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‘What Makes Us Who We Are?’ A Theology Of Identity In Light Of The Cognitive Sciences

Timothy Wall

Abstract

While the cognitive sciences have represented a burgeoning field of research in recent years, the results have rarely been taken into account when questions of identity have been considered. In this thesis I put those results into dialogue with a theological view of identity, arguing that the fullest expression of who we are is found in the Christian understanding of resurrection. In this way, I propose that in the present we participate proleptically to different degrees in who we will be in our resurrection.

At the beginning of the thesis, I explore a basic model of identity indicated by the cognitive sciences. Identity arises from the dynamic interaction between embodiment and embeddedness and has two central aspects; relationships and narrative. If this view of identity is to be reflected theologically, then I argue that the key theological resource is Christology, specifically the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. Within this, new creation is central. It reflects the two emphases identified within the cognitive sciences as the relational and narrative roots of identity are found in Christ yet also embodied and embedded in a world where God is ‘all in all’. This is found in resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ bridges time. It is therefore the foundation of how identity can be found in resurrection, but known now in anticipatory form. To understand this further, I will consider dementia which also arises from embodied and embedded roots. If the identity of someone with dementia can be transient in the present but find its fullness in God, so our identity now is an aspect of who we are and its fullest expression in found in resurrection. Indeed, if the relationships and narratives that express who we are now are reflected in new creation, this has implications for Christian ministry.

‘What Makes Us Who We Are?’ A Theology Of Identity In Light Of The Cognitive Sciences

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Curious Case of Phineas Gage

On 13th September 1848 an accident occurred during the construction of the Rutland and Burlington Railroad.[1] It took place in Cavendish, Vermont. As he was 'tamping in' explosive, the foreman, Mr Phineas P. Gage, prematurely ignited it. The tamping-iron he was using shot upwards straight through Gage's head. The metal rod, just over a metre in length, with a tapered, pointed end, landed several feet away 'smeared with blood and brain.' Such accidents were perhaps not unusual in nineteenth century railway construction. What is remarkable is that in this case Gage survived.

The account of the accident and Gage's subsequent treatment and recovery is recorded by his doctor, Dr. John M. Harlow, in a paper given to Massachusetts Medical Society in 1868.[2] In it, Harlow recounts that while Gage seemingly recovered from his injuries, they seemed to have a lasting effect upon him. There was facial disfigurement, but more significantly, Gage's character and personality seemed to have changed. Once an efficient and capable worker, after his accident Gage was not trusted to return to his position as foreman. Harlow records Gage as now being

> fitful, irreverent, indulging at times in the grossest profanity […] manifesting but little deference for his fellows, impatient of restraint or advice when it conflicts with his desires, at times pertinaciously obstinate, yet capricious and vacillating, devising many plans of future operation which are no sooner arranged than they are abandoned […][3]

The change in Gage was so radical, that his friends and acquaintances could only conclude that he was 'no longer Gage.'

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[1] My account is taken from Harlow, J.M., 'Recovery from the passage of an iron bar through the head' in *History of Psychiatry*, 4:14 (1993), 274-281.

[2] Harlow actually first records the event in a letter to the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal in the year following the accident. See Harlow, J. M., 'Passage of an Iron Rod Through the Head' in *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal (1828-1851)*, 39:20 (1848), 20-24.

[3] Harlow, *Recovery from the passage of an iron bar through the head,* p.277.

Little is known of Gage's subsequent life. Harlow records that he travelled to South America, suffered persistent ill health and struggled to remain in any one place for an extended period of time. He died on 21st May 1861, probably as a result of an epileptic seizure, twelve years, six months and eight days after the accident. The account of Phineas Gage, however, became a seminal case within early neuroscience.[4] It was a striking example of how changes to the brain can elicit changes to the mind. Indeed, the suggestion that the two cannot be easily separated became the basis for the developing field of cognitive science.[5]

I first came across the story of Phineas Gage while researching my undergraduate dissertation as I explored what implications the link between the mind and the brain might have for the coherence of the Christian understanding of resurrection. In the subsequent years the story has stayed with me because, for all its importance within the history of the cognitive sciences, and for all that it has been drawn upon by theologians and philosophers, what seemed, to me, to be a central question within it has largely been ignored. Were Gage's friends right to say that this man was no longer the man they had known? That is, to what extent was this 'no longer Gage'? No doubt there was basic bodily continuity, but is this enough? What weight should be placed on character and temperament? For that matter, what account should be given to physical injuries? These questions, of course, speak to a broader one, what makes an individual the person she is? This, then, is a question of identity.

1.2 Questions of Identity

For all that the case of Phineas Gage indicates that the cognitive sciences may be able to offer a perspective on the question of identity, there has often been some reluctance to do so. As a case in point, consider these concluding words of Kolb:

[4] See for instance, Van Horn, John, Darrell, Irimia, Andrei, Torgerson, Carinna M., Chambers, Micah C., Kikinis, Ron and Toga, Arthur W., 'Mapping Connectivity Damage in the Case of Phineas Gage' in *PLoS one,* 7:5 (2012), 1-24, p.4.

[5] Kotowicz rejects that idea neurological changes resulted in Gage's apparent 'psychopathy', arguing instead that the they stem from social marginalisation due to his disfigurement. However, while some may interpret Gage's actions in terms of psychopathy, this is not found in Harlow's account. Indeed, Kotowicz reads as much into the case as he criticises others for so doing. Kotowicz, Zbigniew, 'The strange case of Phineas Gage' in *History of the Human Sciences*, 20:1 (2007), 115-131.

> If we accept the brain hypothesis, then how is it that billions or trillions of synapses can change throughout our lifetime yet we remain essentially the same? I leave this for the reader to contemplate.[6]

There is a similar reluctance to take account of the cognitive sciences within the philosophical tradition of 'personal identity.' Indeed, within well-trodden thought experiments, we are more likely to encounter science fiction that the insights of contemporary science.

While there are opportunities for both philosophers and scientists to make use of the cognitive sciences on the question of identity, my interest is primarily theological. It is pointedly relevant. Christians believe in a God who knows us and can be known by us. Who we are, then, is intimately tied to who we know God to be. Whatever answer we give to the question posed by Gage's friends, we must also consider the related question; was Gage a different person to God after his accident? I have explored in a previous work the importance of God's faithfulness to us in maintaining continuity of identity through resurrection.[7] But if God's faithfulness is so important, how can this be squared with apparent changes in character and temperament? What theological framework can account for this alongside accounting for the faithfulness of God?

The question of identity, framed by these questions can appear, perhaps, rather abstract. Yet, as a Christian minister, it is one I have encountered on a number of occasions. I have often reflected on the loss felt by an elderly parishioner as her daughter's dementia progressed to such a degree that she was unable to recognise her mother's face. Who were mother and daughter to one another? And who were they to God? These are very real questions and they lie behind my commitment to praxis within this study. After all, what is theology if it is not practical?[8] At the end of the study, then, I hope to drawn out practical implications, but as it shall become clear, it is not possible to separate theological questions from practical concerns in any case.

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[6] Kolb, Bryan*, Brain Plasticity and Behaviour* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), p.169.
[7] Wall, Timothy, 'Resurrection and the Natural Sciences: Some Theological Insights on Sanctification and Disability', *Science and Christian Belief*, 27 (2015), 41-58, p.53.
[8] A point well made by Swinton. Swinton, John, *Becoming Friends of Time* (London: SCM Press, 2017), p.5.

1.3 Identity Rooted in Resurrection, Anticipated Now

The thesis I will offer, then, is thoroughly theological. I will argue that an individual's identity is rooted in her resurrection. That is, I will propose that who she is in new creation is the full expression of who she is and that her identity in the present represents a proleptical participation within that. In other words, who we are now anticipates who we will be by participating within that identity, in part and to different degrees throughout our lives. The relationships which constitute our identity are, for example, present now, but find their ultimate expression and full, renewed meaning within new creation as they are incorporated within a narrative that shapes and expresses who we are, and yet is conformed to who Christ is. This is because, I shall argue, that at the heart of our identity is how God relates to us in Christ, specifically within his work of creation, redemption and new creation. It is this dynamic that means that our identity can be embodied and embedded, rooted in our bodies and the world around us, while at the same time ultimately expressed in our resurrection, because we are raised as embodied and embedded people.

The argument will proceed in three distinct stages. The first takes account of the perspective of the cognitive sciences having first briefly assessed a philosophical approach to the question. The first point is to set out a broad basis for understanding identity. I will not offer a rigorous definition of identity, but suggest a better approach is to understand it akin to a complex dynamical system, arising from the interaction between our bodies and our environmental context. Identity is, then, rooted in embodiment and embeddedness and this will be the foundation for drawing upon the cognitive sciences in two main areas: relationships and narrative. I will propose that at the heart of who we are is a number of identity-constituting relationships, which gain meaning from identity-shaping narratives that are grounded in autobiographical memory.

In the second stage of the study, these scientific perspectives are put into dialogue with a theological approach to identity. Within these three chapters, I will engage with four main dialogue partners: Alistair McFadyen, David Kelsey, Stanley Grenz and Wolfhart Pannenberg. I will focus on each one at different points within the discussion, but return to their work as the argument proceeds. The key biblical text will be Colossians 1: 15-20. I will draw upon

this to set out two points. Firstly, along with McFadyen, I will argue that the foundation of our identity is our relation to God. And secondly, I will propose that God relates to who we are through the work of Jesus in creation, redemption and new creation. I will suggest, then, that for all the importance of a trinitarian approach to theology, Christology is at the heart of our identity. The emphasis on the work of Christ in creation, allows for God to relate to us within the embodied and embedded roots of identity.

Recognising that our embodiment and embeddedness are a part of how Christ relates to creation allows for identity-constituting relationships and identity-shaping narratives to be grounded in God's relation to us. This is also a basis for how these might change, as they are caught up in Christ's work of redemption. However, to hold them aright, this should be orientated towards new creation, in which the relationships and narratives that make us who we are become recontextualised. The key aspect to my argument here is that because resurrection is the central act of new creation and is shared with Christ, it allows for the embodied and embedded roots of identity, not to be done away with, but transformed. Here, the insights of the cognitive sciences are crucial as they emphasise the physicality of embodiment and embeddedness, relationships and narrative. Indeed, a serious weakness in the eschatologies of Kelsey and Pannenberg is the lack of physicality within them. This goes along with little scope for transformation in Grenz's work. An emphasis on resurrection, on the other hand, allows for who we are to be found in new creation, without obscuring identity in the present.

The question is, then, how can identity be determined in new creation but known in the present? In the final stage of the study, I will approach this question, by taking a step back and considering dementia. I will put forward that dementia, like identity, is rooted in the dynamic interplay between our bodies and the world around us. This parallel indicates that while dementia may legitimately be thought to disrupt an individual's identity, it does not rob him of it. Ultimately his identity is found in his resurrection, but it is also known in part in the present. However, there is no clear distinction between the disruption to identity experienced by those with dementia and the changes all of us experience throughout our lives. It means that all of us experience our identity in proleptic anticipation of who we will be. This conclusion does not arise from a dialogue between theology and science alone, but

also takes account of praxis and lived experience. Theology cannot be carried out in a vacuum. Indeed, if identity is rooted in new creation, then the narratives and relationships that constitute and shape who we are, witness to our future resurrection. This is a point that has important implications for our approach to pastoral care and funerals which I will set out in the final stages of this study.

2. 'Here, There and Everywhere?' Identity Embodied and Embedded

In one of the iconic passages within *The Hobbit*, the titular character, Bilbo Baggins, has a conversation with the fearful dragon Smaug. Bilbo's use of his magic ring has made him invisible but Smaug can sense his presence and addresses Bilbo thus: 'Who are you and where do you come from, may I ask?' This is Bilbo's answer:

> I come from under the hill, and under the hills and over the hills my paths led. And through the air. I am he that walks unseen […] I am the clue-finder, the web-cutter, the stinging fly. I was chosen for the lucky number […] I am he that buries his friends alive and drowns them and draws them alive again from the water, I came from the end of a bag, but no bag went over me […] I am the friend of bears and the guest of eagles. I am Ringwinner and Luckwearer; and I am Barrel-rider.[9]

Tolkien tells us that this form of answer meets Smaug's approval and staves off his displeasure for a few more minutes at least.

It will be apparent that Bilbo structures his answer and expresses who he is in terms of his experiences and actions. Yet, at the same time, the nature of his answer also reveals something about him; his penchant for riddles. If we were to examine responses to similar questions across other popular media we would find a range of answers, anything from 'someone like you'[10] to 'Jean Valjean, 24601',[11] but it is important to note that they differ in form and structure, as much as they do in content. Identity, then, can be understood and expressed within a range of forms and structure, as well as by a variety of content.

The aim of this chapter is to assess what is the best way to approach identity in terms of its form and structure before we move on to consider what actually makes it up. During the course of this discussion, I will take identity to be *that which makes me who I am,* or indeed, *that which makes you who you are*. This definition is deliberately ambiguous. Given the range of ways in which identity and related terms are used, it is pointless to specify a particular definition and have to repeatedly assess how others have understood identity

[9] Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), p.200.
[10] *Batman Begins*, dir. Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros., 2005).
[11] *Les Misérables*, dir. Tom Hooper (Universal Pictures, 2012).

against it. It would also, somewhat, put the cart before the horse. After all, defining identity narrows down the options for discerning where identity is found and how it expresses who an individual is. That is the aim of this chapter. Indeed, as I will argue, identity is not found in a unitary entity, but arises from the dynamic interaction between our embodiment and our embeddedness. Such a description defies specific definition.

My argument in this chapter shall proceed as follows. I will first assess two traditions that present a proposal for how we can begin to envision identity: 'personal identity' and 'the self'. I will argue that both are flawed and fail to express identity in its fullness. However, the self is a potential resource if it is brought together with implicit aspects of cognition. I will then suggest that the only way to bring these together is through the embodiment of identity.

If identity is embodied, then it is also connected to the environment the body is situated within. Indeed, I shall argue that this connection is dynamic and is the foundation for a number of different aspects of identity. Finally, I will propose that identity is embedded, that is, rooted in the world around us, just as it is rooted in the body. If this is the case, it is best understood in terms of a dynamical complex system, within which identity emerges from the dynamic connection between body and world. This will have implications for the direction of the study in future chapters and at the end of the chapter I shall set out an important theological question that arises from it.

2.1 Personal Identity

2.1.1 Questions of Personal Identity

The philosophical tradition of 'personal identity' is extensive. As such, it is helpful at the onset to pause and consider what is meant by 'personal identity'. Kind proposes that there are three questions at the heart of the subject:

> The *identification question*: What properties must a being have to count as a person?
> The *reidentification question*: What makes a person the same over time?

The *characterisation question*: What makes a person the person she is?[12]

Kind also notes that there is considerable disagreement over how these questions should be properly formulated.[13] For instance, consider how Wilkes phrases the identification question as 'what it is, or what it takes, to be a person' therefore sidestepping the potentially problematic notions of 'properties' and 'being'.[14] Furthermore, she makes no mention of the characterisation question, which would surely be crucial if we are going to use the personal identity tradition as a resource to understand identity since there is significant overlap between 'what makes a person the person she is?' and 'that which makes an individual who she is'.

Partly, the disagreement stems from the attempt to distinguish three separate questions within a tradition that is not so easily disentangled.[15] Indeed, how these three questions are related is significant as it reveals two inherent weaknesses within the personal identity tradition: the possibility of non-persons and the reliance on misleading 'puzzle cases'. I shall discuss them in turn.

2.1.2 Persons and Non-Persons

It may appear to be stating the obvious to note that it is fundamental to the personal identity tradition that it is 'persons' who are under consideration. As Perry puts it, when we consider the question, we are considering our 'own concept of a person'.[16] After all, if this is not the case, then the boundary of enquiry is unclear. The implication of this is that the identification question is inherently tied to the other two. It is not possible to examine 'what makes a *person* the same over time?' or 'what makes her the *person* she is?', without considering what it is that one has to have to count as a person.

[12] Italics original. Kind, Amy, *Persons and Personal Identity,* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), p.3.
[13] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.3.
[14] Wilkes, Kathleen V., *Real People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.21.
[15] Kind does acknowledge that there is disagreement about if and how these questions are related to one another. Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.3.
[16] Perry, John, 'The Problem of Personal Identity' in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry (London: University of California Press, 1975), 3-32, p.7.

Yet, the identification question is intrinsically problematic. By its very nature it raises the possibility that some are not persons.[17] In other words, since the point of the question is to differentiate between persons and non-persons, there must be the possibility that some of whom the question is asked will be the latter. Consider, for example, the work of Singer. His definition of persons as 'rational and self-conscious beings, aware of themselves as distinct entities with a past and a future' explicitly entails that there are some humans who are not persons.[18] Another good example of this is an article by Ikäheimo and Laitinen in which they argue that the key question which distinguishes 'us' from 'everything else', is not 'are we human?' but 'are we persons?'[19] They put it that if we were to meet an alien, the defining question would not be 'are they human?' but 'are they persons?'[20] It is interesting that they invoke science fiction by way of example. This is something that I will discuss presently, but their invocation is less-than-successful in any case. After all, in most science fiction, on encountering aliens the question of personhood is not a pressing matter. For instance, within the film *Arrival* it is a central point that 'the question' when encountering aliens is not 'are you persons?' but 'what is your purpose on Earth?'[21]

Putting this example aside, it is important to note how the identification question does not just attempt to distinguish a human *as* a person (as opposed to, say, an apple Danish pastry), but that it distinguishes *between* similar beings. Indeed, given that none of us are likely to encounter aliens in the near future, it is fair to say that for the vast majority the only known persons so far are humans.[22] Thus, the point of the identification question is actually to distinguish between *humans*.

---

[17] Moran, Dermot, 'The Personal Self in the Phenomenological Tradition' in *Identity and Difference: Contemporary Debates on the Self,* ed. Rafael Winkler (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3-35, p.3-4.
[18] Singer, Peter, *Practical Ethics,* 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.110, 116-117.
[19] Ikäheimo, Heikki and Laitinen, Arto, 'Dimensions of Personhood' in *Journal of Consciousness Studies,* 14:5-6 (2007), 6-16, p.6.
[20] Ikäheimo and Laitinen, *Dimensions of Personhood*, p.9.
[21] *Arrival,* dir. Denis Villeneuve (Entertainment One, 2016). Interestingly, 'human' is one of the first words that the protagonists attempt to teach the aliens, but this is done in the sense of describing themselves and discovering what the aliens call themselves. See also the short story upon which the film is based; Chiang, Ted, 'Story of your Life' in *Stories of your Life and Others* (London: Picador, 2015), 109-173, p.124-128.
[22] The only alternative would be to consider some animals to be persons. This is argued by Singer, but is something of a minority view. Singer, *Practical Ethics,* p.110. See also Moran, *The Personal Self in the Phenomenological Tradition*, p.3–4; Wilkes, *Real People,* p.22; Quante, Michael, 'The Social Nature of Personal Identity' in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 14:5-6 (2007), 56-76, p.57.

The problem is that, given the moral standing afforded to 'persons', any such differentiation is a question of ethics as much as it is a question of metaphysics. For ultimately it is not the nature of aliens that is in question, but rather those with disabilities, those with dementia, those in a persistent vegetative state and so on. Again, Singer is a good example of someone who notoriously uses the notion of personhood to argue that the killing of a new born child has the same moral equivalence to the killing of a foetus, but does not have the same moral equivalence as killing an adult.[23] Now, on the other hand, it might be considered that by employing the notion of personhood, it is actually possible to confer dignity and worth to those in vulnerable and marginalised groups by including them as persons. However, no matter how many are included, some are always excluded because the nature of the question is to differentiate.

Any such question, then, is problematic. Indeed, returning to the example of Ikäheimo and Laitinen, it is significant that they frame the question in terms of 'us' (persons) and 'everything else' (non-persons).[24] Within these terms, it is all too tempting to associate qualities that we (or those who are like us) have, with those that are necessary for personhood and to label those who do not have these qualities as the 'other' on a par with animals, rocks and it seems, potentially, aliens. The point is not that the identification question is poorly formulated, but that it is fundamentally flawed because it inherently distinguishes between persons and non-persons, which are held in dichotomous relation to one another.

Given, as I have indicated, the identification question is at the heart of the personal identity tradition, it represents a serious weakness within that tradition.

2.1.3 Persons and Identity

Before I move on to the second weakness, there a general point to be made on the use of 'person' and 'personhood'. We will encounter the notion of personhood throughout the

[23] Singer, *Practical Ethics,* p.171.
[24] Ikäheimo and Laitinen, *Dimensions of Personhood*, p.6.

thesis as it is employed by a number of key figures, sometimes in a way that is, if not synonymous with how they understand identity, then certainly overlaps with it. Yet, however the term is applied it carries with it the implication that there are some who can be classed as non-persons.

A good example of this is Kitwood, whose work will be significant in my discussion of dementia in chapter eight. The thrust of his work is to argue for better care for those with dementia.[25] Indeed, he suggests that they are often cared for in a way that treats them as less-than-persons.[26] Yet, even with that background, rather than rejecting the notion of personhood, he conceives of it in such a way that it is still possible for some humans to lose that status.[27] This is highly problematic, for if personhood is going to be applied in any sense as to give inherent value, worth and dignity, then it cannot be understood in any way where some have that status and others do not. If it is, it is hard to see what is *inherent* about the value, worth and dignity of persons.

As we proceed, therefore, I will attempt to avoid the language of 'persons' and 'personhood' wherever possible. This will be difficult since it forms part of the natural lexicon when writing about humans. Furthermore, as I indicated, it is often employed by others when writing about identity. Thus, it will not be wholly possible to avoid these terms, especially when engaging with others. Neither is it practical or desirable to repeat the preceding point every time we encounter the terms. This discussion will have to suffice and I will refer back to it, as and when it is necessary. But for my part, I will use the language of 'an individual' and 'humans', and not 'persons', wherever possible.

Having set that out, it is now possible to move on to the second weakness of the personal identity tradition.

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[25] Kitwood, Tom, *Dementia Reconsidered* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), p.69.
[26] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.46.
[27] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.67

2.1.4 Puzzle Cases: Intuition and Science Fiction

Just as the identification question underpins the other two questions, there is also a fundamental link between the characterisation and reidentification questions. This is because if a particular set of qualities, characteristics or properties is the answer to the characterisation question, then we can define an answer to the reidentification question as being the continuity of those qualities, characteristics or properties over time. A person is the same person she is now, compared with, say, five years ago, because there is a consistent and continuous answer to what makes her the person she is over that time. Thus, the reidentification question is dependent upon the characterisation question.

But is this also the case the other way around? Is the characterisation question also dependent upon the reidentification question? If it is, then they would be two sides of the same coin. Indeed, the problem with proposing they are separable is that humans have a built-in answer to the reidentification question, that is, their bodies. An individual's body always gives continuity and consistency across time. In fact, the only way to argue that the characterisation question does not depend on the body (as the answer to the reidentification question) is to propose an answer to it that is not, in some way, embodied. The most popular approach to such an answer is to say that it is an individual's psychological make-up that makes him the person he is.[28] Psychological continuity would then answer the reidentification question.

It is, of course, perfectly possible to argue that an individual's psychological makeup is embodied, and that body and psychology go hand in hand. But for many who emphasise a psychological approach to personal identity the two are separable. The way proponents of this approach go about arguing their case, Kind notes, is often through 'puzzle-cases', that is, thought experiments that confound expectations and require us to carefully consider our

[28] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.74-5.

intuitions.[29] It is in the use of such cases, that the personal identity tradition is undermined. To demonstrate this, consider one such example set out by Williams.[30]

Suppose there was a process by which two people could be said to have 'exchanged bodies'. That is, a 'certain human body', exhibiting the characteristics, expressing the memories and engaging in the habitual the actions of person A, undergoes a process after which it now exhibits the characteristics, expresses the memories and engages in the habitual actions of person B. In the same way the characteristics, memories and actions of person A are now found in the body of person B.

Before this process is undertaken, it is revealed that one of the resultant persons will receive $100 000 and the other will be tortured. Which option, Williams asks, will A and B choose? He argues that it is reasonable to suppose that A will choose for the $100 000 to be awarded to the B-body person, (who following the process, displays A's characteristics), and the A-body person to be tortured. B, he supposes, will choose similarly, if in an opposite manner. Williams then goes on to note that we may be tempted to conclude that this indicates that the people really have swapped bodies and that 'I and my body are "really distinct"', but that is only half his case.[31]

Suppose I am the prisoner of another individual. He tells me that tomorrow I will be tortured but that, at the appointed time, I will not remember that this is my fate since, by some power, I will be made to forget what it is that she has told me. In fact, this process will strip me of all my memories and I will be given a completely new set of memories.[32] Williams then points out that none of the qualifications set out by the torturer will, in all likelihood, alleviate my fears, since I can readily conceive of forgetting the announcement

[29] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.29; 74-5.
[30] I will paraphrase the examples given by Williams. Williams, Bernard, 'The Self and the Future' in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry (London: University of California Press, 1975), 179-198, p.179.
[31] Williams, *The Self and the Future,* p.183.
[32] It is curious that Williams, here, refers only to memories as emblematic of psychological continuity, when in the first example he has spoken of utterances and movements that express memory and character. Given that he wants to establish a parallel between the two examples, it isn't clear why psychological continuity is now more limited in scope. Williams, *The Self and the Future,* p.179; 186.

and waking up as a different person, and yet still suffering torture. In actual fact, he suggests my fear would be compounded.

In this case, he concludes that the 'impressions I have about the past will not have any effect on whether I undergo the pain or not'. In other words, the psychological discontinuity does not seem to have elicited a change in person. And yet, Williams argues that this scenario is identical to the first, which suggested the opposite result. The only difference is that the circumstances are set out from only one person's perspective. If the same scenario has produced two different results, perhaps 'the whole question seems now to be totally mysterious'.[33]

Williams' essay, and the thought experiment within it, is merely one example within the tradition. However, it is an influential example, from which we can draw out a number of points that apply in this specific case, but also apply to similar puzzle cases.

The first is that while Williams is keen to highlight the homogeneous nature of the two scenarios, there are differences. For example, the second scenario is set out in the first person, adding a level of personalisation that isn't present in the first. This is, of course, Williams' point: how the puzzle is presented unduly affects our judgements.[34] Indeed, in all such thought experiences as these, the final arbiter tends to be one's own intuition.[35] They rely on intuition being a consistent, coherent and reliable measure of truth. And yet there is no basis for saying this is true. Neither is there any justification to say that my intuition will agree with yours, or anyone else's for that matter. As I will discuss later in this chapter, our perception of our own cognition may not be as straightforward as we assume. Of course, to some extent intuition is necessary in any theoretical work, but it must, as Wilkes puts it, have some 'firm backing', without which, the precariousness of the conclusions only increases.[36]

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[33] Williams, *The Self and the Future,* p.187.
[34] Williams, *The Self and the Future,* p.189; Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.75.
[35] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.113.
[36] Wilkes, *Real People,* p.15-16.

Secondly, such 'firm backing' could arise from the natural sciences, and yet a scientific perspective is regularly side-lined in favour of something more akin to science fiction. Williams' examples, for instance, both rely on 'a process' by which people exchange bodies, have their memories wiped or have others' memories transplanted into their body. Indeed, it is common to find talk of 'body transplants',[37] 'brain division',[38] 'brain uploading'[39] and 'teleportation',[40] *as if these were possible*. Given that none of this is possible within the current bounds of technology, what, then, enables such processes to give legitimacy within the argument?

For one thing, it is supposed that while these puzzle cases are speculative, their imaginative coherence makes them viable.[41] It is hard to escape the influence of science fiction on this point. It is surely no co-incidence that teleportation features in a number of thought experiments, since it also features heavily in cultural icons such as *Star Trek.*[42] Or indeed, consider how Kind draws upon Bruce Banner's transformation into the Incredible Hulk in order to demonstrate that we struggle to define the body.[43] This moves beyond science fiction towards fantasy. The point is not to relegate the insights of either genre, rather to point out that imaginative coherence is no substitute for genuine possibility.[44]

For another, it is assumed that what is impossible now will be possible in the future as technology advances. This lies behind the supposition that while teleportation is not achievable now, it is only a matter of time before it is. Indeed, referring to 'body transplants', Perry writes that 'the day when such operations can be performed may not be so far away'.[45] Yet, there is no guarantee that what is impossible now, will become possible,

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[37] Perry, *The Problem of Personal Identity*, p.4.
[38] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.58.
[39] Parfit, Derek, 'Personal Identity' in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry (London: University of California Press, 1975), 199-223, p.200-201.
[40] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.53-59.
[41] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.49-50.
[42] Interestingly, one episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, features a realised version of one of these puzzle cases where, because of a transporter malfunction, one character is replicated. *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, 'Second Chances', dir. LeVar Burton (Paramount, 1995).
[43] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.80.
[44] Indeed, Ricoeur rightly asks why more credence is given to science fiction than to, say, any other form of literary fiction in this regard. Ricoeur, Paul, 'Narrative Identity' in *Philosophy Today*, 35:1 (1991), 73-81, p.76. See also Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.44.
[45] Perry, *The Problem of Personal Identity,* p.4.

no matter how far technology advances. It is instructive to note that Kind writing in 2015 articulates exactly the same point as Perry writing in 1975 that 'the possibility is not as remote as one might think'.[46]

The upshot is that recourse to imagination and potential technological advance is not a sure foundation for the intuition that lies at the heart of many thought experiments. Indeed, my discussion of aliens in the work of Ikäheimo and Laitinen indicates that intuition can still vary. Furthermore, if an argument relies on a process that is not currently technologically possible, it may be more reasonable to assume that this indicates potential falsity rather than probable veracity.

The third point is that this issue is further exacerbated by the failure to allow for the relevant scientific accounts. Advances in the cognitive sciences are often described as indicating an 'ever tightening link' between mind and brain.[47] For all this is shorthand for a much more complex relationship between brain function, cognition and behaviour, which is the basis for cognitive neuroscience, any such relationships is conspicuously absent from Williams' examples.[48] Granted, Williams is writing over forty-five years ago, but there has been little discussion of what the cognitive sciences could contribute to their reception over that time.[49] No consideration is given to the possibility that it may not be possible to wholly separate the characteristics, memories and habitual actions of an individual from her body. It reveals an implicit dualism at the heart of many of these thought experiments. Of course, it is true that Williams' argument is actually in favour of a physical approach to personal identity. The point is that the examples he sets out are typical within the tradition; the same would be true of any such thought experiment that involves body swapping, brain transplants and the like.[50] The lack of engagement with the natural sciences severely

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[46] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.48.
[47] For example, Jeeves, Malcolm and Brown, Warren S., *Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Foundation Press, 2009), p.30.
[48] Purves, Dale, Cabeza, Roberto, Huettel, Scott A., LaBar, Kevin S., Platt, Michael L., Woldorff Marty G., *Principles of Cognitive Neuroscience* (Sunderland: Sinauer Associates, 2013), p.9.
[49] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p.78. It is also not as if questions of mutual dependency between the mind and the brain were unknown at the time of Williams. For example, see Williams, Moyra, *Brain Damage, Behaviour, and the Mind* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1979, p.1, 162-166.
[50] See for instance, Perry, *The Problem of Personal Identity,* p.4-5; Parfit, *Personal Identity*, p.200.

undermines the value of any such thought experiments, highlighting instead their potential 'self-contradictory' and 'incoherent' nature.[51]

The final point I want to draw out is the prevalence of certain unpalatable elements within the tradition. The presence of torture in Williams' examples is an extreme, if not isolated, example.[52] Of course, to some extent, thought experiments are designed to 'provoke' and Williams himself notes that he uses physical pain for simplicity's sake.[53] Yet, it does seem to indicate an inherent weakness within an argument if the conclusions can only be reached by invoking behaviour that is at best, disreputable, and at worst, evil. Indeed, if the use of puzzle cases is supposed to clarify and analyse the 'principles we confidently employ in everyday life', then why are they not rooted in 'what *can* and actually *does* happen' to 'real people'?[54]

In setting out these four points, I have endeavoured to show that the reliance on puzzle cases within the personal identity tradition, in order to consider whether the reidentification and characterisation questions are separable, is a flawed approach. Of course, the philosophical discussion of personal identity is much wider than series of questionable thought experiments. Indeed, Wilkes in setting out a firm rejection of this approach contends that her conclusions are 'more plausible because [they are] based in the real world'.[55]

However, the weaknesses I have discussed cannot be easily overlooked and they suggest that as I come to discuss identity, there may be more fruitful resources to draw upon than personal identity. One such possibility is the 'self', which is the next subject of discussion.

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[51] Perry, *The Problem of Personal Identity,* p.4.

[52] Perry, for instance, includes an example of forced 'body transplant' after which the individual is forced to act and behave in a certain way. Perry, *The Problem of Personal Identity,* p.4.

[53] Williams, *The Self and the Future,* p.188.

[54] Perry, *The Problem of Personal Identity,* p.7; Wilkes, *Real People,* p.1, 48.

[55] Wilkes, *Real People,* p.1.

2.2 The Self

2.2.1 The Reflexive Quality of the Self

The cognitive sciences rarely feature discussion of 'personal identity', instead they often favour another term. 'Self' is sometimes employed alone, as in 'the self', and sometimes found in compound formulations such as 'self-awareness' or 'self-concept'.[56] The variety of usage belies the fact that there is no universally agreed definition of the term and that it is used to refer to distinctly different phenomena. For example, it is possible to find 'self' used synonymously with 'person',[57] 'intelligence',[58] 'personality',[59] and 'mind',[60] to name but four. It is also sometimes used interchangeably alongside 'identity'.[61] Indeed, as Gallagher notes, while there has been an extraordinary amount of research featuring the self within the cognitive sciences in recent years, the results have both 'further clarified *and* complicated' the notion.[62]

The use of the self as a concept within the cognitive sciences stems from the work of James.[63] He distinguishes between the self-as-subject, that is the 'I' that expresses our self-awareness, and the self-as-object, that is, the 'me' that is known about.[64] The self is thus

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[56] Leary, Mark R. and Tangney, June Price, 'The Self as an organizing construct' in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2nd ed., ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 1-20, p.3.
[57] Moran, *The Personal Self in the Phenomenological Tradition,* p.3-4.
[58] Haugeland, John, *Having thought: essays in the metaphysics of mind* (London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.211.
[59] Mischel, Walter and Morf, Carolyn C., 'The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System' in *Handbook of Self and Identity,* ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (London: The Guilford Press, 2003), 15-47, p.19-20.
[60] Vogeley and Gallagher note how Popper and Eccles use the term within a dualistic conception of mind and body: here the self is an 'autonomous entity [which controls] brain processes.' Vogeley, Kai and Gallagher, Shaun, 'Self and the Brain' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Self,* ed. Shaun Gallagher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111-136, p.111.
[61] Oyserman, Daphna, Elmore, Kristen and Smith, George, 'Self, self concept and identity' in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2nd edn., ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 69-104, p.74-75.
[62] Italics mine. Vogeley and Gallagher, *Self and the Brain*, p.112. Oysterman, Elmore and Smith note that while the topic is interesting, the literature is often rather dull! Oyserman, Elmore and Smith, *Self, self-concept and identity*, p.70.
[63] Leary and Tangney*, The Self as an organizing construct*, p.4; James, William*, The Principles of Psychology, Vol.1,* (London: Harvard University Press, 1981), ch. X.
[64] James*, The Principles of Psychology,* p.350. Also, Leary and Tangney*, The Self as an organizing construct,* p.6.

both the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’. [65] In other words ,it expresses the capacity for self-reflection and the content of that reflection.

James in his initial introduction to the subject points out that the line between the two aspects of the self is ‘difficult to draw’.[66] However, the distinction is a helpful way of drawing together the disparate aspects of the literature on the self and discerning how other terms might be more appropriate in certain circumstances.[67] It should be noted that the relation between the two is not symmetric. After all, it is the reflexive capacity of the self-as-subject that underlies the content-driven self-as-object; it is, in other words, what makes that content possible.[68] If this is the case, then, it is not the self-as-object that draws the different manifestations of the self together, but the self-as-subject, that is, one’s reflexive capacity.

