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Addressing Mental Plurality

Justification, Objections and Logical Requirements of Strongly Partitive Accounts of Mind

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ABSTRACT. Strongly partitive accounts deviate radically from the common view of a single, unified knower or self within each 'person', proposing instead an account of multiple knowers. This view is justified by consideration of mental conflict, and objections, including the view that conflict does not require strong partitioning, that there exists a tension between 'persons' and 'parts', and the problem of homunculi, are found not to hold. However, the problems of proposing partitioning *ad hoc* and *ad libitum* are genuine concerns that any account of mental plurality must address. The realist account of cognition, proposing that cognition is a relation between subject and object terms existing independently of the cognitive relation, provides a conceptual basis for evaluating strongly partitive accounts. On this view, any account of knowers, either singular or plural, must be capable of specifying their intrinsic qualities. Pears's account is found to be problematic here since it fails to meet this logical requirement. Maze's account is found to satisfy this requirement, providing in-principle means of characterizing the multiple knowers.

KEY WORDS: logical requirements, mind, realism, strong partitioning, sub-systems

The belief that within each individual resides a single unified knower or 'self' is generally taken for granted. 'Strongly' partitive accounts, however, propose that the mind is inhabited by a multiplicity of knowing subjects or sub-systems. Extraordinary cases, such as multiple personality disorder (or, more technically, 'dissociative identity disorder'; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and split-brain patients (e.g. Sperry, 1969, 1982), suggest that such accounts are possible. Furthermore, others propose that mental plurality is a normal phenomenon, claiming that ordinarily within each individual reside a multiplicity of knowers. Several objections to strong partitioning, however, raise questions concerning whether these accounts can be coherently sustained and point to a need for identifying the logical

requirements for assessing accounts of mental plurality. The aim of the present paper is to examine the justification for proposing ordinary mental partitioning and address objections drawn against it. The paper then outlines requirements that any account of strong partitioning must satisfy, and examines Pears's (1984, 1986) and Maze's (1983, 1987) accounts of mental plurality in relation to these requirements.

Justification for Strong Partitioning

Strongly partitive accounts are often invoked for their heuristic value in avoiding the paradox of self-deception (e.g. Cavell, 1993; Glymour, 1991; Heil, 1989; Hopkins, 1995; Pugmire, 1994). Generally speaking, rather than attempting to understand how a single agent can simultaneously believe that *p* and believe that not-*p*, the contradictory beliefs are partitioned: the beliefs are said to be held by different 'parts' of the mind. However, apart from its heuristic value, mental partitioning appears to be necessary for explaining *mental conflict*. Beres (1995) notes that conflict implies *opposition* (i.e. at least two 'sides'; cf. Singer, 1949, p. 145), so if the human subject is a truly *unified* agent, then it is difficult to account for conflicting intentions and desires. To further appreciate this point requires first outlining the meaning of 'desire' and developing an appropriate conceptual framework. Historically 'desires' have been defined relationally and psychologically, as a desire *for something*, a relation between a desirer and that which is desired: 'You would say—would you not?—that the soul of him who desires is seeking after the object of his desire: or that he is drawing to himself the thing which he wishes to possess . . . ?' (Plato, 1928, p. 166). Desires can thus be conceptualized as a species of *propositional attitudes*, attitudes towards propositions or states of affairs (e.g. *S* desires that *p*; cf. Gardner, 1993; Mackay, 1996). This conceptual position is consistent with a relational account of cognition, a view going back to Aristotle (see Petocz, 1999), developed via medieval scholasticism (see Pasnau, 1997), and prominent in the American new realists (e.g. E.B. Holt) and the British Realists (e.g. G.E. Moore, J. Laird and Samuel Alexander; see Michell, 1988). In the 20th century, the relational view of cognition found prominence in the Australian school of Andersonian Realism (see Anderson, 1927/1962a, 1930/1962b; Baker, 1986) and has been further developed by Maze (1983), Michell (1988) and McMullen (1996). Although this position stands in contrast to conceptions of cognition within modern cognitive psychology, which discuss 'mental representations' or substantive mental entities (see Michell, 1988; McMullen, 1996), the realist position accepted here acknowledges the important distinction between relations and terms standing within those relations:

Anything that can stand . . . in any relation at all, must have at least some intrinsic properties. If that were not the case . . . then we could not

understand what it was that was said to have those relationships. A relation can only hold between two or more terms, and a part of what is involved in seeing those terms as related is being able to see them as distinct, that is, as each having its own intrinsic properties, so that we can say what the terms *are* that are related. That means that each term of the relation must be able in principle to be described without the need to include any reference to its relation to the other. (Maze, 1983, p. 24)

With respect to mentality, cognition is viewed as a specific type of *relation* between a cognizing subject and an independent object term (Anderson, 1927/1962a; Maze, 1983; Michell, 1988). Cognition here refers to acts of *knowing*, such as believing, thinking, remembering, wishing, and desiring, which may either be veridical or non-veridical: '[P]sychological processes are . . . typified by a kind of relation not to be found in merely physical interactions, and that is the relation of *knowing about* or *referring to*' (Maze, 1983, p. 83). The cognitive relation itself 'is not a kind of *stuff* that binds the terms. It is just how the terms are with respect to each other' (Michell, 1988, p. 234):

