A THEORY OF UNIFIED ONLINE IDENTITY

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Dedication

This thesis is first dedicated to my four parents whose love and support throughout the years cannot be overestimated. It is also dedicated to Mandy Wood who, day by day, makes life a better place.

Abstract

People around the world are meeting in places that consist of little more than a touch of some hardware, a dash of electricity, and a pinch of code. As the Internet becomes increasingly incorporated into our lives the subject of online identity becomes increasingly relevant. How are we to conceive of ourselves as selves on the Internet? Is there anything unique or special about the way in which we relate to ourselves in cyberspace?

Sherry Turkle answers this question affirmatively, arguing that the Internet is suggestive of a decentered theory of self which ought to make us reconsider our very notion of our identities. In chapter one, Turkle's position is examined, and I argue that while her encompassing view on online identity presents some incredible insights, in the end it falls short because her argument draws a false conclusion.

In chapter two, Christine Korsgaard's theory of practical identity is taken up as a means of addressing the weakness in Turkle's theory and, at the same time, salvages the insights revealed in the first chapter.

With a theory of unified online identity established, in chapter three it is applied to both show its applicability to case studies and scenarios one may face as they traverse cyberspace, and to explain how it is we can understand our relation to our online selves in a deep sense.

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INTRODUCTION

Computer users all across the world experience a phenomenon that is made possible by the Internet. This phenomenon is online identity and it is experienced in a variety of ways depending on what activity is undertaken in cyberspace.[1] Whether one is checking their e-mail, participating in web forums, chatting with friends and family, exploring virtual worlds, or simply surfing around the World Wide Web, one has an online identity because one's use of the computer-mediated technology forces one to self-identify to other Internet users and, reflexively, to oneself. It can be asked, however, whether this technology changes anything with respect to our conceptions of ourselves.

I argue that while the Internet does not change our conception of self in any essential way, it can affect, expand, and alter the way in which we view ourselves. In this way, by not considering the self to be essentially or fundamentally changed, a theory of unified online identity is presented as an explanation of how cyberspace affects our notion of identity. The thesis is divided into three chapters, which are divided into various sections.

Chapter one examines Sherry Turkle's decentered theory of online identity, and is the source of opposition to my thesis. The goal of this chapter is to both present Turkle's view, and highlight how online identity is special. Turkle's theory starts by situating itself in the postmodern tradition, after which her positions on both the structure of the mind, and epistemology are provided. Turkle constructs a theory of online identity in which fragmentation of the self and disunity of experience are central ideas. For her, this is a desired outcome in as much as the online experience exemplifies those ideas. Turkle concludes that online identities are valuable insofar as they promote psychological health and well being. This chapter ends with the conclusion that, while Turkle raises many

[1] Dorian Wiszniewski and Richard Coyne, "Mask and Identity: The Hermeneutics of Self-Construction in the Information Age," *Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace*, Ed. Renninger et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) provide an in depth survey of the issue of online identity as it arises within the field of information technology. The overarching themes of education and architecture play a prominent role as they explore the subject. The span of their study begins in ancient times with Plato and Aristotle and ends with more contemporary theorists.

interesting points about online identity, and the usefulness of cyber-selves, she is wrong in claiming that the knowing self is a contradictory self.

Chapter two appropriates Christine Korsgaard's theory of practical identity as a means of explaining a theory of online identity that can keep the positive aspects of Turkle's theory, and at the same time provide a description of the unified experience of lived experience. Korsgaard takes a phenomenological approach to the subject of practical identity to justify a Kantian ethic. While Korsgaard's project is concerned with morality, the concept of identity she seeks to ground it in works well for a theory of online identity. By tracing the process from self-consciousness through to how we come to have a conception of what makes a human life worth living, an account of autonomy emerges as a concept that can unify the self, even in cyberspace. This chapter ends with some ideas about how a theory of practical identity could be applied to the subject of ethics in cyberspace. No ethical position, however, is taken regarding online ethics. The conclusion drawn from chapter two is that a theory of practical identity can explain the special features of online identity, and account for the objection leveled against Turkle in the previous chapter.

With a theory of unified online identity established, chapter three puts it into use. The chapter begins by applying the theory of unified online identity to a famous cyber event that occurred in the early 1990s, where it was alleged that a rape had occurred in cyberspace. By examining this event through the lens of practical identity, a better understanding of how we can understand ourselves to be unified in cyberspace is made clearer. This chapter also uses a theory of practical identity to outline the various ways that we can understand our online selves. A theory of practical identity can explain, in a deep sense, the conditions from under which our online selves are much like our selves in everyday life, and can illuminate the circumstances under which our online selves are very much different than our selves outside of cyberspace.

1. A DECENTERED THEORY OF ONLINE IDENTITY

1.1 Introduction

Sherry Turkle begins her book Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet with the claim, "We come to see ourselves differently as we catch sight of our images in the mirror of the machine."[2] She argues that technologically mediated communication has changed the way we conceive of "our very identities."[3] While Turkle never explicitly gives a definition of identity - and her broad inter-disciplinary appeals do not allow her to be pinned down to one academic field - its meaning becomes clearer when her theory is examined as two related positions. The first position concerns the concept of the self as fragmented and non-autonomous. The fragmented self is, for Turkle, especially visible in cyberspace where one can, among other things, don a multiplicity of identities that can radically differ from each other and perhaps more importantly, differ from one's RL self.[4] The second position concerns the value our cyber identities have for increased self-knowledge. This capacity arises from the potential for new experiences brought about from multiple online identities, in which our RL self is largely invisible. For Turkle, understanding the value to be found in such explorations of the self is dependent upon an understanding of how we obtain knowledge. These two positions comprise a theory of online identity as the first position describes how we should understand the phenomenon of online identity, while the second position makes a normative claim about how this phenomenon is valuable.

The two positions attributed to Turkle are brought to light through an example designed to highlight the specialness of online identity. Imagine that you enter a virtual world and encounter yourself. This statement can be interpreted in at least two ways. In one sense, you could actually meet an avatar that goes by your name and may even possess many of your physical attributes. To be sure, you are not actually meeting

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[2] Sherry Turkle, Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995) 9.

[3] Turkle, Screen 9.

[4] RL stands for "real life." RL is identified by its initials to make a distinction between the offline world and cyberspace in such a way that reality of the latter is not questioned. In other words, both RL and cyberspace are real and distinguishable. Meatspace, as opposed to cyberspace, is a cruder way of making the distinction.

yourself in this first kind of scenario but rather meeting someone, or something, masquerading as you. Turkle had this experience when she met a character named Dr. Sherry in a virtual community who was conducting interviews about the psychology of MUDs.[5] It turned out that Dr. Sherry was a composite character designed by two students who themselves, like Turkle, were working on the subject of online identity.[6] What is interesting about this example is that two agents were constructing one identity, a feat not easily replicated outside of cyberspace.[7] Suppose now, that rather than meeting one avatar professing to be you, there are many. They all look and act like you but are controlled by a user, or users, other than yourself. While it is unlikely that this would ever happen to those of us not sufficiently famous to warrant such flattery, the example does point to the fact that online "the one can be many and the many can be one."[8] The point is that the Internet provides special opportunities for identity, because we are forced to explain how it is that we self-identify with a multitude of diverse online selves not bound by the constraints of one's RL body.

The second sense in which you can encounter yourself online is more personal and does not involve others. Imagine you are tasked to design a home page. A home page is a personal web page constructed by an individual which, among other things, reflects

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[5] MUD is an acronym for a "multi-user domain, dungeon, dimension, etc." They are text based virtual communities, though not necessarily a game, in which people control avatars and interact with one another. The last letter in the acronym is often appropriated by groups who find another word that begins with the letter 'd' that better fits their vision. Furthermore, some text based virtual worlds drop the 'd' altogether. MOO, for example, stands for "multi-user object oriented," MUX stands for "multi-user experience", and MUSH refers to "multi-user shared habitat/hallucination." Since they are text based, all objects and actions are represented as words and phrases. Objects are created by assigning them descriptions. So, for example, if one wanted to create a ball, one would commonly type '@create ball,' then '@desc ball=the ball is round.' If one were to then type 'look at ball,' the MUD program's output would be 'the ball is round.' If you wanted to then throw the ball, the command '@emote: Throw the ball,' would produce the output '[your user name] throws the ball.' With these simple tools as building blocks, complex worlds that house hundreds, possibly thousands, can be created.

[6] Turkle, Screen 16.

[7] It could be thought that co-authors working on a novel or script may collaboratively construct an identity. This process, however, does not capture the kind of agency involved in a virtual world where actions are attributable to avatars differently than they are to characters in a novel. The distinction between online personae and fictional personae rests primarily on the fact that online identities are backed by a kind of intentionality not found in fictional characters. While we can say that Hamlet is motivated by a desire for revenge and intends to kill the king, there is sense in which it is different from an online personae who is also motivated by revenge and wants to kill a king. In the latter case intentionality originates in a person controlling an avatar in a virtual world, whereas in the former case the intentionality originates, presumably, in Shakespeare's imagination.

[8] Turkle, Screen 17.

interests, thoughts, and information considered to be notable.[9] A home page can be used for a variety of personal or professional reasons, or a combination of the two. Some of the key features of a home page are theme, content, structural organization, technical features, iconography, and modes of address.[10] There is no single format for a home page. Homepages can be, for example, stand alone web sites, web logs, or a page on a social networking web site. What is important about them is that they reflect something about their creators.[11] In designing a home page one must ask oneself what one plans to project into cyberspace which, in turn, may prompt the question "who am I?" In this sense, then, you can encounter yourself in cyberspace as you are forced to question your identity and choose what kind of online self you want to present. To be sure, in asking the question "Who am I?" in cyberspace a distinction can be made between "who am I *really*" and "what image of myself do I want to project. With the latter question, the possibility for self-serving motivations or self-deception arises because one need not successfully answer the veracity of the first question. With the former question, though, insight can still be had into the issue of encountering oneself in cyberspace through either the construction of the home page when one is seeking to project a sincere truth-seeking reflection of oneself, or in hindsight as one examines one's home page and realizes something new about oneself.

Questions about one's self-identity are obviously not unique to cyberspace, since individuals with any self-awareness ask these questions in RL. In cyberspace, however, there are fewer restrictions on how one can answer them. Consider, for example, people in virtual worlds who swap genders and describe their physical characteristics much differently than how they appear in RL. For these people the question of "who am I?" opens special possibilities because they can choose characteristics that would be impossible or difficult to achieve in RL. Whether one is constructing a home page,

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[9] Home page can also refer to the web site that one's World Wide Web browser loads upon starting that program. This is the web site that one is taken to when the "home" button in the browser is pushed. The use of "home page" here, however, unless otherwise stated, refers to a personal web site and not the default web site for a browser.

[10] Daniel Chandler, "Personal Home Pages and the Construction of Identities on the Web," 1998, Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom, 15 July 2008 http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/webident.html.

[11] Chandler, Home Pages claims that home pages present an "unrivalled opportunity for self-presentation in relation to any dimension of social and personal identity to which ones chooses to allude."

exploring a virtual world, or experiencing some other facet of cyberspace, there is a sense in which one can acquire new kinds of self-knowledge or engage in new forms of self-deception. If self-knowledge is valuable, then such a consequence is to be desired.

Turkle advances two positions with regard to the subject of online identity. The first position focuses on the development of the human mind and concludes that there is no unity of the self. The second position begins with an argument against "traditional" epistemology and concludes with a proposal for an alternative way of acquiring knowledge. In the next section I examine how Turkle fits her theoretical framework into a socio-historical context. The following three sections develop her two positions and relate them to her theory of online identity. I conclude the chapter by questioning aspects of Turkle's respective positions. By taking this approach, Turkle's claim that we come to see ourselves differently in the mirror of the machine[12] can be assessed on its merits and weaknesses.

1.2 Turkle on Postmodernism

Turkle claims that upon encountering the ideas of French postmodern thinkers such as Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari she was initially unsympathetic but ultimately changed her mind because with the advent of the Internet these theories were given means by which they could be understood.[13] While she was originally sympathetic to their views on language and the mind/body problem, their theories, she thought, did not seem to match with lived experience. Part of the reason she thinks the "decentered" theories, a term she attributes broadly to postmodern theory, have been slow to catch on is because it is hard to challenge the idea of an autonomous ego.[14] If we presume there to be an autonomous ego, then it makes sense to think of the self as unitary. This view is reinforced in everyday life as people are expected to take responsibility for their actions as the unified self is treated as a basic reality. So, while these postmodern thinkers challenged the notion of an autonomous ego, as well as traditional theories of knowledge,

[12] Turkle, Screen 9.
[13] Turkle, Screen 15.
[14] Turkle, Screen 15.

Turkle adopted these views only when the Internet provided postmodernism with an object capable of linking the theory to the lived experience.[15]

Turkle compares the ideas of postmodernism to the modernist world view that has dominated post-Enlightenment Western thinking.[16] Postmodernism, while hard to define explicitly, is captured by concepts such as "decentered," "fluid," "nonlinear," and "opaque."[17] Opposed to these ideas are traditional modernist concepts such as "linear," "logical," "hierarchical," which are thought to have "depths that can be plumbed and understood."[18] Turkle emphasizes "the precedence of surface over depth."[19] Her theory of online identity can be clarified through an explanation of both what it is, and what it is not.

Turkle claims that computers both embody postmodernism and bring it to earth.[20] The idea that computers could have embodied postmodern theory would have been unthinkable in the recent past because in the "modernist computational aesthetic," computers had been thought to epitomize the idea of a calculating machine.[21] The idea that computers are the ultimate in linear, hierarchical, calculating machines was presented as a modern metanarrative not only about the way in which computers worked, but also about the way the world works. In others words the modernist metanarrative promised to explain, unpack, reduce, and clarify. [22] For Turkle, the metanarrative she calls the "culture of calculation" has historically been applied to the idea that the mind and self, epistemology, and identity can all be explained, unpacked, and reduced in a linear, hierarchical, and logical manner.

Turkle, however, sees a new and opposing metanarrative arising. In the past objects such as turbines, smokestacks, and conveyor belts could be used as objects to

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[15] It should be noted that in discussing Turkle's position the literature surrounding the subject of postmodernism and the concept of metanarratives will not be addressed. The issues, discussions, and arguments surrounding postmodern theory as a whole are well beyond the scope of this project. While Turkle's theory and influences are clear, the criticisms leveled at her position concern her specific theory of online identity.

[16] Turkle, Screen 17.

[17] Turkle, Screen 17.

[18] Turkle, Screen 17.

[19] Turkle, Screen 44.

[20] The claim that postmodern thought could be brought to earth is a reference to her claim that the Internet has legitimized postmodern theory, not a bold metaphysical claim. It is a strange way to use the term 'embody,' but since that is how she uses it, that is how it is presented.

[21] Turkle, Screen 18.

[22] Turkle, Screen 19.

think with for the modernist position. These objects were useful because they provided demonstrable examples from which modernist theory could be explained.[23] Now, however, Turkle claims that postmodernism and the metanarrative she calls "the culture of simulation" has found its object-to-think-with.[24] The Internet provides Turkle with the tools and means for explicating postmodern theory and an account of the decentered self.[25]

Turkle calls the difference between the culture of calculation and the culture of simulation "A Tale of Two Aesthetics." The distinction lies between what is meant by "transparent" as it relates to the modernist theory, and what is meant by "opaque" as it relates to the postmodern theory.[26] A metaphor used to make this distinction is the difference between MS-DOS based computers (PCs) and Macintosh computers. The PC is transparent because one can open it up, look under the hood, and know how it works.[27] The Mac on the other hand is opaque, intentionally, because the mechanics are hidden and what is important is not the way in which it works but rather the way it is used.[28] The difference between these two aesthetics, according to Turkle, "is often fought out between those who put their faith in reductive understanding (open the box, trust what you can see, and analyze completely) and those who proclaim such ideas to be bankrupt or at least impractical."[29]

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[23] Turkle, Screen 44.
[24] Turkle, Screen 44.
[25] Turkle, Screen 15.
[26] Turkle, Screen 37.
[27] Turkle, Screen 42.
[28] Turkle, Screen 42.
[29] Turkle, Screen 43. This distinction is alive and well today, more than a decade after Screen's publication. To observe it, all one need do is frequent message boards that attract fans of both PCs and Macs and find a subject thread that deals with one of those operating systems. It can be quite surprising the length such threads can reach as proponents extol the virtues of their preferred system and point to the flaws in the other. The arguments often follow the same lines of reasoning Turkle provides, the difference between transparency and opaqueness, for both kinds of operating systems.