Consider the following example. One aspect of self that commonly arises within the cognitive sciences is ‘self-concept’. Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin put it that self-concept is ‘the totality of a specific person’s thoughts and feelings towards him or herself as an object of reflection’.[69] It is, if you like, everything an individual thinks and feels about herself. This places it squarely in the self-as-object side of the self, since there is content which is known (for all it is difficult to appreciate how the totality described could ever be discerned).[70] For instance, an individual thinks she is patient, so then, patience is a part of her self-concept. However, it will be apparent that there is also a reflexive aspect as it is

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[65] James*, The Principles of Psychology* p.379; Leary and Tangney*, The Self as an organizing construct*, p.3; Kihlstrom, John F., ‘What Does the Self Look Like?’ in in The Mental Representation of Trait and Autobiographical Knowledge about the Self, ed. Thomas K. Srull and Robert S. Wyer, Jr. (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1993), 79-90, p.79.
[66] James*, The Principles of Psychology,* p.279.
[67] Leary and Tangney*, The Self as an organizing construct,* p.6.
[68] Indeed, James discusses the possibility that one has no direct access to thought and self-knowledge, in which case the existence of the ‘knower’ becomes metaphysical in nature. James*, The Principles of Psychology,* p.379.
[69] Owens, Timothy J., Robinson, Dawn T. and Smith-Lovin, Lynn, ‘Three Faces of Identity’ in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36 (2010), 477-99, p.478.
[70] This is where Pfeifer, Lieberman, and Dapretto’s definition of self-concept as the capacity to be aware of oneself as a particular entity that has particular abstract qualities, falls down, since there is no content to having a capacity. A better approach would be to define self-concept as the sum total of these particular abstract qualities. Pfeifer, Jennifer H., Lieberman, Matthew D., and Dapretto, Mirella*, “*‘I Know You Are But What Am I?!’’: Neural Bases of Self- and Social Knowledge Retrieval in Children and Adults’ in *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 19:8 (2007), 1323-1337, p.1323.

framed in terms of an individual, herself, being 'an object of reflection'. It is, in this way, that the reflexive self-as-subject, underlies the self-as-object.

Is this, then, just a matter of definitions or is the nature of the self more substantive? Is it just a useful notion that organises various desperate elements of human cognition or might it provide a distinct neurophysical basis for identity? It is these questions to which I now turn.

2.2.2 Is the Self Special?

In order to discuss the question above, it is necessary to put it in slightly different terms. Gallagher defines the minimal self as 'phenomenologically […] a consciousness of oneself as an immediate subject of experience'.[71] It reflects James' notion, then, of self-as-subject. Although James emphasises the self as 'knower' and Gallagher the phenomenological experience of self, they are two sides of the same coin. The notion of the minimal self, then, should capture both and it is a more straightforward way of referring to the self-as-subject.

Within these terms the question becomes, does the minimal self represent a functionally and physically distinct cognitive system? In Gillihan and Farah's terms, is the self 'special'?[72] If it does and is, then this would explain why different aspects of the self depend on the minimal self; it is the foundation for the distinctive cognitive system which they employ. This would also explain phenomena like the 'self-reference effect' in which objects connected to the self are remembered better than those that are referenced differently.[73] This is because remembering *my* Lego set, would access a different cognitive system than remembering *your* Pokémon toy. There would be no reason they should behave equally efficiently as they are using difference cognitive systems.

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[71] Gallagher, Shaun, 'Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science' in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 4:1 (2000), 14-21, p.15.
[72] I am not convinced that 'special' is a helpful term here, but it is used widely within the literature. Gillihan, Seth J. and Farah, Martha J., 'Is Self Special? A Critical Review of Evidence From Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience' in *Psychological Bulletin*, 131:1 (2005), 76-97, p.76.
[73] Powell, Lindsey J., Macrae, C. Neil, Cloutier, Jasmin, Metcalfe, Janet, and Mitchell, Jason P., 'Dissociable Neural Substrates for Agentic versus Conceptual Representations of Self' in *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience,* 22:10 (2009), 2186-2197, p.2186.

Furthermore, a functional and physically distinct cognitive system for the minimal self would suggest that this is a possible basis for identity as it would represent a unique cognitive system that gives rise to multiple aspects of who one is. However, there are a number of difficulties in establishing such a distinct cognitive system for the self.

Firstly, there is the difficulty of relying on neuroimaging techniques to identify regions in the brain that are responsible for specific functions. Neuroimaging techniques require significant interpretation. It is certainly not as simple as identifying the regions that 'light up' when a particular action is performed.[74] Indeed, it is difficult to tell whether a particular brain activation represents cause or effect and some brain activation can actually be inhibitory in nature. As McGilchrist puts it: 'changes in novelty or complexity [of brain activity] can mask relevant structures or falsely identify irrelevant ones'.[75] It isn't, then, the case of observing which brain regions are activated when processing self-related information; evidence from the cognitive science must be taken 'in aggregate'.[76] However, this makes it very difficult to identify distinct cognitive systems.

Indeed, a second difficultly arises when we consider experimental studies of the minimal self, since they do not, very often, accurately reflect what we have understood the minimal self to be. This is set forward by Vogeley and Gallagher who note that experiments usually require the subject to reflect upon herself in some way, in order to elicit reflexive cognition.[77] However, self-reflexive tasks are not constitutive of how the self is actually underpinned by the minimal self. Consider, for instance how self-concept was described earlier as the *totality* of an individual's thoughts and feelings towards herself. This is, then, a much wider notion than being asked to process discrete self-related information. The upshot is that there is a distinct methodological difficulty in making any assessment of the minimal self.

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[74] McGilchrist, Iain, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), p.35-36; Greenfield, Susan, *You and Me: The Neuroscience of Identity* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2016), p.35.
[75] McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary*, p.35-36.
[76] Platek, Steven M., Myers, Thomas E., Critton, Samuel R., Gallup, Gordon G. Jr., 'A left-hand advantage for self-description: the impact of schizotypal personality traits' in *Schizophrenia Research,* 65 (2003), 147-151, p.147; Powell et al., *Dissociable Neural Substrates for Agentic versus Conceptual Representations of Self*, p.2186; McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary*, p.36.
[77] Vogeley and Gallagher, *Self and the Brain,* p.128-9.

These two difficulties are more than hurdles to be overcome. Gillihan and Farah conclude that there is little evidence that there is a 'distinct and unitary entity' represented by the minimal self.[78] Indeed, given that evidence must be taken in aggregate due to the brain's complex nature, then it is surely possible that the notion of physical and functionally distinct systems is fundamentally flawed.[79]

Similarly, Klein et al. question whether we are able to access 'what the self fundamentally is' (akin what we have termed the minimal self) either in practice *or in principle*.[80] Rather, they argue, a better foundation for the self is its 'direct phenomenological acquaintance' to each of us.[81] Thus, the minimal self is not found in a distinctive cognition system but when one engages in reflexive thinking, that is, the 'complex organisation and processing dynamics' through which I reflect on myself as a subject.[82] In other words, there is no basis for an abstract, minimal self, divorced from the process of reflexive cognition.

2.2.3 Holding the Self Together

In one sense, then, this discussion has not moved far beyond James' distinction between self-as-subject and self-as-object. Indeed, he was right to put it that it is hard to draw a line between the two.[83] The self should not be seen as having two separable aspects but as a 'rich psychological construction' of content-driven, reflexive cognition.[84] What draws the many disparate aspects together is the shared cognitive dynamics, not a distinct neurophysical basis.

[78] Gillihan and Farah, *Is Self Special? A Critical Review of Evidence From Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience*, p.94-5.
[79] Greenfield, *You and Me, p.*90-91, 96.
[80] Klein, Stanley B., German, Tim P., Cosmides, Leda and Gabriel, Rami, 'A Theory of Autobiographical memory: necessary components and disorders resulting from their loss' in *Social Cognition*, 22:5 (2004), 460-490, p.460-461
[81] Klein et al., *A Theory of Autobiographical memory*, p.461.
[82] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.16.
[83] James*, The Principles of Psychology,* p.279.
[84] Beer, Jennifer S., 'A Social Neuroscience Perspective on the Self' in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2nd edn., ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 638-655, p.651.

The use of terms like 'minimal self' should be questioned then, because it is easy to infer from them that the basis of the self is a distinct system, object, or entity and so running the risk of reification and dualism.[85] This is particularly so for Klein et al. who use the term 'ontological self'.[86] In either case, the foundations of the self are unjustifiably separated from the content. As we proceed, then, I will just refer to the self, recognising that within its psychological reflexive construction it holds together content and process, knower and known, subject and object.

Having arrived at a conception of the self that is able to draw together many of the disparate aspects of the self, this is a good basis for exploring how the self relates to identity. Of course, we could have hoped that a distinct basis for the minimal self would present a discrete and definable neurophysical basis for identity. This has not proved possible. However, the self as the process and content of reflexive cognition may still be a basis for identity. Indeed, it might be thought that we can equate 'self' and 'identity'. Note, for instance, how Mischel and Morf speak of the self that may 'characterise a person […] distinctively'.[87] They also note how the self is sometimes supposed to distinguish between one person and another.[88] However, this is more than can be supported by the self as I have understood it. Indeed, there are good reasons for supposing that there is much more to identity than the self.

2.3 Embodied Identity

2.3.1 Implicit Cognition

A good place to begin this section is a famous study conducted by Libet and his team in 1983. In it, the researchers instructed participants to press a button at will, while electroencephalograph electrodes recorded cerebral activity. The study found that cerebral

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[85] Sturma, Dieter, 'Person as Subject' in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 14:5-6 (2007), 77-100, p.97-98.
[86] Klein et al., *A Theory of Autobiographical memory*, p.460-461
[87] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.16.
[88] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.19-20.

activity (readiness potential for movement) preceded the point when participants consciously decided to act. As Libet et al. put it

> cerebral initiation of a spontaneous, freely voluntary act can begin unconsciously, that is, before there is any (at least recallable) subjective awareness that a 'decision' to act has already been initiated cerebrally.[89]

In other words, conscious awareness of a decision was found to come after the brain activity that would correspond to a free, voluntary, motor act, was detected.[90] Or to put it another way, subjects decided to press a button before they were consciously aware they had made the decision.[91]

While this experiment was ground-breaking, it was limited. Indeed, it isn't readily apparent how the cognition involved in pressing a button has any relevance for the self or identity. Yet recall that I have proposed that the self should be understood as the process and content of reflexive cognition. This implies that an individual has a conscious awareness of the self, and yet, Libet et al.'s study demonstrates that there are elements of cognition that are outside of conscious awareness. I will refer to these elements as 'implicit cognition' and to those that are perceived within conscious thought as 'explicit cognition'.[92] With this in place, we can turn to further examine how implicit cognition is related to the self through three examples.

The first example is the so-called 'halo effect'. This is a well-documented phenomenon in which a novel attribute (say, intelligence) is influenced by an already known, yet irrelevant, attribute (say, physical attractiveness).[93] In this case one is more likely to judge someone intelligent if one perceives them to be attractive. The crucial factor is that the subject does

[89] Libet, Benjamin, Gleason, Curtis A., Wright, Elwood W. and Pearl, Dennis K., 'Time of conscious intention to act in relation to onset of cerebral activity (readiness-potential)' in *Brain*, 106 (1983), 623-642, p.623.

[90] Greenfield, *You and Me,* p.75.

[91] It is crucial that the 'readiness potential' is the cerebral activity that precedes a free, voluntary and endogenous act. In other words, it is specifically linked to the motor action. It cannot, then, be ascribed to some aspect of the decision-making process. In fact, spelling out how the brain state relates to the state of the conscious mind is not necessary: the point is simply that the subject has begun the process of the motor act before he is aware of it.

[92] This avoids using 'unconscious' or 'subconscious' as the appropriate antonym for 'conscious', which otherwise would create confusion, given the range of meanings those terms carry.

[93] Greenwald, Anthony G. and Banaji, Mahzarin R.*,* 'Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes' in *Psychological Review*, 201:1 (1995), 4-27, p.9.

not identify physical attractiveness as the reason behind their judgement.[94] The reasoning is thus implicit.

The second example involves two groups: one that exhibited explicit intergroup hostility and another that considered such hostility to be unacceptable. A study found that while there was a clear difference explicitly, implicit measures detected a similar degree of linguistic intergroup bias in both groups.[95] Here, the behaviour of the second groups stems from implicit sources, because explicitly they disavow such an attitude.[96]

Finally, in a remarkable study, Pelham, Mirenberg and Jones presented evidence that people are disproportionally likely to live in places or choose careers that resemble their first names.[97] They termed this 'implicit egotism'. For instance, they found that people called Denis or Denise are more likely to be dentists (as compared to those with any other first name) and those called Paul or Paula are more likely to live in St. Paul, Minnesota. They concluded that one's self-concept can influence behaviour in ways that are unrecognised and implicit.[98] No doubt, the effect is small and their thesis has proved controversial.[99] However, it is the significance of this 'implicit egotism' which is disputed, not the phenomenon itself: automatic associations about oneself can influence feelings about anything associated with the self even if there are outside of conscious perception.[100]

In these three examples, implicit cognition affects behaviour, attitudes and explicit aspects of cognition. Indeed, implicit cognition seems to relate to the self in a way that may not only

[94] Greenwald and Banaji*, Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotype,* p.9.
[95] Franco, Francesca M. and Maass, Anne, 'Implicit Versus Explicit Strategies of Out-Group Discrimination' in *Journal of Language and Social Psychology,* 15:3 (1996), 335-359, p.354.
[96] Of course, this depends on a level of veracity from participants in their explicit views.
[97] Pelham, Brett W., Mirenberg, Matthew C., and Jones, John T., 'Why Susie Sells Seashells by the Seashore: Implicit Egotism and Major Life Decisions' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82:4 (2002), 469-487*,* p.470.
[98] Pelham, Mirenberg, and Jones, *Why Susie Sells Seashells by the Seashore*, p.484.
[99] Gallucci is firm in his rebuttal, while Pelham et al. in turn argue the original thesis is a significant understatement of the case. Gallucci, Marcello*, '*I Sell Seashells by the Seashore and My Name Is Jack: Comment on Pelham, Mirenberg, and Jones' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85:5 (2003), 789-799, p.798; Pelham, Brett W., Carvallo, Mauricio, DeHart, Tracy and Jones, John T., 'Assessing the Validity of Implicit Egotism: A Reply to Gallucci' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 85:5 (2003), 800–807, p.800.
[100] Pelham, Mirenberg and Jones, *Why Susie Sells Seashells by the Seashore*, p.470.

have an effect on my identity (where I live, what job I have etc.) but also on how I understand to have become who I am (*why* I decided to move to Timbuktu and work in the Timber industry). It isn't necessary to argue for an explicit and implicit self, as this would begin to unpick the reflexive nature of the self, the content of which should be accessible to me by definition.[101] Rather, it is better to put it that the self is just one aspect of an individual's identity, which includes both implicit and explicit cognition. Indeed, these are not separable categories, but dynamically related.

2.3.2 Dualism and the Whole Body

The idea that there are aspects of our identity that are hidden and unknown to us might be considered a source of potential concern. After all, it suggests possible fragmentation of, or at least confusion about, who we are. We might ask, for instance, with regard to Libet et al.'s study, who did decide to press the button? It seems from their conclusion that the subject's implicit cognition decided for her, but is that a legitimate answer?

This is the concern that lies behind an argument put forward by Mudrik and Maoz; that there is a hidden dualism within some of the cognitive sciences. Consider, for example, how Gazzaniga characterises this issue. He puts it that Libet et al.'s work implies that 'the brain knows our decisions before we do'.[102] Mudrik and Maoz argue that this is characteristic of a trend in which explicit cognition is attributed to 'me' and implicit cognition is attributed to the brain.[103] Thus, while implicit cognition is recognised as being embodied, explicit cognition ('me' in these cases) is detached from any embodied cognitive moorings. A dualism is thereby present between the two.

However, if we recognise that both implicit and explicit cognition are embodied, then a solution becomes evident; the subject decided to press the button, he just was not aware of

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[101] Devos, Thierry and Banaji, Mahzarin R., 'Implicit Self and Identity' in *Handbook of Self and Identity,* ed. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (London: The Guilford Press, 2003), 153-178, p.170.
[102] Mudrik, Liad and Maoz, Uri, '"Me & My Brain": Exposing Neuroscience's Closet Dualism' in *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 27:2 (2014), 211–221, p.212; Gazzaniga, Michael S., *The Mind's past (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p.145.
[103] Mudrik and Maoz, *Me & My Brain*, p.213.

it at the time. Implicit cognition, here, simply precedes explicit awareness of it; both are equally attributable to 'him' it is just that 'he' is comprised of more than his explicit cognition. There is, then, no warrant for detaching the brain from 'our decisions'.[104]

This approach suggests that identity, including both implicit and explicit cognition, is itself embodied. By this, I am not merely referring to embodiment in cognitive processes in the brain, for as Haugeland rightly notes, there is no 'conversion point' between body and brain where the bodily can be converted into the cognitive.[105] The body is a unified, interdependent system. Therefore, if identity is embodied, it is embodied by the whole body.[106]

2.3.3 Embodied Identity

This whole-body approach to embodiment is important for Gallagher's thesis. He argues that the nature and action of the body is foundational for the self, and by extension, our identity. To demonstrate this, he sets out two ways in which we conceive of our bodies. The first – body image – is explicit; a system of perceptions, beliefs and dispositions about one's own body. The second – body schema – is implicit; a system of sensory-motor processes that constantly regulate posture and movement.[107] He then goes on to highlight some of the ways in which body schema is dynamically related to body image.

In one example, he highlights how body image demonstrates plasticity, that is, how it is not fixed but can, say, be extended to include items such as prosthetic limbs and wheelchairs.[108] Gallagher puts it that 'plastic changes in the body image may be generated through the operations of the body schema'.[109] This is because the body schema has to naturally incorporate other elements (say, a partner when dancing) in order to regulate movement,

[104] Mudrik and Maoz, *Me & My Brain,* p.212.
[105] Haugeland, *Having thought: essays in the metaphysics of mind*, p.227-8
[106] As way of an example that will be relevant to later chapters, we might note how disfunction in organs such as the lungs, kidneys or liver is linked to neurodegeneration. Taylor, Kathleen, *Dementia: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p.40.
[107] Gallagher, Shaun, *How the body shapes the mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p.37.
[108] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.37. See also Eiesland, Nancy L., *The Disabled God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p.38.
[109] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.37.

whereas body image is differentiated from the environment. A study that affirmed this characteristic of the body schema was carried out by Berlucchi and Aglioti. They noted that neurons in the brain of monkeys reacted similarly to tool usage as they did to body usage. More specifically, the correlation occurred when the tool was in use. The researchers, thus, argued that it implied the body schema in the brain was temporary extended to include these tools.[110] Thus, the plasticity of body image can occur through physical action, via the body schema.

Now, this thesis can be taken further. Gallagher, for instance, goes on to propose that there is an 'innate system of embodiment' that underlies the development of the self from birth.[111] Chermero in setting forward his proposal for 'radical embodied cognitive science' argues that all cognition should be located in bodily action in the world, rather than mental representation.[112] Neither proposal is wholly successful. Indeed, Chermero admits that in order to succeed, his argument requires some 'ontological funny business' whereby a more-than-physical environment carries inherent potential meaning within it.[113] Similarly, although perhaps, more plausibly, Gallagher relies on the notion of an implicit, innate 'proprioceptive self', which rather runs the risk of recasting the idea of a special, distinct core to the self, which I rejected earlier.[114]

Rather than proposing an innate sense of self or rejecting explicit cognition, a better approach is to recognise that identity is embodied, through the interaction of implicit and explicit cognition, both of which dynamically interact with and depend upon the physicality of the body. However, this is not to say that identity is wholly rooted in the body, for if the boundary between brain and body can be overcome, perhaps the boundary between body and world can also fall? In my final two sections, I will argue that it can and that identity is not just embodied, it is embedded in the world.

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[110] Berlucchi, Giovanni and Aglioti, Salvatore, 'The body in the brain: neural bases of corporeal awareness' in *Trends in Neuroscience,* 20:12 (1997), 560-564, p.561.
[111] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.84.
[112] Chemero, Anthony, *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science* (London: MIT Press, 2009), p.135.
[113] Chemero, *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science,* p.160.
[114] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.83. This is typical of Gallagher's thinking, in that in another piece, he and Vogeley argue that the minimal self is a 'prereflective phenomenon'. This is not how I have understood the self, but also indicates that there is, for them, a distinct system or identity underlying the self. See Vogeley and Gallagher, *Self and the Brain*, p.118.

2.4 Blurring the Boundary: The Dynamic Connection between Identity and the World

2.4.1 Identity in the World and Vice Versa

Consider the following scenario. I believe myself to be a patient person. Patience, then, is part of my self-concept. And yet, unbeknown to me, I am not patient at all. My impatience is, therefore, undergirded by implicit cognition (I am not aware of it) and is also part of my identity. Again, this demonstrates that the self cannot be wholly constitutive of my identity. However, it also poses the question, is it possible to discern implicit aspects of identity or are they inherently unknowable?

In order to answer this, we can bring together some of the material that I have explored already. Recall I argued that implicit cognition affected behaviour, action and attitudes. It was through this that I suggested that I might expect to meet a disproportionate number of people also called Tim in Timbuktu. Putting this together indicates that, for all implicit aspects of identity may appear hidden, they are actually manifested in the world through how an individual interacts with it. To put it another way, who we are is 'projected' onto the world through what we do.

This does not mean that one can simply move straightforwardly from action and behaviour to implicit cognition, since explicit cognition also influences our interaction with the world. I may have very good, articulated reasons for moving to Timbuktu other than my name, for all that it may have implicitly influenced my decision. Action, behaviour and attitudes, that is, our interaction with the world, represent, then, an interaction of explicit and implicit cognition. The implication of this is that identity is not just manifested in the world, but affects the world, sometimes in ways that are straightforward, and sometimes in ways that are more difficult to discern.

If our identity can affect the outside world, can we then say that the opposite is true? Can the world affect our identity? A proposal by Kihlstrom suggests that it can. He proposes that rather than conceptualising the self in singular or uniform terms, we should recognise that

‘there may be a whole host of selves’.[115] Now, it is important to be clear about what he means by this. I have argued that the self is brought together through reflexive cognition, however this does not mean that the content of that cognition should be monolithic. We might imagine, for instance, that I have a different self-concept at work, than at home, or more accurately a different active subset of my self-concept at work than I do at home. Indeed, Kihlstrom puts it that the self exhibits ‘cross-situational flexibly’ manifested in how behaviour varies markedly from situation to situation.[116] In other words, the different aspects of the self, reflect different situational contexts.

Another example of this effect is presented by Park and Kitayama. They studied how social self-esteem decreases following social rejection or negative evaluation (‘social evaluative threat’) and found there were ‘sizable cultural differences in brain responses’ between Asian- and European-Americans.[117] They concluded that the more interdependent Asian-American culture leads to a greater decline in social self-esteem when socially rejected.[118] Again here, an aspect of identity (in this case, self-esteem) is influenced by the outside world (here, the cultural context).

The conclusion we can draw from this is that the outside world – we might say, one’s environmental context – can affect identity. Just as our identity can have an effect on the world around us. Because this connection is two-way, it means that it is dynamic in form, that is, it changes over time as identity and world mutually affect one another, which in turn changes the character of the connection and the nature of future interaction. [119]

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[115] Kihlstrom, *What Does the Self Look Like?*, p.85.
[116] Kihlstrom, *What Does the Self Look Like?*, p.85.
[117] Park, Jiyoung and Kitayama, Shinobu, ‘Interdependent selves show face-induced facilitation of error processing: cultural neuroscience of self-threat’ in *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience,* 9 (2014), 201-208, p.208.
[118] Park and Kitayama, *Interdependent selves,* p.201. See also the work of Hughes and Beer who found that their participants, when faced with social-evaluative threat, were more likely to inflate their own desirability or evaluative themselves in especially flattering ways. Hughes, Brent L. and Beer, Jennifer S., ‘Protecting the Self: The Effect of Social-evaluative Threat on Neural Representations of Self’ in *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 25:4 (2013), 613-622, p.613.
[119] Kitayama and Park actually propose that this means that implicit psychological and neural tendencies should be viewed as ‘covert’ elements of culture, since they shape culture, and in turn, are shaped by culture. Park, Jiyoung and Kitayama, Shinobu, ‘Cultural neuroscience of the self: understanding the social grounding of the brain’ in *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 5 (2010), 111-129, p.121.

2.4.2 The Body in the World

We should not, perhaps, be all that surprised that an individual's identity is dynamically connected to her environmental context. After all, it is a well-attested view that the self emerges and develops as a psychological system of reflexive cognition through interaction with others.[120] In a similar vein, Gallagher puts it that whether we agreed or not with his proposal for a primary proprioceptive self (which I did not), the self still emerges in and through bodily interaction with others.[121] Indeed, his emphasis on the physical body attests that this dynamic connection does not just apply to the self and interpersonal interactions, but to our whole environmental context.

This is a helpful perspective on the dynamic connection between identity and environment, for it suggests that the connection is intrinsic to identity. It does, after all, shape a central aspect of identity; the self. Additionally, it is a reminder that the connection should not just be viewed in abstract or psychological terms, but is rooted in physical interaction. Indeed, I suggest that the dynamic connection between who we are and the world around us, actually follows from the embodiment of identity, since bodies are dynamically connected to their environmental context through perception, sense, action and response.[122] We might think here, for example, of how the brain exhibits 'plasticity,' that is, a potential for structural and functional changes in response to 'learning and experiences'.[123] Therefore, if identity is embodied, it cannot be separated from the dynamic interaction between body and world, indeed, it is caught up within it. As Dawson puts it, to be embodied is to be 'immersed in […] degrees of feedback'.[124]

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[120] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System,* p.16, 23; Decety, Jean and Chaminade, Thierry, 'When the self represents the other' in *Consciousness and Cognition*, 12 (2003), 577-596, p.577.
[121] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.79.
[122] Dawson, Michael, 'Embedded and Situated Cognition' in *The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 59-67, p.61. McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary*, p.7.
[123] Gutchess, Angela, 'Plasticity of the aging brain: New directions in cognitive neuroscience' in *Science*, 346:6209, 579-582, p.579.
[124] Dawson, *Embedded and Situated*, p.61.

It is therefore, impossible to agree with Greenfield when she puts it that there is

> a mental firewall separating my brain and body from yours and indeed from the rest of the outside world.[125]

Rather, the boundary between me (not 'my brain and body'), you and the rest of the outside world is much fuzzier; it is intersected by multiple points of connection and feedback, action and effect. There is certainly no firewall, just as we are not distinct from our environmental context, but dynamically situated within it.

2.4.3 Identity in between Body and World

I began this section by asking how implicit aspects of identity, such as my unacknowledged impatience, could be discerned. I argued that this was possible by considering how my impatience is manifested in my actions, behaviour and attitude. What has become clear, however, is that the outside world is not merely a way of discerning my identity, but actually contributes to who I am. This indicates how we might approach a further question. For if I believe myself to be patient and yet, in actual fact, am impatient, then my identity does not just include my false belief and its truthful counterpart, but also the fact that I have a mistaken impression of my own level of patience. How might this by included in my identity?

At first, this question seems difficult since it is found in neither implicit or explicit cognition, but a comparison between the two. Indeed, relying on embodied identity alone is insufficient. However, by taking account of the dynamic connection between my embodied identity and the world around me, it begins to be possible to see how this might be included. After all, my assumed patience and actual impatience have an effect in the world. This, then, is reflected back to me in my experience of the world and of others, which in turn has an impact upon implicit and explicit aspects of my cognition. Identity is, then, embodied and dynamically connected to the world and yet, it also suggests that there is an aspect of who I am that is not found in either my embodiment or how my body is connected to my environment. This brings us to the next section of the chapter.

[125] Greenfield, *You and Me*, p.73.

2.5 The Extended Mind

2.5.1 Active Externalism

So far, I have argued that identity is embodied but dynamically related to one's contextual environment. Cognition, in particular, whether it is explicit or implicit is manifested in the world through behaviour, actions and attitudes, and in turn is affected by our experience and perception of the world. But what if there was more to this connection that just dynamic action and feedback? This is the suggestion made by Clark and Chalmers in their influential article, 'The Extended Mind' and it merits a detailed discussion.[126]

In Clark and Chalmers' piece, they begin by noting how humans 'lean heavily on environmental supports' within cognition, while at the same time they still consider the process as a whole to be cognitive.[127] Consider, for instance, the use of pen and paper when performing a complex mathematical problem. We would still naturally ascribe the completion of the task to our own thinking, and yet the physical media of pen and paper has augmented that cognition by, among other things, enabling us to write down figures we cannot reliably hold in our memory whilst attending to the remainder of the problem. They term this 'epistemic action', that is, an action that aids and augments cognitive processes.

Clark and Chalmers take this one step further by arguing that physical media can actually comprise elements of the cognitive process. Consider the game of Scrabble. In the course of play, whilst assessing her next move, it is quite natural for a player to manipulate her seven tiles in order to find a combination that is most suited to the board (this is exactly how I play). Clark and Chalmers point out that this physical action and the manipulation of the tiles does not just represent a physical manifestation of the player's cognitive processes, because she is not actively choosing how to move the tiles.[128] Rather, they argue, this physical action is an element of *how* she is thinking about the task. That is, an aspect of cognition has been 'delegated' to the physical medium of the tiles and the player's

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[126] Clark, Andy and Chalmers, David, 'The extended mind' in *Analysis*, 58:1 (1998), 7-19.
[127] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.8.
[128] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.8.

rearrangement of then. This is what they term ‘active externalism’, the idea that there are external features of the environment that are not just affected by, and affecting of, cognition, but actively ‘in the loop’ of cognitive processing.[129]

Active externalism, then, represents a step beyond the argument so far (that cognition is dynamically related to the environment). Menary puts it well:

> It is not simply that the external features, to which the organism is interactively linked, have a causal influence on the cognitive processing of the organism; rather, the interactive link *is* the cognitive processing.[130]

Active externalism, then, suggests that there are ‘coupled systems’, cognitive systems in their own right that link an individual with an external aspect of the environment.[131] Again, while this goes beyond what I have argued so far, it does align with what I have presented. Recall, for instance, how the body schema could accommodate elements of the environment that were coupled with the body, such as a tool or a dance partner. Indeed, it suggests that the boundary between me and you, and between an individual and her environment, is not just fuzzy, but mutable, or as Clark puts it, ‘plastic’.[132] However, before I assess the contribution of active externalism to identity any further, there is a final step in Clark and Chalmers’ thesis we must consider.

2.5.2 The Extended Mind

The final step of Clark and Chalmers’ argument is the extended mind thesis. It is possible, they argue, for elements of an individual’s environment to not just potentially augment or be engaged within his cognition, but to actually form aspects of cognition such that his beliefs can be ‘partly constituted by features of the environment’.[133] If this is the case, they put it that ‘the mind extends into the world’. The difference between active externalism and the extended mind, is that with the former, cognition is still rooted in the brain, whereas the extended mind roots cognition in the brain *and* the world.

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[129] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.9.
[130] My italics. Menary, Richard, ‘Introduction: The Extended Mind in Focus’ in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 1-26, p.2.
[131] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.8-9.
[132] Clark, Andy, *Being There* (London: MIT Press, 1997), p.213-4.
[133] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.12.

The worked example that Clark and Chalmers offer is commonly referred to by other authors, so it is worth briefly setting it out.[134] We are asked to consider Otto who has Alzheimer's disease. This has affected his memory so he carries with him a notebook in which he writes down important information. On a particular day he hears there is an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and decides he would like to go to it. In order to do so, he must consult his notebook, which says that the museum is located on 53rd Street. He then walks to the museum and attends the exhibition.

So far, this example may seem pretty reasonable if unremarkable. However, Clark and Chalmers then note that the notebook is playing 'the role usually played by biological memory', in fact, they claim that there is a functional equivalence between the two within cognition.[135] It is legitimate, they propose, to claim that Otto believed the museum was on 53rd Street *before he consulted the notebook* in just the same way as he would have done if the information was retrieved from his biological memory. Thus, they conclude, 'beliefs can be constituted partly by features of the environment' such that 'the mind extends into the world'.[136]

Clark and Chalmers admit that their view is 'unpalatable' for some and I shall discuss some of the difficulties presently.[137] First it is worth noting the effects of their argument on self and identity. Clark and Chalmers argue that if the mind is extended in the way they have described, then this implies that the self is also extended.[138] The reason they give for this is that credit for accomplishing a particular cognitive task should be given to the whole system, not merely the biological elements.[139] In their example, the cognitive system is Otto's biology plus the notebook, which together are responsible for Otto's (note, not 'Otto plus his notebook') belief concerning where the museum is located. Otto's cognition, then,

[134] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.12-13.
[135] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.13; Clark, Andy, 'Memento's Revenge' in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 43-66, p.52.
[136] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.12.
[137] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.10.
[138] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.18.
[139] This is so-called 'epistemic credit.' Preston, John, 'The Extended Mind, the Concept of Belief, and Epistemic Credit' in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 355-369, p.366.

which may include reflexive thinking, is spread out into the world, by which the possibility for the extended self is established.

Indeed, if this is the case, then it indicates that it is not just our identity that is extended beyond our bodies, but humans themselves are 'agents spread into the world'.[140] In other words, this is no longer a claim merely about self, cognition or identity, but about the metaphysical nature of humanity (or, indeed, of similar such 'agents').

2.5.3 Assessing the Extended Mind Hypothesis

One of the firmest rebuttals of Clark and Chalmers is put forward by Adams and Aizawa in several pieces.[141] A central problem they identify within the extended mind thesis is what they term, the 'coupling constitution fallacy', that is, the erroneous idea that just because X and Y are connected, this implies that X is a part of Y (or vice versa).[142] In other words, just because Otto's notebook is connected to his cognitive process, does not mean that it actually constitutes part of it. The problem with this critique is that it misunderstands Clark and Chalmers' point, since they are not arguing that the notebook is causally part of the biological cognitive system at all, but that biology and notebook form a cognitive system together.[143]

A more substantive difficulty with Clark and Chalmers' approach, is one that is actually shared with Adams and Aizawa. Significant space is given by both parties to the criteria for inclusion of nonbiological candidates within a cognitive system.[144] As Adams and Aizawa put it, 'we thought that the principal weakness in extracranialist[145] theories of tool use was inadequate attention to the mark of the cognitive'.[146] The problem with this is that their discussion is soon characterised by attempts to discern if an object can be 'cognitive' or not,

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[140] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.18.
[141] See amongst others, Adams, Fred and Aizawa, Ken, 'Defending the Bounds of Cognition' in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 67-80; Aizawa, Ken, 'Extended Cognition' in *The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 31-38.
[142] Adams and Aizawa, *Defending the Bounds of Cognition,* p.67-68; Aizawa*, Extended Cognition,* p.35.
[143] Menary, *Introduction: The Extended Mind in Focus,* p.3-4.
[144] Clark, *Memento's Revenge,* p.46.
[145] This is Adams and Aizawa's term for the extended mind hypothesis.
[146] Adams and Aizawa, *Defending the Bounds of Cognition,* p.78.

as if cognition is the only aspect of human being that has significance and with only vague notions of cognition applied.[147]

This approach leads to two related issues. The first is that it creates something of a paradox within Clark and Chalmers' work. Responding to Adams and Aizawa, Clark sets out his criteria for a non-biological object's inclusion within a cognitive system.[148] Cognition, he argues, can only include aspects of the outside world in certain specifiable cases. Indeed, he makes it clear that the mind cannot be extended 'willy-nilly', only in special cases.[149] Yet this is hard to reconcile with the rhetoric of being 'agents spread into the world' and the idea that the 'the bounds of skin and skull are rendered functionally irrelevant' as 'cognition extends gracefully into the world'.[150] This is not just a matter of style, but a substantive issue, because it is unclear whether we should infer that the self can be extended into the world in a number of distinct and different ways, or if it is limited to specific objects and instances.

