CHARACTER, PSYCHOANALYTIC IDENTIFICATION, AND NUMERICAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

Identification figures prominently in moral psychological explanations. I argue that in identification the subject has an 'identity-thought', which is a thought about her numerical identity with the figure she identifies with. In Freud's psychoanalytic psychology character is founded on unconscious identification with parental figures. Moral philosophers have drawn on psychoanalysis to explain how undesirable or disadvantageous character dispositions are resistant to insight through being unconscious. According to Richard Wollheim's analysis of Freud's theory, identification is the subject's disposition to imagine, unconsciously, her bodily merging with the figure she identifies with. I argue that this explanation of identification is not adequate. Human character is held to be capable of change when self-reflection brings unconscious identifications to conscious self-knowledge. I argue that for self-knowledge these identifications must be an intelligible part of the subject's self-conception, and that Wollheim's 'merging phantasy' is not intelligible to the subject in this way. By contrast, the subject's thought that she is numerically identical to the figure she identifies with does provide an intelligible starting-point for reflecting on this identification. This psychoanalytic account provides a clear conception of identification with which to investigate puzzle cases in the moral psychology of character.

1. Identification.

In this paper I argue for 'putting the identity back into identification'. When we speak of someone as 'identifying' with another person (whether alive, or dead, or fictional), we mean that she sees herself in a psychological relation with that figure, some of whose characteristics are possessed by her in virtue of that relation. I shall argue that this relation (between the subject and the relevant figure) is represented in the mind of the subject as an 'identity-thought' whose content is her numerical identity with that figure.

Identification itself is an explanatory concept well-established in the vocabulary of moral and ordinary psychology. The *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* defines this sense of identification as: 'the becoming or making of oneself one with another, in interest, feeling or action.'[1] We indicate our understanding of someone by saying that we 'identify with' them, meaning that we feel as they feel.[2] Or, we may explain someone's actions by saying that they 'identify with' another figure with the same behaviour traits. Such identifications may be temporary, or may become permanent parts of character. 'He is his father over again', we say or, 'Under such circumstances I become my mother'. Identification also figures in the explanation of moral character; on the one hand, as the holding of, by 'identifying with', parental and societal values, on the other as explaining deviations such as masochistic 'identification with the aggressor', or homophobia.[3]

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[1] C.T. Onions (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.459. The etymology of 'identification' is 'making the same' and nominalises 'to identify'; it is not the making of 'identity' as personal character. The *Oxford Dictionary* gives two further definitions of 'to identify': (i) 'the recognition of a thing as being what it is'; (ii) 'the making, regarding or treating one thing as identical with another, or two or more things as identical with one another', the logical sense that I maintain is central to psychological identification.

[2] Some philosophers have taken this apparently simple case to mean, differently, that we 'see' or imagine, or 'simulate' how the other feels. Philosophical discussions of 'simulation' and 'empathy' are too inconclusive to be useful here.

[3] See J.David Velleman, *Self to Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ch.14 p. 347 covers some of this ground. See also Michael Stocker and Elizabeth Hegeman, *Valuing Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.215. They characterise identification as an 'aspect' or a 'sort' of interpersonal relationship, as well as what 'intrapersonally helps account for and constitute these

However, while widely discussed and variously anatomised, identification remains philosophically under-theorised. Some philosophers have asserted the heterogeneity of identification: Stocker and Hegeman refer to the 'bewildering number of varieties' of identification determined by social, psychological and contextual factors, while Velleman sees a radical disparity between the ordinary conception of identification and the one introduced into philosophy by Frankfurt which he sees as 'shaping' philosophers' intuitions.[4] As a guiding definition of identification I shall take the following: 'all the mental processes by which an individual becomes like another in one or several aspects…[viz.] attitudes, functions, and values of the other are integrated into a cohesive, effective identity and become fully functional parts of the self compatible with other parts.'[5] I shall base my discussion of identification on Richard Wollheim's philosophical explication of the concept as it is used in Freud's account of character formation.[6]

2. Character

A person's character is the relatively enduring set of dispositions which are judged by others, and usually accepted by the subject, to be typical or, 'characteristic' of her. It is usually acknowledged that there is an innate contribution in the form of 'temperament', intellectual endowment and other constitutional elements. The psychological foundation of character is however laid in childhood development through experience and socialisation. So-called 'disorders' of character are explained in terms of a disturbed developmental trajectory through an unfavourable environment and present in various ways: as social deviation, mental illness, or 'difficulties in living'. Psychoanalytic treatment was developed as a way in which character can be modified so as to relieve the distress associated with disorder and psychoanalysis is probably the earliest psychology to cover both normal character and its disorders in terms of the same processes of development. The psychoanalytic thesis that character development rests on identifications with significant figures is broadly accepted, even if Freud's specific explanation in terms of the resolution of the Oedipus complex is not. With respect to moral character in particular, ordinary psychological understanding has absorbed the psychoanalytic thesis that there is a part of the self, the Freudian ' superego', which contains parental interdictions and permissions.

