
MEMORY

The Nature and Significance of Dissociation

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DISSOCIATION is a topic that lends itself quite naturally (and perhaps all too easily) to philosophical speculation. The intriguing behavior and reports of subjects in both clinical and experimental settings can be dramatic and quite surprising. In dissociative fugue states, a person's memories and personality can disappear for a long time and be replaced by a new personality and set of dispositions. In dissociative identity disorder (DID; formerly multiple personality disorder), fairly robust systems of memories and dispositions can alternate (sometimes rapidly) and create the appearance that more than one person is inhabiting the same body. During systematized anesthesia (or negative hallucinations), highly hypnotizable subjects apparently fail to perceive not simply the experimenter but anything the experimenter does to the subject, including ordinarily painful interventions (e.g., needle pricks in the mucous membrane of the eye) and procedures that typically elicit involuntary responses (e.g., ammonia under the nose), even though subjects respond normally to those same procedures when administered by co-experimenters.

It's tempting, and even reasonable, to think that these phenomena point to important facts about the nature of the mind. But it's not easy to determine what those facts are. Clinicians and experimenters who speculate about these matters often don't realize how they import (sometimes questionable) abstract assumptions into their deliberations. As a result, the literature on dissociation offers philosophers many opportunities for conceptual clarification and analysis. Besides, until recently, philosophers have paid relatively little attention to the topic of dissociation. So, quite apart

from commenting on clinical and experimental reports (and the theoretical speculations they inspire), philosophers still have much to explore about the relevance of dissociation to venerable issues in the philosophy of mind.

WHAT IS DISSOCIATION?

Although psychologists and psychiatrists have studied dissociative phenomena for a long time, there is surprisingly little agreement about what dissociation is and about which phenomena instantiate it. Historians of psychology usually credit Pierre Janet with having originated the concept of dissociation (although he initially used the term *désagrégation*) to pick out mental states that lack their customary integration or associative links. Since then, the term “dissociation” has been used to denote a wide variety of phenomena, drawn from the domains of psychopathology, experimental psychology, and even everyday life (e.g., overlearned and automatic behaviors). Moreover, there is considerable confusion about the difference (if any) between dissociation and apparently similar or related concepts—in particular, repression, suppression, and denial.

Although space prohibits a comprehensive survey of attempts to characterize dissociation, some general trends and common themes are easily discernible (see Braude 1995 and Cardeña 1994 for details). For one thing, it's clear that the concept of dissociation has evolved since Janet introduced it. Janet intended the concept of dissociation to handle a distinctive and relatively limited class of psychopathological phenomena. He considered dissociation to be a kind of weakness, a failure (in the face of disturbing events) to synthesize or integrate parts of consciousness and thereby maintain conscious unity. Janet's successors also recognized the apparent causal link between trauma and dissociative pathology. But they tended to agree that the processes Janet was describing from cases of hysteria (now called conversion disorder) or double consciousness were also at work in a broad range of nonpathological phenomena. And, along with that, they tended to view dissociation not as a weakness but as a kind of capacity (not necessarily maladaptive) to sever familiar links between mental states.

In a related development, researchers initially considered dissociated states to be functionally *isolated*, not simply from conscious awareness but also from the mass of ideas and dispositions with which they had formerly been associated. Moreover, they believed that dissociated states could neither interfere with, nor be interfered with by, ongoing mental processes or behavior. But, beginning with Messerschmidt's experiments in hypnotically divided attention (Messerschmidt 1927–28), that view has been effectively undermined. Messerschmidt showed that even in automatic writing there was some interference or leakage between conscious behavior and subconscious tasks. Moreover, clinicians began reporting similar forms of interference—for exam-

ple, between alter identities in cases of DID. So experimental and clinical observations now converge in taking the dissociative barrier (whatever, exactly, it is) to be permeable.