There has, however, been a new entry into the debate. Linux, understood broadly to refer to the unix-like operating systems being pushed by the open source community, have recently become more common due to the ease with which they can be accessed and installed. Linux systems are currently more reliant on command line inputs than either of the other systems and have been taken up by some as the flagship for transparency in operating systems. However, to gain greater acceptance, Linux developers have realized the need for usability and have begun making efforts toward opacity. Windows replaced MS-DOS as Microsoft Corporation's operating system. It introduced a graphical user interface, and is now defended by its champions as the best balance between transparency and usability. Apple Corporation was the first to introduce a graphical user interface to its operating system, and continues technical and media campaigns designed to establish itself as the most opaque, and hence most usable.

Turkle claims that the "Macintosh mystique" is indicative of postmodernity as computer culture, and our culture in general, places more emphasis and importance on surface usability than understanding of mechanics and the way things work.[30] The "culture of simulation" is a desirable development in human history because it rejects supposedly discredited notions about our ability to know anything beyond what is on the surface. It should be noted that Turkle concedes that, like all computers, the Mac remains "a collection of on/off switches, of bits and bytes, of traveling electrons," however, the Macintosh strove to make these "irrelevant" to the user.[31] Again, what's important and interesting is the surface upon which the culture of simulation places a premium. On the surface it is tinkering that is important, not rigid command line structures.[32] The Macintosh is supposed to appeal to the culture of simulation because it was designed to be mastered through trial and error as the surface is intuitively probed for function.[33] It is through the lens of the culture of simulation (for which the Macintosh computer is the metaphor) that Turkle fits her theory into the post-modern tradition.

But does the Internet really embody postmodern theory? Aaron Slevin objects that Turkle's claim that virtual communities have arisen out of a process that has propelled us from modernity towards postmodernity is vague and unsupported.[34] For Turkle, as personal computing became more popular and computers became more user friendly, people became less interested in how their machines worked and more interested with the purposes they were using them for. Turkle takes this as evidence for the move toward a culture of simulation based on her observation that computer culture has rejected the old approach to computers and embraced the new movement that places emphasis on usability and opacity.[35] But Slevin claims the inference is not warranted.

Regardless of which actors represent which roles, or whether any of the opinions have merit or can be resolved, what is most interesting is that the debate in computer culture along the lines of transparency and opacity continues to this day.

[30] Turkle, Screen 35. The term "surface," the opposite of deep, is important throughout the whole of Turkle's theory, and is examined in greater detail in her section on epistemology.

[31] Turkle, Screen 34.

[32] Turkle, Screen 35.

[33] Turkle, Screen 35.

[34] Aaron Slevin, The Internet and Society (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2000) 107-108.

[35] Slevin, Internet 108.

Turkle considers only operating systems and does not give enough attention to the hardware side of the equation.[36] Computer systems today are often designed so that the parts can be upgraded, and consumers are encouraged to improve and replace their own component parts.[37] There are far more people today than there were in the 1970s who open their computers and seek out operational structures. Turkle's claim that that the culture of simulation is supported by the number of people who do not care about the workings of their machine's operating system is to some degree offset by the number who care about the inner working of their machine's hardware. Turkle is right about usability being important to consumers, but it seems that market forces can provide a better explanation of the rise in graphical operating systems than a shift in cultural zeitgeist. Consumers of both operating systems and hardware components prefer products that are easier to use and that, in turn, is what informs their purchase decisions. So, Turkle has not necessarily shown that postmodernism has found its object to think with. But this does not undermine her view that the self is decentered, a claim that is now examined.

1.3.1 Turkle on the Mind, and the Self

Turkle claims that the culture of simulation is emerging in various fields, specifically psychology and the area of computer science that deals with artificial intelligence. In the field of artificial intelligence, programmers are no longer trying to program intelligence in a linear, analytic method of simple rules. Rather, she claims, the goal is to design computational objects and structures which can operate somewhat independently of each other in an effort to have intelligence emerge: "After all, these theorists say, our brains are opaque to us, but this has never prevented them from functioning perfectly well as minds."[38] In psychology, Turkle states that the modern theory of calculation represented the mind as a centralized structure with programmed rules. Today this has changed and the mind is often modeled as complex and

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[36] Again, the PC vs. Mac debate arises. The PC computer is often easier to upgrade, while Macintoshes are a notoriously difficult to fix or work on yourself. Keeping with Slevin's objection, this points to Turkle's unwillingness to acknowledge the importance of hardware to the computer equation.

[37] Slevin, Internet 108.

[38] Turkle, Screen 20.

decentralized.[39] It is from within this decentered framework that Turkle develops a theory of the mind and self, which is then used as part of the foundation for her theory of online identity.

Turkle's conception of the self is based on a theory of the mind that holds that the mind is essentially fragmented. The beginnings for this idea are found in the tradition of psychoanalytic theory, pioneered largely by Sigmund Freud, which is based upon human desires and drives.[40] Early psychoanalysis focused on the idea of a drive that provides the energy and goals for all mental activity.[41] Freud identifies what he calls the "ego" as that which regulates one's relationship with the external world, internalizing inner "objects" (e.g. the idea of an ideal parent that emerges from one's outer parental relationship) that are deemed important. It is this kind of process that leads to the idea of a mechanism, the "superego," which can be roughly understood as a 'conscience'. The self in this Freudian sense is not completely fragmented since the ego propels the self, but the groundwork for later, more fragmented, theories find their origins here.

According to Turkle, while Freud's theory includes both drives and inner objects, later theorists, such as Melanie Klein and Ronald Fairbairn, began to emphasize the importance of the inner objects. Object-relations theorists argue that the mind consists of many kinds of inner objects that each have their own histories, widening the scope of the inquiry to examine what it is that we "bring inside."[42] The mind is described as a society of inner agents "suborganizations of the ego capable of generating meaning and experience, i.e. capable of thought, feeling, and perception."[43] Here we find the move toward fragmentation of the mind and away from the idea of a singular autonomous ego. While for Freud the superego is a unitary inner structure that acts on memories, thoughts, and wishes, for the object-relations theorists, "the self becomes a dynamic system in which the distinction between processor and processed breaks down."[44] The mind is a society of inner agents none of which control the whole.

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[39] Turkle, Screen 20.
[40] Turkle, Screen 138.
[41] Turkle, Screen 138.
[42] Turkle, Screen 138.
[43] Turkle, Screen 138.
[44] Turkle, Screen 138.

Turkle's view follows the Freudian tradition: the "self" emerges from the negotiations and interactions of these inner agents. Jacques Lacan takes the idea of a fragmented self further and claims the idea of a centralized ego is illusory. For Lacan "only the sense of an ego emerges from chains of linguistic associations that reach no endpoint. There is no core self. What we experience as the "I" can be likened to something we create with smoke and mirrors."[45] For Lacan the self is a realm of discourse and not a permanent structure of the mind.[46] Turkle embraces both Freud and Lacan's views, as the former represents the modernist position necessary for the postmodern to emerge. This theory of the mind and self is central to Turkle's theory of online identity because it provides the means, among other things, to explain multiplicity and invisibility as special characteristics of selves in cyberspace.

1.3.2 Turkle on Epistemology

How should we think about knowledge? According to Turkle, Western philosophy makes a firm distinction between the abstract and the concrete, and goes wrong by relying too heavily on abstraction.[47] Beginning with Plato, Turkle contends, the Western tradition of thought can be understood as "hard."[48] On this view "pure mathematics" and "pure science" reign supreme because they filter out messy objects.[49] Turkle alludes to Plato's definition of knowledge according to which "a process of reasoning" is required in addition to truth and perception.[50] For Turkle, justification, truth, and belief, are unnecessary abstractions the Western philosophical tradition uses to explain knowledge. Rather than using propositions to reduce and generalize, Turkle claims we should look to concrete objects as the tools for thinking.

Turkle's epistemology is based on the idea that the privileged way of knowing is through an exploration of the surface.[51] Turkle claims that surface exploration is privileged, but not necessarily the only way knowing, to allow for the possibility that

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[45] Turkle, Screen 139.
[46] Turkle, Screen 139.
[47] Turkle, Screen 55.
[48] Turkle, Screen 51, 55.
[49] Turkle, Screen 55.
[50] Plato, "*from* Theatetus," Readings in Epistemology, Trans. Grube, Ed. Crumbley II (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999) 21.
[51] Turkle, Screen 47.

there is underlying meaning to the world, but that such meaning is unknowable for us.[52] Turkle proposes "bricolage" as one method whereby we can tinker with objects to obtain knowledge.[53] She derives these ideas on two 20th century thinkers, the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the psychologist Jean Piaget.

Bricolage, a term adopted by Levi-Strauss, is "the process of theoretical tinkering ... by which individuals and cultures use the objects around them to develop and assimilate ideas."[54] It is, according to Turkle, a "soft" methodology, flexible and non-hierarchical, and is in contrast to the Western analytic tradition.[55] Those who practice bricolage tend to arrange and rearrange, step back, reconsider and then try again. Turkle claims that bricoleurs "approach problem-solving by entering into a relationship with their work materials that has more the flavor of a conversation than a monologue."[56] Bricolage works as a method of navigation because it does not seek deep rooted principles, but rather is a process whereby concrete objects are analyzed in relation to each other.

Turkle claims that Piaget found that children begin their reasoning process through the analysis of concrete objects, but notes that the process is outgrown as adults proceed to a more formal stage of abstraction where propositional logic frees the intelligence from requiring "things" to think with.[57] According to Turkle, analysis of concrete objects also applies to children learning language. They do not learn language by being educated on its rules, but rather "through immersion in its cadences."[58] In other words, the development of thought is culturally dependant, and modern culture, in its plumbing of the depths, forgot how, or made irrelevant, concrete styles of thinking.

Turkle claims that while relatively few in number, there are examples of bricolage in the Western tradition. This can be seen in computer culture, not only among users who prefer the Macintosh style of navigation, but also in programming. Programming today

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[52] Turkle, Screen 47. The idea that something could be meaningful yet unknowable for us is, presumably, an acknowledgement that there could be beings with faculties greater than, or different from, human faculties capable of such knowledge.

[53] Turkle, Screen 55.

[54] Turkle, Screen 48.

[55] Turkle, Screen 56.

[56] Turkle, Screen 51.

[57] Turkle, Screen 55.

[58] Turkle, Screen 61.

can occur within programs. Consider, for example, an architect who uses a program for building design. This architect places things beside each other, turns things around, and may generally approach a job by means of trial and error. In the culture of calculation an architect would have had to draw each possibility separately. With architectural programs, however, this is no longer the case. Now programmers as bricoleurs can be more like painters than logicians.[59]

In another example of how bricolage is applicable to programming, Turkle describes two students in an introductory computer course.[60] These students, one a poet and the other a pianist, had strong ties with bricolage-like reasoning. They both wanted to approach writing code in the same manner in which they practiced their respective arts. They wanted to play with the code and write their own subroutines rather than follow the "structured programming" method being taught. Structured programming is a rule-driven, top down planning process in which a master plan is sketched out and then broken into subroutines to be worked on individually.[61] Once completed these subroutines are set aside until they are required to integrate into the larger program.[62] There are good practical reasons for adopting such a method, since it can facilitate troubleshooting and promote efficiency. Yet these students insisted on trying to manipulate the code as though it were a word in a poem or a musical note. For doing so they were reprimanded to the point where they both gave in and "just faked it" or turned "into a different kind of person" to get through the class.[63] Turkle claims that harm occurred in this example, as the students felt alienated and forced to be someone other than they were, which in turn caused them anxiety.[64] For Turkle, it would seem, that since bricolage and tinkering is the better strategy for knowing, and since they are applicable to traditionally analytic subjects such as computer programming, the students should not have been punished for their strategies, but rather encouraged for their efforts.

Turkle's epistemic approach has implications for her theory of online identity because of its effects on the issues of self-knowledge and value. Since knowledge can

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[59] Turkle, Screen 52.
[60] Turkle, Screen 53.
[61] Turkle, Screen 53.
[62] Turkle, Screen 51.
[63] Turkle, Screen 54.
[64] Turkle, Screen 54.

only be obtained though navigation of the surface, the same is the case for self-knowledge. To explain how this is done Turkle appeals to Kenneth Gergen's idea of the saturated self.

Gergen uses the idea of a saturated self to explain how communication technologies force us to "colonize each other's brains."[65] According to Gergen, our selves are saturated because we are encountering more diverse voices of humanity, both unknown and known, as information and communications technologies, such as the Internet, put more people from more places into contact with each other. As we become increasingly intertwined in the social sphere we absorb the ideas of others, as "they become part of us and we of them."[66] In this way, individual notions of self disappear and the relations one has with one's world become apparent.[67]

Howard Rheingold, using the idea of a saturated self, claims that "We live in each other's brains, as voices, images, words on screens … We are multiple personalities and we include each other."[68] The idea of saturated selves may cause anxiety or anguish to those who feel that they are losing something important and personal with the dissolution of individual notions of self. To the contrary, Gergen, Rheingold, and Turkle all believe that the saturated self presents new opportunities for discovery of the self.[69] Rheingold, in an online discussion, had one participant claim that pejorative connotations should not be associated with the idea of saturated selves. This person claimed that he or she liked being a saturated self in a community of similar saturated selves, and that the big media (television and pop music) that provides much of popular culture is not enough to successfully intertwine humanity. This person thought that, only online, in virtual communities, can the co-saturation of selves truly flourish. Rheingold responded to that participant claiming that "I like being a saturated self too."[70] Self-knowledge obtains, then, by analyzing oneself in relation to one's surrounding of which others are very much a part.[71]

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[65] Gergen in Turkle, Screen 257.
[66] Gergen in Turkle, Screen 257.
[67] Gergen in Turkle, Screen 257.
[68] Rheingold quoted in Turkle, Screen 257.
[69] Gergen in Turkle, Screen 257.
[70] Rheingold quoted in Turkle, Screen 258.
[71] Allison Cavanagh, Sociology in the Age of the Internet, (Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, 2007) challenges Turkle's claim that one's identity is constantly in flux because it is contingent on a variety

Turkle's epistemic approach also has implications for the concept of value. "Value" is an ambiguous term and depending on who is using it can have different meanings. Given Turkle's epistemology, however, it has to be something explicable in concrete terms. In this way, value can be understood as some sort of relation between a subject (the one who values) an object (that which is valued). This way of considering value is consistent with Turkle's training as a social scientist. A third-person perspective is the approach one takes if one seeks to minimize one's personal biases toward the collection and analysis of data. This outside perspective can also be used to explain how it is that concrete subjects and objects can be analyzed in relation to each other. An economist can, for example, form judgments on what a subject values by analyzing her purchasing behaviour. What is important is that value is understood as some sort of observable relation between something capable of valuing and the something valued.

1.3.3 Turkle on Online Identity

Traditionally, Turkle claims, our notions of identity were forged by our communities and culture.72 Identity understood this way is not a claim about the metaphysical relation to the concept of self, but rather a descriptive claim that seeks to explain how selves identify with their characteristics. For Turkle, identity is about self-conceptions, not the relation between mind and self. To help us understand how we can come to have a self-conception in cyberspace Turkle uses MUDs to isolate three special characteristics of online identity: anonymity, invisibility, and multiplicity.73 Turkle

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of associations. According to Cavanagh, this conclusion does not follow because research into group dynamics shows that presentation of oneself precedes association and not the other way around. Along these lines, to "generate a social circle, or the connections necessary to develop an online presence, we must already have a clear sense of self" (Cavanagh, Sociology 123). While Cavanagh does point to the importance of sense of unity for the online experience, an explanation of how such unity arises is not explained. Chapter 2 offers an explanation to how unity in cyberspace can be understood.

[72] Turkle, Screen 179.

[73] Turkle, Screen 14. Turkle claims that MUDs are a good media for understanding how people can construct and reconstruct their identities with the kind of freedom found in cyberspace. This was especially true in the 1990s because virtual worlds did not have the resources or computing power to create the more graphically intensive virtual worlds of today. Even though the golden era of MUDs is long gone, they are still among the best media available for exploring the concept of online identity. There is a simplicity and freedom found in MUDs that captures the special characteristics of online identity, because all one needs to do in order to perform an action or appear a certain way is write the text and send the input.

In "Constructions and Reconstructions of the Self in Virtual Reality," Cyber Reader: Critical Writings For the Digital Era, Ed. Spiller (New York: Phaedon, 2002) 212., Turkle also identifies another characteristic, "ongoingness", which is not dealt with here. Ongoing refers to the fact that one can log on to

describes these special characteristics through her first position that identity is not a unitary notion, which is examined in the first part of this section. Turkle's other position, that online identity has value because it can increase one's self-knowledge using these special characteristics, is examined in the latter part of this section.