The second issue is that by employing specific criteria, Clark sets up a binary system which is hard to reconcile with the world as we experience it.[151] This is because, according to Clark, a feature of the environment is either cognitive or not, but the criteria he outlines are not specific enough to affect such a system. Consider, for example, that the potential cognitive resource has to be 'readily available and typically invoked'.[152] Yet, how are we to understand what is 'readily available'? Is Otto's notebook readily available if it is in his pocket? His rucksack? Kept in a drawer at home? And so on. Again, it is not clear.

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[147] Menary, Richard, 'Cognitive Integration and the Extended Mind' in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 227-243, p.229-230. See also Adams and Aizawa, *Defending the Bounds of Cognition*, p.68-69.
[148] Clark, *Memento's Revenge,* p.46.
[149] Clark, *Being There,* p.217.
[150] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.18; Clark, Andy, 'Coupling, Constitution, and the Cognitive Kind: A Reply to Adams and Aizawa' in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 81-99, p.97.
[151] Clark, *Memento's Revenge,* p.46.
[152] The other two criteria are that retrieved information is automatically endorsed (in other words, it is as trustworthy as biological memory) and that the information contained is easily accessible when required. Clark, *Memento's Revenge,* p.46.

This point may appear pedantic. Indeed, it could be argued that the criteria are not overly prescriptive because they are subjectively defined in each and every context. A notebook in a rucksack might be readily available for me, but not for you. But that is the point. The environmental contexts within which humans are situated, and the connections between human and environment, are too complex and too dynamic to be captured by three criteria that are that are far too generic to offer any real explanatory value.[153]

While both of these issues stem ostensibly from an approach that focuses on discerning a 'mark of the cognitive' they can, in fact, be traced back to the difference between the two aspects of Clark and Chalmers' thesis, that is, between active externalism and the extended mind.

The notion that humans manipulate their environment in order to facilitate and augment cognition, in some respects, follows from embodiment.[154] Indeed, it isn't a great leap from saying that cognition is dynamically connected to the environment, to proposing that aspects of the environment can be integrated within the cognitive process, just as bodily action is. As Menary points out, these are two sides of the same coin.[155] Active externalism, then, is easily integrated into a view of the world that is complex and dynamic, because there is no prescribed form for how cognition might be augmented.

In contrast, because extended cognition is rooted in the body *and* a feature of the outside world, it is difficult to integrate this into a complex and dynamic understanding of the world, since it requires a limited, binary set of criteria (after all, cognition cannot only half be rooted in a notebook). Indeed, Clark and Chalmers begin to argue that to interfere with an individual's environment, 'will have the same moral significance as interfering with their person'.[156] If this is the case, then it is clear why they require a definitive, binary determination of whether the mind or self can be extended to an aspect of the outside

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[153] Ross, Don and Ladyman, James, 'The Alleged Coupling-Constitution Fallacy and the Mature Sciences' in *The Extended Mind,* ed. Richard Menary (London: MIT Press, 2010), 155-166, p.160.
[154] Menary, *Cognitive Integration and the Extended Mind*, p.228, 231.
[155] Menary, *Cognitive Integration and the Extended Mind,* p.231.
[156] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.18.

world. Thus, it is not surprising that the extended mind thesis fails to capture the 'intimate, complex, continued interplay of brain, body and world'.[157]

Putting this together, it is clear that the active externalism element of Clark and Chalmers' argument is more successful than the extended mind thesis. However, it is not the case that we should wholly accept one and reject the other. For Clark and Chalmers' active externalism involves a specific 'coupled system' between an individual and an external entity.[158] Again, this seems overly prescriptive. Indeed, it isn't clear if this implies a permanent coupling or if cognition can still be facilitated to some extent even if the coupling is only in part.[159] A better approach would be to recognise that elements of an individual's contextual environment can facilitate and augment her cognition in different ways, at different times, and to different extents, depending the nature of her interaction with the world.[160] Similarly, it is possible to imagine how there are aspects of an individual's environmental context, that are so habitually integrated within their cognition, that they, in effect, root that cognition, whether that be memory, belief, perception or reasoning. There is no need for specific criteria, since this does not occur in abstraction from the embodied individual's cognition, or indeed, their action, but through it.[161] The implication of this is that although cognition could be rooted in one's contextual environment its primary foundation is still the body.

2.6 Embedded Identity and Complex Dynamical Systems

2.6.1 Embedded Identity

It is worth pausing at this point and recapping the preceding discussion. I have discussed Clark and Chalmers' thesis that the mind could be extended into the world and I proposed

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[157] It is, perhaps, significant that Clark distinguishes between brain and body, which I have argued is not warranted. Clark, *Being There*, p.216.
[158] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.8-9.
[159] Menary notes how difficult it is to give actual examples of couple systems. This is, again, a problem if we are going to study cognition 'in the wild.' Menary, *Introduction: The Extended Mind in Focus,* p.4.
[160] This approach is similar to Menary's integrationist approach and reflects how internal cognitive systems operate in a co-ordinated fashion, drawing upon different system resources at different times. Menary, *Cognitive Integration and the Extended Mind*, p.228, 231, 236-7.
[161] Menary, *Cognitive Integration and the Extended Mind,* p.236-78.

that this was less successful than the approach of active externalism. The upshot was that we should conceive of cognition as facilitated and augmented by features of one's environment in such a way as to root cognition in the environment and the body. We might say from that, then, that cognition is 'embedded', that is, rooted in an individual's environmental context, but that this goes hand-in-hand with its embodiment.[162]

How, then, might this relate to our main discussion of identity? For Clark and Chalmers, the relation is straightforward, for the extension of mind implies an extension of self. As they put it

> Most of us already accept that the self outstrips the boundaries of consciousness; my dispositional beliefs […] constitute in some deep sense part of who I am. If so, then these boundaries may also fall beyond the skin.[163]

As I noted earlier, there is a metaphysical aspect to their argument, but the point holds as far as identity is concerned. However, as the discussion above indicated, extending the self to include entities 'beyond the skin', without accounting for the nature of embedded cognition fails to account for the dynamic nature of the world or give sufficient emphasis to embodiment. The flaws in their thesis are the same as I explored above, because the extended self is predicated on the extended mind.

However, my preceding discussion does indicate that it is possible to conceive of identity being embedded. This was true, I argued, for cognition, and while cognition is not the same as identity, it is an important aspect of it. Indeed, this proposal also accords with how I have understood identity to be embodied and dynamically connected to the world. After all, embeddedness is predicated on embodiment, since it is the body that is immersed in the world and the dynamic connection expressed through embeddedness, expresses the dynamic connection between body and world. The difference of now proposing that identity is embedded, is that it implies that the connection between the body and its environmental context is rooted not just in the body, but in both the body and the environment. To put it another way, identity is not just expressed in action, but in reaction as well.

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[162] Robbins, Philip and Aydede, Murat, 'A short primer on situated cognition' in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situation Cognition,* ed. Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3-10, p.3, 7.
[163] Clark and Chalmers, *The extended mind,* p.18.

Identity, then, is both embodied and embedded. It is rooted in the body and in aspects of an individual's contextual environment. However, just like embedded cognition, to say that an aspect of the environment roots an individual's identity, is not to give special credit to that object or entity, but to recognise that it expresses something of her identity if it is habitually caught up in the dynamical connection between body and world. This indicates two things. Firstly, that the body is foundational over and above any particular aspect of the environment, since it necessarily roots who we are. This means that identity has the potential to be thoroughly context dependent, yet also consistent, as the body engages different contexts in different ways, at different times. And secondly, that identity is not expressed in either body or environment alone, but in the system that connects them.

If this is the case, the way we conceive of identity should, perhaps, be more akin to how we might conceive of a system, rather than a monolithic entity. Indeed, the use of complex dynamic systems theory can prove instructive here.

2.*6.2 Modelling Identity as a Complex Dynamical System*

Richardson and Chemero note that there are three aspects of a 'complex dynamic system'.[164] First, the system has a number of interacting components. Second, the system exhibits collective behaviour that could not have been predicted from the components separately, so called 'emergent behaviour'. And third, the emergent behaviour does not arise from a controlling agent, but is self-organised.

A system of this kind seems to fit identity well. On the first point, being embodied and embedded carries with it multiple connected components within the body and the world. As I have argued these are dynamically connected, spanning the border of human body and environment.[165] Secondly, the emergent behaviour of a dynamical complex system can be seen as identity itself emerging from the interaction between the embodied and embedded

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[164] Richardson, Michael J. and Chemero, Anthony*,* 'Complex Dynamical Systems and Embodiment' in *The Routledge Handbook of Embodied Cognition* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 39-50, p.39.
[165] Chemero*, Radical Embodied Cognitive Science,* p.25.

components in the system. And thirdly, this form of system expresses well the idea that identity is not controlled by any one aspect, just as there is no 'ghost in the shell' or a dichotomous conflict between 'me' and 'my brain' within decision making.

There are, of course, limits in how we can apply dynamical complex system theory to identity. In principle such a system can be described by a particular form of mathematics.[166] To think that was possible or appropriate here is to run the risk of reductionism. Indeed, all models have limits and what is best viewed metaphorically or analogically should not be assumed to be literally true.[167] Yet this does not negate a model's potentially explanatory powers, and the benefit of a complex dynamical systems approach to identity is that it captures many aspects I have discussed and allows us to conceive of them in a way that is not just descriptive, but offers further illumination. Before this chapter comes to a close, then it is worth setting out some of the principal insights we can glean.

2.6.3 Identity Arising from Embodied and Embedded Roots

To make the point again, if identity is akin to a complex dynamical system, then while it is embodied and embedded, identity is found in the dynamic interaction between the two. Indeed, the notion of 'soft assembly' raised by Richardson and Chemero emphasises this. A system is softly assembled if it reflects a 'temporary collation of coordinated entities, components, or factors'.[168] As an individual is immersed within, moves between, and interacts within different environmental contexts, this temporary co-ordination is precisely what we might expect. It is a good basis for different aspects of identity coming to the fore at different times and on different occasions.[169]

A softly assembled system also exhibits 'interaction-dominant dynamics'. In other words, it is characterised by the interaction between the components, rather than the nature of the components themselves.[170] Conceiving of identity as such a system, then, emphasises that it

[166] Chemero*, Radical Embodied Cognitive Science,* p.25.
[167] Ross and Ladyman, *The Alleged Coupling-Constitution Fallacy and the Mature Sciences*, p.156.
[168] Richardson and Chemero*, Complex Dynamical Systems and Embodiment,* p.40.
[169] Kihlstrom, *What Does the Self Look Like?*, p.85.
[170] Richardson and Chemero*, Complex Dynamical Systems and Embodiment,* p.40.

is the dynamical interaction between (and within) embodiment and embeddedness that determines an individual's identity. There is no warrant for attributing responsibility for identity to one component over and above another; within a system like this responsibility is distributed, since the emergent properties, in this case, identity, cannot be predicated on the components alone, but their interaction.[171] Instead, different aspects of identity correspond to different patterns of interaction within the system.

Furthermore, within a complex dynamical system, how components have interacted with one another in the past effects their interaction in the future.[172] This stems from the way in which activity within the system shapes the system itself, which then in turn constrains further patterns of interaction.[173] This gives scope to not merely to understand how identity is shaped by cognition, interaction, experience, bodily action, social relations, the physical environment and so on, all of which have played an important part in the discussion so far. But it also enables us to envision how an individual's identity in the past can shape her identity in the future and how different aspects of her identity can mutually inform each other. If this is the case, then is as much a system across time as it is between body and world and it should be viewed as a whole, given the nature of the interactions from which it arises.

A holistic view of identity, then, suggests that while it still may be legitimate to examine components of the system – say, embodied memory – this will only offer one perspective on identity, and cannot be relied upon to offer a full description.[174] Indeed, analysis must account for interaction within the system since this is where identity is found. This being said, a complex dynamical system allows for, and indeed requires, multiple levels of analysis to build up a coherent picture.[175] The complex nature of the system means that no one perspective will be authoritative, but at the same time, this does not mean that any one perspective will not give an authentic description of identity.

[171] Richardson and Chemero*, Complex Dynamical Systems and Embodiment*, p.48.
[172] William J. Clancey, 'Scientific Antecedents of Situated Cognition' in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situation Cognition,* ed. Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11-34, p.14.
[173] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System,* p.24-25
[174] Clancey, *Scientific Antecedents of Situated Cognition*, p.12.
[175] Clancey, *Scientific Antecedents of Situated Cognition,* p.17.

There are two implications, then, as I proceed. Firstly, that as I consider different aspects of identity, as it arises, the fact that I may not be able to offer a comprehensive account does not mean that the aspects I do explore are not legitimate expressions of what makes us who we are. Secondly, that it is warranted to bring in the perspective of multiple disciplines. I shall begin by considering the perspective of the cognitive sciences before moving on to consider identity from a theological perspective. My discussion in this chapter indicates that a multidisciplinary approach is thoroughly reasonable and necessary.

I began this chapter by discussing the philosophical notion of personal identity. If identity arises akin to a dynamical complex system, then this suggests that the personal identity tradition offers a legitimate insight on identity, but that it is not definitive. Given the problems associated with the tradition I will not be exploring it further in any great detail, save from when there is a natural alignment with my discussion of the cognitive sciences or theology. This is not to say that a dialogue with the philosophical approach would not be possible or potentially fruitful, but given the limited scope I have within this study, and because the insights of science have rarely been put into dialogue with a theological perspective, it is not my intention to pursue this avenue here.

2.7 Theological Questions of Embodiment and Embeddedness

Before I draw this chapter to a close, it is worth offering some brief theological reflections on the notion that identity emerges from embodied and embedded roots. A natural place to turn to within scripture is the creation narratives in Genesis, in particular Genesis 2, in which man [sic] is formed from the 'dust of the ground' (v.7). The connection between humans and the rest of creation here seems to reflect how embodiment implies embeddedness. Indeed, it implies that humans are not merely, '*like* the matter-energy cosmos', but 'made of the same "stuff" that makes up the rest of universe.'[176] Furthermore, if this is the case,

[176] Ashbrook, James B., and Albright, Carol Rausch, *The Humanizing Brain* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), p.153-4; Case-Winters, Anna, 'Rethinking The Image Of God' in *Zygon*, 39:4 (December 2004), 813-826, p.813.

then for all that Genesis 2 presents the creation of humans a distinct event, it suggests that it cannot be understood apart from God's creative work as a whole.

However, for all that the creation narratives within Genesis are significant, and I will return to them in different ways throughout this thesis, there are difficulties with how they express humanity's embeddedness within creation. For instance, only the first man is formed from the dust of the ground and there is only a limited sense of an ongoing dynamic connection between humans and creation. Indeed, these chapters do not reflect the importance of interaction to how identity arises from within the system of embodiment and embeddedness.

A different, and perhaps more fruitful, perspective is found at the end of the book of Job. At the beginning of Job 38, God, speaking out of the whirlwind, asks Job:

> Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
> Tell me, if you have understanding,
> Who determined its measurements – surely you know!
> Or who stretched the line upon it? *Job 38: 4-5*

This is the beginning of a long disputation, which stretches across the next four chapters. Quite straightforwardly, the questions posed by God emphasise his ongoing action within creation and creation's relatedness to him. However, by framing it in interrogative terms there is also an underlying emphasis on the connection between humans and creation. After all, Job was not present when the earth's foundations were laid because he does not stand over creation; he is a part of it. Indeed, as McLeish points out, it suggests that the physical structure and workings of the universe, in which God's ongoing creative work is found, are fundamentally significant and important to who humans are.[177]

The final chapters of Job, then, portray a more dynamic view of the place of humans within creation through emphasising God's connection and relation to both. This is an important perspective. It suggests that if identity emerges from the dynamism of embodiment and embeddedness this does not do so in a way that supersedes the place of God. On the contrary in emphasises the centrality of God to who we are in creation and the importance

[177] McLeish, Tom, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.146-7.

of asking how embodiment and embeddedness can be understood theologically. However, this also raises two questions.

The first is a question of human individuality in relation to God. For example, Gregerson is keen to point out that God's action in world should be seen within the totality of the created order. As he puts it

> God and nature are so intimately intertwined that the presence of the living God cannot be subtracted from the world of nature and still leave the world of nature as it is.[178]

This view arises from his commitment to using emergence theory to describe God's action in creation, but the point does not depend on this. Indeed, for all God's disputation with Job seems focused on the minutiae of creation, the wide-ranging sweep of creation offered by God actually serves to emphasise the totality of his action across it. But if this is the case how can the specificity of identity be maintained? In other words, how can God relate to the specific embodied and embedded roots of my identity, that is, to who I am, if this has to be set within the creative work of God towards the entire cosmos? The second is that if God is at the heart of who we are in creation, then should a theological account also look beyond the creative work of God and what might bring these perspectives together? In the following chapters, I will suggest that two key aspects of identity, highlighted by the cognitive sciences, along with an emphasis on Christology, can help us answer these questions.

2.8 Conclusion: Identity Arising from Embodiment and Embeddedness

I began this chapter with a somewhat enigmatic definition of identity. My intention was not to pin the concept down but to give a sense of what we were considering as we explored the nature and form of what makes us who we are. I offered personal identity and the self as two potential resources, but I argued that neither was sufficient to illuminate identity as I understood it. However, I suggested that the many different conceptions and uses of the self could be brought together through the shared baseline of reflexive cognition and through this, then, the self could represent an important aspect of identity if it was paired

[178] Gregersen, Niels Henrik, 'Emergence and Complexity' in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 767-783, p.781-2.

with implicit cognition. This indicated the first foundation for how identity should be understood: that it is embodied.

Embodied identity cannot be divorced or separated from the physical world in which it is situated and I argued in this chapter that it is dynamically connected to it. In fact, it was this connection that was the impetus for exploring the idea that identity could be rooted outside of the body, that is, in the environments in which humans are found. Identity is, then, embedded, not because of any inherent qualities within the environment, but because our contexts are dynamically engaged by who we are.

The upshot was that we were left with two foundations for identity – the body and the outside world – both of which are complex and multifaceted, as well as a multitude of dynamic connections between them. I proposed that complex dynamical systems theory was an appropriate model that could give illumination and insight. Indeed, this approach implied that identity could be conceived as an emergent quality of the system, dependent upon embodiment and embeddedness, but arising from the dynamic connections between them. The complexity of the system belies strict definitions because it allows for multiple levels of analysis. I shall, then, continue with the view that identity is that which makes me who I am. But if identity is embodied and embedded and arises from the dynamic interaction between the two, then what form might that content take? Indeed, what are the key aspects of that content? That is the subject of the next two chapters and I will begin with an aspect of our contextual environment that has already been hinted at: other people.

3. ‘I know you are; but *who* am I?!’ The Social Aspects of Identity

In a classic scene from *Return of the Jedi,* having been released from frozen imprisonment, Han Solo looks around in an attempt to discover the identity of his liberator.[179] Unfortunately, he is suffering from hibernation sickness and will not be able to see for some time. So, Han asks, ‘who are you?’ and discovers this is, in fact, no gruff voiced bounty hunter, but instead ‘someone who loves you.’ This exchange expresses well the idea that other people may, in some way, shape the content of our identity. Here, Leia defines herself in terms of her relationship to Han. Indeed, the playground comeback with which this chapter is entitled suggests that there might, perhaps, be a connection between the identity of the interlocutors.

I argued in the last chapter that identity arises from the dynamic interaction of our embodiment and embeddedness. If this is so, then perhaps we should expect that there are social aspects to identity, since one of the primary ways humans interact with their environment is through social interaction. However, the significance of this interaction is not obvious. Neither is it clear how we might best understand it. In this chapter I will propose that the view from the cognitive sciences suggests that the social aspects of identity are best understood as identity-constituting relationships.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the idea of the ‘social brain’ and I will suggest that it implies not just that human sociality is reflected in our embodiment, but that this social embodiment is augmented and facilitated by others. In other words, I shall argue that the cognitive sciences indicate that humans are socially embodied and embedded and that the two are dynamically linked, such that aspects of who we are arise within it. Indeed, the innate sociality of human embodiment and embeddedness suggests there is a distinctly social character to who we are.

[179] *Star Wars Episode VI: The Return of the Jedi*, dir. Richard Marquand (Twentieth Century Fox, 1983).

Having established a basis for the social aspects of identity, in the second half of this chapter I will propose that they are best described in terms of relationships. This follows from how the self emerges from social interaction in terms of how we view ourselves in relation to others. However, putting it that the social aspects are central to one's identity, does not mean that identities merge or that my identity is found in someone else, but that who we are is determined by the relationships we have and share with others. At the end of the chapter, I will offer a brief theological postscript, suggesting the questions that this chapter poses are less about how we relate to one another, but how we should understand the fundamental relationship we have to God.

3.1 The Social Brain

3.1.1 The Environmental and Social Brain Hypotheses

Cacioppo and Bernston state that human beings are 'fundamentally social animals.'[180] While we may wish to question whether this is *fundamentally* the case, that humans are social creatures seems self-evident. We exist within a social context. What is less obvious, is whether this is just happenstance. That is, whether humans are merely individuals who, for whatever reason, participate in social interaction or if there is a more fundamental basis for human sociality. Cacioppo and Bernston go on to argue, for instance, that there is a 'dynamic interaction with the biological systems of the brain and the social world in which it resides.' This seems to imply that humans do not just exist within a social context, but are embodied and embedded within it. Whether or not this can be substantiated is the subject of this section.

One of the most apparent differences between primates (of which, humans are one example) and other mammals is their large, cognitively adept brain.[181] Another, is their

[180] Cacioppo, John T. and Bernston, Gary G., 'Social Neuroscience' in *Foundations of Social Neuroscience,* ed. John T. Cacioppo, Gary G. Berntson, Ralph Adolphs, C. Sue Carter, Richard J. Davidson, Martha K. McClintock, Bruce S. McEwen, Michael J. Meaney, Daniel L. Schacter, Esther M. Sternberg, Steve S. Suomi, and Shelley E. Taylor (London: The MIT Press, 2002), 3-9, p.3.
[181] Joffe, Tracey H., 'Social pressures have selected for an extended juvenile period in primates' in *Journal of Human Evolution,* 32 (1997), 593-605, p.593-4.

extended juvenile period, which represents the longest of any mammal (relative to body size). One explanation for this is the 'ecological hypothesis'; that primates require large complex brains and long juvenile periods in order to process ecologically relevant information.[182] In other words, in order to develop the necessary environmental knowledge and develop appropriate problem-solving skills, primates need complex brains and an extended time of learning before adulthood.

While the ecological hypothesis seems to be in accord with how primates adapt and make use of their environmental context, it is not wholly successful. A rather obvious flaw in the proposal is that other mammals also have to learn to process ecologically relevant information within the same environment.[183] Indeed, it is the neo-cortex that represents the area of expansion within primates' brains (in comparison with other mammals) but this is uncorrelated to key ecological categories, such as the percentage of fruit in the diet. It is hard, therefore, to substantiate the ecological hypothesis in its entirety.

Correlation between the neo-cortex and certain other data points does suggest an alternative. The size of the neo-cortex and the length of the juvenile period is correlated with the mean group size for various primates.[184] This is a key piece of evidence for an alternative hypothesis; that primates require large complex brains and long juvenile periods in order to negotiate their complex social structures.[185] A similar correlation is also found in other mammals who inhabit complex social structures (bats, for example) implying, 'the larger the social groups, the larger the brains.'[186] This is commonly termed the 'social brain hypothesis.'

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[182] Joffe, *Social pressures.*, p.594; Dunbar, Robin I. M., 'The Social Brain Hypothesis' in *Foundations of Social Neuroscience,* ed. John T. Cacioppo, Gary G. Berntson, Ralph Adolphs, C. Sue Carter, Richard J. Davidson, Martha K. McClintock, Bruce S. McEwen, Michael J. Meaney, Daniel L. Schacter, Esther M. Sternberg, Steve S. Suomi, and Shelley E. Taylor (London: The MIT Press, 2002), 69-88, p.69.

[183] Dunbar, *The Social Brain Hypothesis.*, p.69, 77-79.

[184] Dunbar, The *Social Brain Hypothesis*, p.75.

[185] Adolphs, Ralph, 'Social Cognition and the Human Brain' in *Foundations of Social Neuroscience,* ed. John T. Cacioppo, Gary G. Berntson, Ralph Adolphs, C. Sue Carter, Richard J. Davidson, Martha K. McClintock, Bruce S. McEwen, Michael J. Meaney, Daniel L. Schacter, Esther M. Sternberg, Steve S. Suomi, and Shelley E. Taylor (London: The MIT Press, 2002), 313-332, p.313.

[186] Adolphs, *Social Cognition and the Human Brain*, p.313.

While the evidence from other species of mammals is significant, the social brain hypothesis is primarily made with respect to humans. However, it is not necessary to jettison the environmental hypothesis entirely. As Adolphs points out, the two are not wholly separable anyway given how, say, the complexity of the environment may put a premium on animals with social skills.[187] An individual's social context is necessarily a part of her wider environmental context. The point is not to exclude other factors, but that brain size or the length of the juvenile period are not of particular significance in and of themselves. Rather the social brain hypothesis indicates that there is a strong link between the structure of the brain in humans and our social context. In other words, it suggests that our social nature is found as much in the brain, as it is in the outside world.

3.1.2 The Social Brain – Distinct and Specific?

If the social brain hypothesis indicates that the brain is structured for social engagement, for some, this indicates that there are specific neural networks for representing social relations and manipulating social information.[188] Indeed Brothers, one of the early proponents of the social brain hypothesis, describes the social brain as a 'discrete neural system.'[189] This runs into the same problem I set out in the last chapter; that it is difficult to identify specific and distinct neural networks for any purpose, given the inter-connectivity and complexity of the brain. However, it is not necessary to suppose that the networks that facilitate social interaction must be specific or distinct to conclude that the brain is structured in such a way as to underpin participation within complex social structures.

Consider, for example, how those with prosopagnosia, that is, impaired visual facial recognition, can still recognise complex patterns and even animal faces, but not the faces of humans.[190] This implies that facial recognition is 'specialised for representing humans' and

[187] Adolphs, *Social Cognition and the Human Brain*, p.313.
[188] Farah, M. J. and Heberlein, A. S., 'Personhood and Neuroscience: Naturalizing or Nihilating?' in *The American Journal of Bioethics,* 7:1 (2007), 37-48, p.42.
[189] Brothers, Leslie, 'The Neural Basis of Primate Communication' in *Motivation and Emotion*, 14:2 (1990), 81-91, p.81
[190] Kanwisher, Nancy, 'Domain specificity in face perception' in *Nature Neuroscience*, 3:8 (2000), 759-763, p.759.

we might thereby justifiably take it to represent an aspect of the social brain.[191] However, as Farah and Heberlein note, human brains err on the side of seeing humans, even when they are not present. In other words, they tend to see human faces even when there is no human face to see. Similarly, children are liable to ascribe social categories, such as intention, to inanimate objects, as they do to other social agents.[192] Thus, while the brain is structured in such a way as to underpin social interaction, any such neural networks also interact and overlap with other cognitive representations and functions. The social brain, then, is not separable from the whole of the brain, just as our social context is not wholly separable from our environmental context.

Furthermore, the evidence that Brothers cites is unconvincing. For instance, he uses the example of autism, arguing that it arises from 'damage to the central nervous system during prenatal development' focused around specific areas of the brain.[193] However, a comprehensive meta-analysis of studies found that there was insufficient evidence to conclude any such causal relationship and that genetic and environmental factors should be considered instead.[194] Brothers' perspective is rendered, then, somewhat out-of-date. Indeed, it is not clear how any of his evidence supports a discrete neural system for the social brain, only that there are key specific areas.[195] Our social context is not linked to specific and distinct structures within the brain. Rather, the neural networks that support social relations and manipulate social interaction are examples of how the brain *as a whole* is structured in relation to our social context.

Before we move on, a word about causation. It would be easy to assume from the social brain hypothesis that either human beings (and other similar mammals) live within social

[191] Farah and Heberlein, *Personhood and Neuroscience,* p.42, 48.
[192] Read, Stephen John and Miller, Lynn Carol, 'Stories Are Fundamental to Meaning and Memory: For Social Creatures, Could It Be Otherwise?' in *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, Advances in Social Cognition, Vol. VII,* ed. Roy F. Baumeister, Leonard S. Newman and Robert S. Wyer (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 139-152, p.140.
[193] Brothers, *The Neural Basis of Primate Communication*, p.85.
[194] Gardener, Hannah, Spiegelman, Donna and Buka, Stephen L., 'Prenatal risk factors for autism: comprehensive meta-analysis' in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 195:1 (2009), 7-14, p.12.
[195] He argues only in reference to 'specific neural structures' in the text of his article (as opposed to the abstract) and only in terms of deficit. In other words, he shows how damage to specific areas inhibits social cognition, but not that social cognition is restricted to these specific areas.

groups because the brain is structured socially, or that living in social groups, causes the brain to be structured in that way. There is, however, no need to imply any such causative link. Firstly, because establishing such a link would be complex and outside the requirements of this study (the existence of the social brain is enough). And secondly, because in all likelihood the social structures of the brain and human social structures evolved hand-in-hand; an ecological niche for organisms with social structures led to an advantage for those with more socially adept brains.[196] Again, it highlights the importance of viewing social context and the social brain as a part of wider systems, but as I noted this is beyond my current argument.

There are two corollaries I want to draw out of the preceding discussion. The first relates to a point made in the last chapter. As Farah and Heberlein rightly insist, the social brain does not supply empirical support to the notion of personhood.[197] After all, it might have been tempting to conclude that particular activations in the social brain could distinguish who is, and what is not, a person. The fact that the social brain is not distinct and that humans cannot rightly distinguish a human from a non-human, refers back to the fact that personhood remains an unhelpful concept. Indeed, these 'errors' suggest that human intuition is fallible on this point, as I suggested in the last chapter. The second corollary follows in the next section.

3.1.3 Innate Social Embodiment

Consider the following. A child gives her favourite blanket a name. She speaks of it in social terms, implying that it has emotions, that it should take responsibility for its actions, that it has hopes and intentions and the like. She treats it as a social agent. The study by Read and Miller, referenced above, indicates children are liable to do this because the social brain exists before a child learns through interaction and experience, who is and what is not, a social agent.[198] This may develop later; however, it suggests that the social brain is not learned or adopted, but is innate in humans.

[196] Adolphs, *Social Cognition and the Human Brain*, p.313.
[197] Farah and Heberlein, *Personhood and Neuroscience*, p.48.
[198] Read and Miller, *Stories Are Fundamental to Meaning and Memory,* p.140.

In order to explore this further, it is necessary to highlight one of the weaknesses of the social brain hypothesis; that it places too much emphasis on the brain, to the exclusion of the rest of the body. As I noted in the last chapter, there is no conversation point between body and brain; they represent a unified system.[199] We should not think, then, of just a link between social context and the brain, but between social context and human embodiment as a whole. Again, as I noted in the last chapter, Gallagher argues that we should take an embodied approach to cognition in general, therefore any cognitive functions that underpin participation in our social contexts should be seen in terms of the whole body.[200]

It might be better, then, to speak of the social body, as much as the social brain. The problem with this is that it seems to imply a perspective from 'outside', that is, of bodies existing within a social context. This is not the intention. Therefore, I will continue to refer to the 'social brain' hypothesis, with the understanding that it rightly applies to the whole body as much as the brain, but in general I will refer to 'social embodiment' to indicate the link between the structure of the body and our social context.

In order to explore social embodiment further, I will highlight two examples of how the body underpins social interaction, both of which imply that social embodiment is innate.

3.1.4 Resonance Behaviours and Mirror Neurons

The first example is resonance behaviours. A resonance behaviour is an action that reflexively reproduces the action of another without explicit cognitive intention.[201] A good example is how conversation partners may adopt the same posture or copy one another's facial expressions. Interestingly, Cozolino gives the example of a therapist imitating the posture or tone of her client and yet that is not quite right, since that behaviour is, in all likelihood, deliberately adopted.[202] Resonance behaviours arise from implicit cognition and

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[199] Haugeland, *Having thought: essays in the metaphysics of mind*, p.227-8.
[200] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.1.
[201] Cozolino, Louis, *The Neuroscience of Relationships* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), p.200-202.
[202] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships*, p.200.

describe behaviour and actions that appear ‘contagious’ rather than deliberate copying.[203] Given how resonance behaviours draw together social stimuli, visual processing and bodily action along with implicit cognition, they are a good example of social embodiment; embodied structures that are linked to social context.

Furthermore, resonance behaviours also indicate the innateness of social embodiment. Consider, for example, how infants can imitate the smile of an adult. This resonance behaviour occurs in children before that behaviour can be expected to arise from explicit cognition or independent emotion.[204] Indeed, one of the purposes of resonance behaviours may be to provide a basis for action understanding. That is, how we come to understand the meaning attached to actions, in and of themselves and within a social context, through the experience of inhabiting them. If that is so, then they are necessary for human development and represent an innate structure of social embodiment.

A similar case can be made for ‘mirror neurons’. Mirror neurons are a class of visuomotor neurons that activate both when an individual performs a particular action and when he observes that action being performed in another.[205] Mirror neurons were first discovered in monkeys and while there is no direct evidence for a mirror neuron system in humans, there is substantial indirect evidence for it.[206]

There is a great deal of speculation around the scope and function of mirror neurons.[207] One influential proposal is that mirror neurons, again, are a basis for action understanding and may be the neurophysical basis by which resonance behaviours emerge.[208] This is because they explain how imitation is achieved, that is, how an observer ‘knows’ which muscle

[203] Rizzolatti, G., Fadiga, L., Fogassi, L. and Gallese, V., ‘Resonance Behaviours and Mirror Neurons’ in *Archives Italiennes de Biologie,* 137:2-3 (1999), 85-100, p.91-92.
[204] Rizzolatti et al., *Resonance Behaviours,* p.92, 98.
[205] Rizzolatti, Giacomo and Craighero, Laila, ‘The Mirror-Neuron System’ in *Annual Review of Neuroscience,* 27 (2004), 169-192, p.169.
[206] Rizzolatti and Craighero, *The Mirror-Neuron System*, p.174; Hou, Jiancheng, Rajmohan, Ravi, Fang, Dan, Kashfi, Karl, Al-Khalil, Kareem, Yang, James, Westney, William, Grund, Cynthia M., O'Boyle, Michael W., ‘Mirror neuron activation of musicians and non-musicians in response to motion captured piano performances’ in *Brain and Cognition*, 115 (2017), 47-55, p.55.
[207] Hou et al., *Mirror neuron activation of musicians,* p.55; Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships*, p.12.
[208] Rizzolatti et al., *Resonance Behaviours,* p.98.

activation will lead to the action they have observed in the other (such 'knowledge' is, of course, implicit).[209] As such, again they represent an example of the innateness of social embodiment; they are a built-in structure for human development that links the brain and the rest of the body with an individual's social context. Indeed, they also represent innate social embeddedness, that is how social cognition is not just rooted in the body, but also within the social environment.

While it is reasonably clear that resonance behaviours and mirror neurons are examples of social embodiment, to say that they are examples of *innate* of social embodiment and embeddedness depends to some extent on their role in action understanding. Lieberman, however, takes issue with this line of argument, noting that imitation does not necessarily imply any *understanding* of action. Indeed, he notes that if we were to take imitation as the embodiment of understanding, then we might expect similar brain activation as we would with self-reflection (within the medial frontoparietal network) and yet no such activation is found.[210] In other words, for Lieberman, merely inhabiting a behaviour or action, does not lead to understanding it. There are, however, two flaws to Lieberman's critique.

