

# Type, Self and Personality

Peter Geyer

[www.petergeyer.com.au](http://www.petergeyer.com.au)

*Will you take me as your mistress?*

*Long and dark hair*

*Will you cut it off when it is useless?*

*All of my hair*

*I have never seen the bottom*

*The bottom of the well*

*Could you ever love a mistress?*

*It never feels the same...*

Inara George

In some cultures and religions, the removal of hair symbolises giving up of self, dedication or submission to a cause: becoming a monk or nun, for instance, or a kind of warrior.

These days, it can also be just a fashion statement, or an indication of toughness with no philosophy or ethic attached – a concretisation of what is, or has been, symbolic.

If you seek a particular identity, or are enveloped by one: that of *mistress* for Inara George, for instance, or businessman, entertainer or INTP for that matter, things may not turn out as hoped for, or anticipated. Identity has its constraints and limitations. Being loved and being a mistress may not be the same thing. And you may have an identity, but nothing else.

*I use the term identity to denote a psychological conformity* C.G. Jung

C.G.Jung's view of *identity* fits in well as a critique of our world of brands and trademarks, often a substitute for genuine knowledge, reflection and real experience.

This can be the case even for constructs and labels associated with his thought, particularly when applied in a reductionist manner e.g. associating everything that is religious or spiritual with introverted intuition or possession of that attribute as a dominant function, or thinking that ESTJs don't have any ideas.

In *Psychological Types*, Jung presents his view of the *Self* as propositional, a "working hypothesis" because it has observable and non-observable (i.e. conscious and unconscious) components and it "designates the whole range of psychic phenomena in man" [para.789]. This definition he applies elsewhere to the *psyche*.

The implication here is that everyone has a self, which can be self-realised, or, as Jolan Jacobi puts it, "becoming one's Self," analogous to Jung's idea of *becoming* a personality (1942 p100).

Consequently, there can be no "personality types" for Jung, *personality* being a vocation or calling.

The Jungian Murray Stein writes that *Individuation*, the process of becoming a self, is complex and has no set rules or processes because each psyche and life is different (2006). As with other ideas of Jung's, the self can be *inferred* from interpreting other data: experiences, behaviours, archetypes, dreams and so on.

The self as an idea, and becoming a self, if we consider that to be individuation, may in fact be separate considerations. Individuation itself may be more prosaic than appears to be the case from how it is perceived, even written about and taught. Often it is conflated with the Buddhist idea of nirvana, which appears to have a quite different aim altogether.

When asked towards the end of his life whether he had achieved individuation, Jung said:

"Individuation means to become what one is really meant to be. In Zen Buddhism they have a saying: 'Show your natural face.' I think I have shown my natural face, often to the bewilderment of my time. Yes, I've attained individuation—thank heavens! Otherwise I would be very neurotic, you know." (1955)

*To dive into psychology is to dive into a whirlwind of confusion that pulls one simultaneously toward the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities*

Gregg R. Henriques

In other fields, personal identity is an umbrella term for discussing notions of the self in general, not all of which are compatible with the continuous self favoured by Jung and psychological type theory. Here are some examples.

### **Self – Contention**

The Western world, confused by some with the contemporary world, finds the self contentious.

Fernando Andacht and Mariela Michel write that “the traditional, rigid structure of the self conceived as an immutable unit was replaced by the notion of a manifold of social identities whose aim was to account for the plasticity of the development of personal identity.” Following Kenneth Gergen, they state that the post-modern self is “a state of non-pathological multiphrenia without coherence or unity.” (2005 p52)

Marshall Gregory, in examining difference and essentialism in human nature (psychological type is situated in both camps), alludes to the “postmodern conviction that we all remain trapped (and isolated) within our perspective and ethnicities – not to mention our genders and language and cultural histories (2002 p130).”

Strong adherents to this view hold that human commonality is impossible, and that selves, if there are such things, are isolated individuals. Along with social constructionists, people of this perspective deny the self, question whether there is a unified self, or if there is such a thing whether we can know anything about it at all.

Gregory does not support this position. Nonetheless, he points out that, whilst a philosophy of difference can lead agreeably for most to a more open and inclusive society, “the politics of difference, despite its good intentions, does not support inclusiveness (p135).”