I choose to focus a large part of my thesis on Turkle, even though there is more current research on online identity, because her position can be philosophically constructed to present an approach to online identity construction in direct opposition to the unified online identity that I develop in the pages that follow. In other words, online identity can be decentered (as Turkle claims) or unified (as I argue). Even while cyberculture studies have progressed and become more nuanced, the distinction between decentered or unified is still important and useful to my project. Moreover, much of the literature surrounding online identity is psychological, anthropological or sociological. That is to say, this literature does not examine the deeper philosophical issues, such as how we even come to have identities in the first place.[74]

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a MUD at any given time and have something to do and someone to do it with. Turkle thinks it is significant in relation to MUDs compared to more traditional games where people had to schedule gatherings. This is a significant distinction between online games and games played in RL. This distinction, however, does not capture any special distinction between online identity and RL identity. The characteristic of ongoingness is nowhere more apparent than RL where one cannot simply log off and log on at will.

[74] In her "Beyond anonymity, or future directions for internet identity research," Helen Kennedy provides a brief but accurate survey concerning the literature of online identity. Following David Silver (2000) she identifies three phases within the cyberculture studies. The first phase is labeled "popular cyberculture," and is found in the early popular magazines which anticipated the coming cyberculture. The second phase is "cyberculture studies," for which the works of Rheingold (1993) and Turkle (1996) are taken as exemplars. The final stage, "critical cyberculture studies," is demarcated from its predecessor by a more theoretically nuanced and empirically grounded approach (Kennedy, Beyond 2). Kennedy, among others, rightly identifies Hall, 1996; Shields, 1996; Baym, 1998; Kendall, 1999; Poster, 1999; and Cheung 2000 as influential theorists within the field.

Since 2000 the amount of research into cyberculture and cyber-identity has risen considerably. Some examples of this more contemporary research that I find interesting are: Bowker and Tuffin, 2002; Perrotta, 2006; Simi and Futrell, 2006; Steinkueler, 2006; Davis, Seider and Gardner, 2008; Gonzalez and Hancock, 2008; Sant, 2008; Valkenburg and Peter, 2008; and Calvert et al., 2009.

In his "Identity and Information Technology," Steve Matthews presents a more philosophically nuanced approach that is found in much of the literature. Matthews acknowledges the importance of the normativity for online identity, and then approaches the question from the perspective of social agency. This perspective is "in addition" to the Aristotelian thinking animal or the Kantian rational agent. He claims that our conception of identity is in part affected by the way others see us: "Thus, if IT affects the way others see me, especially in virtue of the ways it alters various modes of social communication, then it will come to affect the way I see myself (Mathews, IIT 144). I do not deny Matthews' claim, as he does raise interesting issues concerning how cyberspace affects our relationships, which in turn affect our self-conception. On the other hand, I approach the issue of normativity as it relates to cyberspace from the

Turkle claims that in the early twentieth century one's role in the community was fixed by social roles and norms and it was hard to deviate from it.[75] These roles provided the context within which one's conception of oneself could develop. Those who deviated were often on the fringe of society such as shamans, con artists, bigamists, and the cross-gendered. Today, however, many people's identities have extended beyond the constraints imposed by traditional roles in the community. Turkle attributes this shift in part to the culture of simulation. Individuals today she argues "experience identity as a set of roles that can be mixed and matched, whose diverse demands need to be negotiated."[76] In this way the Internet is a social laboratory that can be used to experiment with constructions and reconstructions of one's self.[77]

In cyberspace we "self-fashion" and "self-create" as we decide what kinds of online personae we will assume.[78] In MUDs, or cyberspace in general, it is possible to create personae which express new or different aspects of oneself.[79] For this reason Turkle believes online identities imply "difference, multiplicity, heterogeneity, and fragmentation."[80] She claims that tension exists in our cyber-experiences that can not be resolved through an understanding of the Latin root for the word identity, *idem*, which means 'the same'.[81] Moreover, this tension goes beyond cyberspace and encapsulates the condition of our decentered lives beyond the Internet.[82]

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perspective of personal agency. I argue that personal agency is required if a theory of online identity is going to be established.

[75] Turkle, Screen 179.

[76] Turkle, Screen 180.

[77] Erving Goffman, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Doubleday, 1959) offers a social psychological theory that compares the way in which we present ourselves to the world through social interaction to a theatrical production. On this view the self is an actor who finds itself in a variety of situations, in which the world comprises the backdrops and props, and must don the appropriate role or mask to deal with the circumstance. Some theorists (Dhao, Grasmuck, and Martin, 2008; Pullen, 2007; Robinson, 2007; Papacharissi, 2002) explore the relationship between Goffman's theory and online identity. It is easy to see how this theory could apply to the Internet since we largely get to choose what mask is appropriate to specific situations in cyberspace. This literature is interesting, but it is not dealt with here because the issues tend to move toward sociological questions, such as the composition of a community within which a role can fit, as opposed to more philosophically interesting questions such as how can one's online identity be understood in terms of one's RL identity.

[78] Turkle, Screen 180.

[79] Turkle, Screen 185.

[80] Turkle, Screen 185.

[81] Turkle, Screen 185.

[82] Eleanor Wynn and James E. Katz, "Hyperbole over Cyberspace: Self-Presentation and Social Boundaries in Internet Home Pages and Discourse," The Information Society 13.4: 297-327 (1997), challenge the notion that selves truly are multiple in cyberspace on the grounds that Turkle does not place

The reality of online selves leads to questions such as "What is the relationship of these online selves to what is generally considered the 'whole person?"'; "Are online identities experienced as an expansion of the self or as separate?"; "Can RL selves learn from online selves?" and "How do the various aspects of oneself communicate with each other?"[83] These are the questions which Turkle seeks to answer with her theory of online identity. At the heart of her theory is the idea that on the Internet you are the summation of your combined identities.[84] Turkle summarizes her views toward "identity on the Internet," noting:

> So not only are MUDs places where the self is multiple and constructed by language, they are places where people and machines are in a new relation to each other, indeed can be mistaken for each other. In such ways, MUDs are evocative objects for thinking about human identity and, more generally, a set of ideas that have come to be known as "postmodernism."[85]

Turkle's theory of online identity develops in relation to the specific instantiations of anonymity, multiplicity, and invisibility. Turkle is correct that the Internet is like a laboratory for the construction and reconstruction of the self. The Internet provides a means by which people can explore aspects of their identity which are impossible, or at

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enough importance on the fact that for online identity to even exist there must first be an historically situated being. They argue that Turkle is mistaken in her explanation of how online selves can be created distinct from their historical embodied selves. They claim that when people create personae in cyberspace it is better to explain the phenomena in terms of programming than identity construction.

Wynn and Katz's theory finds its roots in Heidegger and the concept of being which requires a "being thrown into" concept of self. Programs accordingly are not "thrown into anything" and do not have the intelligence to even pretend to be someone else let alone be anything at all. These programs which Turkle considers selves are, to Wyan and Katz, simply artifacts of the being who types the words on the client. Hence, they are not equal because the person sitting in the chair can continue to exist without them but not the other way around.

This view may be somewhat uncharitable to Turkle's position, as she does attempt to reconcile the various aspects of one's RL and online selves. Their point that Turkle does not prioritize the RL self, however, is fair. Their explanation for the phenomena of multiplicity, however, leaves something to be desired. The idea that online selves, presumably avatars, are simply artifacts propelled by a self, does not capture the investment one puts into an online self. There are better ways (see Chapter 2) to draw the conclusion that online identity can be traced back to an autonomous self.

[83] Turkle, Screen 180.

[84] Turkle, Screen 13.

[85] Turkle, Screen 17.

the least not easy, to construct in RL. These three special features are among the first characteristics that spring to mind when considering the subject of online identity.[86]

Anonymity on MUDs refers to the way in which users can create personae without divulging information about the their RL characteristics. The degree to which one can import information about their RL life is the choice of the user.[87] Anonymity on the Internet is in one sense a default position. It can be considered a default position because unless you tell others your proper name the perception is that your true identity remains relatively unknown. True anonymity, however, requires some effort and cannot be guaranteed. Understood in this way, then, anonymity provides the opportunity for people to explore aspects of their selves in online environments without the concern that their activities will affect their RL self.

In technical terms anonymity is "the state of being not identifiable within a set of subjects, the anonymity set."[88] Kathleen Wallace describes anonymity as "a form of inaccessibility to others to whom one is related or with whom one shares a social environment, even if only or primarily in virtue of the effects of one's actions."[89] On Wallace's account, anonymity is a relational term that connects an anonymous agent with others. The anonymous agent is known only through a trait or traits which cannot be coordinated with other traits to enable identification. A trait "functions something like the referential use of definite description in that it enables the picking out of particular entities."[90] An interesting fact about 'true' (i.e. perfect) anonymity and the Internet is that without taking precautions anonymity is difficult to achieve since IP addresses are

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[86] Shanyang Zhoa, Sherri Grasmuck, and Jason Martin, "Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships," Computers in Human Behavior 24 (2008): 1817 consider disembodiment along with anonymity as contributors to "a technologically mediated environment in which a new mode of identity production emerges." The subject of embodiment, especially within digital environments, is interesting and leads to interesting questions about human nature. I do not deal with the subject of embodiment in that larger context. I consider it, rather, to be a part of the feature of anonymity that enables the specialness of online identity.

[87] Turkle, Constructions 212.

[88] Andreas Pfitzman and Marit Hansen. "Anonymity, Unlinkability, Pseudonymity, and Identity Management – A Consolidated Proposal for Terminology," Technische Universität Dresden: Faculty of Computer Science (2009) 1 March 2009 http://dud.inf.tu-dresden.de/literatur/Anon_Terminology_v0.23.pdf 8.

[89] Kathleen Wallace, "Anonymity," Ethics and Information Technology 1 (1999): 23-35. 25.

[90] Wallace, Anonymity 25.

recorded and logged by various parties.[91] The sense in which anonymity is considered a default position on the Internet generally has more to do with the *feeling* of anonymity one has while traversing cyberspace.

For Turkle anonymity enables Internet users to explore various aspects of their selves. For example, a young man named Matt from a socially prominent family uses the anonymity of cyberspace to protect his family from the possible harms his online actions could cause.[92] Matt's relationship with his father is estranged due to the latter's career commitments and heavy drinking. Matt uses MUDs to explore the role of "ideal father" in an attempt to work through his issues, by creating personae that fulfill the role of helper and advisor.[93] One need not have extenuating circumstances such as Matt's for anonymity to enable the exploration of the self in cyberspace, however. Simply by not revealing characteristics about oneself online the door is opened for self-creation in such a way that it does not depend upon any RL contingencies.

It is important to note that anonymity is in principle a value-neutral term. This is to say that there is nothing about the concept of anonymity that makes gives it good or bad per se. In some cases, such as whistle-blowing web sites, anonymity is beneficial. In other cases, such as online stalking, it can be harmful. Anonymity is a central feature of online identity, then, because it gives people the chance to express multiple and often unexplored aspects of themselves, to play with their identities and to try out new ones.[94]

Multiplicity in cyberspace refers to the fact that one can create and recreate any number of concurrent identities. Anonymity enables multiplicity because, as Turkle states,

> Anonymously, I travel their rooms and public spaces (a bar, a lounge, a hot tub). I create several characters, some not of my biological gender, who are able to have social and sexual encounters with other characters. On different MUDs, I have different routines, different friends, different names.[95]

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[91] IP stands for Internet Protocol and is the system in which a computer network identifies and routes traffic. Every Internet connection can be traced to an IP address, so unless precautions are taken, such as through the use of anonymizing software, one's online actions are traceable.

[92] Turkle, Screen 191-192.

[93] Turkle, Screen 191.

[94] Turkle, Screen 12.

[95] Turkle, Screen 15.

Multiplicity is possible in MUDs because one person can create several different personae on one or various MUDs.[96] In the context of the Internet more generally, multiplicity compounds, as not only can a person have his virtual world personae, but also aspects of his self in other online media such as discussion forums, social networking web sites, and Internet Relay Chat groups. Multiplicity, according to Turkle, is a pivotal feature of her culture of simulation, since "each player can create many characters and participate in many games, the self is not only decentered but multiplied without limit."[97] In this way, multiplicity as found on the Internet contributes to a general reconsideration of the notion of a unitary self in the culture of simulation.[98]

A large part of the specialness found in multiplicity relies on the anonymity factor. There is a sense in which our RL selves are multiple, as our lives become more complex and our roles more ambiguous. In RL people are often forced to switch between identities and roles depending on the situation. The difference between multiplicity in a RL self and online self, however, is found in the way in which in RL all actions can be observed as originating from the same body. In cyberspace, given the shield of anonymity, such actions cannot be traced back to the same body. The fragmentation of the online self allows one to observe multiple identities not connected to an RL body, and possibly unconnected to each other.

Invisibility, according to Turkle, is the ability in cyberspace to choose and self-identify with characteristics in ways not easily done outside of cyberspace.[99] Invisibility is possible on MUDs because of the "anonymous social interaction in which you can play a role as close to or as far away from your real self as you choose."[100] Even though Turkle uses invisibility to refer to a special feature of cyberspace, that which is hidden is one's RL self or certain aspects of one's RL self. In other words, it is your RL self that is invisible in cyberspace, because one is not bound by RL characteristics, such as age. For example, on a MUD one can be slim, overweight, pretty, homely, furry, smooth, male, female, funny, obtuse, inanimate, non-conscious, and the list goes on. This is quite different than one's characteristics in RL where one is constrained by the kind of being

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[96] Turkle, Constructions 212.
[97] Turkle, Screen 185.
[98] Turkle, Screen 260.
[99] Turkle, Constructions 212.
[100] Turkle, Screen 183.

one happens to be in RL. This is not to say that some characteristics in RL cannot be chosen, such as fashionably stylish or not, but rather to point to the fact that in cyberspace there are fewer restrictions.[101]

For instance, Turkle interviewed a man named Gordon whose grade school experience was unhappy.[102] He attributed his inability to fit in with the other children to his weight, appearance, and lack of athleticism. When he participated in a trip to India with students from around the world, however, he noticed that he was no longer constrained by his unpopularity at home, and was able to make friends. Gordon found that he could recreate this experience of a fresh start on MUDs. Whenever Gordon feels the need for a fresh start he creates a new persona with whichever characteristics he chooses. Sometimes he creates personae that are like him but more cheeky, other times he takes on the characteristics of an older more reserved observer, and sometimes he creates female personae.[103] Invisibility provides Gordon with the ability to reinvent himself whenever he feels the need to be born again.[104]

Turkle also uses Gordon as an example of how invisibility and the culture of simulation challenge the conventional distinction between one's constructed personae and one's "real self."[105] Slippages occur because the conventional unitary notion of identity fails to hold.

> Gordon's MUD-playing exhibits some of the slippage I referred to earlier. By creating diverse personae, he can experiment in a more controlled fashion with different sets of characteristics and see where they lead. He is also able to play at being female, something that would be far more difficult to do in real life. Each of his multiple personae has its independence and integrity, but Gordon also relates them all to "himself."[106]

The idea of slippage between one's RL self and one's online selves leads to a problem for Turkle: how do we reconcile our multiple and invisible identities within one person?

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[101] Turkle, Constructions 212.
[102] Turkle, Screen 189.
[103] Turkle, Screen 190.
[104] Turkle, Screen 190.
[105] Turkle, Screen 185.
[106] Turkle, Screen 190.

Considering Gordon, how is it that his online selves can have independence and integrity and, at the same time, relate to the person sitting in RL in front of the computer?

Turkle addresses this problem of "how we [can] be multiple and coherent at the same time" by appealing to Daniel Dennett's multiple drafts of consciousness theory and his notion of a flexible self.[107] The flexible self resides somewhere between the unitary notion of the self (exemplified by traditional social roles) and a fragmented self (exemplified by multiple personality disorder).[108] For Turkle, the flexible self is characterized by open channels of communication between one's various aspects of self. She claims that by striving for this kind of open communication one comes to acknowledge, respect, and value the diversity within us and within others.[109] Even if we analyze all these lines of communication with one's flexible self, however, the issue of how they relate back to one RL person still remains. To overcome this problem Turkle appeals to a position advanced by Donna Haraway who claims a "split and contradictory self" is a "knowing self":

> The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly; and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another.[110]

Is an appeal to a split and contradictory self adequate? The embrace of contradiction is worrisome, and yet at the same time, does provide an apparent solution for Turkle's problem. Her theory of online identity can be maintained only if a self can exist in contradiction as multiple, partial, yet whole at the same time. This problem is addressed in section 1.4, where I show that Turkle's position cannot completely be reduced to a contradictory self.

