

Identification and Origins of Multiple Personality: A Criterion from Wiggins

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Abstract : One familiar theory of the origin of multiple personalities focuses on how symptoms of trauma or abuse are central causes, as seen in paradigmatic examples of the condition. The theory states that multiple personalities constitute a congenital condition, as babies all exhibit multiplicity, and that generally alters only remain separated due to trauma. In more typical cases, the alters converge and become a single identity; only in cases of trauma, according to this account, do the alters remain separated. This theory is misleading in many aspects, the most prominent being that not all multiple personality patients are victims of child abuse or trauma, nor are all cases of multiple personality observed in early childhood. The use of this criterion also causes clinical problems, including an inability to identify multiple personalities through the variety of symptoms and traits seen across observed cases. These issues present a need for revision in the currently applied criterion in order to separate the notion of child abuse and to be able to better understand the origins of multiple personalities itself. Identifying multiplicity through the application of identity theories will improve the current criterion, offering a bridge between identifying existing cases and understanding their origins. We begin by applying arguments from Wiggins, who held that each personality within a multiple was not a whole individual, but rather characters who switch off. Wiggins' theory is supported by observational evidence of how such characters are differentiated. Alters of older ages are seen to require different prescription lens, in addition to having different handwriting. The alters may also display drastically varying styles of clothing, preferences in food, their gender, sexuality, religious beliefs and more. The definitions of terms such as 'personality' or 'persons' also become more distinguished, leading to greater understanding of who is exactly able to be classified as a patient of multiple personalities. While a more common meaning of personality is a designation of specific characteristics which account for the entirety of a person, this paper argues from Wiggins' theory that each 'personality' is in fact only partial. Clarification of the concept in question will allow for more successful future clinical applications.

Keywords : identification, multiple personalities, origin, Wiggins' theory

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