The relation between reflection and character, and psychoanalysis, can be developed via the notion of self-interpretation. Charles Taylor has argued that the capacity for self-knowledge through self-interpretation is essential to being human; we are, says Taylor, 'self-interpreting animals'.[7] Interpretation here is semantic; it is the linguistic articulation of the meaning embedded in thoughts and actions and carried by objects and practices as 'meaning bearers' in human communicative behaviour.[8] Taylor's metaphysical thesis, that through self-interpretation we make ourselves,

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relationships', in line with Freud's explanation of identification as both process leading to, and achievement of, the psychological relation of identifying with another person (p.307). In contemporary British psychoanalytic psychology the relation is mediated through its representation as an 'object relation'.

[4] Stocker and Hegeman, *Valuing Emotions* p.307; Velleman, *Self to Self,* p. 347.

[5] See Burness E. Moore and Bernard D. Fine, *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts* (New Haven and London: American Psychoanalytic Association and Yale University Press, 1990), p.102.

[6] See Richard Wollheim, 'Imagination and Identification' in R.Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind: Essays and Lecture* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p.54, and 'Identification and Imagination: the inner structure of a psychic mechanism' in R.Wollheim (ed.), *Freud. A Collection of Critical Essays.* (New York: Anchor Books,1974), p.172.

[7] See Charles Taylor,'Self-Interpreting Animals' in C.Taylor, *Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.45.

[8] Taylor, 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 25:1 (1971), p. 3. For my account of the connection to psychoanalytic interpretation see Louise Braddock, 'Emotions, Interpretation and the Psychoanalytic Countertransference' in Dimitrina Spencer and James Davies (eds.), *Anthropological Fieldwork: a Relational Experience* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), Ch.8, p171.

implies a psychology in which self-knowledge is acquired through reflective self-discovery.[9] This involves the intelligibility to a subject of her ideas about herself, where 'intelligible' here implies more than comprehensible: what is implied is the meaning of the discovery for the subject's sense of herself as subject and agent, and hence for the self-conception invoked by the subject in justifying her actions. For reflection to promote growth of the self, then, what it reveals must be capable of being owned by the subject as a part of her self-conception; what she comes to realise about herself reflectively must be intelligible in this way, or it must be able become intelligible. Intelligibility is a condition of change through reflection because it is a condition of owning what can then be accepted or rejected.[10] Psychoanalytic interpretation is a reflective practice, one carried out, and learned, in the clinical encounter. It makes the subject's thoughts and behaviours intelligible to the subject in just this sense.

2. Psychoanalytic identification.

Freud, in 'Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood' explains how Leonardo's same-sex choice of love objects springs from his identification with his mother.[11] This identification supplies a psychic defence and so becomes dispositional: it becomes part of his adult character to love boys as his mother loved him.[12] Leonardo, removed from his mother in childhood, derived comfort from daydreaming. He wishfully imagined himself together with her again, both from his own perspective and from hers: he imagined himself with his mother; he imagined his mother from her perspective, with him; he imagined himself being like her, taking on the loving behaviour she showed him.[13] These imaginings led over time to his taking on some of her characteristics, imitating or modelling her behaviour, thoughts and feelings towards himself. So far, he might be said to have identified with her as children and adolescents do with significant figures, whose characteristics they more or less transiently acquire. This sort of identification can be understood in terms of ordinary imagining: the activity of imagining oneself to be that person 'from the inside'.[14]

However this 'ordinary' or 'commonsense' construal does not provide an explanation of character formation through identification; more is needed to form character than habitual daydreaming. Wollheim shows what more, according to Freud, Leonardo's identification with his

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[9] Reflection is not being used here to mean reflective self-critique, though it may and arguably should include it (see also note 27). Self-knowledge comes also from others' observations of us and from our knowledge of human psychology in general, employed in our reflective judgements about ourselves. Reflective self-knowledge is achieved through self-discovery in the light of these facts and this, Taylor points out, requires self-interpretation.