1.3.4. Turkle on the Value of Online Identity

Turkle uses her theory of online identity to make claims about the value of exploring oneself in cyberspace. Value, like knowledge, for Turkle, has to be found

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[107] Dennett in Turkle, Screen 258.
[108] Dennett in Turkle, Screen 261.
[109] Turkle, Screen 261.
[110] Haraway in Turkle, Screen 261.

through the analysis of concrete objects. On this theory, the value of online identity is found in its ability to increase our self-knowledge, as well as to enhance our relations with each other.[111] In both cases, the object of analysis is lines of communication, as they apply to a flexible self communicating with its various aspects, as well as to the flow of communication between people. She is also careful to note, however, that such rewards are lost if the real gets lost in the virtual.

Turkle states that "self-knowledge has always been at the heart of philosophical inquiry."[112] This could very well be the case: Socrates did say that "An unexamined life is not worth living."[113] But how does having online identity contribute to an enhancement of self-knowledge distinct from the self-knowledge obtained in RL? Again, the concepts of multiplicity and invisibility, as special features of online identity, are relevant.
The Internet allows people to explore various aspects of themselves either in play or for other more therapeutic reasons. By creating multiple and invisible identities people are able to learn things about themselves that might not otherwise have been learned. It is in this way, she claims, that the culture of simulation "may help us achieve a vision of a multiple but integrated identity whose flexibility, resilience, and capacity for joy comes from having access to our many selves."[114] By taking this approach Turkle sheds light on how the Internet and cyber selves can be valuable.

Multiplicity in cyberspace can enhance self-knowledge because it allows for aspects of oneself to be explored without restriction from other aspects. Anonymity enables the separation of online selves such that other Internet users cannot easily relate one's online selves to each other. An easy way to make this separation is to register with different names when signing up on web sites. This separation allows one's various online identities to proceed with their affairs unrestricted by the possible commitments of one's other identities. Moreover, this separation can even allow one to project contradictory opinions without dissonance between the online selves. For instance, to better understand the issue of euthanasia one could register two accounts on the same web forum, and then passionately argue for each side of the debate. Multiplicity is also

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[111] Turkle, Screen 269.
[112] Turkle, Screen 269.
[113] Plato, "Apology of Socrates," 4 Texts on Socrates, Trans. West and West (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998) 38a.
[114] Turkle, Screen 268.

special in the sense that the number of identities that can be projected at the same time is limited only by desire and computer resources.

Invisibility in cyberspace can enhance one's self-knowledge allowing one to have different kinds of experiences than could be had otherwise in RL. It is impossible in RL for someone to be, with the exception of the human characters, a kind of sentient being from J.R.R. Tolkein's Lord of the Rings. Yet, across cyberspace, Dwarves, Elves, and Orcs run rampant in various virtual worlds. Similarly, people have experiences which may not be impossible, but are very difficult to achieve in RL. Gordon, the young man who enjoyed the experience of fresh starts in cyberspace, created a female persona and swapped gender in cyberspace. To have a female experience in RL Gordon could undertake various actions, such as cross dressing or body modification, but should he not wish to go to such lengths, cyberspace provides a medium in which such experiences can be had without much commitment or cost. Invisibility, then, contributes to self-knowledge because it provides an opportunity for people to learn things about themselves that they may not have discovered otherwise. Examples of such discoveries might include what it must be like to live in a world made for large people when you are only a Hobbit (providing you left the Shire), or perhaps how gender influences the way you are treated or treat others.

When combined, multiplicity and invisibility in cyberspace provide even greater opportunities to acquire self-knowledge. In a rather mundane example, Turkle provides Annette as an example of how online identity can be used to help people overcome barriers they may face in RL. Annette is a forty-two-year old nurse who writes poetry online under the name Bette. Annette claims that assuming the online identity of Bette makes it easier to write poetry:

> I like to close my eyes and imagine myself speaking as Bette. An authoritative voice. When I type as Bette I imagine her voice. You might ask whether this Bette is real or not. Well, she is real enough to write poetry. I mean it's poetry that I take credit for. Bette gives courage. We sort of do it together.[115]

[115] Turkle, Screen 209.

Multiplicity is observed in the example of Bette because two observable aspects of her self emerge. One aspect is a RL nurse, while the other is a poet. The multiplicity is very simple since only two identities are being considered. It is not hard to see, though, how additional online selves could be added by opening a new window and creating another aspect of oneself. Anonymity enables Annette's multiplicity because the chain that links the RL person with her poetry is partially severed. Invisibility is also observed in this example because, even though Bette is very similar to Annette, the online self has more courage when it comes to sharing her poetry. Anonymity enables Annette's invisibility because without it she could not sever the link between herself and others. If the online community, for whom the poetry is being presented, knew that the poet is the forty-two-year old nurse who works at the downtown hospital and lives in that area, Annette would, presumably, be as nervous releasing her poetry online as she is in RL. Hence, multiplicity and invisibility allow Annette to enhance her self-knowledge.

Turkle concedes that Annette is not disassociated from Bette and that the latter does not act autonomously. In other words, Annette is a flexible self that has many parts. One part is a nurse who is shy about releasing her poetry. The other part is an authoritative poet unafraid to speak out. They relate to each other through lines of communication as the online self relays information about how to open up and present one's work to the world back to the RL self. Turkle's point is that the boundary between self and role becomes increasingly permeable as the self becomes more fluent in the role. If the role is developed online, as it is in the case of Annette, and one learns something about oneself in the process, then that is a good thing.[116]

Finally, Turkle's theory has ethical implications. She claims that in the culture of simulation, with its multiple viewpoints, a new moral discourse is needed: "we work to know ourselves in order to improve not only our own lives, but those of our family and society."[117] Turkle does not state how an ethical theory grounded in the culture of simulation would accomplish such goals. She does claim, however, that self-knowledge is at the heart of philosophy. Any such theory, then, would have to somehow incorporate the analysis of concrete objects in pursuit of self-knowledge. This would exclude many of

[116] Turkle, Screen 209.
[117] Turkle, Screen 269.

the ethical theories traditionally associated with the Western philosophical tradition which analyze concepts such as duty, utility, and virtue. Because these concepts are not concrete objects they should be abandoned in favour of concrete particulars. One example of such a particular could be cooperative relations. These relations could be analyzed as lines of communication between individuals. The goal of ethics, on this kind of framework, would be to resolve problems by considering real people and using open lines of communication as the tools of resolution. The better we know ourselves and develop our internal lines of communication, the better prepared we are to improve the lives of those around us, as well as our own. Cyberspace, then, can help us learn about ourselves and others in such a way as to strengthen the ties that bind.[118]

1.4 An Objection to Turkle's Account of the Mind and Self

This section picks up with the worry raised in section 1.3.3. The worry is that Turkle's view that the decentered self is a flexible self does not adequately acknowledge the flexible self's role in binding the disparate aspects of the self.[119] Turkle, in fact, distances herself from this unifying mechanism by appealing to a knowing self as "split and contradictory," which leads her to conclude, "We do not feel compelled to rank or judge the elements of our multiplicity."[120] The problem for Turkle is that on one hand she concedes that the flexible self functions as a mechanism for holding the aspects of oneself together, but on the other hand she distances herself from the implications for such a view. The objection to Turkle's theory, then, is that her argument draws a self-undermining conclusion. Turkle's appeal to the flexible self is an admission that selves are fundamentally unified (even if only partly) in functional terms.

Turkle's claim that "your identity on the computer is the sum of your distributed presence" captures the idea that online selves can be multiple and, to an extent, contradictory.[121] As already established, online identity is special in the sense that the technological layer of the Internet provides a kind anonymity that can be used to sever identifying traits between online selves. These multiple selves can contradict with each

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[118] Turkle, Screen 269.

[119] Here "flexible" means characterized by open channels of communication between different aspects of the self

[120] Turkle, Screen 261, 262.

[121] Turkle, Screen 13.

other because, other things being equal, there is no way to hold them accountable for their differing opinions, characteristics, etc. Turkle's definition of online identity, however, also states that these particular aspects of the self compose a sum. This summation is found in her use of the flexible self as the tool for keeping a self multiple and coherent at the same time. While the flexible self is a nice way to think about how one's multiple aspects of self communicate with each other, it makes no sense to think of it as contradictory. We cannot think of the flexible self as contradictory because it has nothing to be in contradiction with. Even if the disparate particulars of the self-set contradict each other, when they are added together only one self remains. This is why Turkle cannot completely reduce the flexible self to a contradictory self.

This objection leads to another problem for Turkle's theory. Even if Turkle were to concede that the flexible self cannot be completely reduced to a contradictory self, her epistemic commitments leave her bereft of tools for analyzing the flexible self as its own thing. In section 1.3.2 it was shown that Turkle believes concrete objects ought to be the tools of analysis. These commitments cohere with her theory when the objects of analysis are the disparate aspects of self, because they can be analyzed in relation to each other. Turkle's theory, however, does not have the resources to analyze the flexible self as its own thing because there are no concrete objects to which it can be compared. Presumably, we each have only one flexible self. If we are to understand the aspect of ourselves that maintains the whole, we have use tools of abstraction to analyze the flexible self as its own thing to see what properties can be found. If the flexible self is going to be analyzed as its own thing, then more tools than what Turkle provides are required.

1.5 Conclusion

Turkle is right that minds are fragmented and selves decentered. Such an idea, however, is not the exclusive domain of a decentered theory; in fact, it is probably conventional wisdom today that the mind works as a series of inner agents from which aspects of the self emerge.[122] Turkle uses these features of the mind to explain the special online characteristics of multiplicity and invisibility. These characteristics are indeed

[122] See Daniel Dennett, "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity," Self and Consciousness Multiple Perspectives, Ed. Cole and Johnson. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1992.

special since they show how online identity is different from RL identity, largely due to online anonymity.

As I have shown, however, Turkle's conclusion that the self is capable of persisting in a self-contradictory condition does not follow from her argument. Even if the self is flexible and able to bind disparate aspects of one self, that flexible self is functionally important, to maintain integrity. Moreover, if it is conceded that there is in fact something there capable of analysis, then Turkle's epistemology, that places a premium on surface knowledge acquired through the analysis of concrete particulars, is not capable of fully exploring such a thing. Her theory cannot examine the self as a thing by itself because her theory holds that there must always be something concrete with which to compare it. To explain a theory of online identity in a unified sense, one must dig deeper than only surface analysis.

In the next chapter I examine a theory of identity that can both account for the failings of Turkle's account of online identity, and keep the specialness found in multiplicity and invisibility. This theory has the tools to explain how we can understand the unifying feature of the self by examining the phenomenological experience of identity.

2. PRACTICAL IDENTITY IN CYBERSPACE

2.1 Introduction

A person's identity can be understood as unified in the sense that the phenomenological experience of human consciousness forces human beings to relate to their actions as autonomous beings. A phenomenological approach focuses on the description of experience. In this case, the experience is autonomy found in the process of reflective endorsement. The phenomenological account presented here is comprised of two parts. The first part is a description of the way self-conscious beings, such as human beings, must have reasons for their actions. This process leads to the second part, a description of how reasons are chosen such that one's life is considered worth living. These two parts are found in Christine Korsgaard's The Sources of Normativity, and are used as the basis for a theory of unified online identity. Following Korsgaard, I argue for a conception of autonomy as useful and necessary, and an account of value that can explain the origins of value, to account for online experience as unified in at least this one sense.

Korsgaard argues for a theory of normativity that justifies a Kantian theory of ethics. Normativity refers to the property or quality of being normative, that which serves as a standard for prescriptive judgments. Korsgaard's search for this ethical standard, while Kantian in its argument for a categorical imperative, deviates from Kant by finding the source of normativity in our practical identities, rather than through a concept of noumenal freedom. While both Korsgaard and Kant accept a phenomenal experience of freedom, only the latter grounds obligation in noumenal freedom. Practical identity is not understood in terms of scientific facts (that would be a theoretical conception of identity), but rather in terms of the way in which we consider our lives to have value.

Practical identity arises from self-consciousness. The structure of human consciousness is reflective because distance can be placed between our mental states and our awareness of them. It is by virtue of having reasons that we are able to express our practical identities, and, conversely, it is by rejecting that which our practical identity forbids that we accumulate obligations. The source of obligation is autonomy, as we

identify with principles or laws that guide our lives. It is this sense of identity that is explored and examined in the context of cyberspace.

While Korsgaard's theory of practical identity covers many issues, most notably moral obligation, the focus of this chapter is the way in which beings with practical identities self-identify. This focus is found in the idea of integrity as an explanation of how self-identities are maintained. While Korsgaard's theory of practical identity may not be the only way to make an argument for a theory of unified online identity, her explanation of the phenomenological experience of what it means to be an agent is both persuasive and has interesting ethical consequences. I do not take a position on these ethical results, however, as my project is simply to use Korsgaard's theory of practical identity to show how our online identities are unified, in one sense, because they originate in free and autonomous human beings. In section 2.3.2 these ethical results are examined for their implications for online ethics, but that does not mean that the position is argued for.

2.2.1 Korsgaard on Self-Consciousness

According to Korsgaard, self-consciousness for humans refers to a structure of the mind that is self-reflective. A self-reflective view of the mind is opposed to a view in which the mind is internally luminous or directly accessible with any kind of certainty. She claims that some philosophers may believe that the mind is directly accessible because introspection seems to lead to certainty with regard to our thoughts and feelings.[123] It is not however explicitly stated which philosophers may make this claim but she notes that she, Kant, and many contemporary philosophers do not believe such a claim.[124] According to Korsgaard, "The reflective structure of the mind is a source of 'self-consciousness' because it forces us to have a conception of ourselves"[125] Viewing the mind in this way has the benefit of being able to hold on to a concept of the self without engaging in the messy business of proving the existence of a metaphysical self. A self is the concept that a being with a reflective mind uses to understand one's experience of consciousness.

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[123] Christine Korsgaard, The Sources of Normativity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1996) 92.

[124] Korsgaard, Normativity 92.

[125] Korsgaard, Normativity 100.

While the self-reflective mind cannot access itself directly, it does allow a person to turn his attention towards his perceptions and desires. The reflective mind creates a distance between itself and its mental activities by thinking about them.[126] It is in this way that our mental activities are different than those of most other animals whose perceptions are their beliefs and their desires their will.[127] It is really remarkable that humans can do this. Such a common feature of our everyday experience is easily taken for granted, and often overlooked in our day to day activities. Of all the animals on the planet only human beings seem capable of such a high degree of reflection. This feature of our minds is at the heart of philosophy, for without it Socrates' famous dictum, "An unexamined life is not worth living," would be incomprehensible, for we would be incapable of such examination.[128] The structure of a self-conscious mind, then, is important because it is the starting point for an examination of how we come to identify with ourselves, and ultimately how we identify with our online selves.

This point is important for a theory of unified online identity because for a theory to be considered unified the source of unification should be identified. Self-consciousness originates and resides in human minds and these minds reside in human bodies outside of cyberspace.[129] To show that this is not the case, a self-reflective mind outside of a human body would have to be demonstrated: an event which has yet to occur. Consider, for example, a bot.[130] Even though bots can count, read, and perform various functions, and may even be considered conscious in a minimal sense, there is no reason to suppose that these programs are self-reflective (understood as the ability to place distance between oneself and one's mental activities). Not until programs are capable of self-reflection can they be self-conscious and able to create identities. Without a RL self-conscious being,

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[126] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.

[127] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.

[128] Plato, Apology 38a.

[129] In making the claim that minds cannot exist outside of cyberspace, I am not engaging the problem of extended minds. The problem of whether minds can be extended outside of one's body, e.g. using a calculator to perform a mathematics calculation, is well outside the scope of this thesis. My claim, rather, is that given our current level of technology a self-conscious being is required to create online identities.

[130] Short for 'robot,' or more specifically 'cyber-robot,' a bot is a computer program designed to autonomously perform repetitive and, or, remotely controlled tasks. Such tasks can range from simply masquerading as a real person in an Internet Relay Chat (IRC), or any chat room, for the purposes of advertising a product or attempting to lure someone into a fraud, to complex online game manipulation designed to give a player an unfair advantage or eliminate the boredom of mundane tasks.

capable of acting in cyberspace, there can be no cyber-selves. This relationship between self-reflection and identity becomes even clearer when the subject of value is examined. Concerning online identity, unity occurs within the mind of a self-reflective being capable of reflecting on its condition of being online. RL is where self-consciousness originates and cyberspace is an environment one can visit with that self-consciousness.