Essentialism, a natural consequence of making definitions, amongst other things [psychological type is definitional], can be problematic if the wrong things are essentialised.

### **Some Self–History**

This is readily apparent from historical discussions about human nature. Merle Curti, examining the history of the American experience, shows that discourse about the nature of humans from colonial times until the modern era utilised defined gender, racial and religious criteria:

- Gender was essentially the superiority of men over women, who nonetheless had special attributes ascribed to them.
- Race was the superiority of specific European groups to others (including other European groups and cultures), and whether native Americans and other aboriginal nations were human. Sometimes this view was applied to females of all kinds.
- Religion favoured the superiority of a particular kind of Christianity over all other beliefs, particularly the lack of belief, perceived or otherwise (1980).

In another context, C.B. Macpherson has identified a new approach to identity, which he called “possessive individualism” coming from 17th Century English philosophical discourse. This approach was intended to account for the different perspective on this topic given by Hobbes and Locke, amongst others, compared to traditionally long-held views on the subject (1962).

Raymond Martin and John Barresi, in providing an intellectual history of the self in the Western world, point out that an interest in personal identity became important in early Christian theological discussions of what life after death would be like, particularly regarding the body and the Last Judgement (2006). Issues discussed included:

- Whether the body would be perfected
- Would the body be the same body
- What would be remembered
- Who to associate with if there was more than one spouse to meet on the other side
- What would happen between death and resurrection, particularly regarding memory

These and other related ideas have become part of contemporary philosophical discussion on identity issues e.g. Baillie (1983); Parfitt [ed.] (1975)

The philosopher John Locke is a cornerstone of modern ideas about personality, identity and the self. He suggests that individuals are connected to a particular body, memories, time, place and experiences and that consciousness, or awareness of self, constituted personal identity (Perry [ed.] 1975 pp33–52).

This is quite different from others' ideas about the separation of mind and body e.g. Descartes. Some commentators have suggested that Locke wished to define *what* a person was, rather than *who* they might be (e.g. Cohen 2008 p113).

### **Social Identity**

Social identity relates to social membership in groups and the associated emotional significance and value that is part of an individual's self-concept e.g. how much someone might feel part of a family, church, sporting or voluntary group, or even a corporation.

Individuals in this position think and act as members of a group and rely on ingroup members for a guide on what to think and do. The group is considered not as a separate entity, but as part of themselves (Tropp & Wright 2001).

Martyn Hammersley and Peggy Treseder, investigated "pro-ana" websites – those that support the idea of anorexia, bulimia and so on as a legitimate lifestyle choice, superior to others. They point out that social enquiry into personal identity depends on definition (2007).

Identity as a substantial or reflective self involves a sense of being a unique individual, including a continuing point of existence over time and a person as author of his or her own actions. This sense of identity is constituted in similarity and difference in interaction with others, without which we would not know who we are and hence would be unable to act (p284).

An opposing view holds human actions to be mechanical products of biological, psychological or social factors *i.e.* there is no core self at all, so therefore no free will. This is the perspective of behaviourism and scientific materialism *i.e.* the notion that the activities of the brain can be observed, measured and identified directly with psychological processes. The contentious notion of depression, however defined, being identified with a "chemical imbalance" without reference to a person's individual and social experience is an example.

The social scientist Thomas Luckmann sees individuals as a combination of social interaction, genetics/species limitations and historical context. His priority non-genetic components, as genes don't tell us much about "the concrete patterns" of what people do individually or collectively.

" A 1st century Bedouin tribesman was not and could not have been motivated  
by the Puritan ethic, nor the Sioux warrior of Montana deterred by the Code Napoleon "  
(2008 p283)

We are all part of our time and place, whether or not it feels like that.

### **Fictional and other Selves**

In neuroscience the self can often be identified as "fictional."

This is annoying to many people, as Jerome Kagan has recently observed (2009). A reason for this disquiet can be the idea that an identity or self is a self-interpretation: what matters to someone, what they find valuable and to what (or whom, perhaps) they are committed.

