

Chapter 10
On the Psychosocial Possibility of Plural Personhood
[draft for PPRG-UNC-May 2015]

****Reading options****

- ◆ A “[Guide to Terms](#)” has been included—dip into it as necessary!
- ◆ The most **minimal option** would be to just read the [Background](#) and [Abstract](#).
- ◆ To get a **complete outline** of the chapter, read the Background and Abstract plus the [Introduction](#) (Section 1).
- ◆ If you read the Background, Abstract, Introduction, plus [Section 3](#) and [Section 4](#), you’ll get an **in-depth picture** of the chapter. (Psychologists may be most interested in these sections.)
- ◆ The most **ambitious option** is of course to read the whole thing—all of the above, plus [Section 2](#), [Section 5](#) and [Section 6](#)!

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Background

The largest fiber tract in the human brain is the corpus callosum, which connects the two cerebral hemispheres. Surgeries severing this structure were performed in the mid-20th Century, as a treatment for severe epilepsy. The philosophical significance of the “split-brain” cases has always concerned not the surgeries themselves nor the medical condition for which they were treatment, but rather their long-term psychobehavioral consequences: after they are surgically separated from each other at the cortical level, the two hemispheres begin to operate independently of each other—not totally, but to an unusual degree—in the realm of perception, cognition, and the control of action. This independence is only made clear under experimental conditions that carefully direct perceptual information to only a single hemisphere at a time (to the extent possible) and that carefully control the behavior of the “split-brain subject.”

Many people have had what I call the *duality intuition*: the intuition that there are two minds or thinkers within a split-brain subject, a right hemisphere thinker and a left hemisphere thinker. Nearly everyone also has what I call the *unity intuition*: the intuition that a

split-brain subject is a single person—that is, a single self-conscious, reasons-giving, morally responsible agent. These two intuitions are widely viewed as being in tension with each other. Indeed many philosophers have written on the split-brain phenomenon and almost none of them have tried to reconcile the two intuitions. Instead, philosophers have overwhelmingly rejected one intuition or the other: if the hemispheres are associated with distinct minds, then they belong to distinct persons; if a split-brain subject is one person, then she must have one mind.

The Other Side: Self-consciousness and “Split” Brains defends the position that a split-brain subject is one person with two minds. The key to reconciling the unity intuition and the duality intuition lies in facts about a split-brain subject’s self-consciousness. There are two thinkers within a split-brain subject, “Righty” and “Lefty” (Chapters 3 and 4). Righty and Lefty each have their own stream of consciousness (Chapter 5) and are independent intentional agents (Chapter 6), though of course they share a body, which unifies their behavior (Chapter 7). Righty and Lefty are also distinct thinkers of “I-thoughts” (thoughts whose contents we would express in English using the word “I”, e.g., “I’m hungry,” “I don’t know what he’s talking about”). Neither Righty nor Lefty recognizes the other’s existence, however (Chapter 8). Instead, each assumes that the split-brain subject, S, is one person, and each appears to think, “*I am* that person.” Thus there is a *lack of mutual recognition* between Righty and Lefty. Furthermore, neither can distinguish itself from the other on ordinary first-personal grounds: whenever either of them does something, *both* of them think, “I did that.” Thus Righty and Lefty lack the capacity for *self-distinction*, with respect to each other.

In the chapter before this one, Chapter 9, I argue that, because Righty and Lefty do not distinguish themselves from each other, they are not distinct as persons, but are mere parts of one person. I do this by using what I call a social view of the importance of self-consciousness to personhood. The social view of self-consciousness (which is more prominent among developmental psychologists than among philosophers) emphasizes a self-conscious agent’s capacity to grasp herself as an object of other self-conscious agents’ thoughts. According to the social view, self-conscious agents, such as ourselves, are subject to each other’s influence in special and intimate ways that other social but non-self-conscious animals are not. We care what other people *think* about us, and other people care what we think about them. This special kind of mutual influence is essential to the social practices that define personhood. Because Righty and Lefty do not recognize each other as distinct I-thinkers and lack the capacity for self-distinction, they cannot act as distinct participants in these practices.

In the past, when I have spoken on these matters, almost everyone has the same questions. Do Righty and Lefty genuinely lack the *capacity* for self-distinction and mutual recognition, or do they just fail to exercise that capacity at present? Even if they lack the capacity for mutual recognition and self-distinction at present, is there any reason to think they couldn’t develop those capacities? Would they then be distinct persons? This chapter engages with those questions.

Abstract

I have argued that there are, within a split-brain subject, two distinct thinkers of I-thoughts, Righty and Lefty. These I-thinkers do not recognize each other as such and indeed cannot distinguish themselves from each other on ordinary first-personal grounds; that is, they lack the capacity for *self-distinction*. Righty and Lefty are therefore not distinct as persons, but are instead thinking parts of one person: the split-brain subject as a whole.

This chapter concerns the ultimate possibility of *plural personhood* in the split-brain subject. In order to become distinct as persons, Righty and Lefty would need to learn to distinguish themselves from each other as I-thinkers (*mutual recognition*). Their living the lives of distinct persons would further require that second parties learn to recognize and relate to them as such (*social recognition*). Although such *plural recognition* would be difficult to achieve, it may not be impossible.

The possibility of plural personhood in the split-brain subject raises a troubling question, however: are second parties morally obligated to interact with a split-brain subject in ways that encourage Righty and Lefty to develop into distinct persons? The only defensible negative answer to this question requires accepting the intrinsic moral significance of the individual human animal.

Guide to Terms

Because this chapter is at the end of the book, it uses a lot of terminology that was introduced and defined earlier. These are (I think!) all the ones you might need.

Split-brain subject: a human being (or human animal) who has undergone “split-brain” surgery

S = the split-brain subject (a whole human being)

Righty: the entire split-brain subject *minus* her left hemisphere

Lefty: the entire split-brain subject *minus* her right hemisphere

Thinker: an entity with a mind, i.e., a thing that thinks, perceives, feels, acts, intends, decides, wonders, wants, etc.

I-thinker: a thinker who can think I-thoughts. The philosophical literature on personhood standardly equates self-consciousness with the capacity to think I-thoughts.

I-thought: a thought in whose content figures the mental or conceptual analogue of the English word “I”. (So thoughts whose contents we would express using the English word “I”, e.g. “I’m bored,” “I can’t even believe what you’re saying”, etc.)

Person: a self-conscious agent who participates in distinctively interpersonal practices. (Human infants are not persons; possibly some non-human beings (e.g. angels, intelligent space aliens) are persons; neurotypical human adults are persons.)

Distinctively interpersonal practices: I mean here to refer to ways we have of interacting with other *persons* in particular. To take an example, we have practices of asking people to account for things they’ve done wrong: we ask them to explain themselves;

they explain why they did what they did, potentially apologize; we excuse them or blame but forgive them or blame and punish them; etc. You don't do any of these things with e.g. your dog. You do take care of your dog, so although persons take care of each other, care-taking isn't a *distinctively* interpersonal practice.

second parties and **third parties**—a lot of this chapter concerns how members of certain populations understand themselves, but also how other people understand them. I divide the relevant “other people” into “second parties,” “close second parties,” and “third parties.”

Second parties are people who actually interact with members of the population in question (people who would address those members in the second person, using “you”). Some of these second parties are professional psychologists who work with the population. *Close second parties* are e.g. family members and close friends of the subjects in question, people who know them well and interact with them, outside of clinical or experimental contexts, for long periods of time.

Third parties are people who learn about members of the population in question second-hand. I've never met a split-brain subject, for instance, so I'm a “third party” to split-brain subjects.

plural personhood: a condition in which one body (I am focusing on human animals) constitutes or contains multiple persons. (I believe that at present I don't use the language totally consistently here—I suspect that sometimes I say that a human being in this condition is a plural person; other times I say that *one* of the persons she constitutes or contains is a plural person. I will fix this later.)

plural recognition: recognizing and relating to (some) human beings as constituting or containing plural persons.

mutual recognition: when two beings recognize and relate to each other as distinct persons. So there is mutual recognition between you and your sister, but not you and your dog.

social recognition: in this context, a human being obtains “social recognition” when other persons recognize and relate to her as if she constituted or contained plural persons.

weak identification: the only way I've figured out how to put this point is very crude, so I apologize, but here's the idea: to weakly identify with a body (or an animal) is to be inclined to self-attribute any actions or responses (or I guess mental states) of that body, of which you are aware. This leaves open that you may not strongly identify with many of those responses—you might say, “I didn't mean to do that,” for instance.

identify and **individuate** – these are related but distinct psychological activities or events. When I *identify* a vine, I recognize or conceptualize it *as* a vine (rather than as a tree branch, for instance). When I *individuate* a vine, I distinguish it from other things, including other things of the same kind (other vines). Individuating objects is often very easy (you don't look at a phone and wonder how many phones it is) but many biological objects (some animals, some plants) can be hard to individuate. One

example that comes up in this chapter is: animals (human or non-human) with craniofacial duplication—two heads and faces, one body. In such a case is there one individual with two heads? Or two individuals with one body?

1 Introduction

Righty and Lefty do not interact with each other via distinctively interpersonal practices, nor do other parties interact with them independently in the social realm. The central reason for this is that Righty and Lefty do not appear to be able to recognize each other as distinct self-conscious agents: their physical and functional overlap—including their overlap with respect to ordinarily proprietary perceptual modalities and privileged self-control—is too great. R and L differ most starkly with respect to their minds and, of course, their hemispheric embodiment. But we do not perceive other thinkers' minds, and we do not either perceive or have direct agential self-control over our nervous systems.

It is hard to say whether their incapacity for self-distinction is final and absolute, however. Close second parties have never interacted independently with R and L in the social realm, and even neurotypical human infants need social interaction to develop into persons. Perhaps R and L could learn to differentiate themselves if they were actively encouraged to do so. It is, at a minimum, hard to show decisively that they could not. And even the slimmest possibility of mutual recognition raises an unsettling practical and normative question: is there, or was there, an *unmet* obligation to interact with Righty and Lefty so as to encourage their development into distinct self-conscious agents and persons?