2.2.2 Korsgaard on the Problem of the Normative and Reasons for Action

A problem arises from our ability to place distance between ourselves and our mental activities, which Korsgaard calls the "problem of the normative."[131] This distance is created by turning one's attention towards one's mental activities. In the case of some perceptions, we perceive and then we have an impulse to believe. We can then step back and consider that impulse. The impulse no longer dominates us, like it would most other animals, and we have a problem: "Is this perception really a *reason* to believe?"[132] Looking at what appears to be a crooked stick in the water, for example, can make us ask whether it is really crooked since we know that refraction may cause it to appear just that way. In the case of desires, we have a desire, which is then followed by an impulse to act. Again, we can step back and reflect on that impulse thereby taking away its power to dominate us. A similar problem arises: "Is this desire really a *reason* to act?"[133] A person unable to answer such questions would be unable mentally or physically to move forward. Someone could examine his environment thoroughly and see the things around himself, but would keep wondering if his perceptions could be believed and query every desire that might commit him to an action.

The "problem of the normative," then, is the problem that beings with reflective structures of the mind must face because they cannot settle upon perceptions and desires "as such."[134] The problem cannot be resolved so that it goes away, rather the problem lies in its inescapability. It is inescapable because the reflective structure of the mind forces us to act for reasons. It is through this process, acting on reasons, that we come to identify with ourselves and understand our will as a lawmaking process -- and this is how we differ from non-human animals.

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[131] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.
[132] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.
[133] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.
[134] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.

Consider, for example, the simple task of turning on your computer. First, you see your computer, but because you can place distance between yourself and your mental states you can ask whether you really are, in fact, truly seeing your computer. You consider the question, and come to the conclusion that since it appears the same as it did yesterday, and do you not think that anyone would have entered your home and switched it for a replica. Concluding that it is your computer, you overcome the problem of the normative because you have settled on reasons for the belief. To turn on the computer, perhaps to see if your potential future spouse replied to your comment on a dating web site, also requires that you act on a reason. Again, since distance can be placed between one's desires and one's mental states, it can be questioned whether the desire is really a reason to act. Thinking that you do not have any plans for the weekend, and perhaps are a bit lonely, you decide that, yes, the desire is a reason to act. By turning on the computer, you once again overcome the problem of the normative because you have settled on a reason to act on that desire.

Dealing with the problem of the normative pervades our lives as we are forced to continually face it. Notice, though, that most, if not all, other non-human animals do not face such a problem. When we ask "Why did the chicken cross the road?" we are in risky territory implying that a chicken could have reasons for its beliefs and actions. It is easy to ascribe reasons to non-human animals because it is such a pervasive aspect of our lives. That does not mean, however, that other animals have the same experience. Human beings, as rational animals, are special, because reasons resolve the problem of the normative and allow one to commit to a course of action to move on. A reason puts a stop to the reflective scrutiny that one's perceptions and desires face.[135]

"Reason," according to Korsgaard means "reflective success" and is used normatively, just as 'Good!' and 'Right' can mean "I'm satisfied, I'm happy, I'm committed, you've convinced me, let's go. The work of reflection is done."[136] To have a reason to act is to endorse a desire or impulse upon reflection. They are needed if our perceptions and desires are going to withstand reflective scrutiny.[137] Yet, Korsgaard notes that one could be a sceptic about the 'good' and the 'right' by holding to the claim that

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[135] Korsgaard, Normativity 93.
[136] Korsgaard, Normativity 94,97.
[137] Korsgaard, Normativity 97.

the problems of reflection are insoluble and that nothing will ever count as reflective success.[138]

With regard to this skeptical position, Korsgaard points to Kant who labeled this the fear of "the unconditioned." This problem is described by Kant in terms of freedom. For Kant the reflective mind could only operate under the idea of freedom: "we cannot conceive of a reason which consciously responds to a bidding from the outside with respect to its judgments."[139] In other words, the person with a reflective mind must endorse an impulse or desire before he can act, because the motivation for that action cannot be conceived to have originated anywhere else than the reflective mind. It is in this way that, while we act on desires through reasons, we do so freely.[140] But how is it that we are able to settle upon a reason for action?

Kant addresses the problem of continually questioning one's reasons in terms of freedom and the idea of a free will. Freewill, for Kant, is a rational causality which is effective and not determined by any alien cause including one's desires and inclinations.[141] The problem with freewill is that because it is a causality it must have a law but, since it is free it must somehow be its own law.[142] The first formulation of the categorical imperative, the Formula of Universal Law, solves this problem by stipulating that we act only on a maxim that could be willed as a law. This is to say that when we act upon an inclination we create a maxim and that process necessarily makes it a law.

The form of our maxims is vital for determining that we are acting on a good maxim or law. Furthermore, the form is important because it is the means by which the thinking self can ensure that it is governing well. According to Korsgaard a good maxim is an "intrinsically normative entity."[143] Every maxim has two parts: purpose and form. Maxims can be understood in terms of their form by considering the purpose and the action. Korsgaard claims that a maxim for action will usually take the form of "I will do action-A in order to achieve purpose-P."[144] A maxim is good, then, when the action and

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[138] Korsgaard, Normativity 94.
[139] Kant in Korsgaard, Normativity 94.
[140] Korsgaard, Normativity 94.
[141] Korsgaard, Normativity 97.
[142] Korsgaard, Normativity 98.
[143] Korsgaard, Normativity 108.
[144] Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Analysis of Obligation: The Argument of Groundwork I," Creating the Kingdom of Ends, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 57-58.

the purpose are related "so that the maxim can be willed as a law."[145] This is the answer to how we ensure that the laws made by the Formula of Universal Law have authority. A maxim is an intrinsically normative entity whose power rests in its functional arrangement such that it can be acted upon. As a result the normativity that allows us to be autonomous is constitutively found in our maxims as it enables us to do what we want to do. When you turn on your computer to check your e-mail, for example, that action can be understood as the maxim, "I will do action-A (turn on the computer) in order to achieve Purpose-P (check my e-mail). If the action and purpose relate in such a way that the action can be willed, then it is a good maxim because it can be understood as a law that could be obeyed. Whether you act on that law or not is your choice.

Kant offers a transcendental argument for a conception of freedom that cannot be known because its existence cannot be proven. However, because we have the experience of freedom our actions must fall under the idea of freedom.[146] Kant's position allows him to claim that the wanton and egoist are not autonomous because they are not in conformity with the moral obligations of the categorical imperative.[147] Kant's categorical imperative, it should be mentioned, is a model of rationality he develops to derive moral requirements.

Korsgaard, on the other hand, in her attempt to naturalize Kant's argument, makes a distinction between the categorical imperative and the moral law. The moral law is a set of *a priori* moral principles deduced through reason which ought to govern the actions of rational beings. This distinction is needed because Korsgaard's version of the categorical imperative does not entail the Kingdom of Ends formulation, so wantons and egoists are

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[145] Korsgaard, Normativity 108.

[146] A transcendental argument begins with an experience, such as freewill, and then deduces what conditions must obtain for that person to have that experience, such as an understanding of the concept of freedom. For Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals," Trans. Gregor, Practical Philosophy, Ed. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 4:452, rational beings must regard themselves as *intelligences* because they can make a distinction between *things as they appear* and *things unto themselves.* In the case of freedom, we have the experience of freedom, but that experience can only be understood with an *a priori* concept of freedom because the experience could not be had without it. This distinction applies to persons, as much as things, because empirically one can only know oneself through perception, yet at the same time acknowledge something behind that appearance, namely 'pure self-activity.' In this way, rational beings must regard themselves as living both in the world of sense, and in the world of understanding (Kant, Groundwork 4:453). The problem with Kant's transcendental argument, however compelling, is that pure freedom can never be known, thus opening up the possibility of drawing false conclusions from the premise.

[147] A wanton is a person who is a slave to her passions, and an egoist is someone whose laws, she believes, apply only to herself.

acting freely, although they may not care about the moral community.[148] This is a thorny issue with regard to moral obligations, however, because my account of online identity does not involve the moral law, but only the categorical imperative, what seems a problem for Korsgaard is not a problem for my view.[149] Korsgaard's position is well situated to use in a theory of unified online identity because practical identity is grounded solely in human biology and human psychology, and is able to explain the experience of autonomy, non-moral obligations, and maxims for action in cyberspace.

2.2.3 Korsgaard on Practical Identity

The way in which a person identifies with her reasons for action determines her practical identity, and through this Korsgaard explains obligations, autonomy, and maxims for action. The reflective structure of the mind forces us to have a self-conception. From the third person perspective one's self-conception can be explained by identifying inclinations, assigning them weight, and declaring winners and losers. From the inside however, as Korsgaard notes, "that isn't the way it is for you when you deliberate."[150] When deliberating we feel as though there is something personal that goes beyond competing inclinations, something that is 'you' which chooses the impulses you act upon, and do not act upon. You are a law unto yourself in just this way. You make decisions based upon principles that you identify as expressively your own.

This is a practical conception of identity because it is understood not as a scientific fact but rather as a description of how you value yourself. How you value yourself is shown by how you choose among competing desires and beliefs to best reflect the life you decide to lead. According to Korsgaard practical identity is:

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[148] Kant, Groundwork 4:433-434. The Kingdome of Ends is the moral community to which all rational beings ought to belong because they can deduce the moral law.

[149] G.A. Cohen in Korsgaard, Normativity, 172, disputes Korsgaard's claim that, "Kant … thinks that morality is grounded in human nature, and that moral properties are projections of human dispositions." Cohen claims that this is the case for Korsgaard because practical identity is completely grounded in human nature, and that moral properties are projections of human dispositions". For Kant, because morality transcends human nature, he can answer the question of how one can be both sovereign and citizen. Korsgaard, according to Cohen, abandons this part of Kant's theory and thus strays too far from the Kantian project with regard to obligation and thus can never answer the question of how moral obligations are binding.

[150] Korsgaard, Normativity 100.

> a complex matter and for the average person there will be a jumble of such conceptions. You are a human being, a woman or a man, an adherent of a certain religion, a member of an ethnic group, a member of a certain profession, someone's lover, and so on. And all of these identities give rise to reasons and obligations. Your reasons express your identity, your nature; your obligations spring from what that identity forbids.[151]

As a result, it can be seen how one's practical identity is based upon one's endorsed reasons for action. Understood this way, practical identity lends itself to examples of multiplicity and invisibility in cyberspace. The jumble of conceptions can incorporate everything from that of a personal e-mail user, to one's existence as a sentient tree in the land of Middle Earth. In Chapter Three I examine in greater detail the various ways in which Korsgaard's theory of practical identity can be applied to cyberspace. The priority for now, however, is to explain the phenomenological experience of practical identity.

Obligation arises from what your practical identity forbids. If your practical identity as a web forum participant includes being helpful, you would *inter alia* have an obligation not be dismissive and rude to those who sincerely need your help. Korsgaard suggests that the relationship between identity and obligation can be found in common phrases such as 'I couldn't live with myself if I did that' or 'just who do you think you are?'[152] This relationship, whether self-imposed or imposed upon others, is realized by asking what you cannot do or what others ought not to do based on a conception of practical identity.

Integrity is the term used to explain how one's normative conception of self can be preserved and maintained through time. Integrity means oneness or unity, and we use the term for those who live up to their own standards. To violate an obligation is to lose integrity and therefore one's practical identity. When obligations are violated a person can no longer view themselves (unless they are extremely self-deceptive) under the rubric they once did. In some cases a person may rather be dead than violate their strongest obligations.[153] When a person has integrity he commits to his reasons for practical identity as well as the ensuing obligations.

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[151] Korsgaard, Normativity 101.
[152] Korsgaard, Normativity 101.
[153] Korsgaard, Normativity 101-102.

There are cases however in which this notion of obligation is challenged. Korsgaard observes two complexities which arise from this relationship between identity and obligation. First, some parts of our identities are easily shed and, in some cases when obligations conflict, ought to be shed. Her example for this complexity is "a good soldier obeys orders, but a good human being doesn't massacre the innocent."[154] This complication is not that troublesome as we are often, throughout our lives, forced to balance various aspects of our practical identity. In other words, life sometimes throws us into complicated situations where we are forced to choose less than ideal courses of action.

Second, and more problematic, is the fact that our practical identities can take a few knocks and remain intact.[155] Consider, as an example of how an otherwise good person who can occasionally do wrong, an otherwise honest online auction broker who is caught, one time, manipulating customer feedback. Supposing that this person had previously been an exemplar of online trading it is entirely imaginable that her potential customers could forgive her for the transgression. Moreover, if she chooses not to engage in such illicit behaviour again, she can continue to consider herself as an honest person. What if, however, she is caught being manipulative again? To balance one's integrity, Korsgaard's appeals to a "kind of second tier integrity," as the means for keeping the times we make exceptions of ourselves not get out of hand.[156] If a person makes too many exceptions she may very well cross a threshold and damage her integrity such that she loses her practical identity altogether. Eventually, not only will the broker lose customer confidence, but more importantly, she will no longer be able to consider herself an honest dealer. To be sure, she could believe herself to still be honest, perhaps by making herself an exception to the rules. She would, however, be deceiving herself with that belief, because honest self-reflection would make her aware of the fact that she is a cheat. This is not to say that she cannot change and become a dishonest cyber-entrepreneur. If the online broker were to change her self-conception to that of a fraud, she could have integrity so long as she does not revert back to her previous honest ways.

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[154] Korsgaard, Normativity 102.
[155] Korsgaard, Normativity 102-103.
[156] Korsgaard, Normativity 103.

Rather than create problems, these complexities reveal insight into the nature and resilience of our practical identities.

Just as we are forced to always have to act for a reason, so too do we always have obligations. We are forced to have obligations because we must have practical identities, which if they are to have integrity must forbid some kinds of reflective endorsement. Take for example a parent who says he could not let go of a stroller carrying his child down a hill into traffic. Of course he could, all it would take would be to let go of the handle. What he means is that his practical identity, as a parent, is such that he could not do it because he has an obligation that forbids him from doing such an action. In other words he could not act on any reason that would lead to a course of action that would involve endangering his child. This obligation could be so strong that he perhaps would rather die than violate their practical identity. The point is that practical identity is tied closely to the concept of obligation.

Autonomy plays an important role for Korsgaard, as it is the source of obligation. Autonomy is the source of obligation because the reflective structure of human consciousness necessitates that you identify with laws or principles which govern the actions you choose to endorse. By itself the reflective structure of consciousness does not have power over us; it only shows the relation we have with ourselves by way of self-conception. Authority is needed, along with power, to enable autonomous action. It is this authority that is the source of obligation. Korsgaard defines autonomy as "commanding yourself to do what you think it would be a good idea to do, but that in turn depends on who you think you are."[157] The source of obligation can be identified in the concept of autonomy because we are forced to act based upon reasons that are determined by our

[157] Korsgaard, Normativity 91. Lawrence Haworth in, Autonomy (Binghampton, NY.: Yale University Press, 1986) presents an in depth study of the concept of autonomy. He examines the subject from both a descriptive and normative perspective. His descriptive theory begins with what he calls "minimal autonomy" which is the basis for "normal autonomy". Minimal autonomy involves minimal competence, independence, and self-control such as would be found in an average toddler. Normal autonomy is the stage reached by most humans as they become increasingly more competent, achieve greater independence, and develop more self-control over their lives. Haworth's descriptive account of autonomy parallels Korsgaard's definition as they both seek to understand the power behind the human ability to propel themselves forward with intentions and reasons. Haworth's normative description of autonomy however does not have the same parallel lines of reasoning. First he makes a political argument along the lines that both libertarian and utilitarian theories can be reduced to the concept of autonomy. Korsgaard's theory largely avoids the subject of politics. Second he refutes the Kantian ethical argument claiming that it cannot be defended; a position in direct opposition to Korsgaard's.

sense of who we are. Autonomous beings command themselves to action based on their ability to make laws and act on them so long as they cohere with their sense of practical identity.

Intentional actions for beings with reflective minds must take the form of a law because they must have a reason for action that corresponds with their practical identity. Furthermore, autonomy stems from one's self-conscious mind; therefore, all instantiations of autonomy in cyberspace must also stem from that mind as well. This may seem like an obvious point but it is useful for understanding how it is that one can have a unified conception of self-identity in cyberspace where aspects of oneself are multiple and unrelated. It is in this way that the idea of a greater practical identity can be explored as the unifying factor in a theory of online identity.

2.3.1 Korsgaard on Normative Identity and Value

The second part of Korsgaard's theory of practical identity examined here describes the way beings, such as human beings, who have self-reflective consciousnesses must identify with themselves as such a being if they are to self-identify with any other aspect of their identity. Furthermore, she argues that if such beings are to value anything, they must first value themselves as the source of all value. In terms of our cyberspace experience, before we can identify with any kind of online identity, we must first identify with our human identity. Likewise, if we are to value anything in cyberspace, perhaps a well rendered digital landscape, we must acknowledge our human identity as the source of all value.