Svend Brinkmann explains that self-interpretation is fairly complex:

- it isn't necessarily all that clear,
- it isn't easy to articulate,
- it isn't always on one's mind,
- it isn't necessarily coherent and consistent,
- it contains ambiguity and contradiction

Self-interpretation doesn't necessarily have anything to do with individual self-realisation.

Brinkmann quotes Honneth in contending that thinking of life in this way "has developed into an ideology and productive force of an economic system that is being deregulated."

As a consequence, “identity crises, depression and a sense of superfluity are likely resulting social pathologies in Western consumer societies” (2008).

Ed Cohen identifies the body as the *legal* location of “the person” (2008 p113) and quotes Carl Sagan approvingly:

“*The body is not one self, but a fiction of a self built from a mass of interacting selves. A body’s capacities are literally the result of what it incorporates; the self is not only corporal, but corporate.*”

On this perspective, Jung’s notion of the self could be seen as regulating all these other selves.

Locating self in the body is problematic if there are two individuals inhabiting the same body, such as conjoined twins, an example provided by Mark Freeman, referring to a television program on the life of the conjoined Abby and Brittany, who display quite different personalities.

Freeman wonders whether empirical science can determine the validity of something like the self, as its parameters may be too narrow. He also raises the role of memory in personal identity, evidence of a continuous self for many, including Locke, as we have seen (2008).

An individual’s memory as a direction to the self might seem relatively straightforward. Kurt Danziger’s recent examination of the different definitions and understandings of memory over time and place, including a time when memory and imagination were considered the same thing, suggests otherwise.

He identifies the inherent limitations of experimental researches into this subject due to the appropriation of retrieval metaphors of computer or library for its investigations. The social and interactive aspects of memory, as well as its literal reliability are also examined.

Memory, it seems, is not necessarily located in one place (2009).

Identity can also be considered as operating through discourse (categories, labels etc.) in a continual process of construction and reconstruction of selves. This can be considered as nothing more than the process in itself, with no implications of an underlying self.

An example here might be something like enjoying playing or watching sport at one time in your life, but then eschewing all forms of related interest at another time. General behaviours, sometimes associated with specific types, can fall into this sort of perspective, when someone abruptly ceases one behaviour and undertakes another without wishing to return to the previously enjoyed activity.

But it can also relate to the ascription of behaviours and identity to psychological type codes and categories, identifying yourself as INTP or INTJ, for instance, as a way of introduction or explanation, and applying the same process to others.

This can be beneficial in specific contexts. In another context there may be more appropriate or relevant self-descriptions.

### **Theoretical Models**

Identities can also be seen as associated with particular theoretical models, such as psychological type. This is notwithstanding Jung considering his idea not to be a model. Perhaps this was because he wanted to avoid standardised descriptions and classificatory methods.

Isabel Myers and her coterie might be considered the model builders in this instance.

Models are a generalised or reductionist approach used when wanting to make sense of people’s behaviour e.g. *homo economicus* or *rational choice* as used in economic and social policy. They have their own associated vocabulary: economic, Freudian, Jungian, Marxian and so on, as well as obvious inherent limitations.

Because they are self-referential, models can also be at variance with how individuals would describe themselves, particularly with regard to motivation or rationale. Not following the model as prescribed may then be attributed to an individual’s lack of awareness, which may be conjectural.

Models can blind us to the relevance of the data that doesn’t neatly fit in, or appears irrelevant.

They can also be considered, following Anthony Cohen, as “bogus entities”, imposed by researchers and others (2007 p290). A question that follows from this kind of reasoning is whether models should be considered as merely useful, or as having something to do with the facts (at least those that can be identified), or a general theory of everything.

Daniel Robinson considers theorists and researchers who split off categories to be producing arid and actuarial work, unrelated in principle to people and their lives (2004).

Using “The Rational Mind” and “The Emotional Mind” as examples, he criticises reductionist approaches in which “actual persons are viewed or are called on to function as if their lived lives included significant periods of pure rationality or pure emotionality.” Robinson identifies this process as a *mereological fallacy* – “treating the whole as if it were a collection of independent parts” (p283).

