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Defining the Self: Exploring Analytic Theories of Self

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Abstract

The thesis compiles multiple theories for the existence of self from analytic philosophy ranging from minimal reduction accounts to broad narrative conceptual accounts. The initial focus is on Galen Strawson's minimal self theory which states that the self is a mental thing, subject of hiatus-free experience. The minimal self exists briefly during short-lived experiences without influence to one's personality and agency. Other accounts of self are evaluated to determine if there is a logical argument for self that encompasses other potential features. Two experiential self theories, Dan Zahavi's experiential self and Matt Ratcliffe's interpersonal self, have a minimal notion of "for-me-ness" that acknowledges a sense of ownership. Two narrative self theories, Ulric Neisser's narrative self and Dan Dennett's self as a center of narrative gravity, use past experiences spun together by the person to form a narrative self-image. Shaun Gallagher's pattern theory of self and Antonio Damasio's self process argue for a self that can include both an immediate minimal self and accept a reflective self-image component. The thesis ends with an original theory of self referred to as the persisting self. It claims that the self is a mental thing that provides a sense of persisting during conscious states. The compilation of theories demonstrates how the accounts compare and contrast to one another while recognize the implications that come of each claim.

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Introduction

In my thesis I evaluate several analytic theories of self that argue for specific necessary conditions required for the self to exist and sufficient properties of the self which lead to the self's implications over the person. A self and a person are not interchangeable in the analytic context of the thesis; the two states, selfhood and personhood, are distinct from one another because person includes one's body and external factors that influence one's personal identity. Likewise, self and personal identity are separate entities—personal identity incorporates external factors such as national identity, age, race, culture, religion, media, economic status and several other demographics to influence the critical reflection of the person. Determining the ontology of self, distinct from person and identity, is the focus of the thesis. My intuition is that I have a self which develops with me during my life and equates to some sense of me when I am conscious giving it a sense of persisting and an impact on me as a person. Through the evaluation of content to be provided, I will determine if the intuition can be a structured claim with supporting conditions.

After studying several theories of self, I have not found a theory identical to my intuition but rather an extensive body of literature full of opposing views that often use different verbiage for the same terms and lead to a vast array of resulting selves. Some theorists broadly encompass cognitive functions, thoughts and feelings in their claims to make the self's presence an impactful component of the person. Other theorists reduce the self to a minimal entity with little to no effect on the person. Analytic theories of self use metaphysical, deductive reasoning to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions of the

self and what the self inevitably is by the end of the argument.¹ Experiences and consciousness of experience are often included as necessary conditions for the self to exist but the definition of experience and consciousness vary in order to best support the specific claim of self in a given theory. The theories evaluated in the thesis are only within analytic philosophy due to the size of the project and for consistency in how self is described from a deductive approach. Theories and research from continental philosophy, psychology and neuroscience influence several analytic theories but in consideration for concise clarity I choose to discuss analytic philosophy claims.

Even with the subject matter narrowed to one field with similar argument structures, the debate amongst analytic philosophers about the existence of self is chaotic. There are variations of the same terms being discussed, theories that share near-identical conditions yet are perceived as completely different accounts of self, and claims that leave us with no substantial conclusion or sense of direction to progress toward a given understanding of self. My thesis proves an overview of differing self claims and organizes them into distinguishable sets of theories to provide a clear comparison and survey of self accounts. There are few papers that cover the entire self debate in analytic philosophy, instead, philosophers acknowledge one or two opposing views in the introduction and use the bulk of the paper to argue their claims. While those papers influence the debate, it is increasingly difficult to understand the discussion in a broader sense and how the opposing views emerged based on the issues from other theories. One of the purposes of my thesis is to

¹ Necessary conditions could either be essential properties or dependency relations depending on the specific theory. Sufficient conditions are often properties of the self not always present in a given theory.

provide readers with a collection of analytic self theories to more easily understand the logical reasoning used to reach the claim followed by the theory's implications given.

In addition to a compilation of self theories, my thesis will add to the debate by providing an original self theory. After analyzing other theories, I synergize and modify conditions to reach the claim for a persisting self. The persisting self exists through cognitive functions but not as a physical location in the brain. The self is subject of consciousness, which means that it is only present when consciousness is present. Consciousness is described as encompassing a broad scope from immediate pre-reflective awareness to critical reflection of oneself. During consciousness the self's presence is apparent through addition sense-of properties. Although there are breaks in between conscious states, I claim that the self does not terminate during an unconscious intermissions and instead possess as sense of persisting.

The persisting self theory is intended to oppose Galen Strawson's theory for a minimal self, which claims that the self is a mental thing, subject of experience and replaced roughly every three seconds. It is considered one of the most radical reductionist claims of the self and critiqued for making the self's existence to some extent disappointing, however, it is acknowledged by most theorists regardless of their views because the theory's structure and supporting conditions make for a stronger argument than most of its competing theories. My goal in the thesis is to determine if I can construct a theory that allows for a continuously developing self while upholding a structured argument like that of Galen Strawson's minimal self. Before comparing the minimal self to the persisting self, I compare and contrast a survey of other theories to the minimal self. Because the persisting self synergizes conditions

from other theories, it is important to explain those theories and demonstrate the pros and cons they have compared to the minimal self. The theories are organized into different sets to achieve the compilation purpose of the thesis, giving a better understanding of how the overarching sets differ from one another, while also examining specific arguments for self to recognize the challenges that come with each condition.

Chapter One will go into greater depth explaining the minimal self theory and how it relates to experience and consciousness.² One of the results of the self and experience's relationship described by Strawson is that the self is episodic. Strawson argues that it terminates with experiences and that its episodic nature implies that the self does not include things like personality and agency. Strawson's intention is to construct a theory that is realistic to what a self is capable of embodying. The general consensus that the self is continuous and influences the person is considered incorrect and reason is given to believe a self may only exist if its properties are present in experiences.

Chapter Two introduces two sets of self theories and compares them to the minimal self's argument to determine if their versions of self can encompass more without hindering the strength of their arguments. The first set of theories is the experiential self, which has several layers to it, but at the foundation is a minimal notion that the self is subject of experience. Unlike Strawson's minimal self, the emphasis here is on the subject. The experiential self is centered on the claim that the self has a "for-me-ness" during any given experience. It is what makes an experience unique to oneself. Within the set of experiential self theories, two theories that will be evaluated are Dan Zahavi's experiential self and Matt

² Consciousness will be further defined in following sections, as the theories do not use the term in the same respect.

Ratcliffe's interpersonal self. The section will primarily evaluate the first layer the minimal notion, of the self, because it has similarities to the Strawson's minimal self but identifies them in a way that makes the self more familiar to the person. The experiential category will prove to have its own unanswered problems and will not eliminate reason to prefer Strawson's minimal self theory.

The next set of theories evaluated in the chapter is the narrative self, which steers away from a minimal notion and takes a broader more encompassing approach. Narrative self theories oppose an episodic condition for self by arguing for a linguistic narrative that links together episodic experiences. The person uses reflective self-consciousness to evaluate and prioritize previous experiences to create one's self. Ulric Neisser's self-knowledge theory is evaluated in multiple sections that all relate to the overarching narrative self category. He discusses a narrative-self that can construct itself through self-consciousness and memories. Following Neisser, Dan Dennett's theory known as the self as a center of narrative gravity, is discussed in which he describes the self as a fictional narrative that spins together experiences. The theories allow for the self to develop over time and include broader influences like social constructs and contextual environments. Despite the category's far more encompassing features, the narrative self is not arguing for the self as a thing; the self is instead reduced to a concept which is problematic when compared to Strawson's minimal self theory.

The third chapter will give three theories that attempt to combine elements of the minimal, experiential and narrative self theories. It will begin with Shaun Gallagher's pattern theory of self which argues for a cluster of aspects to be considered as self. The theory notes

eight possible aspects ranging from minimal notions similar to Strawson's and broader interpersonal aspects noted by Neisser. The next theory will be a self process theory argued for by Antonio Damasio. The self encompasses a "consciousness scope" to explain for having both a minimal self and a larger autobiographical self. The two theories will demonstrate how minimal, experiential and narrative self qualities can come together if certain conditions are defined differently than that of Strawson's claim. The final theory shared is my claim for a persisting self. It will include conditions from the other theories analyzed but is most similar to Damasio and Gallagher's theories that describe self to include both minimal and narrative notions. The persisting self theory will provide an additional approach to defining self that does not already exist in the larger discussion of self theories. The thesis will provide a compilation of self theories with both breadth and depth because the sets of theories will give an overview of the ongoing debate and give specific self accounts to allude to challenges that come with each theory and their necessary conditions.

Chapter One: The Minimal Self

Chapter One evaluates Galen Strawson's claim for a minimal self. The theory is not minimal in the sense that it has few conditions; rather, from its several conditions it is minimal in what it *does* and the duration that it exists. Strawson opposes several features of self, which he refers to as "ordinarily conceived or experienced as," by arguing for a more primitive self that associates only with experiences contingent on an immediate short-lived definition of consciousness. The chapter will begin with an overview of Strawson's claim that the self is (1) a mental thing, the theory moves on to his claim that (2) the self is 'subject of experience' and refers to properties of the self as Self-experience. The theory will continue with the additional condition that (3) experiences are 'hiatus-free' which will call for Strawson's specific definition of consciousness. The hiatus-free condition leads to the claim that (4) the self is episodic, terminating with every experience—so rather than being *the* self, it is *a* self of several selves. The final section explains the implications that come from having an episodic self and questions if there may be another approach that allows for a more inclusive notion of self.

Strawson's Claim

Strawson's minimal self theory has developed and been refined over the course of several papers in the past two decades. Some of his work refers to the self as the minimal self, others as the minimal subject and some instances as self-consciousness. Regardless of the verbiage, certain conditions remain rooted in Strawson's argument and are the necessary conditions identified in the minimal self theory. The minimal self is defined as a mental thing that exists in the physical world because its properties exist in hiatus-free experiences

(Strawson, 2011; Strawson, 2009; Strawson, 1999a; Strawson, 1996). There are several components to the claim that must be unpacked along with the followed implications of the self due to the defining conditions. Conditions to be unpacked in further depth are how the self is a mental thing while existing in the physical world, the self's relation to experience, how consciousness creates hiatuses between experiences and how the terminating experiences cause the self to be episodic. Through-further analysis of the three components, the self will prove to be restricting and reject potential features that typically are included when defining the self, such as personality and agency (Strawson, 2018; Strawson, 2009; Strawson, 1999; Strawson, 1996). Strawson intentionally confines the self to "Self-experiences" because he believes the broad consensus of self embodies too many features of a person, which weakens the argument for a self to be a mental thing. His intention is to provide realistic conditions for a self without stretching what a mental thing may be capable of producing. His argument is indeed well supported, however, he does so through a few ambiguous conditions and leaves the readers with a self that serves no purpose to the person.