Firstly, Lieberman misunderstands mirror neurons, for while he *may* be right to say that imitation does not necessarily imply understanding, mirror neurons do not necessarily imply imitation. For while the mirror neuron system may mediate imitation and make it possible, fundamentally it just associates observed action with the corresponding mechanisms for similar spontaneously generated action, that is, it 'transforms visual information into knowledge'.[211]

While I have suggested that it is possible that that mirror neurons are the basis of resonance behaviours, even if they are not, there is still evidence that action understanding is their primary function. For example, mirror neurons can still be activated even if there is no visual

[209] Molenberghs, Pascal, Cunnington, Ross and Mattingley, Jason B., 'Is the mirror neuron system involved in imitation? A short review and meta-analysis' in *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews,* 33:7 (2009), 975-980, p.976.
[210] Lieberman, Matthew D., 'Social Cognitive Neuroscience: A Review of Core Processes' in *Annual Review of Psychology,* 58 (2007), 259-289, p.271.
[211] Rizzolatti and Craighero, *The Mirror-Neuron System*, p.173.

stimulus (i.e. there is nothing to imitate), so long as action understanding comes through an alternative route.[212] Furthermore, a study that compared mirror neuron centres[213] of musicians and non-musicians when observing a musical performance found there was greater activity for the musicians.[214] The implication of this is that those who might observe music within the context of understanding the musicians' actions (as opposed to just appreciating the music) have a higher level of mirror neuron activity, indicating some form of action understanding.

Secondly, Lieberman fails to appreciate how understanding may be embodied apart from the self, or indeed, may be apart from explicit cognition. Gallagher highlights, for instance, how infants have the ability not just to imitate an adult's facial expression but to subsequently correct and improve the imitation.[215] This demonstrates, he argues, that they have an embodied understanding well before they develop reflexive cognition or sense of self.[216] In other words, understanding cannot be reduced to brain scans and explicit cognition, but draws in implicit and embodied aspects. Lieberman's critique, then, fails to undermine the key point of how action understanding implies the innateness of embodied and embedded social cognition.

3.1.5 A Dynamic Link Between Body and Social Context

This is a good point to draw together the preceding argument. I have argued that the social brain hypothesis suggests that humans are socially embodied, that is, our embodiment is structured in such a way as to underpin social participation. Indeed, there is a dynamic link between that embodiment and an individual's social context. Cognition is augmented and facilitated by others through aspects of our embodiment like mirror neurons and resonance behaviours, such that we are embedded in our social context. Cacioppo and Bernston were,

[212] Rizzolatti and Craighero, *The Mirror-Neuron System*, p.174.
[213] These are regions known (or suspected) to house mirror neurons. As above, there is only indirect evidence for their existence in humans.
[214] Hou et al., *Mirror neuron activation of musicians*, p.53.
[215] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.74.
[216] Gallagher actually takes this to be an embodied self, but I have used self specifically in relation explicit reflexive cognition. The point still stands as an embodied self implies embodied understanding in this case. Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.78-79.

then, to a large extent correct; humans are intimately connected to their social context. Indeed, it will be apparent that this connection mirrors how identity arises from the dynamic link between embodiment and embeddedness. The discussion I have offered above, suggests that there are social aspects of identity that exist within that dynamic.

Furthermore, since the social aspects of embodiment are not separable from embodiment as a whole, then the social aspects of identity are not distinct from any other aspect of identity. Indeed, I argued that social embodiment and embeddedness is innate. It suggests that the social aspects of identity are not incidental or concomitant, neither are they of varying degrees of importance. Rather, they are fundamental to identity. Another way to put it would be that identity has an inherent social character. The question, then, is what form do the social aspects of identity take and how might we conceive of them? That is the subject of the next section.

3.2 Relationships: The Social Aspects of Identity

3.2.1 The Emergence of the Self

If identity has an inherent social quality, then we might expect social interactions to be a key driving force behind the dynamic link between how identity arises from embodied and embedded roots. I argued in the last chapter that to be embodied was to be 'immersed in degrees of feedback' as we are dynamically connected to our environment through perception, sense, action and response.[217] Social interactions seem to be a good example of this kind of dynamic, since they necessarily entail action and response.

It is no great surprise, then, that Decety and Chaminade conclude that 'self-other interaction is the driving force between self-development.'[218] In this view, the reflexive cognition at the heart of the self arises from repeated, reciprocal interaction with others.[219] In other words,

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[217] Dawson, *Embedded and Situated Cognition*, p.61. McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary*, p.7.
[218] Decety, Jean and Chaminade, Thierry, 'When the self represents the other' in *Consciousness and Cognition*, 12 (2003), 577–596, p.577-578.
[219] Owens et al., *Three Faces of Identity*, p.478; Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.28.

through interaction with those who are perceiving her as someone to be known, an individual develops her own sense of being both knower and known. Thus, as Mischel and Morf put it, 'the self is fundamentally interpersonal.' [220]

That the self emerges through social interaction, is generally well-established. Yet, the self is only one aspect of identity, and what is less clear is the role this plays within identity formation. Dennett, for instance, argues that identity is formed through interaction with others, as an individual distinguishes herself from them.[221] Indeed, Beer and Ochsner highlight that self-perception develops in young children through gestures like pointing, through which they are able to differentiate between self and others. [222] And yet, to take this as confirmation of Dennett's point is not quite right, as I shall argue below.

3.2.2 Embodiment and Relationships

In the last chapter, I resisted Gallagher's proposal of an 'innate system of embodiment' that underlies the development of the self.[223] However, this is not to say that this 'proprioceptive awareness' (body schema, performative awareness and the like) is not an aspect of embodied identity, only that it is unhelpful to see it in terms of a proprioceptive *self* or to draw a connection between it and the emergence of the self. Since I have argued that social embodiment is innate, it would be surprising if aspects of embodiment do not play a role as the self emerges through social interaction. What is implied, then, is that implicit aspects of identity, rooted in embodied proprioceptive awareness are also embedded within an individual's social context. In fact, the link between them takes a certain form.

Gallagher argues that proprioceptive awareness arises prenatally, in that physical movements are aligned to the shape of the human body, such that after birth 'our vision, imperfect as it is, is already attuned to those shapes that resemble our own shape.'[224] In

[220] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.23.
[221] Dennett, Daniel C., *Consciousness Explained* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p.416-418.
[222] Beer, Jennifer S. and Ochsner, Kevin N., 'Social cognition: A multi level analysis' in *Brain Research*, 1079 (2006), 98-105, p.99.
[223] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.84.
[224] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.1.

other words, the fact of embodiment necessarily implies social relatedness. Indeed, Decety and Chaminade highlight studies that demonstrate that humans have an 'intuitive need to relate [themselves] to other people' from birth.[225] The point is that this suggests that identity is not found here in an arbitrary link between social embodiment and social context, but in specific examples of 'coupling between self and other.'[226]

The social aspects of identity, then, are not formed by distinguishing oneself from another, for all that would seem to be implied by the fact and separateness of embodiment. Rather, they emerge from relations with others in the context of embodiment. Take, for example, how a study found that mothers and children stimulate each other's brains to grow and develop, because by simply observing the mother's face, there is a 'biochemical cascade' in the infant that activates neural development.[227] Child and mother are here both distinguished (this is implied by one gazing at the other), but it is the coupling between them – the relationship they share – that is at the heart of how identity develops.

3.2.3 The Social Aspects of Identity: Relationships

I began this section by noting the potential for social interactions to be an element of the social aspects of identity since they mirrored the dynamism between embodiment and embeddedness. However, for all that they are significant (for example, they are the driving force behind the emergence of the self), it is relationships that are at the heart of the social aspects of identity. Indeed, just as the plasticity of the brain underpins the body's dynamic embeddedness, neural systems associated with social processes possess great flexibility, especially with respect to those to whom we are close.[228] Those, in other words, with whom we share a relationship.

Thus, the social aspects of identity are not found in arbitrary social interactions and experience, but in specific relationships that give meaning and context to those interactions.

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[225] Decety and Chaminade, *When the self represents the other*, p.579.
[226] Gallagher, *How the body shapes the mind,* p.81.
[227] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships*, p.85.
[228] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships*, p.307; Gutchess, *Plasticity of the aging brain*, p.502.

They explain, for instance, why we incorporate what others think of us within our self-concept and the effect of wider cultural and societal influences on our identity (both of which I mentioned in the last chapter) because they set specific dynamic interactions within a context.[229] Relationships are, therefore, at the heart of identity. But relationships are, of course, two-way. Han does not just have a relationship with Leia, but Leia also has one with Han. Can we say, then, that they share the same relationship? Or are there two relationships here? How can we understand this? That is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

3.3 Relationships: Dynamic and Rooted in the Body

In this section I will assess two proposals arguing that both are flawed, but proposing that the discussion indicates a view of relationships that are dynamic and shared, but rooted in embodiment.

3.3.1 Do Relationships Imply a Form of Shared Identity?

The first proposal is a remarkable thesis proposed by Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, Mashek, Lewandowski, Wright and Aron. They argue that within a close relationship, part of one's identity *is* the other person.[230] That is, the identity of the two individuals in question is shared or overlaps such that each becomes a part of who the other is. They put it that 'cognitive reorganisation' takes place, so that the views, perspectives and attitudes of another can become our views, perspectives and attitudes.[231]

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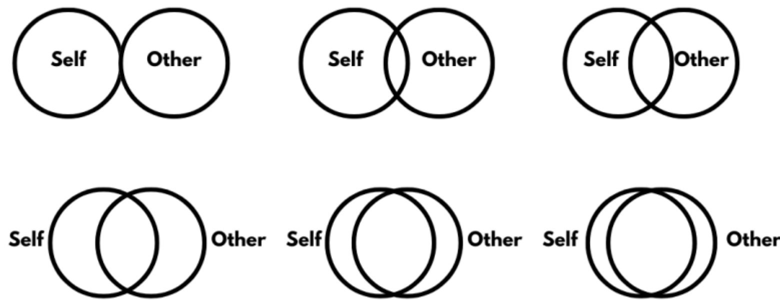
[229] It must also be noted that the researchers found that participants took a somewhat favourable slant on what others said. Oyserman et al., *Self, self concept and identity,* p.76; Park and Kitayama, *Interdependent selves show face-induced facilitation of error processing*, p.208.
[230] Aron, Arthur, McLaughlin-Volpe, Tracy, Mashek, Debra, Lewandowski, Gary, Wright, Stephen C. and Aron, Elaine N., 'Including others in the self' in *European Review of Social Psychology,* 15:1 (2004), 101-132, p.102.
[231] Aron et al., *Including others in the self*, p.106.

Relationships are at the heart of Aron et al.'s thesis since their proposal only applies to those we are 'close' to (i.e. only those with whom we share a relationship). Indeed, they propose the following pictorial scale by which one may 'measure' one's relationship with another:



They conclude:

> Perhaps this measure has been so successful because the metaphor of overlapping circles representing self and other corresponds to how people actually process information about self and other.[232]

In other words, for Aron et al., this pictorial scale is not metaphorical in nature, but analogical, grounded in some form of ontological reality. In this view, to say that the social aspects of identity that are grounded in relationships, implies that identity can be shared between individuals. Who I am can be made up partly of who you are.

This thesis seems promising at first. After all, if a relationship exists between two individuals, then this implies that they share something of the same environmental context. Their identities could, therefore be similarly embedded. The challenge Aron et al. face is that if identity is also rooted in embodiment, how do they overcome the fact that two people have fundamentally separate bodies. They have to demonstrate how identity can be shared in terms of embodiment. To do this, they cite two key results.

Firstly, Aron et al. make use of the 'self-reference effect.'[233] This is a well-established phenomenon, which I have highlighted previously, in which information encoded with reference to the self is better remembered than information encoded with reference to

[232] Aron et al., *Including others in the self*, p.112.
[233] Aron et al., *Including others in the self*, p.110-111.

others.[234] Retrieval of this information also corresponds with activation in the medial prefrontal cortex. However, some studies have found that this memorial advantage can be lessened when considering an intimate other. Indeed, similar activation in the medial prefrontal cortex was found in these cases.[235] Aron et al. argue that given the self-reference effect is a result of distinct cognitive processing, the moderation of it with respect to close others, implies that their identity is included within one's own.[236]

Secondly, Aron et al. make use of the discussion around an individual's perception of another's mental states (their thoughts, emotions, intentions etc.), so called 'perspective taking.'[237] A number of writers propose that this is only possible by making reference to our own mental states. The self is thus the basis for understanding others.[238] Indeed, one study concluded that

> conscious attempts to adopt another person's perspective may prompt perceivers to consider that person via cognitive processes typically reserved for introspection about the self.[239]

The medial prefrontal cortex, once again, plays an important role here and for Aron at al., this is convincing evidence that 'cognitive representations of self and close others […] actually overlap.'[240] Thus, we can take on elements of another's identity – including their characteristics and memories – because the neural processing for self and close other is so intertwined.

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[234] Heatherton, Todd F., Wyland, Carrie L., Macrae, C. Neil, Demos, Kathryn E., Denny, Bryan T., and Kelley, William M., 'Medial prefrontal activity differentiates self from close others' in *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 1 (2006), 18-25, p.19; Craik, Fergus I.M., Moroz, Tara M., Moscovitch, Morris, Stuss, Donald T., Winocur, Gordon, Tulving, Endel, and Kapur, Shitij, 'In Search of the Self' in *Psychological Science,* 10:1 (1999), 26-34, p.31.

[235] Heatherton et al., *Medial Prefrontal Activity differentiates self from close others*, p.18-19; Schmitz, Taylor W., Kawahara-Baccus, Tisha N., and Johnson, Sterling C., 'Metacognitive evaluation, self-relevance, and the right prefrontal cortex' in *NeuroImage,* 22 (2004), 941-947, p.946.

[236] Aron et al., *Including others in the self,* p.110-111. See also Powell et al., *Dissociable Neural Substrates for Agentic versus Conceptual Representations of Self*, p.2186.

[237] Aron et al., *Including others in the self*, p.110.

[238] Beer and Ochsner, *Social cognition: A multi level analysis*, p.99; Mitchell, Jason P., Macrae, C. Neil and Banaji, Mahzarin R., 'Dissociable Medial Prefrontal Contributions to Judgments of Similar and Dissimilar Others' in *Neuron*, 50 (2006), 655-663, p.655; Lombardo, Bhismadev, Chakrabarti, Michael V., Bullmore, Edward T., Wheelwright, Sally J., Sadek, Susan A., Suckling, John, MRC AIMS Consortium, and Baron-Cohen, Simon, 'Shared Neural Circuits for Mentalizing about the Self and Others' in *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 22:7,1623–1635, p.1623.

[239] Ames, Daniel L., Jenkins, Adrianna C., Banaji, Mahzarin R., and Mitchell, Jason P., 'Taking Another Person's Perspective Increases Self-Referential Neural Processing' in *Psychological Science*, 19:7 (2008), 642-644, p.643.

[240] Mitchell et al., *Dissociable Medial Prefrontal Contributions*, p.655.

Drawing upon these two pieces of evidence Aron et al. conclude that 'being in a close relationship does seem to subvert the seemingly fundamental cognitive distinction of self from other.'[241] Indeed, they argue that this shared neural processing is a common 'background to experience', therefore shaping identity as it arises from the dynamism between the body and the outside world. Thus, part of who an individual is, *is* the identity of a close other.

There are a number of difficulties with Aron et al.'s analysis. The first is that relying upon medial prefrontal cortex activation is not as straightforward as they make out. As I noted in the last chapter the interpretation of neuroimaging is complex and this is a case in point. For instance, the medial prefrontal cortex is tonically active at rest, therefore if an experiment includes blocks of modest rest, the medial prefrontal cortex response may actually overwhelm any signal differences.[242] Indeed, a study conducted by Heatherton, Wyland, Macrae, Demos, Denny, and Kelley, found that having allowed for this 'the neural correlates of the self remain distinct from intimate *and* non-intimate others.'[243]

In fact, Heatherton et al. propose an alternative approach. They argue that our knowledge of others is incorporated into our self-concept, through which a form of them is included in our self-bias. This would explain any moderation of the self-reference effect. In fact, the incorporation of our knowledge of others in *relation to ourselves* is just what we might expect given how relationships necessarily include dynamic social interactions. Furthermore, while there is evidence that we incorporate what others think of us within our self-concept, researchers found that this was not done so verbatim, but that we take a 'positive slant' on the matter.[244] The problem for Aron et al. is that there is no such dynamic within their system: identity either overlaps to some degree or it does not.

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[241] Aron et al. also draw upon an experiment in which 'people react to a close other's outcome as if they were one's own outcome.' Yet, this hardly holds much water in inferring a shared element of their identity. It implies a desire to see another succeed and an interest in their wellbeing at most. The best basis for their thesis is the two pieces of evidence cited. See Aron et al., *Including others in the self*, p.107-108; p.110-111.
[242] Heatherton et al., *Medial Prefrontal Activity differentiates self from close others*, p.23-24.
[243] Heatherton et al., *Medial Prefrontal Activity differentiates self from close others*, p.18 (italics mine).
[244] Oyserman, Elmore and Smith, *Self, self concept and identity,* p.76.

The second problem with Aron et al.'s proposal is that they misinterpret perspective taking. Liebermann, for instance, poses the question of when an individual takes on the perspective of another, does she actually enter his experience or merely put herself in his position?[245] For Aron et al. the answer is decidedly the first option. However, the effect that they cite – that attempting to adopt another's perspective prompts the use of cognitive systems typically reserved for the self – actually depends on how similar an individual perceives another to be, rather than how *close* he is to her, which would be a more typical measure of a relationship.[246] The point is that perspective taking relies on introspection and perceived similarity, not on a blurring of distinction between oneself and another.[247]

Finally, Aron et al. fail to take into account the implicit aspects of embodiment. I have already discussed how embodiment necessarily implies and shapes an individual's embeddedness in the world, and in particular, his social context. Even if we accepted Aron et al.'s argument for shared neural circuitry and cognitive representations, an individual's identity is still rooted in the specificity of her embodiment beyond the brain. For example, how would an individual's body schema, that is his implicit sense of the body and physical movement, be shared by another? I argued in the last chapter that another could be included within it, but this does not mean that inclusion is reciprocal or that there is some sort of overlap.

These difficulties, then, seriously undermine Aron et al.'s thesis since they highlight that there is no basis for shared embodied identity within their proposal. Ultimately, however, their proposal is too static, since within it, identities (like circles) may overlap or not, but are uniform and fixed in themselves. There is little space for the dynamism between embodiment and embeddedness. Nor do Aron et al. explore how relationships set social interaction within a wider context. Beer suggests that shared neural processes for perspective taking of others and ourselves, arise because when we attempt to perceive the mental state of a close other, we use abstractions, rather than specific instances, as we do

[245] Lieberman, *Social Cognitive Neuroscience,* p.265.
[246] Mitchell et al., *Dissociable Medial Prefrontal Contributions*, p.655.
[247] Lombardo et al., *Shared Neural Circuits for Mentalizing about the Self and Others,* p.1631.

for ourselves.[248] This suggests a wider context for relationships that depends upon how we relate specific instances to abstract knowledge, the role of memory and social experience. Indeed, another study found that cognitive representations of others more closely mirrored representations of the self in that past, rather than the present.[249] Relationships, then, are set in a context that draws together our past and present identity.

This is not explored by Aron et al., possibly because, in the end, the significance of actual relationships, for them, is questionable. They seem to function merely as a measure for how close two abstract 'identities' are to each other. To put it another way, in this view Han and Leia share part of their identities because they have a relationship with one another but their identity is not shaped by that relationship, nor found within it, which has been my contention so far.

3.3.2 Relationships and 'The Social Synapse'

The basis for the second proposal is set out quite plainly by Cozolino. He puts it that '*it is the power of being with others that shapes the brain.*'[250] This, then, echoes a number of aspects of the preceding discussion and seems to align with my argument that identity is constituted by relationships. However, it is significant that Cozolino speaks of 'the brain' and not identity. This is symptomatic of his work in general, and it is understandable to some degree given that his thesis is outlined in *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships*. Thus, his proposal is set out in decidedly neural terms; relationships are conceived in terms of 'the social synapse.'

Cozolino writes that social synapses span the 'space between us'; they are, so to speak, the conduits through which relationships are possible.[251] The existence of social synapses seems almost axiomatic for Cozolino. He offers little to no argument for their existence except the

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[248] Beer, *A Social Neuroscience Perspective on the Self*, p.644. See also Klein, Stanley B. and Nichols, Shaun, 'Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity' in *Mind*, 121:483 (2012), 677-696, p.679-680.
[249] D'Argembeau, Arnaud, Feyers, Dorothée, Majerus, Steve, Collette, Fabienne, Van der Linden, Martial, Maquet, Pierre and Salmon, Eric, 'Self-reflection across time: cortical midline structures differentiate between present and past selves' in *Social and Affective Neuroscience,* 3 (2008), 244-252, p.244.
[250] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships*, p.9 (italics original).
[251] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships,* p.5.

observation that 'lived experience' indicates that there is a clear analogue between synapses within the brain and human interaction. The social synapse, then, like Aron et al.'s pictorial proposal, is not metaphorical, but is grounded in ontological reality.

In a sense, Cozolino's proposal mirrors my own by suggesting that identity should be understood as an emergent quality of a dynamical complex system. Indeed, he stresses how neurons and brains do not exist within a vacuum but within an interconnected contextual system. He then goes on to argue that relationships draw together a range of cognitive functions and neural processing, from which identity emerges. The system is structured through social synapses that not only make relationships possible, but are dynamic elements within the system, acting like 'external neural circuits' to feedback information to oneself and others.[252]

There is much to commend Cozolino's proposal but it ultimately fails because it places too much emphasis on the social synapse at the expense of the body. Indeed, while I have argued that identity is found within the dynamic link between the body and environmental context, of which relationships are a central feature, Cozolino's proposal is subtly different. He proposes that identity emerges *from* relationships. For Cozolino, relationships bring together embodied cognitive function, but they are predicated on the social synapse system and identity is ultimately rooted there too. Hence, he can suggest that 'identity can be "disembodied" such that it coalesces outside of one's own body' because the social synapse system allows it to coalesce wholly around another.[253] This flies in the face of the central aspect of the preceding argument, that identity is rooted in embodiment and embeddedness (and not a supposed neurological analogue). Thus, while Cozolino does set identity within a complex dynamical system, he does so in a way that undermines the importance of embodiment for identity.

Furthermore, while there is potential for dynamism within Cozolino's system, it is one-step removed from identity since it is found within the social synapses, rather than within one's

[252] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships,* p.342.
[253] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships,* p.205-209.

identity itself.[254] It means that, rather than who I am being constituted by social interactions within relationships, for Cozolino, I can only gain a deeper 'awareness of self.' There is, then, ironically, an independent aspect to how identity is conceived by Cozolino, for while being with others shapes the brain, an individual appears to have a controlling influence over who she is. He cites the case of a patient who developed a self-narrative from which she was excluded, and takes from this that her identity was found in others. Yet, identity is not something to be pushed around, neither can it migrate along a social synapse. Rather, it arises without a controlling influence, from a distributed system of interactions between our bodies and the world outside them.[255] There is no need for a 'social synapse' because embodiment implies interaction with the world, and as we have seen, this implies relationship, within which the social aspects of identity are found.

Ultimately, then, the theses of Cozolino and Aron et al.'s fail because the way they understand relationships, signals a move away from how identity is rooted in the body, as well as how that embodiment is a basis for those very relationships themselves. Neither do they sufficiently allow for dynamism within social interactions. It is not sufficient to argue that the social brain implies that two brains can be 'in synch', relationships entail embodied interaction and a wider context from which identity arises. [256] In other words, if the social aspects of identity are found in identity constituting relationships, then these should be embodied and dynamic, drawing together specific interactions and a wider 'meaning-full' context. But what might that context be? I have already touched on aspects of it when I noted that relationships draw together past and present. In fact, Cozolino identifies the prime candidate: narratives, which can draw together multiple and diverse networks in the brain and in the world around us. That is the subject of the next chapter, but before I move on, it is useful to offer a brief theological post-script, reflecting on the discussion so far.

[254] Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Relationships,* p.342.
[255] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.25.
[256] Ramachandran, V. S., *The Tell-Tale Brain* (London: W.W. Norton, 2011), p.37.

3.4 Relationships: Embodiment, Touch, Computers and God

A theological perspective on the centrality of relationships is not difficult to find.[257] I shall explore this in more detail in chapter five, but at this point, it is helpful to offer a brief reflection on some of the theological questions that have arisen in this chapter so far. A text that is often cited with respect to human relationships is Genesis 1: 26-27, in which humans are created male and female implying, for some, an inherent relatedness within humanity.[258] It is noteworthy, however, that this account is favoured over Genesis 2 in which man is created from the 'dust of the ground' (v.7) and woman from the man's rib (v.21-22), which perhaps more obviously emphasises the embodied and embedded nature of their relationship. However, in a similar manner to my observation at the end of the last chapter, neither reflect the dynamism of relationships, nor give much account of social interaction.

I suggest, then, a better place from which to offer a reflection within the biblical witness is the ministry of Jesus. Again, we could reflect upon the importance of embodiment, stressed by the incarnation, but the actual facts of Jesus' ministry are often overlooked.[259] While it may require an interpretative step or two to fully agree with Kearney when he puts it that 'Christ became flesh in order to heal the sick with his hands', he does rightly indicate the centrality of touch to Jesus' ministry.[260] He cites the woman with a persistent haemorrhage who touches the fringe of Jesus' clothes (Luke 8: 43-48) as a key example, but more pertinent examples are those such as Matthew 20: 29-34 where Jesus touches someone as he heals them. Conradie argues that there is a mutuality implied by haptic perception through touch, that is not necessarily implied through the other senses.[261] Indeed, in

[257] Schwöbel, Christoph, 'Human Being as Relational Being: Twelve Theses for a Christian Anthropology' in *Persons Divine and Human,* ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 141-165, p.141.
[258] Herzfeld, Noreen, 'Do we image God on-line? The opportunities and challenges for authentic relationships in cyberspace' in *Theology & Sexuality,* 26:2-3 (2020), 99-108, p.100-101.
[259] McFadyen, Alistair I., *The Call to Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.47.
[260] Kearney, Richard, 'What Happened to Touch?' in *Pandemic, Ecology and Theology*, ed. Alexander J.B. Hampton (London: Routledge, 2021), p.39.
[261] Conradie, Ernst M., 'Is the Ear More Spiritual Than the Eye? Theological Reflections on the Human Senses' in *Issues in Science and Theology: Do Emotions Shape the World?,* ed. Dirk Evers, Michael Fuller, Anne Runehov and Knut-Willy Sæther (Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 177-188, p.179.

Matthew 20: 29-34, healing and touch are accompanied by interaction, as Jesus asks the men who are blind 'What do you want me to do for you?' (v.32).[262] The point is that Jesus' ministry is characterised through relationships that rely on embodiment and are typified by interaction. In fact, many of these are set within the context of Jesus' redemptive work of healing and are, then, at the heart of his ministry.[263]

The centrality of relationships within identity is reflected by an emphasis found in the ministry of Jesus. In recent years, this has led to theological reflection about the nature of relationships in the digital world given the increasing prevalence of technology. Herzfeld, for instance, expresses concern that 'in cyberspace it feels like we don't need bodies' and argues that virtual relationships must be an adjunct to face-to-face interactions.[264] In this view, then, the 'irreducible desire for tangible contact' experienced by many during COVID lockdowns is a rejection of half-baked online relationships, which for many are increasingly prevalent.[265] Yet this perspective ignores, firstly, how technology can be used to convey multiple dimensions of 'face-to-face' interaction, including touch.[266] Indeed, while it is somewhat bizarre that Serrano and De Cesaris can propose that 'technological objects […] make it possible for us to create relationships with each other and with the environment', technology can certainly enhance the dynamic interaction at the heart of our relationships.[267]

Secondly, it ignores how even virtual communication is embodied. Participants still remain embodied humans and the virtual world still relies on physical technology. Therefore, although virtual interaction may seem disembodied, it is patently not. Rather than rejecting relationships expressed virtually as theologically substandard, a better approach would be

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[262] The parallels to this account in Mark 10: 46-52 and Luke 18: 35-43 do not include touch, but it is represented in numerous other places throughout the gospels, for example Matthew 8: 3, Mark 7: 33, Luke 22:51.
[263] See Wright, Tom, *Surprised By Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007), p.211.
[264] Herzfeld, *Do we image God on-line?*, p.106.
[265] See, for example, the critique of social media offered by Serrano and De Cesaris. Serrano, Gemma and De Cesaris, Alessandro, 'Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Digital Age' in *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society,* 7 (2021), 1-20, p.15.
[266] Kearney, *What Happened to Touch?*, p.32-33.
[267] Serrano and De Cesaris, *Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Digital Age,* p.3; Ott, Kate, 'Purifying Dirty Computers: Cyborgs, Sex, Christ, and Otherness' in *Cursor_ Zeitschrift Für Explorative Theologie,* April 2021, https://cursor.pubpub.org/pub/ott-purifying-dirty-computers, p.2.

to ask what theological framework can account for their place at the heart of our identity? The point arising from this chapter is not so much about the nature and quality of human relationships, but how we can understand identity constituting relationships in theological terms.

The focus on theology, rather than anthropology, then, is significant as we proceed. This is especially the case since this chapter also raises questions about the part God plays in our identity. For instance, if embodiment is significant, then how might we understand an individual's relationship to God who is not embodied in the same way as humans? While Jesus could physically touch those he encountered during his ministry in the gospels, that possibility seems now to be significantly diminished, for all that Jesus might be physically present with God.[268] Indeed, does Jesus' instruction to Mary to not 'hold on' to him (John 20:17) imply some sort of transformation of touch, physicality or relationship? These are questions we shall carry with us as we approach the theological discussion later in this study.

3.5 Conclusion: Identity Constituting Relationships

In this chapter I have set out a range of perspectives from the cognitive sciences and argued that they indicate a view of identity in which relationships are central to who we are. Social embodiment and embeddedness are connected through dynamic social interactions, from which who we are arises. Identity is constituted, then, by relationships. Yet, it is not the quality of these relationships that it is key, but rather to have sufficient meaning, they must be set in a 'meaning-full' context.

At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted the words of Leia from *Return of the Jedi*. Replying to Han's question she said she was 'someone who loves you.' What I failed to mention is that this response recalls their last interaction in *The Empire Strikes Back.* Just before Han is committed to carbon freezing, Leia calls out to him 'I love you,' to which he replies, 'I

[268] Wright, *Surprised By Hope,* p.122.

know.'[269] Leia's words in *Return of the Jedi*, then, do not just indicate her and Han's relationship, but draw upon their shared history. In other words, she sets her identity within a narrative and it is that which I shall explore in the next chapter.

[269] *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*, dir. Irvin Kershner (Twentieth Century Fox, 1980).

4. 'So, what's your story?' The Narrative Aspects of Identity

Gone Girl is a quietly disturbing film set in small-town America, which tells the story of married couple Amy and Nick Dunne, in the aftermath of Amy's disappearance.[270] The film has a bifurcated structure. The first half is told by Nick amid the search for Amy and his growing realisation that she has framed him for her murder. The second half of the story follows Amy as she attempts to navigate her apparent success and justify her actions.

This is not a film ostensibly about identity, save from the fact that Nick gradually realises that he has drastically misjudged his wife's character. However, it perfectly illustrates how a narrative gives meaning to a relationship. The relationship between Nick and Amy is central to who they are; it defines them within the film, for all they rarely appear together. Yet, as each tells the story of their relationship, the audience is presented with two narratives that are quite different. The same events and interactions are interpreted quite differently and the relationship they share means something quite different within who they each are. Narrative gives meaning to relationship.

Films of course, have, by and large, a narrative structure. But do such identity shaping narratives have a basis in reality outside of artistic human construction? In this chapter I will argue that the cognitive sciences suggest that identity can indeed be understood narratively, in fact, I will suggest that our identity is found in multiple, connected narratives.

To make this case, I will first take a step back and assess the contribution of the philosophical tradition on this question, which emphasises the importance of the self and memory. Indeed, by focusing on the self, and drawing upon the cognitive sciences, it is possible to discern a narrative structure to autobiographical memory by way of self-defining memories. These memories shape the narrative of who we understand ourselves to be.

[270] *Gone Girl*, dir. David Fincher (Twentieth Century Fox, 2014).

However, it will become clear that a narrative structure cannot be contained within the self, but characterises identity as a whole.

4.1 Memory, Psychological Continuity and Narrative

4.1.1 Memory and John Locke

Before we consider how we might approach the narrative aspects of identity from the point of view of the cognitive sciences, it is helpful to take a step back and consider how some of the issues we will encounter have been considered within the personal identity tradition. This is not to negate the argument I made in chapter two that there are inherent problems within this tradition. These will be evident in the proceeding discussion. But some of the conceptual framework will be useful as we continue.

The importance of memory for personal identity arises within a tradition in which the central figure is Locke.[271] He argued that what makes a person the same person over time, was the ability to extend one's consciousness back over time to any past action.[272] In other words, if an individual can remember an experience of her younger self, then she is the same person as the one who experienced it. This is tied up, for Locke, in how he defines a person as a 'thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in difference times and places.'[273] It is straightforward to see, then, how extending one's consciousness back implies extension of the same person through time. It is not necessary to rehearse the flaws of this approach to personhood, in that they exclude anyone who is not considered an 'intelligent being'. This is symptomatic of any approach to personhood for all the flaws here may appear particularly egregious. What we can draw from Locke is that, although he focuses specifically on the extension of consciousness rather than memory, it indicates an approach in which memory is the key

[271] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.30-31
[272] Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p.449.
[273] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* p.448-9.

criterion of continuity of identity and thereby, presumably represents an important factor in identity itself.[274]

One of the difficulties identified by Locke is that an individual rarely has conscious awareness of all his past experiences, in fact, any awareness may be interrupted by forgetfulness or sleep.[275] Yet, the point is whether an individual *can* extend his consciousness back, not whether he constantly does. A more pressing problem, however, is that memories may fade altogether. Indeed, there may be moments of an individual's life which her memory has no access to and to which her consciousness cannot be extended, but that are patently a part of who she is. Infancy, is an obvious example, but memories of particular experiences may also be repressed for some reason, and yet have an effect on the present individual.[276] It is for this reason that some have reformulated Locke's approach arguing that 'psychological continuity' is a better criterion for continuity of identity.[277] That is, a person is the same over time if there is uninterrupted connectedness within their psychological make-up over that time.

4.1.2 Continuity and Connectedness

The psychological continuity approach is, of course, an answer to the 'reidentification question' explored in chapter two. While the question is not a central concern of my discussion, it is worth exploring it a little given the central role memory plays within it. Indeed, it is the presence of memory that, for Schechtman, means that this reformulation of Locke's thesis suffers the same problem as the original; that fading memories mean that transitivity is lost.[278] She proposes that 'psychological connectedness' would be a better approach. In actual fact, 'connectedness' is indistinguishable from continuity and it is worth explaining this point in a little more detail at this point.

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[274] Schechtman, Marya, *The Constitution of Selves* (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.107.
[275] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* p.450-1.
[276] Neisser notes how some survivors, for instance, express surprise when memories of sexual abuse emerge during therapy. This is taken as evidence of very deep repression. Neisser, Ulrich, 'Self-narratives: True and false' in *The Remembering Self,* ed. Ulrich Neisser and Robyn Fivush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-18, p.3. See also Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves p.*110.
[277] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, p, 42.
[278] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.27-33.

Consider the following. In the Lord of The Rings, Frodo Baggins embarks on a journey that takes him from his home in Bag End, through the last homely house in Rivendell to Mount Doom in Mordor.[279] Let us say, then, that when arriving in Rivendell, Frodo remembers leaving Bag End and that on the slopes of Mount Doom, Frodo remembers arriving in Rivendell. For the sake of simplicity, let us also say that these memories are indicative of psychological continuity between the occasions. This should imply that there is psychological continuity between Frodo on Mount Doom and leaving Bag End if the relation is transitive. But what if Frodo on Mount Doom no longer remembers leaving Bag End? This would then imply that there is no psychological continuity between the two occasions. Transitivity, then, fails.