Knowledge being taken as a relation, it is thus asserted that, when I know this paper, 'I know' in no way constitutes this paper, nor does 'know this paper' in any way constitute me, nor does 'know' constitute either me or this paper. (Anderson, 1927/1962a, p. 27)

Accordingly, in any instance of knowing (*S* knows *p*), there is: (i) a *subject S* that knows something; and (ii) the something known (*p*). *S*'s knowing *p* is entailed by neither (i) nor (ii) alone. Any account of cognition thus requires stipulating the subject term (the knower) and object term (the known) involved in the cognitive relation. When *S* knows *p*, the subject *S* must be capable of description independently of both *p* and the cognitive relation with *p* (i.e. *S* must have its own intrinsic qualities). Similarly, the object of cognition, conceived of as a situation, is logically independent of the knower and the cognitive relation, although this does not mean that the object must necessarily be located externally to the knower's body. Since a knower may be taken to include the subject's nervous system, then the object of cognition could be located within the body, yet still external to the nervous system (Michell, 1988, p. 234). Indeed, since the nervous system is complex, one part of the nervous system could know another part of that same system. The contention here, however, is that in all these cases the knower is logically independent from that which is known. Hence, on the realist account mentality must be rejected as a substantive and cognition cannot be reduced to either of the terms of the relation, be it the knower or the known (for a detailed defence of this position, see Maze, 1983; McMullen, 1996; Michell, 1988).

Viewed as such, a desire must entail an object of desire, the psychological relation of desiring, and a desiring subject. In the case of conflicting desires, then the unity of the agent is compromised since the existence of competing

desires would appear to entail competing *desirers*. This view that psychological conflict entails a multiplicity of knowers or desirers is not new. Plato (1928) proposes a similar view when he compares mental conflict to 'struggles of factions in a State' (440b, p. 170; cf. Neu, 1988). Additionally, in the dialogue between Socrates and Adeimantus he writes:

... the soul of the thirsty one, in so far as he is thirsty, desires only drink: for this he yearns and tries to obtain it?

That is plain.

And if you suppose something which pulls a thirsty soul away from drink, that must be different from the thirsty principle which draws him like a beast to drink: for, as we were saying, the same thing cannot at the same time with the same part of itself act in contrary ways about the same.

Impossible.

No more than you can say that the hands of the archer push and pull the bow at the same time, but what you say is that one hand pushes and the other pulls.

Exactly so, he replied.

And might a man be thirsty, and yet unwilling to drink?

Yes, he said, it constantly happens.

And in such a case what is one to say? Would you not say that there was something in the soul bidding a man to drink, and something else forbidding him, which is other and stronger than the principle which bids him?

I should say so. (Plato, 1928: 439b–39d, p. 169, italics added)

In more recent times, the psychoanalytic perspective, emphasizing psychical conflict in human maturation and personality development, also highlights the multiplicity of conflicting motives. Indeed, the psychoanalytic observation of the pervasiveness of psychical conflict allows Neu (1988) to rightly conclude: 'The more ordinary phenomena of internal conflict make the notion of an indissoluble unity at best an ideal to be striven for rather than a given in the human condition' (p. 87).

Furthermore, it is proposed that mental plurality is necessary to account for certain psychoanalytic phenomena. Given the Freudian assertion that after repression the repressed desire persists as an activity of a person's own psyche, repeatedly re-presenting itself to the subject and remaining causally active (Freud, 1900/1953a, p. 577; 1915/1958c, p. 166), the general problem for accounts that propose a single knower is explaining how the repressed is prevented from becoming known, without the subject knowing it. Freudian repression appears to require an account of mental plurality to explain how a person desires both that p be true whilst also desiring that not- p be the case, represses one of the desires, and prevents the persisting desire from being known without also being aware of it.

Subsequently, Maze (1983) and Petocz (1999) identify the motivational systems (the instinctual drives) within the organism as the conflicting knowers:

It is only from a pluralistic view . . . that one can begin to make sense of the facts of internal conflict and of repression, of the situation in which one part of the psychological apparatus knows something that another part does not know. (Maze, 1983, p. 162)

. . . in order to accommodate the fact of mental conflict, of a conflict of interests within a single mind, there must be a plurality of drives—at least two. (Petocz, 1999, p. 221)

However, the thesis of mental plurality is by no means standard psychoanalytic doctrine. Indeed, Freud in several places remarks that only a single knower exists within the person; there is no splitting up of consciousness such that there is a consciousness unknown to another consciousness within the one mind or person:

We have no right to extend the meaning of this word [conscious] so far as to make it include a consciousness of which its owner himself is not aware. If philosophers find difficulty in accepting the existence of unconscious ideas, the existence of an unconscious consciousness seems to me even more objectionable. (Freud, 1912/1957b, p. 263; cf. 1915/1958c, p. 170)

One question that arises from this, then, is whether conflict necessarily implies partitioning.

Does Conflict Imply Partitioning?

