon in the conceptual history of personhood.⁵⁶ Certain strands of contemporary secular thought continue this tradition, preserving the notion of a progression from fragmentation to wholeness through the acceptance of the inherently exocentric human disposition, though the relationship between the present and future manifestations of personhood, which Pannenberg delineates through the concepts of likeness to the image and actualisation of the image, is here reduced to a contingency. Vaught presents a typical form of this argument:

The quest for wholeness unfolds in the actual journeys of concrete individuals, who begin with fragmentation and who often struggle to overcome it by seeking a larger community in which their lives can be significant. Wholeness can never be found apart from community, for the meaning of human existence is partly constituted by the human bonds that tie us together ... The fragmentation we experience is often caused by separation from others, and it is fragmentation of this kind that drives us toward the community to seek the fulfilment that can never be found in isolation.⁵⁷

The analogy cannot be pushed too far. In accounts such as Vaught's the external source of personal unity is located in communitarian concepts of personhood rather than transcendent deity, but his recognition that the isolated individual is somehow existentially incomplete or fragmented and that this can be overcome through an adjustment of social relations remains significant. It serves as another reminder that questions about unity, identity and relationality are intimately related in both secular and religious thought.

For Pannenberg, these questions are interlinked through his exposition of the *imago Dei*. Here, the theological foundations of his commitment to the ideas of self-unity and relationality are clearly exposed in the emphasis he places upon the destiny of human being to its final fellowship with God at the eschaton. This defines his conception of the 'whole', ideal state of the human being and demonstrates the conceptual importance of diachronic singularity. For Pannenberg, just as for Gunton, Schwöbel and White, individual human beings are unified by virtue of their relationality, not in spite of it. It is worth noting, however, that although several prominent twentieth-century theologians share some of Pannenberg's specifically eschatological conclusions regarding God's image in humankind, it remains a minority position. As we turn now to examine Alistair McFadyen's image of God theology, another of these themes is immediately recognisable – the understanding of the image in terms of the relational, communicative essence of human being.

56 Grenz notes that an orientation towards the transcendent was a central feature of the Romantic Movement's portrayal of the self. The Romantics, he writes, 'agreed that the acceptance of the self in its particularity could not come at the expense of the unity of the self ... The typical Romantic solution was to seek a source of unity that lay outside the self yet was closely bound up with it' (Grenz 2001, p.110). Also see Taylor 1992.

57 Vaught 1982, p.3.

McFadyen and God-Given Relationality

So far I have made much of contemporary theological anthropology's discontent with the asocial person of modernity and its renewed interest in concepts of relationality. It has inspired a revolution in theorising about the self that has taken place primarily through the reinvigoration of trinitarian theological ideas. McFadyen's contribution to this sort of theological enterprise is unusual as regards the extent of his engagement with social constructionist psychology. Like Pannenberg, McFadyen's psychological theorising reflects certain theological assumptions about the basic attributes and nature of human persons, which he elaborates through his interpretation of the *imago Dei*. However, his theological exposition of personhood is more independent from his psychological exposition. Where Pannenberg moves backwards and forwards between his arguments from above and below, teasing out the theological importance of particular psychological observations and vice versa, McFadyen uses psychology primarily to support and expand upon his theological presuppositions. His account of 'the creation of individuality in God's image' has two major theological components: human existence in the image of the trinitarian God and Christ's call. The former is broken down into two dimensions. The vertical dimension is described as the constitution of individual beings through relation to God, and the horizontal as the image in the sphere of human relations. I will deal with each of these in turn.

The Vertical Dimension of the Imago Dei

McFadyen argues that the biblical theme of creation is more concerned with God's relationship to His creations, especially humankind, than to cosmology or cosmogony. His idea of a positive and healthy interpersonal relationship centres upon notions of the freedom, individuality and autonomy of the participants and is characterised by 'the call and response, the gift and return of dialogue'.⁵⁸ In his concept of dialogue, the key to his project, a notion of reciprocal relationality develops that is largely absent from Pannenberg's thinking.

God's unique communication with human persons, he supposes, is best conceived in terms of grace and he introduces the key ideas of his understanding of this relationship in the following statement:⁵⁹

What is distinctive about the human relation to God in creation is that God's creative and sustaining activity elicits, enables and deserves a free and thankful response ... human being is intended in this communication to be God's dialogue-partner. Human being is therefore to be described as a being-in-partnership with God, a being addressed

58 McFadyen 1990a, p.19.

59 McFadyen cites the psalms as evidence for the uncontroversial character of this assumption.

as Thou by God's I. Human being in God's image signifies the human entrance into this relationship of active partnership by answering God's Word.⁶⁰

According to McFadyen, freedom and autonomy are created by God through His intention that human beings be free partners in dialogue with Him. This, he supposes, is the vertical dimension of the divine image in humanity – the freedom to be autonomous dialogue-partners with God.

Although the image of God can never be fully lost or destroyed, meaning that human being remains eternally in relation with God, this freedom also carries with it an element of responsibility that cannot be abdicated. The image is thus as much an ethical imperative as an ontological thesis.⁶¹ Appealing to the theology of Karl Barth, McFadyen argues that the normative form of the vertical dimension of the image is 'grateful and praise-giving response', and the proper relational form of human being should be defined as openness to and for God's Word – Barth's 'being-in-gratitude'. Not to respond freely to God as a dialogue-partner entails a corruption of the image and a distortion of relations.

For McFadyen, then, the dialogical form of God's address ultimately constitutes 'the ontological structure of human being as relational and responsible'.⁶² The divine image is not to be considered an attribute or a quality that can be possessed but is rather seen as a particular way of being in relation. As such, it demands that individual human being must maintain a dialogical relationship with God if it is to fulfil its potential. In contrast to Pannenberg, however, the determinative presence of the vertical dimension of the image in each and every moment is grounded in the present realisation of that image, not in the eschatological anticipation of its realisation that is implied by Pannenberg's understanding of human createdness in God's likeness. The distinction is important. Realising the image, for McFadyen, means reorienting human relations correctly (towards God) in the here and now. Whereas Pannenberg's interpretation has the image influencing the human present retroactively in anticipation of its destiny, McFadyen's concept is one that works outwards from the present; it is protological rather than eschatological. But understanding the human person as singular and continuous is still essential for

60 McFadyen 1990a, p.19. In a footnote, McFadyen defines dialogue as 'a relationship in which the mutual orientation of the partners is based on their personal uniqueness and discreteness (independence from one another and their relation). It is therefore a bipolar interaction involving both distance and relation. Because it is based upon the unique identities of each and because these must remain unknowable in any final and complete sense by the other, each partner must make her or his own independent contribution to the relation (i.e. be a subject and originator of communication and communicate herself or himself) and give space and time for the other to do the same. So each partner will be passive and active, the subject (I) and object (Thou) of communication.' (ibid., p.275 ff.)

61 He writes, 'The assertion that we are created in the divine image operates both as an assertion of the way things are – an ontological given – and as an ideal regulating personal and social conduct. It is both an "is" and an "ought"' (McFadyen 1990a, p.18).

62 Ibid., p.22.

McFadyen even if his description of the image does not carry the teleological overtones of Pannenberg's understanding. After all, the maintenance of a particular stance of radical and indefinite openness to God's call is an ongoing process and there is no sense in which the personal responsibility for remaining in relation could be described in corporate terms. McFadyen's determination to preserve a theoretical distance between the concepts of the individual and the social make this very clear.

The Horizontal Dimension of the Imago Dei

The concept of the horizontal dimension of the image is developed quite differently, though the theoretical importance of the continuity of personhood is emphasised even more strongly in this part of his thesis. This dimension is specifically informed by his trinitarian interpretation of God's self-communication. Drawing upon an orthodox perichoretic conception of the simultaneous indivisibility of God and the distinctiveness of the three divine Persons, he supposes that a model of human persons might be analogously informed.⁶³ His key assumption is that, since the Trinity is a special sort of community, human persons created in the image of God must be similarly defined according to their relations with others. Taken together, the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the image lead to an extremely dynamic social understanding of human being.

Relationality, as the structural form of the image, becomes an ontological principle, but the freedom in response established by the image, and the degree of responsibility it entails, also presents the possibility of describing it in terms of potential. People are created in the image of God to be free dialogue-partners with Him, and although this image is eternal, an individual may choose not to respond to God's address. They therefore have the potential to stand fully in God's image but may ultimately fail to do so. Being a person is conceived as a continuing process of communication, which is predicated upon this ontological understanding of relationality. That is not to say, however, that human beings are entirely determined by their social situation; for McFadyen, persons are also centred within themselves. In dialogue with God and other human beings, he suggests, personal centring takes place through the discernment of, and engagement with, the personal centres of others.

Clearly there are some similarities with Pannenberg's anthropology, especially with respect to the importance that McFadyen places upon the fundamental 'openness' of humanity. But the differences between them are brought into sharp focus by McFadyen's adaptation of Moltmann's relational understanding of the

63 This must be considered a controversial claim. David Kelsey, in his lucid and highly critical treatment of the subject, similarly concludes, 'The concept "person" and related concepts that are commonly used in our contemporary, largely secular host culture in reference to human beings have very little overlap with the traditional Christian technical concept of person used in Trinitarian discourse' (Kelsey 2006, p.154).

Godhead. This leads him to construe human persons as 'ex-centric' beings with a similar responsibility towards dialogical being in human-human relationships as in God-human relationships.⁶⁴ Unless a person learns to become 'thou' to another's 'I', they will never fully become an 'I' in themselves, since, as McFadyen frequently affirms, the structure of human being contains a dialogical encounter between separate but intrinsically related beings. But by focusing upon reciprocal relationality in such a way, this development of the *imago Dei* attempts to do justice to the implications that all relationships have for personhood, both human and non-human. In this he echoes Gunton's critique of earlier theological attempts to demonstrate the relationality of human beings.⁶⁵ Pannenberg, by contrast, is primarily focused upon the eschatological promise of fellowship with God, and it is this single relationship that guides his theological ontology of personhood.

Further, though perhaps superficial, similarities with Pannenberg are exposed in McFadyen's understanding of responsibility before God, which introduces the idea that to be fully in God's image is to maintain an identity and relations of a certain quality. Relations of a superior quality for McFadyen, are apparently those that are authentic, open and undistorted – they are genuinely dialogical. This would seem to suggest that humanity can be more or less in God's image as Pannenberg believes, but a fundamental difference exists between their conceptions of this sliding scale. This hinges on the distinction between Pannenberg's eschatological concept of the image's realisation and McFadyen's protological understanding (according to which the image itself may be realised in distorted or undistorted form in the present), and is clearly illustrated by his description of distorted relationality and redemption.⁶⁶

Distorted forms of relationality, he assumes, inhere as a direct result of the distorted overarching social structures in which interpersonal interaction necessarily takes place. He describes these social structures in the context of the Christian doctrines of the fall and original sin. These he understands as the 'fracture' of relations between humanity and God, as well as between individual human beings. Citing Genesis, McFadyen explains the fall in terms of humanity's (mistaken) belief that we have the power to be self-constituting beings, and the rejection of the reality of God that this implies. He writes, 'The fall represents human beings'

64 McFadyen uses the word 'ex-centricity' instead of exocentricity, but both are used to refer to the natural human capacity to centre oneself in what is other than oneself, be it other human persons or objects. This capacity is also often referred to as 'openness' to the world in distinction to terms like 'self-sufficient' or 'self-creating'.

65 Gunton 1993.

66 He argues, 'The image exists in its fullness where undistorted, dialogical address meets a formally reciprocal response; where the invitation to enter dialogue is accepted. It is through the experience of being called into dialogue that a structure of personal responsibility before and for others may be sedimented, in which one becomes a true subject in the divine image ... Dialogue, as the undistorted form of the image, is its normative ideal, intended as the fulfilment of human being. [But] the image is capable of both distorted and undistorted realisation' (McFadyen 1990a, p.41).

choice of themselves as a species over against God and as individuals over against one another.⁶⁷ The resulting distorted structures of being, he argues, have been passed down generations through ‘individualising socialisation processes’, meaning undistorted being is now impossible for humanity to recreate alone. This, for McFadyen is our fallen state. For the reconstitution of undistorted being, humanity is dependent upon God, in partnership with whom humanity might realise His image.

As a communicative ideal, therefore, the image is partly oriented towards the future and the central Christian principle of redemption through Christ. In redemption, humanity finds the possibility of responsibly living in God’s image – of returning to a pre-fallen condition within a world that remains fallen. For McFadyen it represents a way of correctly orienting oneself towards God and others and thereby breaking the cycle of distorted relations that subsist throughout unredeemed humanity. This, he argues, can be formulated in explicitly Christological terms. As *Logos*, Christ is the agency that structures and rationally organises the created order. He is the Word, that is to say God’s communication itself – He is God’s call to humanity. As divine and human, He is both God’s address and the perfect undistorted response to that address.

For McFadyen, then, ‘To be fully in God’s image, to make a right response to God and others, is therefore to be conformed to Christ.’⁶⁸ Only through Christ can ‘proper’ identity be established, through responsible, ethical living in dynamic and ex-centrally oriented dialogue with God. Both human individuality and relatedness can be conformed to Christ, McFadyen argues, only by responding to Christ’s call to move ‘beyond ourselves towards the realities of God and others and to new forms of self-identity’.⁶⁹ The renunciation of the exclusive focus upon oneself entailed by a response to the call to follow Christ represents the abandonment of a misconceived independence and the acceptance of an ex-centric self-orientation.⁷⁰ This new form of communicative subjectivity, in which relation with God becomes absolutely determinative, also serves to reorientate the individual ‘properly’ in all future relations. In this way, McFadyen connects the createdness of humanity with its future and re-emphasises the importance of maintaining a concept of personhood that is diachronically continuous.

Theology and the Continuity of Personhood

For both Pannenberg and McFadyen, the realisation of the image of God corresponds to an ‘ideal state’ of human persons, not its ‘natural state’. For Pannenberg, this

67 Ibid., p.42.

68 Ibid., p.47.

69 McFadyen 1990a, p.61.

70 Thus, Bonhoeffer terms the call to discipleship ‘costly grace’ (Bonhoeffer 1995). McFadyen discusses Bonhoeffer’s theme in depth elsewhere (see McFadyen 1990b).

is a final and ultimate unity that exists in the present only as eschatological expectation. For McFadyen, it is a free, authentic and dialogical openness to God and other human beings in any given moment. Their respective interpretations of the *imago Dei* also lead to similar concepts of distorted personhood as the inordinate focus upon the self of the moment in denial of its relational being. Both theses fundamentally draw upon an understanding of human beings as exocentric and, though their respective accounts of the radical openness to other people and to God originate in different places, by elaborating them in relation to the *imago Dei* they manage to reconcile the relationality of personhood with the belief that it is diachronically continuous and singular. This is a significant and distinctively theological achievement. The human sciences have united behind the notion that the twentieth century's relational turn leads inevitably to self-multiplicity and disunity, but by making the unique relationship to an eternal transcendent God definitive of individual personhood, Pannenberg, McFadyen and others make personal continuity and singularity indispensable. They thus preserve the notion of particularity that I previously argued is so theologically important. No equivalent thesis is conceivable in secular thought, where the idea of personal continuity, even when understood in narrative terms, must ultimately be a contingent feature of socially constructed personhood. For Pannenberg, this continuity is a prerequisite of achieving true selfhood in fellowship with God at the eschaton. For McFadyen, it is a prerequisite of maintaining an adequacy in personal relations that accords with his interpretation of God's intention for humanity.