The problem with this approach is that it assumes a static view of continuity. To say that an individual's psychological make-up is continuous, is not to say that it has to be the same at every point. On the contrary, continuity allows for change and development, so long as that change and development is not disjointed.[280] This is what Schechtman means by 'connectedness' but she only has to make the distinction because she misunderstands the idea of continuity. Consider how a function in mathematics is considered continuous if one can draw the graph without 'removing the pen'.[281] If something is continuous it does not imply that it remains the same, only that it is connected.

Memories, then, within an approach to identity that stresses psychological continuity, do not have to remain the same. Indeed, they can change and fluctuate, so long as they do so within the wider context of one's psychological make-up, which is continuously connected to one's psychological make-up in the past. Frodo, therefore, can forget that he left Bag End as he climbs Mount Doom, without concern that he is somehow a different person, if his psychological make-up can be traced back through the process of forgetting (and no doubt

[279] Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).
[280] Matthews, Steve, 'Personal identity, multiple personality disorder, and moral personhood' in *Philosophical Psychology*, 11:1 (1998), 67-88, p.68.
[281] The actual definition is that a function $f(x)$ is *continuous* at the real number a exactly when the following condition holds: given any $\varepsilon > 0$ there is $\delta > 0$ such that if $|x - a| < \delta$, then $|f(x) - f(a)| < \varepsilon$. Smith, Geoff, *Introductory Mathematics: Algebra and Analysis* (London: Springer, 1998), p.182.

other changes) to his psychological make up as he departed on his journey without any disjointed disruption to it.

4.1.3 Psychological Continuity in Context

The problem with the psychological continuity criterion is not a lack of connectedness, this is precisely what it implies. Rather it is the means by which one's psychological make-up is connected. We can approach this in two ways. The first is within the context of the reidentification question of personal identity, in which the body is the means by which one's psychological make-up is continuous. Now, psychological continuity and bodily continuity are usually set up in opposition to each other as answers to this question.[282] Yet, as I highlighted in chapter two, little account is given to the notion that the evidence from the cognitive sciences suggests that it may not be possible to have psychological continuity without bodily continuity at all.[283]

Take memory for instance. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that memory is embodied: structures in the brain consolidate learning and memory through cortical networks.[284] The classic case in point is a study of London taxi drivers which found correlation between the length of time spent as a taxi driver and the size of the posterior hippocampus (which is used to facilitate spatial memory).[285] The study indicated the embodiment of memory in networks across the brain. As Greenfield puts it, memories 'literally leave [their] mark in personalising our brain-cell connections.'[286]

The point is that psychological continuity relies on bodily continuity as the means by which it can be said to be continuous is, because psychological continuity arises from a body which is

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[282] Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity,* p.110; Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.22.

[283] Indeed, Schechtman argues that bodily continuity is the only way to guarantee genuine psychological continuity, rather than the appearance of such. It is not clear how one would achieve un-genuine psychological continuity (outside of outlandish thought experiments), but the point is well made. Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.22.

[284] Jeeves and Brown, *Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion,* p.44.

[285] Maguire, Eleanor A., Gadian, David G., Johnsrude, Ingrid S., Good, Catriona D., Ashburner, John, Frackowiak, Richard S. J., and Frith, Christopher D., 'Navigation-related structural change in the hippocampi of taxi drivers' in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America,* 97:8 (2000), 4398–4403.

[286] Greenfield, *You and Me*, p.76-77.

also continuous.[287] Much more could, of course, be said on this point, but I do not want to dwell on it since the reidentification question is not the focus of this thesis. A more relevant discussion is the other perspective by which we can say our psychological-make up is continuous; that it is part of a connected self-narrative, that accounts for, gives meaning to, and is shaped by psychological change over time. This is much more relevant to what makes us the people we are and is put forward by Schechtman, whose proposal I will outline in the next section.

4.1.4 The Narrative Self-Constitution View

Schechtman takes a similar view to the one I have outlined above. She argues that the body constrains the psychology of a person and that 'arguments for a bodily reidentification criterion are overwhelming'.[288] She, then, focuses on the question of what makes a person the person she is and proposes a 'narrative self-constitution view.' As she puts it

> individuals constitute themselves as persons by coming to think of themselves as persisting subjects who have had experiences in the past and will continue to have experiences in the future, taking certain experiences as theirs. Some, but not all individuals weave stories of their lives, and it is their doing so which makes them persons. On this view a person's *identity* […] is constituted by the content of her self-narrative, and the traits, actions, and experiences included in it are, by virtue of that inclusion, hers.[289]

Thus, for Schechtman identity is narrative in form and what makes a person the person she is, is found within her own self-narrative. Psychological continuity over time, then, may be grounded in the body, but an individual's psychological make-up at any one time finds continuity with the past because it is incorporated within a narrative view of herself.

One of the problems with Schechtman's proposal which will be apparent following my discussion in chapter two is how she frames her proposal in terms of 'persons.' Indeed, the division between 'individuals', 'human beings', and 'persons' is readily apparent in her

[287] Bodies are also subject to change. Indeed, the atoms of a body are replaced around ever six years. Again, this change does not imply a lack of continuity, but does suggest we need to see the body in terms of the pattern of its make-up as well as the physical matter. Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.51-53; Polkinghorne, John, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), p.108.
[288] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.69
[289] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.94 (italics original).

work.[290] There are inherent flaws in this approach, which I have already discussed so will not repeat here. However, what may also be apparent is how Schechtman's proposal rests on the basis of reflexive cognition: 'individuals constitute themselves as persons by coming to *think of themselves* as persisting subjects'. This is precisely how I argued the self should be understood in chapter two; a rich psychological construction of content-driven reflexive thinking. Thus, while she frames her proposal in terms of the identity of persons, it has more potential for success if it is limited to the nature of the self. In other words, what we can take from Schechtman's argument, is a proposal that the self is narrative in form.

While Schechtman's thesis is significant, it does not reflect any significant engagement with the cognitive sciences. This is unfortunate because she frames it in terms of embodied psychology, which could give rise to meaningful dialogue between the two, especially since the subject of narrative has become increasingly significant in recent years, especially within psychology.[291] Indeed, a number of writers put forward a view strikingly similar to Schechtman's, that 'life narratives' are a way of 'defining the self.'[292] In the next section, then, I will assess the view from the cognitive sciences on a narrative self. However, before we move on, it is important to note one more aspect of Schechtman's proposal.

One aspect of Schechtman's argument which is not altogether clear is the extent to which a self-constituting narrative has to be explicit. If we are to take it only in terms of the self, then it has to be, by definition, since I argued for a view of the self in terms of *explicit* reflexive cognition. This is reflected by Schechtman in that she puts it that 'thinking of oneself as persisting through time and of the different temporal parts of one's existence as being mutually influential is a minimal requirement.'[293] In other words, an individual must at least *think of herself* as participating within a basic narrative structure. However,

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[290] Schechtman rejects the notion that it is 'chauvinistic' to exclude those who have no narrative from personhood: 'thinking of one as persisting through time and of the different temporal parts of one's existence as being mutually influential is a minimal requirement of the state we call personhood.' The problem with this defence is twofold. Firstly, it is not self-evident why any individual must be classed as a person or non-person. And secondly, while Schechtman's criterion *may* be reasonable, assessing whether another meets it is unfeasible. Both have worrying ethical implications. Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.94, 102.
[291] Singer, Jefferson A. and Salovey, Peter, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality* (London: The Free Press, 1993), p.2.
[292] Neisser*, Self-narratives: True and false*, p.1.
[293] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.94,102.

Schechtman also allows for unarticulated or implicit aspects to exist within an individual's narrative, that may be 'at least partially hers'.[294] They may, then, play a role, albeit a lesser one, in the identity defining narrative.

This tension arises in Schechtman's work because she is trying to capture the whole of an individual's identity within her narrative self-constitution view. As I argued in chapter two, the self cannot be successfully equated with identity, which is rooted in a range of implicit and embedded factors. Schechtman is attempting to include some of these implicit aspects within her view, but this is inherently difficult because she has defined the narratives in question in terms of explicit reflexive cognition.

To some extent, by restricting the proposal to the self relieves many of these problems. There is no reason why implicit aspects of identity have to be included within a narrative self, because this itself is only one aspect of identity. However, given that I have argued that identity arises from the dynamic connections between the body and its environmental context, then the self cannot be wholly separated from the rest of an individual's identity. Thus, any self-constituting narrative may be shaped by implicit factors. While this was a problem for Schechtman, it aligns well with how I have understood identity so far. Indeed, Hydén notes how any kind of storytelling is embodied and sits within a physical and social context.[295] However, it raises the question as to what extent these other factors could be narratively shaped. In other words, is it just the self that has narrative form or are there other narrative aspects of our identity? These will be important to bear in mind as I now return to the question of the narrative self from the perspective of the cognitive sciences.

[294] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.117-118.
[295] Hydén, Lars-Christer, 'Towards an embodied theory of narrative and storytelling' in *Travelling Concepts of Narrative*, ed. Mari Hatavara, Lars-Christer Hydén and Matti Hyvärinen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 227-244, p.227-8.

4.2 Autobiographical Memory: The Building Blocks of Narrative

4.2.1 Autobiographical Memory and the Self

In the previous chapter, I outlined the generally established view within the cognitive sciences that the self arises through interactions with others.[296] However, this should not be taken in contradiction to a narrative view of the self. Indeed, Read and Miller argue that humans use stories to 'effectively manage social interactions' and efficiently store other similarly complex information.[297] To put it another way, it is possible that as the self emerges in interaction with others, it takes narrative form as a way of managing the complex social and experiential content of reflexive cognition.[298]

At the heart of this process for many researchers is autobiographical memory, that is, an individual's recall of particular self-involving episodes from her past.[299] In other words, my autobiographical memories are memories of events that happened 'to me.' Howe and Courage note that while infants and toddlers have accurate and durable recall, it is still fragmentary and usually heavily dependent on questioning. The reason for this, they argue, is that while episodic memory systems are present within young children, autobiographical memory has not yet emerged. [300] They note that this mirrors how the self emerges when a child is between eighteen to twenty-four months old.

Howe and Courage's thesis is that autobiographical memory emerges hand-in-hand with the self. Therefore 'infantile amnesia' comes to an end as the self emerges as an organising concept around which memories can be structured.[301] Indeed, it is important to note that if

[296] Mischel and Morf, *The Self as a Psycho-Social Dynamic Processing System*, p.23.
[297] Read and Miller*, Stories Are Fundamental to Meaning and Memory*, p.149-150.
[298] Mankowski, Eric and Rappaport, Julian, 'Stories, Identity, and the Psychological Sense of Community' in *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, Advances in Social Cognition, Vol. VII*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister, Leonard S. Newman and Robert S. Wyer (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 211-226, p.215
[299] Fivush, Robyn, 'The functions of event memory: some comments on Nelson and Barsalou' in *Remembering Reconsidered*, ed. Ulric Neisser and Eugene Winograd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 277-282, p.277.
[300] Howe, Mark L. and Courage, Mary L., 'The Emergence and Early Development of Autobiographical Memory' in *Psychological Review*, 104:3 (1997), 499-523, p.507-508.
[301] Howe and Courage, *The Emergence and Early Development of Autobiographical Memory*, p.514.

the self is narratively in form, then this is a mutual dynamic: autobiographical memory begins to be organised by the self, which in turn constitutes the self through that organisation.[302] In fact, within this framework, it is the self that separates autobiographical memory from general episodic memory.

Howe and Courage also note the importance of questioning by adults to elicit memory in infants possibly implying a link between the emergence of the self through social interaction and the development of autobiographical memory. Indeed, a number of studies draw out how children are socially conditioned to articulate their past in narrative form. One such study examined parent-child conversations and found that adults guided children to recount their past in increasingly coherent and conceptualised ways.[303] Through this, Fivush argues, children are taught to value the past, view it as worth speaking to others about and, in particular, they learn the 'culturally appropriate narrative forms for recounting' it.[304] Another study found that by the age of three children are able to recount narratives by themselves and seem aware of the canonical features of a story, such as time, place, character and structure (i.e. beginning, middle and end).[305] Fivush concludes that the main function of these narratives is 'self-definitional.' [306]

Drawing this discussion together, then, it indicates that the emergence of the self is connected to the emergence of autobiographical memory and self-definitional narratives. This may suggest that the self is narrative in form and made up of autobiographical memory, but it is also possible that self-definitional narratives are a product of social conditioning and

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[302] This aligns will with how Schechtman argues that within a self-constituting narrative the 'incidents and experiences' are interpreted as part of the on-going story 'that gives them their significance.' Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves.*, p.97.
[303] Fivush, Robyn, 'Constructing narrative, emotion, and self in parent-child conversations about the past' in *The Remembering Self,* ed. Ulrich Neisser and Robyn Fivush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 136-157, p.137-138.
[304] The research Fivush cites also indicates that adults' conversation differs between girls and boys. She concludes that 'girls are being socialized to be relational whereas boys are being socialized to be individual.' This point is significant in and of itself, but it raises a further issue. That is, how society affects the narratives we are taught to recall. I am going to engage with this issue presently, however it is worth noting that most of the academic research focuses on western cultures. Indeed, Fivush herself concedes that her research was only conducted with white, middle-class parents. Fivush, *Constructing narrative, emotion, and self in parent-child conversations about the past*, p.137-139; 143.
[305] McAdams, Dan, 'The Psychology of Life Stories' in *Review of General Psychology,* 5:2 (2001), 100-122, p.105.
[306] Fivush, *Constructing narrative, emotion, and self in parent-child conversations about the past,* p.136.

have little to do with autobiographical memory. Of course, the truth may be something of both.[307] However, to make a determination, we must consider if there is a narrative element to autobiographical memory itself. This is not straightforward. After all, we can hardly expect to find memories marked ‘beginning’, ‘middle’ and ‘end’. Indeed, this is particular difficulty since whatever narrative we are a part of, we know – by virtue of being alive to ask the question - that it has not yet come to a conclusion. Yet it is possible that we may find structures within autobiographical memory that are potentially narrative in form. For example, consider the markers of intelligible narrative identified by Singer:

a) There is a valued end point or goal.
b) Events are selected that are relevant to that end point or goal.
c) Events are ordered in some way.
d) There are causal links between events.
e) Demarcation signs signal that a narrative is distinct (from other narratives or discourses).[308]

Alternatively, drawing upon a number of sources, I propose that we can identify three criteria through which we might discern a narrative structure within autobiographical memory:

1) Memories are connected to the self.
2) Memories gain significance through integration within a whole.
3) Memories are mutually interpretive: organised chronologically or causally etc.[309]

While Singer’s criteria are more sophisticated, these three do a good job of accounting for them in the most part. The main difference is that they focus on the self as a whole, whereas, for Singer, the central aspect is a valued end point. This, of course, arises from the fact that memory is ‘one-sided’, that is, it is only comprised of the past, and not the future. As we shall see, this is less difficult than might be supposed, and does not mean that we

[307] Sutton, John, ‘Remembering’ in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situation Cognition,* ed. Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 217-235, p.222

[308] Singer, Jefferson A., ‘Seeing One's Self: Locating Narrative Memory in a Framework of Personality’ in *Journal of Personality*, 63:3 (1995), 429-457, p.447.

[309] Barsalou, Lawrence W., ‘The content and organisation of autobiographical memories’ in *Remembering Reconsidered*, ed. Ulric Neisser and Eugene Winograd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 193-244, p.224; Matthews, *Personal identity, multiple personality disorder, and moral personhood*, p.69-70; Conway, Martin A., ‘Memory and the self’ in *Journal of Memory and Language*, 53 (2005), 594-628, p.595; Jefferson A. Singer and Susan Bluck, ‘New Perspectives on Autobiographical Memory: The Integration of Narrative Processing and Autobiographical Reasoning’ in *Review of General Psychology*, 5:2 (2001), 91-99, p.95; Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.124-5.

cannot use these criteria to assess a possible narrative structure within autobiographical memory.

4.2.2 Autobiographical Memory and the Self Memory System

Conway and Pleyell-Pearce propose that the connection between the self and autobiographical memory is best understood by what they term 'The Self Memory System'.[310] They argue that an aspect of the self – 'the working self' – encodes new memories and mediates autobiographical memory recall in the future.[311] Indeed, it does this in such a way as to support and cohere with the current conception of the working self.[312] Conway and Pleyell-Pearce's model thus suggests that there is a mutually interpretive dynamic between the working self and autobiographical memory.

It is important to clarify what is meant by 'the working self.' The term is not specifically defined by Conway and Pleyell-Pearce, but they and others use it to denote a particular aspect of the self, which is directed toward one's goals, that is, those aims and processes which determine action and behaviour.[313] However, by denoting those aspects of reflexive cognition that are caught up in goal directed action and behaviour, as a kind of self, Conway and Pleyell-Pearce run the risk of implying that there is a distinct core to the self that controls how autobiographical memory is encoded and modulated. This is akin to the notion of the 'minimal self' which I resisted previously. However, Conway and Pleyell-Pearce's argument is not that a mysterious, unitary entity exists within the self, rather that those aspects of reflexive thinking that are generally goal-directed, are those that are most involved with autobiographical memory encoding and mediation. There is no suggestion that such aspects are distinct. In fact, they argue that the working self is a dynamic concept. All the same, we should be cautious about using terms like the working self.

[310] Conway, *Memory and the self*, p.595.
[311] Conway, Martin A. and Pleydell-Pearce, Christopher W., 'The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System' in *Psychological Review*, 107:2 (2000), 261-288, p.265.
[312] Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, *The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System,* p.271; Conway, *Memory and the self*, p.594.
[313] Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, *The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System,* p.264.

A more substantive, yet related, objection to Conway and Pleyell-Pearce's proposal is that the Self Memory System places too much emphasis on an individual's goals, that is, on what she *does*. Of course, intentional action and behaviour are essential aspects of the self.[314] Yet, given that the working self is not distinct within the self, and that Conway and Pleyell-Pearce have argued that memory encoding and retrieval are modulated in favour of consistency, it seems difficult to exclude non-goal related aspects of the self. Indeed, Conway himself in a later piece speaks of autobiographical memory being drawn up to provide support for 'current self image, goals and beliefs', therefore moving beyond the working self alone.[315]

I suggest, then, a better approach is to move away from the notion of the working self altogether, and put it that autobiographical memory is directed towards, and motivated by, multiple dynamic aspects of the self, especially those that are goal-driven, whether this is in terms of action, belief or purpose.[316] Indeed, this last point is important, because it begins to indicate how memory may incorporate a valued future end point, which was a central aspect of narrative.

The upshot of the Self Memory System is that autobiographical memory is directed towards on-going conceptions of the self, particularly how we conceive of ourselves in terms of our goals. In a sense it is 'motivated.'[317] This is a challenge to any notion that memory storage and retrieval is a neutral process. King points out that many of the metaphors we have of memory, such as that of a storehouse, fail to capture its dynamic properties.[318] Indeed, recollection does not just involve accessing an isolated memory, but also involved the cognitive processes that were caught up in previous recollections of that event as well.[319] In other words, how an event has been remembered previously is as important as the event

[314] Greenfield, *You and Me,* p.108.
[315] Conway, *Memory and the self*, p.595.
[316] Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, *The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System*, p.264-266.
[317] Conway, Martin A., Singer, Jefferson A. and Tagini, Angela, 'The Self and Autobiographical Memory: Correspondence and Coherence' in *Social Cognition,* 22:5 (2004), 491-529, p.493-4.
[318] King, Nicola, *Memory, Narrative and Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.25.
[319] Lars-Christer, *Towards an embodied theory of narrative and storytelling,* p.234.

itself within memory systems. Hence, autobiographical memory 'is better understood as a process of personal reconstruction than one of faithful reconstitution.'[320]

The implications of this are twofold. Firstly, autobiographical memory is encoded and mediated in order to give personal consistency in line with goal-driven action, intention, purpose and belief. Indeed, it quite naturally records perceived progress of personal aims and processes.[321] This suggests that it is in a sense interpreted, just as events are interpreted within a narrative.[322] And secondly, this discussion indicates that autobiographical memory is not just dynamically connected to the self, but also a wider range of factors, given that recollection is determined by past recollection and therefore by the embodied and embedded context of that recollection.[323] Furthermore, if there is no distinct working self then the dynamic relation of the self to the other aspects of identity means that they, in turn, are dynamically connected to autobiographical memory. In other words, autobiographical memory is not narratively shaped by the self, but by our identity as a whole.

Before I expand my focus beyond the self, however, there is one further matter for discussion. So far, I have suggested that autobiographical memory is narratively shaped within the self. This accounts well for how an individual sees himself in relation to events, but the self contains more abstract elements as well, such as the qualities or dispositions an individual believes he has. It is not readily apparent how these relate to autobiographical memory nor how they can be included within a self-defining narrative. However, as I shall argue in the next section, they can.

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[320] Neimeyer, Greg J. and Metzler, April E., 'Personal identity and autobiographical recall' in *The Remembering Self,* ed. Ulrich Neisser and Robyn Fivush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 105-135, p.105.
[321] Conway, Singer and Tagini, *The Self and Autobiographical Memory*, p.496.
[322] Hirst, William, 'The remembered self in amnesiacs' in *The Remembering Self,* ed. Ulrich Neisser and Robyn Fivush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 252-277, p.252-253.
[323] Lars-Christer, *Towards an embodied theory of narrative and storytelling*, p.237.

4.2.3 Autobiographical Memory and Self-Defining Memories

Klein and Nichols identify two types of memory: episodic memory and semantic memory.[324] Episodic memory refers to memories that are associated with an event at a specific time and in a specific place. This includes autobiographical memory. Semantic memory on the other hand, includes factual knowledge as well as the knowledge, beliefs and opinions about oneself and others. For Klein and Nichols, this kind of memory is 'context free', that is, it is not associated with an event, time or place.

It is difficult to maintain a strict division between episodic memory and semantic memory. Shank and Abelson, for instance, argue quite the reverse. Their thesis is that 'all knowledge is embedded in stories'.[325] Although certain 'facts' might be learned, most knowledge that is used in daily life is actually a form of abbreviated story. In other words, my knowledge that Berlin is the capital of Germany is as much episodic memory as the memories I have of my school trip to that city. This is because, rather than being context-free, my knowledge that Berlin is the capital of Germany may, in fact, be tied up within my memory of that school trip (or within another Berlin-related episodic memory).[326] The problem is, as Brewer points out, Shank and Abelson present minimal evidence for their 'extraordinary claim' beyond that semantic memory is often tied to a specific episodic memory.[327] My knowledge about the German capital may be *connected* to my trip to Berlin, but this does not demonstrate that it is found within that episodic memory.

While Shank and Abelson may not be right to say that all semantic memory is found within episodic memory, their work does demonstrate that semantic memory is hardly context free. It suggests that there is no strict division between abstract elements of the self and autobiographical memory. Indeed, research suggests that repeated rumination on particular

[324] Klein and Nichols, *Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity*, p.679-680.
[325] Shank, Roger C. and Abelson, Robert P., 'Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story' in *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, Advances in Social Cognition, Vol. VII*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister, Leonard S. Newman and Robert S. Wyer (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 1-86, p.2.
[326] Shank and Abelson, *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story,* p.4.
[327] Brewer, William F., 'To Assert That Essentially All Human Knowledge and Memory is Represented in Terms of Stories is Certainly Wrong' in *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, Advances in Social Cognition, Vol. VII*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister, Leonard S. Newman and Robert S. Wyer (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 109-119, p.118.

events can have an effect on semantic knowledge of one's qualities and dispositions.[328] This brings us on to so-called 'self-defining memories.'

Singer and Salovey argue that at the heart of autobiographic memory is a number of particularly significant memories. They argue that these memories represent a 'core of slides' that summarise a wider canon of narratively interpreted autobiographical memories.[329] The implication is that some autobiographical memories are more 'privileged for self-definition than others.'[330] It is this privileged status within how autobiographic memories are encoded and mediated that entails repeated rumination, so that self-definitional memories 'crystallise characteristic interests, motives or concerns of an individual into a shorthand moment.'[331] In other words, they encapsulate central abstract aspects of the self.

At the heart of what makes a self-defining memory is, for Singer and Salovey, a connection to an unresolved theme or concern. This ties the memory closely to those aspects of the self that are goal-driven, which encode and mediate autobiographical memory, making it 'highly available' within that process.[332] Furthermore, the unresolved nature of the memory elicits greater emotional intensity and vividness, entailing a greater memorial effect.[333] These two factors together make such memories particularly significant, not just in and of themselves, but in their connection to other autobiographical memories, so that through repeated recollection they can encapsulate abstract elements of the self. McAdams highlights, for example, how a study found that for those who were recovering from addiction, memories that affirmed agency and interpersonal connection were particularly significant.[334] In other

[328] Pillemer, David B., 'Momentous Events and the Life Story' in *Review of General Psychology*, 5:2 (2001), 123-134, p.126.
[329] Singer and Salovey, *The Remembered Self*, p.3-4; 12-13.
[330] McAdams, *The Psychology of Life Stories*, p.110.
[331] Singer and Salovey, *The Remembered Self*, p.3-4; 12-13.
[332] Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, *The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System*, p.264-5.
[333] Conway et al., *The Self and Autobiographical Memory;* Singer and Salovey, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality*, p.80; Kensinger, Elizabeth A., 'Phases of Influence: How emotion modulates the formation and retrieval of declarative memories' in *The Cognitive Neurosciences*, ed. Michael S. Gazzaniga (London: MIT Press, 2009), 725-737, p.727; 730.
[334] McAdams, *The Psychology of Life Stories*, p.109.

words, self-defining memories connected to the on-going goal of recovery, enabled qualities such as agency to be incorporated within a self-defining narrative.

Singer and Salovey also suggest that the more self-defining memories are employed, the more the saliency of the memory is reinforced so that 'these memories begin to define one's basic interaction with the world' since autobiographical memory will be encoded in such a way as to cohere with the basic narrative offered by these self-defining memories.[335] Self-defining memories, then, do not just encapsulate abstract aspects of the self, but they summarise its key narrative elements. Consider, for example, how in free-recall experiments, researchers found evidence of nested structures within autobiographical memory, that is, chronologically, hierarchically and thematically organised sets of autobiographical memories.[336] Central to these 'extended-event time lines' were 'summarised events'; particular autobiographical memories which incapsulate a number of others.[337] It is not a stretch to view these in terms of self-defining memories and to observe how they represent key points within a larger narrative structure.

4.2.4 The Narrative Form of the Self

We can, at this point, bring the preceding discussion together. I have noted how the self and autobiographical memory emerge together. Indeed, they are dynamically connected in that the self encodes autobiographical memory, which in turn is directed to support on-going conceptions of the self. Autobiographical memory, then, is 'motivated' and this primarily occurs through a number of self-defining memories that encapsulate abstract qualities of the self and summarise organised sets of autobiographical memories. In other words, autobiographical memory is shaped and patterned with respect to the self and this pattern is expressed through a number of self-defining memories.

It is my contention, then, that self-defining memories shape autobiographical memory narratively. We are now in a position to assess this against the criteria noted earlier by

[335] Singer and Salovey, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality*, p.3-4, 12-13.
[336] Barsalou, *The content and organisation of autobiographical memories,* p.218.
[337] Barsalou, *The content and organisation of autobiographical memories*, p.224, 200-201.

which it was hoped that we might be able to detect a narrative structure within autobiographical memory:

1. Memories are connected to the self.
All autobiographical memories are inherently connected to the self, but self-defining memories are highly accessible within that dynamic.

2. Memories gain significance through integration within a whole.
Self-defining memories are privileged through how they summarise and encode other autobiographical memories.

3.Memories are mutually interpretive: organised chronologically or causally etc.
Self-defining memories represent a thematic, chronological and causal organisational structure within autobiographical memory.

Self-defining memories, then, are central to how we can understand autobiographical memory to be structured narratively. Indeed, I suggested that it was difficult to imagine how such a narrative could include Singer's 'valued end point or goal', yet given that self-defining memories arise from their connection with the goal-driven aspects of the self, this aspect of narrative also seems to be represented.

The consequence of a narrative pattern to autobiographical memory is that it affirms a narrative structure to the self, since autobiographical memory is directed to support how the self is conceived. Indeed, it provides a cognitive basis for a narrative understanding of the self that is not merely the result of social conditioning. Furthermore, I suggest that it is through a narrative self that continuity of psychological make-up should be best understood since, as Hatavara notes, narrative can be understood as a 'basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change that helps people fashion the vicissitudes of personal experience into a more or less coherent life story'.[338]

There is, however, one issue still unresolved and that is whether a narrative structure can be extended beyond the self. I noted earlier the problems that Schechtman encountered in trying to restrict narrativity to the self and it was also apparent within the preceding discussion that various implicit aspects of identity are connected to how the self is narratively formed. Does this imply that identity as a whole is narrative in form? This will be

[338] Hatavara, Mari, 'Making sense in autobiography' in *Travelling Concepts of Narrative*, ed. Mari Hatavara, Lars-Christer Hydén and Matti Hyvärinen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 163-178, p.164

the subject of the next section, which I shall approach by way of three problems with the narrative self.

4.3 Narrative Identity

4.3.1 'But is it true?' The Narrative Self in the World

The first potential problem with a narrative view of the self concerns the veracity of our memories. If autobiographical memories are shaped narratively within the self, is there a place for false memories within that? Could a false memory become self-defining? Given that there is a dynamic connection between the self and autobiographical memories through which memories are integrated within a self-defining narrative, what about those that don't 'fit'? And what if those memories are more representative of reality or our identity as a whole?

Gazzaniga contends along this line of questioning. In fact, he proposes that the self is an illusion, created, along with a fictional past, by the brain and in particular by the left hemisphere.[339] This is a rather extreme proposal, which is ultimately let down by the dualism evident within his work. He speaks, for instance of how 'the brain' lies 'to me' (see 2.3.2). However, putting this aside, there is still some merit in how he views the self as narratively constructed, and while we may baulk at the idea of an entirely fictional self, it raises the possibility of the narrative self being shaped more by cognitive processes than actual events.

Ultimately, this issue comes down to the level to which an event can change, modify or have some impact upon the self. For Gazzaniga, it cannot, since experience has little effect on the self, or indeed, the brain.[340] However, from an evolutionary perspective, it seems unlikely that any organism would develop a memory system that bears no resemblance to reality. Indeed, accuracy among key features such as goal processing would seem to be an

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[339] Specifically, he argues this comes about through something he calls 'the interpreter.' What exactly this is, is not made clear. Gazzaniga, *The Mind's Past*, p.1, 19-27.
[340] Gazzaniga, *The Mind's Past,* p.35.

important aspect of evolutionary survival.[341] There must, then, be some level of veracity between how autobiographical memory is narratively shaped within the self and the world around us. After all, humans are dynamically embedded within our environmental contexts; our self-defining narratives are shaped by our interaction within it.

To some extent, this objection comes down to a misunderstanding around how the self, and in particular, how self-defining memories, encode and modify new autobiographical memories. I noted earlier that this occurs to give consistency and continuity, however, we should not take from this that dissonant memories are rejected or side-lined. Rather, this is a dynamic process in which the past is constantly 're-interpreted…in the light of the current process of narrativizing self' and where 'disparate past experience can be understood in relation to current and future visions of reality'.[342] There is constant mediation of autobiographical memory and re-interpretation of narratives within the self, which indicates that there is the possibility for dissonant memories to be integrated within it. Indeed, given that memories that conflict with the self are likely to be emotionally affecting and thus elicit further rumination, it is possible that they become self-defining in a reshaped narrative self.[343]

A good example of this can be found within the documentary *My Old School.*[344] In the film old school friends share their experiences of interacting with 'Brandon Lee' a thirty-year-old masquerading as a seventeen-year-old school pupil.[345] One contributor gives her account of performing with him in *South Pacific* following which she is invited to watch a video recording of the musical. The recording presents a quite different account of a kiss between the two of them, the nature of which has been repeated often in the contributor's account. The dissonance between the remembered and recorded accounts creates an understandably emotional reaction from the contributor. The point is that while a possibly self-defining memory may be misremembered, this does not mean that the dissonance

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341 Conway, *Memory and the self*, p.596.
342 Georgakopoulou, Alexandra, *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008), p.18; Mankowski and Rappaport, *Stories, Identity, and the Psychological Sense of Community*, p.215.
343 Conway, *Memory and the self*, p.595.
344 *My Old School*, dir. Jono McLeod (Dogwoof, 2022).
345 See https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-60081503 (last accessed 25/6/2024).

created when that aspect of the self engages with the world is overlooked, negated, or marginalised by the self. Indeed, it has the potential to create a reshaped narrative.

At the same time, none of this rules out the possibility that autobiographical memories are delusional, or that the self is constituted by a narrative that bears little coherence to reality. Indeed, it is patently the case that such an eventuality is possible, as the example above indicates. It is for this reason that theorists like Schechtman build in reality constraints. She argues that if a narrative does not cohere with reality, then it cannot be 'identity constituting'. [346] The problem with this is that it is not clear what objective standard of reality one could set a narrative against or how one might have access to it.[347] In fact, such a constraint is not necessary since the narrative self is ultimately descriptive in nature; it is about who an individual conceives of herself to be, not whether she is being true to reality. If I believe myself to be the manifestation of Gandalf the Grey then that belief is a central aspect of who I consider myself to be, even though it is manifestly false. As Singer and Salovey put it

> identity may be as determined by events we believe happened to us as ones that did. Our illusions, fantasies, and manufactured memories are as much a part of our identity as our mental representations of objective past and present events.[348]

As they suggest, this indicates how unremembered events, such as one's birth, can be included with the narrative self as well as hypothetical events such as one's imagined or hoped-for future.[349] Indeed, it gives rise to the possible inclusion of fantasy or imagination in the self.

The self, then, is more than a collection of organised autobiographical memories. Rather it has the form of a narrative that encompasses the totality of how an individual understands herself to be situated in the world. It is central to her interaction with the world but is shaped by both interaction that is coherent and dissonant.[350]

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[346] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p.119-120. S

[347] Neisser*, Self-narratives: True and false*, p.2.

[348] Singer and Salovey, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality*, p.157.

[349] Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities*, p.17.

[350] Singer and Salovey, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality*, p.12-13; Ricoeur, *Narrative Identity*, p.78.

4.3.2 'But is it just socially conditioned?' The Narrative Self within Relationships

The second potential problem is whether the self has narrative form simply because of the culture we inhabit, which promotes this manner of self-constitution. I have already noted how the self emerges from social interaction in line with culturally acceptable ways of recounting the past. Indeed, there is evidence that self narratives often rely on 'vivid imagery, familiar structures, and archetypal characters, and are often linked to predominant cultural themes or conflicts.'[351] Can we have any confidence, then, that the self is narrative in form, irrespective of cultural or social considerations?

On the one hand, this problem is mitigated, since I have set forth a view of the narrative self that has a cognitive basis; self-defining memories create a narrative structure within the self. However, a cognitive basis does not preclude social influence, especially given how implicit factors can influence the self. Indeed, the fact that the narrative self can encompass the totality of how an individual understands herself to be situated within the world and this is dynamically related to how autobiographical memory is shaped, implies a possible social and cultural influence.

While this may appear to be a challenge to the general applicability of the narrative self, it is in fact, only an issue when we assume that others have no part to play within our identity or that societal or cultural influences on the self are illegitimate. However, if identity arises within the interaction of embodiment and embeddedness and is constituted through relationships, then this can hardly be the case. The cognitive capacity for a narrative self may be equipped and shaped through society and culture, but this arises from social interactions and relationships that are at the heart of who we are.[352] In other words, societal influences on the narrative self are not imposed on an individual 'from outside' but arise from her identity within her social context.

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[351] Singer and Bluck, *New Perspectives on Autobiographical Memory*, p.92.
[352] Singer, *Seeing One's Self*, p.449.