Today, the primary debates over dissociation concern either (a) the inventory of phenomena to be regarded as dissociative or (b) whether the forms of dissociation differ in degree or in kind—and in particular, whether pathological dissociation is fundamentally different from nonpathological dissociation. But the literature on these topics shows little clarity or attention to underlying assumptions. In my view, the current debates might be resolved simply by attending to those underlying assumptions and then seeing whether we can lay down criteria of dissociation that conform to them. As a step in that direction, I offer the following observations and proposals.

First, there is widespread agreement that dissociation is not simply an occurrent psychological condition or state (i.e., the state of being dissociated) but also (contrary to Janet) something for which we have an aptitude or capacity. This seems to be a sensible move away from the position advocated by Janet, and it is continuous with the way we treat a great many other areas of human cognition and performance. Analogously, compassion, irony, patience, indignation, dishonesty, kindness, and sarcasm can be regarded as both occurrent states and corresponding capacities. So it seems reasonable to hold that dissociation is likewise one of many things (at least some) people are *able* to do. Let's call this the *capability assumption*. In fact, it's reasonable to think that the capacity to dissociate, *insofar as it's a capacity*, will be similar in broad outline to most other human capacities. Thus, even though dissociation presumably has distinctive features, we would expect it, qua capacity, to share features found generally in human (or just cognitive) capacities. Let's call this the *nonuniqueness assumption*.

Now capacities generally are things people express in different ways and to varying degrees. For example, the capacities for self-deception, intimidation, empathy, sensuality, or malice can range from extreme to very moderate forms, and they can be expressed in highly idiosyncratic ways. So it seems reasonable to assume that dissociation likewise assumes a variety of (possibly quite idiosyncratic) forms, that it can affect a broad range of states (both occurrent and dispositional), and that it spreads out along various continua (e.g., of pervasiveness, frequency, severity, completeness, and retrievability). Let's call this the *diversification assumption*.

Another important assumption allows us to distinguish dissociation from what we might call cognitive or sensory *filtering*. Although the term "filtering" has many meanings, in the sense that matters here it picks out a total blocking of information from a subject. Examples of this sort of filtering would be blindfolding, audio band-pass filtering, and local chemical anesthesia. These situations differ from (say) hypnotic anesthesia and negative hallucination, where subjects merely fail to experience consciously what they are nevertheless aware of subconsciously. So the relevant difference between filtering and dissociation is that in filtering, information never reaches the subjects (consciously or otherwise), whereas dissociation merely blocks subjects' conscious awareness that they have already registered certain information. Thus, the next important assumption is that the things dissociated from a person are always the

person's own states. Let's call this the *ownership assumption*. Granted, it's common to say that information or data is dissociated. But, strictly speaking, what is dissociated are the subject's states: for example, volitions, knowledge, memories, dispositions, and sometimes even behavior (as in automatic writing).

The ownership assumption connects with a fifth (and very important) assumption. When a state is dissociated, it is not totally obliterated or isolated in principle (even if retrieving it is difficult in practice). Dissociated states may be subjectively hidden or psychologically isolated, but they are always potentially knowable, recoverable, or capable of reassociation. Thus, dissociation is a theoretically (but perhaps not practically) reversible functional isolation of one's own states from conscious awareness. Let's call this the *accessibility assumption*.

We should also note that the relation "x is dissociated from y" is *nonsymmetrical*, as in "x loves y" (even though x loves y, the latter may or may not love the former). We see this nonsymmetry clearly in cases of one-way amnesia in DID, or in *hidden observer* experiments where states of a hypnotically hidden observer may be dissociated from those of the hypnotized subject, even though the subject's states may not be dissociated from those of the hidden observer (see Hilgard 1986).

With these assumptions in mind, let's consider how to distinguish dissociation from a cluster of concepts easily confused with (but apparently closely related to) it. Probably the most important of these is the concept of repression. Although neither of these concepts is precise, we can effectively distinguish them so as to show that they mark off different (if slightly overlapping) classes of phenomena. In fact, they seem to rest on different presuppositions.