[10] The intelligibility requirement does not entail that subjects are never prone to error or to self-deception in respect of their character. Nor is it needed for all characteristics displayed by a subject: knowledge of her psychological and physical dispositions (emotional temperament or physical strength) while relevant to explaining actions are not part of the self-conception as intended here.

[11] See Sigmund Freud, 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood', James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* ['*S.E*'] *11* (London: Hogarth Press, 1910), p.63.

[12] Freud uses 'identification' ambiguously for the causal process through which identification is achieved and its achievement as a psychological relation to another person. This achievement (in turn) may be temporary; it becomes part of character when, through its contribution to psychic defence, it becomes dispositional.

[13] See Wollheim, 'Imagination and Identification' and 'Identification and Imagination'.

[14] The intentionality of first person reflexive imagining (recently summarised by Velleman, *Self to Self,* Ch.8, p.170) is not adequately disambiguated by spatial metaphors of 'from the inside', 'in the other person's place' (or, 'shoes') etc. The problem of disambiguation arguably motivates Wollheim's characterisation of 'central imagining' as imagining presented phenomenologically from the subjective perspective of the figure imagined: see Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.72, also Braddock, 'Psychological Identification, Imagination and Psychoanalysis', *Philosophical Psychology*, (forthcoming).

mother involves. In response to the painfulness of losing his mother and her love Leonardo retreats in his mental functioning from considerations of reality and his imaginings now answer the demand to relieve mental pain in a radically different way. His imagining his mother is no longer in the transient and reversible modality of wish-fulfilling daydreaming, but comes under the organising principle of psychic defence which Freud called the 'Pleasure principle'.[15]

Wollheim describes the result as follows:

> In the identification of himself with his mother, the imaginings in which Leonardo indulges, and which as we have seen, are modelled not upon his but upon her thoughts or upon her feelings, are *conceived as a means by which he can take her into himself and thus lovingly merge with her.* Such a conception I shall call the master thought in Leonardo's imaginings: meaning thereby not merely that it is because he thinks of imagining in this way that he sets out to imagine what he does, but, more directly, that *this is what he thinks he is doing when he imagines what he does.* (my italics)[16]

This further, radical, addition to the explanation I shall call (for expository convenience) the psychoanalytic thesis of 'archaic' thought.[17] Archaic thought is the mode of unconscious thought in which Leonardo's imagining represents itself as efficacious in bringing about what he wishes for in his imagining.[18] Archaic mental activity is overvalued in its self-representation: the represented taking-in and merging-with his mother is thought of as being causally efficacious in bringing about what is wished for. According to Wollheim, then, the unconscious imaginings of taking-in and merging-with together provide the thought-content of Leonardo's identification with his mother: '*this is what Leonardo thinks he is doing* when he imagines what he does.'

     The Leonardo case instances Freud's general theory about identification.[19] Characterological identification is established as the disposition to imagine, as Leonardo does, under the archaic mode of thought. Consequently both the disposition and the thought it gives rise to are unconscious, and it follows from this that those aspects of character due to identification are not present to conscious reflection.

3. The identity-thought

[15] See Freud, 'Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning', *S.E.12* (1911), p.218.

[16] Wollheim,'Imagination and Identification', p.75.

[17] I take the term from Wollheim's thesis of 'the archaic theory of the mind' (Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* p.90, p.142) which develops Freud's description of the mind as organised under the joint control of the Reality and the Pleasure principles (see note 14). Thinking in the reality mode the subject can engage with reality to secure the 'exigencies of life'. Under the Pleasure principle, thought is organised to preserve mental equilibrium ('pleasure') against the pain of unsatisfied instinctual and affective wants. In this mode, Freud says, the mind works to mitigate mental pain through the process of 'hallucinatory wish-fulfilment' and to produce dreams as the paradigm case of unconscious thought: see Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', *S.E.4* (1900), p.1. For more on the pre-psychoanalytic origin of this thesis see Freud, 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', *S.E.1* (1950 [1895]), p.295. See also Braddock, "Psychoanalysis as functionalist social science: the legacy of Freud's 'Project for a Scientific Psychology'' ' *Studies in the History and Philosophy of the Biomedical Sciences* (2006), p. 394.