Self-experience

For the minimal self to be a mental thing and have some relation with the physical world experiences, it depends on *real* materialism, also referred to as real physicalism (Strawson, 2015; Strawson, 2011; Strawson, 2009). The traditional view of materialism is that everything real is physical, an example is the claim that phenomenon is not mental thing; instead it is physical phenomena that can be reduced to neurons firing in the brain.³ Strawson

³ Materialism and physicalism oppose viewpoints like dualism that argue for physical and mental things distinct from one another, but dualism runs into the interaction problem. Thus, one solution is real materialism because it keeps the mental but finds a way to incorporate it into the physical.

argues that mental phenomena exist in the physical world, but his reasoning is not that of traditional materialism. His line of reasoning is as follows: First, he describes consciousness of experiences as mental phenomena, the cognitive functioning/processing of something happening (i.e. an experience). Second, he says that a component of mental phenomena is experiential phenomena because it pertains to the qualitative characteristics of an experience received and comprehended in the mind. Third, the qualitative characteristics referred to as the experiential phenomena are metaphorically extracted from physical components of the experience—the physical world. Hence, the deductive reasoning of real materialism (i.e. real physicalism) is that because mental phenomena traces back to the physical world, mental phenomena is physical (Strawson, 2015; Strawson, 2009; Strawson, 1999). Rather than separating mental from physical phenomena, real materialism claims that mental phenomena, including experiential phenomena, are physical; the experiential simply *is* physical.⁴

Using real materialism, Strawson gives the groundwork for a mental thing to exist in experiences because the mental thing's phenomenon has qualitative-experiential character due to the experience itself being physical. Referring to mental phenomena as being *in* an experience can be misleading to Strawson's theory due to the subject-predicate phrasing. The minimal self theory refers to the self as the "subject of experience" which makes the self seem like it has both a separation from the experience and ill-defined dependence on the experience.

If a subject-predicate interpretation of the self as subject of experience were to be true, the self would need distinct properties—some defining feature that identifies the self. Strawson's necessary condition does not give a great deal of detail to specific properties; he

⁴ Strawson is not using "is" in an identical thick notion.

states that selfhood must have what he refers to as “genuine form of Self-experience” (Strawson, 2009). He does not provide qualitative description of “the genuine form,” rather, the self’s properties—whatever they may be—are classified as Self-experience in the theory. Strawson uses the term Self-experience to describe the phenomenal properties necessary for a self to exist during an experience. Self-experience exists at a fundamental level below interpersonal relations and cultural variations (Strawson, 2010; Strawson, 1999a). Thus far, the self as ‘subject of experience’ is understood in that it can only exist if there are specific necessary phenomena within an experience but it is still unclear how exactly the self exists in relation to the experience. It seems to be related to phenomena because its necessary properties are a form of experiential phenomena and there is a dependency on the experience for the phenomena and the self to exist. What is not clear is if (1) the self exists *in* the experience with the phenomena or if (2) the self *is* the experience because the experiential phenomenon is a part of the experience.

Consider the former: (1) the self exists *in* the experience with the phenomenon. The claim would keep a subject-predicate relation, however, the relation is less likely to be Strawson’s intended perception. Strawson is using the term phenomenology to refer to certain structures of experience; the experiential-phenomenon-property for self (moving forward it is referred to as Self-experience) is understood as a structure of experience (Strawson, 1999a). One interpretation of Strawson’s claim that the self is subject of experience is that the self exists when an experience has Self-experience (properties). Therefore, the self is not a separate thing from the experience. It does not exist separately; if it were separate then phenomenology would have to exist separately from experience—which is false under real materialism. The entity “self” requires Self-experience which exists

in the structure of experience. So now consider the latter interpretation of the self and experience relation: (2) the self *is* the experience because the experiential phenomenon is a part of the experience. The relationship between minimal self and experience is not to be perceived as identical to one another. Strawson is not claiming that the self is identical to experience, nevertheless, the self's necessary properties exist as a part of an experience's structure. Self is in a sense incorporated within the experience. The minimal self's necessary condition subject-of-experience makes experience a necessary condition for the self to exist. There cannot be a self without an experience.

Hiatus-free Experiences

While the last section discussed the self as subject-of-experience, the claim has additional conditions to it, those being: self is a *conscious* subject of a *hiatus-free period* of experience. Strawson argues that hiatus-free periods are short-lived. He gives the example of thinking: the cat is on the mat, in which the elements (*cat*, *on* and *mat*) are bound together in one simple thought. He gives another example of looking up and seeing books and chairs and seeing them simply as they are. Both of the examples are primitive experiences that require consciousness (Strawson 2009; Strawson, 1999a). Strawson argues that conscious thought, at best, has a nearly-continuous series of experiences. He claims that the fundamental experience of consciousness is one of continuous returns into consciousness from momentary, unconsciousness or momentary absences, essentially, "consciousness is continually restarting" (Strawson, 1997).

Strawson describes consciousness as a form of awareness of things. In the two examples shared above, both causes of consciousness are related to awareness of objects.

Strawson describes consciousness of oneself as the ability to recognize one's mood but not personality. The large domain of research and literature regarding personal identity would oppose the claim that a person cannot be aware of their personality—awareness of a person's personality can be recognized by that individual through reflective processing and comparisons to other people both in close relations and culturally—however, Strawson is not directly opposing the ability to recognize personality. Strawson is arguing that as a “bare locus of consciousness,” a person has experiential awareness and when referring to “consciousness of experience,” he means consciousness as a form of immediate awareness. With such a sense of immediacy it is understandable why he takes the view that experiences are short-lived and primitive.

Strawson further defines hiatus-free period of experience similar to a *moment* or *being in the present*. He argues that the shortest period of time in which experience exists is reduced to a living moment of experience (Strawson, 1999b). Strawson gives a range of numerical time frames anywhere from blink-of-an-eye milliseconds to three-second durations to describe the Now (i.e. the present). The belief that the experienced Now is roughly three seconds in duration is not solely Strawson's idea. He claims that Now is not actually a point in time, rather, it is extended in our minds; the [human] consciousness is the Now.

All of the consciousness, awareness and time claims relate back to the minimal self theory because they give reason for another necessary condition: The self is episodic. Because the self cannot exist without experience it terminates with the experience. The claim can seem a bit odd if asserted alone as it goes against the common notion that the self exists continuously over time with a person, however if we retrace Strawson's claims, then the self

being episodic is the most logical conclusion to the theory's argumentation. To clarify how the theory reaches an episodic self, the necessary conditions up until this point are as follows:

- (1) The self is a **mental thing** that has mental phenomena, which includes experiential phenomena, also referred to as Self-experience.
- (2) The properties that make-up **Self-experience** are necessary for the self to exist.
- (3) Self-experience exists in the structure of experience, which means that experience contains Self-experience and from that it contains the self—making the self a **subject of experience**.
- (4) An experience exists only in conjunction with experiential **consciousness**.
- (5) More specifically than (3), the self is subject of a **hiatus-free** experience, which means consciousness is present for the entirety of the experience.
- (6) Experiential consciousness is short-lived, which makes experiences are short-lived, which makes the self short-lived. Thus, the self is **episodic**.

The Episodic Condition's Implications

Being episodic, *the* self is better comprehended as *a* self that is amongst several selves that will exist in a person's lifespan. It is crucial to distinguish self from person when making an argument for an episodic self. Strawson identifies the diachronic feeling that some people have but through his distinction of self and person, he says that the self does not experience long-term continuity. He argues that although living human beings are aware of having long-term continuity that does not mean *ipso facto* they have any significant sense of long-term continuity as the mental self or subject of experience (Strawson, 1996).⁵ The continuous development in a human being's life due to new experiences may give the impression of continuous consciousness, but Strawson asserts that uninterrupted

⁵ His reasoning relates back to the distinction I provide in the introduction between person and self. It is commonly perceived that the self would be continuous with the person but the person's continuity is related to personhood claims. Selfhood cannot use the same reasoning.

consciousness is impossible. So while one's consciousness of content may seem like it has steadiness and constancies, he claims that the sense of continuity does not give enough support for a continuous mental thing (Strawson, 2009; Strawson, 1999b, Strawson, 1996).

He explains that a person is continuous, also referred to as diachronic, when they reflect upon themselves as a whole person. A person can have continuity as a human being but the self does not include the continuous-aspects of the person. Strawson recognizes that people can feel diachronic and refers to them as having a "strong narrative" or "Diachronic way of thinking" (Strawson, 1999; Strawson, 2018). These are people that believe their current mental presence of "I" is the same as that in the past and will be the same of that in the future.⁶ Diachronic people supposedly have a strong narrative mode in which "they regularly rehearse and revise their interpretations of themselves" (Strawson, 2018). While narrative mode will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, for the time being it only needs to be understood as a person's approach to self-construct their identity through a first-person storytelling perspective. As far as Strawson is concerned, the narrative mode is fiction and the Diachronic people that strongly feel a continuous self are engulfed in continuous rehearsal revisions to update something that is not the self as a mental thing. He goes so far as to describe it as a personality trait that is associated with being great planners oriented to long-term projects (Strawson, 1999; Strawson, 2018).

To counter the Diachronic people, Strawson claims there are also people naturally Episodic. These people have little sense of the mental presence "I" existing over time. They

⁶ The mental presence of "I" could be perceived as either a part of one's personal identity or a feeling of ownership over one's experiences. The latter is similar to "for-me-ness" which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

do not show great interest in their own past nor concern for the future. Regardless of if someone has a Diachronic nature or Episodic nature, such personality traits influence the person not the minimal self. The diachronic notion that people may feel does not affect the self's episodic condition because such a feeling does not influence the necessary conditions of a mental thing, experiences and consciousness. It is not to say that a sense of continuity is irrelevant to a person, but as far as Strawson is concerned with the minimal self, such characteristics have nothing to do with the self's necessary conditions. Strawson uses himself as an example to prove the trait's irrelevance: he identifies himself as being an Episodic person, agreeing to the trait of having little interest in his past, but he asserts that his poor personal memory rarely impinges on his present consciousness (Strawson, 2018; Strawson, 1996). Strawson is striving for us to understand from his personal anecdote that people mistakenly consolidate qualities of the person with qualities of the self. He is adamant that it is a mistake to presume that so many qualities of a person must be included in the qualities of a self as a mental thing.

Strawson's example of poor memory is further explained as personal quality because it varies drastically amongst people. Some people have excellent personal memory with vivid recollections, other people may have decent memory but may not remember as many details, and furthermore, there are people that only through sensory triggers will have a memory resurface. The vast differences of memory are met with different qualities in which people imagine, anticipate or form future intentions. Strawson states that such varying components are attributed to a person, not a self. Strawson claims that "[the self] is experienced as something that can *have* or *undergo* things like sensations and emotions, something that can *be in some state or other*" (Strawson, 1999a, emphasis in original). In other words, the self

can be perceived through personal traits, however, he is not claiming the self includes the personal traits. He continues the claim about the self experiencing something like emotions or sensations by adding that it does not make them properties of something else.