Some authors attempt to demonstrate that the mere fact of psychical conflict does not necessarily imply strong partitioning. For example, Heil (1989), who accepts the heuristic value of partitioning for strong cases of self-deception (p. 582), argues that simply distinguishing ‘between the motivational strength possessed by a given desire and its evaluative standing, we can account for a broad range of irrational actions without resorting to mental division’ (p. 581). A person, for example, may believe it is wrong to insult someone, but may do it nonetheless since his or her desire to insult is stronger than the evaluation not to do so. As presented, this appears then to be a simple case of a conflicting desire and belief, not requiring a multiplicity of either desires or agents. However, closer examination suggests that a division is implied, since *conflict* would only emerge if a desire to insult *and* a desire *not to* insult (i.e. to act on the belief that it is wrong to insult someone) both exist. ‘Beliefs’ (which include knowledge, memory and fantasy), though necessary, are not sufficient for behaviour to occur since they are policy-neutral (simply about states of affairs) and cannot explain why, for any given belief, one person acts in one particular way and another differently, (Mackay, 1994; Maze, 1983, 1987):

Any information which can be put into the form *X leads to Y* can be used either in promoting *Y* or in avoiding it. . . . The belief, for example, that a certain diet will increase body weight may lead one either to adopt that diet or to avoid it, depending on one's already existing motives or drive state; it may produce opposing behaviours in the same person at different times. Thus, as it is identically the same belief operating in each case, it cannot be said to imply either policy. Factual information in itself is policy-neutral; it can initiate behaviour only if it is perceived as relevant to one of the person's existing policies. (Maze, 1987, p. 191)

The additional factor required is a motivational component (i.e. the 'desire') to explain a given person's policy regarding how he or she acts on that belief. Thus, although beliefs are policy-neutral, alluding to 'evaluative standing' masks the existence of the second desire. Viewed in this manner, Heil's example is a case of conflicting desires, and not a unified mind as first supposed. The same holds for other types of conflict, such as that between bodily desire and moral beliefs. Although morality may be imposed in the first place by external sources (social demands and expectations), whether an individual follows such moral dictates cannot be explained without some reference to motivation (i.e. a 'desire' component).

However, some claim that conflicting desires still belong to the one 'person' (i.e. a single agent; e.g. Gardner, 1993, p. 75; Schafer, 1973, p. 262): 'Persons do have parts, in the sense that their personalities comprehend contrasting sources of motivation: but not in the sense that their minds have parts which function like agents' (Gardner, 1993, p. 78). To some extent this view is found in Freud's explanation of 'split-consciousness' and differing mental groupings, a position found also in Davidson's (1982, 1985, 1998) 'weakly' partitive account. Rather than multiple knowers, the 'same consciousness turns to one or the other of these groups alternately' (Freud, 1915/1958c, p. 171). On this view, conflict emerges not between multiple agents, but between a single subject deciding upon different courses of action:

. . . in speaking traditionally [i.e. the Freudian view of drives], we are saying something absurd, namely that the person is stronger than himself or herself. . . . In contrast, it is entirely logical to say that the person does one action more completely or conspicuously than another or even to the exclusion of effective or recognizable manifestations of the other. (Schafer, 1973, p. 263)

However, if the 'person' acts as an executive, arbitrating between different desires, then this agent must also be motivated (i.e. have his or her own desires) to explain how he or she arbitrates between one course of action and another (see Maze, 1983, 1987; Michell, 1988). If so, then there are at least two poles of agency consisting of 'person desires' and 'non-person desires', and so not a single agent as first presumed. In fact, to say that a 'person' manages his or her 'conflicting desires' requires: (a) the person, as subject,

desiring to manage his or her conflicting desires; and (b) the subject(s) of the conflicting desires (e.g. S^1 desiring that p , S^2 desiring that not- p). Consequently, postulating a 'person' managing conflicting desires multiplies the number of knowers involved.

'Persons' vs 'Parts'

This last point, however, indicates that the relationship between 'persons' and 'parts' needs addressing. One claim here is that a tension emerges: mental states either belong to the person or to sub-systems but not to both: 'Sub-systems therefore entail radical conceptual revision: equipped with their own point of view, they think, intend and act, and in so doing compete with persons for the ownership of mental states' (Gardner, 1993, p. 80). Gardner believes that the competition here is resolved phenomenologically: since we only ever know ourselves as 'persons', it is the 'person' who owns mental states (Gardner, 1993, p. 83; cf. Macmurray, 1969). This exploits the apparent gap between partitioning accounts and human experience: we only have our single subjective frame of reference and never experience the world, nor could we, says Gardner, through the 'eyes' of a variety of 'persons'. Empirically this is immediately disputable, since Rorty (1988) notes that there *is* an experiential basis for partitioning strategies: certain normal and pathological cases demonstrate that 'psychological dissociation and disintegration can be phenomenologically experienced' (p. 24). Nevertheless, even if experience could only be known through a single subjective frame of reference, as Gardner maintains, this would not necessitate mental unity since other factors may explain the singular experience of the 'person', even if a multiplicity were to exist. For instance, if a plurality is constrained within a singular perceptual apparatus and body, then it might only be natural to perceive mental unity whilst remaining unaware of the multiplicity. Such an account is not implausible, since from infancy onwards the developing sense of 'self' is conveyed through proprioception of a single body (Mahler & McDevitt, 1982; cf. Freud, 1923/1961, p. 26). Consequently, when the organism engages in 'self-reflection' or (self-)consciousness, the 'whole' organism (and its relations) is taken as the object of cognition. The resulting belief of a unified self is as *prima facie* plausible as the belief that the sun revolves around the earth. Such a belief in the 'self' constitutes an error of omission (see Rantzen, 1993, p. 165), and the 'self-belief' can be viewed as an evolved, complex fantasy (see Grossman, 1982; Peskin, 1997; Spruiell, 1981). Consequently, the experience of mental unity is not sufficient for refuting claims of strong partitioning.