[18] Under 'the archaic theory' mental self-representation the mind's 'image of itself' draws on a spatial vocabulary that at times achieves a profoundly corporeal mode, in which thought 'self-misrepresents' as material and so, as causally efficacious: see Wollheim, 'The Bodily Ego' in R.Wollheim & J.Hopkins (eds.), *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.124.

[19] Other instances are the resolution of the Oedipus complex towards heterosexual object choice, in Freud, 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', *S.E.19* (1923) p.319, and his explanation of 'melancholia', in Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', *S.E. 14* (1917) [1915], p.243.

Reflecting consciously on her identifications the subject may think or say, 'When I lose my temper *I am being my father*'. I shall call this the 'identity-thought', and I shall argue for the unlikely claim that it is the thought, on the subject's part, of her numerical identity with the figure identified-with. This thought is invoked as an explanation, not as a description, of her behaviour: the identification explains the behaviour.[20]

Most writers have argued that someone who imagines being someone else, and describes this as 'imagining I am X', does not imagine her numerical identity with another person, 'X'. Rather, she imagines uttering 'I am X' in the role she occupies in her imagining.[21] It is further argued that the identity 'I am X' cannot provide the content of a thought since the assertion of identity between two independent existents is necessarily false; in consequence, to entertain in imagination the thought of identity with another person is either confused or incoherent. Wollheim objects: 'there is no accessible sense in which a thought that is necessarily false can give the content of my imagining, or in which I can imagine a thought that is necessarily false to be true'.[22] This then motivates his own proposal of a different candidate for the identity-thought: what Leonardo *thinks he is doing when he imagines what he does* is taking-in and merging-with his mother. As the above quotation makes clear, this is the thought-content of Leonardo's identification, in Wollheim's account. I shall argue that this account is incomplete and that completing it establishes the identity-thought as a thought about numerical identity.

4. 'Phantasy-content'

Imagining under the archaic mode of thought is how psychoanalysis theorises unconscious thought. I shall follow psychoanalytic usage in calling unconscious thoughts 'phantasies'.[23] Wollheim's proposed 'phantasy-content' for the identity-thought is incomplete in two ways (the second emerges at the end of this section). Firstly, we do not have an account of why, in his phantasies of taking-in and of merging-with his mother Leonardo should retain the maternal characteristics he daydreamingly imagined himself as taking on. For the merging phantasy represents a state of affairs quite different from Leonardo's 'wanting to be' his mother in his daydreaming. Constrained by the bodily vocabulary and spatial character of unconscious representation, what it represents as realised is his 'wanting to have' her; in the shift to archaic thinking, which systematically self-misrepresents

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[20] 'Thought 'is neutral here between desires, beliefs, and imaginings. Though the identity-thought's content may be put in terms of similarity, not identity, the ground of the identification cannot be the resemblance identification is invoked to explain: 'When I lose my temper I am just like my father' is not an explanation in terms of identification if the identification is itself exact resemblance in respect of losing one's temper. The problem generalises: if identification is held to be exact resemblance in respect of relevant behaviours, tendencies, etc, these cannot be independently explained by identification.

[21] See: Bernard Williams, 'Imagination and the Self' [1966] in B. Williams, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.26; Stephen Reynolds, 'Imagining Oneself To Be Another', *Nous* 23 (1981) p.615; Velleman *Self to Self* p. 171. These writers concede to perspectival imagining ('imagining being') a propositional mode of presentation.

[22] See Wollheim, 'Identification and Imagination' p.80. This objection is not conclusive; it begs the question by presupposing that the intensional context of imagining is sensitive to necessary falsehood while not to contingent falsehood. And, *pace* Williams's stricture that 'at least with regard to the self, the imagination is too tricky a thing to provide a reliable road to the comprehension of what is logically possible' (Williams, 'Imagination and the Self', p. 45), the observation cuts both ways: something that is held to be logically (because metaphysically) impossible may still be imaginable with circumscribing conditions imposed on the imagination (see Williams 'The Self and the Future' in *Problems of the Self* , p.46).