As Hilgard (1986) has noted, writers tend to employ different metaphors in describing the psychological barriers of repression and dissociation. Generally speaking, repressive barriers are described as horizontal, whereas dissociated barriers are described as vertical. As a result, repressed material is typically treated as psychologically (usually, emotionally) *deeper* than what we can access consciously. By contrast, dissociated states are not necessarily deeper than consciously accessible states.

This alleged difference connects with the different roles repression and dissociation ostensibly play in a person's psychological economy. Ordinarily, repression is linked to dynamic psychological forces and active mental defenses that inhibit recall. Granted, some writers similarly describe dissociation as a defense mechanism (primarily, one that produces amnesia), but that view seems both confused and needlessly restrictive (see Braude 1995; Cardeña 1994). In fact, paradigm cases of dissociation needn't involve any impairment of memory, and dissociation may be only fortuitously related to the exigencies of psychological survival. For example, systematized anesthesia does not affect memory, and posthypnotic amnesia can concern virtually any kind of material, whether important or unimportant.

Historically, the concept of repression is bound up with the psychoanalytic concept of a dynamic unconscious, which (among other things) acts as a repository for repressed material and access to which seems more indirect than access to a dissociated part of consciousness. According to the traditional and still standard view of repression, we learn about the unconscious through its byproducts (e.g., dreams or

slips of the tongue), and expressions of unconscious material tend to be distorted, either symbolically or by means of more primitive primary-process thinking. So the received view is that repressed mental activities can only be inferred from their behavioral or phenomenological byproducts. By contrast, dissociated material can be accessed relatively directly, as in automatic writing, hypnosis, and interactions with alter identities in cases of DID. We can summarize this difference by saying that third- and first-person knowledge of dissociated—but not unconscious—states can be as direct as (respectively) third- and first-person knowledge of nondissociated states.

So we can say that if x is repressed for S (in this sense of “repressed”), then (a) S is not consciously aware of (or has amnesia for) x , and (b) third- and first-person knowledge of x is indirect as compared (respectively) with third- and first-person knowledge of both conscious and dissociated states (i.e., it must be *inferred* from its possibly distorted or primitive cognitive, phenomenological, or behavioral byproducts). Not surprisingly (and not alarmingly), this still leaves a variety of borderline cases—for example, amnesia for a memory we’re motivated to forget but which can be recovered directly through hypnosis, or behavior that reveals hidden feelings but whose interpretation is clear even to the person exhibiting it (e.g., forgetting an appointment you prefer to avoid). In fact, in some cases the only difference between a repressed and a dissociated state may be the conceptual framework in terms of which it is treated clinically. For example, obsessional or compulsive behavior might be approached psychoanalytically, using indirect methods (e.g., free association) to uncover the reasons for the behavior. Or, it might be treated as a dissociative disorder, using hypnosis to reveal hidden memories lying at the root of the problem.

The concept of suppression is also a bit difficult to pin down, and certainly the term “suppression” gets used in various ways (often as a synonym for “repression”). To the extent that there is a standard view of the difference between suppression and repression, there seem to be two distinguishing features. First, “amnesia is absent in suppression, present in repression” (Hilgard 1986: 251), and second, suppression never results from unconscious activity. So suppression seems to be “a conscious putting-out-of-mind of something we don’t want to think about”. (Braun 1988: 5). So if we agree to use “suppression” in this fairly narrow technical sense, we can say that when x is suppressed for S , (a) S consciously diverts attention from x (i.e., puts x “out of mind”), and (b) S does not have amnesia for x .

Although Braun regards *denial* as yet another distinct point on a continuum of awareness (Braun 1988), I submit that if we define the relevant terms as I suggest here, a distinct category of denial is gratuitous. I propose instead that we consider analyzing the term “denial” in terms of repression, suppression, and dissociation. For example, one handy (if slightly oversimplified) approach would be the following. Let’s suppose first that the difference between unconscious and subconscious mental states is that the former can be accessed only indirectly (as explained earlier), whereas the latter can be accessed relatively directly. Then we can regard repression as *unconscious denial*, dissociation as *subconscious denial*, and suppression as *conscious denial*.