In the previous section it was shown that when forced to confront the problem of the normative, one has no choice but to have a practical conception of identity. Practical identity arises as one must choose what, for them, makes their life worth living. A life worth living, here, does not mean what will bring happiness or flourishing, though that could be chosen, but is rather a statement about how whatever reasons are adopted propel one through life. This is necessary because "you must take something to be normative, that is, some conception of practical identity must be normative for you."[158] Without a normative conception of one's identity one would have no reason to act, since there

[158] Korsgaard, Normativity 123.

would be no way to act on reasons in accordance with one's practical identity, or be obligated to refrain from those actions which your practical identity forbids. Human beings are just a kind of animal with a reflective structure of the mind, for whom a normative conception of identity is necessary.[159]

All aspects of one's practical identity stand in front of one's identity as a rational being, which for human beings is their human identity. As animals with reflective minds rational beings must identify themselves as such before any contingent aspects of their practical identity can manifest. This is because by identifying oneself as a parent, worker, friend, one implicitly acknowledges the aspect of rational nature that makes such identifications possible. Contingent practical identities are those which a person can choose whether to endorse, such as "affable and funny", "honest", or "Internet user". In day to day activities people predominantly relate to contingent practical identities, but they all stem from a greater conception of identity based on one's nature as a rational being.[160] A sense of unity in cyberspace emerges from the idea that one endorses one's humanity so that contingent online identities can be identified with. How, though, does one proceed from a conception of one's human identity to choosing the way in which one takes one's life to be worth living?

Value is rooted in the reflective structure of the mind as it projects onto the world.[161] It may seem obvious, but to value anything there must be an environment in which value can be generated. Someone who values a possession, a sunset, a friend, or even an idea such as happiness, must both be capable of conceptualizing such objects and exist in a setting alongside them. The source of value is found in rational nature because without a mind capable of reflection, even in a world of things, ends could not be chosen as worth acting upon. A bee, for example, does not value the flower which provides pollen and nectar for the purpose of energy. It does not have a mind capable of creating such value and operates solely on instinct. A human, on the other hand, can value a flower in a variety of ways such as aesthetically, nutritionally, or even for metaphorical purposes, because the reflective mind allows one to question its authority. This explains how value can be generated on the Internet. Cyberspace is an environment on to which

[159] Korsgaard, Normativity 123.
[160] Korsgaard, Normativity 123.
[161] Korsgaard, Normativity 116.

users project and find things to be valuable. In this way users in virtual worlds can value a location, an item, or other users. Before a person can choose such things as valuable, however, they must acknowledge that to value anything, one must value the conditions that make valuing possible.

Value and normative practical identity both relate to the structure of the reflective mind but it is still unclear how this comes to be. A transcendental argument is needed to show that rationality is a fact about the reflective mind. In other words, rational action exists, therefore we know it is possible, and it is possible because simply considering the question shows it to be so.[162] This kind of value cannot be seen from the third person because it is only accessible from the perspective of reflective consciousness.[163] Korsgaard notes that there should be nothing surprising in this fact because "trying to see the value of humanity from the third person perspective is like trying to see the colours someone sees by cracking open his skull."[164] It is in this way that humans find themselves to have value and consequently to be valuable. Consider a person who takes great pride in her online web log. In valuing anything within that web site, such as the insightful posts and great links, she must acknowledge herself as the source of value because without her there would be no value, for her, in that web log. This acknowledgement need not be explicit and can be implicitly recognized simply by valuing anything. In other words, she must value her humanity as a being capable of generating value.

Value in this sense is universal. It is universal because universalizability is constitutive of autonomous law making. To engage in any endorsed activity is to engage in certain activities which are constitutive of that action. Walking and thinking are used by Korsgaard as examples of this component of actions.[165] If one is to walk one must put one foot in front of the other; it is constitutive of the action. The same goes for thinking in which one must adhere to certain logical rules. Just as walking and thinking have constitutive rules for their actions so too does willing. A constitutive element of willing is that it be done universally.[166]

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[162] Korsgaard, Normativity 124.
[163] Korsgaard, Normativity 124.
[164] Korsgaard, Normativity 124.
[165] Korsgaard, Normativity 235.
[166] Korsgaard, Normativity 235.

I have shown that online identity is unified from the perspective of practical identity for two interrelated reasons. First, as reflective beings there is a sense in which we have to identify with ourselves as rational beings before any aspects of practical identity can be created. This identification as a rational being, or more specifically having a human identity, leads to a unified online conception of identity because the source of all identities can be isolated in the concept of one's practical identity. Second, a conception of practical identity unifies a self as it is the origin for all value. Korsgaard uses her theory of online identity to establish justification for an ethical system. As the subject of online ethics becomes increasingly relevant, a theory of practical identity could be a starting point for understanding moral obligations in cyberspace.

2.3.2 Korsgaard on Normative Claims

Christine Korsgaard presents her theory of practical identity as an attempt to answer a normative question. The normative question she is concerned with is what justifies the claims morality makes on us. Korsgaard's project is justificatory as it incorporates a first person dimension into a third person question concerning morality. Korsgaard's overall project is to explain why moral agents must do, for them, what morality dictates.[167] Such a question, on her theory, can only be answered from the first person perspective. Korsgaard's position is not subjectivist, however, because in the third person all rational beings ought to identify themselves as moral agents and act accordingly.[168] In other words, the phenomenological experience of morality impinges on agents because from the first person perspective one must act in accordance with one's beliefs. One's justification for such beliefs could be religious, ethical, or seemingly unknown, but what is important is that for the agent they could not act otherwise. Korsgaard's moral project, like Kant's, grounds ethics in the rational aspect of human nature in such a way that it is universalizable.

Korsgaard's ethical argument follows the Kantian tradition wherein rational beings must identify themselves as Citizens in the Kingdom of Ends. In the Kingdom of Ends, rational beings respect the rational nature of all rational beings in such a way that

[167] Korsgaard, Normativity 16.
[168] Korsgaard, Normativity 121.

they are always considered as ends in themselves and not simply as mere means.[169] Korsgaard's theory comes into line with Kant's Formula of Humanity which prescribes the rule for how rational beings must relate: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."[170] According to Korsgaard, to accept one's normative identity is to acknowledge one's rational nature as the root of all value and, according to Korsgaard, to have a moral identity.[171] An agent has no choice but to act in accordance with her rational nature because for her something must be taken as normative. To act morally is to act as one who values their rational nature should, which for humans is to value their humanity. A person who values her rationality as the source of all value must also value it in others. One must acknowledge others as valuable because beings with a reflective mind can distance themselves from their beliefs and perceptions and put themselves in the place of another and conclude that they find themselves to have value and hence to be valuable. Furthermore, one cannot ignore another's rationality because rational beings share a world of meaning in the realm of language. Korsgaard uses an example in which someone yells "stop!" - whether the demand is respected or not, having heard the command it cannot be dismissed as simply noise.[172] Our rationalities impinge on each other. To act as a person with a moral identity should is to respect the rationality in others, and this is how moral obligations are established.

The application to cyberspace is clear. Assuming Korsgaard's establishes the justification for her ethical argument, we ought to respect the rational nature of other Internet users, regardless of whether they are anonymous, multiple, or invisible.[173] Of

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[169] Kant, Groundwork 4:432.
[170] Kant, Groundwork 4:428.
[171] Korsgaard, Normativity 121.
[172] Korsgaard, Normativity 140.
[173] Suler, "The Online Disinhibition Effect," CyberPsychology and Behavior 7 (2004): 321-326, examines some of the ways in which people are inclined to be less inhibited in an online environment. Individuals may be more likely to be disinhibited in an online community for various nonmutually exclusive reasons. The first reason has to do with disassociative anonymity, or the "you don't know me" effect. Another reason has to do with the impression that one is invisible while online, or the "you can't see me" effect. Next, because of the asynchronicity of the Internet people may feel they are not immediately responsible for their actions, otherwise known as the "see you later" effect. Solipsistic introjection may lead an individual to think that all his contact with others happens in his head with imaginative characters; this is known as the "it's all in my head" effect. Another possibility relates to disassociative imagination, or the "it's all a game" effect. Finally, authority plays less of a role in cyberspace because often the details of a person's life are not known and repercussions are less likely

course, there is a contextual element to consider as well. In play, people can explore darker aspects of their selves and not treat other avatars as ends in themselves. This is not to say, though, that one can disrespect the rational nature of the other players. Even in play, if it is accepted that one can take liberties regarding moral obligations between avatars, all things being equal, one cannot go outside of the rules and, for example, cheat and exploit the program code. What is important to remember about this ethical theory in regards to cyberspace, is that other Internet users are rational beings deserving of respect.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Korsgaard's theory of practical identity provides some resources for exploring online identity from the first person perspective. Her theory provides a rich phenomenological description of what it is like to be an agent, which can be applied to what it feels like to be an agent in cyberspace. By following her description from the self-conscious mind through to an understanding of how such beings come to find value, a unified conception of identity is established. The unity found in our autonomous human experience is the unity found in our online experiences. In the next chapter, this theory of practical identity as it relates to cyberspace is shown to have practical applications.

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which leads to a "we're equal" effect. All of these causes can be seen as tools or apparatuses whereby one can seek to mitigate accountability for their behaviour.

3. APPLICATIONS OF PRACTICAL IDENTITY IN CYBERSPACE

3.1 Introduction

Having established a theory of online identity that can be understood as unified in at least one sense, it can asked what kind of work such a theory can do? In this chapter I show that Korsgaard's theory of practical identity can be used to explain case studies that deal with online situations, as well as provide a taxonomy of online experiential states. The first section of this chapter straightforwardly applies the theory of practical identity to a famous cyber-case from the early 1990s, the case of an alleged rape in cyberspace. In the second section, the theory of practical identity is used to explain different ways of identifying with our online selves. At the end of the chapter it should be clear that not only can a theory of practical identity conceptually explain online identity, but is also useful for its practical applications.

Online identity is a subject worthy of consideration because, as was shown in chapter one, multiplicity and invisibility are special characteristics of cyberspace. Multiplicity refers to the way in which one can manifest multiple instantiations of oneself in cyberspace. This feature is observable when, for example, you are roaming a virtual world, writing a web log post, and updating your social network profile all at the same time. Multiplicity becomes even more special when invisibility is considered. Invisibility refers to the way one's characteristics are more arbitrary in cyberspace than they are in RL. This feature is observable when, for example, one chooses to project oneself in cyberspace as a different gender, age, or ethnicity. Individually or combined, then, multiplicity and invisibility lead to possibilities for self-identity that are difficult, or impossible, to achieve in RL.

The popular expression 'age is a state of mind' may be true, as we meet youths wise beyond their years, and elderly persons who exhibit characteristics commonly associated with the young. RL physical contingencies, such as appearance and health, can impose restrictions regardless of one's state of mind, however. A youth with a well developed political stance may be dismissed or paternalistically tolerated by her elders. An elderly person seeking to learn something from a group of young people may face a

problem as some kinds of information, perhaps definitions for slang expressions, are reluctantly shared. Online, though, such barriers are easily dispelled. The youth can participate in a political discussion without revealing her age, and the elderly person can visit web sites geared toward younger persons to find out what the kids these days find hip. Suppose, now, that the elderly person, while conducting this ethnographic project, is also adding information to his social networking profile which reveals his RL age. In this case, in at least one sense, he can be considered both old and young at the same time. When one considers how many identities one can create in cyberspace and the variety of characteristics that can be chosen for those identities, it becomes clear how multiplicity and invisibility are indeed special features of online identity.

The kind of anonymity which arises from the technological barrier that separates users in cyberspace is important as it enables multiplicity and anonymity. Anonymity enables multiplicity because it provides the means to keep various personae, which can conflict and contradict each other, separate and distinct. Anonymity enables invisibility because, as the term "invisible" suggests, one's RL characteristics cannot necessarily be observed, thus one is free to project whichever characteristics one chooses. This is not to say that anonymity is necessary for all online identities, but it is required for some kinds, especially the ones which press the limits of multiplicity and invisibility.

How, though, does a theory of practical identity explain multiplicity and invisibility, among other features of online identity, in any way that is more substantive or illuminating than other approaches? The key feature of Korsgaard's theory of practical identity is its phenomenological method. By considering how we experience ourselves and our identities in the first person, we get insight into how we experience ourselves in online environments. In exploring the following case study, multiplicity and invisibility are highlighted because of the specialness they bring to online identity. Furthermore, since all online experiential states can be understood phenomenologically, they can be explained regardless of how close or far they happen to be from our RL self.

3.2 A Rape in Cyberspace

Korsgaard's theory of practical identity finds depth in the phenomenological experience. In Chapter Two, I advanced a theory of practical identity following

Korsgaard to show how we can understand our online selves as at least partially unified. We are unified in cyberspace because all our identities can be traced to an autonomous being. Moreover, because autonomous beings are forced to acknowledge themselves implicitly as valuable we can understand the source of value. Integrity was a key concept in the theory of unified online identity because it provided the means by which practical identities are maintained. This sense of agency, in turn, can be used to explain how we can have, and value, our online identities. This theory will now be demonstrated as it applies to a case study of an online event.

Julian Dibbell's "A Rape in Cyberspace; or How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society" is an early account of a famous event that occurred in cyberspace. [174] This event took place in LambdaMoo, a MUD hosted on a Xerox Corporation research computer located in California.[175] Dibbell's account is primarily concerned with the impact the incident had on the community, however, the focus here is on the first person perspective of the major agents involved. By examining Dibbell's account of the LamdaMoo incident, not only are multiplicity and invisibility seen in the context of cyberspace, but issues such as what it means to have an online identity, and the permissibility of online actions are also brought to light.

There were three primary agents involved in Dibbell's description of the rape in cyberspace. Mr. Bungle was the antagonist of the event who used a sub-program to attribute actions to two other characters in the MUD. The names of the two other agents involved were legba and Starsinger. Mr. Bungle's description at the time, which could have been seen by typing a command such as 'look at Mr. Bungle,' is described by Dibbell as "a fat, oleaginous, Bisquick-faced clown dressed in cum-stained harlequin garb and girdled with a mistletoe-and-hemlock belt whose buckle bore the quaint inscription "KISS ME UNDER THIS, BITCH!."[176] Not nearly as offensive, legba was "a Haitian trickster spirit of indeterminate gender, brown skinned and wearing an expensive pearl gray suit, top hat, and dark glasses," and Starsinger "a rather pointedly nondescript

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[174] Julian Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace; or How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society," High Noon on the Electronic Frontier: Conceptual Issues in Cyberspace, Ed. Ludlow (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993) 375-395.

[175] Dibbell, Rape 378.

[176] Dibbell, Rape 377.

female character, tall, stout, and brown haired."[177] While there were others involved, such as administrators, witnesses to the event, and commentators in the post-event discussion, only these three personae are considered.

All three of the LamdaMoo users constructed their online identities. By choosing to be a clown, a Haitian trickster spirit, and a non-descript brown haired female, they project into cyberspace a conception of their normative identities. This notion of projecting, as a means of creating identity, has implications for what it means to have an online self. One does not have an online identity simply by browsing a web site, perhaps to check the local cinema times; however, once actions are taken in which one projects into cyberspace, whether that is sending an e-mail, making a forum post, or sauntering through a virtual meadow, one has a cyber-self.

Using a sub-program called a "voodoo doll" Mr. Bungle was able to type commands which made it appear that others were performing particular actions that, in fact, were being performed by the person representing Mr. Bungle. His first offence occurred while he was in the same room (room #17 of the database which was described as a living room) with the rest of the personae. He began by controlling legba's avatar, forcing the Haitian trickster spirit to "sexually service him in a variety of more or less conventional ways."[178] He was ejected from the room, but discovered that the voodoo doll could be used from his private chamber. From afar, using this program, the evil clown gave the impression that legba was eating his/her own pubic hair and that Starsinger was violating herself with a piece of kitchen cutlery, all while Mr. Bungle laughed evilly.[179] Eventually one of LamdaMoo's veterans known as Zippy was able to halt the actions of Mr. Bungle by invoking a command which encapsulated the perpetrator in a "cage" from which the powers of the voodoo doll were not effective.[180] This event raises sociological issues, which seem to be Dibbell's focus, such as what makes a community and how do communities form online? Ethical issues can also be asked about what, if any, moral implications such an event may have? While these issues

[177] Dibbell, Rape 377.
[178] Dibbell, Rape 377.
[179] Dibbell, Rape 377.
[180] Dibbell, Rape 377.

and questions are interesting, my focus is on the phenomenological experience of the three main agents.