The similarities between Pannenberg and McFadyen ought not to be overplayed. Their distinctive interpretations of the *imago Dei* also reveal substantial differences, some doctrinal, some philosophical and some psychological. For example, McFadyen makes much of the idea of the Fall as the source of the original corruption of personhood. Pannenberg, by contrast, denies the historical reality of the Fall and grounds his own concept of personhood's primary brokenness in philosophical anthropological reasoning. What is more, despite Pannenberg's persistent concern with relationality in his trinitarian theology, he lacks McFadyen's focus upon the concept of reciprocal interpersonal relationality in the human sphere and the impact of the image upon the present orientation of personhood. These differences of foci are evident in their descriptions of the image both as it relates to human standing before God, and to the concept of exocentricity itself. They also differ with respect to the way they justify other forms of self-unity. Pannenberg places a degree of theological importance upon the concept of synchronic experiential unity that is largely absent from McFadyen's work. It might be possible to derive a limited notion of the importance of synchronic personal wholeness from his notion of dialogical communication, but, as I will subsequently show, McFadyen's concept of synchronic wholeness is derived primarily from his psychological theorising. Such broad theoretical differences as these, not to mention the fact that Pannenberg and McFadyen approach the problem of the self from within quite different theological traditions, make the convergence of their understandings of self-unity

even more striking. The unity of the person appears to be such a fundamental theological presumption that it transcends denominational boundaries.

The philosophical and theological significance of personal continuity in its metaphysical dimensions, I hope, is now clear. But alongside these conceptual concerns lies an equally deep concern for the experiential continuity of the individual. Theological anthropologists of all descriptions have tended to assume not just that people are continuous particular beings, but also that people must experience themselves as continuous beings. It is an important distinction. After all, the contemporary sociocultural crisis at the heart of recent theological anxiety about personhood seems to threaten the experience but not the metaphysical basis of personal continuity. Self-fragmentation for White and Thiselton is a problem only because of the impact it has upon a person's sense of being one and the same person over time. Quite apart from the postmodern problem of self-fragmentation, the capacity both to experience oneself as continuous and particular, and to treat others as continuous particular beings with individual histories and futures, as White, McFadyen and Pannenberg all recognise, has tremendous ethical significance.

The experience of self-continuity, of course, only becomes a philosophical problem once it is recognised that people change constantly throughout their lives. In the absence of such qualitative transformation no one would have any reason to question the unity or continuity of personhood. But such changeability is not a theoretical inconvenience that must be overcome; it is central to the concept of individuality itself. After all, to deny its changeability is to isolate personhood from its interactions with God and the social world in the manner of radical individualism, and thus to reduce it to universal characteristics. Both McFadyen and Pannenberg, in emphasising the temporality of personhood, also draw attention to the changeability of persons over a period of time. This is implicit in the idea that a single individual is capable of transformation into the image of God – a notion that implies a temporal transition from distorted to undistorted personhood – but in their concern to establish thoroughly relational understandings of human being, both address the problem explicitly and in considerable depth. The mechanisms of change, however, and the implications of this change for notions of self-unity are not strictly the subject matter of theology. The development of the self falls within the compass of psychology, and it is to this aspect of their work that I now turn.

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Pannenberg and McFadyen in Dialogue with Psychology

The 'I' is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existence consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. It is the primal identity, the primordial work of identification.

(Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 1969)

Having described the theological importance that Pannenberg and McFadyen each place upon the idea that individual persons are the bearers of continuous personal identities (the idea that they experience themselves as diachronically singular beings), our attention now turns to the psychological basis of this idea in their respective theories of identity formation. The crux of my argument will be that, while making the concept of diachronic singularity a central feature of their respective psychological projects, both also make certain claims regarding the structural unity of the self and identity that are largely psychologically and philosophically unsupported. Such restrictive concepts of unity place significant and unnecessary strain upon their specifically psychological accounts of the individual human being. They each succeed in establishing the social basis of personhood, but their accounts are too inflexible to accommodate either recent psychological theories of self-multiplicity or recent accounts of the social world's transformation in postmodernity, and the concomitant changes to the sources of identity that have ensued. Given the emphasis that each places upon the social determination of personality, this is a significant failing. Interestingly, although there are some obvious differences between them, both of their theories of identity bring them into the purview of narrative approaches to identity, even if they do not quite make contact. My initial concern is with what Pannenberg believes can be established about human identity on the strength of his psychological theorising alone. In accordance with Pannenberg's chosen method of identifying scientific 'facts' before expounding their theological significance, I will begin by examining the use he makes of psychology in isolation from the religious thematic he subsequently introduces.

Pannenberg's Psychological Anthropology: The Primacy of the Self

Dividing personhood into its ego (*das ich* – the experiencing subject or 'I') and self (*das selbst* – the object of self-experience or 'me') dimensions, Pannenberg seeks

to explain the psychological construction of the individual human being in the context of the sociocultural environment. Both ego and self are, for Pannenberg, subject to continuous modification in the mirror of society, and there can be no adequate theory of identity formation that fails to acknowledge this point. Hence he writes:

[T]he subjective unity of the 'self'-comporting living entity is not simply given in advance, but is rather acquired only in the very process of human behavior itself. This process is one of identity formation, the result of which at any given moment is the form taken by self-consciousness at that moment.¹

The fullest psychological discussion of these ideas takes place in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* where his thesis weaves together three closely related central themes: the origins of both the ego and the self in the social world, the momentary unity of ego and self in self-consciousness, and, most importantly, the relationship between ego and self in the formation of continuous individual identity. Of utmost importance to all three themes is the claim that the 'cohesion and unity of the individual's life history' are grounded in the cohesion and unity of the self, not the ego, which, as a momentary agency, cannot be the source of personal continuity.² Any account of identity that depends upon a notion of the enduring ego as its primary source, he argues, cannot simultaneously claim that the ego is also a social construct, since, if it were, it could not both modify the self and be modified in return. If both the ego and self are subject to change over time, then the self, he repeatedly asserts throughout his various anthropological writings, must develop independently of the ego.³

Any analysis of Pannenberg's psychology is complicated by the many ways in which he uses the word 'identity'. In summarising Pannenberg's writings on self-transcendence, the bioethicist Robert Potter suggests that he uses it to refer variously to the problem of sameness over time (Pannenberg refers to both the identity of the ego and the identity of the self in this sense), to the problem of the momentary integration of the ego and the self in self-consciousness, and to the final communion of the individual with God at the eschaton.⁴ At times Pannenberg uses the word in each of these ways, but also quite freely in other places to describe the unique character of the individual ego or self in distinction from, and in relation to, all other egos and selves. In the context of this particular understanding, he also describes a number of 'identity factors' that contribute to personal identity, including: 'body, name, sex, age, group membership, and life history'.⁵ The 'problem of identity', therefore, which is the title of chapter five

1 Pannenberg 1985, p.159.

2 Ibid., p.223.

3 See especially Pannenberg 1970, 1985, 1994.

4 Potter 1997, p.133.

5 Pannenberg 1985, p.225.

of his *Anthropology*, subsumes each of these meanings of identity within itself. To understand the process of identity formation, for Pannenberg, is to understand how we become both who we are, and who we will be. It is to understand how the individual as ego knows it is identical with one and the same self over time.

Complicating matters still further is the freedom with which Pannenberg uses the word 'unity' in a psychological context. Hence, at various times he writes of the unity of the ego, the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, the unity of the ego and the self, and the unity of personality. In the critique that follows, some of Pannenberg's concepts will be dissected using the terminology and concepts of the theoretical framework that I have already established. This is with the aim of making explicit the implicit distinction in his psychology between the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of the representation and sense of self. He does not, of course, use these terms himself, but he does clearly refer to both the representational and experiential dimensions of self and personhood. A reading of his work with such a scheme in mind, I believe, exposes some notable difficulties with his psychologically derived ideas of self and personhood.

Consciousness and the Ego

Pannenberg's commitment to the idea that the self and ego develop independently from one another leads him to expound a distinctive philosophy of consciousness. In what has been described as a 'Copernican revolution' by Timothy Bradshaw in his comparative study of Barth's with Pannenberg's theology, Pannenberg argues that self-consciousness develops primarily as a function of the self and is only secondarily expanded in any given moment through the action of the ego.⁶ In the light of recent psychological theorising, the novelty of this approach is no longer quite so striking, but it is certainly a radical departure for theological anthropology, which has traditionally set great store by the concept of the rational transcendental ego.⁷

At the beginning of a life, Pannenberg argues, in the symbiotic unity between infant and mother, the ego is identical with the self. Only through the development of the uniquely human form of objective perception (that reveals humanity's inherent exocentricity) can the ego come to be present to the other as other. It is, therefore, only through the development of the capacity for self-transcendence that the ego can know itself to be other to, and thus distinguishable from, the self. In Pannenberg's thought, this differentiating process gives rise to the form of self-consciousness that distinguishes humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom – what Grenz helpfully redescribes as the 'heightened exocentric capability of humans'.⁸ This is the sense of self-relatedness – a conscious sense of self – that

6 Bradshaw 1988, p.225.

7 See Macquarrie 1982; Schwöbel and Gunton 1991; Grenz 2001.

8 Grenz 1990, p.100.

signals the beginning of the process of identity formation that ultimately culminates in the ability to use the word 'I' in a self-referential sense.

Pannenberg's description of the origins of self-consciousness in the emergence from an infantile symbiotic unity are highly questionable. As the Husserlian phenomenologist Dan Zahavi notes, this hypothesis, common in early psychoanalytic psychology, has been largely rejected by contemporary psychology: 'It is now taken for granted that the infant already from birth begins to experience itself and that it never passes through a period of total self/Other differentiation.'⁹ Pannenberg's exposition of this point clearly exposes the datedness of his understanding of developmental psychology, and his unfamiliarity with much of social psychology and contemporary psychoanalytic theory (not to mention cognitive psychology).¹⁰ Such criticism echoes the views of many who have addressed Pannenberg's engagement with the natural sciences.¹¹ Nevertheless, his argument that a clearly identifiable and well structured experience of 'I' post-dates the development of the self does accord with much of developmental psychology. However outmoded his concept of symbiotic unity, this criticism in itself is not sufficient to detract from Pannenberg's main argument that unity and continuity begin 'on the side of the self'.

Pannenberg's concept of ego is distinct from his concept of self, but also from his concept of the individual person. Ego appears in his work as a sub-personal structural feature of embodied being that is the centre from which the individual experiences the world. It is the sense of self-relatedness that links Pannenberg's concept of self to his concept of ego, and to his account of its continuity. He argues that continuity can be attributed to the self-reflecting 'I' only indirectly, through its capacity to know that it is identical with 'its self'. As ego, he writes, 'I am first and foremost the speaker of the moment and the one who at each moment experiences and acts.'¹² He continues:

Only indirectly, insofar as the 'I' of the isolated moment is known as identical with 'myself', and therefore as the momentarily present manifestation of that totality of states, qualities, and actions that in the eyes of a 'generalised other' are to be ascribed to the individual which I am – *only in this way does the 'I' as such acquire a continuity that lasts beyond the isolated moment.*¹³

This passage unites all the important psychological elements of Pannenberg's theory of identity, and clearly states his intention to reverse the ego-self relationship

9 Zahavi 1999, p.175. Also see Harter 1999.

10 Perhaps the most notable absentee is object relations theory, which, in its contemporary forms, is in close communication with both cognitive and social psychology. For example, see Colby and Stoller 1988; Westen 1992.

11 See, for example, Eaves 1997; Hefner 1997; Stewart 2000; Clayton 2003.

12 Pannenberg 1985, p.222.

13 Ibid. Original italics.

that is found in the psychological works with which he is primarily concerned – those of Mead, Hartmann and Erikson. Where these theorists were each eager to establish the relationality of the self, each also sought its unity in the subject of self-consciousness, thereby isolating the conscious subject itself from the social world. Pannenberg's own theory, he believes, not only accounts for the social constitution of both ego and self, but also presents a satisfactory resolution to the conflict between the 'for-itselfness' and social determination of personhood.¹⁴ The 'I' is still very much for itself, but it is conditioned absolutely by the social self.

The Unity and Continuity of Self

But if unity and continuity are primarily features of the self, and the self, given its social constructedness, is constantly subject to change, in what does its unity and continuity consist? Pannenberg's explanation is presented most clearly in his *Anthropology*, where he grounds the continuity of the self in the continuity of consciousness – an idea that he borrows from William James. Here, continuity is a function of the connection between individual moments of unified consciousness, whereby each successive moment appropriates the contents of the former.¹⁵ The self's experiential continuity, therefore, must be seen as an achievement of 'the individual's developing consciousness of itself as the totality of its "states, qualities, and actions"'.¹⁶

To explain the unity of the developing self, Pannenberg appeals to Mead's concept of the 'generalised other'. Given the apparent importance that Pannenberg places upon the idea of self-unity in his psychology in general, his treatment of this concept is extremely sparse and this damages his thesis as a whole. He recognises the possibility that if the self image – the represented self – is formed in the mirror of the other as the internalisation of attitudes towards oneself, then relationships with different people will result in a multiplicity of self-images. Consequently, he asks the question 'how can our self be a unity for us?'¹⁷ Mead's answer to this question, Pannenberg claims, depends upon the notion that people are able to experience themselves not only as seen by individuals, but also as seen by a whole social group. This more general self-image presents itself as a unity of the

14 He writes, 'When this viewpoint is adopted, it is possible to surmount the oppositions between the "absolute" concept of person, which is limited to the individual that exists for itself, and the "relational" concept, which looks rather to the conditioning of the ego by the Thou and by society' (Pannenberg 1985, p.236).

15 James, as is well known, criticised Kant (mistakenly, in Pannenberg's opinion) for his notion of the transcendental ego that underlay consciousness and located its unity instead in the 'stream' of consciousness itself.

16 Pannenberg 1985, p.221. This explicit denial of the ego's role in identity formation does distinguish Pannenberg's thinking from the bulk of traditional psychology, theology and philosophy, although the unity of the sense of self in phenomenal consciousness remains largely uncontested (see, for example, Strawson 1999; Zahavi 1999).

17 Pannenberg 1985, p.188.

internalised values and social norms of that particular group to which a person belongs. Pannenberg finds this perfectly acceptable, and comes to describe the unified self as ‘that totality of states, qualities, and actions that in the eyes of a “generalized other” are to be ascribed to the individual which I am’.¹⁸

It is telling that Pannenberg seeks to explain self-unity without first addressing the theological implications, or even the psychological possibility of its enduring multiplicity. The successful explanation of personhood’s various unities is the chief criterion by which he judges the plausibility of the various psychological and philosophical accounts that are the objects of his discussion of identity. He does not seek to engage with anyone who is content to permit a degree of multiplicity or disunity in their concepts of person, self or consciousness. Each avenue of theoretical exploration leads back to the theme of totality, and he constantly subjugates ideas of difference and distinction to his fundamental ideas about wholeness. Despite his concern with the social determination of self, then, his project is not as postmodern as it might first appear. His objective throughout is to critique others’ attempts to secure unity and to demonstrate the theoretical superiority of his own.

Given the inseparability of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ as two ‘phases’ of the self in Mead’s thought, his concept of the generalised other has implications both for how the self is structured and how people experience themselves. However, it is apparently its structural unification of the self-image that stands behind the sense of unity and singularity in any given moment of consciousness that attracts Pannenberg’s interest here – ‘The self that we grasp ourselves as being in self-reflection ...’ – even if he does not describe in detail the specifically psychological processes in and through which the structure and sense of self are related.¹⁹ His aim is to explain how the self’s developing consciousness of itself is a consciousness of one and the same self-image in any given moment and over time. He solves the problem by suggesting simply that the self which is represented to consciousness is both singular and structurally unified – successive representations of self are subsumed one into the other so that each is always a totality.²⁰ There is no room here for multiple, simultaneously co-existing senses or representations of self. In the light of contemporary theorising, this is a controversial claim, and, as we shall see, it has significant repercussions for the flexibility of his concept of personhood.