With these considerations in mind, I offer the following provisional analysis of

dissociation. We can then see how it bears on current debates about dissociation. Let's say "x is dissociated from y" just in case:

1. (a) *x* is an occurrent or dispositional state of a person *S*, or else a system of states (as in traits, skills, and alternate personalities), and (b) *y* is either a state or system of states of *S*, or else the person *S*.
2. *y* may or may not be dissociated from *x* (i.e., dissociation is a nonsymmetrical relation).
3. *x* and *y* are separated by a phenomenological or epistemological barrier (e.g., amnesia, anesthesia) erected by the subject *S*.
4. *S* is not consciously aware of erecting the barrier between *x* and *y*.
5. The barrier between *x* and *y* can be broken down, at least in principle.
6. Third- and first-person knowledge of *x* may be as direct as (respectively) third- and first-person knowledge of *S*'s nondissociated states.

Condition 1 takes the capability, ownership, and diversification assumptions into account, and condition 5 acknowledges the accessibility assumption. Since condition 4 requires *S* to erect the dissociative barrier either subconsciously or unconsciously, it provides a way of ruling out cases of suppression. Similarly, condition 6 rules out a large set of cases ordinarily classified as instances of repression.

Condition 3 is designed to rule out a large class of cases we would presumably not count as dissociative but in which *S*'s states seem to lie behind an epistemological barrier. In particular, this condition rules out many examples of conceptual naiveté and inevitable forms of self-ignorance. For example, *S* might desire or dislike something but lack the introspective or conceptual sophistication, or the relevant information, needed to recognize those states. So condition 3 rules out cases in which infants, small children, or naive or mentally challenged adults lack the conceptual categories to identify their own mental states. The epistemological barrier in these cases is not something they erect. Similarly, many conceptually sophisticated adults may fail to recognize they have certain mental states, either because they are insufficiently introspective or because they lack relevant information. For example, *S* might be unaware he detests the sound of a fortepiano because he has not yet heard enough examples for that disposition (or regularity in his preferences) to become clear. He might mistakenly think he dislikes only the one or two fortepianos he's heard. That is clearly not a case of dissociation, and condition 3 rules it out as well.

I believe this account of dissociation is sufficiently abstract and general to undergird and also correct the needlessly restrictive or overinclusive accounts one finds throughout the clinical and experimental literature. For example, Cardeña (1994) has identified several general approaches to the analysis of dissociation, many (or perhaps the most credible) of which can be seen as presupposing most of the conditions specified here. These approaches include taking dissociation to be (1) the absence of conscious awareness of impinging stimuli or ongoing behaviors; (2) the coexistence of separate mental systems or identities that should be integrated in the person's consciousness, memory, or identity; (3) ongoing behaviors or perceptions that are

inconsistent with a person's introspective verbal report; and (4) an alteration of consciousness in which one feels disconnected from the self or from the environment. Moreover, the foregoing account also corrects some obvious shortcomings of the prevailing approaches—for example, that some instances of (3) would include as dissociative what are clearly cases of self-deception, cognitive dissonance or confusion, or outright ignorance or stupidity (say, a person's simply failing to grasp that simultaneously held beliefs are inconsistent). (For further details, see Braude 1995: ch. 4; Cardeña 1994.)

In any event, my proposed criteria of dissociation clearly countenance a large range of phenomena as instances. Naturally (and predictably), classic forms of pathological dissociation satisfy the criteria, including DID and dissociative fugue. Moreover, other familiar impressive phenomena likewise satisfy the criteria—for example, hypnotic amnesia, anesthesia or analgesia, and automatic writing. Perhaps more interesting, the criteria are apparently satisfied by a range of normal phenomena many want to regard as dissociative. These include, for example, blocking out the sound of ongoing conversation while reading (but being able to respond when your name is mentioned) and shifting gears and obeying traffic lights while driving but consciously focusing only on your conversation with your passenger. I consider it a virtue of these criteria that they undergird a variety of disparate intuitions about which phenomena are instances of dissociation. And that brings us to the next issue.