By “something else,” Strawson is either referring to personality or to self, it is not completely clear. Nevertheless, both interpretations would support Strawson’s claim that self does not include agency and personality. It was stated earlier in the section that one could be conscious of experiencing their mood but not their personality, so it could follow that Strawson is claiming that although the self can have or undergo an emotion, it does not mean the self must *have* the person’s personality that aligns with the undergone emotion. Strawson may have instead meant that the self can have or undergo emotions and sensations, which may inspire a person’s future action or personality trait, but it does not mean the self contains emotions and sensations as necessary properties. Returning to Strawson’s claim, “[the self] is experienced as something that can *have* or *undergo* things ... something that can *be in some state or other*,” several commonly perceived features of self are not properties of the minimal self. The self in a passive sense experiences other mental things (Strawson gives the examples of personality and agency) but those are not the Self-experience necessary for the existence of self. Personality and agency are considered “other mental things” (Strawson, 1996).

The minimal self is stripped of mental self features such as personality, agency and long-term continuity (due to being episodic) that are ordinarily perceived as feature of the self. Strawson acknowledges that these features are still mental things but they must be explained in some other way than attributing them to the self. It is not a coincidence that the

minimal self's necessary conditions do not include features like diachronic continuity, agency and personality. Strawson's intention when defining the self is to ensure that it can prevail as a mental thing. He does not include numerous mental attributes to the self's necessary conditions because that would make the theory more challenging to support through deductive reasoning. His approach to ensure a strong argument for the self as a mental thing is to minimize the mental attributes of the person necessary for the self to exist. The minimal self theory claims that the self is a mental thing that episodically exists in a hiatus-free experience and during the short-lived experience the self may undergo other mental things but it is not responsible for features like personality and agency

Due to the narrow parameters of consciousness and the vagueness of Self-experience, the minimal self theory is quite strong. Because consciousness is reduced to short-lived immediate awareness, it allows for experiences to be considered brief primitive thoughts and actions. The unclear properties referred to as Self-experience and the ambiguity in how they exist in the structure of experience gives the self no binding necessary condition to be present. Since a self only exists during brief three-second durations, it is more logical to claim that the self is not responsible for mental features like personality and agency. The theory as it stands is able to avoid theoretical problems that may come from more explicit necessary conditions and closer relation of self and person. It would be far more difficult to claim that humans have multiple selves over the course of their lifespan while simultaneously having a sense of diachronic-continuity. Despite the complexity of the theory, the minimal self is excellent for providing well-structured necessary conditions that correlate and support one another.

The main objection to the minimal self theory is not in the argument's logic but in the theory's implication—the minimal self is too minimal. Although the argumentation for the self's existence is well supported, Strawson notes that to some people his theory's conclusion is indeed disappointing. It leaves us with a mental thing that is only a portion of experiential consciousness. Its properties, referred to as Self-experience, are given no clear characteristics, yet exist somewhere within the structural framework of experiences. The self is subject of experience but it is a subject that we cannot clearly identify and it terminates within seconds. It does not account for a person's personality, agency, or any other mental feature that is attributed to a person. The theory leaves us with a mental thing distant from other mental features, crucial to a person, and the theory does not give an explanation for how those other mental things interact with the self.⁷

I am inclined to describe the minimal self almost as if it is a stranger to the person, which seems wrong to how the self is generally conceived. Although Strawson argues that the self does not need to include additional features to exist, there are several other theories—even those dependent on experiential consciousness—that manage to include the features that are rejected by the minimal self. The following chapter will survey two sets of self theories, experiential self and the narrative self, to evaluate their argumentations for defining the self and compare them to the minimal self theory. The experiential self will reference the self as “subject of experience” but give more emphasis to the subject rather than the experience's defining elements. The narrative self will take a different approach entirely to give a broader

⁷ Strawson's lack of providing suggestions for other mental things is not meant as a criticism. He brackets the subject to not distract from the theory being discussed. However, I believe in doing so, the lack of it being discussed adds to why the minimal self theory leaves some people to be disappointed with the conclusion.

version of self that encompasses several features of a person. The two sets will give specific accounts to better understand the logical structure of the theories and compare them to the minimal self theory.

Chapter Two: Experiential Self & Narrative Self Theories

Chapter Two explores two sets of self theories: the experiential self and the narrative self. Specific accounts within the sets vary to an extent but have defining components that organize them into the given sets.⁸ Evaluating the theories will reveal how other philosophers give their own interpretation of necessary conditions and how they construct arguments to withhold those features of the self. Features include a what-it-is-likeness for a person in an experience and an ability to form a narrative using multiple past experiences. Similarities and difference to the minimal self theory will be apparent which will prove useful in determining if Strawson's theory of self is the strongest option. To review, Strawson argues that the self is a mental thing that is subject of hiatus-free experience. Its properties, Self-experience, exist in the structural framework of an experience and with that the self cannot exist without experience. In terms of its use in the minimal self theory, experience is described as experiential consciousness of brief, primitive thoughts or actions. The self is minimal in that its duration is limited to the short duration of the experience and in that time the self does not influence personality and agency.

The experiential self often includes multiple layers to the self, but it begins with a minimal (also referred to as "core") notion that is similar to Strawson's minimal self theory. Evaluating the minimal notion of experiential self theories will distinguish the different interpretations of the self's relation to experiences. The primary minimal notion evaluated is from Dan Zahavi's experiential self and will show a divergence from Strawson, in which the

⁸ Chapter Two shifts from using the term *conditions* to *components* because the specific accounts represent the set of theories. The deductive conditions for the existence of self are identifying components of the set as a whole. The shift in terminology does not imply a different methodology being used to explain the theories.

self exists due to the “for-me-ness” felt in an experience. Matt Radcliffe’s theory is also noted as it expands on Zahavi’s minimal notion by providing recognition for interpersonal influencers. Both theories will show possible ways for the self to seem less detached from the person, but will not be able to account for a long-term continuity.

The chapter will transition to evaluating two narrative self theories to explore if theories within the category can better explain how a self exists beyond a minimalist notion, namely, determine if it can justify a long-term continuity for self. Theories discussed will be from Ulric Neisser and Daniel Dennett.⁹ Their theories allow for the self to be continuous over time and emphasize features like memories, personality and agency in contrast to the minimal self’s dismissal of such features. The caveat to the narrative self’s encompassing features is that its conditions reduces the self to a concept and is no longer a thing. Despite the strict confinements placed on the minimal self, its properties hold more substance in the world as a mental thing than that of a narrative self. It is not completely clear as to how a mental thing holds more substance. Strawson never clearly defines what he means by *a thing* in the minimal self, he simply states that the self is “a thing, in some robust sense” (Strawson, 1997). I interpret a thing to still be a substance of sorts, but in this case not a physical one, whereas a concept is an idea so it less constant and more dependent to the person wielding the idea. The chapter concludes by highlighting important variations and similarities between minimal, experiential and narrative self theories.

The Experiential Self and its Minimal Foundation

⁹ Neisser argues for five aspects of “self-knowledge” but two of the aspects demonstrate narrative self qualities and will be the portion of his theory evaluated in the narrative self section within chapter two.

Strawson is not the only scholar to use the term “minimal” self, the minimal self is acknowledged within the set of theories referred to as the experiential self. The experiential self primarily exists in relation to its condition “self is subject of experience.” The necessary condition is included in Strawson’s theory but his interpretation gives focus to the experiential consciousness, the experience, and the Self-experience properties, all of which are needed for the self to exist as subject of experience. The experiential self, however, is more concerned with how to define *subject* than experience in the condition subject-of-experience. Strawson goes to great length in defining the experience and then assigns the self to the role of subject. While the experiential self requires an experience, its argumentation emphasizes the subject’s mental/experiential phenomena of the experience. Despite it being a different approach to explain the subject-of-experience relationship, several experiential self theorists acknowledge and include a minimal self (also referred to as ‘core’ or ‘thin’ self) within their claims.

The experiential self has a fundamental minimal notion accredited to the what-it-is-likeness of one’s experience. It is the experiential phenomenon that gives a sense of *ownership* of the experience in that your experience is specific to you; it is not the same mental phenomena that another person may have despite being in the same experience. The mental phenomena is not required to be an accurate depiction of the physical experience nor does it require self-reflection to identify the experience as one’s own. The minimal notion is simply the feeling that an experience is your own; it is an innate primitive component of the self. It can be viewed similarly to Strawson’s Self-experience condition—Strawson’s theory incorporates the phenomenology into the physical experience and therefore the Self-experience properties existed in the experience. The experiential phenomenology for the

experiential self, however, is attributed more to the subject, but it can be perceived as the same sense of the self's properties. The feeling of ownership for the subject having an experience is a property of the self.

Although there is a minimal foundation to the experiential self, making it analogous to the minimal self, the experiential self includes additional layers usually incorporating interpersonal relations, self-reflection and possible decision making agency. All of the features mentioned are dependent on experience which is why the experiential component is placed at the base of the self's definition. However, not every experiential theorist agrees on what exactly is encompassed in the base layer of self. The two experiential theories that will be evaluated are those of Zahavi and Ratcliffe. To clarify, the evaluation is only of their specific minimal notions of self. Doing so will allow us to recognize how Strawson's necessary conditions are not the only plausible explanation for the self as subject of experience. Furthermore, the experiential self's additional layers are equivalent to the other mental things that Strawson acknowledges but they do not pertain to the minimal self's conditions. Going in depth on those features is irrelevant in opposing the minimal self theory due to how they are described in a ranked order in the experiential self theory.¹⁰

Zahavi's experiential self theory is the first version described because it gives a thorough depiction of the minimal notion allowing for the experiential phenomena to be best compared to Strawson's claim. Ratcliffe is later incorporated into the comparison as his

¹⁰ The additional features of the experiential self are incorporated differently in other theories to be discussed in chapter three. The features are important for claiming that the self can contain more features than Strawson gives credit for, but Strawson's argument can too easily dismiss the features based on how the experiential self argues for them. Thus, it is better to evaluate only the minimal notion of the experiential self for the purpose of the thesis.

minimal notion is fairly close to Zahavi's notion except that it includes an interpersonal component, which changes the perspective of the subject as a sole entity to one immediately intertwined with other people.

Dan Zahavi's versions of the experiential self is similar to Strawson's theory in that he states the self is a mental thing, subject of experience and is not separate from consciousness, however, Strawson associates the self to individual experiences and experiential consciousness. Zahavi refers to such a view of consciousness as nothing but a bundle of changing experiences; Zahavi instead believes that the self is not reducible to one specific experience nor (sub)set of experiences, rather it is an integral part of consciousness (Zahavi, 2014). Zahavi claims that the experiential self is not dependent on one specific experience because every possible experience we have has a *what-it-is-like-for-me-ness* (shortened to *for-me-ness*). There is an experiential phenomenon that remains the same across various experiences; it is the "first-personal character," the *for-me-ness* of an experience.