[23] See Richard Wollheim, 'Wish-fulfilment' in Ross Harrison (ed.), *Rational Action: Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.47.The theory of unconscious phantasy is specific to Kleinian theory within the British Object Relations school of psychoanalysis. For philosophical exegesis see Sebastian Gardner, *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Ch 6, p.140.

itself as bodily, Leonardo's daydream of being his mother by taking on her role, her behaviours, *vis à vis* him becomes the phantasy of bodily taking-in and merging-with her. What it now represents is 'having' his mother. In the shift from 'wanting to be' her to 'wanting to have' her, the continuity of content with his conscious imagining is lost, and with it the explanation of why his mother's characteristics, in particular those founding the identification, should persist as part of Leonardo's own character.[24]

A theoretical consideration not employed by Wollheim restores explanatory continuity to the account. According to Freud the representational resources of archaic thought include those observed in dreams as the 'means of representation' of logical relations.[25] In dreams similarity is represented by composition, through the activity of condensation. The resulting representation is of one composite or merged object. So when Leonardo imagines himself resembling his mother in respect of her loving behaviour he is restricted in his unconscious thought to representing the resemblance as composition. His wishful imagining of himself with her characteristics ('the imaginings in which Leonardo indulges, and which as we have seen, are modelled not upon his but upon her thoughts or upon her feelings') in the mode of archaic thought represents him and his mother as one composite object, having both their characteristics.[26]

Wollheim proposes the taking-in-and-merging phantasy as the content of the identity-thought because he rejects numerical identity as the intentional content of imagining being, or of wishing to be, someone else; accordingly the sole thought content in identification is the phantasy. We have seen that this leaves it obscure how Leonardo can acquire his mother's characteristics by identification with her. It also leads to a second way that the phantasy-content account is incomplete: Wollheim's phantasy identity-thought is not such as to meet the requirement of intelligibility in self-reflection.

5. Self-knowledge.
My objection to the proposed phantasy-content for the identity-thought is that it, and so the identification itself, are not intelligible (in the sense of Section 1) to the subject in respect of her self-conception. If the subject is to reflect on her dispositions as hers these must be capable of meaningful connection to her reasoning about herself. It is in this way that the identity-thought must be intelligible to her in reflection.[27] Intelligibility is important because it is a condition of the subject's reflective acceptance of self-knowledge as authentic.[28] Authenticity requires intelligibility and failure of intelligibility negates authenticity. Retaining an un-intelligible thought about herself is a form of false consciousness; it alienates the subject from her actions. For the subject to understand and own an identification as hers, the identity-thought must therefore be such as to survive reflection.[29]

The identity-thought proposed by Wollheim does not meet this condition. The phantasy-

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[24] Freud thought this form of identification was enacted in the supposedly primitive practice of eating the totem animal in order to acquire its characteristics. But he gives no independent justification for this belief.

[25] Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams' Ch.6, p.277. This piece of psychoanalytic theory is absent from Wollheim's account.

[26] Composition assembles only the characteristics not held in common, according to Freud; the resembling ones are omitted from the composition. Leonardo's resemblance to his mother is wished-for, and the wish is realised by the composition.

[27] This is prior to whether she accepts it as part of herself or tries to change her character; not all identifications are ones which on reflection we want or need to retain.

[28] 'Authentic' here has its ordinary sense of 'original authority', glossed as what is integral to character. See Moore and Fine, *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts* p.102, 'integrated into a cohesive, effective identity and *become fully functional parts of the self compatible with other parts*' (my italics).

[29] See Edward Harcourt, 'Introduction', in E.Harcourt (ed.), *Morality, Ideology, Reflection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.1, on failure to survive self-reflection as a criterion of ideological beliefs in self-knowledge.

content of merging is produced by the imagination working in the archaic mode of thought, which misrepresents the content of Leonardo's conscious imagining. Phantasies, like dreams, have what Freud calls in the latter connection 'manifest' content. This identity-thought's manifest content both conceals the latent content of the wishful imagining by misrepresenting it as bodily, and arises by the process of archaic thought, which misrepresents itself as self-fulfilling.[30] This then gives rise to a dilemma, on both horns of which the identity-thought itself must fail to be owned by the subject in reflection:

Horn 1: Let us allow that phantasies, like dreams, can enter conscious reflection indirectly.[31] This would make the manifest phantasy-content of 'taking-in-and-merging' accessible to the subject as her identity-thought. This identity-thought is not intelligible to the subject as part of her self-conception as an agent. For her identification, as her disposition to entertain the identity-thought, is then just her disposition to have the phantasy.But citing this disposition could make no rational contribution to justifying her actions. For the disposition to have the identity-thought is, on this account, a disposition to 'phantasise', where phantasy-formation is a non-rational process of forming representations under the conditions of unconscious thought. Actions motivated by phantasy are not those of the agentive subject; they invite the charge of Sartrean *mauvaise foi*.