Pannenberg is subsequently critical both of Mead’s ultimate failure to ground the unity of self and ego in the social world, and the opacity with which his concepts of ‘I’ and ‘me’ are bedevilled, but he accepts Mead’s account of the unity of the generalised other uncritically. Unfortunately, although this appears to be the sole basis for his presupposition of the structural unity and generality of the specifically social self-image, he seems to oversimplify Mead’s own assessment

18 Ibid., p.222.

19 Ibid., p.188.

20 Ibid., pp.219–21.

of this concept's role in self-stability. For Mead, the concept of the generalised other was a generalised internal dialogue partner. As such, many have commented that it bears a striking similarity to the Freudian superego, and fulfils the role of a 'censoring agency' as much as uniting the various socially derived images people have of themselves.²¹ Indeed, although Mead was eager to establish the unity of the sense of self, he continued to emphasise the importance of the internal dialogue between the 'I' and a variety of generalised (and sometimes specific) others, which evolves as part of a mature self-system. Without the synthesising function of the 'I', the 'me' would lack any semblance of unity at all.²² Those who have drawn upon symbolic interactionism to promote dramaturgical models of self, the internal dialogue, the resulting internal conflict and its resolution are all fundamental aspects of the self's constitution.²³ Nowhere does Pannenberg address these issues.

Unity and Singularity

In his unwavering concern with unity, Pannenberg fuses together at least three concepts that I have argued ought to remain qualitatively distinct. He makes all three of these concepts essential elements of his theory of identity formation, to the extent that the plurality of self as it is described in contemporary psychology becomes inconceivable. For Pannenberg, the successful formation of identity requires the continuous unification of the ego with the self, so that in any given moment of self-consciousness the ego knows itself to be identical with its self.²⁴ Without such acts of self-identification the ego would be severed from the coherent life-history that is the self's domain, and identity of any kind would be impossible. Hence, this notion of self-identification is central to his concept of the person, which itself entails 'the presence of the self in the moment of the ego ...'.²⁵ For Pannenberg, such a moment of self-consciousness is necessarily a moment of synchronic experiential unity, but his description of the act of self-identification makes a further concept of self-unity essential to his account of identity formation – the synchronic unity of the represented self.²⁶ As a singular and unified totality

21 See Mead 1934; Burkitt 1992, pp.28–50; Dunn 1998, pp.200–209; Valsiner and Van Der Veer 2000, pp.234–76.

22 See Burkitt 1992, pp.38–40.

23 See Burkitt 1992; Archer 2000.

24 Pannenberg writes: 'indispensable, then, for identity formation is the element of self-identification on the part of the momentary ego agency, which in turn achieves perdurance only through this self-identification' (Pannenberg 1985, pp.226–7).

25 Ibid., p.240.

26 It should be noted, however, that Pannenberg tends to use the word 'personality' to refer to the state or quality of being a person. He rarely uses it to refer to the distinct set of psychological attributes, as is common in psychology.

that is formed in the mirror of the generalised other, this is the sum total of what an individual believes him or herself to be.

For Pannenberg, 'the unity of the formative process that goes on in the story of a human life ...' is primarily a function of the self and is only secondarily expanded into the ego.²⁷ The ego only receives its continuity through its moment-by-moment identification with the totality of the unified and continuous self.²⁸ This self-identification might be essential to the formation of personal identity inasmuch as it enables the ego to claim the totality of experience represented in the self as its own, and thereby identify itself in its particularity, but the continuity of the individual remains entirely grounded in the self's development in the structure of a Jamesian 'egoless consciousness'. It is this that gives the individual what I referred to above as diachronic experiential singularity. The sense of singularity is known by the ego only inasmuch as it knows itself to be identical with one and the same self over time. It appears, then, that Pannenberg also makes the diachronic unity and singularity of both the sense and representation of self essential to his understanding of how the individual as a whole maintains a sense of being singular and continuous.

But significant demands are still made upon the ego if this sense of continuity is to be preserved indefinitely. The uniquely human capacity for temporal self-transcendence means that the ego's experience of the currently incomplete (unfinished) self in the moment of self-reflection includes an anticipation of the self's future states, and therefore a notion of its enduring unity over time. At any given moment, Pannenberg suggests, the individual as ego can either recognise that it is identical with a momentary part of the whole true self, and thus acknowledge its identity with that self, or it can find its unity in itself in the moment of its experience. Such a failure of identity is variously described by Pannenberg as 'non-identity', 'disunity', 'separateness', or 'self-alienation'. Here, Pannenberg is able to reintroduce the religious thematic to his psychological discussion and imbue his discourse of self and identity with a specifically theological meaning. The ego's assumption of its own totality is manifested psychologically as a disruption of the individual continuity that is central to the exocentric destiny of the individual. This is the 'brokenness of human nature', which corresponds to egocentricity – the Augustinian concept of *amor sui* – and which Pannenberg and so many other contemporary theologians identify explicitly with sin. I will return to this idea in greater depth below.

Before I describe some of the difficulties that attend Pannenberg's psychological thesis, let me summarise the main points of the argument so far. Pannenberg's account of identity formation describes the experiential singularity of the socially constructed individual that is constantly evolving towards its eschatological wholeness, but in doing so he also makes the unity of the self a central feature of his thinking. For Pannenberg, the unity of the sense of self goes hand in hand with

27 Pannenberg 1985, p.199.

28 Ibid, p.221.

the unity and singularity of the represented self that appears in self-consciousness, and with the continuity and singularity of the individual as a whole. Each form of unity, he implicitly assumes, presupposes the others. But Pannenberg's distinctive means of establishing the singularity of the individual through time, though superficially it seems to emphasise the flexibility and mutability of the individual by denying the perdurance of the transcendental ego, actually leads to a peculiarly restrictive notion of social personhood.²⁹ The reasons for this, I will explain, lie primarily in his concept of the singular unitary represented self.

Problems with Pannenberg's Concept of Self-Unity

The undoubted strength of his approach, inasmuch as he partly intends a critique of the modern concept of the enduring asocial ego, is his joint emphasis upon the social constructedness of personality and its temporal structure, and for this Pannenberg has won wide critical acclaim.³⁰ Despite the commendable breadth of his project as a whole, it is ironically in the narrowness of his concept of self that the problems begin. Pannenberg, though he critiques a vast and diverse corpus of self-theories from Fichte to Erikson, picks and chooses the concepts that appeal to him and incorporates them into his own theory.³¹ Mead's concept of the generalised other is juxtaposed with the Freudian ego and James's social and spiritual selves, while crucial aspects of these theories (such as the Meadian concept of internal dialogical conversation and most psychoanalytic concepts of psychopathology) are given short shrift or are simply ignored. His adaptation of James's account of the continuity of consciousness, and his exposition of James's 'social self' in the absence of any mention of James's conception of the enduring multiplicity of the self seems especially remiss.³² The result is an exclusionary model of the self that fails to do justice to the multifacetedness of personhood.

Although Pannenberg apparently believes the singularity and synchronic unity of the represented self to be of considerable importance to his project, he never seriously questions his assumptions of why it must be unified in the first place. He never raises the possibility of its synchronic or diachronic multiplicity. It appears as an undifferentiated conglomerate of the experience of other people's attitudes to the person and the internalisation of a number of 'identity factors'. The unity of the represented self ultimately depends upon the structural unity of the totality of an individual's history of social experience, but he offers no account of exactly what a 'unity' of this sort might look like. This problem also afflicted Mead's concept of

29 Pannenberg is often praised for managing to describe the self in such a way that emphasises its changeability (see Walsh 1986; Potter 1997).

30 See Olson 1986; Walsh 1986; Grenz 1990; Thiselton 1995; Albright and Haugen 1997; Hefner 2000; Stewart 2000.

31 Stewart also recognises this problem (Stewart 2000, pp.71–102)

32 Barresi presents a compelling account of why James's theory of the self ought to be understood in terms of a dialogue between multiple selves (Barresi 2002).

the generalised other, the sole source of Pannenberg's notion of representational unity, and Pannenberg has no answer to Mead's numerous critics on this front.³³ As I have indicated, Pannenberg's use of this concept is questionable at best, but the fact that he chooses Mead specifically to support this particular aspect of his thesis is, from a psychological perspective, extremely surprising.³⁴

Such a strong conception of self-unity raises particular problems with regards to the sense of self. Through his relegation of the ego to the status of a momentary agency, Pannenberg apparently precludes the possibility that an individual might have an unchanging and unified sense of self over time – what I have called diachronic experiential self-unity. But by grounding the individual's continuity in the unity of the self, and arguing that the experience of continuity is primarily a product of the developing self's consciousness of itself, his theory of identity lacks the dynamism that its appeal to social constructivism should otherwise ensure, and which contemporary psychologists are agreed is so important.³⁵ According to Pannenberg's account, people have a sense of being singular beings over time, but only a very limited capacity to experience themselves in different ways from moment to moment – they have no capacity, for example, to experience themselves as a teacher at one moment and as a mother the next. Rather, the experience of being a teacher would seem to be indistinguishable from the experience of being a mother, since all people, at all times, necessarily experience themselves as totalities of their roles and other qualities simultaneously. This conflicts with the huge majority of contemporary psychological research. That such an understanding of the sense of self could arise in Pannenberg's work is strange, given that many of those others, including James, Freud, and Mead, whose theories of identity formation Pannenberg draws upon heavily, do attempt to incorporate such nuances into their own notions of the subjective sense of self.

His thesis also seems very limited in its ability to explain various psychopathologies of identity. There would appear to be no possibility, for example, of explaining the kind of dissociative disorders that have received so much attention since Morton Prince's seminal studies, because however the individual identity might be distorted, for Pannenberg the sense of self is still necessarily singular and unified.³⁶ Pathological forms of identity, it must be

33 For example, see Holland 1977; Harter 1999, Augustinos and Walker 2000.

34 The self-unifying potential of the ability to take the perspective of the generalised other arguably recedes in the postmodern world where the meaning systems, values and social norms of the particular community to which one belongs are no longer readily identifiable.

35 Constructivism, here, is to be distinguished from social constructionism. I have borrowed this distinction from Gergen, who uses the former to describe traditional social psychological models of self that recognise the influence of the social world upon self-development. (Gergen 1994). Social constructionism, by contrast, refers to the far more radical, broadly postmodern, thesis that describes selfhood purely in terms of discursive practices and negotiated meanings.

36 Prince 1906.

remembered, are described by Pannenberg in terms of the break between self and ego, not a disruption of the self. Mead himself recognised that the dissociation of personality was possible, as a result of 'the breaking up of the complete, unitary self into the component selves of which it is composed'.³⁷ But Pannenberg blends these selves together into a unified whole, making such an explanation impossible. Even if he were to deny the reality of such extreme conditions as DID (he certainly makes no reference to them), it is difficult to see how his theory of self could begin to account for whatever distinctive experiential abnormalities do appear to afflict some people. There is no room in his model even for a sliding scale of experiential abnormality.

These criticisms are collectively the consequence of a single major problem with Pannenberg's theory of identity formation – his conflation of certain concepts that belong to two different types of theory about the self. Psychologically, a theory of personal continuity, as I described it above, is an attempt to give an account of diachronic experiential singularity. It asks the question: 'who has/had these experiences, which I call mine?' Psychological theories of the synchronic unity of the self, on the other hand, concern the organisation of the represented self into a structurally unified whole, and the unity of a person's sense of self at any given moment.³⁸ Theories of diachronic self-unity concern the persistence of the represented self as a structural whole over time, and the persistence of a singular unified sense of self over time. The unity of the self and the diachronic experiential singularity of the individual that Pannenberg describes in his account of identity are not necessarily incompatible concepts, but they need not be co-dependent. A singular unified sense of self over time is not equivalent to, or strictly necessary for, the sense of being singular over time. By failing to distinguish between them, and by making them co-dependent, Pannenberg's theory establishes the singularity and continuity of identity, but at the expense of the multifacetedness of the individual person.

Problems like these seem even more severe in the context of contemporary social theory and sociocultural analyses, such as those undertaken by Gergen, Dunn, Davis, Giddens and Bauman amongst others. If we are to take seriously the onset of postmodernity and the changes to the sources of identity that result from pronounced cultural changes, then these changes must be explicable within the terms of any adequate theory of identity formation.³⁹ In a theory as rigid as Pannenberg's there can be no explanation of how changes to the ways in which relationships are formed and conducted may influence contemporary identities, or how subsequent changes might influence them in the future. Most significantly,

37 Mead 1934, p.209.

38 As I showed in Chapter 4, the singularity and unity of the sense of self are indistinguishable in the 'normal' person.

39 Even if we deny the novelty of the postmodern era, there is surely no denying that there have been marked changes to the ways people relate to each other and experience themselves over the course of human history.

Pannenberg is unable to account for the extreme differentiation between context-specific personas that the detraditionalisation and globalisation of society has seemingly engendered. Certainly, there seems little room here for the theoretical developments inspired by sociological and psychological observations of these phenomena. Thus Bauman's concept of the 'palimpsest identity', Giddens' *'homo optionis'*, Gergen's 'saturated self', and even White's concept of the fragmented self (and all the existential angst that goes with it) are very difficult to reconcile with Pannenberg's account of self-unity.

Unfortunately, although Pannenberg, in both his *Anthropology* and his *Systematic Theology*, undertakes a thorough examination of the foundations of culture and the primacy of social reality over individual appropriations of that reality, he makes almost no attempt to extend his analysis of identity formation into more concrete studies of our contemporary predicament. Quite unlike contemporary sociologists who, as I showed in Chapter 2, emphasise the fragmentation of culture and the disintegration of shared systems of meaning in the modern world, Pannenberg constantly emphasises the continuity of meaning that culture and social institutions provide.⁴⁰ This is despite his familiarity with Peter Berger et al.'s *The Homeless Mind* – an important progenitor of those works that chart the collapse of communal traditions in postmodernity.⁴¹ Hence, it is no surprise that Pannenberg does not see the need to take such profound sociocultural changes into account when describing the process of identity formation. In contrast to authors such as Thiselton and White, his understanding of identity remains very much in the realms of philosophical anthropology. This, as Stewart also observes in a comprehensive critique of Pannenberg's work in relation to postmodernism, is a significant failing of his anthropological project.⁴²

In short, although Pannenberg's concept of a self that is grounded in extrapersonal interaction (and that gradually develops over time) would surely meet with general approval within the human sciences, the idea that this self is always a singular and structurally unified 'whole' is now largely unsupported psychologically or philosophically, or by contemporary social theory. Certainly, in comparison to any one of the contemporary experiential and representational theories of self that I explored in earlier chapters, Pannenberg's own understanding seems extremely outdated, and this is at least partly due to his failure to acknowledge the possibility of at least some degree of (non-pathological) self-multiplicity.

40 Pannenberg, 1985, p.315 ff.

41 Berger, Berger and Kellner 1981. Pannenberg refers to the homeless mind thesis in many places, but only ever superficially (see Pannenberg 1985, 1990).

42 Stewart 2000.

Pannenberg's Self and Narrative Identity

Just how central is Pannenberg's concept of self-unity to his understanding of identity formation? Actually, the continuity of personal identity could be established without the kind of unity that Pannenberg makes central to his theory. His rethinking of the relationship between ego and self does set his psychology well apart from more traditional approaches within theological anthropology, but it also brings him into the orbit of the narrative psychological approaches I described in Chapter 4.⁴³ According to these approaches, personal continuity (or diachronic singularity) is essentially the narratisation of particular moments of synchronic experiential unity.