We must take seriously, then, how other people shape the narrative self beyond playing a 'starring role' within it.[353] I argued in the last section that the narrative at the heart of the self shapes our interaction with the world, and thereby with other people, but as I have also noted, that interaction shapes the narrative self as well. This expresses the dynamic of relationship, which is central to who we are, but it also indicates that the narrative self is not just found in cognition, but is determined, mediated and interpreted through interaction with others in the world.[354] Indeed, as Hydén argues, it is embodied, found in situated social interaction and experience, and therefore, also embedded.[355]

The implication of this is that an individual's self-defining narrative may not be uniform, but may modulate according to the environmental context he finds himself within. Certain aspects may become more significant or dissonant experiences may be more easily accommodated. For example, while my belief that I am Gandalf the Grey may represent a discordant aspect of myself in most contexts, it is much more easily accommodated within my self-narrative while I interact with my friend who believes himself to the Radagast the Brown. Furthermore, Baumeister and Newman note how the roles we take within a self-narrative, affect its interpretation and these are primarily determined socially.[356] In other words, through interaction with others, my narrative self may modulate in relation to the place I hold in their self-definitional narrative, since, as Gallagher puts it, it is always entangled in the narrative of others.'[357]

It will be apparent, that the focus of this discussion has moved beyond how reflexive cognition is narrative shaped, and left the self some way behind. We are in a place now, then, to propose that it is not just the self that is narrative in form, but identity itself.

[353] DeGrazia, David, *Human Identity and Bioethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.86.
[354] Brockmeier, Jens, 'Fact and Fiction: Exploring the Narrative Mind' in *Travelling Concepts of Narrative*, ed. Mari Hatavara, Lars-Christer Hydén and Matti Hyvärinen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 121-140, p.137.
[355] Lars-Christer, *Towards an embodied theory of narrative and storytelling,* p.235-7.
[356] Baumeister, Roy F. and Newman, Leonard S., 'The Primacy of Stories, The Primacy of Roles and The Polarising Effects of Interpretative Motives: Some Propositions about Narratives' in *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, Advances in Social Cognition, Vol. VII*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister, Leonard S. Newman and Robert S. Wyer (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 97-108, p.106.
[357] Gallagher, *Philosophical Conceptions of the Self*, p.20.

4.3.3. 'And do I have to believe it?' Narrative Identity in the Body and in the World

The final issue I will discuss is whether a self-defining narrative must be explicit. That is, whether an individual must have an awareness of her narrative self or be able to articulate it. As I observed earlier, Schechtman requires some basic awareness of narrativity and indeed, by definition, the self should be comprised of explicit, reflexive cognition. However, for Strawson, this presents a problem in that, while the self might be narrative constituted for some, he argues that others do not experience life narratively, so it cannot be universally true that the self has narrative form.[358] He uses himself as a case in point, acknowledging that he has a past, but that he has no special interest in it, or particular concern for the future.[359] In fact he puts it that he has 'absolutely no sense of my life as a narrative.'[360]

Strawson's thesis, therefore, potentially undermines any notion of the narrative self and yet, it also faces problems. For instance, while memory recall is – again, by definition – explicit, the same cannot be said for the dynamics that modulate it. Neisser, for instance, details a study in which subjects compared their memories of the Challenger space shuttle explosion, one day and three years after the event. Many were oblivious to how their memories had changed; some remained committed to their later recollection in spite of evidence of their initial memories.[361] The dynamics then that mediate memory, and which I have argued shape autobiographical memory narratively, are often implicit. In other words, it is perfectly possible to have no sense of self that is narrative in form, but this does not mean that it is not.

Neisser's study also highlights, once again, how self-narratives are dynamically engaged through interaction with others. While the dissonance he highlights and which I noted earlier is explicit, there is no reason to suspect that self-narratives cannot be shaped by others implicitly. Hirst, for instance, found that those with amnesia did not have to

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[358] Strawson, Galen, 'Against Narrativity' in *Ratio,* 17:4 (2004), 428-452, p.432-433, 437.

[359] He is led into the curious position of using 'I*' to refer to his past self as he does not accept that *he* was there ('as a matter of metaphysical fact') even if he accepts his past as being his ('as so far as I am a human being'). Strawson, *Against Narrativity*, p.434.

[360] Strawson, *Against Narrativity,* p.432-433.

[361] Neisser records one student, when confronted with their original account saying, "Yes, that's my handwriting - but I still remember it this other way!" Neisser*, Self-narratives: True and false,* p.6.

remember events from their life to be aware of them because 'the social structure of their lives guarantees that memory for these events is externalized, collectivized, and eventually internalized [sic].'[362] The point is that how I have presented the narrative self as shaped by embodiment and embeddedness in the preceding sections, is not all on explicit terms, but is also based on implicit dynamics.

While Strawson's objection may be mitigated by this, there is still the problem that the narrative self should be explicit, within the terms I have set out, and yet, as I have just noted, it is engaged both explicitly and implicitly. The solution has been evident throughout this chapter; that the narrative self represents but one aspect of narrative identity. That is, I suggest that the perspectives of the cognitive sciences set out in this chapter indicate that our identity is narratively shaped.

Narrative identity makes good sense of narratives that arise from and are determined by our interactions with others. In fact, it suggests a context to those interactions that can give rise to relationships and thereby indicate how those relationships can constitute one's identity. Indeed, I noted in the last chapter how cognitive representations of others more closely mirrored representations of the self in that past, indicating that we relate to others in a similar manner to how we relate to our past selves. [363] This makes good sense if we relate to both self and other within a narrative structure.

Furthermore, while the narrative self, represents those aspects of one's narrative identity that are explicit, understanding identity narratively allows for those implicit dynamics that can modulate narratives which are embodied and embedded. Indeed, it suggests a view of identity that is diverse and dynamic. Within this Dennet proposes that who we are is found at the 'center [sic] of narrative gravity,' yet this too easily discounts those aspects that are on the margins and sacrifices dynamism and diversity, for uniformity.[364] Rather, a better

[362] Hirst, *The remembered self in amnesics*, p.272-273.
[363] D'Argembeau et al., *Self-reflection across time*, p.244.
[364] Dennett, Daniel 'The Origin of Selves' *in Self and Identity: Contemporary Philosophical Issues*, ed. Daniel Kolak and Raymond Martin (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 355-364, p.360.

approach is to see our narrative identity as a whole; a cluster of many different strands or aspects of interwoven narrative or, to use a term from literature, an 'epic.'[365]

4.4 Remembering God's Future

In thinking about narratives that are multifaceted, diverse and interwoven, within a theological context, our thoughts might easily turn to scripture, which seems to exemplify these 'epic' qualities. Indeed, narrative is often applied to scripture; how it relates to the work of God in the world and how we are caught up in it. Wright, for instance, uses the model of a five-act play, in which we participate in the final act.[366] While this does run the risk of 'smoothing over' some of the dissonant aspects of the Bible, it does do justice to how the events of God's work in the world are often set in narrative terms within it. The question is, then, whether the narrative interpretation is a fair reflection of how God interacts with the world and an individual's place within that? If so, can we see our relation to God in narrative terms and how might that be a part of who we are?

One of the more curious verses in the Bible is found in Hebrews 11 where we read that

> By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial. *Hebrews 11:22*

As Reese points out, 'made mention' here is a gloss of *μνημόνευσεν*, which is more usually translated 'remembered'.[367] The idea that 'Joseph…remembered the exodus' is understandably odd, since it implies that Joseph is *remembering* an event in the future. Some versions draw Genesis 50:24 into the interpretative context and put it that 'Joseph, when he was dying, referred to [the promise of God for] the exodus' (The Amplified Bible) or 'Joseph…prophesied the exodus of Israel' (The Message), but this doesn't quite do justice to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, who we can be fairly confident was aware of the temporal difficulty in using *μνημόνευσεν* here. How, then, should we understand this verse?

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[365] Nelson, Hilde Lindeman, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.75-76.
[366] Wright, Tom, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (London: SPCK, 2005), p.89-93.
[367] Reese, Ruth Anne, 'Joseph Remembered the Exodus: Memory, Narrative, and Remembering the Future' in *Journal of Theological Interpretation,* 9:2 (2015), 267-286, p.268.

Reese argues that Hebrews 11:22 functions as an example of 'collective memory', that is, events that are socially remembered and repeatedly brought to mind by which they shape the narrative of a community.[368] Thus, the memory of the exodus functions akin to a self-defining memory, which does not just shape an individual's identity, but connects his defining narratives to those of others'. From this point of view, then, Joseph's identity is as much defined by the memory of the exodus as the recipient of the letter to the Hebrews. Reese's thesis makes use of how memory is dynamic, socially dependent and embedded, as I have done in this chapter.[369] However, given that identity shaping narratives are also embodied, it is hard to escape the conclusion that while Joseph may have hoped for, expected, or prophesied the exodus at the end of his life, he did not *remember* it. There is a question, then, about how the narratives of God in the world interact with our identity; are they simply background context, or are they somehow more involving than that?

This is a particularly pertinent question considering, as Volf notes, the exodus is at the heart of the identity of God's people throughout the Old Testament.[370] Indeed, he argues that the exodus and the death and resurrection of Jesus are defining moments for who Christians are now, because the memory of these events reframes our narratives by adding particular narrative weight to aspects of our own narrative.[371] This is brought about because these events are inherently self-involving, that is, they are not just the knowledge of something that happened, but memories of something that happened to do with me. Again, however, while it is straightforward to see how the exodus and the passion of Jesus could affect who I am because of my faith and how those events are represented in key relationships and practices, it is much harder to see how they could be *my* memories.

Here Volf makes a telling contribution to the question as he highlights the place of the resurrection in his model of exodus and passion, and notes that through the resurrection the 'future of humanity has […] already happened in Christ.'[372] In that sense, then, memory of the resurrection[373] implies that what is being remembered is not just an event in the

[368] Reese, *Joseph Remembered the Exodus*, p.269, 275,
[369] Reese, *Joseph Remembered the Exodus*, p.270.
[370] Volf, Miroslav, 'Memory, Eschatology, Eucharist' in *Liturgy,* 22:1 (2007), 27-38, p.27.
[371] Volf, *Memory, Eschatology, Eucharist,* p.35.
[372] Volf, *Memory, Eschatology, Eucharist,* p.27-8.
[373] Volf uses 'passion' but it is helpful here to directly focus on the resurrection of Jesus.

narrative, but the end of the narrative itself. No wonder that, for Volf, memory of these events is transformational, since the end of a story is central to how we understand it. I have argued that a narrative form of identity leaves space for imagination, fantasy, and expectation of the future; is there space also, then, for the end of the story to be known and have a transformational effect in the present?

This, perhaps, raises a number of questions to be explored in the remainder of this study, but we can take from this that we should not underestimate the transformational effect eschatology might have upon who we are, perhaps as much as the events of our pasts. If this seems a little outlandish, consider how the Eucharist is both grounded in the past and fixed in the present, but also has an inherent eschatological character.[374] This is neatly summed up in 1 Corinthians 11:26, adapted as a refrain in some Eucharistic prayers: 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'[375] Here, then, the narrative of God in the world is drawn together and an individual who receives the bread and wine is caught up within that.[376] Furthermore, because of the centrality of the resurrection, this narrative is eschatological in nature, so much so that Lane puts it that the bread and wine capture the transformation of the cosmos in new creation.[377] Could it be, then, that our identity is narratively shaped from the future? And if this is so, might we actually be able to say, even though he couldn't remember it on his deathbed, that the exodus was as much a part of who Joseph is, as much as his memory of imprisonment in Egypt or his reconciliation with his brothers? After all, God is God 'not of the dead, but of the living' (Matthew 22:32).

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[374] Worthen, Jeremy, 'The Theology of Time Regained: Eucharist, Eschatology and Resurrection' in *New Blackfriars,* 80:945 (1999), 512-524, p.513.
[375] Within my own tradition, this is potentially used twice within a Eucharistic prayer; as an acclamation and at the fraction of the bread. The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, *Common Worship* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), p.176, 179. So also, The Methodist Church, *The Methodist Worship Book* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1999), p.217.
[376] Worthen, *The Theology of Time Regained: Eucharist, Eschatology and Resurrection*, p.516.
[377] Lane, Dermot A., 'The Eucharist as Sacrament of the Eschaton' in *The Furrow*, 47:9 (1996), 467-473, p.472.

4.5 Conclusion: Identity Shaping Narratives

It is undeniable that stories are a central aspect of human life and have been for millennia. *Gone Girl* represents just one example among a canon of human storytelling that is impossible to count. The approach in the film does demonstrate how a narrative gives meaning to relationships that are central to who we are. It also demonstrates that multiple, diverse and sometimes dissonant narratives are necessary to reveal who a person is. Indeed, one of the intriguing aspects of the film is how the secondary characters interact with the narratives of Nick and Amy and what this reveals about who Amy and Nick are.

The aim of this chapter has been to draw upon the cognitive sciences to argue that a narrative structure to identity is not the invention of a storyteller, but rooted in how autobiographical memory is embodied and embedded. A useful place to start was the philosophical tradition, in which memory and narrative have been taken up to constitute personal identity or the self. However, it was through self-defining memories that we were able to suggest that the self should be viewed in narrative terms. Throughout my argument, and particularly when discussing three potential problems, it became increasingly clear that a narrative self depended on a narrative understanding of identity as a whole. Indeed, relationships, which in the last chapter I argued constituted our identity, are not just set in a narrative context, but implicitly exemplify the narrative of who we are. Indeed, if this is the case, then the dynamism of those relationships, indicates that rather than viewing narrative identity as a unity, it is itself dynamic and diverse. This raised a number of theological questions and it is to theology that I now turn.

5. Identity in Relation to God: Image, Trinity and Christ

As we move to theology, it seems an appropriate moment to recap some of the principal aspects of my argument so far. I set out in chapter two a view of identity that is both embodied and embedded. In fact, I argued that our identity arises from the dynamic interaction between our body and the world around us, akin to a complex dynamical system. I then set out to explore two key aspects of identity from the perspective of the cognitive sciences. To begin with, I proposed that the social aspects of identity should be understood in terms of identity constituting relationships. These took account of specific interactions, but also had the capacity to root those interactions within a meaningful context. I argued that such a context should be understood in terms of narrative, and drew upon the cognitive sciences to show how identity was narratively shaped, in terms of multiple connected narratives that make up who we are.

In summary, then, our identity can be characterised through relationships, set within a narrative context and arises from our embodiment and embeddedness. However, as I have noted along the way, the cognitive sciences raise a number of questions for how this view of identity should be understood in theological terms. Indeed, if identity can be understood as a complex dynamical system, then this allows from multiple lines of analysis, within which the theological perspective sits alongside the scientific. In other words, we do not turn to theology to answer the problems raised by science, but in order to gain a fuller understanding of what identity is. How these two perspectives interact with one another is the first subject of this chapter.

In the next three chapters I will assess how identity should be understood theologically, in light of the cognitive sciences. I will argue that who we are is rooted in new creation but can be known now proleptically. To do this I will engage at different points of the argument with four dialogue partners – McFadyen, Kelsey, Grentz and Pannenberg – all of whom discuss identity in terms of relationships and narrative from a theological perspective, as well as

drawing upon biblical and other theological resources along the way. I will briefly set out my rationale for this approach in the second section of this chapter.

The first step in my argument is to propose that our identity is founded upon God's relation to us, which is best understood in the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. To make the case in this chapter I will principally engage with McFadyen, arguing that while he rightly identifies the relation of God to humans as crucial, the use of the image of God and the relationality of the Trinity in his work is not as helpful as a Christological approach. I will draw this out from the Christ-hymn in Colossians 1 and argue that it enables us to reflect how identity is constituted through relationships that are embedded and embodied.

5.1 Relating Science and Theology

5.1.1 Models for Engagement

So far, as I have explored scientific perspectives on identity, I have offered some brief theological reflections. As we now approach more significant theological work, it is important to consider how the insights of science can be developed within it. The relation of science and theology is, of course, an area that has been subject to a great deal of discussion. The different approaches are often categorised as falling into one of a number of different models. For instance, Peters identifies eight different ways in which science and theology can relate to one another in his review of the subject.[378] Barbour, on the other hand, in his influential overview argues that there are broadly four different approaches.[379] It isn't, at this point, necessary to argue for the veracity of either suggestion, but the differences are instructive.

While the obvious difference between Barbour and Peters is the number of approaches they identify, there is also a more fundamental difference. Consider, for instance, how Barbour

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[378] Peters, Ted, 'Theology and the Natural Sciences' in *The Modern Theologians*, 2nd edn., ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 649-668, p.650-654.
[379] Barbour, Ian, *When Science Meets Religion* (London: SPCK, 2000), p.8-38.

describes the conflict model as one in which science and theology offer competing accounts of reality.[380] Peters on the other hand describes three different approaches that can reasonably be understood to fit within Barbour's conflict model: scientism, scientific imperialism and ecclesiastical authoritarianism.[381] But where, then, might 'scientific creationism' fit in? Barbour understands this to be a part of the conflict model, but as Peters points out, scientific creationists assert that the conflict is not between biblical and scientific truth, but between rival scientific theories.[382] While Barbour, rightly, identifies the dangers of scientific creationism, his model struggles to account for the subtle differences within the different approaches, because his approach is less *descriptive* than Peters'. On the other hand, by focusing on broad underlying themes of how science and theology are related, Barbour's work is more helpful for our purposes. After all, my intention is not to describe how science and theology *can* be related, but to consider the approach that I shall take.

Which of the different views that Barbour sets out, then, describes the way in which science and theology can be best related? The conflict thesis, which I have already referred to above, is not just unhelpful in that it allows for little relation between science and theology, but it actively assumes they provide competing descriptions of the natural world. While there may be tension and differences between science and theology, to assume they are actively opposed is unwarranted.

Two more helpful views are set out by Barbour in his model as 'independence' and 'integration'. An approach which emphasises the 'independence' of science and theology, recognisees the differences between the two, in terms of the questions they ask and the domains they apply to. Indeed, within this perspective, there is no possibility of conflict because both are held in 'watertight compartments'.[383] While this does rightly allow the perspectives of science and theology to be heard on their own terms, the downside is that it allows for no fruitful interaction between the two. This, of course, may be inevitable if they do, in fact, 'speak different languages', but it is hard to substantiate unless we assume that

[380] Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion,* p.11.
[381] Peters, *Theology and the Natural Sciences*, p.650-651.
[382] Peters, *Theology and the Natural Sciences*, p.651.
[383] Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, p.17.

the physical world is wholly separable from God. As Torrance points out, the doctrines of creation and incarnation suggest otherwise (as does my argument in this chapter).[384]

'Integration' between science and theology, on the other hand, allows for a great deal of interaction between the two. Here, Barbour suggests, the insights of science offer the possibility of a 'theology of nature' in which doctrine and beliefs can be reformulated in light of contemporary science. The problem is that while there should be space for revision and reappraisal, the integration within this approach is decidedly one-way. There is no scope, for instance, for theology to have a similar effect of reformulation on science. This shifts the balance of authority too heavily towards science, but more significantly, it does not allow the distinctive approaches of science and theology to be heard, because it is assumes accommodation in the face of difference. As Barbour puts it, 'a coherent vision of reality must allow for the distinctiveness of different types of experience'.[385]

The final view set out by Barbour, at its best, allows for both the distinctive perspectives of science and theology to be heard and for interaction between the two. A 'dialogue' between science and theology also allows space for difference and tension, as well as some integration. Importantly, neither difference or integration is assumed beforehand. Barbour sets this model out primarily in terms of similarities between 'presuppositions, methods, and concepts' but there is also space for a dialogue on more substantive issues where both science and theology can offer perspectives that maybe considered alongside one another. This is broadly the approach I have taken so far, in which I have offered theological reflections and comments on the scientific perspectives on identity.

The problem with a dialogical approach is that while there is space for a great deal of interaction, and although it may allow for substantive engagement, it can emphasise interaction over and above engagement. In other words, to put it plainly, it emphasises comment over any sort of conclusion. Allowing for difference and tension always includes the possibility that we might not reach a satisfactory conclusion, but framing the relation of

[384] Torrance, Thomas F., *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.24.
[385] Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion,* p.38.

science and theology in terms of a dialogue may implicitly assume that it will never do so. This hints at a wider problem surrounding the whole approach of figures such as Barbour and Peters, which I will outline in the next section.

5.1.2 Science Engaged Theology

In recent years, the approach to science and theology which has sought to map out their engagement in terms of an overarching framework has been challenged by proponents of 'science engaged theology'.[386] Perry and Leidenhag, for instance, argue that any 'model' of engagement invariably emphasises the engagement rather than whatever the results of that engagement might be. Indeed, they criticise Barbour as the foremost example, for working within a strict paradigm in which 'science' and 'theology' are two, monolithic, distinct lenses with which to look at the world. Perry and Leidenhag, on the other hand, argue that science and theology cannot be so easily disentangled and that neither represents one single perspective.[387] Science engaged theology, then, rather than trade in stock examples of 'science' and 'theology' asks specific questions and draws upon specific scientific and theological disciplines.[388]

One of the advantages of this approach is that it emphasises positive engagement, which moves towards a conclusion in a way that dialogue might not. Furthermore, it allows for difference and nuance within, as well as between, science and theology. Indeed, it gives methodological space to draw in perspectives from other disciplines. Within this, a helpful assumption is that theologians should be bold in seeking empirical evidence, rather than waiting for the scientific 'scraps' to be handed down.[389] However, this boldness can easily become methodological dominance within which there is the assumption that science exists for the service of theology. Consider, for example, how science engaged theology begins

[386] See Perry, John and Leidenhag, Joanna, 'What is Science-Engaged Theology?' in *Modern Theology,* 37:2 (2021), 245-253. See also, Davison, Andrew, 'Science-Engaged Theology Comes to San Antonio: A Report from the American Academy of Religion / Society of Biblical Literature Meeting 2021' in *Theology and Science,* 20:1, 1-3.
[387] Perry and Leidenhag, *What is Science Engaged Theology?*, p.246-7.
[388] Perry and Leidenhag, *What is Science Engaged Theology?*, p.252.
[389] Perry and Leidenhag, *What is Science Engaged Theology?*, p.247-8.

with 'theological questions on which empirical studies may shed some light.'[390] While it is natural to begin with theological questions this, aligned with the specificity with which science is engaged, offers little opportunity for the scientific perspectives to speak for themselves, pose questions or provoke new theological lines of enquiry. Science is not simply a repository for 'empirical evidence' but has a more substantive role to play when engaging theology.

There is, then, a balance to be found here. The primary aim in the preceding three chapters has been to give space for the perspectives of the cognitive sciences to be heard in their own right. However, these have been focused around broad questions which stemmed from the theological purposes of this study and been augmented by theological reflections at the end of each chapter. These reflect the theological nature of this work and my conviction that the cognitive sciences are not merely employed to give 'scientific answers' but offer a perspective(s) that can challenge and enlighten, as well as, inform theology. As we move into a more explicitly theological section of this study, the perspective of the cognitive sciences will be employed to guide, shape, support and provoke the discussion. There is no presupposition of tension, alignment or conflation; all three might occur, but whether or not they do, will not be based on a grand theory of 'science' and 'theology', but on critical engagement on the specific points of issue. Furthermore, this critical engagement will be theological in nature, but not because theology is the final arbiter of other disciples, but because this is a theological piece of work.

The most applicable characterisation of the interaction between science and theology in this study may, then, be dialogue, or a 'conversation', albeit one which is structured to come to some point of resolution.[391] However, it isn't clear that adhering to one model is a helpful way of proceeding. While proponents of science-engaged theology may limit the scientific perspectives, their focus on the specific is helpful. This study represents a specific engagement of science and theology, as such I will address how we might understand

[390] Perry, John and Leidenhag, Joanna, *Science Engaged Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), p.63.
[391] This is Haught's characterisation of his 'contact' model of interaction between science and theology. It is largely similar to how I have outlined dialogue. Haught, John F., *Science and Religion* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), p.18.

identity from a theological point of view, in light of the perspectives I have outlined from the cognitive sciences. This critical engagement will draw to a conclusion, but cannot be representative, or governed by notions of how 'science' and 'theology' should always interact. Neither is there space to consider, here, how theology might guide, shape, support or provoke work in the cognitive sciences. My argument is specifically aligned to the question of identity, and the scientific and theological perspectives I will draw upon. I have already set out the scientific perspectives I will engage with, but before we move on, it is worth considering which theological resources I will draw upon.

5.2 Setting the Parameters for Theological Engagement

The question of identity in theological terms, most naturally falls into the area of theological anthropology. Farris and Taliaferro describe theological anthropology as theological reflection on 'what it is to be human' and the exploration of the religious significance of our understanding of human nature.[392] There is a wealth of resources to draw upon here; one need only glance at introductions to the subject to see many of the most significant Christian thinkers represented. However, the subject is dominated by two themes; human constitution and the image of God. In other words, much of the focus is on what it means to be a person (or a human being) and is set out in terms of being made in God's image. That emphasis is distinct from the question of identity, which is not so much focused on *what* we are, but *who* we are.

Now, we should not imagine that there is no relation between the questions. I will draw upon elements of theological anthropology throughout my argument, but I will not be following the well-trodden contours of the subject. Take, for example, how I will consider the image of God. I will engage with it extensively within this chapter, but I will argue that it is an unhelpful way of expressing the relation of God and humans. It will not, therefore, form a central plank of my argument in and of itself, as it does within much theological anthropology.[393] Indeed, I shall suggest presently that the precedence given to the image of

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[392] Farris, Joshua R. and Taliaferro, Charles, 'Introduction' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology,* ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 1-14, p.1.
[393] Kelsey, David H., *Eccentric Existence* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p.895.

God in theological anthropology is problematic. Just, then, as my thesis is not representative of engagement with 'science' and 'theology' it is not representative of an engagement with 'theological anthropology', it is specifically aligned to the question of identity and the theological perspectives I will draw upon.

The upshot of this is that it is necessary to set out and justify which theological perspectives will form the basis of the next three chapters. The first aspect to set out is that there will, at different points, be significant engagement with scripture. This stems from my own theological convictions that the Bible is a firm basis upon which theology rests. However, we should not imagine that scripture offers us building blocks, which may simply be taken up and used, but rather that there should be continued critical engagement with the perspectives of the biblical authors.

The second aspect is that I will primarily engage with four dialogue partners: Kelsey, McFadyen, Grenz and Pannenberg. I have chosen them primarily for the significance of their contributions on a number of important points, as well as their interaction with one another. At the same time, I will draw upon a number of other voices, but as with my main interlocutors, these will be largely modern theologians. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, significant consideration has already been given to voices of theologians like Irenaeus and Augustine. Indeed, they have set the terms of much theological anthropology and it would be difficult to avoid significant discussion on matters of human constitution and the image of God if we were to consider them in any detail.[394] On the other hand, much less attention has been given to modern theologians on their own terms. Secondly, many of the modern theologians I will consider are writing in a similar context to the scientists whose work I have explored. Their engagement, or lack thereof, with the perspectives of science is, therefore, significant. Indeed, even if there is no explicit engagement, how they employ similar concepts (i.e. relationality) allows for a more fruitful interaction.

[394] Consider, for example, Irenaeus' contribution to the tradition surrounding the image of God, which is intimately tied to the question of whether humans are constituted as flesh and soul or flesh, soul and spirit. If we were to consider this it be difficult to keep the focus on the question of identity. See, Cardman, Francine, 'Irenaeus: As It Was in the Beginning' in *T&T Clark Handbook of Theological Anthropology,* ed. Mary Ann Hinsdale and Stephen Okey (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 137-146, p.141.

None of this is to say that pre-modern theologians cannot be fruitful dialogue partners on the question of identity or with the perspectives of science. Consider, for example, Gregory of Nyssa. He sets out a perspective in which all things now lie between creation and new creation, and therefore derive their reality from them. Ultimately, Gregory argues that this is rooted in new creation since, as he puts it, 'all things were already arrived at their own end'.[395] In chapter six I will argue a similar point; that our identity is rooted in new creation. There would be scope to engage with Gregory then; how he formulates this teleological view, how this aligns with the proleptic nature of identity I will set out and so on. However, there is not the space within this study to do so. I will therefore be relying on critical engagement with the particular elements of the theological tradition I have identified and leave more widespread work to the future. On that note, we will begin with one of the key voices I shall be considering: McFadyen.

5.3 Identity and the Relation of God to Humans

5.3.1 McFadyen: Identity as a Sedimented Structure of Response

In *The Call to Personhood*, McFadyen echoes the view from the cognitive sciences that humans are inherently social. Indeed, he puts it that an individual's sense of self arises, not from some internal source, but from interactions with others.[396] This occurs through a process of 'centring' in which she organises herself as a 'personal centre' because others have acted in a manner that indicated she was such a 'continuous point of identity.'[397] In other words, our personhood is constituted in response to others acting as if we were persons.

It will be apparent, that McFadyen has moved his focus from the 'self' to 'person'. While I have observed how it is well-established that the self arises in relation to others is, I have

[395] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man,* trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Aeterna Press, 2016), p.4-7. See also Smith, J. Warren, 'Gregory of Nyssa: Formed and Reformed in God's Image' in in *T&T Clark Handbook of Theological Anthropology,* ed. Mary Ann Hinsdale and Stephen Okey (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 147-156, p.147.
[396] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.113.
[397] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.95.

also argued that the notion of personhood is inherently problematic. While there are problems associated with McFadyen's use of personhood, his view of identity relies more upon the social interactions that form the self, than an abstract category of 'person.' McFadyen argues that identity is shaped by communication, that is, 'patterns of exchange', the history of which in our lives 'makes us the people we are.'[398] McFadyen refers to this history as 'sediment'. This sediment is deposited by past communication and it, in turn effects how we communicate in the present. McFadyen concludes that our identity is found within this response; this 'spirit of communication'.[399]

McFadyen does not draw upon the cognitive sciences, but it will be clear how there are a number of similarities between his proposal and the view of identity I have outlined in the previous three chapters. For McFadyen, identity is dialogical and dialectical, in that it arises and is found within social interactions, which means it is constantly in flux and does not come to rest in a final fixed state.[400] This is closely aligned to the dynamism of identity constituting relationships I outlined previously. McFadyen's proposal also takes into account the value of specific social interactions. Indeed, the idea of 'sediment' does represent a form of context to those interactions, in a way that is akin to how I argued that relationships find a meaning-full context in narratives.

There are also key differences. For one thing a narrative is much more complex and wide-ranging than one's history of communication. For another, I argued that the emergence of the self from interactions with others indicated the centrality of relationships, rather than merely the importance of those interactions. Finally, an individual's identity must take into account how relationships and narrative are both embodied and embedded; McFadyen's proposal only suggests that identity is embedded in social interactions. These points indicate substantive differences between McFadyen's view of identity and that which I have set out so far, there is enough similarity to suggest that the theological basis McFadyen draws upon, might offer a fruitful basis for view of identity I have drawn out from the cognitive sciences.

[398] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.7.
[399] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.63.
[400] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.9.

Indeed, McFadyen argues that it is through a process of 'address and response' that human being is constituted relationally in creation.[401] It is to this that we now turn.

5.3.2 Human Relationality in Relation to God

McFadyen is not alone in articulating a relational view of human nature. Indeed, Shwöbel notes that a common element in contemporary anthropology is a relational view of human being and that theologians have generally accepted this view, albeit with the distinctive claim that the dominant relation is between God and humanity (that way round).[402] Theologically this has been, on the whole, understood within the context of creation. One exception to this is Grenz, whose work I will discuss in chapter seven.[403] Bird, for instance, drawing upon the witness of the Old Testament puts it that 'humans are relational beings in their fundamental nature.'[404] This is echoed by McFadyen who argues that the biblical narratives of creation affirm that humans are 'intrinsically related to one another and to God.'[405] This is significant for two reasons.

Firstly, it demonstrates that the commitment to relationality has not just arisen as a response to contemporary anthropology. This concern seems to lie behind Harris' point that recognising that humans develop in relation to others does not necessarily justify ontological or normative claims about the relationality of humans.[406] This is true. Indeed, I argued that humans are innately social, but this is different than claiming that humans are relational in their *nature*. Human sociability arose from our embodiment and embeddedness; it is a different question whether this is rooted in a relational nature. However, that is what McFadyen, Bird and others' claim: that human being is relational, which is not based in terms of how humans appear to be (their sociability), but in terms of how humans are in creation. This raises an important point. If identity constituting

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[401] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.41.
[402] Schwöbel, *Human Being as Relational Being*, p.141-3.
[403] Grenz, Stanley J., *The Social God and the Relational Self: a Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p.304-5.
[404] Bird, Phyllis A., 'Theological Anthropology in the Hebrew Bible' in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 258-275, p.267.
[405] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.18.
[406] Harris, Harriet A., 'Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?' in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 51:2 (May 1998), 214-234, p.233.

relationships are to be grounded in normative claims about human relationality, then this must account for how those relationships, and indeed, identity itself rooted in embodiment and embeddedness. In other words, we must account for the whole perspective offered by the cognitive sciences.

Secondly, it highlights that in creation the it is the relation of humans to God that is central to human being. After all, if God is the one who creates, then it follows that in creation, human being is determined by how God relates to humans, which establishes human's relation to God. Indeed, it is through this relation that Torrance argues that human relationality is established, as he puts it

> man [sic] must be regarded as an essentially relational being, who is what he is as man [sic] through subsisting in the being-constituting relation of the Creator with him [sic][407]

This approach is adopted by McFadyen as well. He emphasises that it is the relation to God that is the primary determinant of human being.[408] In-line with his emphasis on communication, he puts it that this is not so much a static relation, but the address of God in creation, which structures human nature as one of response. In other words, it establishes human being relationally.

It is important to recognise that the centrality of the relation to God in humans does not flow from the relational nature of humans. If this was the case, then it would give the problematic impression that those who cannot respond to God in any 'recognisable manner' find their humanity limited in some way (especially when the matter is couched in terms of personhood).[409] However, the logic of McFadyen, Torrance and others flows the other way. Human relationality is predicated upon the centrality of how God relates to humans. This establishes humanity's relation to God in creation. This is not, then, just one relation among many, or even the most significant relation among many, it is constitutive of humanity's very being.[410] Therefore there is no need for humans to be able to respond to God any

[407] Torrance, Thomas F., 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition' in *Modern Theology*, 4:4 (July 1988), 309 – 322, p.311.
[408] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, p.195.
[409] McFarland, Ian A., *Difference and Identity* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), p.15.
[410] Cortez, Marc, *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), p.3.

‘recognisable manner’. The response humans naturally offer is through living, akin perhaps to how a child exists within a relation to his mother simply by being born.[411]

It is important to draw out of this that if the relational nature of humans is not established, then this does not negate the centrality of human’s relation to God in creation. Indeed, it is the nature of this relation that will be the primary point of focus for the rest of this chapter. I will outline that, for McFadyen, it should be seen in terms of the image of God, which leads to a relational view of human being. This is the foundation for his view of identity as a sedimented structure of response. However, I will argue that his approach struggles to account for how humans are embodied and embedded. Instead, I will set out a view in which the relation to God in creation should be seen in Christological terms. Before we get there, we need to consider the image of God.

5.4 Identity, Relationality and the Image of God

5.4.1 Problems with the Image of God

One of the primary ways in which the relation of God to humans is understood within theological anthropology is through the *imago Dei* or image of God. In the first account of creation in the book of Genesis we read:

> Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
>
> *Genesis 1: 26-27*

These verses from Genesis represent the primary scriptural basis for the idea that humans are made in the image of God and, as Kelsey points out, it is common for proposals within theological anthropology to be tied to a central claim about what the image of God in Genesis means.[412] Interpretation of the text, then, is central to how the concept is used. Unfortunately, there are a number of problems with this approach.

[411] Coetzee, Johan H, ‘”Yet Thou Hast Made Him Little Less than God”: Reading Psalm 8 from a Bodily Perspective’, in *OTE,* 19:3 (2006), 1124-1138, p.1134.
[412] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.895.