This is an important issue for research into psychological type and associated ideas, whether by psychometric measurement, or identification and application of various categories and sub-categories regarding psychological functions and behavioural expression.

Sunil Bhatia and Henderikus Stam observe that researchers and writers from many disciplines outside psychology have developed understandings of self, culture and identity that haven’t been taken up in mainstream psychology.

They describe the latter discipline’s view of the self as “individuated and autonomous...having core properties that are universal, bounded, atomic, and detached from its cultural, social and historical moorings” – the unfolding self being “unaffected by the politics of power, race, gender and sexuality,” using experimental and quantitative methods that “reduce the latter to mere variables (2005 p420)”.

M. Brewster Smith, reviewing his decades of life in social psychology comments that a focus on “the study of variables, rather than of persons” a consequence of the publish-or-perish research environment, was at the expense of more useful longitudinal studies (2005 p337)

### **Culture and self**

Culture can also impose limitations of perceptions of self and other.

In reviewing a work of renowned cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Don Ambrose endorses Geertz’ approach of seeking the deeper dynamics of identity formation while resisting our tendencies toward cultural insularity...to understand other cultures without necessarily abandoning our own.” Ambrose observes in turn that his own field (the gifted) may be “excessively rooted in the values and beliefs of suburban America (2003 p240).”

Yueh-Ting Lee suggests that modern counselling could benefit from the perspective of a Daoistic humanism. “The Daoist self is based on the interests of others and the world...[which] may be inconsistent with Western humanism which focuses on the me-oriented self (2003 pp74–5).”

Lee comments on C.G. Jung’s interest in Daoism, expressed in his counselling approach of not giving too much advice, just letting things happen. Jung claimed this was quite different to doing nothing (pp76–78). Jung’s typology, of course, was much influenced by the *yin* and *yang* of Daoism as well as the idea of opposites and the energetic tension between them.

The notion that there are clear distinctions between Western and non-Western ideas about the self has been challenged by Melford Spiro, who argues that Geertz’ method of looking at cultural artifacts and symbols as evidence of self, or at Buddhistic notions of the need to empty the self are at variance with how people in these cultures think and act (1993). Reincarnation, whilst accepted as fact, was not necessarily approached in terms of a person seeking to have a better life next time, notwithstanding the cultural influence of a Buddhistic belief system.

Tony Walter, in looking at reincarnation and identity, notes that belief in reincarnation is held by a reasonable number of people in Western culture i.e. Britain. He suggests there are at least three concepts of personal identity associated with traditional thinking about reincarnation:

- an “individual” self or soul progressing through successive incarnations;
- the self as an illusion; and
- identity rooted in kin relationships and one’s descendants (2001; p24).”

None of these propositions require a continuous self.

## Virtual Identities

According to particular points of view, people can create separate identities for themselves, such as in engaging with virtual reality websites, or other online destinations.

Divina Frau–Meigs investigated notions of identity and community in *Wired* magazine (2000). In a political and social sense, this publication sought to create “two very separate spheres: on one side, the state, and on the other, individuals organised into a fluid virtual community (p230).

According to one commentator, Brenda Laurel, virtual reality is “the chance to discover parts of yourself that you wouldn’t have found in the course of everyday life. It’s like shining a flashlight around the dark part of the brain” (p.230).

The opportunity for multiple identities for one entity as a means of development or expression.

Quite why anyone would want to do this is a personal mystery, but different social and cultural environments, such as what Frau–Meigs identifies as the “American televisual universe” – a place where on-screen reality can be preferable to everyday experience, inherently produce different ways of living life. These are agreeable to some, not so to others.

What is clear with this perspective is that identity is both disembodied (unlike Locke’s view), but also in the brain, all that might matter for proponents. An interesting feature of this online community was the lack of critique or disagreement about ideas and perspectives as well as a tendency to express instant opinion rather than considered reflection, which suggests an unconscious approach..

Fernando Vidal has suggested that the brain, in a somewhat disembodied way, has become the modern self and that acceptance of this interpretation, or “ideology” as he puts it has stimulated neuroscientific research (2009). The reality of virtual selves makes a great deal of sense given this context. however reductionist the idea might be.