However, although the phenomenological argument may be insufficient for demonstrating that mental plurality is problematic, there is still the

question of the relation of the 'whole' to the 'parts, and Macmurray (1969) argues that a problem arises here for accounts of mental plurality:

Different elements within us seem to be in competition with one another for the control of behaviour. Attempts to describe the relation between these elements in the Self tend to deny the unity which they seek to analyse, by lending to the parts the characters which properly belong only to the whole. The one Self becomes two selves—a higher self and a lower self, a controlling self and a self that is to be controlled. We have to learn to control ourselves, yet the very conception of self-control is paradoxical, for, as Plato pointed out, the man who is master of himself is thereby also slave of himself. The fact of experience that is expressed in all of this is that the unity of the Self contains, and indeed is constituted by[,] a practical contradiction between its elements. (p. 98)

However, the problem here with Macmurray's argument is that whilst the unity of the 'whole' in relation to the parts may be said to obtain, in the same way as the unity of a 'team' holds in relation to its players, whether the 'self' itself exists, as a separate agency, is not immediately clear. Macmurray's (1961) proposal of the 'self as agent' (or doer) would require, on the realist view, that such a self stand as the subject term in the *doing* relation (i.e. the agent *S* does *x*). Furthermore, Macmurray (1969) makes it clear that this self is a *cognizing* agent, since the actions it performs require cognition (p. 87), and hence it would also be the knowing subject in the cognitive relation (i.e. the agent *S* knows that *p*). However, Macmurray (1961) also claims that the self is constituted by relatedness: '[T]he Self exists only in dynamic relation with the Other [the world] . . . the Self is constituted by its relation to the Other' (p. 17). The problem here is that if the 'self' is constituted by relatedness, then it leaves unanswered what the 'it' is (the subject) that has that same relation (cf. Maze, 1983). Since the act of knowing requires both a subject and object term (a knower and what is known), each existing independently of the cognitive relation, then whatever is considered a knower must possess its own intrinsic qualities. If the self or knower is only defined in relation to other things (i.e. without intrinsic qualities of its own), as Macmurray suggests, then it cannot be said to be capable of standing as an independent subject term, and, if treated as such, it succumbs to the *fallacy of constitutive relations* (i.e. the fallacy of constituting an entity or thing solely in terms of its relatedness rather than in terms of intrinsic properties; cf. Maze, 1983). Consequently the 'self as agent', as proposed by Macmurray, cannot stand as the 'whole' subject having those relations.

Furthermore, Macmurray's (1969) point that a paradox arises when saying 'the man who is master to himself is also slave to himself' (p. 98) only holds *if* the 'man' who is slave is identical to the 'man' that is master. Here, however, the nature of the 'whole' needs greater consideration since, as already demonstrated, Macmurray's relationally defined 'self as agent' is problematic, and cannot stand as the 'whole' subject having those relations.

On the other hand, if the 'self' as 'whole' is simply the *apparent* unity, then one can compare it with a team existing as a 'whole', whilst not denying that it comprises distinct individuals who may at times be in conflict (with even some individuals dominating others, e.g. the captain). The problem that Macmurray draws attention to above only follows from the conventional usage of 'self' that presumes a person is one and the same throughout, which is exactly what is being brought into question here. Consequently, the further claim that the 'irrational element is necessary to the constitution of the rational whole' (Macmurray, 1969, p. 99; i.e. disunity implies unity) rests upon an already decided 'whole'. If the 'whole person' is, by definition, every activity or action that the organism engages in, then naturally the 'whole' obtains. But such a 'whole' simply reflects either a definition, or surface manifestation (e.g. the 'whole' body), rather than contradicting the actual existence of a multiplicity of desirers, sometimes in conflict, underlying the apparent 'unity'.