Horn 2: Let us suppose that reflection could have revealed the content latent in Leonardo's phantasy: his wish to retain his mother in his thoughts of her. This would reveal the identity-thought as a distortion of the wish into the manifest form of the merging phantasy, by a process which misrepresents the wish as fulfilled. But this would reveal the manifest merging-phantasy content of Leonardo's identity-thoughtas the result of a process of systematic misrepresentation. Retrieval of the phantasy's latent content reveals the identity-thought to be a false consciousness.

The identity-thought as phantasy-content thus fails to survive critical reflection on either horn, and on either horn the outcome of reflective understanding would be abandonment of the identification. The explanation of action in terms of identification, and the formation of character through identification, would then be contingent on the absence of reflective self-knowledge. Were Leonardo to reflect he would be back where he started: missing his mother, not identified with her. In order to avoid this conclusion a content must be found for the identity-thought which makes it such as to withstand reflection, by making it intelligible to the subject.

6. Numerical identity

The task then is to make the identity-thought intelligible to the subject, while retaining Freud's insight that identification realises a wish. I shall do this by arguing that the content of Leonardo's identity-thought is his numerical identity with his mother. This is the thought that, if it were made consciously available to him, would be what presented his identification to him in a form which could be reflected on. So far we have seen that his daydreaming reflects the wish not to have lost her and that his imagining keeps her in his mind, both by imagining being her, and by imagining himself with her characteristic behaviour. These imaginings, shifted into archaic thought, represent him and his mother together forming one composite object, in which two things become one thing. This manifest phantasy-content has as its latent content, interpreted psychoanalytically, the wish not to be separated from his mother; the manifest phantasy-content represents this as fulfilled, in (mis)representing him as not being numerically separate from her. The wishful content of the phantasy, retrieved in linguistic form, is the identity-thought 'I am her and she is me'. Since numerical identity is a relation that cannot fail to be satisfied (except in the empty domain), the thought about the numerical identity of two things is a thought about this relation. When Leonardo wishes not to be separated from his mother his archaic imagining fulfils his wish by misrepresenting the two of them as one thing. This representation is linguistically articulated as their numerical

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[30] Misrepresentation can be understood as an extreme form of emotionally distorted mis-categorisation.
[31] Gardner (*Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* p.218) calls this 'quasi-manifestation', detectable through learned introspective sensitivity to phenomenology.

identity and this provides the meaning of the identity-thought; for Leonardo, numerical identity with his mother realises his wish not to be separated from her because it represents as realised the only condition under which what he wishes will be 'true': the numerical identity of himself and his mother.[32] Numerical identity between Leonardo and his mother represents him and her in a never-failing relation.[33]

I claim that the semantic content of the identity thought retrieved from the phantasy is the subject's numerical identity with the figure identified with. This does provide the subject with an intelligible thought about herself, since even as a necessary falsehood it can enter into semantic relations as the unasserted antecedent of a counterfactual.[34] At least minimally then, the identity-thought 'I am X' meets the requirement that it be rationally connected to other thoughts the subject entertains about herself: 'if I were my father I would be powerful'. Or, as Leonardo might think, 'if I were my mother I would always be with her'. By itself this is not enough to explain behaviour on the basis of identification; for this there must be a condition under which the identity-thought is taken, *per impossibile*, as not contrary to fact. I have suggested that such a condition might obtain within the intensional context of imagining.[35]

Lastly, although it cannot be shown in detail here, the account generalises to character formation through other parental identifications. Freud explains the development of moral character in terms of the super-ego's formation through identification with the father.[36] Unlike the defensive structure of Leonardo's identification, super-ego formation is developmentally precipitated by the little boy's need to resolve the rivalry he feels with his father for his mother. The little boy's 'solution' (notoriously unavailable to the little girl, though we do not have to accept the letter of Freud's account in respect of either sex here) is to identify with his father. Freud is unexceptionably drawing our attention to the normal existence of deep conflicts between love and hostility in the child's attachment to both parents, which provide the psychological motivation for identification. Identification secures the parent's presence against loss, not only as experienced by Leonardo, but as feared by the child who experiences normal ambivalence in attachment. The identity-thought can therefore be allotted the same role as in Leonardo's identification: it wishfully represents the loved-and-hated parental figure as ever-present and so, as protected from angry annihilation.[37]