Probably the most hotly debated topic today about dissociation is whether normal, experimental, and pathological dissociation are all forms of a single phenomenon (let's call this the *inclusivity position*), or whether pathological and nonpathological dissociation differ in kind rather than in degree (the *exclusivity position*). Thus, the debate concerns the viability of the diversification assumption, according to which dissociation assumes (nonessentially) different forms and spreads out along a variety of relevant continua. Until recently, most clinicians and experimenters embraced the inclusivity position. But on the basis of some recent taxonomic analyses by Waller, Putnam, and Carlson, and a small number of subsequent studies by other investigators, some now claim that pathological and nonpathological forms of dissociation are sharply distinct categories, and they argue that it is a mistake to view normal and pathological dissociation as continuous (see, e.g., Putnam 1997; Waller et al. 1996; Boon and Draijer 1993; Ogawa et al. 1997).

But this recent endorsement of the exclusivity position seems unconvincing for several reasons. First, it's likely that the appearance of distinct classes or taxa of dissociative phenomena is simply an artifact of the categories and form of questions used in the questionnaire from which the data were gathered (Ruk, in press). But, quite apart from that, even if pathological and nonpathological forms of dissociation differ consistently and dramatically (so that many properties of the latter are never properties of the former), that *could not* by itself show that the two forms of dissociation were discontinuous. One of the assumptions apparently underlying the exclusivity view is that if the two forms of dissociation were continuous, one would expect to find a fairly even distribution of dissociative phenomena along a dissociative continuum. And because Waller et al. report finding two distinct clusters or taxa of

phenomena, not the relatively smooth distribution to which they think the inclusivity view (or diversification assumption) is committed, they believe they have disconfirmed the inclusivity view.¹ However, it seems simply arbitrary to suppose that the distribution between normal and pathological dissociative phenomena must be smooth. In fact, uneven distributions are clearly compatible with treating all dissociative phenomena as continuous. At least some leading researchers recognize this (see, e.g., Nijenhuis 1999: 175f). For example, pathological lying and ordinary lying can easily be regarded as falling along various continua, even if the former can be sharply distinguished from the latter and even if there are relatively few examples of lying that fall between the extremes. Similar observations can be made about the differences between normal orderliness and pathological or compulsive orderliness, and between ordinary anxiety and panic attacks.

Moreover, I suspect that defenders of the exclusivity position set up a straw man when they state the inclusivity position. To say that normal and pathological dissociative phenomena are continuous is not to say that there is a *single* dissociative continuum along which those forms of dissociation are spread (unevenly or evenly). That's an absurdly simple and antecedently incredible formulation of the inclusivity position, and it's all too easy to overturn. Presumably, one can always select a list of allegedly relevant properties in such a way that the classes of normal and pathological dissociation appear to be disjoint. But on different characterizations of dissociation, or using different lists of relevant properties, the two forms of dissociation might turn out to overlap. Indeed, we saw that the criteria of dissociation I listed earlier countenance both normal and pathological forms of dissociation, and phenomena that satisfy those criteria clearly spread out (smoothly or otherwise) along the continua mentioned when I stated the diversification assumption (e.g., pervasiveness, frequency, severity).

THE HUMPTY DUMPTY FALLACY

So let's assume we have a reasonably clear idea of which phenomena count as examples of dissociation. What do those phenomena tell us about the nature of the mind? Of course, for many the main issue is whether human beings are deeply unitary or, alternatively, whether they are fundamentally multiple persons or colonies of lower-order selves (or humunculi). That issue is addressed elsewhere in this volume (but for large-scale treatments of the issue, see Braude 1995; Radden 1996; Saks and Behnke 1997; and Wilkes 1988; and for a recent and thoughtful survey, see Graham 2002). For now, we may focus on a related but more modest issue.