The Problem of Homunculi

This last point does bring into question the nature of the parts, and one objection to strong partitioning here is that it *succumbs* to the phantastic division of the person into homunculi' (or little people) (Gardner, 1993, p. 181; cf. Johnston, 1988; Thalberg, 1982). Homunculi, in this sense, each possess 'minimal rationality' in that their behaviour is explicable in reference to their own particular desire/belief patterns (de Sousa, 1976, p. 221). If so, says Johnston (1988), we either have the implausible view of multiple personalities, or otherwise have metaphors incapable of explaining phenomena such as self-deception:

This account [mental partitioning] can be discredited so long as we do not allow its advocates the luxury of hovering noncommittally between the horns of the dilemma: either take the subsystem account literally, in which case it implausibly represents the ordinary self-deceiver as a victim of something like multiple personality, or take it as a metaphor, in which case it provides no way to evade the paradoxes while maintaining that intentional acts constitute self-deception and wishful thinking. (p. 82)

However, the problem of homunculi or multiple 'persons' extends to the commonsense view of the 'person' or 'self' as well, since the subject term of any cognitive relation is not necessarily transparent. The simple response of equating the 'person' with the entire organism is problematic for reasons outlined earlier: this proposes unity, and difficulty emerges when explaining cases of psychological conflict and phenomena such as repression. Furthermore, claiming that a 'person' or 'persons' exist within the body then requires identifying precisely what such subjects are.

De Sousa (1976) believes that a problem here with sub-systematic accounts is that these parts are not in fact independent subject terms with their own intrinsic qualities. He claims that since behavioural aims change and combine into one another there is no evidence for the existence of 'relatively stable intentional systems' necessary for proposing sub-systems (p. 224). Instead, he argues, the supposed sub-systems are not cognizing subjects but rather 'projects', solely constituted by belief/desire structures: '[The] *candidates* for the status of homunculi are structured *projects*. . . . Beliefs are ascribed to persons, not to projects' (p. 233). If these sub-systems are, in fact, solely constituted by desires and beliefs, then there is a valid point here insofar as these relations cannot constitute agents having those same desires and beliefs, a mistaken viewpoint seen in Glymour's (1991) account of 'homuncular agents':

Roughly, what makes a system of beliefs and desires an agent is that they collaborate in almost every circumstance. . . . A collection of beliefs and desires forms a homuncular agent if the beliefs and desires are consistent and rationally combined to form preferences that are accommodated in the social determination of collective preference and in the consequent determination of action by the whole individual. (p. 75)

However, a problem with de Sousa's account here is that the argument rests on identifying the subject terms through behavioural aims. The finding that aims are fluid is not enough to dismiss a plurality given the psychoanalytic proposition that conflicting and cooperating desires and beliefs may combine to form compromise formations (see Freud, 1906/1953c, pp. 276–277; 1907/1959, p. 58; 1915/1958b, p. 149). Whilst it is true that sub-systems defined solely in terms of relations cannot stand as subject terms in those relations, whether a multiplicity of sub-systems exist must be identified independently of any given behaviour.

Although identifying the subject term in cognition may not be simple, it does not entail Hume's (1739/1958) conclusion that since experience only ever informs us of a particular perception there is no perceiver but merely a 'bundle or collection of different perceptions' (p. 251):

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself* I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but the perception. (p. 251)

Neither does it logically follow, as Gardner believes, that if the unified person is denied, then all that is left is the Humean view of the mind as a 'bundle of desires':

What is wrong with self-division is that it takes oneself to constitute *no more than a set of desires*: self-division manifests a Humean conception of persons as constructed out of relations between mental states. For the

Humean, any statement that a person has conflicting desires will reduce to a statement that there is a relation of conflict between desires: that a person is in conflict, to a statement that there exists a relation of conflict. (Gardner, 1993, pp. 92–93, italics added)

The problem with both these accounts is that desiring or perceiving are relations requiring both a subject and object term. The Humean position, raised by Gardner, errs precisely because it fails to acknowledge the meaninglessness of ‘perception’, ‘knowing’ and ‘desiring’ *without* a ‘perceiver’, ‘knower’ and ‘desirer’. The mind cannot be a society of desires alone, but possibly a society of desirers, and what is required in identifying such subject terms is specifying them independently from the relations they engage in.

The Arbitrary Specification of Sub-systems

It is this issue of specifying the knowing subject, independent of its relations, that raises legitimate concerns about sub-systems. One of Freud’s reservations about mental partitioning was similar to his stance on identifying drives from behavioural manifestations:

In the first place, a consciousness of which its own possessor knows nothing is something very different from a consciousness belonging to another person, and it is questionable whether such a consciousness, lacking, as it does, its most important characteristic, deserves any discussion at all. . . . In the second place, analysis shows that the different latent mental processes inferred by us enjoy a high degree of mutual independence, as though they had no connection with one another, and knew nothing of one another. We must be prepared, if so, to assume the existence in us not only of a second consciousness, but of a third, fourth, perhaps of an unlimited number of states of consciousness, all unknown to us and to one another. (Freud, 1915/1958c, p. 170)

The problem that Freud identifies here is that sub-systems are open to arbitrary specification. Without some objective manner of determining whether sub-systems exist, they become open to the criticism, voiced by Gay (1982), of being *ad hoc* strategies ‘which multiply agencies at will’ (p. 494). Here positing sub-systems to explain any psychological function is equivalent to postulating a drive to explain any given behaviour: it simply provides a vacuous account of motivation (Maze, 1983, 1993):

Drives specified by aim can be postulated without check, because the ‘evidence’ for them is always available: the observed behaviour they were postulated to explain. Any commonly occurring behaviour can be ‘explained’ by saying there must be an instinct or drive behind it, but it is only a pseudo-explanation. (Maze, 1993, pp. 462–463; cf. Freud, 1933/1960, p. 95)