A number of similarities between Pannenberg's theory of identity formation and McAdams' account of the construction of narrative autobiography are easily identified. Both McAdams and Pannenberg conceive of personhood in largely processual terms, not as the possession of a set of static attributes, qualities or abilities, and both ground the 'I' and 'me' elements of personality in extrapersonal interaction. Neither locates the experience of being a continuous individual over time in an unchanging or enduring 'I'. McAdams refers to the achievement of experiential singularity as 'selfing' and Pannenberg calls it 'identity formation', but in both cases it describes the process of becoming a fully integrated human being. Both also incorporate the temporal structure of identity into their notions of personhood, and place a special emphasis upon the anticipated future of the self.⁴⁴ Hence, each recognises the incompleteness of the self in any given moment. Both are also agreed that the whole individual's sense of being identical with itself can only arise through the self-relatedness that the emergence of the 'I' enables. Although McAdams does not explicitly agree with the idea of a pre-conscious symbiotic unity between mother and infant, he does suggest that the self initially develops in a context of trust that precedes explicit self-consciousness, and that the 'I' arises secondarily through the emerging awareness that 'other' is not 'self'.⁴⁵

There are nevertheless two important differences between their accounts that must be addressed if the compatibility between a narrative explanation of the person's diachronic experiential singularity and Pannenberg's own idiosyncratic psychology is to be established. The first and most significant of these concerns the multiplicity or unity of the 'me', though this difference might not be wholly insurmountable. For McAdams, the represented self is really a plurality of relatively autonomous self-concepts, and what unity can be accorded to the 'me' is derived

43 Pannenberg does engage in a very limited discussion of narrative in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. His primary concerns, however, are with the narrative structure of history, the concept of narrative tradition, and the wholeness of a life in relation to its community (Pannenberg 1985, pp. 502–15). He does not engage with any of the psychological theories of narrative that I have discussed here.

44 See McAdams 1997, pp.127–8.

45 Ibid., pp.35–44.

from the process of narratising a life history, its projected future and personal aspirations. This type of unity, which I have described as diachronic experiential singularity, thus only exists in a phenomenological sense. Pannenberg, by contrast, relates this sense of singularity to the structural unity and singularity of the self-image that he believes is captured by the idea of the generalised other. According to Pannenberg, people experience themselves as unitary beings because their 'me's really are structurally unified totalities.

The key to reconciling the sense of diachronic singularity with the multiplicity of self in a theory such as Pannenberg's, is the recognition that earlier (multiple) representations of self are neither necessarily subsumed into later representations, nor necessarily destroyed with the passing of each moment as the strongest postmodern accounts suggest. Rather they can co-exist in the person synchronically and diachronically, without being synchronically or diachronically unified. With perduring representations of self come perduring dispositions towards experiencing oneself in particular ways in particular contexts. Synchronic experiential unity does not depend upon the synchronic unity of all possible representations of self; it depends upon the singularity of the represented self at any given moment. In the moment of self-reflection, therefore, the unitary 'I' signifies the process of identifying a particular representation with a distinctive sense of self. This, of course, all takes place in the context of the larger story of a person's life and according to the acquired narrative traditions – the rules of story-telling – of the community of which the individual is a part. To see and experience oneself as a character in a particular plot at any given moment, is also to recognise one's role, and to ground one's identity in a grander narrative that extends both into the past and into the future.

Given that Pannenberg's theory of identity formation is strongly motivated by the need to understand the continuity of the ego in terms of the continuity of the social self, and thereby explain how people come to represent themselves to themselves as singular continuous beings, a narrative understanding of personal continuity would seem strongly to benefit his inherently inflexible model. Such a modification, in which the structural unity of the represented self based upon the concept of the generalised other is replaced by a multiplicity of self-concepts, each derived from social interactions, would not preclude the formation of identity in any meaningful way. Embracing self-multiplicity in this sense does no damage to the psychological dimension of his thesis. Certainly, the resulting concept of personality would be characterised by a plurality of senses of self diachronically, but this does not need to imply the diachronic experiential multiplicity of the person as a whole, since these discrete senses of self are connected to one another through the construction of narrative plots. The self that would be represented in any given moment of consciousness would be incomplete – it would be a narratised self – but it would still be implicitly related to the totality of the represented self through its participation in the temporally structured narrative of a whole life.

The second potential difficulty relates to Pannenberg's insistence that personal continuity begins in the developing self's consciousness of itself as a totality in

isolation from the ego. Still, given that McAdams and the narrative theorists do not call upon a concept of a unified and continuous transcendental ego to play a synthesising role in the construction of identity, this is not a critical problem. For both Pannenberg and McAdams, the 'I' is as much a product of social interaction as the 'me', and the continuity of the person still ultimately depends upon the stringing together of isolated moments of self-experience in consciousness (though they clearly disagree over precisely what this stringing together entails). Importantly, when narrative theorists such as Theodore Sarbin and Jerome Bruner (and others) claim that all human experience is structured by narrative, they are appealing to fundamental properties of human psychological processes, not just the self-conscious construction of stories about oneself.⁴⁶ Unless one repudiates entirely the cognitive level of understanding selves and persons, there is no reason at all why self-narratives must be solely the products of the self-conscious recounting of autobiography to oneself or others, but this does not mean that the narratised selves of dormant sub-personalities coalesce into an orderly unified structure. As with all psychological processes, much of the actual processing takes place beyond the reaches of the 'I', even if, for theorists like McAdams, the person's sense of singularity that results from a particular narrative necessarily entails its reclamation by the 'I' in the self-conscious moment.

My aim in comparing Pannenberg's account of identity and those of the narrative psychologists in this way is certainly not to suggest that Pannenberg's is a narrative psychology in disguise, nor strictly to reconstruct his thesis in narrative terms. Rather, my aims are to demonstrate the compatibility of the notion of the plural self with his own theories about the singularity and continuity of identity, and to suggest that narrative psychology is well placed to address some of the fundamental problems I have raised with his inflexible account of identity formation.

Since the structural unity of the represented self in Pannenberg's account can be replaced by a multiplicity of self-representations without significant damage to the psychological side of his thesis, it would appear that this idea of unity does very little explicitly psychological work for him. And yet he never seriously questions his assumptions about the unity of the self, despite the fact that his reading of James, Mead, Berger, and other psychologists and sociologists has clearly brought him into contact with these ideas. So why should Pannenberg place such a high premium on the notion of structural self-unity? Perhaps the best explanation is revealed in his concept of personhood as a 'wholeness' that 'transcends the fragmentariness of its reality at hand ...'. This in turn, relates to his exposition of the *imago Dei* and his appeal to the infinity of God as the most appropriate model of the divine essence. It is in this explicitly theological context that his vision of the self as an unqualified unity is best understood.

Before I examine this idea, however, I want to expand slightly upon the theme of narrative concepts of identity and the use that might be made of them

46 Sarbin 1986; Bruner 1990, 1996. See also Carr 1986; Chafe 1990.

in contemporary theological anthropology.⁴⁷ A range of narrative approaches to personhood (those that are, for example, grounded in the work of philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur and Alasdair MacIntyre) are now commonplace in theological anthropology.⁴⁸ Hans Frei, Stanley Grenz, Stanley Hauerwas and Anthony Thiselton have all written at length on this subject.⁴⁹ This is not a new development. By the early 1970s Hauerwas was already arguing that a narrative understanding of self supplied a crucial dimension to Christian ethics, and he later wrote a famous essay based upon Richard Adams' novel *Watership Down* in which he re-emphasised the significance of narrative traditions in shaping moral communities.⁵⁰ More recently, Thiselton, in his book *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, acknowledged that Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of narrative has the potential both to secure the continuity of personhood and effectively mediate between the autonomous and decentred selves of modernism and postmodernism respectively.⁵¹ Thiselton's primary concern, though, is with postmodernism's manipulative undertones, and he never appeals to psychological concepts of narrative specifically. Hence, he stops short of describing the potential that the concept of narrative identity has for affirming both the multiplicity of self *and* the continuity of personhood that he deems central to Christianity.⁵² Like Pannenberg, White and the majority of contemporary theological anthropologies, Thiselton's overriding concern is with unity. His self remains singular despite the plurality of its possible social roles.

By far the most significant contribution of narrative approaches to theological discussions of self-disunity centres upon the role that the Christian community has to play in the re-establishment of the secure identities that postmodernity

47 Clearly, the concept of narrative in relation to the self has a deep tradition in theology. Indeed, Augustine's *Confessions* is widely believed to be the origins of such narrative accounts of personhood, being arguably the first ever work of autobiography (Augustine 1961). Also see Horne 1991; Cary 2000.

48 Given that my focus in this book is upon the relationship between theology and the human sciences, my discussion is restricted to concepts of narrative identity in their capacity to mediate between concepts of self-multiplicity and self-unity as they have been formulated and applied within the human sciences, particularly psychology. Needless to say, the philosophical literature relating to the concept of narrative in the thought of such intellectual giants of the twentieth century as Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) and Paul Ricoeur (1992) is very extensive indeed.

49 Grenz himself tracks the evolution of the narrative identity through the concept of autobiography from Michel de Montaigne in the sixteenth century through Jean-Jaques Rousseau and into the Enlightenment period (Grenz 2001).

50 Hauerwas 1974, 1981. These ideas were brought to a wider audience by Alasdair MacIntyre in his seminal work *After Virtue* (MacIntyre 1981).

51 See Thiselton 1995, pp.73–8. Thiselton even enters into a brief discussion of Pannenberg's own theology, praising him for his awareness of the social-constructedness of personhood (*Ibid.*, pp.151–2).

52 *Ibid.*, p.73–8.

has stripped away.⁵³ In other words, narrative theories arise in discussions of how communal narrative traditions might be actively reformed in the face of a crippling social malaise, not in relation to the understanding of how individuals piece themselves together.⁵⁴ This, of course, is the understanding of narrative identity that stands behind White's proposed 'cure' for self-fragmentation. From this perspective, it is only the self that is rooted in the stable moral narratives of the church, what Stanley Grenz calls 'the ecclesial self', that achieves a unity of purpose and action.⁵⁵ Those who remain detached from this community are denied such stability and remain at the mercy of postmodernity's whimsical trends.

So, narrative theories of tradition and communal coherence clearly play extremely important explanatory roles in contemporary theological anthropology, particularly given the widespread determination to seek an antidote to postmodernism's fragmentation of the enduring subject. Psychological concepts of narrative have even made an appearance in the field of religious studies. Hauerwas, for example, has also tackled the problem of moral development in narrative terms through an analysis of the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg.⁵⁶ Ulrike Popp-Baier has offered a detailed survey of narrative approaches to conversion and Gergen himself has undertaken a study of the many important implications that narrative approaches might have for practical theological issues.⁵⁷ Psychological concepts of narrative identity, however, have yet to receive significant theological attention in relation to the problem of self-unity, though some theologians have touched lightly upon this area. Alistair McFadyen belongs in this category, and a close examination his own theory of identity formation will help to illustrate the theoretical advantages afforded by such an approach in theology's dialogue with the psychology of self. Though he appeals to the concept of 'narrative autobiography' only infrequently, it is clear that the bulk of his psychological theorising is appropriated from the work of Rom Harré (specifically Harré's book *Personal Being*), whose own reasons for finding narrative psychology attractive should make McFadyen's work amenable to such an interpretation.⁵⁸ His account of personhood comes much closer to admitting the plurality of the self than almost any other contemporary theologian to have engaged with psychology, but he never quite breaks away from an abiding concern with self-unity. In this and several other issues, there is a remarkable confluence between McFadyen's and Pannenberg's thought, despite the gulf that exists between their theological and psychological agendas and conceptual

53 See Taylor 1992; Thiselton 1995; White 1997; See Grenz 2001; Hauerwas 2001.

54 Grenz offers perhaps the most comprehensive engagement with the concept of narrative in this respect. Unfortunately, though he flirts with psychology in his potted history of the social self, he never fully explores the implications of his thesis with respect to individual narrative identity (See Grenz 2001).

55 See Grenz 2001.

56 Hauerwas 2001.

57 See Gergen 2002; Popp-Baier 2002.

58 See Harré 1983.

schemes.⁵⁹ Such confluence demonstrates the resilience, ubiquity and axiomatic importance of theological ideas about self-unity, as well as their independence from specific denominational commitments.

McFadyen's Theory of the 'Individual in Social Relationships'

The influence of Barth, Bonhoeffer and Moltmann is striking in McFadyen's anthropology. It is apparent in his adaptation of Barth's ontology of the image of God in the human, and Moltmann's understanding of uniqueness and relation between the persons of the Trinity is the foundation of McFadyen's approach to understanding personal relatedness. It is again apparent in the concern he shares with Barth regarding the importance of personal relational histories in the formation of persons. But one influence in particular deserves special mention – the focus on the 'concreteness', the lived experience of personal 'I–You' relationships that he shares with Bonhoeffer. In elaborating McFadyen's concept of the human person as it is formed for and by other people, my emphasis is upon demonstrating the importance that he places upon the inner unity of the self and its relationship to the singularity and continuity of identity. Once more, I will begin by examining the relevance of such concepts for his psychology in isolation (as far as this is possible) from his theological position.

For McFadyen, persons are 'individuals whose consciousness, experience of and interaction with the world are internally centred'.⁶⁰ It is from this personal centre of being that an individual is a subject in communication – an 'I' for others and for him or herself. A person does not, he argues, have an innate psychological structure through which to organise communication. Rather, he supposes, this structure emerges from and develops according to experience of moments of social interaction that take place within a particular 'communication code'.⁶¹ Eschewing completely the language of self-representations or concepts, he argues that an individual's unique continuous identity is determined by the idiosyncratic way that this social experience is 'sedimented' in the individual.⁶²

59 McFadyen acknowledges Pannenberg to be amongst the primary influences upon his work, but mentions him only very infrequently.

60 McFadyen 1990a, p.69.

61 Communication codes are considered to include everything from languages to the rules of political and institutional systems.

62 McFadyen 1990a, p.95. Intersubjectivity is therefore predicated as the ground of all meaning in McFadyen's thesis. Codes of social meaning, social structures, even seemingly private cognition and the structures of consciousness are ultimately derived from an intersubjectively mediated reality. Society shapes individuals wholly and completely to the extent that McFadyen argues: 'Full personhood is afforded those in a society whose communication counts as intersubjectively valid because its content has public meaning' (Ibid., p.97). This much he takes from Harré, but his concept of the sedimentation of information is entirely his own.

McFadyen argues that although the intentionality of communication is generally interpreted as having interpersonal significance rather than indicating some inner psychological state, it is nevertheless assumed to be the product of 'an organised psychic unity'.⁶³ He believes, however, that the self is better considered as having theoretical as opposed to ontological status.⁶⁴ Therefore, the self is not '... some internal organ of identity, but a way of organising one's life and communication in a centred way. It is not something one has so much as something one does, which is learned in social interaction.'⁶⁵ In keeping with a broadly constructionist approach, he rejects outright the idea that there is a substantial 'inner core' to the self. Rather, he supposes, personal centring is merely the result of holding a belief (or theory) about oneself, the origin of which lies in the social world.⁶⁶ That is to say, it is learned. His explanation of the motivation for its learning appears to be simply 'self-control' in communication – the need to be able to conduct oneself as a unified being through self-reflection and self-intervention: 'One learns to be a particular type of person through the network of expectations of being a person which surround one in significant communication contexts.'⁶⁷

The theory of self one acquires is used structurally to organise experience as if centred on a personal inner core, but it does not specify the content of identity. Identity is sedimented from a personal history of communication, and its individual nature is not, therefore, strictly socially determined. By emphasising the uniqueness of identity entailed by this sedimentation process, McFadyen believes that he manages to avoid accusations of social determinism. As the product of sedimented experience, a person enters every particular communication context as a structured presence and is not, therefore, completely open to social determination in any specific one. Selfhood, then, is described as a dynamic process of becoming a unique individual. It enables the organisation of sedimented information into a unified and continuous structure, which transcends every particular situation.