When the pioneers of hypnosis observed the phenomena of divided consciousness, they believed that their techniques *uncovered* aspects of mental functioning that were normally hidden. Specifically, they assumed that their therapeutic techniques

disclosed a doubling of consciousness that had existed all along within their patients. So they supposed that their magnetic (hypnotic) techniques illuminated a normally hidden feature of our mental *structure* (Braude 1995; Crabtree 1993; Ellenberger 1970). Once nineteenth-century research into multiple personality had gotten under way, we find helpfully explicit statements of this assumption. For example, Ribot wrote, "Seeing how the Self is broken up, we can understand how it comes to be" (1887: 20). Later, Myers wrote, "Subjected continually to both internal and external stress and strain, its [i.e., the personality's] ways of yielding indicate the grain of its texture" (1903: 39).

These authors seem to be making a kind of historical or developmental claim — namely, that dissociative disorganization or splitting is a reversal or undoing of a prior functional organization or unity. So from the phenomena of dissociation, we should be able to infer the elements or organizing principles underlying that former unity. That is, we should be able to argue from postdissociative divisions of the self to the predissociative structures or divisions that made them possible. I've called this the *Principle of Compositional Reversibility* (or CR principle), and the fallacy it commits the *Humpty Dumpty Fallacy*.

This brief summary can't explore all the relevant issues here, but we can note the following. First, the CR principle has been articulated in both a weak and a strong form. The strong version (prevalent during the nineteenth century) holds that there is correlation (perhaps an identity) between the *particular* clinical or experimental entities produced dissociatively and the components of the predissociative self. So from our discovery of the former, we should be able to infer the existence of the latter. Let's call this the *token* CR principle. The weaker version asserts a correlation merely between the *kinds* of entities produced dissociatively and the *kinds* of things composing the predissociative self (see, e.g., Beahrs 1982; Watkins and Watkins 1979–80). Let's call this the *type* CR principle.

Both versions of the CR principle are fatally flawed, and although the details of their errors vary somewhat, the main problem is quite simple. Just because something is now in pieces, it doesn't follow that those pieces correspond to permanent or previously existing natural elements of that thing. Certainly, it's not a general truth that things always divide along some preexisting grain or that objects divide only into their historically original components.

Consider the token CR principle first. I can break a board in two pieces with an axe, but it doesn't follow that the board resulted initially from the uniting of those two parts. Moreover, some cases of splitting, such as cell division, are evolutionary and create entities that didn't exist previously. So if the token CR principle is true, it's not because it's an instance of a more general truth about the way things break up. It would have to be true in virtue of the special way the self divides.

But there is no reason to think that the self always breaks along a preexisting grain or structure, especially under extreme trauma or stress. In cases of DID we see alter identities that apparently form in response to *contingent* stressful situations, and those identities seem to be contingent *products* of a creative process of defense or adaptation. That's why some alters are animal identities, and it's why some are highly

specialized (e.g., for cleaning toilets or taking enemas) or specifically impaired (e.g., blind or deaf). Moreover, a multiple's system of alters evolves over time, and sometimes it undergoes temporary integration and subsequent fundamental functional reorganization into a different system of alters. But then it becomes arbitrary to choose one temporal slice of a multiple's history and to claim that the alters at that time reveal the deep grain or structure of the predissociative self. It's much more reasonable to maintain that a multiple's array of alters *at any time* represents merely one of many possible dissociative solutions to problems in living.

A similar point works against the type CR principle, because a multiple's system of alters at different times may divide along quite different functional lines. So it would be arbitrary to select one set of alter *types* as representing the deep functional divisions of the predissociative self. Moreover, it's difficult to know what the type CR principle means and, in particular, to *which* types of postdissociative entities it should apply. Surely, not every type—for example, alters that prefer analog to digital sound, collect ostrich purses, or enjoy rap music. In fact, even if we identify types more conservatively, the type CR principle still seems committed to an absurdly inflated inventory of personality divisions. Suppose an alter identity emerged to deal with witnessing the murder of one's parents. Does that mean that there was a preexisting personality component of the type specifically suited to dealing with the murder of one's parents? And, if so, must we posit a distinct component waiting in the wings (so to speak) just in case the murder had been to the person's siblings, or in-laws, or next-door neighbors? Even if we say there needs only to be a component to deal with murder of any kind and to any person, does that mean we need to posit a component that could have been dissociated just in case the victims had been tortured instead, and another if they had been kidnapped, and another if they had merely been stalked?