## Work Selves

*There is a deep contradiction between the demands  
“be yourself” and “change and adapt all the time”*

Svend Brinkmann

Having separate identities can also be something that people engage in at work.

“Work identities”, whereby people identify as a work self (presumed sometimes by attributing a level of specific importance to casual social enquiries like “what do you do?”), or are presumed to be able to readily adapt to changed circumstances, such as in “flexible” workplaces.

This latter contention could not easily be supported from a psychological type perspective, let alone Jung’s idea of individuation, but it has been challenged by others.

Michael Doherty, whilst producing research supporting the notion of the importance of work for people from a personal and social perspective, adds that the same people felt disconnected from workplace decision making, notwithstanding the existence of contemporary team-oriented practices, and associated methods (2009).

Gudela Grote and Sabine Raeder discuss the acknowledged link between “work biography and personal identity” in an age of boundaryless careers and flexible selves (2009). Identity here is a fluid concept, including the notion that the experience of different roles enables the creation of different sub-identities for an individual.

This research took the perspective of identity as a “patchwork of self–perceptions,” and a “schema through which the individual’s experiences are interpreted, structured or integrated in an open–ended, non–normative process (p222).” Their conclusions questioned the necessity of individual flexibility regarding career success or progression.

A work self, or at least the requirement to possess one, can be *persona* based, particularly in “emotional” and “aesthetic” labour, a field of investigation that has its origins in Arlie Hochschild’s *The Managed Heart* (1983), where you can talk about “recruiting a self” (Dean 2005).

This kind of approach can have an implication that the different selves or identities involved or required are virtual in a sense, and not connected to a core self at all, or a false self, part of a defence of sorts, and hard to maintain, particularly in different or difficult circumstances.

Construction of a social identity, on the other hand, can be more than *persona*.

Demis Glasford, John Dovidio and Felicia Pratto contend individuals derive their self-concept from their perception of the "I" in personal identity and their membership in social groups. Self-affirmation i.e. fitting in and receiving positive responses, enhances personal identity (2009 p417).

Brian Mullen, Michael Migdal and Drew Rozell, examined the interplay between self and social identity. They asked how pervasive the tendency is towards a clear sense of identity, whether a personal or a social self-awareness (2003). They use two terms in *deindividuation* and *depersonalisation* as context for their study.

Deindividuation is "wearing a mask"...a reduction in self-awareness and personal identity, or being "lost in the crowd." Depersonalisation is low self-awareness ...an increase in social identity e.g. identifying with an ethnic group, particularly a minority group, or family.

Their research found that reduction in one of these components or constructs of identity resulted in a compensatory increase in the other identity construct. Being aware of yourself as a member of an in-group reduces or precludes awareness of you as an individual.

This could be a reason why Jung considered "the individual can be treated in the group, only if he is a member of it (Illing 1957)."

Talking about the self, personality or even psychological orientation can be a minefield. There are a variety of approaches to how the self and personal identity is understood, ranging from outright denial of the existence of actual selves, to the establishment of specific attributes, or different emphases on what is considered important.

There are also questions about where to look for evidence, be it the body or brain, social interaction with its cultural and historical variables, through strictly empirical research, or a propositional, inferential approach like that of Jung.

The requirements point to the examination of all these and perhaps more avenues, regardless of the level of utility each provides.