Korsgaard's theory self-consciousness and the problem of the normative can be related to the three main actors in the event. Self-consciousness for these personae's users is pretty straightforward as it originates in the minds of their users. Take for example legba. Without a person in RL to create and control it, that Haitian trickster spirit could not act at all. This is to say that the avatar representation of legba on LamdaMoo, by itself, does not have a mind or self-consciousness. While the Internet can provide the opportunity to explore interesting and special aspects of oneself, in all instantiations self-consciousness can be traced back to the person in front of the screen. This holds true even when one is exploring many multiple identities at once. Given the ease with which one can perform concurrent online actions, it can be seen that even while multiple all aspects of one's online self can be found in the consciousness of a self-conscious being. Similarly, the importance of the self-conscious being's relationship to cyberspace can be understood in terms of perceptions. It is not legba, the avatar, that sees and hears things in LamdaMoo, but rather the user in RL who sits in a chair before the screen reading descriptions about the state of affairs in that online environment.

The reflective mind is also in the Internet users. In LamdaMoo, for example, sitting in her chair before logging in, Starsinger sees the name of the MUD, perhaps its URL,[181] and there may even be some information about theme and policy. Unlike an animal, perhaps a house cat, looking at that same screen, the self-reflective mind can reflect upon its mental states. While both the cat and the human being can see the screen, only the human can reflect about what is on the screen. Likewise, a bot, whose function may be to aid new users through a process of registration, for example, is incapable of placing distance between its mental states – assuming that is what it has when it "reads" input commands – and its perceptions. The ability to turn our attention toward our perceptions and inclinations leads to a problem.

The problem of the normative arises for Internet users as much as it does for any self-conscious being. Imagine one of LamdaMoo's users stuck sitting in front of her computer continuously questioning her perceptions and desires, unable to move forward.

[181] Uniform Resource Locator.

If she is going to settle on a belief, she requires a reason to do so. Likewise, if she is going to turn the computer on, then she also needs a reason to act on that desire. The problem of the normative is a problem because she has no choice but to require reasons for forming beliefs and acting on desires. It is important to remember that the problem of the normative faces the LamdaMoo user, and not the avatar. This problem leads to the question of how reasons are settled upon so that one's perceptions can be believed, and one's desires acted upon. Upon reflection, rational beings, must (for the most part) endorse actions in accordance with the practical conception of identity they create as their own.

This idea of choosing your practical identity involves an element of freedom as self-reflective beings choose what reasons they will act on. Consider Mr. Bungle's user when he decided to use the voodoo doll in the way that he did. When he used the voodoo doll to attribute actions to others, his act of utilizing the sub-program was not brought about from any external factor. He may have had a desire to act in a less than polite way, but the reason upon which he acted did not originate anywhere other than his self-reflective mind. Even if he had friends sitting beside him in front of his computer encouraging him, the final reason for action rests solely with the person controlling Mr. Bungle. Conversely, when legba and Starsinger had actions attributed to them through the voodoo doll it is clear that their users were not endorsing a reason for an impulse. This is because the desire to attribute the actions to their avatars did not originate in either of them, but rather in the person controlling Mr. Bungle. It was that person who endorsed a reason to act on a desire to attribute actions to the unwilling victims.

Here we can see how one's practical identity in cyberspace emerges from one's reasons for action. Consider Mr. Bungle's user as he undertook his scheme. By acting on his reason to use the voodoo doll, to engage a "thought polarizing" psychological experiment, he identified with that reason, which determines his practical identity.[182] This is to say that by using the sub-program as he did, he was endorsing the action, thus becoming a kind of person who pulls juvenile, and possibly hurtful and offensive, experiments in virtual worlds. Unless Mr. Bungle's user was somehow not in control of his actions on the other side of the screen, perhaps under duress, he cannot disavow this

[182] Dibbell, Rape 388.

identity because he was the person endorsing those actions. Mr. Bungle's identity is created out of the reasons he takes for his actions. This is what it is for a being with a reflective mind to identify with their reasons for action. This is why Mr. Bungle's user is mistaken that his actions have no consequence on his RL existence.[183] Because his avatar's actions originate in RL, he cannot disavow himself from his online actions so easily. Whether he acknowledges it or not, the creation of Mr. Bungle affects his RL practical identity. He is the kind of person who created an online identity to cause distress in a virtual community.

This practical aspect of identity should be highlighted as it relates to invisibility in cyberspace. When choosing an online identity on a MUD, or more generally in cyberspace, there is a special sense in which you can choose aspects of your identity not available, or perhaps difficult to achieve, in RL. These special characteristics could be such things as life form, gender, age, ethnicity, and so on. Considering our MUD example, at least two of the primary agents identify themselves in ways they would not in RL. Mr. Bungle is a Bisquick-faced clown and legba is Haitian trickster spirit. Starsinger is a nondescript female which may or may not correspond to a RL identity. Regardless of their RL identities, however, it can be seen how their identities arise within the LamdaMoo environment. All of these personae are aspects of RL persons who have chosen to project their online selves in these ways. Their identities are grounded in the reasons those users endorse, but these identities also stipulate what they cannot do. They cannot act on what their self-identity rejects, except by engaging in rationalization or self-deception, and that is where they get their obligations.

In the case of Mr. Bungle, whose phenomenal obligations are realized through his practical identity as a Bisquick-faced clown, there was nothing preventing him from acting as he did. Because obligations can only originate in the computer user, the experience of obligation as it relates to an avatar is only a phenomenal obligation. This is to say, Mr. Bungle's phenomenal obligations as a LamdaMoo citizen did not include treating the other users with a level of respect that was, up to that point, considered the norm within that community. Given the aggressive sexual nature of the language he used for his attack, it is hard to imagine what would count as a threat to his identity. Perhaps

[183] Dibbell, Rape 389.

he could not have taken it to the level of child pornography. Suppose one of LamdaMoo characters in room #17 during that time was a child. It can be imagined that Mr. Bungle could not have brought himself to attribute the actions he did to Starsinger and legba to that child. In this case Mr. Bungle's user's practical identity would forbid him from raping a child in cyberspace.

On the other hand, it is clear that the person creating Starsinger's identity as a member of the LamdaMoo community could not have used the voodoo doll as Mr. Bungle did. Her testimony reveals as much: "Mostly, I trust people to conduct themselves with some veneer of civility."[184] It can be inferred from her statement that she expects to conduct herself with at least a veneer of civility and therefore could not be as uncivil as Mr. Bungle. Starsinger's user has reasons for her actions which create a normative identity for her avatar and at the same time that conception of identity gives rise to obligations based on what would be forbidden. Again, one can only speculate about what Mr. Bungle's phenomenological experiences of obligations were, but we can be fairly certain that Starsinger's would include treating others with a modicum of respect. The point is that an "obligation always takes the form of a reaction against a threat of a loss of identity."[185] Reasons and obligations understood in this manner support a theory of unified self-identity because there is a sense in which one's practical identity, if it is to be consistent, must somehow hold together.

Integrity, as it relates to practical identity, implies living up to one's standards, and explains how one's identities are maintained through time. An avatar has character integrity when it lives up to the standards of its normative identity. In the case of Starsinger, part of her character integrity includes treating others with some degree of respect. It would be hard for her to consider herself civil if she began insulting others and taking advantage of exploits in the LamdaMoo program to humiliate others or make them look foolish. Mr. Bungle on the other hand, has character integrity so long as he is consistent with his practical identity which has no problem being uncivil in a virtual world. It would be hard for him to continue being a disrespectful member of the LamdaMoo community if he began treating people with respect.

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[184] Dibbell, Rape 380.
[185] Korsgaard, Normativity 102.

The flexibility found in Korsgaard's theory of practical identity is important because it helps to explain how one's self-identity can change over time. A person's cyber-identity has character integrity so long as it remains consistently true to its reasons for action. This can be stated more specifically as, a cyber-self has integrity so long as its user acts in accordance with the reasons and values she ascribes to that online identity. This has interesting implications for the idea of multiplicity in cyberspace. The fragmentation of self that one can experience in cyberspace makes it possible for various aspects of oneself to come into conflict and contradict each other. Because anonymity enables multiplicity, however, each fragment can have its own kind of integrity. Perhaps Mr. Bungle's user, alongside his LambdaMoo excursions, builds web sites for charities. A person can be as polite as Starsinger on one MUD, and as vile as Mr. Bungle on another. The theory of practical identity is useful for explaining multiplicity in cyberspace because it can explain how contingent online practical identities can have a kind of integrity that preserves it through time in an online environment.

What does it mean to be autonomous in a MUD or in cyberspace in general? It means commanding yourself in an online environment to do what you think it would be a good idea to do, depending on who you think you are. In the case of Mr. Bungle's user he was autonomous when he used the voodoo doll because he was able to command himself to do what he thought it would be a good idea to do based on a conception of his practical identity. Conversely, neither legba nor Starsinger were autonomous during the 'rape,' because they could not command their actions. In other words, they were not autonomous because they could not act. To understand how Internet users command themselves in cyberspace an examination of how users form maxims for action is required.

To act autonomously one must form a maxim for action. Mr. Bungle's user's maxim may have been something like "To humiliate others I will take over their characters and have them violate themselves." If this process was to be examined in a Kantian ethical light the question of whether such an action could be universalized would have to be asked. It seems that Mr. Bungle's action could not be universalized while, at the same time, respecting the humanity of the others. But I am not concerned with this ethical argument. What is important is that his action can be understood as, for him, law-giving. The action of the maxim refers to his use of the voodoo doll, and the purpose

refers to his reasons for undertaking the action, namely to humiliate others. Such maxims for online actions are not formed within the avatar, or "on the Internet," but rather in the being with a reflective mind choosing to endorse reasons for action which in turn depend on how that person decides to express that aspect of the practical online identity.

The idea of an online normative identity applies to an Internet user's conception of their online self. In the case of LamdaMoo, for example, if one is going to participate in that community then one must choose some way of identifying oneself within that environment, even if it is simply as an invisible presence that spies upon others. While Starsinger's RL self may indeed be a brown haired nondescript woman it is doubtful that Mr. Bungle's is a clown dressed in Harlequin garb, and legba's user almost certainly is not a Haitian trickster spirit. The Internet, however, facilitates the creation of such identities in such a way that users can actually put themselves in those contingent practical identities and act accordingly.

The fact that cyber-identities are contingent is very important to a theory of unified online identity. Simply put, those who control Mr. Bungle, Starsinger, and legba, relate to their identities on LamdaMoo as a clown, nondescript woman, and Haitian trickster, respectively, must first identify as human beings whose human identities stand in front of any contingent MUD identities. Similarly, it is by acknowledging the value of one's humanity that one can find value within cyberspace. This move from identity to contingent identity requires a transcendental argument because to value any particular identity one must value that which makes identity and value possible. To use Starsinger for example, before she can value anything within LamdaMoo, perhaps a friendship with another member, her user must first acknowledge herself as a self-reflective being capable of generating value. This acknowledgement need not be explicit and can be implicitly recognized simply by valuing anything. This implicit commitment is conceptual because many people never formally value their value-generating capacity. A theory of practical identity is useful for both its ability to explain how contingent online practical identities arise, and the origins of value in cyberspace.

Online identity understood in this unified sense is applicable to any case study that deals with online selves. To apply it, all one needs to do is identify the personae involved, trace those personae to their users, discover what reasons those users endorse

on behalf of their online selves, and then observe whether they are consistent in their attribution of action to those cyber-selves such that it lives up to the standards they have set out for it. If they are consistent in this way then their online selves have character integrity, and if they are not consistent in this way then they do not have character integrity, or at the least it is compromised. By explaining how an online self can have character integrity, even in this contained sense, a kind of unity is established in cyberspace.

3.3 A Users' Guide to Self-Awareness in Cyberspace

How are we to understand the various ways in which we can experience online identity? As has already been shown, online identity allows one to experiment with various aspects of oneself in ways not easily achieved in RL. In this section I provide an outline for understanding our online selves in any phenomenological state.

Using the tools found in Korsgaard's theory of practical identity, a taxonomy of online experiential states can be explained using one's RL self as a baseline. Since online identity requires one have a RL identity, the latter is a solid standard to which online identities can be compared. This model for self-awareness in cyberspace is presented as a spectrum that ranges from online identities that are very much like one's RL identity, to online identities radically different from one's RL identity. Such online understandings, then, are contingent on an understanding of who you are in a broader sense.

These ways of self-identifying in cyberspace can be explained with the tools found in the theory of practical identity by focusing on the phenomenological experience of endorsing reasons for action in accordance with a normative conception of identity. Normative identity, as discussed in section 2.3.1, refers to the reasons one chooses for actions that propel one through life in accordance to what one deems a life worth living. One's RL self can be compared to one's online selves by examining the reasons for action, along with the entailing values, of their various online practical identities. To be sure, all reasons for action along with the corresponding values stem from one's greater self, but since one can have experiences in cyberspace that would be impossible or difficult to achieve in RL, there is a sense in which RL identity and online identity can be compared.

Invisibility in cyberspace is the special feature addressed in this section. Invisibility is the term used to refer to the way one's online characteristics are more arbitrary in cyberspace than they are in RL. With a theory of practical identity, however, invisibility can be explained beyond simply choosing characteristics: the theory can explain how we identify, in a deep way, with those characteristics. Consider, for example, the difference between an MMO player who chooses an avatar of the opposite sex for strategic reasons and a virtual world inhabitant who chooses an avatar of the opposite sex to explore a different gender.[186] In the first case, the MMO player chooses characteristics different from her RL characteristics, and identifies with those characteristics. Suppose her reason for choosing that avatar stems from a desire, as a game player, to gain an in-game advantage. The reason promotes the values of the RL player insofar as the end to the means is gaming success. To be sure, game player is not the only way she can identify with this online identity since she could also be identifying with it as, among others things, a manipulator. In this case, assuming she has no qualms about being manipulative in RL games either, there is not much difference between the player's RL self and online self because their reasons and values are in sync.

In the second case, the person controlling the virtual world inhabitant also chooses characteristics different from his RL characteristics and identifies with those characteristics. Supposing his reason for choosing that avatar stems from a desire, as a member of a particular gender, to have an experience not easily achieved in RL. The means to this end may require that the virtual world inhabitant identify with reasons and values quite different than his RL self. The difference between these two cases, then, is found in the relation one's online self has to one's RL self. The project of this section is to explain how two people can seemingly choose the same kinds of characteristics, e.g. an opposite gender, but identify with them in very different ways. By tracing the online

[186] MMO stands for "massive multi-player online," and is a video game genre. The term is a derivative of MMORPG, which is an acronym for "massive multi-player online role playing game," but since not all massive multi-player games need to be role playing games MMO is a broader category. Also, a distinction can be made between MMOs and virtual worlds. MMO implies a game because there are players, but virtual worlds have inhabitants because, while games can be played within them, they are not designed specifically for that purpose. Technically speaking, however, MMOs are also virtual worlds because they are virtual environments that create an illusion of time and space to be projected into. Unless otherwise noted, the distinction between MMO and virtual worlds will used to refer to the difference between a game and a social meeting place.

identities back to their users we can see how even though they are both projecting into online environments, the decisions are being made in RL by RL selves. By comparing the online identities to their RL selves, it can be shown how the MMO player is not much different than her RL self, whereas the user in the virtual world is quite different than his RL self.

Onymity, pseudonymity, and anonymity are the terms I use, in an internal sense, to explain the ways in which one can understand one's online selves. This sense is internal because it refers to an awareness of one's online identity in relation to one's RL self. In this internal sense we are onymous when we identify with our online identity much like we do our RL self, we are pseudonymous when there are slight differences between our online self and RL self, and we are anonymous when there is a radical separation between our RL self and online self. This terminology is a little precarious, however, since these terms already find use as descriptors of external relations between people.[187] In the external sense we are onymous when we are known to each other, we are pseudonymous when we are known to each other by different not uniquely re-identifiable names, and we are anonymous when we are not known to each other. It could be asked, then, if these terms already function in this external sense, why would I confuse the matter by attributing them an internal sense? There are two reasons that warrant the distinction. First, a conflation already exists within the concept of anonymity as it applies to the Internet. Second, there are parallels that can be drawn between the two senses. For example, when someone is anonymous his presence is undetectable, and when one is internally anonymous in cyberspace one's online self is, in a way, unaware of one's RL self. The similarities are not exact, but the external senses of these terms can be used to point toward what is meant by the internal senses.