Surprisingly, this question turns out to be one about *individualism*. Individualism is a principle or ideology according to which the proper bearers of rights and responsibilities, and the fundamental objects of moral concern, are individual human beings. The concept has its home in political philosophy, where it is contrasted with *collectivism*. Collectivism is a principle or ideology according to which the proper bearers of rights and responsibilities are not (always) individual human beings, but, rather, larger social entities or “collectives” that multiple individual human beings constitute or contribute to. One understanding of collectivism, then, is as the commitment to the personhood of (some) *groups*. Accordingly, when individualism is touched upon or dealt with in the philosophy of mind or action theory, it is, generally, in the context of discussions about *individual* versus *group* agency, rights, and identity.

In the split-brain case, the relevant alternative to individualism isn't collectivism, but rather *pluralindividualism*. According to pluralindividualism, mere parts or aspects of individual human beings can also bear rights and responsibilities. “Parts or aspects” will be construed broadly, here, to refer not just to *physical* parts of human beings but to e.g. psychologically individuated entities, such as mere collections of traits or memories, for instance.

Pluralindividualism might seem too silly an ideology to consider for even a moment, much less a whole chapter. So far as I know Puccetti is the only philosopher to have clearly argued for plural personhood in split-brain subjects, and, indeed, in neurotypical subjects as well. He often encountered what we might call an *objection from social absurdity*. Riggerink, for

instance, imagined a man, a “modern day Raskolnikov” (1980: 444), who kills two women in cold blood, not out of passion or impulse but “... but because he wants to demonstrate his intellectual superiority” (Rigterink 1980: 443). (Rigterink does not say whether the subject is a split-brain or a neurotypical subject, but that doesn’t matter here.) Since he ends up confessing to the murder during his trial, all fair-minded people are assume that justice will at least be served.

“But wait, what is this! The defense lawyer has risen and is announcing to the court that an innocent person is being sent away to suffer. How can this be? The evidence is overwhelming; the man has confessed.

“Ah yes’ says the defense lawyer, ‘it is true that the major hemisphere is guilty of this hideous crime. But we have to consider the rights of the other prisoner standing in docket: the poor, innocent, victimized minor hemisphere. This was not a crime of emotion in which the brain stem poisoned both hemispheres so that they would participate as partners in crime. The crime was from the very beginning a calculated, analytic, intellectual affair. Obviously it was committed by what scientists call the major or dominant hemisphere.

“Let me remind the court that the guiding principle of justice in a trial system has always been ‘Better to let a guilty party go than punish an innocent person’. We can not send Raskolnikov to Siberia. Admittedly his major hemisphere deserves a punishment ten times, nay a hundred times, worse. But still, the fact of the matter is that his minor hemisphere is innocent and deserves to suffer nor [sic?] more.” (Rigterink, 1981: 444)

Rigterink must take this legal defense to be absurd on its face, since he feel it necessary to *argue* that it should be rejected (e.g. lest it set a pernicious legal precedent). And I admit that the defense sounds absurd to me, too!

The problem with arguments from social absurdity is that they tend to have short shelf lives. In the early 1990’s, biologist and feminist theorist Anne Fausto-Sterling published an op-ed in the *New York Times* suggesting a five-sex rather than a two-sex distinction within our social, legal, and medical systems: male; female; herms (true hermaphrodites); merms (male pseudo-hermaphrodites); and fermes (female pseudo-hermaphrodites). This specific proposal was offered tongue-in-cheek; a five-sex system would still lead to many of the same social consequences that Fausto-Sterling against in *Sexing the Body*; her real aim was to question both the biological and the social legitimacy of categorizing people by biological sex. In response, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights took out an

advertisement in the same paper, which read, in part, “It is maddening to listen to discussions of ‘five genders’ when every sane person knows there are but two sexes” (for further responses, see McQueen, 2008).

The “beliefs” of a formal and strictly hierarchical body like the Catholic Church change evolve much more slowly than do those of modern Western society as a whole, however. America (and other Western societies) have witnessed a revolution (still ongoing), even in the past ten years, in our understanding of the connection between biological sex, socialization, the performance of gender, and individual self-determination. Gay marriage and transgenderism are wholly uncontroversial among significant swaths of the population. Needless to say there are vital disanalogies between transgenderism and plural personhood, and plural personhood may continue to strike people as absurd in a way that transgenderism increasingly does not. My point is just that its *sounding* absurd to us, at present, doesn’t in itself show that it always will.

This chapter concerns both the possibility of plural personhood in the split-brain subject. Section 2 reiterates and elaborates upon some of the challenges to mutual recognition between Righty and Lefty. Still, since Righty and Lefty have never been *encouraged*, by psychologists or by close second parties, to recognize each other as distinct I-thinkers, it is hard to say with certainty what would happen if they *were*. I concede therefore that it isn’t possible to show that Righty’s and Lefty’s incapacity to distinguish self from other is final or absolute.

Section 3 treats a basic objection to the possibility of plural personhood just in general. According to this objection, to be distinct, qua person, requires the potential to act autonomously from all other persons, and such autonomy requires having a distinct body. Conjoined twins don’t have this kind of autonomy, however, and while such lives do present clear challenges to the standard ways we think about persons in the abstract, second parties very much recognize and relate to conjoined twins as distinct individuals and persons.

Section 4 concerns whether even the latter kind of autonomy would be possible for Righty and Lefty. This would require what I call *social recognition*: that second parties came to recognize and distinguish and relate to Righty and Lefty as distinct persons. Again there are a number of obstacles to such social recognition. Cases of dissociative identity disorder, and related cases, nonetheless suggest that social recognition isn’t strictly impossible. These are cases in which a human being develops what I call a plural self*-conception: a belief that her body constitutes or contains multiple persons. Drawing from such cases of multiple identities, I suggest a few ways in which second parties might begin to relate to or interact with a split-brain subject so as to promote the development of Righty’s and Lefty’s capacity for self-distinction.

That discussion raises a potentially troubling question, however. Is there—or, since most split-brain subjects are no longer living, *was* there—an *unmet* obligation to relate to split-brain subjects in ways that would have encouraged Righty and Lefty to distinguish themselves from each other as I-thinkers, and thus to become distinct qua persons? After all,

we think that it is good, perhaps even required, for us to relate to infants in ways that promote their development into full persons.

Section 5 will argue against the existence of such an obligation in the split-brain case. This argument will appeal to the intrinsic moral significance of the individual human being or animal. What makes it good to relate to human infants in ways that encourages their development into persons cannot be understood in the standard philosophical terms for thinking about personhood. The obligations we have to human infants are best understood as obligations to them *qua* human infants, not *qua* potential persons. Because Righty and Lefty are mere parts of one human being, there is no obligation to relate to them in ways that promote their development into persons—or at least, our obligations to prototypical potential persons, i.e. human infants, don't show that there is. On the other hand, if Righty and Lefty came, independently, to recognize and relate to each other as plural persons, then second parties would be obligated to try to relate to them as such as well.

Section 6 notes however that this obligation probably exists in the neurotypical case as well: that is, if a heretofore neurotypical human being developed a plural self*-conception, then she presumably has the right to live, including amongst and in relationship with others, *as* plural persons. One trend that makes plural personhood in (heretofore) neurotypical subjects sound at all plausible is *intra-individual pluralism*: a condition of the individual human being in which external conflict between diverse attitudes and values are internalized, and in which these conflicting perspectives are juxtaposed, within the individual, to guide situationally specific behavior. At the same time, increasing intra-individual pluralism also makes plural personhood less necessary.

2 Mutual recognition and self-distinction

<Note: *non-philosophers might be less interested in this section...*>

The only truly clear-cut instances of persons are neurotypical adult human beings, and we characteristically identify and individuate persons by identifying and individuating human animals. PERSON and HUMAN ANIMAL are distinct concepts, however, delineating non-co-extensive categories. More controversial is whether *human* persons are nonetheless animals, as animalists claim, or whether they bear some other intimate relation to human animals. Constitutionalism about persons, for example, holds that each neurotypical adult human animal *constitutes* but is not identical with a person (**Baker**).

If each human person *is* an animal, then pluralindividualism is metaphysically impossible. In this chapter, however, I'm interested in the *psychosocial* possibility of pluralindividualism: could we come to genuinely *relate to* a single human being *as if* she were multiple persons? An animalist could in principle accept that *this* was possible, while maintaining that such a human being was in fact just one person. In such a case our social practices concerning persons would simply not be a good guide to the metaphysics of personhood (see discussion in Shoemaker, D. 2007). Conversely, a constitutionalist about persons could accept the *metaphysical* possibility of plural personhood, while suspecting that

we would never in practice be able to relate to a single human being as if there were multiple persons within her.

For simplicity's sake I will simply assume here that human animals stand in the constitution rather than the identity relation to persons. The psychosocial questions I want to ask and address in this chapter could however be reframed in a way that was compatible with animalism. (Of course it would be part of that reframing that if we *did* relate to some human being as if she constituted multiple persons, we'd be making a metaphysical mistake. Bad metaphysics can ground social practice too, however!)

2.1 *Persons, minds, and bodies*

The most obvious objection to pluralindividualism would be something like the following:

P1: Multiple persons cannot share a single mind

P2: A single human being cannot have more than one mind

A single human being cannot constitute or contain multiple persons

The second premise might be defended on either biological or conceptual grounds. I have already argued against both versions of the premise. At least some split-brain subjects are strong empirical candidates for having two minds apiece, and even better candidates could in principle be produced. (Especially as we learn more about subcortico-cortical connectivity, it would be possible to perform super-split-brain surgeries on human beings—though hopefully this will never be done!) In a super-split-brain subject, direct interaction between Righty's and Lefty's mental states (i.e. interaction not involving the mediation of sensation, perception, responses, and behavior) would be exceedingly rare, rarer than that between e.g. Tatiana and Krista Hogan. It is meanwhile not conceptually necessary for one person to have just one mind, if, as I have argued, the concept of a mind is in part determined by our mind models.