McFadyen's concept of the self and the terminology he uses to describe it are both extremely different from Pannenberg's. For McFadyen, self is essentially a learned way of being in relation to God and to others. Unfortunately, it is no less restrictive than Pannenberg's, as McFadyen focuses on the organisational capacity of the self at the expense of all other possible aspects. His theory forsakes the

63 Ibid., p.91. He explains, 'The assumption that persons contain a secondary structure of internal complexity operates as a causal explanation for organised communication. It makes it possible to track communication back to a person's intentions, mentation, etc. The secondary psychological structure (selfhood, in our philosophical tradition) is a public assumption of internal unity corresponding to and responsible for that which is external and publicly observable' (Ibid.).

64 Ibid., p.92.

65 Ibid., p.70.

66 This is not an unusual view of self, having been espoused in great detail by many contemporary psychologists, most notably Epstein (Epstein 1973).

67 McFadyen 1990a, p.93

broadly phenomenological approach of Pannenberg's psychology as well as the cognitive, empirical emphasis of those secular psychological theories I examined in Chapter 3. His understanding of personhood is expounded purely in terms of small-scale interpersonal relationships, and his account of the self reflects this focus.

For McFadyen, the self is synchronically and diachronically unified in that it is the single guiding principle of organising information about oneself – 'a grand theory'. Indeed, McFadyen comes to refer to it as an 'experientially transcendent concept [that] enables one's experience and activity in diverse places and times to be unified in a central organisational structure which transcends the embodiment in any and all particular contexts.'⁶⁸ Through the concept of sedimentation, then, McFadyen distances himself somewhat from Harré's resolutely discursive approach and brings himself into closer contact with ideas of representational unity.⁶⁹ For McFadyen, just as for Pannenberg, personally relevant experience is organised as a unified totality. His exposition of the process of sedimentation in the formation of identity leads to an implicit affirmation that the continuity of identity subsists in the construction of a single superordinate self-structure.

It is this particular similarity with Pannenberg that I believe to be the primary difficulty with McFadyen's theory – the lack of a very firm distinction between the concepts of totality and unity (as they relate to the synchronic and diachronic aspects of the self-structure and sense of self), and personal diachronic singularity. Statements of the perceived importance of unity pervade McFadyen's work, but they appear as largely unjustified *a priori* assumptions. In fact, McFadyen's main psychological concerns, like Pannenberg's, are with the singularity of the person and the continuity of identity. He makes this clear in the following passage in which he establishes the bare facts of what we each 'know' about personhood:

What is sensed is that 'I' am one and self-same, a unity of consciousness, experience and communication. It is sensed that it is the same 'I' who eats the apple, knows 'I' am eating it and knows that 'I' know that 'I' am eating it; the same 'I' who eats the apple as bought a newspaper in a different town yesterday.⁷⁰

Quite unlike Pannenberg, however, there is room for a degree of plurality in McFadyen's concept of the sense of self, which gives his understanding of personhood a creditable dynamism and flexibility that Pannenberg's lacks. Indeed, more than any other contemporary theologian, McFadyen seems prepared to tackle the differences between appearances of the self in different social settings. At any given time, McFadyen argues, identity depends upon precisely how the 'I' is 'indexed' in relation to others ('you', 'him', 'her') in the context of a particular

68 McFadyen 1990a, p.100.

69 See Harré 1983, 1998.

70 McFadyen 1990a, p.97.

communicative situation.⁷¹ He believes that this understanding of identity does not preclude its continuity; it merely suggests that the way a person – an individual or singular ‘I’ – enters communication changes with relational context. Changing time and place entails a change in communicative stance and identity since:

To enter a particular communication at a particular point in a given exchange is to make an implicit claim concerning the social validity of such a contribution ... [and] The social space and time it is appropriate for ‘me’ to occupy in each case is different.⁷²

Thus there is a very real sense in which the ‘I’ that appears in any particular instance of communication is experienced differently. These different ‘I’ positions, McFadyen supposes, might be considered to represent local ‘selves’ since they are specific to local communication contexts. It is not so much a matter of manipulating one’s public appearance, he argues, ‘but of having a different sense of myself in different contexts’.⁷³

His concept of the local self therefore seems to be closely related to the contemporary psychological concept of the ‘sub-personality’, but he does not go so far as to suggest that they might depend upon independent representations of self, or to accord them any degree of autonomy. Counterintuitively, he actually takes the observation that people do experience themselves differently in different contexts as evidence for the existence of a further, more fundamental structure of selfhood. Hence he reiterates his concern with the unity of the individual person in the description of what he refers to as a ‘deep self’:

This seems to indicate a distance between, on the one hand, a structure of selfhood which is deeply embedded and removed from particular relations (deep ‘self’) and, on the other, a model of ‘self’ generated by it which structures and organises communication and experience amid the practicalities of a particular context (practical or local ‘self’). Deep ‘self’ would then be a transcendent point of unity behind a number of lower-level models.⁷⁴

Clearly, this understanding of self is closer to the concept of a core self in schematic cognitive models than to the unified self that Pannenberg describes. It is not antithetical to the concept of plural selfhood that I have been advocating throughout this study, but nor is it a necessity. With the continuing advance of postmodernity, as I have tried to show, people could eventually disown any notions of core selves altogether, but this would not affect their basic enduring senses of singularity.

71 This way of defining identity is taken from Harré 1983.

72 McFadyen 1990a, p.83.

73 Ibid., p.102.

74 Ibid.

For McFadyen the deep-self is a crucial determinant of identity derived from the sedimentation of the experience of a particularly close relationship, and always present in the background of one's relations with less significant others. Unlike other selves, it is not situation specific. Effectively, it acts as a mediating presence in less stable relations, offering continuity when the sense of self is in danger of being 'fragmented'. It is here, in his discussion of the deep self, that McFadyen comes closest to acknowledging that the sedimented information constituting identity might be organised into multiple interdependent self-representations rather than a single synchronically and diachronically unified whole. He states that 'Personal identity in a particular relation is not a complete and exhaustive self-presence'.⁷⁵ His concept of self as a way of being in relation, though, precludes our understanding this statement in terms of diachronic representational multiplicity. Indeed, though he sees much value in James Ogilvy's approach, in which the author explicitly advocates the idea that personhood may be constituted by competing autonomous personalities, each with 'equal claims', he criticises Ogilvy's failure to account for a transcendent point of unity.⁷⁶ Rather, the concept of the local self refers to the way that people experience and communicate themselves to others in conformity with the particular communication codes that are appropriate to specific contexts. The local selves are very much tied to the 'grand theory' and the core self.

The notion of a deep self, though, is not necessarily sufficient grounds for establishing the unity of localised selves in the way that McFadyen claims, and its own origin remains somewhat mysterious. How is it that a single 'grand theory' of self might lead to the construction of a deep self structure *and* several local self models? McFadyen offers no explanation. By arguing that the deep self is constructed from particularly important self-relevant information derived from particularly close relationships, he introduces the possibility that relationships are not all treated equally in the formation of identity, but fails adequately to justify this possibility in relation to his concept of self. What, for example, is distinctive about the information that is sedimented in the deep self as opposed to a local self? How is it that the core self is extraordinarily resistant to change? These issues would not be so problematic for McFadyen's concept of identity were he to permit these various selves a much greater degree of equality and autonomy.

Most importantly, given the specific interests of this book, the existence of a deep self that determines a person's sense of him or herself in a close relationship does not preclude the continued existence of multiple and independent self-representations. From a psychological perspective, it is not at all clear why McFadyen is resistant to this idea. He demonstrates a profound concern for the continuity of identity, but his insistence that the sedimented information that constitutes identity is synchronically and diachronically unified appears to have very little impact upon that continuity. The sense of diachronic singularity, as

75 Ibid., p.103.

76 Ibid., p. 289n.

I have argued, need not depend upon such unity. McFadyen's thesis, it seems, could easily incorporate the idea that a multiplicity of self-representations and corresponding senses of self could co-exist and persist over time as relatively stable structures of personal identity. He himself mentions the idea that identity is a sort of narrative autobiography, and this is sufficient in itself to explain the sense of personal continuity.⁷⁷ And yet he continues to fall back upon the not unrelated yet distinct idea of the grand unifying 'theory' of self. McFadyen's account of self and identity is compromised by different problems to Pannenberg's, but the outcome is largely the same. It simply lacks the dynamism of those theories that do acknowledge the existence of multiple autonomous self-representations, and struggles to accommodate or explain radical changes in the sense of self from one moment to the next, whether those changes ought to be considered pathological or not.

The concept of the deep self seems to arise largely from the perceived need to explain the consistency of persons in relation to others, and thus the particularity of personhood. McFadyen writes:

If individual identities were to be equated with the moments of their particular responses, then they would have no reality beyond their active engagement in particular relations. The partners to a relation would then be nothing more than turns within it. There could be no sense of continuity to account for the way in which the same individual may be a 'turn' in not one but many relations, or for a person's discreteness from relation evidenced by, say, the privacy of individual psyches and the private or 'internal' presence of a person to him or herself.⁷⁸

This much may be true, but we need not appeal to a structure like the deep self to explain the sense of sameness over time. The concept of self-multiplicity is not synonymous with the idea that selves are momentary constructions. Were McFadyen to realise the full explanatory worth of the concept of narrative identity that he touches upon, he would have a ready-made explanation of how such continuity and particularity could subsist, even if the selves with which a person entered into different relationships were extremely different.

Just as for Pannenberg, still further issues for McFadyen are thrown up by postmodern accounts of the destabilisation of identity. Postmodernity speaks of the changing nature of interpersonal communication, the pluralisation of ways of relating, and the consequent construction of vast numbers of relation-specific selves. If the rules of interaction themselves are changing, McFadyen's theory seems ill-equipped to cope. How might a grand theory of self survive when so many different, often contradictory, theories of self must exist simultaneously, each with as great a claim on personality as the other? Even if he is able to account for limited changes to the sense of self from moment to moment, his theory of

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.100.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.73–4.

identity formation seems too restrictive to understand the postmodern world's constantly changing fads and trends, which now form such important parts of individual selves. Explaining the transformation of self in a postmodern context demands a greater flexibility than either McFadyen's or Pannenberg's concepts of self-unity can provide.

From a purely psychological perspective, both Pannenberg's and McFadyen's accounts of identity formation are, to a large extent, compatible with various forms of self-multiplicity. But it is also clear that neither is prepared to admit this possibility. Even McFadyen, who does allow a degree of multiplicity in the sense of self, understands the represented self to be an organised structural unity. Given that the concept of self-unity appears to do so little work in the psychological dimensions of their respective theories, why do they insist on self-unity at all? The most plausible answer to this question seems to be rooted in the demands they believe to be made upon their psychological theories by their respective theological anthropologies.

The Theological Grounding of Self-Unity

In the previous chapter I explained the theological significance of the wholeness of personality in Pannenberg's anthropology. This wholeness, which relate to the ideas of diachronic singularity and synchronic experiential unity, signifies his introduction of the religious thematic into his theory of identity and establishes the particularity and freedom of the individual.⁷⁹ In a much quoted passage from *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Pannenberg describes the person as 'the presence of the self in the moment of the ego, in the claim laid upon the ego by our true self, and in the anticipatory consciousness of our identity'.⁸⁰ In the concept of the person, then, the self appears as the present manifestation of a continuous but unfinished life history – it represents 'the life of the human being that is partly already past and partly still future ...'.⁸¹ It is, therefore, implicitly related to the totality of the true self. What is more, the person in its momentary wholeness is identified as the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence, he writes 'Without the works of the divine Spirit in us there could be no personality in the deeper sense of the term. For personality has to do with the manifestation of the truth and totality of individual life in the moment of its existence.'⁸²

Clearly, it is in relation to the anticipation of the individual's eschatological future that the unity of the self at any given moment has the greatest resonance

79 For Pannenberg, 'Personhood transcends all the singularities and changes of circumstances because it finally draws upon the relation to God as the source of its integrity' (Pannenberg 1985, p.200).

80 Ibid., p.240.

81 Pannenberg 1985, p.240.

82 Pannenberg 1994, p.198.

for his anthropology. But whereas Pannenberg's vigorous defence of self-unity is comprehensible from his theological perspective, it still does not appear to be essential from a purely psychological perspective. For Pannenberg, whose intention is to reconcile theology with anthropological 'facts', such a discrepancy ought to be problematic. It is, however, consonant with the suggestion that Pannenberg's psychological understanding of self-unity is determined by his theological understanding. The result is an unfortunate conflation of two different types of unity. In his eschatological concept of the true self, self-unity can be understood in terms of the totality of the life history that reveals the true identity of the individual. But in his psychological account of identity formation, he also introduces a structural unity to the self. These distinct concepts are brought together in his attempt to integrate his eschatological concept of the true self into his psychological theory of identity formation. Here, the true self's totality is presumed to entail the structural unity of its representation in any given moment. By failing to recognise the theoretical independence of these concepts, his theological understanding of personal wholeness, which draws upon the notion of the self's totality (and the relation to God that this implies), inadvertently comes to depend on the idea that the self is both singular and unified. This is, I believe, unnecessary. I have shown that the self might be understood as a totality, inasmuch as it represents the history of a whole life, without being structurally unified. People can be whole, singular continuous beings without their representations or senses of self being synchronically or diachronically unified. Unfortunately, by failing adequately to distinguish between the concepts of unity and totality, he implicitly denies the possibility of diachronic or synchronic representational self-multiplicity, and sacrifices the multidimensionality of personhood that is so central to the contemporary psychological models that I have attempted to describe.

The suggestion that Pannenberg's psychological defence of self-unity is inspired primarily by theological commitments receives further support in reflection upon his exposition of sin. Pannenberg finds the inherent 'brokenness' of human nature in the very act of differentiation that gives rise to self-consciousness. It is, he suggests, manifest in the tension between the centralised and the exocentric dimensions of the ego. In the balanced individual, this tension is a feature of every moment of human existence. But, he argues, when 'the ego, in its identity with "itself," also places itself over against the other', then the tension is resolved on the side of the ego.⁸³ This, he writes, 'is the root of the break in the ego, the root of its conflict with its own exocentric destiny.'⁸⁴ In trying to assert its self-sufficiency in its relation to the world, the ego fails to unify itself with its self. The result is the 'non-identity' of self-estrangement.

The concept of sin as the primary failure of identity formation acts as a vehicle for Pannenberg's theological justification of the tension between the centrality and exocentricity of human being. The uniquely human capacity for radical exocentricity

83 Pannenberg 1985, p.85.

84 Ibid.

acquires its theological meaning through its projection of the human being into its eschatological future with God, but it is expounded psychologically in terms of its impact upon individual identity formation and its potential corruption.⁸⁵ A picture emerges of the ubiquity of a certain distortion of the self (egocentrism), which corresponds to a turning away from God and, in Pannenberg's thesis, the universal reality of sin. He presumes that the 'pregiven existential structure of all human beings are determined by the centrality of their ego', and argues that a natural tendency towards egocentrism subsists in the subordination of the exocentric orientation of self-consciousness by human nature's centralising tendencies.⁸⁶ Hence, the essence of sin does not originate in the arena of moral reasoning or behaviour, but in the 'natural' human way of experiencing the world.

In the psychological tension between egocentrism and exocentricity, then, a correlative theological tension emerges between sinfulness and human destiny, which is the image of God. In people's striving to be whole in themselves, Pannenberg believes, they are always in denial of the transcendent movement towards salvation and communion with God.⁸⁷ Sin is a tacit rejection of the image, a disregard for the God-given disposition for openness to the world, and ultimately a refusal of intended destiny. It is a person's refusal to accept the relation to God that is implicit in every moment of our lives as human persons. Although the nature of the failure of the self is described in the terms and concepts of psychology, it fulfils a specific theological function, and in this the most significant reason for his avowed concern with the psychological unity of the person becomes apparent.