The first is that the image of God as found in Genesis 1: 26-27 has no universally accepted meaning. As Briggs notes, interpreters coming to the image of God, hoping to unlock the mysteries of the human person have, on the whole, been frustrated.[413] Kelsey takes the matter one step further, arguing that the various interpretations 'largely cancel one another out.'[414] In other words, he proposes that the multiple views do not indicate complexity, but irrelevance, since they are mutually contradictory.

Kelsey's view goes too far. After all, a lack of consensus amongst commentators and theologians is hardly a mark of irrelevance. One may point to, say, the atonement as a theme within theology that has spawned multiple interpretations and yet is of uttermost theological importance. However, the difficulty in interpreting the image of God in this context does highlight that no interpretative framework is provided within Genesis, or indeed, within the Old Testament as a whole.[415] Similarly, recourse to the practices of the ancient near east offer interpretative potential, but no definitive framework.[416] Thus, Kelsey is right that the discrepancy between the weight given to the image of God in its original context and that given to it by later theologians is concerning.[417] It suggests that we should be cautious in ascribing a central role for the image of God within how we understand God to relate to humans in creation.

The second problem follows on, for if the image of God is understood in terms of one singular account of creation, then this is a narrow basis for theological anthropology. For one thing, it means that it exclusively draws from the doctrine of creation.[418] Given that creation accounts are only one part of the biblical witness (and Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 is only one such account) and creation is only one element of Christian doctrine, then any such

[413] Briggs, Richard, 'Humans in the Image of God and Other Things Genesis Does Not Make Clear', *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, 4:1 (2010), 111-126, p.113.
[414] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.936.
[415] Briggs, *Humans in the Image of God and Other Things Genesis Does Not Make Clear*, p.115.
[416] See Wenham, Gordon J., *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), p.30-31.
[417] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.923.
[418] McFadyen, Alistair, 'Redeeming the image', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 16:2 (2016), 108-125, p.108.

theology seems rather limited.[419] Of course, it would be possible to draw upon further sources and doctrines, but the point is that a central claim tied to an interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1: 26-27 cannot readily escape these limitations.

This brings us to the third difficulty, that an interpretation of the image of God located within the doctrine of creation tends to lead to a static and definitional approach to theological anthropology.[420] The essential question becomes 'what are humans?'[421] Granted, this has led to the image of God being used to confer dignity to marginalised groups.[422] That is, by being included within the boundary of what is human and thereby considered 'made in the image of God' the value that goes along with that is bestowed upon them. While this may be applauded, the very nature of a static, definitional approach nevertheless implies that some are still excluded from this dignity.[423] This is similar to the problem that we encountered in the notion of personhood in chapter two. In fact, it may be the case that given the ambiguity seemingly inherent within Genesis 1: 26-27, that the writer(s) have no interest in articulating a universal notion of humanness, and yet a definitional approach does just that.[424]

The final problem draws the previous three together. That given the lack of interpretive content for the image of God in the biblical witness and the narrow theological underpinning of theological anthropology, there is a tendency for the image of God to become 'a theological or spiritualising gloss' laid upon constructions arrived at independently by non-theological means and therefore, for theological anthropology to

[419] McFadyen, *Redeeming the image*, p.110.
[420] McFadyen, Alistair, 'Imaging God: A theological answer to the anthropological question?' *Zygon,* 47:4 (2012), 918-933, p.919-920.
[421] We may note that if this is the essential question, then the place of a theology of identity within theological anthropology becomes limited. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.938; McFadyen, *Imaging God*, p.931.
[422] McFadyen, *Redeeming the image*, p.113-114.
[423] A case in point is the exclusion of animals. The image of God has often been construed to be that which separates humans from animals. Yet, even given the ambiguity of the term within Genesis, this cannot be justified by the text. The creation of humans as male and female is closely linked with their creation in the image of God, and yet animals themselves are created male and female. Briggs, *Humans in the Image of God and Other Things Genesis Does Not Make Clear*, p.119-121.
[424] Briggs, *Humans in the Image of God and Other Things Genesis Does Not Make Clear*, p.122.

collapse into anthropology.[425] This is all the more concerning given that the question has essentially become about who, or what, is not human.

This discussion has hardly done justice to the image of God within a range of theological traditions. However, what it has indicated is that any approach that seeks to determine the relation to God in humans through Genesis 1: 26-27 may be misguided. Yet, before we write-off the possibility, we should consider an alternative proposal which allows McFadyen to do just this.

5.4.2 The Image of God for McFadyen

McFadyen argues that the central problem in how the image of God has been used within theological anthropology is that it has been assumed that it refers, primarily, to humans.[426] Hence, the risk that we have secular anthropology in all but name.[427] However, as McFadyen rightly puts it, the image of God should refer primarily to God and only secondarily to humans. It is, after all, the image of *God.*

It is helpful to see how McFadyen draws upon the work of Barth here. Barth argues that the image of God does not lie in 'anything that man [sic] is or does'; rather 'he is the image of God in the fact that he is man [sic].'[428] In other words, Barth locates the image of God in humanity's creation, rather than in anything humans may do or any characteristic they may possess. Indeed, he goes on to put it that the image of God represents a 'likeness' or 'correspondence' between God and humans.[429] The image of God, then, it is used to characterise the relation between God and humans in creation as one of human correspondence, likeness or similarity to God.[430]

[425] McFadyen, *Imaging God*, p.921.
[426] McFadyen, *Imaging God*, p.919.
[427] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.24.
[428] Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics III/1* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), p.184.
[429] Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics III/2* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), p.323-324.
[430] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1,* p.184.

This approach is central within McFadyen's argument, since he argues that the image of God has both a 'vertical' and 'horizontal' aspect. It expresses that the relation between humans and God is one of correspondence (the vertical), through which human are structured in relational terms (the horizontal).[431] The image of God, then, is used to express the particular relation between humans and God that determines their being, but it does not determine the content of that relation.[432] Relationality, for McFadyen, is not predicated upon a particular interpretation of the image of God, it arises from human likeness to God. It is, then, in the nature of God where we will discern the basis for the relationality of human being.

5.4.3 Relationality Rooted in the Image of the Triune God

For McFadyen the correspondence expressed by the image of God is rooted in the trinitarian nature of God. In particular, it is found in how the three persons of the Trinity can be understood relationally.[433] He argues that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are 'persons in relation and persons only through relation' whose 'identities are formed through the others and the way the others relate to them'.[434] From this he determines that human nature must be similarly relational. In other words, in this view, the image of God expresses the notion that how God relates to humans (which is determinative of human being), establishes a correspondence between the relationality of the divine life and human nature. The upshot is that the relationality of human being finds its source in the trinitarian life of God.

McFadyen, of course, is not alone in making a connection between the image of God and the relationality of the Trinity.[435] Barth draws a similar connection and some have even put it that for Christian theology, the '*imago Dei* means *imago Trinitas*', although this reflects a different approach to the image of God.[436] Moltmann goes on to connect the Trinitarian life

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[431] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.23-24.
[432] See also Torrance, *The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition*, p.311-312.
[433] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.30-31
[434] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood, p.*27.
[435] Russell, Edward, 'Reconsidering Relational Anthropology: A Critical Assessment of John Zizioulas's Theological Anthropology' in *The International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 5:2 (2003), 168 – 186, p.168.
[436] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, p.323-324; Smail, Thomas A., 'In the Image of the Triune God' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 5:1 (March 2003), 22-32, p.22.

of God with the social structure of human life: 'The inner fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is represented in the fundamental human communities.'[437] However, for some, the notion that human relationships are modelled after those of the godhead is inherently problematic. After all, the language of interrelatedness is often drawn from human experience in the first place and therefore it is argued that it cannot legitimately be applied as a model for Christian relationships and relatedness.[438] However, for McFadyen, the life of the Trinity does not just underpin human community, but is foundational for identity since his view of identity rests upon the relationality of humans. As he puts it:

> human nature analogously informed by the nature of God as Trinity will lead to a specific understanding of individuality as a sedimentation of interpersonal relations which is intrinsically open to others as to God.[439]

Human identity understood as a sedimented structure of response is, then, ultimately rooted in the life of the triune God. In other words, for McFadyen identity is theologically underpinned by the relationality of the Trinity.

Having, myself, set out a view of identity that is constituted by relationships, this may seem like a natural theological basis to draw upon.[440] However, in the next section, I will argue that such an approach is misguided, because it fails to take into account how relationships are embodied and embedded.

5.4.4 The Problems of Embodiment, Embeddedness and Hermeneutics

In this section I will highlight three problems. They will be specifically focused on how McFadyen roots identity in the triune life of God. However, they also relate more generally to any approach that seeks to put forward a relational view of identity predicated on the relations of the Trinity.

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[437] Moltmann, Jürgen*, God in Creation* (London: SCM, 1985), p.241.
[438] Tanner, Kathryn, 'Trinity' in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, 2nd edn., ed. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 363-375, p.370-1; Karen Kilby, *God, Evil and the Limits of Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), p.14
[439] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.24.
[440] See for example Gutenson, Charles E., 'Time, Eternity, and Personal Identity: The Implications of Trinitarian Theology', in *What About the Soul?*, ed. Joel B. Green (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 117-132, p.130-132.

The first problem, is that drawing upon the Trinity to support human relationality runs the risk of emphasising an individual's relatedness to God at the expense of her relatedness to creation. Granted, I have argued, with McFadyen, that the relation to God is determinative, but when this is seen in terms of *relationships* between persons,[441] then this leaves little room for how humans are related to each other, never mind, the non-social aspects of creation. However, for all that the biblical narratives of creation may affirm humanity's relation to God, they also emphasise the relatedness of humans to the rest of creation.[442] Indeed, while the second account of creation in Genesis (Genesis 2: 4-25) could be said to emphasise the relatedness of humans to creation more than Genesis 1-2:3, given that man is formed from the 'dust of the ground' (Genesis 2: 7) and woman from his rib (Genesis 2: 21-22), the first account also includes the inherent relationality of humans to creation since they are given dominion over every living thing (Genesis 1: 28). Furthermore, we also should take account of passages such as Job 38-41, which as I noted at the end of chapter two, emphasises how God relates to humans as a part of creation.

McFadyen does acknowledge this to some extent. He argues that the 'horizontal' aspect to the image of God can express humanity's dialogical relationships with creation but it also may represent 'social mediation' of God's primary address.[443] Torrance goes further, arguing that this aspect of relationality is 'subsidiary'.[444] But if this is the case, it means that the givenness of humans as embedded beings is lost and our interdependence with the rest of creation is undermined. Instead, it suggests a view of humans as simply individuals in a 'resonance field' of relationships, rather than being grounded in the physicality of creation.[445] However, as Case-Winters points out, humans are 'made of the same "stuff" that makes up the rest of universe […] we are nature.'[446] Identity constituting relationships, then, have to be grounded in our embeddedness within creation.

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[441] I recognise that terminology becomes very difficult here, given I have tried to avoid the use of 'person'. Here it is used in relation to persons of the godhead in a different, and obviously theologically significant manner.
[442] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p.186-8.
[443] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.39, 195.
[444] Torrance, *The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition*, p.311.
[445] Jersild, Paul, 'Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology' in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 47:1 (Spring 2000), 37 – 52, p,44; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p.241.
[446] Case-Winters, *Rethinking The Image Of God*, p.813.

The second problem is that there are serious difficulties in concluding that the divine and human natures are analogous. Indeed, a number of authors express caution on this point. Torrance, for instance, notes the 'creaturely difference' and the 'transcendent' nature of the relation.[447] Barth similarly argues that the correspondence between God and humans can be no *more* than an analogy.[448] There is no space to discuss the notion of analogy here, indeed, the nature of the potential analogy between divine and human relationships is not even clear. Are human relationships predicated on persons who are wholly constituted by their relations or upon three self-possessed persons who enter into relationship with each other?[449] McFadyen falls squarely in the first camp, writing that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are 'Persons in relation and Persons only through relation.'[450] It is from this that he speaks of 'personal centres' between which (human) relationships form. Harris, rightly questions what these personal centres are and how they are formed and she goes on to question the legitimacy of a wholly relational view of personhood if there is the possibility that it is formed by malignant or deficient relationships.[451] However, within the focus of this thesis, a more pertinent question is how such personal centres relate to the physicality of the body never mind the physical environment as a whole. The weakness of arguing that identity is predicated upon the relationality of the Trinity in this way, is that they do not relate to them at all. Indeed, as Kilby argues, to judge the nature of the potential analogy between divine and human relationships, requires insight of the divine life, and while she fails to engage with key New Testament texts (mere 'proof texts in the Gospel of John'), she is right to note that it is all too easy to make that judgment based on what we experience of *human* relationships.[452]

The final problem is that the line of argument that runs from divine to human nature via the image of God is that it does not seem to acknowledge the hermeneutical difficulties of interpreting a central biblical trope in terms of trinitarian theology. Granted, McFadyen used the image of God to imply a likeness or correspondence, but this was then interpreted to

[447] Torrance, *The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition*, p.311-312.
[448] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, p.323-324.
[449] Kilby, *God, Evil and the Limits of Theology,* p.13.
[450] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.27.
[451] Harris, *Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?*, p.225.
[452] Kilby, *God, Evil and the Limits of Theology*, p.13-14.

imply a likeness or correspondence *between divine and human relationality*. Indeed, for McFadyen this is the 'special way' in which human nature corresponds to God's.[453] The difficulty with this is that it implicitly offers an interpretation of the image of God in terms of trinitarian theology. The image of God represents how God's relationality is mirrored in human relationality. This is not to say that this is necessarily incorrect, just that the case has not been made. Indeed, the hermeneutical difficulty could perhaps be overcome by reflecting upon the embodied and embedded relationality of humans in creation. This is an approach taken by Moltmann, who, for all he argues that human communities image the inner fellowship of the Trinity, also holds that to understand what it is to be human we must begin with humans as they appear: 'a creature in fellowship with creation.'[454] McFadyen's logic seems to flow decidedly the other way.

In summary, then, there are substantial problems for any approach that seeks to ground relational aspects of human identity in the relationality of the Trinity. Along other reasons, it does not take account of how human relationships are embodied and embedded, which was at the heart of the perspectives offered by the cognitive sciences. Indeed, as Russell points out, emphasising the continuities between human and divine persons in general can lead to under emphasising the body and physicality.[455]

So far, using the image of God to express the relation of humans to God has proved unfruitful. Is there a way we can understand the relation of humans to God that takes account of the dynamic, embodied and embedded relationships that are at the heart of identity? In the next sections I propose a third approach to the image of God that does just this. Taking Colossians 1: 15-20 as my basis, I will argue that a Christological interpretation of the image of God offers a better theological basis for how God relates to humans, and through this, that it allows for identity constituting relationships to be both embodied and embedded. Indeed, I will set out how this approach suggests that an individual's relation to

[453] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.30-31.
[454] A key difference in Moltmann's approach may be that he argues that human communities image the inner life of God, not human relationality. He also interprets human being and identity to some extent eschatologically, which I will discuss in chapter seven. Moltmann*, God in Creation*, p.186-8.
[455] Russell makes the point in relation to the work of Zizioulas, but it stands more generally. Russell, *Reconsidering Relational Anthropology*, p.184.

Christ is fundamental to her identity. The key aspect to my argument is that by starting with Colossians 1: 15-20 and other New Testament texts, the image of God is seen in Christological terms, so that the focus is not about a particular interpretation, but on how the way it is used speaks of Christ.

5.5 God's Relation to Humans in Christ

5.5.1 Christ as the Image of God in the Christ-Hymn of Colossians 1

Colossians 1: 15-20, the so-called 'Christ-hymn', is one of the major texts in which the image of God is given a Christological interpretation.[456] Within it, Paul[457] writes that

> He [the beloved Son of v.13, that is, Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
>
> *Colossians 1:15*

While a number commentators take this as a clear reference to Genesis 1: 26-27, this view has been subjected to significant challenge.[458] Kelsey, for instance, proposes that Colossians 1:15 can, at most, only be an 'indirect' reference to Genesis 1 since Paul could not know what the Priestly author of Genesis (or any subsequent redactor) intended by the phrase.[459] He suggests that the influence of the wisdom tradition of Greek thought was so pervasive that Paul's notion of 'image' could not be left unaffected. Similarly, while Beetham concedes that there is an allusion to Genesis 1: 26-27, for him it is at most, a secondary allusion; the primary reference is to the wisdom tradition.[460]

As we shall see in the next section, the wisdom tradition does have a significant influence upon the Christ-hymn and upon how 'image' is used in particular. However, this should not be taken to mean that the reference to Genesis 1: 26-27 is any less direct. Beetham does, at

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[456] Moo, Douglas J., *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), p.107-108.
[457] There is some debate whether Paul was the author of Colossians. I will refer to Paul as the author simply for ease. It is not a significant aspect of my argument.
[458] For example, Thompson, Marianne Meye, *Colossians and Philemon* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), p.28; Pokorny, Petr, *Colossians*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzman (Hendrickson: Peabody, 1991), p.74; Sumney, Jerry L., *Colossians* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), p.64.
[459] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.960.
[460] Beetham, Christopher A., *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Boston: Brill, 2008), p.132.

least, concede that Paul's *language* derives from Genesis 1:26-27, but a linguistic connection alone belies the fact that Paul is making a Christological interpretation of Genesis 1: 26-27. Indeed, this is symptomatic of how Paul uses scripture within Colossians, in that he allows

> scripture to make its sense in the light of Christ's work […] in a way those who do not know scripture (1) can grasp and (2) could find scriptural confirmation should that become important.[461]

In other words, the primary meaning is Christological, drawing upon Genesis 1:26-27, and indeed the wisdom tradition, but doing so as an extended interpretative context for who Christ is and what he has done. The point is one of direction.

It is not incidental that, in general, those commentating on the Colossians text hold that Paul draws upon Genesis 1:26-27, while those who are reluctant to admit such dependency are those with systematic considerations. After all, approaching the image of God from a wider theological perspective is complex enough given the multiplicity of interpretations, without having to reconcile a Christological approach to an ambiguous and over-interpreted Genesis text. Nevertheless, holding that Colossians 1:15 depends upon Genesis 1: 26-27 does not imply they share the same meaning or that Paul had access to the 'original meaning' (whatever that might be). What it does mean is that we can approach the image of God in Genesis 1: 26-27, on the basis of how it is used in Colossians 1: 15-20, that is, from a Christological perspective. This may appear to be an example of 'undue theological misappropriation by overzealous theologian[s]' but the approach is justified because the focus is not on a fresh interpretation of the image of God but on Christ.[462]

I will exemplify this approach presently, but before that it is important to discuss the contribution of the aforementioned wisdom tradition, which has a significant influence on the Christ-hymn. Again, it will be evident that it is used in a thoroughly Christological manner.

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[461] Seitz, Christopher R., *Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), p.91.
[462] Briggs, *Humans in the Image of God and Other Things Genesis Does Not Make Clear*, p.118.

5.5.2 Christology and Wisdom in the Christ-Hymn

One of the clearest biblical expressions of the wisdom tradition is found in Proverbs 8 and there are clear links between the second half of that chapter and the Christ-hymn of Colossians 1.[463] For instance, 'The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago' (Proverbs 8:22) parallels Christ being the 'firstborn of all creation' (Colossians 1:15). Indeed, the notion of 'image' has strong associations with the wisdom tradition in which it has a revelatory function such that 'the person represented becomes present in the image.'[464] This role is normally ascribed to wisdom herself, but it seems pointedly relevant to Colossians 1:15.[465] If Christ is the 'image of the *invisible* God' (my emphasis), then this implies that God is present in Christ, who thus makes God present within creation. The strong resonance with another New Testament text – John 1: 1-18 – is not coincidental, for that passage is also heavily influenced by the wisdom tradition.[466] Indeed, both emphasise that Christ is the one who reveals and makes God present in creation.[467]

Given the strong allusion to the wisdom tradition, it is easy to see why Kelsey resisted any notion that the 'image of God' in Colossians 1:15 could primarily draw upon Genesis 1:26-27.[468] Indeed, Paul does seem to speak of Christ as fulfilling the same function as wisdom, even if, as I have argued, this does not exclude Genesis 1:26-27 from the interpretive context. The question, then, is whether the wisdom tradition is the primary reference point for Paul in Colossian 1:15-20.[469] Does he, say, simply apply everything said of wisdom, to Christ?

The difficulty with relying too heavily on the wisdom tradition as a basis for the Christ-hymn, is that Paul ascribes more to Christ than is generally ascribed to wisdom. For instance, Christ

[463] Seitz, *Colossians*, p.88.
[464] Schweizer, Eduard, *The Letter to the Colossians,* trans. Andrew Chester (London: SPCK, 1976), p.66.
[465] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.960; Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians,* p.66.
[466] Hay, David M., *Colossians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), p.56.
[467] Sumney, *Colossians*, p.64.
[468] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.960.
[469] It seems difficult to escape this conclusion if we accept Kelsey's position that the wisdom tradition acted as an 'Hellenistic Hegemony,' overriding all other expressions of cultural thought. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.960,

is not just the firstborn of creation, but also 'firstborn from the dead' (v.18). This has no parallel.[470] Additionally, while the assertion that Christ is 'before all things, and in him all things hold together' (v. 17) has resonances with what is said of wisdom in Proverbs 8: 22-31, there is no such resonance for the idea that it is Christ who brings redemption 'by making peace through the blood of his cross' (v.19).

What is said of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20 does, then, seem to parallel what could be ascribed to wisdom in creation. However, Paul moves beyond the wisdom tradition to speak of Christ's role in redemption and new creation. Paul, therefore, is not merely relying on the wisdom tradition and then applying it to Christ. While he draws upon it, it is not the basis for the Christ hymn. Rather the basis is Christ – his role in creation, redemption and new creation. The point is similar to the one I made with respect to Genesis 1:26-27, that while the wisdom tradition informs Paul's thought, expression and interpretation, he draws upon it because of what can be said of Christ. Again, it is a question of direction and Christology is, again, the starting point, in particular Christ's role in creation, redemption and new creation.[471]

That Christ is at the heart of Colossians 1:15-20 is almost self-evident. The upshot of my argument is that what is said of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20 is not based on anything other than the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. What we must discuss in the next section is how this can be a basis for how God relates to humans.

5.5.3 Creation, Redemption and New Creation: A Christological Basis for Identity

I have argued that a central aspect of what it means for Christ to be the 'image of the invisible God' in Colossians 1:15 is that God is present in him and he manifests God within creation. Other New Testament texts affirm a similar understanding. Consider, for example, the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews:

[470] MacDonald, Margaret Y., *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), p.66.
[471] While earlier I spoke of how Paul drew upon scripture in Colossians, quoting Seitz, the same could equally be said of the wisdom tradition: Paul allows it to make sense *in the light of* Christ's work. Seitz, *Colossians*, p.91.

> He [the Son, that is, Christ] is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.
>
> *Hebrews 1:1*

The author of Hebrews, then, also expresses a strong connection between the nature of Christ ('the reflection of God's glory' and the 'exact imprint of God's very being') and his role in creation ('he sustains all things by his powerful word'). Indeed, Webster draws upon Colossians 1:17 (in Christ 'all things hold together') to put it that Christ is the basis for 'all creaturely reality' and for all that we might say of creation.[472] In a similar fashion, Barth argues that it 'is here [in Christ] that God Himself has revealed the relationship between Creator and creature – its basis, norm and meaning.'[473] The implication of this is twofold.

Firstly, it implies that the determinative relation of God to humans is found in Christ.[474] As Torrance writes, 'the humanity of every man [sic]…is ontologically bound up with the humanity of Jesus and determined by it.'[475] Secondly, it implies that the relation of God to humans, should be seen in the wider context of the relation of God to creation. After all, 'all things have been created' through and for Christ and in him 'all things hold together' (Colossians 1:16b, 17b). This is the first place where 'reading back' from the Christ-hymn to Genesis 1:26-27 is helpful. For if Christ is the basis for how God relates to all of creation as the *image of the invisible God,* then because this image is tied to the creation of humans in Genesis 1:26-27, this implies that Christ relates to humans not in isolation from the rest of creation, but as a part of how he relates to the whole.

It was through specifying how God relates to humans in creation that McFadyen proposed that human being is relational. MacFarland takes a similar approach, arguing that it is because the determinative role of Christ to humanity is held in common, that the inherent

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[472] Webster, John, '"Where Christ is": Christology and Ethics' in *Christology and Ethics*, ed. F. LeRon Shults and Brent Waters (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), 32-55, p.34; Allen, Michael, 'Toward Theological Anthropology: Tracing the Anthropological Principles of John Webster'*, International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 19:1 (2017), 6-29, p.17, 24.

[473] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1*, p.24-25.

[474] Cortez, Marc, 'The Madness in Our Method: Christology as the Necessary Starting Point for Theological Anthropology' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology,* ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 15-26, p.24-25; Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, p.47.

[475] Torrance, *The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition*, p.317.

relationality of humans comes together in him.[476] The problem with this is that Christ is not just determinative for humans but for all of creation. Indeed, there is no particular warrant here to hold that humans are relational in their nature, any more than the rest of creation. Granted, by virtue of Christ's humanity and being made in the image of God, humans occupy a particular place within how God relates to creation. But this comes about through Christ, not through a distinct, relational ontology for humanity.

Locating the relation of God to humans in Christ also enables a stronger basis for embodied and embedded relationships to be at the heart of identity than inherent relationality. This is because Christ is the one 'in whom all things hold together'. So, then, any aspect of identity which is rooted in human embodiment and embeddedness is caught up in how God relates to creation in Christ. Relationships between individuals, which I have argued are central to identity, can be understood as having particular importance, since humans occupy a particular aspect of how God relates to creation in Christ. But they are not separable from how humans are embodied and embedded in the physical creation. McFadyen's view, then, that human identity is a sedimented structure of response, is not wholly wrong, but only expresses a limited aspect of identity constituting relationships that are embodied and embedded in creation, which God relates to through Christ.

5.6 Conclusion: Finding Identity Constituting Relationships in Christ

In this chapter, I have explored how identity, and in particular how the relationships that constitute identity, can be theologically rooted. I have aimed to show why approaches which employ the image of God or the relationality of the Trinity are flawed. In doing so I put it that God's relation to humans in creation is central to who we are and I have drawn upon the Christ-hymn in Colossians 1 to argue that this is best seen in terms of Christ. The upshot of this is that if identity is found in relation to Christ, as one aspect of how he relates to the whole of creation, then this allows for the dynamic, embodied and embedded, relationships that constitute who we are to be a part of that.

[476] McFarland, *Difference and Identity*, p.72-73.

However, this is not the whole picture. I have explored identity with respect to the relation of Christ to humanity in creation, however I noted that the Christ-hymn held this together with the work of Christ in redemption and new creation as well. The question is how these three aspects of the work of Christ hold together and how this might relate to the narratives that shape our identity; this is the subject of the next chapter.

6. Conformed to Christ: Identity Orientated Towards New Creation

In the last chapter I proposed that the fundamental relation of God to humans, which is at the heart of who we are, is best understood in Christological terms, specifically in the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. I argued that identity, which arises from embodiment and embeddedness is caught up in how God relates to creation in Christ. In this chapter, I will explore how this connects to how Christ relates to us in redemption and new creation and I will propose that in order to rightly hold the three together, identity is rooted in new creation.

At the beginning of this chapter, I will return to the Christ-hymn of Colossians 1 and use it and other New Testament texts to put it that human destiny in new creation is determined by Christ, and in particular, by resurrection. It is to this future that who we are in redemption is orientated towards, but not in such a way as to undermine who we are in creation. I will then use this as a basis to explore how two key dialogue partners – McFadyen and Kelsey – have understood how the relation of Christ in redemption underpins identity. As it will become clear, while they rightly propose a view in which who we are might not be fully determined in creation, they do not do so in a way that reflects the biblical emphasis of physicality in new creation. Neither do they recognise the emphasis of the cognitive sciences that identity arises from our embodiment and embeddedness. Indeed, as I shall argue, who we are is determined by how Christ relates to us through the physicality of creation and new creation, but it is how he relates to us in redemption, recontextualising who we are, that means our identity is found, ultimately in our resurrection.

6.1 Creation, Redemption and New Creation in the Christ-Hymn

6.1.1 The Relation of God to Humans in New Creation

While the Christ-hymn of Colossians 1 places Christ at the heart of creation, this must also be set alongside the place of Christ in redemption and new creation. For example, Christ is

the ‘firstborn of creation’ (v.15) and ‘firstborn of the dead’ (v.18). In him ‘all things in heaven and on earth were created’ (v.16) and in him ‘God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven’ (v.20). This goes beyond mere linguistic parallelism. Hay, for instance, argues that the work of Christ holding all things together in creation (v.17) connects with the work of Christ in reconciliation (v.20) and the unity of the church in Colossians 3:14-15.[477] This is significant, since it indicates that just as the relation of God to creation in Christ encompassed the whole of creation, so does redemption. In other words, the scope of redemption is not just limited to humans, but to ‘all things’. This is echoed in other New Testament texts, such as Romans 8:19-23.

As Wright notes, the parallel is also particularly close between creation and new creation, and the connection Paul draws between the two is important.[478] We can explore it further by turning our attention to Colossians 3:

> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.
>
> *Colossians 3:9-10*

Paul uses ‘image’ here in a reference that, unlike Colossians 1:15, is widely held to refer to the image of God in Genesis 1: 26-27.[479] These verses imply that the new creation (‘the new self’) comes into being according to the image of God, and given the reference to Genesis, this represents a direct link between creation and new creation. For Beetham, this suggests that Paul believes that ‘Adam in his pre-fall state serves as the example or pattern for the new humanity of the new creation.’[480]

Unfortunately, Beetham’s argument relies on a problematic reading of both texts from Genesis and Colossians. While Paul draws parallels between Adam and Christ elsewhere in the New Testament (for example, 1 Corinthians 15:22), Adam does not appear by name in Colossians and so it is something of a stretch to say that he is central to Paul’s thought here. This being said, it does appear to be a tenable reading of Genesis 1: 26-27a:

[477] Hay, *Colossians,* p.59.
[478] N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p.70.
[479] Hay, *Colossians*, p.56; Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, p.241.
[480] Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, p.244.

> Then God said, “Let us make humankind [Heb: adam] in our image […].” So God created humankind [Heb: adam] in his image, in the image of God he created them [Heb: him]
>
> *Genesis 1: 26-27a*

As I have indicated, the NRSV translates ‘adam’ as ‘humankind’ here, whereas from Genesis 4 it is translated as a proper name. Indeed, as above, the plural ‘them’ stems from the removal of the gendered language in the NRSV, so that it could be that the image of God does refer to a singular individual. However, this reading is undermined by the second half of verse 27 – ‘male and female he created them’ – indicating that it is not the singular Adam who is made in the image of God, but humans collectively.[481]

I do not intend to spend more time on this text, given the problems I have highlighted with this approach. The point is that it does not support Beetham’s reading and as I proposed in the last chapter, Colossians 1:15, as well as other New Testament texts (for example, 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Hebrews 1:3) indicate that it is not Adam who is the image of God, but Christ. Indeed, it may be that Beetham struggles on this point because of his reluctance to accept the allusion to Genesis 1:26-27 in Colossians 1:15. However, a more natural reading is to say that if Christ is the image of God, then the renewal Paul writes of in Colossians 3:10 is according to Christ. Indeed, this would accord with the fact that the Christ-hymn is continually focused on Christ (i.e. Colossians 1:1, 3, 4, 11, 15, 16, 17, to name but seven verses), which is also reflected in the rest of the letter (i.e. Colossians 2: 2, 8, 11, 14, 20, to name but five verses from chapter two). Human destiny in new creation, then, is determined, not by Adam, but by Christ. Just as in creation, then, the relation of God to humans in new creation is found in Christ.

6.1.2 Redemption Orientated Towards New Creation

The focus on the central relation to Christ in Colossians 3 aligns very well with other New Testament passages such as 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 8. In those passages Paul writes of individuals bearing the ‘image of the man of heaven’ (1 Corinthians 15:49) and of them ‘being conformed to the image of [God’s] Son’ (Romans 8:29). However, the connection

[481] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.922.

with these passages allows us to say a little more, since in both cases Paul is explaining how the general resurrection is predicated on the resurrection of Jesus.[482] Indeed, this point is present in the Christ-hymn, in which Paul puts it that Christ is '*firstborn* of the dead' (Colossians 1:18, my italics), implying more are to come. In new creation, then, Christ does not just relate to humans in a general sense, but in their resurrection, within which an individual is conformed to Christ such that he becomes the pattern of her very being.

I will discuss resurrection further presently, but from these New Testament passages, there is a clear indication that how Christ relates to humans in resurrection is critical to how we understand identity. However, it would be a mistake to set this in opposition to how God relates to humans in creation through Christ. Kelsey seems to do just this when he takes some of the New Testament texts we have examined and argues that they indicate the image of God is not about God relating to humans in creation, but about how he relates to humans in 'eschatological redemption'.[483] Yet, as I have set out, Paul draws a clear parallel between creation and new creation in the Christ-hymn and the connection between the two is Christ himself. The work of Christ in creation and new creation should not, therefore, be set in opposition to each other. It is not a zero-sum game; the link is more subtle than that.

The connection between creation and new creation, of course, travels through redemption. I noted how the scope of Christ's work of redemption is the same as the scope of his relation to creation, namely 'all things'. In Colossians 3:10-11, it is possible to see how the work of Christ in redemption connects with creation and new creation in a particular fashion. Here Paul writes that individuals have 'stripped off' the old self (v.9) and 'clothed' themselves with the new, 'which *is being* renewed' (v.10, my italics). There is an ethical focus here, but these verses do suggest that redemption is directed towards new creation, in that the event of reconciliation of all things to God 'through the blood of the cross' (Colossians 1:20) is the first step in a process of transformation in which humans are renewed according to Christ (Colossians 3:10).[484] Indeed, although Paul is exhorting the

[482] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.42; Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon,* p.129.
[483] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.946.
[484] Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon,* p.268.

Colossians to live in accordance with their new selves this renewal occurs not through their own efforts but comes from God.[485] This is set within a context of the renewal of not just humans, but all things, that is, the whole of creation. Thus, redemption is not the abandonment of creation (the centrality of Christ ensures that) but is inherently orientated towards new creation.[486]

There is much more to be said on all these matters in the rest of this chapter and the next. However, the discussion so far represents a firm basis to begin to explore the way in which theologians have connected how the relation of Christ underpins our identity in creation and new creation through redemption. I shall begin by returning to McFadyen before moving on to Kelsey.

6.2 McFadyen: Redemption and Recontextualization

6.2.1 Redemption Looking Backwards to Creation

In the last chapter I set out McFadyen's view, that through a process of 'address and response' human being is constituted relationally in creation.[487] The basis of this was the relationality of the Trinity, which humans were called to image. I argued that this approach meant that McFadyen's view of identity, while not wholly mistaken, was limited. It is helpful, at this point, to return to his work.