Consciousness is a necessary condition for the experiential self, just as it is for the minimal self, in that one needs consciousness of an experience to have experiential phenomena. Zahavi's definition in one sense contrasts Strawson's definition of consciousness, but it also has similarities. Zahavi more specifically is referring to consciousness as self-consciousness and defines it to be a many-layered phenomenon. On one extreme, which contrasts Strawson, there is a complex form of self-consciousness that has the capacity to question one's life through rational judgment. Because such an evolved self-consciousness requires language and strong comprehension of oneself within an

experience it is associated with the additional layers of the experiential self, not necessarily the minimal notion.

On the other hand, phenomenal consciousness entails the most primitive form of self-consciousness: “a question of ongoing first-personal manifestation of one’s own experiential life” (Zahavi, 2014). The first-personal character of consciousness is the basic form of selfhood that Zahavi is arguing for at the root of the experiential self. He describes it as a pre-reflective self-consciousness that accounts for a self-givenness in the structure of experiences—which is similar to Strawson’s claim. The “self-givenness” that Zahavi is referring to in an experience is similar to Strawson’s description of Self-experience in an experience because they both relate to the self but exist from the experience. Despite the similarity, Zahavi presents the pre-reflective self-consciousness with a sense of ownership by the recognition of first-person character in an experience to make oneself the *subject* of an experience, not merely properties within an experience.

Zahavi refers to the first-personal character of experience as a first-personal presence of experience attributed to for-me-ness. He writes, “To speak of a for-me-ness of experience is to pinpoint something with ramifications for the subject’s overall phenomenology. The for-me-ness of experience refers to the first-personal character of experience, to the fact that our acquaintance with our own experiential life differs from the acquaintance we have with the experiential life of others and vice versa” (Zahavi, 2014). The first-personal mode of experience allows for an experience to be mine in a way distinct from anyone else—it gives a self-other distinction. The distinction appears between self and other when recognizing the ownership that comes with pre-reflective self-consciousness. The idea of ownership over

experiences is easily misconstrued to be in support of a different sense of self, one that has the capacity to own its experiences and because it is an entity that experiences are ascribed to, it therefore requires an ontological distinction and separation from the experience itself. The experiential self, however, alludes to an alternative phenomenological interpretation of ownership. The ownership here is a claim that the what-it-is-like to experience something is unique to each person. Hence, a for-me-ness is at the root of Zahavi's interpretation of minimal self. The experiential self is the subjectivity present during an experience specifically for that person.

Zahavi identifies Strawson's minimal self theory in his work which is partly why the two minimal notion share conditions despite approaching them from different angles. Strawson emphasizes the role of the experience in subject-of-object because without an experience there is not Self-experience and therefore no self (subject) can exist. Zahavi presents his argument to emphasize the importance of for-me-ness, which is an experiential phenomena in an experience, so there is a necessity for experience but Zahavi is more concerned with the same remaining first-person character in numerous experiences (Zahavi, 2014). Despite the similarity of subject-of-experience, Zahavi does not agree with every minimal self condition, he only highlights conditions that strengthen his experiential self theory. Zahavi does not address the minimal self's episodic condition, lack of personality and agency. He does not include the episodic condition because in his opinion for-me-ness is ubiquitous across all of a person's experiences, so there is not a new self associated to each specific experience if the first-personal character is present. Zahavi asserts that the first-personal character remains the same through every experience and he uses the intrinsic but elusive sense of subjective presence to give a continuous self. A possible objection to

Zahavi's line of reasoning is that he cannot prove the for-me-ness is identical across multiple experiences. The claim that it is the *same* presence is fallible and Zahavi's claim that the self is an integral part of consciousness becomes unclear as to how it is continuous and what range of self-consciousness he is referring to. If the argument is using primitive self-consciousness, similar to Strawson's argument for episodic consciousness, the ubiquitous component of Zahavi's experiential self theory is not easily accepted.

As for the minimal self's lack of personality and agency, I believe Zahavi would agree with Strawson. The experiential self has many layers to it with its foundational base being an innate phenomenology referred to as the minimal (or thin) self, but Zahavi is not content with the minimal self. He writes, "Ultimately ... I don't think we should make do with a thin notion of the experiential self. This notion, although fundamental, has some clear limitation, and it must be supplemented by thicker notions that do justice to other important aspects of self" (Zahavi 2014).¹¹ The experiential self goes on to have richer layers that embody other experiential attributes. Essentially, when Strawson addresses that his theory's conclusion is found to be disappointing by some, it similar to the conclusion Zahavi makes for the minimal notion in that it is disappointing even to Zahavi and is why he later goes on to add more layers.

Zahavi keeps the minimal notion similar to Strawson's in that the more encompassing attributes of self, "thicker notions," are not included, just as Strawson delegates such features as being other mental things. There is a different experiential theory that deviates in one

¹¹ Zahavi concludes that remark with the idea that self is meant to encompass more than only experiential phenomenology. Zahavi's idea alludes to self theories that will be evaluated in the third chapter.

respect from Zahavi's minimal notion but in doing so the theory has a strikingly different claim. The theory described is Ratcliffe's interpersonal self. To clarify, Ratcliffe still calls it the experiential self and specifically contends Zahavi's experiential self, but in his conclusion Ratcliffe says that if his experiential self's necessary conditions are accepted, it should be better perceived as an interpersonal self. Being so, I refer to the theory as the interpersonal self to not be confused with the experiential self theory given by Zahavi. Additionally, Ratcliffe on occasion refers to the minimal notion of the self as the minimal self, so to not confuse it with Strawson's theory, when Ratcliffe address the minimal notion I put "minimal" in parentheses.

Ratcliffe agrees with the notion that the (minimal) self must have a pre-reflective component, but he argues that it must include the intentional state's kind, or type, that it is in. From doing so, that sense of state causes the need for our prospective of self to be re-conceptualized in interpersonal terms (Ratcliffe, 2017). Ratcliffe argues that the most basic sense of self is developmental, more specifically, developmentally dependent upon interactions with other people. Strawson does not claim that the self is developmental because of its short duration and Zahavi does not include a developmental aspect because his emphasis is on the inward-looking for-me-ness phenomenon.¹² Not only does Ratcliffe say the self is developmental, he accredits its development to the influence of other people, which is a reasonable assertion being as other people quite often are a part of the experience along with the self.

¹² Zahavi's minimal notion does not require reflective properties. "Inward-looking" is used to describe the isolated component to for-me-ness being as Zahavi does not give an account of other people that may be a part of the experience.

The (minimal) self's for-me-ness is supposedly inseparable from the intentional state. I interpret the intentional state to be similar as being conscious of one's own mood in which Strawson used as an example. Ratcliffe claims the self is inseparable from the state because we are not innately in an experience, but we are innately experiencing the experience with a specific type—which I assume is meant as a specific type of for-me-ness. Zahavi described for-me-ness as a stagnant phenomenon that appears in every experience, but Ratcliffe gives room for fluctuation. People experience different emotions and moods—something Strawson noted people can have consciousness of—and Ratcliffe incorporates the changing phenomena to the self by referring to it as intentional states. However, the theory is questionable for including intentional states because Ratcliffe agrees that the minimal notion is pre-reflective. If we interpret it like Strawson described it as being conscious of one's mood, it is more like a reflective account. Ratcliffe's theory is met with criticism, primarily from Zahavi, when pressed on the pre-reflective versus reflective notion, especially when the theory is applied to infants. The two theorists have several publications that respond to the other's objections. For Ratcliffe's sake (and everyone else in the discussion about self) the conversation should stay within the focus of fully developed human beings.¹³ Diverting from fully developed human beings causes assumptions of development conditions, which is not stated in all theories of self.

Regardless of the questionable pre-reflective condition in the interpersonal self theory, Ratcliffe claims that the intentional state is dependent upon a certain way of experiencing and relating to others (Ratcliffe 2017). He goes on to give examples of how

¹³ "Fully developed human beings" is not a perfect, clear category but it brackets infants that are a problematic outlier.

detrimental experiences due to other people can inflict the person permanently (his main example pertains to Schizophrenia). Ratcliffe's theory branches off to focus on the implications of an interpersonal self, yet the initial claim that other people influence and factor into a (minimal) self theory is intriguing because it still aligns fairly well with the other two. Even consciousness, which is a defining feature for Strawson and Zahavi, is credited to interactions with other people in the interpersonal self theory. Ratcliffe addresses how subjectivity arises out of intimate engagement with others; that other-consciousness is inseparable from self-consciousness and that they should be better referred to as self-other-consciousness.

The experiential self, both Zahavi's version and Ratcliffe's interpersonal modification, have several attractive qualities while still managing to uphold an experiential foundation similar to Strawson's minimal self. They acknowledge and emphasize the for-me-ness phenomenon that often makes people feel as though there is some type of self that is unique to us throughout our lives. However, the experiential self does not necessarily prove to be a better approach than the minimal self theories. Zahavi's version is criticized for not explaining how the for-me-ness has potential to change over time; it cannot withstand the unconscious states that Strawson addresses. If the for-me-ness is not truly the same over time then the theory leads to an equally episodic self because the for-me-ness is specific to each episodic experience and it cannot justify long-term continuity.

The interpersonal self theory modifies the minimal self in a way that makes it a developmental self, which does have the ability to argue for long-term continuity. The pre-reflective self-consciousness, loses its independence from the rest of the world. At least with

Strawson's theory the self was a thing that existed through the individual's experiential consciousness. In the past chapter I noted that the minimal self feels almost detached from the person, yet in comparison to the interpersonal self, at least it has a sense of purity in which the world does not inflict upon it innately. Zahavi's theory gave us better ownership of the experience and Ratcliffe gave room for the self to develop, but neither theory is quite as precise as Strawson's theory in terms of its reasoning and the conditions' support for one another. The next step is to consider a different self category that takes a completely different approach from the minimal notion but still acknowledges episodic experiences.

The Narrative Self

The next theory to evaluate, the narrative self, claims that the self is constructed through self-reflection by means of one's memories and linguistic story telling in order for a person to determine the self. Before diving into specific theories, there are a few categorical disputes that must be dealt with. First, narrative self theories are often similar to or included within personal identity claims. There is the similar notion occurring in both topics that the human being looks at past events, uses features like self-reflection, consciousness and language to form a narrative story of their life and then determine as sense of one's identity in their conclusion. Selfhood and personhood can overlap in this respect because of the similarities in reflecting upon one's actions and creating a conclusion.¹⁴ Some personal identity claims will alternate between the term "identity" and terms like "self-image" or "self-reflection" which often causes the term "self" to also be referenced, which causes some

¹⁴ There is far more to personal identity theories but for the purpose here I am only addressing a few similarities to narrative self to demonstrate how the self is constructed from one's ideas.

confusion to what personal identity theories believe to be the self. When analyzing narrative self theories, I do not intend to make any claim regarding personal identity or personhood, but I recognize that a similarity will be present due to the subject matter.