The fragmentation of the person that is 'non-identity', 'self-estrangement', or the ego's failure to identify itself with its self, signifies the failure to recognise both the totality of meaning that is represented in the self, and its continuous identity. Here, the completeness and ultimate unity of the true self is set in opposition to the incompleteness and even the disunity that the person might be subject to in any given moment. Since the totality and the structural unity of the self are linked, for Pannenberg, the concept of structural self-unity is itself ascribed an important theological role in his account of identity formation by enabling a distinction between the way that this process ought to proceed, and the way that it often actually proceeds as a result of the natural human tendency towards egocentrism. In light of this connection between disunity and sin, then, the reasons behind Pannenberg's unqualified psychological defence of self-unity become even clearer.

Once again, though, the understanding of personal disunity that is expressed through Pannenberg's concept of sin might not be completely incompatible with the idea of self-pluralism or a narrative understanding of identity. Considered

85 Pannenberg considers this principle to constitute the primary contribution of Christian thought to modern concepts of development (See Grenz 1990, p.94).

86 Pannenberg 1985, p.107.

87 Pannenberg believes that Sartre distorts this transcendent movement into a 'desire to be God' (Ibid., p.239).

as a whole, the 'normal' individual, as a singular subject, must always have a singular and unified sense of self at any given moment. Even for Pannenberg, where personal unity and continuity begin on the side of the self, the pathology of identity formation that engenders the sense of self-estrangement does not signify a fragmented sense of self in any given moment. Rather, it describes the experiential discontinuity of the individual whose ego fails to identify itself with its self.⁸⁸ Such an experiential discontinuity, I argued in Chapter 4, corresponds to a loss of the sense of diachronic singularity, which can be captured so neatly by the concept of narrative incoherence. This is no more or less than the individual's failure to recognise itself as the continuous subject and owner of the totality of its experience, which is why it provides such a helpful means of understanding the distinctive sort of self-multiplicity that underlies dissociative conditions such as DID. Given Pannenberg's refusal to admit the possible plurality of the represented self, it is not possible to draw too close an analogy between his understanding of disunity and the concept of narrative incoherence. Nevertheless, it appears that, were Pannenberg to admit the multiplicity of self and adopt a narrative concept of the totality of self, his concept of sin, in its psychological dimensions at least, need not be compromised. His distinctive concepts of the ideal and distorted processes of identity formation can both be preserved in nearly all of their important respects without defending the unity of the self in the way that he does.

Pannenberg is certainly not alone among theologians in making the connection between pathology and self-disunity. Indeed, even the specific sort of disunity he describes is common enough throughout the contemporary dialogue between theology and the human sciences. Is it possible, then, that this dialogue in general suffers from the same misconceived relationship between the concepts of unity and totality that seems to be present in Pannenberg's thought? It may not be ubiquitous, but it is certainly widespread, as further analysis of the concept of self-unity in the context of McFadyen's trinitarian theology will reveal.

McFadyen's interpretation of the *imago Dei* offers the most plausible reason for his rugged defence of personal unity. This, as I showed in the previous chapter, is the source of his belief that the individual person, as an enduring particularity, has a continuous identity. A clearer picture of his understanding of self-unity emerges in his descriptions both of the distorted relationships that characterise humanity's fallen state, and of the implications that redemption has for the reorientation of human relations. Personal unity for McFadyen is a central feature of the pure undistorted dialogical communication that humanity is only capable of in its redeemed state. As it was in Pannenberg's case, the perceived importance of unity is discernible in the temporal dimension of human existence – in the order it brings to present and future relations.

This notion of futurity has special significance in the context of relations to God. Since the mode of redemption's presence is future, he argues:

88 On this point, also see Potter 1997.

God and redemption can only be present in promissory or anticipatory form ... Because of the newness and futurity which it brings, God's presence transforms present structures and forms. In addition to the more mundane sedimentation processes through which past relations push persons into an evolutionary future, God's Word pulls persons into the divine future which so radically differs from the present that it seriously challenges our present identities, relations and social structures in the process.⁸⁹

McFadyen's conception of genuine dialogue as the ideal undistorted form of relation is rooted in his understanding of the image of God and corresponds to the radical openness to God and others that a person adopts in their conformity to Christ. Given this assumption and the central role he accords interpersonal communication in the construction of identity, possible deformations of identity (including clinical psychopathologies) can be discussed in terms of relations that deviate to a greater or lesser extent from this ideal form. McFadyen discusses such corruptions of relations, which can take place in the form of either call or response, in terms of exploitation and manipulation.⁹⁰ Both of these pathological forms of communication are characterised by a closure of the self to the influence of the other. Ultimately, both result in an unrelated form of individuality. In other words, such monological forms of communication are conducted by people who are in relation only in and for themselves – those people whose own personal goals are exclusively important.⁹¹ For McFadyen:

The possibility of maintaining a genuine order between the bipolarities of personal being (centredness and transcendence, or ex-centricity) is created in the genuine call of a genuine other mediating the presence and call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Thus genuine address grounds the possibility of genuine responsibility by calling forth another whose existence is concretely integrated.⁹²

The corruption of identity, in McFadyen's thesis, arises from the failure successfully to integrate private and public forms of communication. Such distorted forms of communicating are indicative of a distorted internal organisation of personality. There must be, he suggests, a continuity between the transcendent 'I' and the

89 McFadyen 1990a, p.115.

90 Though McFadyen's description of manipulation is idiosyncratic, the idea that manipulation in relationship contravenes basic Christian principles is undisputed. As Thiselton argues, '[T]o be manipulated is to be treated as less than a personal self ... We do not seek to manipulate someone whom we genuinely respect and love as an Other in their own right. Yet respect for the other as 'Other', as a unique agent or active personal subject, stands at the heart of the Christian gospel' (Thiselton 1995, p.13).

91 Whereas McFadyen believes that, because a person in relation is present in a structured form due to the prior sedimentation of experience, no one can ever be 'completely' open in relation, he also believes that there are degrees of partial-openness and partial-closure. It is the latter that characterises distorted forms of relations.

92 McFadyen 1990a, p.156

'Thou-I' of any particular relation, corresponding to a continuity between the deep self and local selves, or between enduring identity and the identity a person adopts in a particular relation. It is essential to McFadyen's understanding of self-unity since the personal centredness that represents the good internal order of the person depends upon it. Self-deception is characterised by a failure of the internal communication that is necessary for successful undistorted interpersonal communication. Here, McFadyen is clearly drawing upon an established theme in Christian anthropology.⁹³ In this case, he argues, those aspects of sedimented identity that should be 'ordered together into a whole', and made present in communication, remain repressed, unconscious and unexpressed. Such a distortion, it appears, is characterised by internal fragmentation.

Here, then, is a conclusive statement of the importance McFadyen ascribes to the continuous integration of personal experience into the structured form of sedimented identity and, therefore, to his understanding of synchronic and diachronic representational unity. The failure of this integrative process is characteristic of distorted communication and thus of distorted identity. It ultimately represents a lack of consistency in public communication and a failure to unify the various identities that a person might assume in different specific situations. It is a failure to achieve and maintain a continuous unified identity. Since a proper orientation in communication with others can only be achieved through conformity to Christ, the unredeemed identity (the natural state of the person) is perpetually subject to such inner disunity. This is the primary pathology of the person.

So, like Pannenberg, McFadyen's reasons for defending self-unity become clearest in their theological context and the inner disunity that he believes characterises humanity's unredeemed state. Furthermore, the disunity that he describes is also a pathology of personal continuous identity. In principle, therefore, there is no reason why synchronic and diachronic representational multiplicity or a radical form of diachronic experiential multiplicity should be incompatible with his theological position. What really matters to McFadyen is that the diachronic singularity of the person is preserved. The structural unity of the represented self is irrelevant to this. As long as different representations and senses of self co-exist through time – and contemporary psychology suggests they can – personal continuity is secure.

McFadyen's concept of self-unity, then, seems ultimately derived from a similar source as Pannenberg's. Unity is contrasted with disunity in order to indicate the transition between the initial state of the individual and the ideal or redeemed state, which is the realisation of the image. But this is a unity and continuity of personal identity, not self. By failing to distinguish these qualitatively different concepts of unity, McFadyen apparently defends a concept that is unnecessary to his thesis as a whole. As is the case with Pannenberg, the concept of self-unity

93 Thiselton presents a clear and interesting account of Christian theological explanations of manipulation (see Thiselton 1995).

stands out as something uncritically incorporated into his psychological model to serve a primarily theological purpose.

McFadyen's understanding of identity, in both its psychological and theological dimensions, seems to cry out for an explicitly narrative formulation, but he resists this temptation despite his use of Harré's psychology – a psychology that, as I have already mentioned, is peculiarly amenable to a narrative interpretation. Through an appeal to narrative, McFadyen would gain the flexibility that is inherent to such models of personhood, without compromising his theological expositions of the *imago Dei*, or the redemptive transformation of relations in any way. Without such flexibility, McFadyen's theory seems unable to address the findings of contemporary psychology or social theory, and must inevitably give way to one that can.

Unity and Disunity in Pannenberg and McFadyen

Despite the facts that their projects are underpinned by very different theological methodologies, and they expound their theories of identity formation in very different psychological terms and concepts, Pannenberg and McFadyen reach startlingly similar conclusions regarding the essential features of personhood. This is certainly true of their conclusions about self-unity, which each relates to the idea of personal wholeness. This idea is important for two primary and essentially theological reasons. First, the absence of personal wholeness is taken to correspond to the corruption, or denial, of the image of God. Secondly, the concept of personal wholeness in any given moment and over time is deemed essential to the concept of the individual as a unique and continuous entity that exists over and above its social constitution.

The inner order that both Pannenberg and McFadyen identify with personal unity is contrasted with the disorder that represents the discontinuity of identity and is a consequence of egocentrism – the denial of relationality. This understanding of disunity (and its causes) is a hallmark of those accounts of personhood in which the image of God is used to establish the inherent openness of human being. As White argues:

Chiefly, the fall speaks of disordered relationships and impoverished identity ... evil is being characterised in Christian tradition as a deep-rooted sense of disorder and fragmentation in identity and relationships ... [A] key consequence of fallenness is, undoubtedly, the disruption of right *relations* – between persons and God, each other, and the environment.⁹⁴

94 White 1997, p.118.

There is almost unanimous agreement over this point, regardless of how the psychology of identity formation is described.⁹⁵ Disunity, as a failure of identity and modes of relation, only ever has negative implications.

For both Pannenberg and McFadyen, personal wholeness is a function of the self, but neither distinguishes adequately between the totality of the self and its unity, and this oversight leads each of them independently to unnecessarily restrictive conceptions of individual identity formation. McFadyen's concept is arguably more dynamic than Pannenberg's in that he is prepared to admit a greater variation between the different ways in which individuals experience themselves at different times, but this notion is compromised somewhat by his insistence that identity is sedimented into an organised structural unity.

It is also especially interesting that Pannenberg's and McFadyen's theories of identity are so close, in many respects, to the ideas of narrative psychology, even though neither makes specific use of them. Such similarity should not be too surprising since narrative theories of identity can be understood in part as a secular response to precisely the sorts of problems regarding the social constitution of personhood and the continuity of identity that McFadyen and Pannenberg both set out to tackle. In attempting to demonstrate the compatibility between narrative psychology and the theoretical demands that their own accounts of self, identity and personhood are designed to meet, and by exploring its possible impact upon their theological preconceptions about human relationality and the disunity of identity, I have tried to show the dispensability of their ideas about the structural unity and singularity of the self. I have not attempted to reconstruct their respective theories in narrative terms, though I have argued that the concept of narrative identity has the potential to reconcile the idea of the plural self and their own profound concerns with the singularity of personhood and the perdurance of individual identity. Any dialogue with narrative psychology, however, must be approached with caution if theological anthropology is to maintain its integrity and its own distinctive identity. I will return to this idea in the final chapter as I attempt to explain the broader implications of this study of unity and multiplicity for the broader dialogue between theology and the human sciences.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Anderson 1982; Macquarrie 1982; Pannenberg 1985, 1994; McFadyen 1990a; Thiselton 1995; White 1997.

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CONCLUSION

Reconfiguring Theology's Dialogue with Psychology

Contemporary humanity speaks in many voices and we know now that it will continue to do so for a very long time to come. The central issue of our times is how to reforge that polyphony into harmony and prevent it from degenerating into cacophony.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualised Society*, 2001)

Normality and Psychological Concepts of Self-Multiplicity

Let me begin by tying together the main arguments of the preceding chapters. Although contemporary psychology readily accepts that some sorts of self-multiplicity are pathological, there is an overwhelming consensus that some other sorts are both inevitable and adaptive. A divided self is not always a troubled self. Distinguishing between representational and experiential theories of self, and between synchronic and diachronic forms of self-multiplicity and unity, I have suggested that a single individual can form a broad array of self-representations that are not unified at any given time, and do not merge into a unity over time. Furthermore, I have claimed that people have the potential to experience themselves in a variety of different ways in any given moment, and that a person's sense of self can be radically different from one moment to the next – a variety of enduring sub-personalities wait in the wings ready to be called upon as and when required. But there is still a sense of unity that persists amidst the flux. Despite an inherent multiplicity, a person's ability to tell coherent life stories exposes a sense of singularity and continuity that is an essential component of normal psychological functioning. In summary, to borrow John Rowan's words, the individual is 'Neither a one ... nor a many ... nor a many within the one ... but a one-with-the-potential-to-be-many'.¹

To explain this apparent paradox, I have drawn upon the concept of narrative identity. This refers to the narrative history of a life (constructed according to the story-telling standards of a particular time and place) that unites past experiences with the present manifestation of personality and anticipates its future development. As well as mediating between the extremes of total self-fragmentation and undifferentiated self-unity, the concept of narrative identity also provides a means of understanding the difference between pathological and natural forms of self-multiplicity. As the psychologists Hardcastle, Flanagan and Crossley have each

1 Rowan 1999, p.67.

suggested, it is the failure successfully to narratise different strands of a life story that is truly definitive of the pathologically divided subject. The inability to tell a coherent story about a singular life is what distinguishes the DID sufferer from the normal person, not the number or variety of self-representations, or the disparity between different ways of experiencing oneself. This 'narrative incoherence' is neither adaptive nor inevitable, but is rather indicative of a deep and often debilitating fragmentation.

Such an understanding of self as I have encouraged, then, diverges from the central epistemological premises of strong postmodernism, but it is also far from concepts of unchanging essence or unity of consciousness. In arguing my case, I have followed theorists such as Dunn and Davis in acknowledging the need to explain changes in the processes of contemporary identity formation without abolishing the subject altogether. By distinguishing between the self-fragmentation described by sociologists and that described by psychologists, I have been able to show how even radical cultural change does not necessarily preclude the possibility of individual narrative continuity. Though it undoubtedly affects particular narrative traditions, and may therefore make individual narratives more complex and confusing, it cannot (yet) prevent the very formation of those narratives. Indeed, according to some, narrative might be a fundamental structuring principle of human thought.