The first premise is on securer grounds. The social-relational account of personhood implies that multiple persons cannot *completely* share a mind. It's arguably possible for multiple persons to have overlapping or partially shared minds, however. On the account of individuating minds first defended in Chapter 3, all this would mean is that the multiple persons in question would have some mental states which interacted with each other's mental states directly, as in e.g. telepathy or, indeed, in the split-brain case, or as in the case of Tatiana and Krista Hogan, whose brains are connected via the thalamic bridge, giving them a kind of direct access to each other's mental states that the rest of us don't have. Presumably partly as a result, the development of self-distinction may have been somewhat more difficult for them, but they have nonetheless developed into two persons.

2.2 *Plural, social, and mutual recognition*

This chapter, in any event, concerns not the biological or conceptual but the *psychosocial* possibility of plural personhood. I focus on the psychosocial possibility of *plural recognition* in particular: recognition of multiple persons within one human being.

Plural recognition has both a first-personal and a second-personal aspect. The first-personal aspect is whether multiple parts or aspects of a single human being could ever to recognize and relate to each other as distinct self-conscious agents. This is the question of *mutual recognition*. The second-personal aspect is whether second parties could ever recognize and relate to mere parts or aspects of a single human being as if they were distinct self-conscious agents. This is the question of *social recognition*.

We have already seen that multiple mindedness does not secure plural recognition, nor even mutual recognition. The last chapter explained some of the obstacles to mutual recognition in the split-brain case. At the time, I said I would assume that, if R and L recognized each other as distinct self-conscious agents (mutual recognition), they would be distinct persons. There, I used a weakly relational account of personhood. On this account, personhood requires the *intrinsic capacity* to participate in distinctively interpersonal practices—though one of the capacities necessary for this is that for self-distinction, a capacity which is in a sense relational: it is a capacity to distinguish oneself from *other* self-conscious agents.

A more strongly relational account of personhood would be one according to which personhood requires the capacity, full stop, to participate in distinctively interpersonal practices. This capacity would be clearly (partly) relational: you cannot participate in distinctively interpersonal practices unless *second parties* also (exist and) recognize you as a person.

The primary objection to any strongly relational account of personhood is that it would seem to raise an obvious moral hazard: if enough people denied or failed to recognize a human being's personhood, that would constitutively make it the case that their doing so was not violating any person's rights. Over the course of this chapter, certain lines of response to this important moral concern will emerge. Still, I will continue to assume an only weakly relational account of personhood: if R and L developed the capacity to distinguish self from other, recognized each other as distinct self-conscious agents, and interacted with each other via distinctively interpersonal practices, R and L would be distinct persons. If second parties failed to recognize them as such, this would be a serious problem, but it would be a problem *for* R and L *as* distinct persons.

2.3 *Unearthing the other*

The first-personal aspect of plural recognition is mutual recognition, which R and L do not ever appear to have attained. In the previous chapter I argued that the basic reason why R and L do not recognize each other as distinct persons (mutual recognition) is that they in fact don't recognize each other at all: neither can distinguish itself from the other. I called this the problem of self-other ambiguity. Thus even if Righty and Lefty each came to intellectually accept that it was one of two self-conscious thinkers within the split-brain subject, neither could easily or immediately know *which one it was* (identity ambiguity), nor which actions were its own (agent ambiguity).

One might think that the primary obstacle to mutual recognition is R's (absolute or at least substantial) inability to speak. But it is not clear that this is right. Certainly when R

does speak, L and R treat its contributions as something S has said (Gazzaniga, 1983; Mark, 1996). Certainly the problem isn't *just* that there is so little evidence of R's psychological existence because R can't speak. L speaks all the time, and yet R does not appear to recognize L as a distinct thinker either (again, consider that in P.S., in whom R can speak, R appears to self*-attribute L's responses as well; Gazzaniga, 1983).

The difficulty of mutual recognition is rooted partly in the fact that we self-attribute actions (and at least some classes of mental state) to ourselves at least partly on the basis of *perception* rather than introspection. Illusions of agency can occur even in neurotypical subjects and even in clearly interpersonal cases (Wegner and Wheatley, 1999), when the subject's perceptual feedback is appropriately manipulated. Righty's and Lefty's don't have to be manipulated in this way: the illusion is guaranteed by their co-embodiment. (Although if, as I have argued, Righty and Lefty are in fact parts of one person, it is misleading to call it an "illusion.") And how often are we aware of *exactly* what we intend to say, prior to saying it? Generally we just say stuff, and if it sounds wrong, we say more stuff to modify it or take it back, and eventually, we just give up. Having so much less influence over what gets said must be frustrating for Righty, at least in those instances (test situations) in which the subject has been asked a plain question and Lefty has plainly given (from Righty's perspective) the wrong answer. This frustration is:

"evidenced in the frowning, wincing, and negative head shaking in test situations where the minor hemisphere, knowing the correct answer but unable to speak, hears the major hemisphere making obvious verbal mistakes. The minor hemisphere seems to express genuine annoyance at the erroneous vocal responses of its better [sic?] half." (Sperry 1968A: 732)

However often it is experienced, Righty's frustration in such instances needn't be different in *kind* from what we all (I think) experience when we speak impulsively or inarticulately. Lefty's frustration in response to (from its perspective) "anarchic" left hand behavior, meanwhile, may be less familiar to neurotypical adults. But it will seem to Lefty like a motor control problem. And split-brain subjects in particular will perhaps be less likely than a neurotypical subject to be taken aback by such experiences; their long histories of severe epilepsy, especially with drop attacks, mean that they are used to being betrayed by their bodies, slipping beyond their own conscious self-control.

On the other hand, it is admittedly hard to decisively *rule out* the possibility that Righty and Lefty could learn to distinguish self from other. Certainly split-brain subjects could be taught ways of behaving that presupposed Righty's and Lefty's distinctness qua thinkers and that would presumably *encourage* mutual recognition. Each such subject could (to take a toy example) be given two little clickers, one to hold in each hand, and via which they could be trained to indicate "YES" "NO" or "NEUTRAL/UNCERTAIN" responses. Then they could be encouraged, when making decisions, to state the relevant question out

loud, slowly, and in a “YES/NO” form, and to answer such questions simultaneously, one hand per clicker. They could also be taught to “be fair” to the left hand after such responses—that is, to only go ahead (for instance) when both hands selected “YES”. It’s worth noting that regularly eliciting Righty’s opinion in this way might well, among other things, counteract Lefty’s dominance, and help Righty develop a greater capacity and tendency to speak.

To be honest I myself am not sure that even long enough engagement with enough such practices *would* yield mutual recognition. Again however I concede that I do not see how to rule it out. Significantly, as long as the possibility of this achievement *has not* been ruled out, one might think that there is an obligation to attempt it. That is, one might think that, if we simply do not *know* whether Righty and Lefty could come to distinguish self from other and thus to be distinct persons, there is some obligation to encourage them to develop this capacity. If there is no such obligation, then, it cannot be because we know that mutual recognition is impossible.

3 Individualism and autonomy

It might be said that plural personhood, in the split-brain case, is impossible for another very different reason however: because persons must enjoy at least a *potential* for autonomous action, and this requires having one’s own body: “You are a unified person at any given time because you must act, and you have only one body with which to act” (Korsgaard 1989: 111). For some philosophers, this (potential) autonomy is necessary even for having one’s own mind (see e.g. Baker 2000: 108).

Notions of autonomy are central to the debate between individualism and collectivism as well. Individualists defend self-sovereignty and value self-reliance; collectivism safeguards group integrity by promoting group responsibility. As noted earlier, however, one way of construing individualism and collectivism is as rejecting or defending (respectively) the existence of group persons. Construed thusly, individualists and collectivists agree that a person has both a right to self-determination and a responsibility for self-care. They disagree about whether persons are (in all cases) individual human beings or (in some cases) groups.

By analogy with individualism and collectivism, pluralindividualism should hold that: 1) multiple parts or aspects of a single human being in some cases have the right to self-determination and 2) these parts or aspects are primarily responsible for themselves. According to what we might call the strong objection from autonomy, the analogy has to fail, for the plainest of physical reasons: no mere part or aspect of me can rely just upon itself; it needs the rest of me to cooperate.

There are two ways to respond to this objection from autonomy. The first is to note that autonomy comes in kinds and degrees. There are after all psychological accounts of persons and personal agency according to which competitive self-reliance characterizes not just the external (social) marketplace of liberal capitalism, but the individual human being’s

“internal marketplace” as well. Ainslie’s “hyperbolic discounting” theory of decision-making and cross-temporal agency for instance is one according to which:

“... people may have a variety of contradictory preferences that become dominant at different points because of their timing. The orderly internal marketplace pictured by conventional utility theory becomes a complicated free-for-all, where to prevail an option not only has to promise more than its competitors, but also act strategically to keep the competitors from turning the tables later on.” (2001: 40)

The best way to understand human action isn’t rational utility theory but *game theory*:

“Often I’ll choose in the opposite direction when I’m [temporally] close and when I’m [temporally] distant, which means I’ll regularly do things at one time and undo them at another. Obviously if what I do in a particular situation regularly gets undone later, I’ll learn to stop doing it in the first place—but not out of agreement with the later self that undoes it, only out of realism. I’ll keep trying to find ways to get what I want from this particular vantage point, things that won’t get undone, and take precautions against a future self that will try to undo them. In this way I’ll be like a group of people rather than a single individual; often these people will be as different as Jekyll and Hyde.” (2001: 40)

A second response to the objection from autonomy might come from the collectivist. Why privilege, in an account of personhood, an individual human person’s theoretical *potential* for autonomy over the *actual* interdependence that characterizes normal human lives? In practice, and even in an individualistic culture, individual human beings normally do have *some* longstanding and committed relationships, characterized by the need to cooperate and coordinate their actions and choices, and not characterized by a feeling of freedom from each other.

These two responses to the strong objection from autonomy converge in the case of conjoined twins, who have some autonomy, without having the capacity to *live their own lives* in the full sense Korsgaard imagines is required for plural personhood.