Maze here is arguing not against the existence of genuine drives or instincts, but rather against proposing drives based solely on behavioural manifestations. To do so is a remnant of faculty psychology, where a 'faculty' of the mind is postulated to explain any effect based purely upon that same phenomenon, and subsequently open to the charge of circular explanation (cf. Anspach, 1998; Gardner, 1993; Passmore, 1935). If the only evidence for the supposed explanans is the explanandum, then it is simply redescribing what is in need of explanation. Furthermore, sub-systems can then be postulated *ad infinitum* since any number of sub-systems can be postulated to explain any number of psychological activities: 'Mental activity being viewed in this way, the number of possible agencies within agencies approaches infinity' (Schafer, 1973, p. 271).

Not everybody, however, agrees that there is a problem here. Given the scope of literature invoking sub-systems to explain cognitive functioning in modern cognitive theories, Erdelyi (1974) writes:

In this computer age, with man's head infested with (among other things) veritable societies of demons—e.g., feature demons, cognitive demons, decision demons, etc.—it is probably fair to say that the problem of the teleological homunculi has been over taken by time. It is clear . . . that a system with control processes for internal regulation, including regulation of input, violates no sacrosanct edict of science, nor does it imply the literal existence of little men or demons in the head. (p. 4)

However, the important question is: how are these terms to be understood? Without a coherent, objective foundation for these subjects, shifting the responsibility of any function onto sub-systems is merely *ad hoc* and no better than any similar claim, and so, as Neu (1988) proposes, 'the problem remains of how one is to specify and justify any particular theoretical division as opposed to any other' (p. 88). The problem of specifying sub-systems *ad hoc* and *ad libitum* is thus a legitimate concern.

Furthermore, these subject terms cannot simply arise *ex nihilo* for the sake of fulfilling a function, and their origins must be explicable within a deterministic framework, which specifies the conditions that these sub-systems arise from. Subsequently, Gardner (1993) argues that sub-systems remain problematic unless a parsimonious account of their origins is provided. He does, however, provide an example of what he considers to be satisfactory:

One possibility remains. It is that sub-systems are always present in human personality, in some actual or immanent form. To say this would be to claim that, from manifest mental disunity in certain contexts, the concealed existence of two or more mind-like entities at all times is to be inferred. This would solve the problem of causal genesis: if rational existence is in fact no different fundamentally, no special explanation is owed for the appearance of sub-systems in irrationality. (p. 76)

If so, supplying a satisfactory account of the origins of sub-systems surmounts one hurdle to a coherent account.

Requirements for Acceptable Strong Partitioning Accounts

After reviewing the objections to strong partitioning, we are now in a position to propose logical requirements that accounts of strong partitioning must satisfy. The main problem of these accounts is generating sub-systems *ad hoc* and *ad libitum* to explain cognitive functioning, and the subsequent difficulty of evaluating one account against another. This problem can be surmounted, however, through appeal to the realist account of cognition. Viewing cognition as a relation between independent subject and object terms means that, whatever is considered, a knower must possess its own intrinsic qualities, existing *independently of the cognitive relation*. That is, if sub-systems are proposed that can enter into psychological relationships, then these must be capable of being characterized independently of those same relations. Consequently, if a 'knower' is solely identified by its relations, then it cannot be said to be capable of standing as an independent subject term (cf. Anderson, 1927/1962a; Maze, 1983; Michell, 1988). Similarly, if a sub-system is proposed to explain a particular effect (and thus, following Hume, logically distinct from that same activity), then it must possess its own intrinsic qualities and consequently be capable of characterization independent of the activities it is said to enter into (cf. Maze, 1983). Furthermore, as knowers, the relation of these subject terms to cognition and motivation needs spelling out, and a plausible account of their origins needs to be provided (cf. Gardner, 1993). It should be stressed that such requirements are not exclusive to accounts of mental plurality, but extend also to any account of the 'knower', either singular or plural. As indicated earlier, if the self is defined solely in terms of its relatedness to other things, then it cannot also stand as the subject term in the knowing relation (cf. Maze, 1983). To summarize, any account of sub-systems must be capable of providing in principle specification of what these parts consist of, explain how they relate to cognition and motivation, and provide a plausible account of their causal origins.

Having discussed requirements for feasible strongly partitive accounts, the paper now turns to examples of strong partitioning.