The second categorical dispute is that to some, the narrative self theories are arguing that the self does not exist at all, therefore, the theories should not be included in a section intended to define self. The reasoning behind the possible objection is that the self is nonexistent because it is based on a narrative definition; it is reduced to a fictional construct, which is not claiming to be a thing to the same extent as Strawson is arguing for the self as a mental thing. In comparison the minimal self, the narrative self's existence is weaker as a concept than the minimal self's assertion as a mental thing. A different approach is to perceive that the narrative self theorists are claiming that the storytelling self-consciousness *is* the self, rather than reasoning for the self to not existing.

Compare it to Strawson's condition that the self is a mental thing: Strawson claims there is a mental thing that we call the self. A narrative theorist could take the same structural claim and say there is a first-person narrative that we call the self. It still exists but in a completely different sense from that of a thing like Strawson's use of the term. The narrative theorists' conclusions of "no self" or "self as a concept" are two sides of the same coin when compared to a self as a mental thing. For that reason I do not see a problem in including narrative theories in which the philosopher is claiming there is no self (as a thing). For clarity, the second theory that will be covered, Dennett's self as the center of narrative gravity, can be interpreted that he is arguing for no self, but it is also interpreted that he is

arguing for a different concept of self. Due to the relevance of surveying types of selves in this chapter, I will describe Dennett's theory as one arguing for a concept of self.

The third categorical dispute is that the narrative self as a specific type of theory overlaps with other types of self, mostly the conceptual self and the extended self. The three types of selves have superficial differences but essentially reach the same notion that the self is recognized and exists through features like self-consciousness and memory. In some cases the terms are used interchangeably and in other literature the scholars specifically use one of the names and do not alternate, which gives a sense that the theory is meant to be distinct from the other types. For the purpose of surveying different theories in this chapter, I find the theories to be discussed in the next few pages to be interchangeable in their names. If we were to imagine "narrative self" as an umbrella term, the theories would all fall underneath it despite the different names. The first narrative self theory is that of Ulric Neisser and will incorporate components of the extended self and conceptual self to give an encompassing self-construed narrative theory. Extended self is based on the use of memories to influence anticipation and conceptual self is based on a person's socially-based assumptions drawn from external factors (e.g. economic status, nationality, gender, etc.).

Although the narrative self comes with several stipulations due to categorical disputes, the set of self theories has several appealing qualities that other theories cannot as easily include, hence, why it is worth evaluating such a contrasting set from the minimal and experiential selves. While the minimal self has strength in its conditions' precision it leaves us with a mental thing lacking qualities often perceived as the self. The phenomenal experience is crucial to its claim; yet, the sense of long-term-continuity is dismissed due to

the episodic consciousness. The experiential self includes a for-me-ness component to give more ownership of the experiential condition but it does not combat phenomenology changing. The for-me-ness arguably will vary in certain contextual situations. When I am scared versus when I am angry my sense of myself within the experience, my for-me-ness of the experience, will vary. The experiential self does not account for how episodic experiences can affect the phenomenal self-consciousness; it cannot properly address how the self is situated temporally.¹⁵ Essentially, it gives a different approach to a similar conclusion as that of the minimal self. The theory concludes that the self is episodic and does not include traits like personality and agency.

The minimal self directly opposes three potential features of self, (1) it is continuous, (2) it has personality and (3) it is an agent/has agency, all of which Strawson identifies are features typically conceived of for a mental self.¹⁶ The constant comparison of the sets of theories to these three potential features is not to imply that the features must be included for a theory to be correct, however, because there is a natural gravitation to include these features, it is worth evaluating if a theory is strong enough to include them.¹⁷ The narrative self is a far more encompassing theory than the minimal and experiential selves in respect to the features mentioned. Despite the differences, however, the narrative self theory actually

¹⁵ The minimal self does address the temporal component with episodic experience through the episodic condition, however, this is the condition I intend to prove incorrect so I state that the minimal nor experiential self have properly answered the temporal problem of self.

¹⁶ The phrasing for having agency versus being an agent varies across different papers. Essentially, Strawson refutes both.

¹⁷ I make the assertion that there is a “natural gravitation” to these theories. I know this is not true for all—I would assume Strawson does not feel such gravitation, however, even he acknowledges in his work how “the self tends to be figured as...” (Strawson, 1999a).

begins with a similarity to the minimal self, that being: the necessity for experience and with it the necessity for consciousness.

In a broad generalization the narrative self takes episodic experiences and pieces them together with linguistic storytelling. It is not the self specifically plucking experiential episodes so to speak, it is the human being using different cognitive functions to reflect and present their own unique storyline. The narrative self includes both present experience and past experiences brought forward (figuratively) to the present moment as memories obtained through reflection.¹⁸ With reflection and retrieval, consciousness and long-term continuity can be argued for differently than that in the minimal self theory.

Preceding Neisser's five kinds of self-knowledge is Neisser's theory for self-narrative as a basis of identity and described as extending in time by including memories of the past and intentions for the future (Neisser & Fivush, 1994). Neisser's theory specifically notes the constancy of the self in a lifespan, claiming that one of the necessary conditions is the *capacity to change*. Rather than a rigid entity, Neisser defines the self to be malleable by identifying how certain experiences can "profoundly alter the sense of self" (Neisser & Fivush, 1994). There are two inferences that should be addressed from the claim just mentioned. First, Neisser is referring to the *sense of self*. Like other narrative self theories, Neisser is not arguing for a specific mental thing (like that of Strawson) but is trying to grasp possible self properties. Second, using the word 'alter' is indeed an example of the capacity for change, but it is recognized as a passive relation in that something is being done onto the

¹⁸ Memories can also be understood as present experiences brought about from remembering a previous experience. It's a new experience because the phenomenology is different. However, for the intention of explaining the narrative sense I describe memories in a retrieval notion.

self and possibly not for the best.¹⁹ However, Neisser also uses more positive action-oriented words like “evolve” and “progress” in order to argue that the self changes in multiple respects. The theory states that change occurs because of a relational circle between, self-construal, narrative and memory. The three components artfully work with one another—the narrative can take autobiographical memories to piece together a story leading to the construal of the self, the construal of the self can then determine which memories are kept to influence the narrative and lead to new experiences to be incorporated.

Neisser emphasizes the importance of memories for the self’s narrative circle but it appears as a necessary condition in the extended-self (memories and anticipation) and conceptual-self (socially-based assumptions) encompassed in the self-knowledge claims as well. By using memories, the self can acknowledge behavioral patterns and familiarity for a person. The person does not use memories in an extreme deliberate sense, but the basis of memory allows us to have a self from the past and a self expected for the future—it is how we have the extended-self (Neisser, 2008). Furthermore, memory is a necessary condition for the self because the sense of one’s narrative, which includes one’s figurative place in the world and self-concept, would not be possible without the ability to reflect. Memories and their experiential content (social, emotional, etc.), play a crucial role in the theory.

The theories evaluated prior to the Neisser theory only consider the self in the present moment and do not allow for a reflective self-consciousness. By incorporating memories Neisser’s approach to a narrative self gives reason for a continuous self that demonstrates predictability in actions and the ability to label one’s personality. Neisser notes that a

¹⁹ Alter is interpreted in a negative tone because Neisser specifically refers to tragedies and psychological damage as the example.

person's self-perception can contain inaccuracies due to the possibility of false-memories, even mere misconceptions of oneself can arise from social roles and culture. The questionable self-reflection exposes that the self's properties lack validity which causes the definition to be a "sense of" self. It reduces the necessity to have absolute accuracy when self-reflecting both due to contents validity and societal influence.

Whereas Neisser respectfully acknowledge that the construal dimension of the self through false-memory can lead to inaccuracies, Dennett candidly refers to the self as the spinning of stories and accepts the stories as fictional (Dennett, 1991). He argues that we invent our selves using language, but due to language's boundless possibilities we cannot prevent a fictional product from being created. As mentioned previously in the chapter, Dennett's theory of self is best known as the center of narrative gravity in which his first claim is that the self is an abstract object, just as gravity is an abstractum (Dennett, 1992). Dennett does not mean for the self to be considered obsolete but he defines it as neither a mental nor physical thing, instead the self takes the position as a figurative center of gravity where the person's narrative stories meet and form an autobiography.

Dennett uses several figurative phrases to define the self, comparing it to physical gravitational pull and to novelists writing fictional books. He goes so far as to state that the self is "the chief fictional character at the center of [one's] autobiography" (Dennett, 1992). Beneath the imagery and examples used to support his theory, Dennett's theory defines the self as a creation, based off of previous experiences.²⁰ The narrative self compiles the past

²⁰ Dennett notes a false interpretation of 'creation' is possible using the example: A novelist creates a world in a story but a person reading the book then believes the world is literally created. 'Creation' in this theory is meant in a fictional sense.

experiences and thoughts to forms a present fictional character, however, the self's story is not finalized like a fictional character is in a published book. Furthermore, Dennett notes that the person can try to manipulate and reword previous narratives' content or meanings in order to reach a specific character/self, but several problems can occur when asking to what extent one can lie to themselves and knowingly change the past narratives, which is why Dennett says the stories spin us more than we spin them (Dennett, 1991).

The self as a center of narrative gravity seamlessly includes long-term continuity and gives credit to reflective self-consciousness. Although not specifically stated, the theory infers a for-me-ness through ownership of the narratives (experiences) because the experiences were once experienced in a first-personal character. The theory also relies on reflective self-consciousness in order to develop the concept of one's self as a main character in their own book. The several references to fictional characters and objects' center of gravity indeed make the narrative self seem like fiction. Neisser presents the self-narrative to be dependent on memories and acknowledges memories well enough that it would seem reasonable to perceive memories as accurate or near accurate. Neisser's theory is like Dennett's theory in that the narrative self allows for more cognitive functioning to determine the self, but in doing so, the self does not exist beyond being an idea or concept. The narrative theory is enticing because it includes several mental things that influence our action and ideas—even of ourselves—but it leaves us without the minimal self's fundamental notion as a thing. The minimal self's conclusion of being a brief episodic thing that terminates with experiences is criticized for being disappointing. The narrative self's lack of a mental thing is not necessarily a problem (it has not been determined that the condition

mental thing is essential) but reducing the existence of self to a mere idea seems disappointing in its own respect similar to that of the minimal self's conclusion.