I have suggested that the outcome of the reflective subject's assessing her character identifications for acceptance or for rejection is that she comes to accept some as authentically hers and to reject others. It is here that the identity-thought is theoretically important: once the identity-thought has emerged in reflection, the unconscious motivation for the identification may be explored, freeing the subject to reject the aspects of the figure identified-with, whose characteristics she no longer emotionally needs to own. Reflectively realising, 'If I am my father then I am not a small and helpless child', the adult subject may at last be able to relinquish this identity-thought. So long as such an identity-thought has not been confronted the subject cannot consider its

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[32] Though, as Arif Ahmed has pointed out to me, the part-whole relation would also meet this condition.

[33] A psychoanalytic interpretation would be: 'you think you are your mother because if you and she are one and the same person then she will never leave you. This is what you wish would come true.'

[34] A necessary falsehood (one true in no possible world) can still stand as the unasserted antecent of a counterfactual. Arif Ahmed suggested this as a formal way to refute the objection that the identity-thought as entertained would be confused. As a formal solution this implies nothing substantive about how the identity-thought would enter into the subject's reasoning about herself (see also notes 20,21).

[35] See note 22.

[36] Freud, 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', *S.E.19* p.319.

[37] A fuller treatment within psychoanalytic theory itself would elaborate on what is lost: the 'narcissistic' pleasure of total love which identification with the mother is to bring back into the infant's world. This narcissistic identification, exemplified by Leonardo, is held to differ from the identification, exhibited by hysterics, which Freud found to be represented in dreams by condensation and displacement, whereas on my account these two forms of identification are not distinct types.

consequences in her actions, but remains in thrall to a figure unconsciously represented as identical with her. Moral character development requires freeing oneself from such psychological situations. Once the identity-thought is consciously accessible, and understood as a defensive formation, the subject can question the identification itself.

Finally, it might be objected that confronting the identity-thought should always entail its rejection as contrary to fact. To retain it would be knowingly to retain a belief about oneself that was necessarily false. Ordinary psychology certainly recognises that a proposition can knowingly be entertained contrary to fact, and indeed can be wishfully acted upon, for instance under the sway of emotion, or when constraints on belief and action are eroded by desire. Indeed, the expressive enactment of fantasies or imaginings in this ordinary sense pervades everyday life as well as being, on some views, constitutive of much artistic and cultural activity. Reflective recognition of the falsity of the belief and the wishfulness of the enactment does not always put a curb on such enactments nor lead to rejection of wishfully held beliefs. Recognising the identity-thought as the representation of a wishful belief is one way the subject can both confront her identity-thought as necessarily false and accept it as part of her self-conception, without relapsing into self-deception, either as *mauvaise foi* or as false consciousness. Many of the ideas according to which people live their lives are more wishful than justified. However, in a life worth living they must be examined and accepted. What the psychoanalytic psychology of identification has to show is that the identity-thought, as such a belief, can be assessed by the subject for acceptance or rejection and this, I have argued, can be shown.

Conclusions
'Putting the identity back into identification' has involved the following claims: in identification the subject has an 'identity-thought' about her numerical identity with the figure identified-with; the numerical identity represents the only condition of realising an unconscious wish; the numerical identity is meaningfully connected to the wish through the latter's unconscious representation; the subject can entertain this thought without incoherence (it can enter into some semantic relations); the identity-thought is necessary to complete the analysis of identification.

What philosophical advantage accrues from this? If one agrees with philosophers like Williams that philosophy's proper object of study is ourselves and if Freud is right that identification with others is at the basis of individual character, and if Hume and Smith are right that sympathy with others is the natural capacity at the basis of our life as social creatures, then identification taken in this sense is a key idea in the 'project of humanistic enquiry' that Williams and others articulate.[38] But invoking identification to understand character demands a clear analytic view of the theoretical structure of identification itself. For this we have turned to psychoanalytic theory, where the psychological explanation in terms of process is, as I have argued, incomplete analytically. For identification to ground character, it must be expressible in a thought the subject can have about herself which will survive reflection. I have argued that this 'identity-thought' is the thought of the subject's numerical identity with the figure identified-with.