Pears's Protective System (PS) Account

David Pears's (1984, 1986) rationale for positing sub-systems is solely to explain irrationality:

When the relation between certain elements in a single, unified system would be too irrational to be credible, we mark off a subsystem, which rids

the main system of the troublesome elements and combines them in a way that is internally rational. (Pears, 1986, p. 72)

His account of self-deception divides the mind into two independent, intentional systems, 'crediting each of them with the same kind of internal organization as a whole person' (1984, p. 86), each 'from its own point of view, entirely rational' (p. 87; cf. Pears, 1986, p. 64). The two protagonists are the *main system* (MS) and *protective system* (PS). (Pears [1984, 1986] refers to the 'subsystem' or simply 'S', whilst the term 'protective system' is from Johnston's [1988] description, based on the system's proposed motivation.) The MS generally corresponds to the 'ego' since it is the 'tolerably rational system of interacting desires and beliefs that maintains its diachronic identity through inner stability and memory and occupies the hot seat between perceptual input and behavioural output' (Pears, 1986, pp. 69–70). Ordinarily, the MS forms 'cautionary' beliefs preventing irrationality occurring. For example, the MS desires that *p* be the case but the evidence supports not-*p*, and so the undesired cautionary belief (the undesired not-*p*) is believed. However, under the influence of anxiety an 'ordinary wish' of the MS may give rise to the PS. The MS's 'wish to believe *p* . . . is the force that produces the secession of S [the PS] and motivates all its operations' (Pears, 1986, p. 74). After the PS forms, it then dominates the MS and manipulates its beliefs. The PS 'directly attacks the thought-processes of the main system' (Pears, 1986, p. 66); 'dominance and manipulation are the *raison d'être* of the sub-system' (Pears, 1984, p. 89). For this to be effective, the PS traverses the various systems of the mind (Pears, 1984, p. 89; cf. Pears, 1986, p. 76), having privileged access to the MS's problems and beliefs, whilst the MS must remain ignorant of the PS's operations for the deception to be successful. Consequently, the PS is capable of preventing the cautionary belief from forming and so the irrational belief is held to be true by the MS (Pears, 1986, p. 77). This, like Freudian repression, is a product of conflict and 'dynamic', rather than resulting from intellectual incompetence or lack of information (Pears, 1986, p. 71). The paradox of self-deception appears solved since the PS prevents beliefs forming in the MS.

Problems with Pears's Strong Partitioning Account

Pears's account here bears more than a passing resemblance to Freud's account of the repressing censor, famously criticized by Sartre (1956). Sartre's analysis, though not unproblematic, highlights the transcendental nature of Freud's censoring agency: the censoring agency traverses the mental systems and is superior to the conscious ego (as found in Pears's [1984, 1986] account). Sartre argues that if such an agency knows more about the personality than the ego (or in Pears's case the MS), insofar as it

knows both the world and itself, then such an agency has more claim to being the 'person', and so the self-deception is merely relocated.

However, the main problem with Pears's account is that it fails to characterize the PS agency independently of the functions it performs and so is open to the criticism of positing sub-systems *ad hoc* and *ad libitum* (see Gardner, 1993; Gay, 1982; Neu, 1988; Schafer, 1973). The main problem here, however, is that it is unlikely that any account of the PS's qualities could be provided since there is no adequate account of the sub-system's origins. Recall that Pears (1986) claims that it is 'the wish to believe *p* . . . that produces the secession of S [the PS] and motivates all its operations' (p. 74). The particular anomaly here is that, according to Pears, an 'ordinary wish' (p. 77) is said to give rise to an agency with privileged, extra-systemic access to the workings of the mind, and so is superior to the MS which produced it. This appears to be impossible, however, since a 'wish' (i.e. a desire for something to be the case) cannot intelligibly bring into existence an agency with both its own motivational and cognitive processes, and which is transcendental and superordinate to the system that created it. Consequently the PS appears to simply be an *ad hoc* device invoked to explain self-deception, and appears to reify self-deceiving activity into an 'autonomous consciousness', or, in Sartre's words, 'a mere verbal terminology' (Sartre, 1956, p. 53; cf. Anspach, 1998, p. 67n). Pears's account therefore fails to satisfy the logical requirements for coherent strong partitioning.

Example of a Logically Coherent Account of Strong Partitioning

An alternate strongly partitive account is provided by Maze (1983, 1987). Maze's account is articulated within a Freudian model explicitly committed to realism and determinism. The major extension, though, is the postulation of the motivating systems, the instinctual drives (or what he calls 'biological engines'), standing as the *knowers* in the cognitive situation. This extends a logical implication of Freud's recognition of the relationship between drives, objects and aims. Instinctual drives are not 'blind bodily forces' (i.e. directionless, non-cognitive urges), as some propose (e.g. Slavin & Grief, 1995, p. 166), but instead *psychobiological* systems (Petocz, 1999, p. 222). Freud (1911/1957a), in fact, writes: 'We regard instincts as being the concept on the frontier-line between the somatic and the mental, and see in it the psychical representative of organic forces' (p. 74). This may appear to make instinctual drives ontologically obscure, and it appears that Freud here was himself unclear: they were sometimes referred to as the 'psychical representative of the stimuli originating within the organism' (Freud, 1915/1958a, p. 122; cf. Freud, 1905/1953b, p. 168), yet elsewhere he writes

that an 'instinct can never become an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents the instincts can' (Freud, 1915/1958c, p. 177). The position is resolved if the instinctual drives are defined somatically, but simultaneously engage in cognition, and since behaviour is a complex process involving cognition (see Maze, 1983; Michell, 1988), Maze (1983) proposes that it is these drives that utilize cognition in their quest for gratification and avoidance of frustration: 'Each instinctual drive accumulates information and misinformation about the location and means of acquisition of the objects necessary for its specific actions to be performed' (p. 162). Hence, on this account, the smallest units comprising the 'knowers' in the cognitive relation are the psychobiological drive structures. Each drive is a bearer of full propositional attitude (desires, beliefs, fears) relevant to their somatic source component and subsequent policy.