Within a pair of conjoined twins, compromise and cooperation are physically necessitated, at least if the twins are to be successful agents at all. The kinds of compromise and cooperation that are involved depend upon the kind of conjoinment. Since Brittany and Abigail each control only a single arm, neither girl can open a jar or hold a fork and knife without the other, and since they share a bloodstream, Abigail can’t enjoy a cup of coffee without making her more sensitive sister jittery. And all conjoined twins will have to come to

some agreement about what overall life path to pursue. Ladan Bijani wanted to be a lawyer, and Laleh Bijani wanted to be a journalist; they chose law. Brittany and Abigail initially hoped to at least pursue separate specializations within their chosen major, education, but even the coursework required for two specializations turned out to be prohibitive. And, although they have different teaching licenses and would both need to contribute more or less equally in order for either to teach successfully, they can't handle sixty students between them. "Obviously right away we understand that we are going to get one salary because we're doing the job of one person," Abigail has said (Wallis, 2013).

To non-conjoined people, typical bodies—especially in an individualistic culture—can constitute a *standard* of autonomous personhood against which conjoined twins will be deemed incapable of achieving full personhood. These standards emerge dramatically in the life-or-death case of "Mary" and "Jodie", conjoined twins who were surgically separated in infancy, by medical request and at the courts' permission, against the wishes of their parents. Neither girl was likely to have lived if they had not been separated, but Jodie—who was more neurologically developed—was ruled likely to survive if separation was performed. Mary, on the other hand, had very underdeveloped lungs, and furthermore her heart was estimated to provide only about 10% of the oxygen she needed to survive, the rest being provided by Jodie's.

Of course, referring to their hearts as Jodie's and as Mary's, respectively, obscures the fact that Jodie's heart had some *functional* claim to being Mary's as well. The Court did not reason so, however, and instead reasoned that Mary's right to life did not give her a right to Jodie's body. The Court thus appealed to a general legal principle of bodily integrity—the same one that lets me keep my redundancy of kidneys, for want of a single one of which innocent people will die each day. But of course Mary's body was *from* (indeed, before) *birth* attached to and dependent upon her sister's: what about *her* right to bodily integrity?

The Court struggled to fit this extremely atypical and specific case into some more universal framework:

(v) Every human being's right to life carries with it, as an intrinsic part of it, rights of bodily integrity and autonomy - the right to have one's own body whole and intact and (on reaching an age of understanding) to take decisions about one's own body.

(vi) By a rare and tragic mischance, Mary and Jodie have both been deprived of the bodily integrity and autonomy which is their natural right. There is a strong presumption that an operation to separate them would be in the best interests of each of them.

(vii) In this case the purpose of the operation would be to separate the twins and so give Jodie a reasonably good prospect of a long and reasonably normal life. Mary's death would not be the purpose of the

operation, although it would be its inevitable consequence. The operation would give her, even in death, bodily integrity as a human being. She would die, not because she was intentionally killed, but because her own body cannot sustain her life.

What's interesting for our purposes are the assumptions, guiding the Court's reasoning, concerning the relationship between personhood, individuality, and bodily autonomy (see Bratton and Chetwynd 2004). Justice Ward apparently interpreted bodily autonomy as some kind of *positive* legal right, one that should be *secured* in rare instances in which "nature" fails to provide it.

Second parties who actually *know* conjoined twins, however, seem to have a more flexible and complex notion of individuality and autonomy, one that doesn't require bodily autonomy of the sort a neurotypical and body typical human being has. A reporter who met with twins Krista and Tatiana Hogen, conjoined at the level of the thalamus, wrote openly:

"At first, the sight of their younger sister, Shaylee, walking freely past the girls, struck me as painful, a constant reminder of their own constraints, her liberty a moment-by-moment assertion of superiority. But over time, my sympathies switched: the twins' unity was so strong I wondered if Shaylee felt she was somehow missing an essential part of herself. When the girls wanted to wash their hands in the sink, they worked as one, silently, to drag the bench over to the bathroom. More often than not, they both seemed to want to slither like snakes at the same moment, to roll a ball down a ramp to the television room, to drift toward the electric piano. But acceptance, rather than mutual desire, might be at play: the family often reminds them they have no choice but to compromise, and... [their mother] believes they have a private logic for determining whose turn it is to decide their whereabouts." (Dominus, 2011)

Close second parties still very much see conjoined twins as individuals; Brittany and Abigail Hensels' parents talk about them in the same kind of dichotomizing way that parents of two children often do: she's the loud one, her sister's the quiet one; this one can be bossy and that one lets her get away with it; one girl likes to go out and the other is a homebody, so they argue about that sometimes, etc. But loved ones have ways of conceptualizing the girls' individuality while simultaneously recognizing all the ways in which their lives are bound up in each other.

One of the ways they are bound up with each other is morally. When they were growing up, Brittany and Abigail's parents were "careful to scold the individual responsible" for any misbehavior, "Even if the other has been dragged unavoidably into the misdeed" (Weathers, 2006). Their mother has however wondered aloud what would happen if the girls

got pulled over for speeding: because each of them controls only one side of their body, they drive together: Abigail, who controls the right side of their body, is thus in charge of the accelerator the brakes, and the gear shift, while Brittany controls the blinkers and lights, and each girl has one hand on the steering wheel. If a cop pulled them over for speeding, would both girls be given separate tickets—or only Abby, with her foot on the gas?

It's interesting to note that the lawyer's plea, in Rigterink's imagined court case about the split-brain Raskolnikov, could made just as well about a fictitious Brittany and Abigail:

“Ah yes’ says the defense lawyer, ‘it is true that Abigail is guilty of this hideous crime. But we have to consider the rights of the other prisoner standing in docket: poor, innocent, victimized Brittany. This was not a crime of emotion in which a wave of adrenaline surged through the twins’ shared body, overpowering both girls’ better natures and making them equal partners in crime. The crime was from the very beginning a cool and calculated expression of narcissism and arrogance. Obviously it was committed by the socially dominant twin: bossy and over-confident Abigail, who disdains weakness and meekness in all people, including her tender-hearted sister.

“Let me remind the court that the guiding principle of justice in a trial system has always been ‘Better to let a guilty party go than punish an innocent person’. We cannot send the Hensel twins to prison. Admittedly Abigail deserves this punishment. But still, the fact of the matter is that Brittany is innocent and does not deserve to suffer alongside her.”¹

To the extent that this plea, too, strikes us as problematic, it is because of two respects in which a pair of conjoined twins is *like* a split-brain subject. First of all, our lawyer supposes they have radically different psychologies, when in fact they have a great deal in common. (The girls don't just finish each other's sentences; they often start, speak, and complete the same sentences at the same time.) Close second parties emphasize their individual differences largely out of necessity, in order to counter the powerful (and potentially depersonalizing) impression of *sameness*.

Second of all—how exactly is someone supposed to plan and carry out a murder without the knowledge of a second party to whom she is literally physically attached at every moment? We cannot kill people just by wishing them dead. Wouldn't Brittany—or wouldn't

¹ So far as I can tell, there are no totally confirmed cases of a conjoined twin committing a crime. In the 1920's, there were apparently a couple of newspaper items about the conjoined twins Lucio and Simplicio Godina, alleging that Lucio had been let off for traffic violations because Simplicio argued that he himself was innocent and could not justly be imprisoned.

Righty—feel the weight of the ax in the right hand? Unload the gun? Recoil from the skull and crossbones on the bottle? Why wouldn't Brittany or why wouldn't Righty *do* something—subdue the malevolent hand, shout out a warning, refuse to go a step further? These, anyway, are the sorts of questions that the prosecutor, in *either* Rigterink's imagined Raskolnikov case or our own, would do well to press.

The only reason that re-imagining Rigterink's Raskolnikov case as involving Brittany and Abigail, rather than Righty and Lefty, makes it sound less absurd, is that we *already* recognize Brittany and Abigail as distinct persons. If we already recognized Righty and Lefty as distinct persons, the difficulty of working out the forensic implications would strike us only as an interesting challenge to be overcome. After all, our courts *already* face many difficult questions of allocating responsibility to different individuals all known to have been present or played some role (if only by inaction or omission) in various crimes. How different would a putative case of plural personhood really be? If (one or both members of a pair of) conjoined twins were implicated in a crime, our legal system would just have to deal with it. (As Patty Hensel concluded after wondering aloud what would happen if Brittany and Abigail got pulled over for speeding, "We'll just have to see what happens when it... hopefully doesn't happen" (Pihlaja, 2007).) The same would be true if we recognized plural personhood in a split-brain subject.

2.1 *Autonomy and responsibility*

It might reasonably be insisted, however, that recognizing any plural persons would simply carry too great a moral or social cost. Even the most legitimate cases would introduce great difficulties into our legal system; those difficulties would be compounded by the fact that some people would *fake* plural personhood in the hope of avoiding punishment; finally, recognizing some cases of plural personhood might encourage more genuine cases to develop.

The first point is presumably true (although the courts have already dealt with some such cases), but again legal system already handles a wide range of difficult cases involving both diminished and group responsibility. The second point is presumably true, too. Once again however there are already numerous ways in which defendants can lie in order to evade responsibility. There is no reason to think that faking plural personhood would be particularly easy.

As for the third point, meanwhile, increasing numbers of plural persons are bad only if plural personhood is bad to begin with. Is it?

Plural personhood does seem inherently morally and socially problematic, since weak identification has a moral texture. To weakly identify with your body is to assume primary responsibility for its responses and their psychological causes; and to be primarily responsible for those mental states and responses is to be *the person* whose mental states and responses they are. What *grounds* both weak identification and responsibility are, in part, social needs and normative expectations. The circle isn't vicious because it can be justified. But what justifies doesn't totally inhere within the individual. The justification is instead to

be found in the larger social web in which each individual finds herself, a web of normatively significant relationships and needs and interactions and utilities.