I have not considered objections to my argument here, nor defended the psychoanalytic theses I call on. My aim has been the philosophical completion of an analysis, formulated within psychoanalytic theory, of identification in character formation; this is not intended to be conceptual analysis, but can be thought of as an 'analytic reconstruction' of a psychological account originally couched in the terms of psychoanalytic psychology. Possession of an intelligible identity-thought is a psychological, not a conceptual condition. It also remains open what other psychological conditions are necessary for identification to be present, some of which, such as the presence of a motivating affect, have been mentioned. Also left open is the question whether an intelligible identity-thought about numerical identity, acquired in the way described, is always necessary: not

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[38] Williams, 'Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline' *Philosophy* 75 (2000), p.477.

explored here is the extent to which there may be 'family resemblance' identifications which do not involve this identity-thought. But I propose that the analysis of identification in terms of the theoretical presence of the identity-thought provides a criterion with which to distinguish the core sense of identification from its wider usage.[39] The distinction rests, as we have seen, on the psychoanalytic conceptions of defensive psychical organisation and unconscious 'archaic' thought in the theories of Freud and Klein, which remain undefended here.[40]

While these theories do not have wide currency in analytic philosophy, moral philosophers drawing on psychoanalysis have been alert at the descriptive level to phenomena it helps identify, particularly when these are egregiously pathological and intractable to insight or to any form of psychological treatment. The psychoanalytic focus of moral philosophy has as a result been skewed towards 'puzzle cases': identifications such as murderous *folie a deux*; masochism and other forms of 'identification with the aggressor', such as the visiting of abuse on others by those who have been abused, or the extreme identification with a leader which is held to explain successful totalitarian rule.[41] If moral psychology is to venture into psychoanalysis here more understanding is needed of psychoanalysis' explanations of character and of unconscious motivation. For psychoanalysis explains these 'puzzles' of moral psychology as deviations from the normal psychology and character of human beings: when identification is adduced in explaining someone's behaviour it follows from the psychoanalytic account that more is involved in producing the behaviour than imitation or aspiration. Psychoanalytic theory also explains why rational exhortation is insufficient to change such behaviour, since dispositional identification has unconscious motivations which can render it intractable to insight. Properly understood, psychoanalytic theory can be a resource to philosophy in perplexing questions of human behaviour; with acknowledgement to Bernard Williams, we might say that in the area of identification (as elsewhere) psychoanalysis contributes to making sense of inhumanity.

In invoking psychoanalytic theory to illuminate questions of moral psychology, philosophers could therefore employ the criterion of identification argued for in this paper, the presence of the identity-thought about numerical identity. I said that 'so long as such an identity-thought has not been confronted the subject cannot consider its consequences in her actions, but remains in thrall to a figure unconsciously represented as identical with her'. Such is the position of the subject whose identification takes one of the puzzling forms which interest moral philosophers. It can for instance help unlock the puzzle to ask who the other figure in the identity is: who does the hostage, or the sadist, the totalitarian ruler or the Emperor Caligula, 'think he is'. It may then be asked, further, if he would knowingly choose to be that person? Moral change involves freeing oneself from an unthinking subjection to such identity-thoughts. This leaves open the question of choice of identifications; the psychoanalytic theory of identification is not a metaphysical theory and has nothing to say about the concept of person or the ultimate grounds on which an identification is felt to be a part of the self. It is a psychological theory, analytic understanding of which provides a criterion, the theoretical presence of the identity-thought about numerical identity, for this form of

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[39] The distinction in psychoanalytic terms is given by the role of identification in psychic defence. Non-defensive identifications (which can be recruited to defence) can be 'interactive' (empathy, communicative projective identification, psychoanalytic counter-transference) where imagining someone is used to understand 'how it is for them'; or 'aspirational' (transient identifications with charismatic figures) where imagining another aims at resemblance.

[40] The differences between Kleinian and Freudian theory cannot be gone into here.

[41] Psychoanalytic elucidation would involve Klein's distinction between introjective identfication (which retains the parental figure and its properties) and 'projective' identification used as a way, to get rid of unwanted aspects of the subject herself. This marks a major theoretical difference from Anna Freud's 'identification with the aggressor'. Kleinian theory explains the extreme intractability of such identifications by reference not only to the functionality of defence but by the projection away from the subject's mind of thoughts that are unacceptable.

identification.[42]
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