

Initial title:

Can Multiple Personality Disorder and Dissociative Identity Disorder support the traditionally held views of the Self?

Abstract

For my dissertation I will be focusing on the sub-branch of Philosophy of Mind: Philosophy of Psychopathology. I will be looking at widely accepted notions of the Self from Western Philosophers and using the medical cases of Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) and Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) as a framework in which to critically analyse these held positions. The main theories of Self that I will focus on are David Hume's Bundle Theory and John Locke's Memory Theory. I believe these two theories will provide the strongest foundation for my argument. Before my argument can be addressed, I will outline what MPD and DID are in medically defined terms. I will also show how the experiences of those affected by MPD and DID relate to these commonly held theories.

✓ Very well written.

Context

To initially start I will give an overview of the branch of Philosophy, this issue falls under: Philosophy of Psychopathology, to establish the groundings of where the discourse into philosophy of mental illness comes from. Some of the current philosophers who are researching this area are George Graham, along with his frequent collaborator Lynn Stephens whom have written several papers and books on general Philosophical Psychopathology.

Insert Ref's.

In the area of research I will be focusing on, I have found that a lot of discourse is surrounding memory and the effects of it towards MPD, the more I looked into papers and journals, the more I found that discuss memory. I hope that there will be different philosophical positions in the papers to give me a sphere of knowledge. Contributors to this subject include but are not limited to Ian Hacking, Daniel Dennett, Nicholas Humphrey, Owen Flanagan who all use MPD as a main point in their arguments of personal identity.

Focus of research

The focus of my research will be to determine whether or not MPD and DID can support traditionally held views of the Self. To do this, I will explain what MPD and DID are, this will include an emphasis of there being two different illnesses, or at least for the clarity of my research. Since 1994, DID has been the medically held definition for the mental illness I will be using as a framework to apply theory to. However, I believe that the previously defined disorder (MPD) still exists and that there is a difference in both of these disorders as a result. The distinction between the disorders will prove important to the discussion I aim to create from analysing Locke and Hume's theories. My research will also aim to address any problems that arise in Locke or Hume's theories, when applied to the cases of MPD and DID. I currently believe that MPD and DID are unable to support the accepted notions of the Self or at least their current incarnations of Self that were given by Locke and Hume in their time, and I hope today or this in my work.

Significance of your project

The main talking points of my research will be that it has the potential to modernise Hume and Locke's theories, by analysing them within the framework of modern day scientific understanding. As a result, currently argued theories of personal identity will be improved and possess the capacity to articulate the Self through the experiences of those possessing the symptoms of MPD and DID. This is significant because the currently held

✓ Good/well said

and respected positions of personal identity do not currently have the ability to discuss and co-ordinate these experiences accurately to the modern day person afflicted with mental illness. Any theory that lacks this feature is missing a crucial conception and as a result will always be found lacking when put under scrutiny and applied to non-biased case studies, as opposed to a biased thought problem that supports the position.

Another point of significance is that my research will add to the current discourse and research into this area of study. For years the field has been growing into its current incarnation of philosophy of mental illness and I think I have an interesting contribution to make to it. I also feel that by looking at traditional and old views of the Self is a good position to start to find a philosophical solution for present issues. Whilst this area of study may seem to be a relatively new one, its roots do find their way back to old sections of Philosophy of Mind and as medical science continues to advance, there lies more undeveloped research and philosophical musings to explore.

Bibliography

For this project, I will be looking at George Graham and Lynn Stephens to provide a background information on what Philosophical Psychopathology is, where it came from and why it is important. Following this introduction to this subject matter, I will look to medically defined definitions of MPD and DID to inform the reader about the disorders I will be using throughout my dissertation and outline them for clarity.

The next piece of work I will look at and use is John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in which he proposes his theory of memory for personal identity. This along with David Hume's argument for the Bundle Theory of Self will be the philosophical foundations I lay my work upon, as I will use both theories of Memory and Bundle Theory against the disorders of MPD and DID to test their relevance in modern society.

Following this, I will explore Daniel Dennett and Nicholas Humphrey's work in "Speaking for ourselves: an assessment of multiple personality disorder", which whilst being 30 years old still provides a good position for the modern researcher into these issues. It also provides a clear discussion into MPD from a philosophical standpoint.

Another interesting paper that I will use in my dissertation is 'Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity' by Shaun Nichols who uses a similar approach to Locke when it comes to theories of personal identity but with the addition of mental illness, similar to what I assume is MPD from a brief scan through the paper.

Finally to round off my research on the effects of memory on personal identity, Ian Hacking's paper *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* will add to the rich discussion that I hope to create in my dissertation. Hacking starts his arguments by first outlining whether MPD is real and goes on to discuss the effects of memory with regards to its effects on MPD.

Full ref's needed

81%

This is an incredibly interesting - & original - proposal for a philosophy thesis. You present a detailed & well-conceptualised proposal that focuses on a problem which - tackled sufficiently or even partly - could lead to revised traditional conceptions of the self. This is a really exciting project & I look forward to seeing how it develops. My only issues are 1) You are covering a lot of ground. It would be best to start by analysing traditional theories & then use the one found to PTO

be most plausible (rather than more than one) - but
I leave it for you to decide.

2) Full references needed & a bibliography.