Cases of plural personhood would do the most damage to the web only during the transitional period in which they were still unfamiliar and it was not yet clear how to accommodate them. The problem with accommodating them within our legal system, for instance, is, as Rorty points out, that at present:

“... an individual is tried, judged to be found innocent or guilty; the guilty are punished by fine or imprisonment. If the crime is thought to be excusable in some way, or if its recurrence is thought unlikely, a judge may lighten or shorten a sentence, but the judgment of guilt or innocence is attached to the biological individual. These practices reflect the accepted view that the *whole* individual, and not just the offending traits, bears responsibility for actions. It is, further, the *unitary*, isolated individual, and not those who may also be responsible for his beliefs and habits, who is liable.” (Rorty, 1973: 80)

Our legal system slowly but continually evolves, however, and we are already:

“... familiar with societies that direct punishment to a larger or to a smaller unit than the biological individual, either to an extended family or to the offending trait.” (Rorty, 1973: 80)

If traits can be punished, then it is likely that other mere parts or aspects of human beings can too.

If pluralindividualism was accepted, our social practices and expectations would evolve to accommodate plural persons. To take the simplest example, pluralindividualism might promote collectivism as well—since now even some individual human beings would contain multitudes. We might say to such a plural person, “Sure, there are eight of you in there, and only one of you lit the match—but you all knew what kind of a state she was in, and it was your responsibility to watch out for her.”

Conjoined twins are distinct persons, even though they do not enjoy the kind of autonomy, from each other, that prototypical persons enjoy. Conjoined twins are autonomous in just the way that seems to matter for personhood, however: they can form their own conclusions about things, assert their own preferences, contend for their own positions—contend even or indeed especially against each other. And each conceives of herself and the other as autonomous in this way: as a distinct social subject, with a right to speak for herself. If Righty and Lefty could develop the capacity for autonomy of *this* sort, that autonomy would suffice for their distinctness as persons.

4 The psychosocial possibility of social recognition

I have just said that conjoined twins Abigail and Brittany Hensel are autonomous in the way that seems most important to personhood: they are *distinct participants* in interpersonal practices, who recognize each other as distinct persons and whom second parties recognize as such as well.

Whether this kind and degree of autonomy is possible for Righty and Lefty depends not only upon their own capacity for self-distinction, but upon second parties' ability to recognize and relate to them as distinct I-thinkers as well. Now, on the only weakly relational account of personhood that I am assuming, social recognition is not constitutively necessary for plural personhood. The possibility of social recognition is nonetheless important to plural personhood, for two reasons. First, without some kind of second party encouragement, mutual recognition between Righty and Lefty would most likely never be achieved. Second, the possibility or impossibility of social recognition affects the desirability of plural personhood. Perhaps it's better to *not* to develop into a distinct person if second parties would never recognize you as such anyway.

4.1 *Second-party obstacles to plural recognition*

Social recognition is not trivial. We are strongly disposed to see and relate to individual human beings as individual persons. Many of the factors underlying this disposition don't involve mindreading, even though persons are psychologically characterized entities. As a consequence, even behavior that could perhaps be best understood by positing multiple psychosocial subjects tends not to be understood in such terms.

The most obvious obstacle to social recognition is, we might think, convention:

“This self is a unity... It regards itself as one, others treat it as one. It is addressed as one, by a name to which it answers. The Law and the State schedule it as one. It and they identify it with a body which is considered by it and they to belong to it integrally. In short, unchallenged and unargued conviction assumes it to be one. The logic of grammar endorses this by a pronoun in the singular. All its diversity is merged in oneness.” (Sherrington, 1947, [

Sherrington is not talking about a merely arbitrary *convention* however. There are a whole host of reasons—moral and causal, proximal and distal—*why* we see each other as one person apiece. One very basic part of the explanation has to do with the perceptual basis of *person detection*.

We naturally, pre-reflectively individuate objects on the basis of their perceptible properties, such as boundedness and common movement, and we most commonly individuate agents on the basis of their perceptible properties as well, since prototypical agents *are* objects. Indeed, we generally identify agents as such on the basis of their

perceptible properties as well; certain kinds of movement are more likely than others to trigger attributions of agency, for instance.

Indeed several psychologists have argued that we don't just have "object-files" but "agent-files" (Bulot and Rysiew, 2007; Eraña, Sylband, and Taraborelli, 2005). Some psychologists have even proposed that human beings might possess a third class of singular-file: a *human-file*, distinguished from mere agent-files by the conditions in which they are opened, and by the types of information we're disposed to put into them. Human-files are opened (obviously) for human beings, whom even young infants distinguish from other animals (and objects) (see Bonatti et al., 2002). And we are disposed to put into a human-file both physical and psychological information (Strawson) about the referent of the file.

Part of the notion of a singular file, however, is that it "... can be split (if its referent divides or appears to be two individuals) or fused with another file (if two files happens [sic] to have a single referent" (Bulot and Rysiew, 2007). Perhaps under the right kind of psychological pressure, we can assign two human-files to one human animal. Or, even if this were not possible, we might assign two *agent-files* to one human animal, though all the information in those files might still be nested within a single human-file. After all, although we most commonly posit persons and humans on a perceptual basis, we can obviously posit them on the basis of e.g. hearing them named in a narrative, or receiving an anonymous letter in the mail.

On the other hand, in the latter sorts of cases, there isn't a *single perceptible human being* for which a singular-file is opened. When there is just a single perceptible human being—as in any candidate case of plural personhood—it may overwhelmingly be the default to open just one file.

Cases of conjoinment (and craniofacial duplication that has other causes) suggest that it is in particular *faces* that trigger the creation of agent- or human-files. Brittany and Abigail Hensel are a single object, in one sense, and below the neck, they look like a single animal as well—yet we naturally and immediately (that is, pre-reflectively) view them as two agents, two thinkers, two persons, and even (I think) two human beings. But of course Brittany and Abigail Hensel have different faces.

Indeed, people tend to see all diprosopic (two-headed or two-faced) human beings as two individuals, regardless of the cause of the condition. Abigail and Brittany developed from either one partially fissioned zygote or from two partially fused zygotes—one of several reasons to identify them as two, biological individuals. Some cases of "two-headedness" are in contrast the product of excessive SSH (sonic hedgehog) protein activity within a single biological individual—though animals with such "cranial duplication" may still have two brains. My impression is that we have a tendency to view *non-human* animals with two faces as "one animal with two heads", while our tendency is to view human beings (?) with two faces as "two human beings with one body." Conjoined twins with two bodies but one face, meanwhile, are viewed as single human beings who *have* parasitic twins attached to them.

We thus naturally see Brittany and Abigail, Krista and Tatiana, all as distinct individuals, while we do not naturally see Righty and Lefty this way. I do not think this is mere “face-ism” on our part. Distinct faces are, of course, very good proxies for distinct minds and brains. But they are also of profound psychosocial importance in and of themselves.

Facial expressions convey emotions, including the *sum* of one’s emotions, and even in cases in which the emotions are hard to express verbally. Faces are used to reidentify *persons* quickly, without extensive questioning—something that Schechtman (1996) points out is most likely a universal social need. This is because faces are highly individualized.

“If you ask me to show you a picture of my son and I show you a picture of his face, you will be satisfied. You will consider yourself to have seen a picture of him. But if I show you a picture of his body without his face, you will consider it strange and will not be satisfied. You might even ask, ‘But what does he look like?’ Thus the metonymy THE FACE FOR THE PERSON is not merely a matter of language. In our culture we look at a person’s face—rather than his posture or his movements—to get our basic information about what the person is like.” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 37)

Gaze-perception and gaze-sharing, meanwhile, are not just important precursors for a richer repertoire of social psychological capacities, but continue to be important in their own right throughout adult life, as means of shared attention. Gaze-meeting, between human beings, is also means of communicating mutual recognition, and the potential for interpersonal interaction; indeed, targets looking directly at perceivers are more quickly categorized as, for instance, male or female (Macrae et al. 2002); gaze-meeting thus aids “person construal”. Even the human eye has features that are unique among primates (Kobayashi and Kohshima, 2001), that allow gaze to play these specialized social roles.

It may be for these reasons that both children and adults judge an object to be closer to a person or agent the closer it is to her *eyes*, as opposed to other parts of her body, and no matter where her eyes are *located* on her body. (Starman and Bloom 2012 found that the nearness judgments hold even for fictitious agents whose eyes were in the center of their torso.) This judgment was not dependent upon whether or not the agent is depicted as being able to actually *see* the object in question. Instead, people seem to identify an agent, in some strong sense, with a *point of origin* for a (visual) perspective: “...children and adults intuitively think of the self as occupying a physical location within the body, close to the eyes.” (Starman and Bloom, 2012: 317)

A number of authors have meanwhile suggested that facial *mirroring* plays a role in the development of self-consciousness. (Though since the congenitally blind also develop self-consciousness, this cannot be strictly necessary.) It’s been hypothesized that children learn something about their own facial expressions, and through them, their own emotions,

and through both, the *relationship* between emotions and facial expressions, by having their expressions *mirrored* by their caretakers. But of course another thing that is *there* in the interaction to be learned is that they are the *objects* of thought or perception of other mindreaders, and others who are like them. And it seems likely to me that this is part of what is learned in these interactions: that we live amongst others who *recognize* us, in the way Righty and Lefty *don't* recognize each other.

Basic facts about so-called “person detection” therefore present a number of obstacles to social recognition in the split-brain case. As noted already, these should equally present bars to mutual recognition; Righty can't distinguish itself from Lefty on the basis of e.g. just looking in a mirror, either.

The first-personal and the second personal obstacles to plural recognition reinforce each other, since personhood is both causally and, some would argue, constitutively dependent upon social interaction and social relations (e.g. Kittay, 2005). We *change* as a result of the way others perceive us—not just because they treat us differently but more directly because we also perceive ourselves *through* their eyes. Conversely, of course, how they see us also depends upon how we see ourselves. This mutual interdependence of *self*-image is part of what it means to be a person (see Chapter 9), and explains the special rights and responsibilities persons have against and to each other (Taylor, 1992).

4.2 *Social recognition and plural self*-conception*

It isn't natural for us to recognize and relate to single human beings as or as if they constituted or contained multiple persons. Such recognition does not seem to be totally impossible however: there are cases in which second parties appear to relate to multiple parts or aspects of one human being as if they were distinct social subjects.