After evaluating three different types of self, a pattern is beginning to form in which each theory provides a useful perspective or condition to what is essentially for the existence of self, but causes other possible features to be non-existent. Strawson argues that fewer features are better for the minimal self to be an explainable mental thing, intertwined with specific short-lived experiences causing the self to be distant (almost detached) from the person. The experiential self keeps a minimal notion but allows for us to appreciate an ownership of the experiences despite being at a loss to explain continuity better than the minimal self's explanation for discontinuity. The narrative self offers a completely different approach that presents a long-term self that is continuously changing to incorporate new experience, however, the experiential content needed for the narrative is skeptical and inevitably makes the self only an idea.²¹ After analyzing other theories, the minimal self's lack of *doing* or *influencing* does not seem like a horrible tradeoff in order to still have a self as a thing at the conclusion of the theory. There are several other self theorists that would beg to differ on simply having to choose between the three sets of theories presented, which leads to the focus in the following section. Chapter three will evaluate self theories that attempt to have both minimal and narrative notions of self.

²¹ The experiential self as only an idea is more so Dennett's conclusion in the self as center of narrative gravity theory. Neisser does not intend for such a drastic conclusion, how if there is possible inaccuracies because of the person's hampering, then there is reason to argue the self is a concept in the mind.

Chapter Three: Gallagher, Damasio & the Persisting Self

The previous chapters examined several different theories about the self, their necessary conditions and their implications. The minimal self is a mental thing that is subject of hiatus-free experiences. The self's properties are referred to as Self-experiences which exist within certain structures of experience. Both the whole experience and the Self-experience require consciousness as a short-lived immediate awareness also referred to as experiential consciousness. Experiential consciousness is inescapably brief which causes the experience associated with the consciousness to be brief; furthermore, a hiatus-free experience is short-lived. With an immediate consciousness present for only three seconds, the self is indeed also bound to the episodic condition, its properties only capable of being experienced during consciousness.

On a similar starting note, the experiential self contains a minimal notion and includes being subject of experience, but it stresses the subject's for-me-ness phenomenon felt in an experience. Once again consciousness allows for experiential phenomena to emerge in the experiential self theory as it does in the minimal self theory, however, the experiential self emphasizes that there is a specific self-phenomena referred to as for-me-ness and how an experience feels as though it is specifically yours. It is the sole ownership of the perspectival/sensational experience that only exists as such for that person—the what-it-is-likeness to be in any experience.

Unlike the minimal and experiential self's position as a *thing* in existence, the narrative self is a *concept* of self that uses previous experiences to develop the self. It is a continuously changing image determined at least partially by the person with potential

influence from societal roles and customs and recollected inaccuracies. The narrative self can give reasons for how one's experiences and events can influence oneself and give credit to the self's reshaping from interpersonal experiences. The narrative self has a paradox in which it arguably would seem the most aligned, or resembling self to the person being as the person created this interpretation, however the narrative self is also the farthest removed in comparison to the other two selves because it is only an idea displayed in one's mind. Despite its vague description, the minimal self is a more robust as a mental thing with experiential properties than the narrative self's fabricated properties. Nevertheless, the minimal self's possible Self-experience existent during three-second blips of awareness without any long-term continuity is ironically difficult to relate to.²²

Chapter Three evaluates two other theories of self that combine attributes from the theories already discussed and use additional methods to reach a more inclusive theory. Shaun Gallagher argues for a pattern theory of self in which the self has multiple aspects that demonstrate selfhood. He does not believe there is an independent existence of "the self" that encompasses the aspects; rather, "self is a cluster concept which includes a sufficient number of characteristic features" (Gallagher 2013). Gallagher's theory is modeled after a pattern theory of emotions in which emotions are clusters of characteristic features (bodily process, experiences, expressions, behaviors and actions) and no individual features constitutes an emotion. The pattern theory of self gives a similar theory that allows for Gallagher to include other types of self theories including a minimal experiential self and a narrative aspect. The theory is included in the chapter because Gallagher's work is well versed in the other self

²² The minimal self does not have an actual "relatable" condition and Strawson could arguably dismiss such a critique for being irrelevant to the theory as "subject of experience."

categorizes discussed so it gives an accurate representation while manipulating the features of those selves to fit within the theory that he is claiming for. The main concern and critique about the pattern theory of self is that it lacks necessary conditions due to its inclusive description. Through its inclusive process it resulting gives a self that lacks any clear feature to call self.

The following theorist will give a self theory that is also inclusive to possible self features, however, it includes necessary conditions. The following theorist is Antonio Damasio, whom makes claims both about consciousness and self that challenge the minimal self, while also managing to encompass several features of self mentioned in previous theories. Damasio's precision in defining consciousness immediately positions him in contrast to Strawson's consciousness claim from that position, Damasio's self theory equally shows contrast to the minimal self while still recognizing much of the same necessities for experience and consciousness. The theory manages to give specific defining qualities without reducing the self to a narrow entity with limited ability.

Following Damasio, I present my own interpretation of self called the persisting self. The persisting self claims that the self has a sense of persisting based on consciousness (similar to that of Damasio) and supported by other features such as for-me-ness and memories (similar to that of Zahavi and Neisser). The persisting self shares similarities to Damasio's self process. The theory synergizes conditions such as for-me-ness from Zahavi's theory and narrative memory from Neisser's theory to demonstrate how the self can have both a minimal and narrative nation to it. The theory in some respect shows similarity to the

minimal self theory, however, the persisting self's conclusion opposes the episodic minimal self.

Pattern Theory of Self

Gallagher's approach acknowledges many features of self through what he calls a pattern theory of self. The theory attempts to resolve social constructed theories of self (i.e. minimal, interpersonal, narrative) by claiming that all of these theories demonstrate different aspects of self (Gallagher, 2013). Gallagher lists eight possible patterns of self, they are as follows: minimal embodied aspects, minimal experiential aspects, affective aspects, intersubjective aspects, psychological/cognitive aspects, narrative aspects, extended aspects, situated aspects.²³ Each aspect includes possible self features that are explained in respect to their given titles. The theory intends to organize an interdisciplinary approach but Gallagher notes that in doing so, "no one feature is constitutive in an essentialist sense" (Gallagher 2013). While Gallagher integrates different types of self into clusters, the self is not one thing on its own—it is a cluster of characteristic features that we call 'self'. Gallagher present the pattern theory as a meta-theory providing a scheme of possible theories of self, which in its own sense is a theory but one that lacks necessary and sufficient conditions. Therefore, the pattern theory is not precise in saying how many features, also referred to as aspects, are needed in order to have self. Gallagher gives eight possible aspects claiming that different

²³ Gallagher notes that this is not an exhaustive list.

selves are constituted by different patterns from the interaction of aspects.²⁴

The minimal embodied aspect is a biological aspect that defines the egocentric spatial frame of reference, which allows for the distinction between oneself and what is not oneself. The minimal experiential aspect resembles the minimal self and the experiential self; it includes consciousness and pre-reflective experience and an embodied sense of ownership of experiences (much like Zahavi's "for-me-ness"). Affective aspects emphasize temperament and emotional pattern or mood to help explain behavioral actions. Emotions were not discussed specifically in the other theories covered, however, they are embedded in the narrative stories' actions and reflective reasoning. The intersubjectivity depends on a self-conscious awareness that can be associated with mirror-self recognition (the cognitive ability to recognize the object in the mirror as one's reflection—to recognize that it is oneself) and social interactions to recognize an "other awareness" or "self-for-other" (recognition of oneself from the prospect of another). The intersubjective aspects has various approaches but essentially has a notion that the self is a distinct internalized feature recognized through external interaction and comparison—similar to that of Ratcliffe's theory of an interpersonal self.

The psychological/cognitive aspects are a conceptual component of the private, internal kind of existence of self. It can vary from self-consciousness, to conceptual sense of self as self, to personality traits. It includes features of the narrative self theories where the individual has an inward reflection to construct as sense of oneself. The narrative aspects

²⁴ Note that Gallagher's theory is not arguing for "the self" but what we call "self" and includes several possible aspects, which is why he uses the plural form for self. He is not arguing for a specific entity.

continue such features but more so emphasize the storytelling self-interpretations directly described as fiction. Dennett's self, as a center of narrative gravity, demonstrates the abstract concept of self that can be a narrative aspect of the pattern theory of self. The extended aspects addresses a person's ownership of external objects and their situated role in given social structures. The situated aspects are similar to the extended aspects but address cultural and normative practices in family structure and environment. The eight aspects provided are not all needed to necessarily have a self. The aspects are presented in a meta-theory of self, so Gallagher does not claim for any specific series of necessary and sufficient conditions. Gallagher notes that the numerous aspects provided could actually form into patterns that resemble theories that already exists

Additionally, the pattern theory of self includes aspects that contradict one another such as the minimal experiential aspects and the extended ownership aspects. Some of the aspects are minimal inward notions that do not care to include more external worldly components so a problem arises in determining how the aspects can be included together in patterns and how many aspects need to be included for a pattern to be justified. Compared to Strawson's theory, most of the pattern's aspects would be described as "other mental things" not associated with the minimal self. In the minimal self theory, cognitive functions related to personality and the ability to reflect on one's actions were acknowledged but labeled "other mental things" not pertinent to the self's conditions. I am inclined to believe many of the aspects Gallagher listed are other mental things in Strawson's theory. Although Strawson does not explain how/if other mental things interact with the minimal self, by retracting them from the self's conditions, he gives a clear claim for self. Although the pattern theory of self

is broadly encompassing and Gallagher incorporates multiple other theorists work to the possible aspects of self, he does not give any necessary and sufficient conditions. He provides us with a meta-theory containing reasonable candidates to be a part of self, but does not provide a claim for which aspects must be included nor the quantity of aspects needed to form a cluster. In terms of trying to define the self, the pattern theory of self is not the most adequate theory.²⁵

The Self Process

Damasio's neuroscience approach is centered on consciousness and questioning how and when the brain has consciousness. It is in the midst of defining consciousness that he is also defining self, often referred to as the self process. The term consciousness is used differently by every theorists thus far in the thesis. Strawson uses it in a primitive sense often calling it an immediate awareness which makes it seem like a mere reflexive action, however, he is still referring to phenomenal consciousness. Phenomenal consciousness is what-it-is-likeness, an incoherent notion, a raw-feeling. An immediate first-person state; it is an experience.²⁶ The minimal notion of the experiential self also uses phenomenal consciousness due to the account of what-it-is-likeness aligning with the for-me-ness of experiences. The narrative self, however, does not base its theory on phenomenal consciousness. It uses access-consciousness which includes representational content with the ability to reflect and analyze from a third-person perspective.²⁷ Each self theory describes

²⁵ In fairness to Gallagher, he states that his theory is to find self as a cluster of aspects, not to find *the* self.

²⁶ It is an experience, in the sense of how Strawson defines an experience.

²⁷ Dennett's Self as the Center of Narrative Gravity more specifically uses his Multiple Drafts Model (MDM) of consciousness, which explains for a more interpretational view of the content.

consciousness in a unique way that supports the claims being made for self.

Damasio gives a precise definition of consciousness in that it is “a state of mind in which there is knowledge of one's own existence and of the existence of surroundings” (Damasio, 2010). He confines consciousness to being a state typically possible when awake, but gives exception for some paradoxical form of consciousness when dreaming. Consciousness also has a private and personal knowledge apparent through different sensory materials to give a sensory stream, and more so, explain for consciousness as a sensory feeling. Thus far from Damasio’s consciousness theory, there is explanation for how a person can have an innate feeling that gives self-knowledge—relating to both Zahavi and Neisser’s notion for a feeling of ownership and subjectivity with experiences.