It won't help advocates of a type CR principle to argue that there is (in part) only a small number of psychologically primitive types, and dissociative splits reveal them. Like descriptive categories of any sort, a set of personality or functional types represents one of any number of ways of slicing the psychological pie. There is no privileged (or perspective- or context-independent) inventory of psychological types or divisions into parts, just as there is no single correct or privileged answer to the questions "How many things are in this room?" and "How many events were there in World War II?"

Despite these considerations, some might think that some sort of CR principle *must* be true. Perhaps they would agree with Binet that "what is capable of division must be made up of parts" (1896: 348f). That is, perhaps they still believe that the self cannot be unitary, since if it were, DID and other dissociative phenomena would be impossible. But if they want to avoid the fatal flaws of the token and type CR principles, their only option would seem to be a *noncommittal* CR principle, analogous to the position called "anomalous monism" in the philosophy of mind. They might argue that there are, indeed, predissociative divisions of the self but that they don't correlate with postdissociative divisions. In other words, there would be a non-lawlike correlation between pre- and postdissociative divisions of the self, and we would not be able to infer features of the former from features of the latter.

Of course, this strategy seems thoroughly unenlightening, and if researchers subscribed to it, we might wonder why they would expect dissociation to yield great and *distinctive* insights into the nature of the mind or self. To see this, consider why partisans of a type CR principle regard the functional types of dissociative entities or states to be of theoretical interest. Obviously, we don't need angry or sexually promiscuous alter identities (say) to demonstrate that people have a predissociative capacity for anger or sexual promiscuity. So what reason do we have for focusing on *dissociative* anger and so on? What special fact about the predissociative self could we hope to learn from an angry alter? The answer, presumably, is that an alter of that type would tell us something about how the predissociative self came to be—that is, about the self's processes of organization and formation, or about the historically original components of the predissociative self. If that were not the case, dissociated anger would apparently tell us no more about our underlying mental *structure* than would nondissociative anger.

So advocates of the CR principle seem to hope that dissociative phenomena will illuminate the predissociative divisions of the self that made *those* phenomena possible. They seem to be looking for nontrivial lawlike connections between pre- and postdissociative divisions. But that means they have to decide between the fatally flawed token or type CR principles.

Quite apart from all these details, it should be clear that there was something wrong from the start about the strategy of inferring predissociative divisions of the self from postdissociative divisions. To argue successfully for the predissociative complexity of the self, one must show that it's required to handle *nondissociative* phenomena. Otherwise, one can always maintain plausibly that alter identities, hidden observers, and other dissociative splits are simply products of (rather than prerequisites for) dissociation. That is why some adopt a strategy, similar to Plato's, of inferring parts of the self merely from ordinary (but nondissociative) internal conflicts. Although I believe that strategy is also defective (see Braude 1995 for details), that's clearly a matter for another occasion. For now, we can be satisfied with a modest (but nevertheless important) conclusion: namely, that we seem unable to establish a nonunitary view of the self by appealing exclusively to dissociative phenomena.

NOTE

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1. In the study by Ogawa et al. (1997), the assumption is slightly different, but just as questionable and (*mutatis mutandis*) subject to the same criticism. The researchers conducted a longitudinal study with young children at risk for traumatization. According to Nijenhuis, they found that the largest difference was between the clinical dissociative group and the normal group as a whole, which consisted of low- and high-dissociative normal subjects. They argued that if the clinical group were merely the high end of a distribution of dissociation scores, then one would expect that discriminant analyses would differentiate the low-normal group, the largest group, from the two smaller high-dissociation groups (Nijenhuis 1999: 174).

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