I will call these cases of “multiple identities.” A subject with multiple identities has what I will call a *plural self*-conception*. A plural self*-conception can be characterized, negatively, as the absence or rejection of weak identification: that is, the self*-attribution of everything that (to put it awkwardly) one's own body has done. In response to something Righty has done, for instance, Lefty may say “I didn't mean to do that” or “I don't know why I did that” or “Well, I must have done it unconsciously”—but Lefty still says “I don't know why I did that.” In a human being with multiple identities, even weak identification breaks down.

It's hard to know how to characterize plural self*-conception in positive terms. Perhaps to have a plural self*-conception is to believe—“on some level”—that there are plural persons inhabiting one's body. Of course, this assumes that one remains, on some level, unitary qua believer. (The alternative would be to say that, within a subject with multiple identities, each identity has its *own* self-conception.) It looks as though this is right: on explicit memory tests, for instance, subjects with multiple identities don't seem to be consciously faking inter-identity amnesia, but their behavior does appear to be guided by some kind of belief about what their various identities *would* remember if they really *were* distinct qua persons (Kindt and Van den Hout, 2003; Huntjens et al., 2006). That is, psychic dissociation appears to be sustained by some kind of underlying set of attitudes or

commitments at which there is no evidence of disunity. In any event, there is, at least, a striking difference between the self*-conception/s of a subject with multiple identities and that of Righty and Lefty in the split-brain case.²

So characterized, cases of multiple identities clearly do not constitute a natural kind. They are not likely to constitute a clinical kind either, even though they do substantially overlap with cases of dissociative identity disorder. The latter disorder is included amongst dissociative conditions in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Its first three diagnostic criteria are:

- (1) Disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality states... The disruption in identity involves marked discontinuity in sense of self and sense of agency, accompanied by related alterations in affect, behavior, consciousness, memory, perception, cognition, and/or sensory-motor functioning. These signs and symptoms may be observed by others or reported by the individual.
- (2) Recurrent gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and/or traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting.
- (3) The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

The third criterion, which is standard for disorders as defined by the Manual, means, among other things, that some subjects whose mental lives are as described by criteria (1) and (2), do not view themselves as having a *disorder*, since they have ways of successfully coping with whatever challenges they face as a consequence of e.g. gaps in recall. And some subjects who relate to second parties *as if* they were plural persons won't receive a diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder for other reasons. Conversely, there are many subjects who *have* received a diagnosis, but whom second parties do not recognize or relate to as constituting or containing plural persons, and who are thus not relevant here. So the kind I am interested in is heterogeneous even from a clinical perspective, even though it does, again, substantially overlap with dissociative identity disorder.

² This could be put in terms of Braude's (1995) notion of *indexical* mental states. A mental state is *autobiographical* for a subject, in Braude's terminology, when the subject *experiences* that state as his own. But a mental state is *indexical* for a subject when he *believes* it to be his own. Autobiographicality is phenomenological, that is, and indexicality is cognitive and epistemological. Braude then uses these terms to characterize what he calls an *apperceptive center*. A subject is such a center if she is the subject of autobiographical states which are indexical for her (that is, which she believes are hers). And "X and Y are *distinct* apperceptive centers just in case the autobiographical and indexical states of each are (respectively) largely non-autobiographical and non-indexical for each other" (1995: 78). Crucially, while there are other dissociative phenomena involving failures of autobiographicality, dissociative identity disorder is unique for involving symmetric failures of indexicality: even when a dissociative identity disorder human being is confronted at t2 with evidence that her human being did something at t2, she, at t2, may deny that it was *her* who did it; then, at t3, she happily admits that she did do that thing at t1, and insists that it was not her, at t2, who ever denied it.

The philosophical literature generally assumes that what motivates the postulation of plural persons in cases of multiple identities and dissociative identity disorder are radical behavioral inconsistencies. Consistently with previous chapters, however, I argue in other work that the multiple identities literature in fact suggests that radically inconsistent behavior still won't give rise to the plural persons hypothesis. It would be more accurate to say that once someone *has* posited plural persons within, e.g., her husband, his past behavior *retrospectively* makes more sense to her. But again, it doesn't seem as though inconsistencies in and of themselves suffice to generate the hypothesis. Perhaps they would if neurotypical subjects were more unified and consistent themselves (Chapter 6 and Chapter 9). As things are, however, subjects with multiple identities can live unsuspected of plural personhood:

In my experience there is a whole lot of "hiding in plain sight" going on. Most people don't recognize the signs of... [the disorder] and don't catch on even when a [dissociative identity disorder] system is quite overt. Most people don't notice unless the system is really florid, for example in the middle of a conversation disavowing the host's name and saying their name is _____. (Reply to "How well can you hide your dissociative identity disorder?" at www.psychforums.com/dissocaitive-identity)

What second parties need to grasp, at least implicitly, is precisely the subject's plural self*-conception. This can most easily be conveyed by the subject's exploiting narrative conventions, in her speech, that are generally used to introduce and refer to multiple parties. These conventions involve both personal pronoun usage and names. A subject with multiple identities might say "We went to breakfast" (when you saw only the subject, alone, go to breakfast). Or when you try to follow up with Mary about what she was trying to say at work yesterday, she might say, "I wasn't at work yesterday; Jessica was."

The very act of naming alters encourages the multiple to reconstruct her autobiographical memory schemata as the life histories of distinct individuals. Indeed, the condition is all but invisible until alters name themselves and assert self-referential ownership of distinct mental lives. (Brown, 2001: 435-436)

Once a second party does grasp the plural self*-conception of a subject with multiple identities, however—that is, once he posits multiple identities or alters, within the subject—there are a host of other ways the subject (or her various "alters") can efficiently signal to second parties who it is they're communicating with, e.g. by dressing differently from each other, speaking in different voices, and so on. It's just that these things do not on their own typically suffice to generate the plural person hypothesis.

Instead, it looks likely that the *prior* postulation of multiple persons drives both the differentiation of alters and other parties' perception of those differences. In the same way, identical twins raised together may in fact be *more* different from each other than are identical twins raised apart, because identical twins raised together unconsciously (or for that matter consciously) *work* to differentiate themselves. Meanwhile, the greater the physical resemblance between a pair of twins, and therefore the more easily they are confused, the more behaviorally different their parents say they are (Segal, 1999).

One reason that multiple identities subjects' alters may be of such different social types—different ages, sexes, classes, subcultures (e.g. goth versus prep)—may again be in order to aid other parties in distinguishing them simply on the basis of e.g. clothing, posture, vocabulary. Different social types introduce the possibility of very different voices (higher or lower pitched, more mature or immature, with varying accents and vocabularies and emotional tones), different clothing, hairstyles, postures, movement patterns, and so on. This provides second parties a *perceptual* basis for distinguishing between the various alters, allowing them to interact with them as distinct persons.

4.3 *Social recognition in the split-brain case*

Cases of multiple identities suggest two different ways in which other parties could first come to posit Righty and Lefty as distinct candidate persons and social subjects and targets for mindreading. First, if Righty and Lefty came to recognize each other as such, they might express this in their pronoun use, in ways that exploited narrative and conversational conventions for distinguishing characters or persons. So far as I know this has never happened. More realistically, then, neuropsychologists might simply *tell* other second parties (the subjects' family members) about Righty and Lefty, in the same way that a psychotherapist might tell the loved one of a subject with multiple identities about the subject's plural self*-conception. Perhaps other parties could be encouraged to try to interact independently with Righty and Lefty, and this interaction could itself encourage Righty and Lefty to recognize each other as distinct social subjects.

Even once second parties intellectually accepted Righty's and Lefty's existence, they would still need to be able to actively distinguish them, to tell *who* they were interacting with, as in the case of subjects with multiple identities. Since Righty and Lefty are always "co-present," the strategies that serve this role in subjects with multiple identities would not be practicable here. It might nonetheless be possible for Righty and Lefty to learn to speak in different pitches or tones of voice. They might learn to wear make-up (or acquire tattoos) that would serve to remind other parties of their twinned existence within one body—even drawing a rough, color-coded sensorimotor map of hemispheric lateralization on their face and body!

Second parties could meanwhile develop habits like, for instance, holding the subject's left hand (Righty's hand) while speaking to Righty, and holding the subject's right hand (Lefty's hand) when speaking to Lefty. Or S's brother could ask the split-brain subject to remain visually fixated on his face whenever he spoke, but he could always make a signal with his right hand, on the right side of his face, in S's left visual field, to attract Righty's

attention, whenever he wanted to speak to Righty, and make a signal using his left hand, on the left of his face, in S's right visual field, to attract Lefty's attention, whenever he wanted to speak to Lefty. In such ways the split-brain experimental paradigm could be brought home—but also adapted for ordinary, on-the-fly social engagement.

The natural objection to this sort of proposal—besides that it sounds insane, which we are setting aside!—is that for second parties to try to interact with split-brain subjects in this way would be effortful, unnatural, and uncomfortable. Perhaps downright unpleasant. Righty and Lefty themselves might be very unhappy with it. Can we safely say that the discomfort of the attempt speaks against making it, however? After all, what takes more effort than parenting an infant?—yet you don't just *give up*. Aren't Righty and Lefty worth the same effort? For that matter, behavioral therapies for e.g. young children with autism, which aim to promote their development of those cognitive capacities which are essential for personhood, are often effortful, unnatural, and uncomfortable. The kids themselves would rather be left alone. Many people nonetheless feel that when providing such therapies is possible, it is obligatory. And this is despite the fact that one can never know, of any particular young child with severe autism spectrum disorder, just how much such therapies will achieve. Again, don't Righty and Lefty deserve this same shot?

I have just analogized Righty and Lefty to non-person human children. Like neurotypical infants, Righty and Lefty are potential persons—or at least, like some non-neurotypical infants, Righty and Lefty are *possibly* potential persons. Here we might stop to ask how appropriate the analogy is for the present purpose: that of determining our *obligations* to promote plural personhood in the split-brain subject. How morally significant is this abstract commonality—potential personhood or possible potential personhood—between the two classes of human thinker—between human children on the one hand, and Righty and Lefty on the other?