Damasio further adds to consciousness’ repertoire by claiming that it “is a state of mind with a self process added to it” (Damasio, 2010). A crucial difference arises compared to Strawson’s minimal self from the self process claimed by Damasio. Both theories discuss experiences and emphasize the need for consciousness, but due to how Damasio includes it, he claims that the self is a process, rather than a thing. He further orients the self from two vantage points: one as a “dynamic object” and the other as “knower” (Damasio, 2010). The self as a dynamic object encompasses behavioral traits and life histories. In comparison to other theories evaluated, the self as a dynamic object incorporates much of Neisser’s assertions toward the extended- and conceptual-self. When Neisser mentions how personal events can alter the shape of one’s self, it matches the history acknowledgment incorporated in the dynamic object. Recognizing the history of life flows easily to behavioral traits while staying within the object vantage point. The other vantage point, the self as knower, is the

process that allows for someone to give focus on experience and eventually reflect on those experiences. The self-as-knower is more complex than that of self-as-object. As knower, it originates from the dynamic object but evolves to more reflective notions that can relate back to the difference between phenomenal consciousness and access-consciousness. The self-as-knower is like access-consciousness in which there are various functions like third-person reflection and rational agency.

The two vantage points are the effects of two kinds of consciousness that also are described as one simple and the other more complex. Damasio describes consciousness as having to do with scope, the consciousness scope constantly shifts between *core* consciousness and *autobiographical* consciousness (Damasio, 2010).²⁸ Core consciousness is the minimal-scope that gives a sense of here and now, with little interest in past or future. The core consciousness is similar to Strawson's definition of consciousness for the minimal self: an immediate awareness often primitive thought or experience. The core consciousness revolves around a core self that can give characteristics of personhood but does not include the reflective notion that gives identity from the characteristics. The big-scope, referred to as autobiographical or extended consciousness, is more concerned with large events in a person's life that are carried past their present experience as past memories and anticipate possible future proceedings. The autobiographic consciousness serves the autobiographical self's role to encompass both the 'actual' and the 'imaginary' content effortlessly together. It resembles similar notions discussed about the narrative self theories, in which the narrative self integrates both factual and possibly inaccurate content to give a sense of self.

²⁸ Previously described as core self and autobiographical self in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotions in the Making of Consciousness* (Damasio, 1999).

Damasio's theory for a consciousness scope allows for the self to be both minimal and encompassing without losing necessary conditions and properties. Consciousness is described as being derived from the self whether it be minimal or autobiographical. The self process is a necessity for the mind's orientation and ability to distinguish oneself from others (Damasio, 2010). For Damasio, there is always a feeling of self; sensing it may come and go but the *feeling of knowing* is continuous even in the faintest minimal scope. Strawson's theory directly opposes such a feeling claim. He acknowledged that some people feel diachronic more than others but that it does not constitute a diachronic self. However, Damasio's feeling claim supposedly should still be applicable to Strawson's minimal self because even the faintest hint of a self gives a feeling of knowing in a pre-reflective sense.

Because Damasio's claim is the self as a process related to consciousness and consciousness is described in such a vast scope, he does not seem concerned with discontinuity from unconscious states. The theory includes a shifting of consciousness that allows for both simple and complex comprehension of a self's functions in the mind. There is some ambiguity when trying to understand the relationship between self and consciousness when analyzing the self process. At times Damasio asserts that consciousness is predicated by self and at other stages in the theory the self contains features derived from the descriptions of consciousness. An additional objection is that the claim for feeling of knowing is subjective and an episodic person may be able to argue such a feeling is absent. In comparison to the minimal self, the two theories diverge drastically when consciousness is defined, yet, they share similarity in asserting its presence and component to the mind. The difference is in calling it a thing as Strawson does and a process as Damasio does, but

regardless thing or process, both are present when consciousness is present.

The Persisting Self

The final theory of self to be presented is the persisting self theory which is my own argument for defining the self. The theory is discussed after the self process theory because the persisting self uses the same description of consciousness that Damasio argued for. Conditions from other theories explained in previous sections and chapters will also be incorporated to support the claim. The persisting self synergizes certain aspects from other theories to reach a claim that allows for the self to have qualities from the minimal notion and narrative continuation.

The theory claims that the self is a mental thing with a sense of persisting in a conscious states. Each condition will be focused on in greater depth but to give a brief overview, the self:

- (1) Is a mental thing
- (2) Is subject of consciousness
- (3) Has for-me-ness
- (4) Has narrative memory

From the four conditions, there is reason to argue that the self has a sense of persisting that opposes Strawson's claim for an episodic self. The four conditions may imply additional aspects or require explanation due to possible problems but overall it presents an argument for a self that is more involved with a sense of persisting than that of the minimal self.

The first condition, self is a mental thing, appears similar to Strawson's theory. Strawson describes a mental thing as being physical because of real materialism.²⁹ The mental phenomena he experiences is related to the physical world, which leads into why he argues self as a mental thing is subject of experience. Self as a mental thing in the persisting self theory, does not require real materialism nor is it being defined quite like Strawson defines it. For the persisting self, a "mental thing" is more similar to the *process* description in Damasio's self process theory and the *cluster* description in Gallagher's pattern theory of self. A cluster of self aspects was critiqued earlier in the chapter because it was not clearly a thing, it lacked explicitly requirements in Gallagher's theory. Nevertheless, considering something as a cluster of other things still means a thing is present. The self as a process is not as clearly a thing, however, it is performing a function. Considering the self as a process allows for it to be a thing that *does* something. Both the cluster and the process exists mentally through cognitive functioning, so they are not arguing to be physical things with physical locations, hence, they are mental things. The persisting self can be considered in a similar respect when called a mental thing. It is a mental thing that does a function; it provides a "sense of" cognitive function for phenomenology presented in a person's mind. *Cluster*, *process* and *sense-of* selves are not a thing in the same way Strawson uses the term. They are not as robust as the minimal self, however, they are closer to a robust thing in terms of their actuality than that of the narrative self as a concept. Therefore, when the persisting self is described as a mental thing it is not to the same extent that Strawson described it, but one in which there is still something beyond an idea present.

²⁹ Real materialism is the view that mental phenomenon *is* physical. See pg. 9 for further clarification.

The word “providing” is being used as a function/action in the description of a mental thing, it is not meant to be claiming that it creates phenomenology. The condition states that one’s ability to sense or to feel phenomena is a thing and it occurs in one’s mind, thus it is a mental thing. As it stands with the first condition, self is a mental thing that provides “sense of” cognitive functioning. There needs to be clarification to “sense of” and how the function of it is possible. The condition is vague on its own and requires further explanation, however, moving on to the other conditions will aid in the clarification and demonstrate support for the first condition. The next condition, subject of consciousness helps to explain the functional component to mental thing.

The second condition, self is subject of consciousness, is an adaptation from the claim “subject of experience” that is included in the minimal self and the experiential self. Minimal self and experiential self deviate from one another’s use of the phrase but they both acknowledge a dependency to consciousness. The experiences are not possible without consciousness. Due to the persisting self being a mental thing that provides a sense of phenomena, rather than claiming that it needs experiences to exist, I am claiming that it needs consciousness (arguably something the other theories also claim for but never explicitly). Two clarifications must be made to understand what subject of consciousness means: (1) How consciousness is being defined and (2) the relationship between subject and consciousness.

Consciousness is defined similarly to Damasio’s consciousness scope, which includes both a core and autobiographical consciousness. The core consciousness has a minimum-scope that gives first-personal character and a sense of the present without a need for

reflective past or anticipated future attention. It is the immediate awareness that Strawson describes in the minimal self's consciousness and the consciousness in Zahavi's experiential consciousness.³⁰ The autobiographical consciousness has a big-scope that is more interested in broader perspectives for the individuals past memories and anticipated future actions. It is similar to Neisser's narrative self theory because it has the ability to critically reflect and self-construal.³¹⁻³² Consciousness defined with the minimal-scope and big-scope incorporates both phenomenal consciousness and access-consciousness. Phenomenal consciousness includes the feelings typically are described as innate, such as raw-feels, qualitative character and subjectivity—again similar to that of Strawson and Zahavi's theories. Access-consciousness includes the narrative self-reflection and the third-person understanding of oneself (i.e. ability to picture yourself from a third-person perspective). Consciousness in the persisting self theory has both phenomenal immediacy and critical reflection.

The relationship between subject and consciousness is challenging because it can either be defined with wording that makes the two seem distinct and separate or defined as one and the same, Neither is correct. In other theories the relationship needing explanation is that of subject and experience. Similarly, they struggle to give a clear explanation. Strawson's subject-of-experience claims that the self's properties are incorporated into the structure of an experience, so the self is dependent on experience but also not entirely separate from experience. It is unclear what part of the experience has the properties of self

³⁰ Ratcliffe's interpersonal self potentially fits the core consciousness description, but Damasio's minimal-scope does not mention other people so I do not include it with Strawson and Zahavi's theories here.

³¹ Self-construal is one of the three elements in Neisser's narrative circle—the influence of memories, narrative and self-construal towards one another.

³² Dennett's description of consciousness is similar but referred to as the Multiple Drafts Method so I do not claim it is exactly like the big-scope.

and what determines the properties are present. Zahavi expresses in his work the difficulty to describe the self as an entity without making it seem separate from experience and to explain the two's convening without making them be the same thing. It is a reoccurring problem across many theories and exists when trying to explain self's relationship with consciousness as well.

The way subject and consciousness are related for the persisting self initially resembles the relationship of subject and experience in the minimal self. Strawson claimed that the properties were in/a part of the experience which allowed for them to attempt some distinction while maintaining a dependence—specifically the subject's dependence for experience. Strawson does not claim that experiences need Self-experience (properties) to exist. The persisting self theory does not use the same verbiage of experience structure nor does it result in a one-sided dependency. To explain subject of consciousness relation, it is worth metaphorically describing it and then more thoroughly explaining the reason. The self is the subject of consciousness in the respect that within a conscious state, the self is center-stage performing its “sense-of” function. If the self is not subject of consciousness, not present in consciousness, then consciousness would not fulfill its description of phenomenal and access-consciousness.

Self and consciousness are co-dependent because their defining properties are the same, however, that is not to say self *is* consciousness in a thick strict identity relation. Consciousness needs the self as the subject of it in order to fulfill its definition of having a sense of the present. A person needs to be consciousness in order to recognize being in a present moment and to recognize a thought that is not the present moments (past events and

future anticipations). Equally so, the self cannot be a mental thing that provides a “sense-of” without consciousness. It needs consciousness in order to give a sense or feeling because the self does not create the phenomenology. Consciousness and self require one another and because of their relation to one another the self is subject of consciousness.