## References

- Ambrose, Don (2003) *Book Review: Clifford Geertz – Available light: Anthropological reflections on philosophical topics* Gifted Child Quarterly 47(3) 239–241
- Andracht, Fernando, and Michel, Mariela (2005) *A Semiotic Reflection on Selfinterpretation and identity* Theory & Psychology 15 (1) 51–75
- Baillie, James (1993) *Problems in Personal Identity* Paragon House
- Bhatia, Sunil; and Stam, Henderikus J. (2005) *Critical Engagements with Culture and Self: Introduction* Theory & Psychology 15(4) 419–430
- Brinkmann, Svend (2008) *Identity as Self–Interpretation* Theory & Psychology 18(3) 404–22
- Brock, Adrian C. (2005) *Book Review; Trying to keep it all together: History, Theory, and Philosophy in Psychology* Theory & Psychology 15(4) 409–11
- Curti, Merle (1980) *Human Nature in American Thought: A History* Wisconsin
- Danziger, Kurt (2008) *Marking the Mind: A History of Memory* Cambridge
- Dean, Deborah (2005) *Recruiting a self: women performers and aesthetic labour* Work, Employment & Society 19(4) 761–74
- Doherty, Michael (2009) *When the working day is through: the end of work as identity?* Work, Employment & Society 23(1) 84–101
- Frau–Meigs, Divina (2000) *A Cultural Project Based on Multiple Temporary Consensus* New Media & Society 2(2) 227–44
- Freeman, Mark (2008) *Review: A Case of Theory: Abby, Brittany, and Us* Theory & Psychology 18(3) 545–52
- George, Inara (2005) *Mistress* (Inara George/Michael Andrews) Inara Music (ASCAP)/Elgonix Music (BMI) All Rise Everloving eve010
- Glasford, Demis E., Dovidio, John F. and Pratto, Felicia (2009) *I continue to feel so good about us: In–Group identification and the use of social identity enhancing strategies to reduce intragroup dissonance* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 35(4) 415–27
- Gregory, Marshall (2002) *The politics of difference vs the ethics of essentializing* Arts and Humanities in Higher Education 1(2) 125–44
- Grote, Gudela and Raeder, Sabine (2009) *Careers and identity in flexible working:* Human Relations 62(2) 219–44
- Hammersley, Martyn; and Treseder, Peggy (2007) *Identity as an analytic problem: who’s who in ‘pro-ana’ websites* Qualitative Research 7(3) 283–300
- Henriques, Gregg. R (2008) *Special Section: The Problem of Psychology and the Integration of Human Knowledge: Contrasting Wilson’s Consilience with the tree of Knowledge System* Theory & Psychology 18 ((6) 731–55
- Hochschild, Arlie (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of human feeling* California
- Illing, Hans A. (1957) *C.G.Jung on the present trends in group psychotherapy* Human Relations 10 Feb 1957 pp77–83
- Jacobi, Jolan (1942) *The psychology of C.G.Jung* [trans. K.W. Bash] Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner
- Jung, C.G. (1921/1990) *Psychological Types* CW6 Princeton
- Jung, C.G. (1955) *The Old Wise Man* Interview/article in Time magazine Vol LXV No 7 February 14 1955 pp62–70
- Kagan, Jerome (2009) *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the Humanities in the 21st Century* Cambridge
- Lee, Yueh–Ting (2003) *Daoistic Humanism in Ancient China: Broadening Personality and Counseling Theories in the 21st Century* Journal of Humanistic Psychology 43(1) 64–85
- Luckmann, Thomas (2008) *On Social Interaction and the communicative construction of personal identity, knowledge and reality* Organizational Studies 29(02) 277–90
- Macpherson, C.B. (1962) *The political theory of possessive individualism: Hobbes to Locke* Oxford
- Martin, Raymond and Barresi, John (2006) *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self:* Columbia
- Mullen, Brian; Migdal, Michael J., and Rozell, Drew (2003) *Self–Awareness, Deindividuation, and Social Identity:* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 29(9) 1071–81
- Perry, John [ed.] (1975) *Personal Identity* California
- Robinson, Daniel N. (2004) *The reunification of rational and emotional life* Theory & Psychology 14(3) 283–293
- Smith, M. Brewster (2005) *“Personality and Social Psychology”* Personality and Social Psychology Review 9(4) 3334–340
- Spiro, Melford E.(1993) *Is the Western Conception of the Self “Peculiar” within the Context of the World’s Cultures?* Ethos 21(2) 107–53
- Stein, Murray (2006) *The Principle of Individuation: toward the development of Human Consciousness* Chiron
- Tropp, Linda R., and Wright, Stephen C. (2001) *Ingroup identification as the inclusion of the ingroup in the Self* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 27(5) 585–600
- Vidal, Fernando (2009) *Brainhood, anthropological figure of modernity* History of the Human Sciences 22(1) 5–36
- Walter, Tony (2001) *Reincarnation, Modernity and Identity* Sociology 35(1) 21–38

For Andrew Gibson.