I have also argued that there are widely divergent attitudes to self-multiplicity within the human sciences. Stanley Grenz is only partially correct, therefore, when he observes, regretfully, that 'What Augustine saw as the debilitating malady has, in the postmodern context, become a source of celebration.'² Although theorists such as Gergen may emphasise the adaptive advantages of self-multiplicity above all else and eagerly await the full maturation of the 'postmodern consciousness', the continuity of identity, unlike strong notions of representational or experiential self-unity, continues to be highly valued by the majority of psychologists.³ This is especially true of those involved in the treatment of patients who have apparently lost the capacity for such continuity.⁴ It is also true of those sociologists, such as Giddens and Bauman, who emphasise the increased levels of anxiety in the contemporary era in which society has largely relinquished its traditional guiding role. The struggle for self-definition that is manifested in the postmodern individual's overriding concern with his or her own identity testifies to the abiding importance of personal continuity.⁵

In short, according to the psychological scheme I have developed, unity and multiplicity co-exist (and may always have co-existed) within the individual person. The sorts of stories people tell about their lives and the 'rules' of story-

2 Grenz 2001, p.64.

3 See Gergen 1972, 1991.

4 See Apter 1991; Braude 1991; Brook 1999; Hardcastle and Flanagan 1999; Crossley 2000a.

5 For example, see Bauman 2001.

telling themselves may have changed markedly with the onset of postmodernity, but the majority of people are still able to retain the sense of being singular and continuous over time. Hence, not all forms of self-multiplicity are indicative of 'identity crises', and ought not to be described in overwhelmingly negative terms. Much of recent theological anthropology, however, tends strongly to conflict with these claims.

Theology, Pathology and Self-Fragmentation

In the recent trend for reassessing the concept of personhood, Christian theologians have sought to distance themselves from the idea that self is a simple unchanging essence. Their aim has typically been to redefine the concept of the individual in such a way as to restore the social foundations of the self that theologians have traditionally valued so greatly, and expose the problem of self-alienation, inasmuch as this signifies the decentring of the person and the denial of authentic identity, as a fundamental pathology of personhood that has its roots in modern individualism.

In its recent dialogue with the human sciences, though, Christian theology continues to neglect the subtleties of the ever-increasing psychological and sociological literature on self-multiplicity. The plurality of roles that normal people adopt over the courses of their lives is widely recognised, but these roles tend to be blended together in monolithic concepts of personhood without adequate consideration of the possibility that they reflect a genuine underlying structural multiplicity of self. Plurality is universally downplayed in favour of somewhat blinkered claims about the self's enduring unity. On those rare occasions that the notion of self-multiplicity is addressed by theologians, it is almost always deemed to be a pathological condition. In this respect, a dialogue that has prospered on so many other fronts has failed to respond adequately to central ideas within the modern secular human sciences.

I have illustrated these claims primarily through an analysis of Pannenberg's and McFadyen's anthropologies – two of the most comprehensive theological attempts to engage with psychological theories of self in the last 30 years. In their accounts of identity formation both attempt to demonstrate the relationality of personhood and substantiate specific theological claims regarding personal continuity. Despite some significant theological and psychological differences between their theories, both ultimately conflate the continuity of identity with various other understandings of self-unity. It is this failure to differentiate between concepts of self-unity (and self-multiplicity) which, I have suggested, is largely responsible for the prevailing theological attitude towards the plural self.

By implicitly making synchronic and diachronic, experiential and representational self-unity determinative factors of 'normal' identity formation, Pannenberg fails to acknowledge that the internal differentiation of the self might have positive or adaptive functions. Indeed, the only sort of inner disunity he is

prepared to acknowledge at all is pathological. The same is true of McFadyen for whom self-multiplicity is a consequence of the failure to integrate private and public forms of communication, and thereby a failure to unify the authentic self with the self of a particular relation. Since genuine communication is determinative of 'proper' (unified) identity, distorted communication results in disordered identity and the pathological disunity of the person. Importantly, though, the abnormalities that Pannenberg and McFadyen each describe relate to the dissolution of the sense of personal singularity over time, and do not correspond strictly either to representational or experiential self-multiplicity.

Secular psychologists and theologians alike can agree that the distortion or disruption of an individual's identity project could result in a form of debilitating self-fragmentation, but theological anthropology is yet to devote significant attention to the idea that the self is, in some important senses, 'naturally' plural. This understanding of non-pathological multiplicity is made possible by certain psychological distinctions between synchronic and diachronic dimensions of selfhood, and between sub-personal and personal concepts of unity and singularity. These distinctions are rarely recognised by theologians, but they have very significant implications for the understanding of self, personhood and identity. Both Pannenberg and McFadyen defend the normality and desirability of self-unity in very strong terms. Unfortunately, they are joined by many others in their failure to recognise that not all forms of self-multiplicity necessarily conflict with notions of personal continuity and singularity.

The continuity of identity that underlies the sense of diachronic singularity is undoubtedly of pivotal importance to Christian theological anthropology. For McFadyen it is a prerequisite of maintaining an adequacy in personal relations that accords with his interpretation of God's intention for humanity. For Pannenberg it is explicit in his understanding of the image of God and the anticipation of true selfhood in fellowship with God at the eschaton. For both, the personal continuity that unifies a personal history of experience is essential to an understanding of human being in its particularity. As I explained in Chapter 1, the theoretical justification of personal continuity is more important now than ever before, given contemporary theology's rush to embrace contemporary theories of the self's social-constructedness – amongst the chief reasons behind the disintegration of the unified self in the human sciences.⁶

The theological need to defend the notion of personal continuity, therefore, is both theoretically defensible and comprehensible, but confusion over exactly what this entails creates a number of problems for Pannenberg's and McFadyen's psychological projects. Both ground the sense of personal diachronic singularity in the singularity and unity of the self. From a psychological perspective, as I have tried to show, this is simply not necessary. It is almost universally agreed, in fact, that people are able to experience themselves as continuous and singular beings even though they construct multiple and enduring self-representations and

6 See Taylor 1992; Grenz 2001.

sub-personalities over the courses of their lives. The concepts of representational and experiential multiplicity do not challenge the personal continuity valued by Christian theology. In the absence of crucial distinctions between different concepts of self-unity, then, both Pannenberg and McFadyen give accounts of personhood that the human sciences would consider quite inflexible.

This does not diminish the very significant contributions that both Pannenberg and McFadyen have made to understanding the compatibility between psychological and theological approaches to personhood and self. Their projects are very different in many ways, but they do seek to answer very similar questions, and often provide very similar answers. Each, for example, develops an understanding of continuous personhood that cannot be divorced from either the past or the anticipated future. Furthermore, both recognise the central importance of interpersonal relationships in the continuous construction of identity and the multiplicity of roles that each person adopts over the course of a life. In these respects, and despite their idiosyncratic terminologies, Pannenberg and McFadyen share the common ground with the large majority of contemporary psychologists and theologians. Of even greater interest for our current concerns, though, is the fact that these principles are all central to the narrative approaches that are now receiving sustained attention in the human sciences.

Pannenberg's and McFadyen's explicitly psychological accounts of personhood differ from the account that I have defended in this book primarily as regards the possibility that people can accommodate many different autonomous sub-personalities and representations of self simultaneously and over time. It is the cornerstone of the particular narrative approach to identity I have described, but neither Pannenberg nor McFadyen confront this possibility directly. The concept of narrative identity offers more than just a means of understanding the compatibility of some forms of self-multiplicity and self-unity; it seems tailor-made to mediate between theology's presupposition of the diachronic singularity of personhood, and its description of the possible distortions of self that characterise the failure to live according to God's intention for humanity. In narrative identity, theological anthropology should find a concept that adds flexibility to its relational understanding of personhood, but keeps both relativism and individualism at bay by securing the individual identity's continuity over time. It has already performed a similar function for contemporary psychology and sociology.

We must be clear, however, that not all narrative accounts of identity are so amenable to dialogue with Pannenberg's and McFadyen's theological concerns as that which I have described here. After all, narrative psychology is a very close relative of ontologically sceptical social constructionist psychology, and much of it is founded on the assumption that the self is merely a useful fiction – it is literally the product of the stories we tell, and nothing more. This sort of narrative psychology, which precludes a pluralistic understanding of the self, to the same extent as reductionistic cognitive science, is at odds with the theological claims of both Pannenberg and McFadyen.

For Pannenberg, especially, who draws upon an eschatologically grounded concept of the true self, this particular narrative understanding of self and identity would be anathema. Pannenberg defends the constructedness both of the social self and the ego, but the concept of person corresponds to their momentary unity in anticipation of their identity with the true self: 'The word "person" establishes a relation between the mystery – which transcends the present of the ego – of the still incomplete individual life history that is on the way to its special destiny and the present moment of the ego.'⁷ If the concept of narrative identity is understood as entailing the metaphysical claim that we are nothing but the stories we tell about ourselves, then it becomes very difficult to harmonise with Pannenberg's eschatological realism and his concept of universal history. His understanding of identity formation presupposes the participation of the self in the totality of meaning that constitutes God's complete eschatological self-revelation – 'selfness is ultimately grounded in the relation to God.'⁸ In other words, the form that the individual's identity takes at any moment corresponds to their 'true identity'.⁹ According to some narrative psychologists, the history of the individual self is as indeterminate as its future – it is entirely dependent upon the context of its expression in any given moment – hence, there can be no 'true' identity. For McFadyen who differs radically from Pannenberg in his conception of the true self, and whose psychology is explicitly grounded in social constructionism, the indeterminateness of such narrative concepts of identity ought not to be quite so problematic. Still, both through its relation to God, and through McFadyen's understanding of dialogical communication, which requires the authentic expression of oneself in relationship with others, identity (which is the sedimented history of communication) acquires an objectivity that grates against the ontological scepticism of some narrative psychologists.

The potential difficulties for Pannenberg and McFadyen that are raised by such an understanding of narrative identity, though, are not related specifically to the idea of the plural self or how it might be reconciled psychologically with the idea of the continuous singular person. Indeed, the difficulties are not psychological in nature at all. They rather arise from a particular metaphysical claim about what the self essentially is. The approach to understanding the continuity of personhood that I have tried to articulate depends upon precisely the sort of theoretical pluralism that these exclusionary concepts of narrative identity reject. As a purely psychological description of how people are able to experience themselves as singular beings over time, the theory of identity formation I have described is no more or less a process of social construction than those of Pannenberg and McFadyen and does not stand in opposition to their metaphysical theological claims, even if it does

7 Pannenberg 1985, p.240.

8 Ibid., p.241

9 Pannenberg writes, 'Subjective identity formation in each case is not something arbitrary, since it ought to correspond to the true meaning of the individual's life' (Pannenberg 1985, 279).

not explicitly support them. It presents a solution to the problems I identified with their psychological theories and deserves to be a part of the ongoing conversation between theological anthropology and the human sciences. Indeed, without the concept of narrative identity, psychological ideas of self-multiplicity will continue to be unacceptable to much of theological anthropology, and the radical changes that postmodernity has wrought upon identity will remain unaccounted for. Consequently, interdisciplinary conversation will be severely compromised.

Although the capacity for explicitly psychological notions of narrative identity to supply new vigour to theology's dialogue with the human sciences is largely an unrealised potential, the possibilities of other narrative approaches to identity are already being explored in a number of theological contexts. One of the undoubted virtues of the narrative approach is its unique ability to connect disparate areas of the dialogue as a whole. Not only does the concept of the personal narrative relate diverse areas of psychology to one another, it also grounds psychological processes in much broader sociocultural processes through its acknowledgement that the rules by which individuals narrate their own autobiographies are the products of infinitely complicated sociohistorically constructed webs of meaning.

The idea that identity is grounded in narrative traditions is tremendously important for our understanding of the transformation of the individual in the modern world, but it is itself not a new idea. Before the current explosion of popularity in narrative theory, it flourished sporadically in the twentieth century in the works of the philosophers Arthur Danto, Robin G. Collingwood and Alasdair MacIntyre, amongst others.¹⁰ It is this understanding of narrative that White, Thiselton, Grenz and particularly Hauerwas have all engaged with explicitly in their descriptions of personal identity and the plight of the individual in the unstable postmodern world. It is also central to their accounts of how we might all restabilise ourselves. It is in specifically Christian communities, they each argue, that people might acquire the narrative resources through which unified identity might be re-established.¹¹ Thus, White sees enormous value in his evangelism.¹²

10 Collingwood 1946; Danto 1965. As Livingston explains in great depth, Hume can be read as if explicating the narrative construction of the 'forms of common life' were amongst his primary ambitions (Livingston 1984).

11 Pannenberg himself believes something similar to be necessary, though he does not explicitly appeal to the concept of narrative resources in describing the restabilising of identity in a secularised world (See Pannenberg 1985, especially pp.473–84. Also see Pannenberg 1989, pp.41–58). McFadyen too, in his understanding of how the social rules of communication are formed, seems to appeal to something like this concept of narrative traditions, though he does not ground it specifically in these terms. Arguably, however, his notion of the 'ossification' of interpersonal communication into social structures is simply too individualistic to do justice to narrative concepts of traditions as they are employed by thinkers such as MacIntyre or Taylor. Here, there is a much greater separation between the concept of tradition and the individuals that participate in them – the meanings of traditions are the products of complex societies not just interpersonal communication.

12 White 1997, p.91.

Indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that the members of a community who remain united in tradition, belief and culture will have a better chance of resisting even greater instability as postmodernity continues to transform the rules of personal story-telling. But even the establishment of such a safe haven for the contemporary identity will not entirely exorcise the spectre of self-fragmentation. After all, neither acknowledging the social basis of personhood nor restoring a stable (ecclesial) community will 'heal' the multiplicity that modern psychology describes.

Although it is not a central concern of this particular study, the concept of narrative identity also has significant implications for a theologically sensitive psychology of religion. There are many issues in this field, including the study of fundamentalism, religious experience and conversion that could be enriched greatly by considering the way that narratives weave a plurality of self-experiences and representations together over time. From this perspective, the conversion experience, to pick a single example, need not be understood simply as the wholesale replacement of an old with a new personality or identity. It might instead be seen as a complex interaction of old and new attitudes, experiential dispositions, and modes of communication in the construction of a life-story that contrasts 'new' and 'old' ways of looking at oneself and the world. Such complexity is very difficult to accommodate within a unitary understanding of self. William James himself famously suggested that conversion represents 'the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.'¹³ A narrative interpretation of this unification may even be compatible with James's own psychology, though he clearly does not use the term 'narrative identity' as we understand it today.¹⁴

I would like finally to suggest one other possible benefit of a comprehensive dialogue between theological anthropology and narrative psychology. It is clear that many modern theologians assume that a sense of existential angst accompanies the sense of self-fragmentation as a result of the conflict it inspires with prior beliefs in the enduring unity of personhood. The typical theological solution has been to redouble the search for a secure foundation for personal continuity, and the seemingly obvious alternative, that we embrace our self-multiplicity, has largely been ignored. However, if self-multiplicity can co-exist in harmony with personal continuity, then multiplicity itself no longer carries such an existential threat. Perhaps, then, as Gergen would surely suggest, the personal conflict that theologians have sought to resolve can be alleviated, not by seeking to reaffirm a strong sense of self-unity, but by surrendering it, and accepting that

13 James 1902, p.189.

14 See Barresi 2002. Barresi suggests that James's understanding of the 'me' is entirely compatible with the narrative concept of self and identity that I have outlined here.

the continuity of personhood is not coterminous with the singularity of the self.¹⁵ The potential benefits of theology's dialogue with narrative psychology, then, are not just theoretical, they may also be profoundly practical, and they should not be dismissed lightly.

Reviewing and Revising Theology's Dialogue with the Human Sciences

It is ironic that in its concern for the unity of the self, and their apparent disdain for the individualism of modernity, much of theological anthropology continues to venerate a very modern ideal of personhood. Schrag observes that:

In the traditions both of the ancients and the moderns unity has fraternized with identity, and in concert unity and identity have waged war against plurality and difference. The quest for unity, as at once a metaphysical and epistemological principle, was driven by a nostalgia for a primordial and unblemished *archē*, an untrammelled beginning, and an appetite for a fixed and universal telos.¹⁶

In rejecting notions of self-plurality, theological anthropology is clinging to restrictive ideas about personhood that are very definitely outmoded in recent human scientific theorising, if not yet totally redundant. The greatest value of the interdisciplinary conversation with which I have been concerned in this book, lies in its potential to correct this predicament.