After the first two conditions, we know there is a self that is a mental thing providing a sense-of phenomenon and from its relation with consciousness it can obtain both phenomenal consciousness and access-consciousness. The exact “sense of” that the self provides is yet to be clarified. The third and fourth conditions will clarify the “sense-of” object. The third condition is that the self has for-me-ness. For-me-ness is the term that Zahavi uses in the experiential self theory to describe how first-personal character of experience is felt. It allows for subjectivity and ownership of an experience through pre-reflective self-consciousness, similar to the description for phenomenal consciousness. Self has for-me-ness because it provides “sense-of” in the claim that self is a mental thing with a *sense of* persisting in a conscious states. Phenomenal consciousness, minimal-scope and for-me-ness all address in their respective definitions how the phenomena that is immediate experienced without self-reflection is what gives a sense-of self, the sense that the experience is specifically theirs.

In the experiential self section, for-me-ness is criticized for being not truly the same—or not giving enough reason to support it is the same—across time for a person. The experiential self is challenged to argue for a continuous self when the for-me-ness is potentially a different for-me-ness in each episodic experience. In the persisting self theory, for-me-ness does not have to be the same over time. Arguably, it should not be the same over

time if we factor in an experience's context, the way you feel during an experience may vary. For-me-ness is responsible for providing a sense-of phenomenon in a conscious state; it does not require it to be the same sense-of at all times.³³ For-me-ness is a condition of the persisting self because without it the self would feel disconnected from the person, similar to the minimal self.

Conditions one through three explain how there is a mental thing that is subject of consciousness and has a sense of self but the sense of persisting has not been explained in the theory—this is the task for the fourth condition. The fourth and final condition is that the self has narrative memory, which allows for it to have a sense of persisting. The term “narrative memory” refers to Neisser’s use of memory in the narrative circle, which describes the relation between memory, narrative and self-construal. The three components are simultaneously influencing one another; autobiographical memories are pieced together into a narrative that leads to the construal of the self, the construal of the self can determine the memories highlighted to influence the narrative and influence future actions that may add to the construal. The persisting self’s narrative memory condition means that it has the ability to reflect and form a narrative from memories. Access-consciousness aligns with the narrative memory description in that it has the ability to reflect and analyze representational content from a third-person perspective.

One of the criticisms towards the narrative self mentioned in Chapter Two was the problem of false-memory, the concern that the inaccuracy of reflection causing the self to be only an idea invented by the person. I agree with Neisser’s stance that some inaccuracy is

³³ It allows for variation in how for-me-ness feels also allows for the self to develop. It is not focused on in the theory’s explanation but would be an implication based on the third and fourth conditions.

acceptable and that does not mean the memories and the narrative are completely fabricated. Furthermore, when referring to memories and their part in forming a narrative, it is typically described as intentional reflection. A person intentionally reflects on certain memories to think to oneself about the narrative. While intentional reflection on past experiences is included in narrative memory, the theory also includes memories that appear to us as background knowledge about ourselves. For example, I know that I am a former athlete. I do not need to deliberately think back to a given experience of being at track practice or in a competition to determine its place in my narrative. I know that I am a former athlete; I can make the statement without having to reflect back and without having to recite to myself my own narrative emphasizing that component. Narrative memory, in addition to being a critical self-reflection, can simply be present facts about the past. Another example is where people previously live. We know the places where we lived and they influence us today, but we do not have to intentionally think back on thoughts in that location to remember we are from there—the narrative memory includes past experiences that are facts immediately recalled.

Regardless of the specific type of memories, the self has narrative memories because they give a sense of persisting. The memories and the narrative that forms from them cause a feeling of continuation. For-me-ness allows for immediate feelings to be recognized as one's own and memories allow for conscious states to be similar to previous conscious states giving a sense of persisting. For-me-ness is questionable because it potentially is not the same feeling across all experiences and narrative memories are questionable because they are not guaranteed to be accurate depictions of one's past. Nevertheless, the for-me-ness variations and false-memories do not jeopardize the validity of the persisting self theory. The theory is that the self is a mental thing with a sense of persisting in a conscious state.

Condition one explains how the self is a mental thing.³⁴ Condition two explains what a conscious state is referring to. Condition three and four explain how the self has a sense-of phenomena and more specifically a sense of persisting. The theory only requires a sense-of, interchangeable with feeling-of, neither of which require complete accuracy, rather something close to accurate or an interpretation. After all, with for-me-ness, it is the feeling specifically of that person so we should accept that the self has some autonomy in how it exists in consciousness.

In comparison to the minimal self, the persisting self is far more encompassing and relatable to the person. Strawson would argue those features are not necessary for the self to exist, however, I disagree. While Strawson's argument is well structured with conditions that support one another and lead to his conclusion, the concluding claim is hardly a self at all. The persisting self theory as its opposition is far more inclusive of potential self features and highlights important conditions from other theories evaluated. Despite the differences amongst sets of theories, and even between the accounts in a given set, there are similar features and challenges. The persisting self does not resolve the problems entirely. In some cases it acknowledges and accepts the problems in a similar fashion as the other theories do (e.g. the ambiguity in subject of experience/consciousness), however, it also uses some of the conditions in a way to make previous objections irrelevant (e.g. memory inaccuracies). The persisting self theory allows for the self to be continuous and feel like it is an active part in a person's life.

³⁴ A mental thing not identical to how Strawson uses the term. Explanation can be found on page 51.

Conclusion

In the thesis several analytic philosophy theories are presented to include their claims, conditions and implications. The prevalent theory discussed and consistently referred back to is the minimal self theory constructed by Galen Strawson. Within the broader discussion of self theories, the minimal self is often viewed as an extreme reductive claim of self because it concludes that self exists for brief seconds at a time and does not impact the person during that time. Despite the theory's restrictive implications, it is not a ludicrous claim that lacks proper justification; rather, it is arguably one of the stronger theories for providing justification of its conditions. The thesis compares other self theories to determine if another type of self can encompass more features and still have as strong of an argument as the minimal self.

The first set of theories evaluated was the experiential self which included accounts from Dan Zahavi's experiential self and Matt Ratcliffe's interpersonal self. The accounts more specifically evaluated the minimal notion presented as the foundational layer in their theories. The experiential self has a fundamental for-me-ness referring to the sense of an experience being one's own. It is an innate pre-reflective self-consciousness that is asserted as the same in every instance for a given person. The minimal notion similarly describes consciousness to Strawson's theory in that consciousness is an immediate primitive awareness/thought. It relates to phenomenal consciousness features like raw-feels and qualitative character, which are essentially the exact same idea of immediate feelings of one's surrounding being experienced as unique to oneself. Ratcliffe adds an interpersonal relation to the foundation layer stating that there is a relational component that exists from

the beginning of people's lives, so there is an immediate influence from other people on one's self. Ratcliffe's interpersonal addition to the minimal notion was not discussed in great length during the thesis, however, further evaluation toward self and other relations would be useful if theories adjust to focus more on the relational influence of self.

The experiential self theories give us a self that is more personable than that of the minimal self. In other words, the minimal self comes and goes with experiences and its unclear Self-experience is the determining factor. The theory does not claim that self influences personality and agency and it does not account for a sense of ownership from its immediate awareness. In contrast, the experiential self does have that sense of ownership and with it the self feels more like a part of the person—more personable. The experiential self's minimal notion is critiqued for its claim of continuity. It states that for-me-ness is the same in every experience, in some interpretations the idea of "same" may be true, but if we consider the context of an experience there is reason to argue that how we feel experiencing something varies. The minimal notion in the experiential self's foundation seems more episodic than continuous.

While an episodic condition is not necessarily wrong, it is strange to perceive one's self as an entity that is not a continuous part of a person. The next set of theories evaluated was the narrative self because it opposes the episodic condition, instead claiming for a continuous developing self. The two specific accounts of self discussed were Ulric Neisser's narrative self and Dan Dennett's self as a center of narrative gravity. The two theories describe the narrative's validity to different extents. Dennett argues that the self is a fabricated story written from the individual's perspective of past experiences. The person

chooses which experiences and their content is most significant to determine how one views oneself. The theory argues more so for a theory of self-image. The actual self is reduced to a concept with little validity. Neisser's narrative self is more charitable to one's memories being fairly accurate does note the possibility for false-memories. Neisser's theory focuses on how the narrative is influenced by memory and that leads to self-construal, self-construal influences the future narrative, which adds to the memories, and the relational circle continues. Both accounts of the episodic self imply that the self is developmental, constantly revising, but the self is only an idea.

The third chapter evaluated Shaun Gallagher's pattern theory of self, Antonio Damasio's self process and my own theory for a persisting self because the three theories identify possible ways to combine the minimal self and narrative self. Gallagher claims for a meta-theory to acknowledge several aspects of self that can group together to form a cluster that is self. The theory does not give specifics of how many aspects are needed and if certain ones must be included, so while the theory is useful in understanding possible features it does not give an actual claim for the existence of self. Damasio's theory claimed that the self is a process rather than a thing and described it as either a dynamic object or a knower. The two terms relate to different scopes of consciousness. The scopes, core and big, are like minimal self and narrative self. Their features align with either phenomenal consciousness's qualitative characters or access-consciousness's reflective third-person ability. The commonality in the pattern theory and self process theory is that they describe the self in between a strict notion of thing (like the mental self) and a mere concept (like the narrative self) by using terms like process and cluster.

The persisting self theory does the same thing by using the phrase sense of persisting. It is a mental thing with a function that needs consciousness and provides the person with a sense-of themselves continuous in their life. Its existence is related to a sense of something. It is more specific than Gallagher's cluster and more personal than Damasio's process because of how it describes for-me-ness and narrative memory. The theory has not been tested to the same extent as the other theory, which have gone through several colloquiums, conference presentation and publications. The minimal self has been revised numerously since the late 90's to resolve some ambiguities and root itself as a reductionist theory of self accepting the implication of being dissatisfying to some.

Theories like the pattern theory, self process and persisting self need to be the future direction to determine the existence of the self. Describing the self as an episodic thing implies a strong distinction not only from experiences but also from the person. Describing the self as purely a conceptual self-image also lacks a fundamental self for a person to possess. If my theory is correct, or at least is an accepted argument, then I predict that self theories will be less distinct from persons. Selfhood should be perceived as a portion of personhood if the debate is to maintain participants and advance ideas. The self needs a purpose or influence in the person's life otherwise there is no reason to argue for its existence at all. It is extraneous to debate complex theories of self when the conclusion is for a thing that we cannot locate and has no purpose. I recommend that the debate additionally moves forward with less stringency on language to explain the self's conditions. Theorists spend years critiquing one another back and forth in publications over nuances in verbiage. The tedious gripes limit progression in the overall discussion. While it is important to have

precision and consistency in theories, more use of imagery and more variation in the verbiage may actually improve comprehension and tangibility of the theories.

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