The force of the question can be brought home by considering that mutual recognition between Righty and Lefty might be furthered by further neurosurgery. In particular, their *neural* (and thus functional) overlap could be reduced, by e.g. sectioning some ipsilateral afferent and efferent pathways. Doesn't Righty in particular have a right to more exclusive control over the left hand, since Lefty already dominates the conversation? For that matter, maybe the latter tendency could be somehow surgically reduced? If this sounds unfair to poor Lefty, just consider poor Righty—and keep in mind that giving Righty greater power of self-determination will simultaneously increase the odds of *Lefty's* achieving distinct personhood as well.

Of course, since S, unlike a human infant, is a person; he or she would have to want (or anyway consent to) any such surgery. I trust that, even so, the proposal sounds beyond comically to monstrously insane. *Further*, non-medically necessary brain surgery, for the sake of *reducing* interhemispheric integration? Just to promote some kind of totally artificial autonomy? What on earth about the physical and psychological of the *human being* as a whole?

It isn't immediately obvious how to defend this intuitive reaction, however. It's not so easy as just saying that it would "end the life" of an existing person, S, since "life" would be meant somewhat metaphorically here: no one would *die*. We could equally well employ the same metaphor to say that S would live on *as* two persons, Righty and Lefty. And anyway think, again, about the case of very young children. There is a case to be made that infants in particular participate in personhood not as distinct persons, but as parts of parent-child *dyads*. Parents sometimes express a certain sadness, as their children develop and individuate and separate from them into fully autonomous persons. But we all view it as a good thing.

This intuitive reaction to the proposal that second parties (or broader social institutions) do "whatever it takes" to promote Righty's and Lefty's development into distinct persons, can, I think, be justified. It requires *rejecting* the analogy between Righty and Lefty on the one hand and non-person children on the other. And it requires defending the moral significance of the individual human animal.

5 On our obligations to potential persons

The category of the human has culturally universal social significance: so far as I'm aware, there is no human culture in which human beings are treated as merely one kind of animal among others. (Prima facie this claim is analytic!) This isn't surprising. Animals of other social species share their lives with others of their own kind specifically, too. Because human cultures are governed by norms, meanwhile, there is a special aspect to the way that human beings, in particular, set their conspecifics apart: human beings, in particular, don't just relate to their conspecifics differently from how they relate to non-conspecifics, but also relate to their [conspecifics](#) in *norm-governed ways* in which they don't relate to non-conspecifics. The human is thus, prima facie, not just a social but a normative category.

It is sometimes asserted however that the normative significance our social practices grant to all and only human beings is neither rationally nor morally defensible. This view is expressed most starkly by critics of what they call *speciesism*: the view that members of our own species deserve special moral consideration simply in virtue of being members of our species. The term "speciesism" is intended to connote racism or nationalism or sexism. Indeed critics of speciesism explicitly argue that speciesism is of a kind with those latter –isms, whose evil (it is stated or implied) consists in the discounting of non-group-members' interests, simply because they are not members of one's own group.

It is from such a perspective that it makes sense to object to our practice of, e.g., killing non-human animals for food, by appealing to the fact that we don't kill non-person human beings for food (Diamond, 1978). But of course it cannot be that meat-eating is near universal and cannibalism so rare simply because human beings are nearly universally great lovers of mankind. Any serious xenophobic will feel a much greater kinship with his own dog than he does with foreigners. Anyway, people have starved to death rather than eat other human beings whose *dying wish* was that their bodies should be so consumed. There are of course cultures in which cannibalism is willingly practiced, but in such cultures human

beings are still not seen as just one protein source among others; instead, they (or some of them) are consumed (by some people) for (broadly) spiritual reasons.

In other words: we just don't see human beings as *food* (Diamond, 1978).

Even this single example points to what is surely a very rich folk concept of the human—the deep foundation out of which the concept of the person emerges (Gomez, 2003). As Taylor says, even the "... roots of respect for life and integrity... seem to go as deep as this, and to be connected perhaps with the almost universal tendency among other animals to stop short of the killing of conspecifics." (Taylor 1989: 5) Note, moreover, that isn't just the general category of "the human" that has such universal social significance, but the *individual* human animal, the "... mortal human being, the empirically observable entity [...] whose constitution, acts and motivation receives some form of social recognition in all societies." (La Fontaine 1985: 124)

Our evolved history of relating to *conspecifics*—human *animals*—may impose impassible limits to a *deep* acceptance of pluralindividualism, even if other obstacles to plural recognition were surpassed. And I suppose what I mean by *deep* acceptance is, in significant part, *emotional* acceptance. It is one thing to accept on purely theoretical grounds that some or other human being, a third party to oneself, constitutes multiple persons. It's another thing to spontaneously relate to her as such in face-to-face interaction. And it's another thing still to love her and live with her and continue to think of her as a second person plural. to

Indeed I have argued in other work that existing cases of multiple identities don't present a totally positive case for the possibility of social recognition. The individual human subject, and not just her multiple identities, seems to retain her status as a *single* moral being for second parties, even when these second parties explicitly structure the terms of their relationship with her *as if* the multiple identities were totally distinct persons. This only goes so far, however. To take a single, telling example of its limits, second parties who ostensibly consider themselves the romantic partners of only some "alters" still feel anger, hurt, and jealousy when any *other* alter become sexually involved with third parties.

Thus in cases of multiple identities—at present the best candidate cases of plural personhood that there are—social recognition is not entirely "full-blooded". I don't think the reasons for this are purely evolutionary. It is also that we do understand persons' lives at least partly in narrative terms, and although there may be distinct origin stories for the various alters of a subject with multiple identities, these are nonetheless all embedded within an overarching, psycho-emotional narrative about the life of *an animal*. (As well as, perhaps, a narrative according to which these alters are all the products of what is, at some level of integration, a common psychosocial creative process.) This is broadly true in the split-brain case as well: even if Righty and Lefty did become distinct persons, they would always share a "prehistory" *as* (parts of) S. And we *all* have a prehistory as animals: the *prototypical* person *is* (or is constituted by) a human being, who was not born a person. (I will return to this point below.) That there *is* so strong a standard origin story for persons, one in which they (we) were animals before we were persons, might make it very difficult for us to accept the reality of plural personhood in a totally full-blooded way, since we would still be disposed to weave

the individual narratives of a group of plural persons into an overarching narrative of the life of one human being.

These points about the narrative significance of the human animal, even in candidate cases of plural personhood, suggests something further: it suggests that there may be a justification for the fact that social practices, across cultures, *grant* moral significance to the individual human being. And if the individual human being does have intrinsic moral significance—not *just* as a candidate (constitutor of a) person (or persons)—then the original analogy between Righty or Lefty on the one hand and a human infant on the other looks strained. Both are potential persons, true. But this might not be the source of our obligation to human infants.

Assuming that the *goodness* of relating to young children in ways that encourage their self-consciousness can be understood in terms of an *obligation* on our part, it is unlikely that the obligation in question is that we should interact with all (possible) potential persons in ways that encourage this development into persons.

Kittay argues that our obligations to human beings, in general, is simply grounded in our kinship with them. In this sense, the value of humanity is relational. Kinship does not mean likeness per se, however; if we failed to appreciate the great differences between adults and infants, the latter would starve to death. Kinship means something more like a relationship that you just *find* yourself in; the strictest kinships are literally familial. According to Kittay, the special obligations that human beings have towards human beings in particular “... has as its appropriate moral analogue *family membership*, not racism and not pernicious nationalism” (Kittay 2005: 124; emphasis added). As a species, we have special obligations to *all* of our conspecifics in particular because they are members of *our* genetic or evolved family.

I accept this, but suggest that the relationship between human persons and human infants that is the source of obligations from the former to the latter is also in part narrative: our own *life stories*, our first-personal narratives, are stories in which *we* were once like them as well. I cannot defend or even fully flesh out this idea here, but note that there are a number of cases in which we seem to recognize obligations rooted in narratives of past identification and transformation: e.g., obligations from recovered to struggling addicts, obligations from the “kid who made it out” to the kid still on the street, and so on.³

In a discussion of virtue ethics and abortion, Hursthouse (1991b) summarizes the “familiar biological facts” about pregnancy and birth:

³ And actually the narrative obligation is less problematic in the case of human infants, because *everyone* was once an infant, whereas those other sorts of narrative obligations *divide* people in part along problematic social lines: why should (to take an example) the successful member of an embattled minority, whose life is still more challenging than the successful member of the socially dominant group, have additional responsibilities put on her shoulders? There are certainly serious challenges here; my point is just to note that we do in fact seem to recognize narratives of past transformation as a source of moral obligation to the untransformed. The obligations seem rooted in narrative and not just group identification; intuitively, the e.g. gay adult who was bullied in middle school has *more* of an obligation to struggling gay teens than does the gay adult who grew up in a gay-friendly community.

“... that, standardly (but not invariably), pregnancy occurs as a result of sexual intercourse, that it lasts about nine months, during which time the fetus grows and develops, that standardly it terminates in the birth of a living baby, and that *this is how we all come to be.*”
(Hursthouse, 1991b: 236; emphasis added)

This, she says, is a part of the wisdom that an ideally virtuous agent must have. Strikingly (but of course not surprisingly) she conveys these familial biological facts in narrative form and via a familiar kind of narrative: the origin story. In order to make right judgments about the morality of abortion, in a particular case, it isn't sufficient to know every detail imaginable about that case. You must also know the relationship between these facts and the pre-history of *other persons*—including you yourself. We were once cared for, by persons, in ways that ultimately promoted (or at least did not prevent!) our own development into persons. This history is like a debt we carry from the past, one that must be repaid by “paying it forwards,” by providing the same kind of care for those who come next.⁴

Note that accepting the moral significance of the individual human being, qua human being, is wholly compatible with the *further* moral significance of persons. Even if human persons have positive responsibilities towards other *human beings*, non-human beings, both persons and even non-persons, may well have negative rights against us, that we should not interfere with their lives, for instance. And the interests of an individual human person may well supersede the interests of the animal that constitutes her. To take a sharp example, a person with body integrity identity disorder, who wants to have amputated a healthy limb, may have this right: her rights as a person to bodily integrity *relative to* her own self-image, may override whatever rights to bodily integrity she has as an animal (Widdershoven, 2009).