I have tried to explain why theological anthropology ought not to feel threatened by the concept of self-multiplicity, but implicit in much of what I have written is that contemporary theological anthropology needs to take the idea of the plural self seriously. Contemporary human scientific conceptions of self-multiplicity are the product of, and a response to, many centuries of deliberation over the idea of self-unity. They are, in part, a solution to the problem that was reintroduced to modernity by the acknowledgement that the self is largely shaped by its experiences of the extrapersonal world. Inasmuch as this principle matters to Christian theologians, and it clearly matters a great deal, the plurality of self should matter too.

The continued neglect of these ideas will lead theological anthropology into theoretical isolation to the same extent as would the refusal to engage with evolutionary theory or other natural scientific theories. Evaluating prominent themes in the contemporary human sciences, even incorporating them into itself, would not be a novel sort of enterprise for theological anthropology, which remains,

15 Gergen presents a fascinating counter-study to Vernon White's *Paying Attention to People*, in that he acknowledges the creation of the autonomous 'I' to be the source of the stress caused by multiphrenia, but advocates the abandonment of individuality rather than attempting to secure the particular self (Gergen 1991).

16 Schrag 1997, p.129.

as it always has been, a composite discipline. Describing the various influences upon the concept of person in the Christian tradition, David Kelsey observes:

In attempting to address anthropological questions Christian thinkers have always borrowed what they took to be the best anthropological wisdom of their host non-Christian cultures. And in borrowing the wisdom, they borrowed conceptual schemes. To be sure, Christian thinkers were guided by a relatively small set of biblical tropes, chief among them that human beings are created 'after the image of God'. But the material content of Christian explanation of what those tropes mean has largely been borrowed from other sources.¹⁷

This entwining of itself with other disciplines has not compromised theological anthropology's capacity to address the human condition, but if it is to maintain its relevance for current and future generations, it must not shrink from the challenge of rejuvenating itself by seeking meaningful dialogue. As Philip Clayton suggests, this is another lesson worth learning from Pannenberg himself.¹⁸

This is not to say that theologians should dispense with all talk of self-unity (not even the human sciences themselves are agreed that this is necessary); there are ways of speaking about self-unity from the perspective of the committed Christian that are theologically indispensable, and which the human sciences will always be unable to capture. This is brought into sharp relief in Pannenberg's own work, in which the concept of the true self and, derivatively, the concept of the person are understood through their participation in the infinity of God. The idea of self-unity will continue to have a place in theological discussion, even if Gergen has correctly anticipated the imminent realisation of the 'postmodern consciousness'. It is, after all, part of Christian theological anthropology's distinctive character to consider human beings in their transcendent dimensions as well as those that are empirically observable. As Maquarrie states so clearly:

Psychology, as an empirical science, describes the human condition as it is ... theological anthropologies, however, criticize the actual human condition. In order to do so, they must have accepted, either implicitly or explicitly, some norms or criteria of what it means to be a human person ... They are concerned not simply with describing human nature as something given, but with the realization of human nature as an emerging reality.¹⁹

The human sciences might propose a number of secular equivalents of transcendent reality in which to ground human personhood. The candidates include certain sociological concepts of community, or even the 'worlds of meaning', which structure human action and belief in works of social anthropology, but these are of a different order of concept to the God of Christian theology.

17 Kelsey 2006, p.141.

18 Clayton 2003, p.240.

19 Maquarrie 1982, p.3.

There has, of course, already been some theological engagement with concepts of the disunified self. Discourses of self-fragmentation, for example, are conspicuous in the context of theology's continuing obsession with reiterating the social basis of personhood. Here, self-fragmentation is most frequently identified with some form of self-alienation, and proposed 'cures' for this condition are often tied to the wider dissemination of relational theories of self. Although Linda Woodhead deliberately caricatures Christian theology's reaction to the contemporary condition of humanity, she accurately portrays the consensus amongst many theological anthropologists when she states 'it is the task of the Christian to reassert belief in a self given by God and a God who gives himself to the self. By such a means, Christianity can reassert belief in love and relationality, and so "... dissolve the acids of suspicion and deception".'²⁰

Christian theology will meet with little resistance to its claim that people are essentially social beings; the secular human sciences renounced the idea that the person is an autonomous self-creating entity long ago. That does not diminish the importance of this idea or the undoubted success with which it been treated in an interdisciplinary context. Certainly, the most significant achievement of recent attempts to bring theology into conversation with psychology has been the reinvigoration of traditional theological notions of relationality, and the reinterpretation of psychological theories of self and identity in accordance with the doctrine of *imago Dei*. The vast majority of these works endorse the idea that personhood and personal identity must be conceived partly in processual terms as continuous projects. In this, theological anthropology has successfully bridged a gap between itself and human scientific theories of personhood. It has done so without sacrificing the principle that each individual has a responsibility towards God and other people, and, therefore, without abdicating its own distinctive identity or its independence from the secular human sciences.²¹

Regrettably, the sheer volume of interest in the relationality of personhood, much of which is expressed in the form of abstract philosophical critiques of modernity's individualism, has arguably occluded other approaches to the self, and restricted modern theology's understanding of precisely what self-fragmentation might entail.²² It is clear that the postmodern problematisation of self covers more ground than modernist concepts of self-alienation. Existential angst in the postmodern individual is not simply a consequence of failing to realise the relational basis of the self (regardless of whether or not that failure leads to feelings of inauthenticity) or the separation of the private from the social self. There is more to understanding self-fragmentation than the idea that a pluralisation of social roles makes their integration into a unitary self more difficult. The very

20 Woodhead 1999, p.69.

21 Indeed, as Schwöbel and White observe, the ontological grounding of personal identity in transcendent deity stands out among Christian theology's unique contributions to the concept of personhood (Schwöbel 1991b; White 1997).

22 As in, for example, White 1997; Grenz 2001.

idea of a core authentic self is being quickly eroded in postmodern thought. The experience of self-fragmentation is now seen as the product of a vast number of competing claims on the self, and the concomitant experience of a plurality of selves, each of which constantly struggles for expression. This does not necessarily signify a complete break with modernity, but at the very least it suggests a radical complexification of the self and the process of identity formation.²³

Abstract philosophical critiques of self-alienation or postmodernism's dissolution of the subject, are representative of just one kind of approach to the concept of self-multiplicity. But the current threats to the unity of the self are not just philosophical; they are also psychological and sociocultural. They are revealed as much through observations of a global technologised society and contemporary cultural developments as they are through theoretical discourse. For theological anthropology to rejuvenate itself successfully in relation to a broader range of contemporary problems, it must address the distinctive predicament of people living in the postmodern period, in which all aspects of life, including the social sources of personal identity have been transformed.²⁴ What is required, then, are theories of self that are able to account for such profound social and individual changes. This means engaging with the problem of self-multiplicity both as a theoretical possibility and an object of empirical study, and avoiding the identification of concepts of the singular continuous person with *a priori* notions of self-unity. A deeper and subtler engagement with the human sciences is essential.

I do not mean to deny or even downplay the significance of philosophical discourses of the self's disunity. Indeed, much of the argument in this book has necessarily been philosophical. But in the attempt to bring theology and the human sciences into dialogue we must be constantly aware that the human sciences are not reducible to philosophy, even if they are frequently guided by it. The tension between them was an explicit theme of Chapter 1, where I criticised White for offering a philosophical solution to a social and psychological problem, and of Chapter 2, where I distinguished between postmodernism's annihilation of the subject and its destabilisation and pluralisation under the conditions of postmodernity, but it was also in the background of subsequent chapters. It was evident in the dialogue between Strawson and Wilkes regarding the possibility of synchronic experiential multiplicity. The former denies it is possible on the strength of epistemological arguments, whereas the latter insists it is a clinical reality and deserves to be taken seriously on that basis if no other. It was also apparent in Pannenberg's averred ambition to address the theological meaning of empirical

23 As Bauman notes, there are significant continuities between modern and postmodern culture: 'I do not suggest that what we face today is a "cultural crisis". Crisis – the perpetual transgression and forgetting of the forms already created and experimentation with forms new and untried – is the natural condition of all human culture' (Bauman 2001, p.250).

24 This clearly echoes Davis's call for the fragmentation of self to be studied sociologically in its concrete context in postmodernity, not just through postmodern discourse (Davis 2000a).

findings in secular science, and the abstract philosophical level upon which he works most of the time (for which he has attracted substantial criticism). It can also be seen between narrative theories of identity that make certain metaphysical claims, such as Rom Harré's, and the description of self-narratisation in the work of people like Dan McAdams and John Rowan, who are attempting to describe purely psychological processes.

Throughout this study I have advocated an approach to understanding personhood that preserves the tension between philosophical discourse and more concrete analyses in the human sciences. Clearly, there are some philosophical questions about the self and identity that the human sciences are not equipped to answer, just as there are some theological questions that they are not equipped to answer. This is why Olson's plea for theoretical pluralism to be embraced in approaching the problem of the self is so important – specific questions must be addressed in the terms that are appropriate to them. The philosophical question of whether selves are nothing but the stories we tell about ourselves, for example, is very different to the question of how the self-experiences of a multiplicity of sub-personalities can be woven together into a coherent and continuous personal narrative. There is no answer to the latter question that could satisfy the former, though both may agree about what actually constitutes a personal narrative.

The various human sciences each have a unique voice, and seeking to transcend this multiplicity by treating these issues as purely philosophical problems, which can be solved by abstract reasoning alone, can only stifle our understanding of personhood. But the prospects for the conversation between theology and the human sciences do not just depend upon letting the participants speak freely; they also depend upon each listening very closely to precisely what the other is saying. McFadyen makes a similar point with respect to the dialogical communication between individual persons, but it applies no less accurately to interdisciplinary dialogue.²⁵ As far as self-multiplicity and self-unity are concerned, this involves attending to the very different things that could possibly be implied by these terms in different contexts.

It would not be fair to either Pannenberg or McFadyen to accuse them of seeking to reduce the psychological study of self-multiplicity and self-unity to abstract philosophical discourse. This is certainly not their intention. However, it is their theological commitments to the relationality and continuity of personhood, I have argued, that leads them to presuppose the structural-unity of the self in their psychological accounts of identity formation. These accounts rarely stray beyond the abstract philosophical level and do not sufficiently consider the many different ways to understand self-multiplicity and self-unity that emerge from a variety of sociological, psychological and other human scientific accounts of the self.

25 McFadyen writes, 'The danger that integrity and identity might be sacrificed attends any dialogue, but dialogue itself actually depends upon maintaining the distinct identities of the partners. So everything depends upon the interaction being structured in such a way that it remains a real dialogue' (McFadyen 1990a, p.10).

Both appeal to notions of self-unity that satisfy their respective goals, but which have other indirect and undesirable implications. The end result in each case is a psychological account of self and identity that clearly conflicts with a number of key ideas in contemporary secular psychology and sociology. The problem here, then, is not with a philosophical psychological approach to the self per se, but rather the way that very specific abstract philosophical approaches, which nevertheless make very broad claims about what the self really is, are allowed to drown out the other voices of the human sciences. These other voices need to be heard if the practical ambitions of their projects are to be realised. Unfortunately, this sort of approach is characteristic of the dialogue between contemporary Christian theological anthropology and the secular sciences in general, and goes some way to explaining the almost universally negative attitude towards concepts of self-multiplicity in this context.

The neglect of the plurality of possible approaches to understanding personhood is at the root of so many problems in this field. Pannenberg's choice of psychological theories and concepts, for example, is extremely selective, tending to fit his theological agenda rather than being an even-handed exposition of secular theories of personhood. This apparently conflicts with his own ideals for his anthropological project of engaging wholeheartedly with secular and theological thought to achieve a rounded and defensible theological understanding of humanity and society. No single person could possibly summarise the entire literature on the self, but, given Pannenberg's concern for defending the faith on the 'terrain of anthropology', his selectivity seems to point more to a conscious instrumentalist appropriation of psychology than simple naivety.²⁶ Similar problems pervade McFadyen's thesis. He does not make much detailed recourse to other relevant classic or contemporary positions; nor does he decisively position his work in relation to the enormous volume of extant literature (particularly the sociological literature) on many of the topics with which he is concerned. This detracts slightly from the many valuable insights of his undertaking. As Nicholas Lash notes in a review of McFadyen's *The Call to Personhood*, this narrow perspective also does damage theologically: 'inattention to the many very different things which "person" and its cognates have meant when used of human beings, and of God, leads to much awkwardness.'²⁷

Time and again, we are reminded of the importance of theoretical pluralism in a subject as complex as the self. Over-arching theories of self will always fail to do true justice to the multifacetedness of the human person. Yet Pannenberg and McFadyen do not deserve to be singled out for special criticism in this respect, since the tendency to over-generalise about the self is a problem endemic to theological anthropology, and to much of psychology too. As Woodhead notes, the current vogue for triumphalist assertions of a revised Christian anthropology's unique capacity to haul humanity back from the brink, lacks a broader awareness

26 Pannenberg 1985, pp.11–23.

27 Lash and Friedman 1992, p.332.

of different contemporary visions of selfhood.²⁸ Hence, White is joined in his demonisation of the fragmented self by those such as Thiselton, whose development of Christian anthropology might be read as an attack on the whole of postmodernity, and whose concept of the postmodern self is constrained by its exclusively philosophical focus.²⁹ Woodhead herself argues:

What is needed from theologians today is not such broad-brush characterizations and condemnations of modernity or postmodernity ... To have any real bite, theology should engage seriously with the complexity of the modern world and the diverse modern construals of selfhood ... It should do so with the confidence that it can continue to influence and play a part in the unfolding of modernity or even postmodernity.³⁰

My conclusions here fully support the instigation of just such an agenda. The failure to articulate significant differences between particular manifestations of particular terms and ideas will discredit any dialogue both in the eyes of theology and the human sciences. Genuine dialogue is neither the complete assimilation nor the annihilation of different theories. It must be founded upon the acceptance that different disciplines may have both disparate and common interests, and can continue to influence and elucidate one another. Sociological, psychological and theological concepts of self-multiplicity and unity, for example, will undoubtedly continue to differ greatly from one another as a result of differences between the fundamental concerns of these disciplines. This is all part and parcel of maintaining their distinctive identities. Schwöbel, for example, in discussing Christian theological conceptions of persons, argues:

There is no one clearly defined Christian understanding of personhood which is to be contrasted with clearly defined secular notions ... Christian theology is therefore not only challenged to clarify what is distinctively theological in its accounts of personhood but is also confronted with the task of finding criteria for what is authentically Christian in theological concepts of the person.³¹

A variety of answers to the same essentially philosophical questions about selves and persons is simply a consequence of a pluralistic approach (although, as the field of science and religion has shown so clearly, that need not be an insurmountable barrier to dialogue *per se*). Each of these answers makes a valuable contribution to the sum total of our knowledge about the human self. If theology and the human sciences are to retain their respective independence and integrity, we must acknowledge the important differences that exist between them. There is undoubtedly a great deal of overlap between their anthropological concerns, but

28 Woodhead 1999.

29 Thiselton 1995.

30 Woodhead 1999, pp.69–72.

31 Schwöbel 1991a, p.9.

points of divergence should not be dismissed as uninteresting side-issues. Some of these differences seem based upon little more than misunderstanding and can, I believe, be resolved, but we should not let the persistence of a multiplicity of perspectives cause us undue concern.

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