A conflation can occur when the concept of anonymity is considered in the context of cyberspace. This conflation can be clarified by making a distinction between external anonymity and internal anonymity. This distinction is represented in a famous 1993 *The New Yorker* magazine comic, depicting a dog sitting in a chair, in front of a computer, talking to another dog sitting on the floor. The caption reads, "On the Internet,

[187] Wallace, Anonymity explains the concept of anonymity in this external sense.

nobody knows you're a dog."[188] The conflation, and the comic's humour, is found in the double meaning of the word 'dog.' If dogs could talk and use computers, they could hide behind the anonymity provided by the technological layer that the Internet enables. This sense of anonymity is external because it refers to a kind of relation that can exist between people online – "nobody knows you're a dog." In a way, external anonymity is a default position (or at least the feeling of anonymity) for online relations because until you make yourself known to others, the technological layer of the Internet keeps your identity hidden.

In the internal sense, anonymity refers to the way in which people can identify with aspects of their online self that are radically different than their RL self. Internal anonymity is captured in *The New Yorker* comic because the term 'dog' can be used idiomatically to refer to less than virtuous behaviour. In this way, for example, someone could be a morally upstanding person in RL, but unbeknownst to anyone else, completely loutish and deceptive in cyberspace – "you are a dog." The analogy is not exact because internal anonymity is not the only way of explaining this experiential state. As will be shown in the following three sections, there are grey areas on this spectrum of self-awareness in cyberspace. One such grey area is found between the point from which one uses the Internet to rationalize behaviour that would not be endorsed by one's RL self, and the point where one begins to lose sight of one's RL self altogether.

The conflation between the two senses of anonymity as it relates to cyberspace can also be found in popular expressions such as, "You can be whoever you want on the Internet." You cannot be whoever you want in an external sense, your favorite performer for example, because you are not that person. You could, however, create an online identity based on your favorite performer and project into cyberspace as that person. In this case, the distance between your RL self and your online self, which requires a self-awareness of each, determines where you place on the spectrum of online experiential states. If you are projecting as your favorite performer as a joke to see if you can fool a friend, then you are much closer to your RL self than if you embrace the role whole heartedly in an attempt to *be* that other person.

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[188] Peter Steiner, "On the Internet Nobody Knows You're a Dog," The New Yorker July 1993: 61.

3.3.1 Onymity in Cyberspace

This first section in the guide to self-awareness in cyberspace shows that there are times when our online identities are very much like our RL identity. Internal onymity is the term used to refer to this kind of online self-awareness. Onymity means to have a name or be named and has both an internal and external sense. The external sense of onymity can be used to point towards how we can understand onymity in its internal sense.

External onymity refers to the relation between people that are known to each other. In many of our day to day interactions with those we know external onymity is the default relation, because, once known, those people are re-identifiable. When we wake we often see those we live with, we work alongside colleagues and co-workers, and in the evenings spend time with friends and acquaintances. In cyberspace we are externally onymous in much the same way. We e-mail friends, have virtual conferences with colleagues and stay connected though personal web logs and social networks.

Internal onymity refers to an awareness of one's online self as not different, in terms of reasons for action and values, than one's RL self. In other words, when a person relates to her online self in an internally onymous manner, it means that he makes no distinction between his RL self and his online self. The distinction is there by virtue of their projecting into cyberspace; however, it is not considered important or relevant, if even considered at all. The important thing to remember about the experiential state of online internal onymity is that nothing changes with respect to self-identification and values when the user accesses the Internet. For example, when one checks one's e-mail and sends a note to a colleague about work, one is internally onymous so long as the message does not contain anything they would not be willing to say in person, or even if not, so long as the senders address is not forged.

In some cases people can not help but relate to their online self in this way. This could be because they have an obligation to uphold certain principles or ideas. In political web forums most people who post comments probably are doing so in an internal onymous sense. This is because their beliefs are so strongly held that to project any other kind of opinion may be unthinkable. A person who believes strongly in Marxist political theory would most likely have a hard time sincerely arguing a neo-liberal position in a

web forum. Their normative identity as a Marxist obligates them not to promote an opposing ideology even if it is in cyberspace. Even "concern trolls" (those who masquerade as sympathizers of a view but express concern about some issue or idea in hopes of having such concerns catch on) are identifying with their RL self in relation to those held beliefs.[189] It is hard to imagine how one could hold strongly onto a belief in RL and then sincerely eschew it in favour of its opposite position in cyberspace. This is because, as was shown in Chapter 2, some obligations are so strong that people may rather die than violate them. One's onymous practical online identity can arise in almost any online media -- what is important is that one's normative identities and values are shared between cyberspace and RL.

Another feature of this onymous relation to one's online self is that a person can keep her values separated in cyberspace. In one web forum a person can be an apolitical connoisseur of nineteen eighties horror movies and in another a rabidly partisan political pundit. The two identities need not overlap so a person can enjoy a certain freedom from views on one subject without polluting or affecting the views of another.

People relate to their online selves in this way because they want simply to be themselves. This is possibly the simplest way in which one can relate to one's online self because it does not require any change in attitude. Internal onymity is probably the most common way in which people identity with their online selves.

The external sense of onymity can point towards the internal sense of onymity in the way it indicates a knowing of selves. The external sense of onymity, where we are known to each other, is similar to the internal sense of onymity, where our online self and RL self are known to each other because they are basically one and the same. To bring it back to the user's guide, you will find that your experiential online state is internally onymous when you endorse reasons for actions in line with a conception of who you are and what you consider to be a life worth living in RL.

3.3.2 Pseudonymity in Cyberspace

This second section in the guide to self-awareness in cyberspace shows that there are times when our online identities begin to deviate away from our RL normative

[189] On the Internet, the term "troll" is used to generally refer to those who deliberately provoke others with no good reason other than, perhaps, self amusement.

conception of identity. Internal pseudonymity is the term used to refer to this kind of online awareness. Pseudonymity means “to bear a false name” and has both an internal and external sense. The external sense of pseudonymity can be used to point towards how we can understand the internal sense as it relates to online identity.

External pseudonymity refers to a relation between people where someone uses a different name than the one by which they are generally known. An author, for example, writes pseudonymously when a work is published under a name different than that associated with his own previously published works or his RL identity. In cyberspace, external pseudonymity is common as people often use pseudonyms for reasons such as privacy or security.

Internal pseudonymity refers to an awareness of one’s online self as slightly different, in terms of reasons for action and values, than one’s RL self. This deviation can continue to the point where one would be hard pressed to see similarities between the RL self and the online self. Pseudonymous aspects of one’s practical identity can be explored on the spectrum between onymity and anonymity. This broad category can be further demarcated by noticing that some pseudonymous online selves are closer to internal onymity, whereas others closer to internal anonymity. Someone who projects an idealized version of themselves on a social networking web site is more alike to their RL self than someone who uses cyberspace as a means to rationalize behaviour they would not in RL. It is in this way that three over-arching groups can be classified. Group A identifies aspects of one’s online self that, while pseudonymous, are closer to internal onymity. Group B examines practical identities in the middle area which are not closer to either end of the spectrum. Group C isolates practical identities that are closer to the notion of an anonymous online self.

Internally pseudonymity is found in Group A as one departs from an onymous conception of one’s online identity toward a pseudonymous conception. Light can be shed on this problem, however, by examining some kinds of examples in which a person’s conception of their online self seems to make this transition. The beginnings of pseudonymous practical identity in cyberspace can be traced to the point at which people start endorsing actions that they would not or do not in RL.

Consider a person who sincerely enjoys Dickens novels and golf but, on her social networking profile only claims to like the novels because golf can have negative connotations regarding her status within her online social network, and she does not want to appear haughty or discriminatory. This person is beginning to move toward a pseudonymous conception of her online self, because in her attempt to project an idealized aspect of herself, she is hiding an aspect of her RL self. In other words, her normative conception of her online self differs from her normative conception of her RL self. While it is not a big change, what should be clear is that the line between onymously and pseudonymously relating to one's practical identity is not sharp and can be understood more as a gradual departure.

Another kind of example that shows how people can depart slightly from their RL selves in cyberspace is found in situations where people say their online self is just like them except for differences that do not change their conception of who they are or the values they hold. Consider a person who in RL has a disability which confines him to a wheelchair, but in a virtual world he creates an online self that is like him in every way except for the disability. This person looks, speaks, and smells just as he does in RL, but rather than wheel around for transportation in the virtual world he is able to walk and run. There is not much difference between his online self and RL self; however, since he can endorse actions in cyberspace that he cannot in RL, in a minimal sense he is beginning to self-identify in an internally pseudonymous manner.

Internally pseudonymous online identity is found in Group B as a person begins to endorse actions in tension with what would be endorsed in RL. This is a hazy area, because it is hard to know when you have passed the threshold that keeps you closer to an onymous online self, or moves you toward an internally anonymous understanding of your online identity. There are many kinds of examples that could exemplify this kind of online identity, two of which are examined here. The first class of example concerns instances in which people use the Internet as means to make themselves exceptions. The second class of examples examines a situation where embarrassment forces a person to pursue an interest anonymously in cyberspace.

When people use the Internet as a tool for making themselves exceptions they are identifying reasons for a normative conception of their cyber-self that would not endorse

in RL. Consider, a monogamously married man who has an emotionally charged online relationship with someone other than his partner. This man may think that since there is no physical contact he can go ahead and participate in an online affair. Assuming the man would not engage in such an affair in RL, perhaps with an "office hubby," he is using the Internet as a means of separating the actions he would endorse online from those they would not in ordinary day to day life.

The second example deals with situations where someone might join an online community and endorse actions within that environment that would be embarrassing or unacceptable in RL. Consider a woman who would feel ashamed if it were known by her friends and family that she enjoyed celebrity news. On the internet, however, she follows such news with keen interest. This person may even make a web site that aggregates stories from various sources, or participate in a community of people who track movie star sightings and reveal the latest gossip about celebrity events. A middle of the road conception of internal pseudonymous online identity is found in this example as the woman identifies with her online self differently that she self-identifies with her RL self.

Group C isolates a kind of internal pseudonymity that approaches the concept of internal anonymity. Again, because these identities are being examined on a spectrum it is hard to know when thresholds are crossed. It seems that for this group to only approach this end of the spectrum, characteristics very different from one's RL characteristics are chosen and identified with, but without losing a grasp on one's RL self.

What if, in the example of man with a disability, rather than simply choosing to project as an able bodied person, he chooses additional characteristics that differ from his RL self? Suppose he also changes his gender, age, ethnicity, and attitude toward life. Now, in the virtual world he looks and acts considerably differently than he does in RL. When he interacts with others it is from a perspective, and for reasons, much different than those to which he is accustomed. So long as he remembers that his RL self exists in RL, and that self-consciousness originates in RL, he can be considered internally pseudonymous in cyberspace on this far edge of the spectrum.

The external sense of pseudonymity can point towards the internal sense of pseudonymity in the way it indicates a difference between one's RL self and one's online self. Where the external sense of pseudonymity refers to a difference in names by which

people are known to each other, the internal sense refers to a difference in the way one's RL self is known to its online selves. When the man rationalizes his online affair, in a way his online self is known to him in a different way than he knows his RL self. His online self is the one who has emotionally charged online affairs, whereas his RL self would never condone such action. To bring it back to the user's guide, you will find that your experiential online state is internally pseudonymous when you endorse reasons for actions that you would not endorse in RL, but have not gone so far as to lose sight of the difference between your online selves and RL self.

3.3.3 Anonymity in Cyberspace

The final section in the guide to self-awareness in cyberspace shows that there are situations where one can lose oneself in a cyber identity to the point where awareness of one's RL self is a fleeting thought. Internal anonymity is the terms used to refer to this kind of online self-awareness (or lack of awareness). Anonymity means to be without a name or nameless and can have both an external and internal sense. The external sense of anonymity can be used to point us towards the internal sense of anonymity as it relates to online selves.

External anonymity, as already mentioned, is "a form of inaccessibility to others to whom one is related or with whom one shares a social environment, even if only or primarily in virtue of the effects of one's actions."[190] There are all kinds of ways someone can be anonymous in RL. Unintentional anonymity obtains when, for example, you attend public events such as sporting events. Intentional anonymity can obtain when you disguise yourself to spy on someone. In cyberspace, where it has be shown that anonymity is a kind of default position, we are anonymous when commenting on web logs that do not require any kind of identification. People can go to great lengths to be anonymous in cyberspace employing software to cover their online tracks. External anonymity is especially interesting because it is the feature of the Internet that enables multiplicity and invisibility.

Internal anonymity refers to an awareness of one's online self far removed from one's RL self. Method acting is a good analogy for this kind of awareness. When a method actor is fully engaged in her role, her awareness of a RL self is distant and

[190] Wallace, Anonymity 25.

possibly not even considered. In some cases such awareness of one's internally anonymous self may not arrive until after the identity has been disengaged. When one is internally anonymous they take measures to shield one's online identity, motivations, and values from the mind of the self-conscious being in the chair. This kind of anonymous online identity is most often seen in role playing games and virtual worlds where users can try to keep the beliefs and desires of the RL self separate than the beliefs and desires of the online personae.

To be sure, one can never truly sever the link between one's online self and one's RL self. The limits, however, can be pushed. One draws near an anonymous online self by beginning with the premise that the self-consciousness of their online persona is contained solely within the online environment. This can be done by putting yourself in the position of the personae, and consider it as the identity that stands behind all others and is the source of all value. In this way, from the perspective of the personae, the problem of the normative is faced and value generated.

Take, for example, a person who wants to explore the darker side of human nature but is not an evil person in RL. This user could create an online persona receptive to evil ideas in a MUD. In this way he can identify themselves as callous and devious, and value ill gotten gains without guilt since from the first person perspective of that persona, that is what it is to be evil. Clearly, however, this shielding can only go so far as there may be certain acts which would be fine for the persona, but could not be endorsed by the user - even if it is all online.

The extreme nature of anonymously self-identifying with one's online self makes it a very uncommon experience, and is probably not something experienced by the average Internet user. It is interesting to see, however, how the Internet can allow persons to put such distance between their RL selves and their cyber-selves.

The external sense of anonymity can point towards the internal sense of anonymity in the way that something is unknown. In the external sense, an anonymous person is unknown to others, and in the internal sense one's RL is, in a sense, unknown to one's online self. To bring it back to the user's guide, your experiential online state is anonymous when you endorse reasons for actions on behalf of a created persona unaware of a RL self.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Korsgaard's theory of practical identity, when applied to cyberspace, can have practical applications. This theory was used to show it can be applied to case studies of events which occur on the Internet, as well as provide a deep understanding of how we can relate to our online selves. The Internet provides many opportunities to experiment and play with aspects of their self. Some of these aspects were seen in the example of a rape in cyberspace as multiplicity and invisibility were demonstrated in the event that transpired. The users who controlled Mr. Bungle, legba, and Starsinger could have their experience explained phenomenologically, as their actions, while online, could always be traced back to someone using a computer to access LamdaMoo. The phenomenological approach to practical identity also provides the means for sketching a taxonomy on online experiential states. By using one's RL conception of a normative identity as a baseline, it was shown how one's online identities can range from very similar to one's RL self, to very different from one's RL self. Using this taxonomy, anyone should be able to be aware of the state of their online self so long as they have a solid awareness of their RL self.

CONCLUSION

The Internet's affect on the world has been remarkable. In a short period of time, the Internet has managed to creep its way in to many aspects of our everyday lives. Never has correspondence across vast distances been easier, or knowledge more widely disseminated. We do business online, visit friends, play games, find partners, find entertainment, make entertainment, receive our news, and much more. There are no indications that the incredible growth rate of the Internet is going to slow down either. As the world becomes ever more connected through this technology, new questions and problems will arise. In this thesis I addressed two such questions. First, what affect, if any, does the Internet have on our identities? Second, how does the Internet affect our capacity for autonomy and integrity?

The subject of online identity is as interesting as it is relevant. Sherry Turkle broaches this subject from a decentered perspective. Turkle raises many strong points about the ways in which the Internet affects our identities, the value of the Internet for exploring aspects of the self, especially in light of anonymity, multiplicity, and invisibility in cyberspace. It was shown, however, that her theory falls short because it draws a false conclusion and is unable to examine identity in a deep sense.

Korsgaard's theory of practical identity was then explored for its ability to explain identity in a deep sense, while still accounting for the special features of cyberspace. This theory was useful for explaining online identity because, as it is grounded in human nature, it is able to describe how it is that our minds are capable creating identities, and the process such a creation undertakes. With a theory of practical identity it was shown how online selves can have, in a limited sense, their own kind of integrity, along with an explanation of how value can be generated in cyberspace.

In the final chapter this theory of practical identity was used in a practical way. It was shown that a theory of practical identity can be used to explain online events, as well as explain online experiential states. It is hoped that as the Internet become increasingly ubiquitous, and developers create exciting new media to explore, and the number of users

continues to grow, that a theory of unified online identity can provide insight into how we understand ourselves in cyberspace.

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