Suppose that all this is right, and that our obligations to human infants are not obligations to them qua (possibly) potential persons, but qua what we were *before* we were persons. There *is* no analogous obligation in the split-brain case. First of all, our obligations to infants are not specific instances of a more general obligation to all (possibly) potential persons. Perhaps chimpanzees could become fully self-conscious with enough training; surely we aren't obligated to go around the world making persons out of them. And our obligations to infants are not even specific instances of a more general obligation to all *human* potential persons. They are obligations to *human beings*, specifically, which R and L are not. And they are obligations to human beings with whom we human persons share a particular narrative connection. We bear that connection to S, not to R and L.

Someone might say that my argument has been unnecessarily weak and indirect. It isn't just that second parties aren't obligated to promote plural personhood in the split-brain subject. It is that they it would be wrong to do so, because doing so would destroy—end the

⁴ The view I'm sketching here does I think have some implications concerning the moral quality of abortion—like Hursthouse (1991b) I think it will vary from case to case—but (so far as I can tell) no direct legal or political implications, especially to the extent that *persons* rather than human beings remain the basic legal and political rights-holders.

life—of someone who is already a person: S. But “life” is being used metaphorically here; Righty’s and Lefty’s becoming persons wouldn’t *kill* anyone. And S would after all *survive* as Righty and Lefty, who already participate in personhood—just as parts of S.

6 Intra-individual pluralism versus plural personhood

Social recognition is not an obligation prior to mutual recognition: so long as R and L *don’t* distinguish self from other, and don’t recognize each other as distinct I-thinkers, there is no obligation to encourage them to do so. I take it, however, that *if* R and L *did* achieve mutual recognition, then (assuming they wanted and try to relate to second parties *qua* distinct persons) social recognition would become an obligation. For it is hard to see how there could *not* be such an obligation in a liberal society. Refusing to try to relate to R and L as if they were distinct persons would be to deny their right to self-definition and not just self-determination. This doesn’t of course mean that the State would necessarily have to allow R and L their own votes, or marriages to different persons, or whatever. The interests of the State, whatever those were, would have to be balanced against the rights of individuals, here as elsewhere. Pluralindividualism would simply mean accepting that some of those individuals share a body with each other.

In fact, however, R’s and L’s distinctness *qua* persons, and even their distinctness *qua* thinkers, is really tangential to this obligation. It is hard to see how to deny—consistently with liberalism—even a (heretofore) neurotypical subject’s right to live our her plural self*-conception, including in relationship with others.

It’s hard to say what plural personhood in a (heretofore) neurotypical subject would look like. In the case of those subjects with multiple identities who also have dissociative identity disorder, their mechanisms of dissociation act to maintain some degree of psychic distance between the alters. A (heretofore) neurotypical subject probably could not implement these mechanisms simply at will. But in the same way a lawyer can bracket what he knows about his client’s guilt when in the midst of defending her in the courtroom, one “plural” could adhere to a policy of not using in her reasoning any information she learned while another plural was “in charge”. Indeed they, or the subject, could adhere to a policy of communicating only indirectly, by speaking out loud and listening to each other, for instance.

The enactment of such a policy would still leave in place many psychological connections between the plurals, of course. And on some level it might even continue to be the (heretofore neurotypical) subject as a whole who adhered to this policy. But the policy could also genuinely change whose and what sort of policy it was:

“If such a choice is successfully carried out, it will have the effect of eradicating the very point of view from which it was made, leaving in its place multiple points of view within the human being, each of which can be engaged in its own right in distinctively interpersonal ways.” (Rovane 2004: 557)

Even this may make psychic unity more normative than it is in neurotypical subjects. For many of us, a unitary point of view is, at best, something to be achieved. Or perhaps this isn't even best; some theorists have denied that having a single, cross-situationally stable point of view is necessarily better than having a number of different, even mutually inconsistent points of view between which one can shift as the situation requires.

Consider the contrast between individuals whom Snyder (1979) called high versus low self-monitors. The behavior of *low self-monitoring* individuals is less influenced by the behavior and attitudes of others than is the behavior of *high self-monitoring* individuals: "... the activities of the low self-monitoring individual can be characterized best as the cognitive asking and behavioral answering of the question, 'Who am I and how can I be me in this situation?'" (Snyder 1979: 103) while "the high self-monitoring individual cognitively asks and behaviorally answer the question, 'Who does this situation want me to be and how can I be that person?'" (Snyder 1979: 102). Low self-monitors predictably exhibit much more cross-situational consistency; high self-monitors are much less self-consistent. But what is condemned as inconsistency can sometimes be praised as flexibility: Wright et al. (2007) note that, relative to low self-monitors, high self-monitors are "... more socially skilled, more likely to engage in affiliation cues with others and better able to manage their impressions... High self-monitors are more effective negotiators, experience fewer conflicts with colleagues, are more likely to receive job promotions and more likely to emerge as leaders" (Wright 2007: 102; citations omitted).

Furthermore, some theories have suggested that all of us—even individuals closer to the low self-monitoring, highly self-consistent end of the spectrum—achieve and maintain intra-psychic consistency and stability in part via internal dialogue that is itself "dilemmic" (Billig et al., 1988). On this view, arguments are a universal feature of social life; "Moreover, these are the sorts of arguments which people must have with themselves if they are to deliberate about matters.... they must weigh the different factors, going to the trouble to make sure that both sides are given a hearing in the debating chamber of a single mind. This sort of deliberation is, of course, possible only if the individual possesses the dilemmic aspects of social belief" (Billig et al. 1988: 17). That is, "... the individual, by possessing the common sense of the community, also possesses the contrary aspects of beliefs which permit debates to continue both internally and externally" (Billig et al. 1988: 19).

Whether or not Billig and colleagues are right about the *universally* dilemmic character of thought and decision-making, that is at least where we are now. In large part of course this is simply because of globalization and information technologies, which combine to make people more aware of ideological diversity, of the depth and ferocity of *debate* that exists on even or perhaps especially the most fundamental questions of values. Meanwhile the soil out of which the radical pluralism of postmodernity has grown is of course that of the radical individualism of advanced modernity. Perspectives thus multiply as external sources of authority decline:

“The human being becomes... a choice among possibilities, *homo optionis*. Life, death, gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social ties—all are becoming decidable down to the small print; once fragmented into options, everything must be decided.” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 5)

Meanwhile there is less now than there was even forty years ago—when the split-brain phenomenon was first coming into public view—to promote stability in individual lives:

“Nowadays everything seems to conspire against... lifelong projects, permanent bonds, eternal alliances, immutable identities. I cannot build for the long term on my job, my profession or even my abilities. I can bet on my job being cut, my profession changing out of all recognition, my skills being no longer in demand. Nor can a partnership or family provide a basis in the future... togetherness lasts no longer than the gratification of one of the partners, ties are from the outset only ‘until further notice’, today’s intense attachment makes tomorrow’s frustration only the more violent.” (Bauman, 1993)

People move more often; they raise their children far from their own parents, who may themselves live with new spouses in different states. It helps to be able to make friends quickly, especially since your current batch may soon scatter across the country. Rapid technological change creates pressure to “self-diversify” and continually break with the past. (“In the new global economy, your most valuable asset is your willingness to reinvent yourself?”)

We might call this *intra-individual pluralism*: the *internalization* of diverse and often opposed perspectives and values. Summarizing Billig et al.’s empirical findings, Gergen (1991) writes that:

“They found the typical condition of the individual to be internal conflict: for each belief there exists a strong countertendency. People feel their prejudices are justified, yet it is wrong to be intolerant; that there should be equality but that hierarchies are also good; and that we are all basically the same, but we must hold only our individuality. For every value, goal, or ideal, one holds to the converse as well.” (Gergen, 1991: 72-73)

Such results are troubling if we assume that a drive for consistency is the most fundamental force out of which we create ourselves as persons (see Chapter 9). From the

standpoint of a perspective on persons according to which *social* drives are the fundamental forces that construct us as persons, however, this intra-individual pluralism can be adaptive, enabling social fluidity and “multilingualism” in a pluralistic culture. Increasing intra-individual pluralism enables cohesion and cooperation in the face of differences and disagreement. It does this not just by making the individual more flexible, but by reducing how much consistency she expects of others.

It is worth noting, in this context, that according to some psychotherapists, the hallmark of dissociative identity disorder isn't *instability* (of perspective, personality, and so on) so much as *inflexibility*: difficulty accommodating and mediating between the multiplicities and complexities and at times outright inconsistencies that characterize even the neurotypical human person (Rivera, 1996). Intra-individual pluralism and developing a plural self*-conception may in fact just be different ways of self-organizing in response to similar psychosocial pressures.

If this is right, then increasing intra-individual pluralism, over the course of the mere half-century during which the split-brain cases have been debated, may have made plural personhood sound at least slightly less absurd than it once did or would have. It may simultaneously have undermined some of the motivations for plural personhood, however. Perhaps if our images and expectations of persons had remained perfectly fixed, the forces that promote intra-individual pluralism would also promote or even *force* plural personhood. But of course what we expect of *a person*, in the abstract, changes in response to the lives we see particular people living. Forces that make individuals contain psychic multitudes also reduce our inter- and intra-personal expectations of psychic unity. If we require or even expect less consistency of persons, then why bother becoming plural persons in the first place? Perhaps, rather than being trailblazers, subjects claiming “multiple identities” are *behind* the times, *more* committed than the average person is to the ideology of psychic consistency.

Of course someone could in principle argue that the *concept* of a person is bound to be more consistent, less fixed, less adaptable, than are we persons ourselves. Perhaps, rather than undermining the motivation for plural personhood, intra-individual pluralism is just an instance of it, other another name (Grice and Strawson, 1956). And maybe this is right. I don't have a theory of conceptual change that would decide whether and when intra-individual pluralism would shade into plural personhood.

Note that to the extent that the difference between intra-individual pluralism and plural personhood really does strike us as indeterminate, it must be because they are both, as defined, conditions *of* individual human beings. I think this suggests once again the continuing conceptual force that the individual human animal will continue to play in our thinking about persons, short of some sort of revolution in the way persons come to be constituted in general.