Maze's account here is strongly partitive since each individual is made up of a small community of these drives, 'each of which is a knower and a doer' (Maze, 1987, p. 197). He is not, however, proposing that these should be understood to be anthropomorphic homunculi ('little persons'). Instead, the knowing drives are biomechanical systems utilizing cognition:

... unlike the whole person each has, in effect, only one motive, never restrains itself from seeking satisfaction, knows only a portion of the aggregate body of information, and suffers no internal conflict. An instinctual drive can no more restrain itself from working than any motor can, once the switches are thrown. If its operation is to be arrested, then that must be through some influence external to itself—in the case of repression, from other instinctual drives. (Maze, 1987, p. 197)

Once activated, these drives are thoroughly 'self'-serving in relation to their biologically wired interests and learnt sources of gratification and frustration. In this respect, their activity is explicable via psycho-mechanical principles, fully determined by their relevant causal conditions. The behaviour of the 'person' results from both facilitating and inhibiting influences emerging from the interaction of these drives.

Meeting the Criteria for Strong Partitioning

One advantage of Maze's account is that it circumvents both the homunculi objection, often cited as a problem for partitioning strategies (Gardner, 1993; Johnston, 1988; Thalberg, 1982), and criticisms concerning the gratuitous postulation of sub-agencies *ad hoc* and *ad libitum* (Gardner, 1993; Gay, 1982; Neu, 1988; Schafer, 1973). Specifically, Freud's (1905/1953b, 1915/1958a) view that drives must be identified by their *source*, rather than

their *aim*, provides an 'in principle' method for identifying the knowing subjects within the confines of the organism's physical structure. Accordingly, the drives can be characterized independently of the relations that they are said to enter into, and their number and specification are ultimately resolved empirically. Furthermore, it can be seen that Maze's account is not an extension of the Humean bundle since Maze's knowers can exist independently of the act of knowing. For example, when the organism lies dead, several motivational systems/knowers may still exist, independent of the knowing relationship. Furthermore, the objection that the origins of sub-systems cannot be accounted for is nullified since the proposed systems can be seen to originate through the evolution of the physical organism. Although these drives' specific empirical referents are still to be precisely located, Maze supplies a provisional list of drives identified via exciting and satiating biochemical events (and identifiable consummatory actions), including: sexuality (or several specific sexualities), hunger (or several specific hungers), thirst, a respiratory drive, pain avoidance (where pain is specified by literal activation of pain nerves, and the satiating behaviour anything that terminates that activation) and a temperature control drive, specified similarly to pain avoidance (Maze, 1983). This list is not exclusive and there may be yet other discoverable drives or drives that are satiated by psychological aims (e.g. aggression). Any further inclusion is dependent on identifying the necessary 'hardware' and action corollary (see Maze, 1983, 1993).

Positing 'hunger' and 'thirst' as the types of strongly partitioned systems needed for explaining Freudian repression and struggles of conscience may appear overly simplistic and not do justice to the phenomena; some words should therefore be said here to clarify Maze's position. Maze's proposal seeks to identify 'basic' motivational systems, following the Freudian tactic of attempting to explain complex, human behaviour in the simplest terms possible (whilst not succumbing to the behaviourist strategy of denying cognition altogether). This partly involves demonstrating how apparently non-biological behaviours may actually stem from underlying biological sources of motivation. A moral conflict, for example, may possibly be explained simply with respect to socialization of the drives and their experiences of rewards and punishments. To provide an oversimplified example, a 'struggle of conscience' may reflect a desire that *p* (say, a sexual desire) that calls for satisfaction, and the belief that satisfying that desire (in this case, gratifying sexuality) is 'wrong' (i.e. will lead to some other *ungratifying* experience, such as loss of the caregiver's love; see Maze, 1983, for further discussion here). However, the question of precisely which knowers exist is ultimately empirical, and this paper addresses simply the logical requirements of evaluating such accounts, rather than attempting to prove any particular theory correct.

Summary

Strongly partitive accounts deviate radically from the ordinary view of a single knower or self. However, accounts of a single, unified self meet with difficulties accounting for psychological conflict, and, subsequently, mental plurality appears theoretically justified. However, there are certain issues that need addressing when considering these accounts. In particular, the *ad hoc* and *ad libitum* manner of postulating sub-systems means that some type of objective evidence, independent of the behaviours they are said to perform, must, in principle, be supplied. Furthermore, a coherent account of the sub-systems origins' must be supplied since they cannot arise *ex nihilo*. Pears's (1984, 1986) strongly partitive account was found to be problematic since, in these respects, it neither specified the qualities of the proposed systems, nor supplied an adequate account of their origins. Maze's (1983, 1987) account, on the other hand, provides an in-principle means of identifying the sub-systems' independent qualities and a plausible account of their origins. The number and specification of these knowers are resolved empirically, providing an objective method of identifying such drives.

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