For McFadyen, God's address in creation is both an 'is' and an 'ought.'[488] Human nature is not just constituted relationally in an abstract sense, rather it is structured in terms of response, of which the right response reflects the open, genuine, dialogical relations of the Trinity. There is, therefore, the potential for humans to fail to respond rightly to God (and, indeed, to others), thereby distorting the relations in their lives. There are echoes of Barth

[485] Sumney, *Colossians,* p.201.
[486] This is the reason I have used 'redemption' rather than 'reconciliation'. Although the latter arises more naturally from the Christ-hymn, redemption connotes a process as well as a decisive event. Dunn, James D. G., *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p.222.
[487] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.41.
[488] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.18.

here and his proposal that relationships can only be genuinely human if they echo the determinative encounter of God and humans in creation (the I-Thou relation).[489]

Distorted relations are, of course, how McFadyen understands sin, but the implication of this seems to be that if an individual fails to respond rightly to God, that is, if he sins, then his very humanity is at stake. Although she couches it in terms of personhood, Harris makes a similar point when she asks how McFadyen can hold that humans can fail to become persons because of their distorted relations, while at the same time their personhood is established by the address of God?[490] The answer is the high degree of continuity McFadyen places between the work of Christ in creation and his work in redemption. He puts it that since Christ fully enacts the image of God, the address of God in creation is the same as the call of Christ to redeem humans.[491] Moreover, Christ is also the paradigmatic response to God in creation so that those who are in him are redeemed through their inclusion within it.[492] The roles of Christ in creation and redemption, for McFadyen then, cannot be separated. Indeed, he writes of 'creation-redemption' and argues that 'redemption is not a consequence of the fall, but of creation itself.'[493]

By positioning creation and redemption so closely it can appear that McFadyen over-emphasises the work of Christ in redemption at the expense of his work in creation. For example, consider how McFadyen writes that

> Jesus found broken, closed and communicatively distorted people in distorted and closed relational networks.[494]

There seems little scope, here, for how Christ represents the creative address of God since he seems to 'find' people who are already 'there'. This is the other side of Harris' critique; how can the call of Christ both constitute humanity as well as redeem us? This is a weakness of McFadyen's approach. All the more so if we assume that the call of Christ is just made once, rather than reflecting God's continued relation to creation. However, there would be more potential to mitigate the problem if the language of personhood was not employed

[489] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2,* p.285.
[490] Harris, *Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?*, p.233.
[491] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.46.
[492] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.116-117.
[493] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.275.
[494] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.117-118.

and if it was recognised that Christ relates to humans through their embodiment and embeddedness in creation. There is also the question of whether or not some relations are to be counted as genuinely human and others as less-than-human. It is an approach I resisted earlier, since our identity is constituted by various relationships, not just those that reflect the relationality of the Trinity.

Setting aside the specifics of this point, McFadyen's approach does indicate that the work of Christ in creation and redemption is not separable. This much was evident from how Paul envisioned the scope of redemption as the whole of creation. Indeed, Barth makes a similar point, arguing that how God relates to humans in creation is dependent upon the relation of Christ to God in salvation.[495] I argued in the last chapter that God relates to humans in creation through Christ; the point Barth and McFadyen make however, suggests that this is informed or determined by the work of Christ in redemption. As Torrance argues, by becoming human and effecting salvation Jesus transforms human being such that he is '*now* the ground and source of our human being.'[496] This is significant because it indicates that the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation may relate to our identity in different ways. Indeed, it suggests that the relation of God to humans in creation is not just a foundation to which redemption and new creation are 'added on', but that how Christ relates to us in them can have a transformational effect upon who we are.

6.2.2 Redemption Looking Forwards to New Creation

If humans are incorporated into Christ's paradigmatic response to God, then McFadyen argues that this represents not just a transformation of our central relation to God, but also our relationships with others. McFadyen describes this as 'recontextualisation', in which our relationality is predicated on, and determined by, the open, dialogical relations of the Trinity.[497] However, McFadyen is clear that this should be seen in terms of a process in which God and redemption can only be present in 'promissory or anticipatory form.' McFadyen therefore reflects a view of redemption which is similar to what was expressed in

[495] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2,* p.49; 69.
[496] Torrance, *The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition*, p.317. Italics mine.
[497] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.114-115.

the New Testament texts I discussed above. Redemption is orientated towards new creation; it is transformative, but that transformation while present now, is only made complete eschatologically.

Given that McFadyen's view of identity is rooted in human relationality, the transformation in question is not merely a transformation of social interactions, conventions and norms, but represents a transformation of the identity of an individual as she is conformed to Christ.[498] In other words, within this view, identity is not statically rooted in how God relates to creation in Christ, but is dynamically determined by the transformative work of Christ in redemption.

This level of transformation within identity presents a problem for Harris. She challenges the idea that continuity of identity can be maintained through such a transformation.[499] In fact she takes issue with the very idea that identity can be continually added to or changed through communication and interaction with others.[500] Part of the difficulty here is that there is confusion over whether the matter under discussion is 'personal identity' or one's sense of self, character or personality. Yet even if we set that aside, there is still the issue of how identity can be maintained through any sort of change or transformation. However, as I outlined in chapter four, continuity does not preclude change, rather it specifically allows for it. Thus, transformation of identity should not be set against continuity of identity. For example, I have argued elsewhere that a determinative relation to Christ established eschatologically allows for continuity of identity through resurrection.[501] I shall return to this point in the next chapter, but it is reflected in McFadyen's proposal that redemption is predicated upon the future eschatological presence of God in our relations. This allows for Christ to relate to humans in redemption in a way that transforms who they are, in anticipation of who they will be, without the suggestion that their identity is lost.

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[498] Green argues that the new creation is anticipated now through the dissolution of social barriers, which is true, but only part of how we should understand the transformation. Green, Joel B., 'What Does it Mean to be Human?' in *From Cells to Souls – and Beyond*, ed. Malcolm Jeeves (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), p.198; McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, p.115.
[499] Harris, *Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?*, p.223.
[500] Harris, *Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?*, p.218-219.
[501] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.51-53.

The real difficulty in McFadyen's approach is that it is not clear what the call of Christ in redemption is a call *to*. Or, to put it another way, what is our identity being transformed in anticipation of? The presence of the relationality of the godhead in our relations, yes, but in what sense does this come about? This is not clear. To some extent, this difficulty flows from the differences between McFadyen's view of identity, which is grounded in human relationality, and my own in which it constituted through relationships but rooted in embodiment and embeddedness.

There is ambiguity, then, within how McFadyen understands redemption to be orientated towards new creation. A similar ambiguity is present in a text like 1 John 3:2 where John writes that 'what we will be has not yet been revealed'. However, this is tempered by what he goes on to say. Namely that

> What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

We can draw from this a similar point to that which was emphasised in other New Testament texts: that in new creation, Christ relates to us in resurrection. After all, if we are to be 'like him' we must share in a resurrection like his.[502] Transformed relations are, perhaps, as much as McFadyen needs to specify, but the emphasis of the biblical texts we have examined is that Christ relates to humans within new creation in resurrection.

This ambiguity, along with the high degree of continuity McFadyen sets between creation and redemption, ultimately means that it is difficult to determine how the relation to Christ in redemption and new creation can have a transformative effect upon our identity. What it does suggest, however, is that the relation to Christ in new creation is crucial, since it is towards this that redemption is orientated. In other words, if the work of Christ in redemption recontextualises who we are in creation, and itself is orientated towards new creation, then who we are may be ultimately found in who we are in new creation. As I have put forward, the biblical perspective indicates that this is found in resurrection. In the next section I want to explore further what this means through the work of Kelsey whose

[502] We could also draw upon texts such as 1 Thessalians 4: 15-18 and Romans 6:5, as well as those cited earlier in the chapter, to emphasise the centrality of resurrection in how Christ relates to humans in new creation.

approach includes far less continuity between creation, redemption and new creation than McFadyen and who emphasises the key relation to Christ within them.

6.3 Kelsey: Separating Creation, Redemption and New Creation

6.3.1 Kelsey: Identity Shaped by the Narratives of Christ

In his book *Eccentric Existence*, Kelsey tells us that he seeks to answer three interrelated questions: given the Christian conviction that God actively relates to us, what does this tell us about what we are, who we are and how we are to be?[503] Central to his thesis is the conviction that the answer to these questions comes in three parts, reflecting how God relates to humans in creation, reconciliation and eschatological consummation. Kelsey's approach, then, mirrors my own in the sense that he identifies the relation of God to humans as fundamental for who we are and discerns that this is reflected in creation, redemption and new creation.[504]

Kelsey's thesis as far as identity is concerned comes in two parts. Firstly, he argues that in creation humans are 'living human personal bodies' in community, in reconciliation they are those who are 'in Christ' and in new creation they are those who are both elected and those to whom judgement is occurring.[505] Kelsey envisions this as a 'three stranded helix', which makes up our 'basic identity', that is our identity as directly related to us by God.[506]

The second view of identity he outlines is, thankfully, somewhat less abstract. He proposes that who we are also arises from how God relates to us through our 'proximate contexts', that is, from the environment we are a part of. This is our 'quotidian identity.' Setting aside this technical language, what Kelsey means by this is that there is an aspect of our identity that arises from the everyday world around us; from every interaction we have with

[503] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.159.
[504] It will be apparent that the terms I use are not wholly aligned with Kelsey's. I have discussed my use of redemption/reconciliation above. The use of 'eschatological consummation' reflects an unhelpful aspect of Kelsey's thesis, which I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. I will continue to use creation, redemption and new creation whenever I can except when the distinct nuances of Kelsey's terminology are relevant.
[505] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.1046-7.
[506] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.382-3.

creation.[507] In other words, our identity is defined by what we do and what is done to us. Kelsey rightly acknowledges that this cannot encompass every instance of an individual's life, but it can rely on certain key moments and stories, which are highlighted and interpreted to define a single identity. The word he rightly uses to describe this is 'narrative'.

Together, for Kelsey, an individual's basic identity and quotidian identity make up her 'personal identity'. It is important to note, however, that basic identity plays a much greater role within this. This stems from Kelsey's argument that the strands of human basic identity come together in Jesus; creation, reconciliation and new creation are reflected in his defining narrative. In redemption Kelsey argues, our narrative identity is exchanged for Jesus' narrative identity, through which we are reconciled to God. Thus, our personal identity is shaped by Jesus' personal identity, which was our given basic identity (God relating to us), hence Kelsey's emphasis on it. That is an all-too-brief summary of Kelsey's complex argument, but the upshot is this:

> Who they [humans] are is most adequately described by narratives having the narrative logic of canonical narratives describing Jesus' basic identity.[508]

In other words, in redemption, our identity is shaped by Christ's narrative of creation, redemption and new creation.

The emphasis Kelsey gives to narrative within identity, echoes the perspective of the cognitive sciences I set out in chapter four; that who we are is shaped in narrative terms. Indeed, the interplay between the narrative of our quotidian identity and our basic identity, which, in redemption, is shaped by the narrative of Christ, could indicate how our identity is dependent upon how Christ relates to us in creation, redemption and new creation. Like McFadyen, Kelsey sets out a view in which the work of Christ in redemption is central. The question is, then, how does the narrative of Christ shape who we are within it?

[507] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.385-6.
[508] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.1049.

6.3.2 Creation, Redemption and New Creation: Distinct or Related Narratives?

At the heart of Kelsey's approach is a very different view of creation, redemption and new creation than was present in the work of McFadyen. While McFadyen ascribes a great deal of continuity between them, Kelsey asserts that the biblical witness is 'made whole by three kinds of inseparable narratives': creation, reconciliation and eschatological consummation.[509] While they may be inseparable, for Kelsey it is equally important that they are not conflated; they are distinct and have their own narrative logic. So, for instance, he rejects the idea that the canonical narrative of new creation (or eschatological consummation, as he puts it) is dependent upon humans being estranged and then reconciled to God, since it makes 'perfectly good sense' without it.[510] In other words, according to Kelsey, it is not the narrative, but the *narratives* of Christ's work in creation, redemption and new creation that shape who we are.

This is a bold claim and has not gained widespread acceptance.[511] Its origins are murky but it seems to arise from the trinitarian nature of God.[512] Indeed, Thiel notes that a commitment to God specifically understood as Trinity, is central to Kelsey for all acts of 'theological parsing.'[513] Here, each narrative expresses an aspect of how God relates to humans and each aspect is described by a unique trinitarian formula, in which the work of one person of the Trinity is highlighted.[514] For some, this leads to the 'hanging implication' that some persons of the Trinity could do without the others, yet this is not quite fair on Kelsey, whose focus is less on the nature of the Trinity and more on *how* God as Trinity relates to creation.[515] However, in the end, Kelsey's claim fails because he does not show that these

[509] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.897
[510] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.611.
[511] David F. Ford, 'The What, How and Who of Humanity Before God: Theological Anthropology and the Bible in the Twenty-First Century' in *Modern Theology,* 27:1 (January 2011), 41-54, p.44-45.
[512] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.605.
[513] John E. Thiel, 'Methodological Choices in Kelsey's Eccentric Existence' in *Modern Theology,* 27:1 (January 2011), 1-13, p.5.
[514] The Father in creation, the Spirit in eschatological consummation and the Son in reconciliation. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.167; 442; 609.
[515] Catherine Pickstock, 'The One Story: A Critique Of David Kelsey's Theological Robotics' in *Modern Theology*, 27:1 (January 2011), 26 – 40, p.28; Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.605.

three narratives can encompass and faithfully express the whole of the biblical witness including its particularity.[516]

6.3.3 Relational Identity in Christ

While Kelsey fails to demonstrate that the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation can be understood as three distinct narratives within scripture, this does not invalidate his whole approach. Indeed, he argues that the 'three strands' of how God relates to humans come together in Christ, so it is perfectly possible to apply his approach to a more connected view of creation, redemption and new creation.[517] Indeed, for all that Kelsey puts it that they are distinct narratives, in truth he struggles to differentiate between the three strands of the helix. For example, he argues that redemption and new creation 'circle around each other' since they are both 'constituted in the actions of one living human personal body – the son of Mary'.[518] Within Kelsey's argument this is a problem. He has already argued that the work of new creation is primarily the work of the Spirit, not Jesus, but as Pickstock points out, new creation can hardly be conceived in terms that are non-Christological.[519] It is, after all, the resurrection of Jesus that establishes and inaugurates new creation.[520] Yet, this does demonstrate that his scheme can accommodate a much more unified approach to creation, redemption and new creation within the narrative identity of Christ, despite Kelsey's protestations.

Kelsey's argument then becomes a proposal that in redemption the narrative identity of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation, defines and brings coherence to our own identity. The upshot of this is, as McFarland puts it, 'Jesus is the one who makes us who we are.'[521] If this is the case, then it is important to recognise that for all that Kelsey emphasises narrative, in the end identity has a relational form, since being 'in Christ' will 'ultimately define who human creatures most basically are'.[522] An important question for Kelsey's

[516] Ford, *The What, How and Who of Humanity Before God*, p.46.
[517] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.605.
[518] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.608; 898-901
[519] Pickstock, *The One Story*, p.31; Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.442.
[520] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences,* p.44-45.
[521] McFarland, *Difference and Identity,* p.163.
[522] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.699.

approach is does his characterisation of redemption as being 'in Christ' reflect the orientation towards new creation we observed in the biblical witness? Another is how does it characterise our relation to Christ in creation? In the next section I will explore these questions, setting out the case for why Kelsey's approach is flawed. To begin to do this, it is useful to draw a parallel between the work of Kelsey and McFadyen.

6.4 Identity Rooted in New Creation

6.4.1 Two Grids; Two Identities

As I noted earlier, Kelsey proposes that there are two aspects to our identity – basic and quotidian – reflecting how God relates to us directly and indirectly in creation. This distinction arises from his discussion of creation in wisdom literature (specifically Job 10), in which he argues there are two distinct accounts of creation. Taking them together means that God relates to humans in creation both directly (their ultimate context) and through the rest of creation (their proximate contexts).[523] Thus, the creation of 'personal human living bodies' is a result of God's direct and immediate creative work, but it is also mediated in creation. Identity, in turn, should be understood as rooted directly in God's relating to us *and* mediated through creation.

It is interesting that a similar idea is present in the work of McFadyen. He uses two grids to explain the interdependence of physical and social life. The physical grid relates to 'bodies-in-motion' and tracks an individual's physical activity. This is overlaid by a social grid representing 'social space-time', which maps and co-ordinates 'socio-psychological phenomena' which make up personal and social life.[524] Given that McFadyen understands an individual's identity to be his history of communication, these two grids offer a way in which the material that makes up that history can be organised. Thus, he puts it that the 'uniqueness of location and of the history of communication around that point are co-determinants of personal identity.'[525]

[523] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.160; 246-7; 270.
[524] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.78-82.
[525] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.86.

There are two things to notice here. Firstly, organising an individual's history of communication in this manner represents a rudimentary form of narrative, which as I pointed out in the last chapter is also present in McFadyen's concept of 'sediment'. Secondly, given that for McFadyen, God relates to humans in terms of address and response, then how God relates to an individual is located primarily within the social grid, whereas the physical grid can only ever map God's mediated relation even when communication is interpreted in the widest possible means.[526] Thus, there is a parallel, here, with Kelsey's proposal in which God relates directly to us within our basic identity, whereas our quotidian identity stems from God's mediated relation in creation. These two systems are not, of course, identical, but it is significant that both distinguish between how God relates to us directly and in a mediated manner through creation, and therefore that both envision two distinct, albeit related, aspects to our identity. The problem is that when this approach is coupled with the view that identity is dynamically determined by the transformative work of Christ in redemption, the particularity of who we are can be lost. I will explore how this arises in both the work of Kelsey and McFadyen.

6.4.2 Kelsey: Removing our Embodied and Embedded Identity

One of the most helpful aspects of Kelsey's proposal is his insistence that the 'real you *is* the quotidian you' since this emphasises how identity is embedded and embodied in the physical creation.[527] This is an example of how, on the face of it, he is able to hold together how God underpins who we are through his direct and mediated relation. However, it is important to note that, for Kelsey, the work of Christ in creation does not play a significant role within this. This stems directly from his insistence that the biblical narratives of creation, reconciliation and new creation are all distinct. Indeed, this is why in giving an account of creation, he chooses to engage with Job, rather than, say, Genesis; because, for him, the whole of the Pentateuch is a part of the canonical narrative of reconciliation, not

[526] McFadyen defines communication as 'every interaction' where there is an exchange of information, between people, their environment and God. However, 'address and response' seems to be the predominant pattern of this interaction, which severely limits what counts. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.6-7; 9.
[527] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.204-207. My italics.

creation.[528] This is not to say, of course, that Job cannot inform our understanding of creation (I drew upon it myself at the end of chapter two), but Kelsey's approach means that those texts which might have allowed for a discussion of Christ's role in creation are not thought to be applicable, precisely because Christ is present and he is the central figure of other narratives.

The upshot of this is that when creation, redemption and new creation are drawn together in the narrative identity of Christ, he is only related to creation by virtue 'simply [of] his bodily humanity.'[529] For Lett this is an example of how Kelsey 'fails to appreciate that the identity of Jesus only makes sense within the incarnation's broader narrative of the Son's descent and ascent.'[530] The result is that the narrative identity of Christ is skewed away from creation. Since Kelsey argues that in redemption our basic identity is shaped by the narrative of Christ, the significance of creation within who we are, then, is minimal. Thus, our quotidian identities – the narrative of our lives, embedded and embodied in the physical creation – is undermined. It only serves as material to be subsumed by the narrative identity of Jesus, who does not relate to this aspect of who we are in creation in any significant way. It is hard to escape the implication then, that given that our identity arises from embodied and embedded roots, and given Kelsey's own emphasis on our quotidian identity, in redemption, a significant part of who we are is lost.

6.4.3 McFadyen: Diminishing the Value of Embodied and Embedded Identity

To some extent, McFadyen's two-grid model is more successful than Kelsey's approach. After all, the reason he uses it is to resist the 'artificial separation' between the physical and the social. However, it seems curious that in trying to emphasise their interdependence, he chooses to use a model in which there is a fundamental distinction between the two aspects of human being. Indeed, he still maintains that 'the reality of persons is…primarily social.'[531]

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[528] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.901.
[529] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.1045.
[530] Lett, Jonathan, 'Narrative And Metaphysical Ambition: On Being "In Christ"' in *Modern Theology,* 33:4 (2017), 618-639, p.634.
[531] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.77-78; It is interesting to note that Watts points out that there is not much contact between those who emphasize the relational and those who emphasis the biological in psychology as well as theology. Watts, Fraser, 'Multifaceted Nature of Human Personhood' in *The Human*

Altogether, it means that social interaction, for McFadyen, is separated from what the body does in the world, for all he allows for a nominal connection.

To approach this another way, consider this question: if McFadyen's physical and social grids are a way of mapping the material that determines our identity through the creation of a rudimentary narrative structure, then whose perspective is it from? From the way that McFadyen describes it, it seems to be from an objective, bird's (God's?) eye perspective. Yet, this doesn't take into account how a particular social interaction may mean something to me but something completely different to you. This was why I argued that relationships had to be set within a narratively shaped interpretative context. McFadyen's proposal is that an individual's identity, that is, her sedimented communication history, provides such a context.[532] And yet, where or how does this take place? The suggestion McFadyen makes is within our memory, but as I argued, narrative arises from embodied autobiographical memory and is dynamically related our environmental context. A mapping of the physical location of social communication, as suggested by McFadyen's second grid, cannot sustain this level of dynamic embodiment and embeddedness.

The point is that within McFadyen's two-grid model, the physical grid contributes so little that it is almost reduced to irrelevance. In the end, it is simply a log of location.[533] Hence McFadyen conceives of identity as 'happening through' the body, rather than actually found in the body itself.[534] There are echoes of Barth here, who also seems to prioritise the subjective life of a human over and above her bodily activity.[535] Similarly, Swinton argues that memory is something we do with the whole of our body and cannot be reduced to 'flat' physicality.[536] Coetzee, on the other hand, echoes my argument when he points out that all human experience is embodied and it is through that embodiment that we engage with the

Person in Science and Theology, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees and Ulf Görman (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 41-61, p.49.

[532] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.7.

[533] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.78-82; 86.

[534] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.89.

[535] Cortez, Marc, 'Body, Soul, and (Holy) Spirit: Karl Barth's Theological Framework for Understanding Human Ontology' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 10:3 (July 2008), 328-345, p.335. Barth couches his argument in terms of 'soul' and 'body'. Although he argues for no division between the two, the 'soul' (a human's subjective life) does have 'freedom' from the body. Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2,* p.424.

[536] Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time,* p.146; 160.

world.[537] Either way, the problem for McFadyen is that while he acknowledges that God relates to us in creation in a mediated manner, this is only ever within our social relations and thus potentially separated from the physical creation.

In redemption, then, although our social relations are recontextualised, McFadyen makes little mention of how the physical correlates of these relations are transformed. This is because, as I have shown, they are not a significant element of how McFadyen understands identity. However, the perspective from the cognitive sciences indicated that our identity is dependent upon the physical creation since it is rooted in embodiment and embeddedness. Indeed, I argued that in creation, God relates to us through them in Christ.

McFadyen, therefore, arrives at a similar place to Kelsey. In redemption, the embodied and embedded roots for our identity are undermined, because in creation God only relates to us through them in, at best, a secondary fashion. Furthermore, McFadyen and Kelsey's bifurcated view of identity undermines the goodness and integrity of creation as it implies that its role is merely to provide the raw materials for reconciliation and new creation. This is a very different picture from that which I drew out from Colossians 1 and other biblical texts, in which redemption has the same scope as creation. If this is the case, who we are in our embodiment and embeddedness cannot be discarded. Granted, this is less of a problem for McFadyen, for whom the physical grid still moors transformed social relations in and through redemption, yet no account is given for how they relate to the physical creation in a renewed manner. Indeed, it is how redemption is orientated towards new creation that will prove to be the crucial factor.

6.4.4 Redemption Orientated to a Physical New Creation

If how Christ relates to us in redemption does not account for the embodied and embedded roots of our identity in creation, then this implies that a significant aspect of who we are is lost. Indeed, I have suggested that this approach, seen most clearly in Kelsey's work, does not give sufficient value to creation. However, as I argued above, redemption is orientated

[537] Coetzee, *Yet Thou Hast Made Him Little Less than God*, p.1127.

eschatologically. It is therefore incumbent to assess how being 'in Christ' reflects Kelsey's view of redemption, and how it relates to our identity in new creation.

Kelsey quite rightly affirms that creation does not automatically lead to new creation but is brought forth by God and inaugurated by him in the resurrection of Jesus.[538] Thus, he puts it that creation is 'blessed with promise.'[539] This expresses how redemption is orientated eschatologically and how it encompasses the whole of creation. Both of these points reflect the scriptural witness outline earlier in this chapter. It also suggests a view of human nature that is not yet fully realised, and may not be fully realised until new creation.[540] In any case, the notions of 'blessing' and 'promise' seem to give worth and value to creation in a manner that was not present in Kelsey's view as set out previously.

However, while blessing and promise seem to imply worth and value, this is only established on the nature of that promise. In this case, the nature of our identity in new creation, upon which who we are in redemption is predicated. Specifically, this is focused on the nature of resurrection, which, as I argued earlier, is at the heart of how Christ relates to us in new creation. Kelsey argues that resurrection should be seen primarily in terms of a transformation from physicality to non-physicality. Referring to 1 Corinthians 15:44 where Paul speaks of the resurrection body as a 'spiritual body', Kelsey concludes that 'whatever else a spiritual body may be, it is a not-physical body.'[541] From this he argues that the body is a concept that needs to be defined in much wider terms than physicality and that in new creation our physical environment will be replaced with a 'proximate context' that is characterised by 'networks of reciprocal information exchange'.[542]

It may be apparent, then, how Kelsey can, on the one hand, stress that it is the whole of creation that is subject to 'eschatological consummation' and therefore orientated to new creation in redemption.[543] And on the other, how we can take from Kelsey's argument that

[538] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.499-500. Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences,* p.42.
[539] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.494-5.
[540] McFarland, *Difference and Identity*, p.145.
[541] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.539.
[542] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.541.
[543] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.507.

the scope of redemption was less than the scope of creation as I observed earlier. In fact, the scope is the same, it is just that the effect of the transformation is to dramatically reduce it. Indeed, the physical creation appears to be eliminated in the eschaton.

I have argued at length elsewhere that readings such as Kelsey's fundamentally misunderstand 1 Corinthians 15:44 and that the biblical witness implies that resurrection bodies are physical.[544] Indeed, I have proposed that the transformation of resurrection is not one from physicality to non-physicality, but from physicality to some kind of 'supra-physicality'. A key text here, alongside 1 Corinthians 15 and the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the gospels, is 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, in which our present bodies are viewed as tents compared to the *more substantial* 'building from God' that awaits us (v.1). Unfortunately, Kelsey does not engage with this text, which itself is also often misinterpreted.[545]

I shall return to the nature of resurrection and its place within the new creation in the next chapter. For now, it is interesting to note how Kelsey echoes my analysis of how the evidence from the cognitive sciences might affect how we understand resurrection. Indeed, he notes that without a physical brain or nervous system, we cannot conceive of mental acts, events or processes.[546] For me, this is strongly aligned with a physical view of resurrection, yet Kelsey's only recourse is to suggest that the answer may lie in 'theological science fantasy' or 'pious agnosticism.'[547]

None of this is to say that our concept of the body should not be expanded. Indeed, I noted in chapter two how some individuals extend their body image beyond their biological embodiment. People with disabilities who consider their mobility aids to be a part of their bodies are a good example of this.[548] Indeed, from a theological perspective, Marsh argues that the in the Eucharist the boundary of an individual's body is 'fluid and elastic' as he is

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[544] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, 41-58, p.43.
[545] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A & C Black, 1973), p.158; Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, p.165-166.
[546] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.540-1.
[547] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences,* p.48-49*;* Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.541.
[548] Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p.38.

united to Christ and to others.[549] However, this line of argument does not imply that the physicality of the body can be abandoned. Rather, just like the 'extended mind' approach explored in chapter two, this should be taken to emphasise our embeddedness, that is, how our bodies are interrelated with and interdependent upon the physical world around us; not how they are separable from it.

In Kelsey's view, then, the promise of new creation is the promise of an end to physicality. Redemption, orientated towards this view of new creation, represents a loss of identity as the embedded and embodied roots of who we are replaced by an ambiguously defined existence within energy networks. It is hard to escape the conclusion that this characterises redemption as the abandonment of creation. Such a proposal hardly expresses the idea of blessing or reflects the witness of the New Testament texts explored earlier. Indeed, as I have indicated, the idea of resurrection suggests very different approach. However, at this point, I want to note two things.

Firstly, Kelsey's approach to new creation goes hand-in-hand with his approach to how God relates to us in creation. After all, he argued that God primary relates to humans apart from the physical creation. A view of redemption, then, that was focused on the relational aspect of being 'in Christ' aligns well with this if it, in turn, was orientated towards a promised future in which the relation to Christ dominates who we are apart from the rest of creation.

Secondly, while this may seem to indicate that this approach to creation and new creation are two sides of the same coin this is not quite right. It is Kelsey's view of new creation which is determinative. This is because, as I noted earlier, the relation of Christ in redemption and new creation, can transform who we are in creation. Thus, Kelsey can seem to emphasise an individual's quotidian identity, and yet it does not play a part in who she ultimately is. In the end, if redemption has the same scope as creation, and is orientated towards new creation in a way that can determine who we are, then at the heart of that must be our relation to Christ within new creation.

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[549] Marsh, Charles, 'In Defence of a Self: The Theological Search for a Postmodern Identity' in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 55:3 (2002), 253-282, p.256.

6.4.5 Related to Christ in our Embodied and Embedded Resurrection

At this point it is helpful to draw some of the threads of the preceding sections together. Kelsey's argument was that in redemption, our identity is conformed to the narrative of Christ so that being 'in Christ' can 'ultimately define who human creatures most basically are'.[550] This reflected McFadyen's approach to identity in which our relation to Christ in redemption and new creation can dynamically determine who we are within creation. However, I have argued that a bifurcated view of how Christ underpins our identity in creation, in which Christ relates to humans primarily apart from their embeddedness and embodiment, runs the risk of framing redemption as a loss of particularity of identity as we are subsumed into who Christ is. This is reflected in how Kelsey, for example, envisions new creation, where the embedded and embodied nature of humanity, from which our identity arises, is replaced by an abstract notion of existence within relational energy networks. This does not do justice to the evidence from the cognitive sciences or the biblical witness.

While I have indicated that Kelsey's approach is unsuccessful, what the discussion has revealed is that how Christ relates to humans in new creation is central to our identity. Paul, as I noted earlier, speaks of this as being 'conformed' to Christ's image (Romans 8:29) and the wider biblical witness envisioned this in terms of resurrection, which as I have indicated should be understood in physical terms. The question, then, is how a central relation to Christ in new creation, can be held together with an embodied and embedded view of identity.

Here, I want to draw upon McFadyen, for while I have argued his approach parallels Kelsey's in some respects, as I also noted, he does maintain an important connection between the physical and the social. Indeed, he rightly acknowledges that 'social life and communication are founded on bodiliness, and interpersonal communication is both a social and bodily activity.'[551] The problem with his argument is that it fails to recognise how identity is rooted in embodiment and embeddedness, not just the communication that arises from them.

[550] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence,* p.699.
[551] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.77.

However, McFadyen's approach does stand behind an important emphasis; that how Christ relates to humans cannot be separated from our physical environment. So, for example, he locates the call of Christ in redemption in specific instances within the ministry of Jesus, such as the calling of the disciples.[552] A relation to Christ, then, cannot be abstracted away from who we are as embodied and embedded beings, rooted in specific physicality.

In the last chapter I argued that Christ related to humans within our embodiment and embeddedness in creation. This, then, reflects how our relation to Christ should be understood within our physicality. The examples of dynamic relationships within the ministry of Jesus, highlighted in chapter three are examples of how Christ can relate to us within redemption through the specificity of our embodiment and embeddedness. Yet, as I have argued, redemption is orientated towards new creation. The implication of this is that our relation to Christ should also be found in our eschatological embodiment and embeddedness. Therefore, while Christ relates to us in new creation through resurrection, we should not imagine that he does so in a wholly different manner of relation to how he relates to us in creation or redemption. I will discuss this further in the next chapter. My point here, is that grounding an individual's relationship to Christ in new creation is not antithetical to the view that identity is rooted in embodiment and embeddedness within creation. Rather, it represents the fullest expression of that embodiment and embeddedness.

This line of argument suggests an answer to the question I posed in chapter three, namely how identity can be constituted through relationships that are embodied and embedded, while at the same time, grounded in a fundamental relation to God who is not embodied and embedded in the same way that humans are. For if our identity is rooted in new creation, in which we are conformed to Christ in a resurrection that is embodied and embedded, then the central relation to God is not found outside of physical roots, but through the embodiment and embeddedness we share with Christ. Thus, our identity as Christ relates to us in redemption is not orientated away from who we are in creation, but is orientated towards a transformation of that embodiment and embeddedness. Indeed,

[552] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.47-50.

Jersild is right to stress that to emphasise relationships within identity is also to put an emphasis on human embodiment and embeddedness.[553]

6.4.6 The Recontextualisation of our Narrative Identity

If our identity still arises from our embodiment and embeddedness in new creation, then it is not enough merely to focus on how this roots the central relationship we have with Christ, attention must also be given to the narrative context of this relationship. After all, I argued that the cognitive sciences indicated that identity constituting relationships are set within a narrative context that gives them meaning. While Kelsey argued that identity was ultimately relational as our narrative identity is replaced by the narrative (or narratives) of Christ, this abstract relational approach proved unsuccessful. Indeed, if the relation to Christ we have in our resurrection is a greater expression of our embeddedness and embodiment in creation, how is our narrative identity conformed to Christ within that?

Again, it is helpful to draw upon an idea employed by McFadyen. Earlier, I noted how McFadyen used the concept of 'recontextualisation' to express how relations are re-orientated within redemption, so that they anticipate the open, dialogical relations we will share with Christ eschatologically. However, this idea can just as easily be applied to the narrative aspects of identity. Recall, that I argued that our narrative identity is made up of multiple dynamic, context-dependent, connected narratives. Recontextualisation, then, can be thought of as a 're-shaping', 're-aligning' or 're-centring' of these narrative strands so that that they are aligned with the narrative of Christ's work in creation, redemption and new creation.[554]

Here, again, the perspective of the cognitive sciences is critical. Recall that in chapter four I argued that self-definitional memories represent a narrative structure within

[553] Jersild, *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, p.46.
[554] Thiselton, Anthony*, Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self* (Edinburgh*:* T&T Clark, 1995), p.163; Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.330.

autobiographical memory, and through them our identity is narratively shaped. As an individual is conformed to Christ in resurrection, those self-definitional memories could be reformed so that they reflect key aspects of who Christ is in relation to her. They would be held in common by all who are conformed to Christ, and yet, be distinct within each individual's identity as those memories dynamically interact with the other embodied and embedded roots for who she is.

A film that explores this idea is *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse,* where we are introduced to multiple 'spider-people' from different universes.[555] However, what unites them and gives them a shared identity are 'canon events', that is, key points within the story of 'a spider-man' that are shared by each and every spider-person.[556] All of their lives are unique and distinct, but they share the same narrative structure. This is, of course, not a perfect analogy, but it does indicate a way of understanding how in redemption, we can think of our narrative identity as being 're-plotted' in accordance with Christ, while at the same time, maintaining the particularity of who we are, thus suggesting an answer to the question posed at the end of chapter two.

McFadyen's use of recontextualisation is not, of course, focused on narrative, but on our identity constituting relationships. However, my use of this concept can easily accommodate how McFadyen employs it since, as I have argued relationships are set within a narrative context and can easily be described in narrative form (for example, the past, present and future form of those relations as well as the interplay between character and circumstance).[557] The central point to how McFadyen's use of recontextualisation is that the full reality of it is established eschatologically and is only known in the present in promissory or anticipatory form. If then, we can apply it to our notion of identity that is narratively shaped then it expresses the idea that the full story of who we are is only brought together

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[555] *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, dir. Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson (Sony Pictures, 2023).

[556] It is interesting to note that the concept appears to have inspired cultural attraction as some have used it to narrate events in their own lives. See, Lee, Kevin B., 'The Greatest Films poll hints at a critical shift towards the post-historical, miniversal and subjective' in *Sight and Sound,* 33:7 (2023), 28, p.28.

[557] McFarland, *Difference and Identity*, p.137; Jersild, *Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology*, p.45.

in new creation. That is, in resurrection our central relationship to Christ provides a new plotline in which the different, sometimes conflicting and misaligned, strands of who we are brought together. This is an embodied and embedded reality, so there is no question of losing who we are and a narrative structure to identity allows for dynamism and change without risk of discontinuity. Indeed, the material remains the same and yet the narrative of Jesus provides a new or transformed plot. It is, perhaps, a pivot on which the narrative turns or a wider perspective that gives a new meaning to existing plotlines.[558] This occurs in redemption, but only because it is in new creation where who we are is ultimately brought together. In other words, who we are now anticipates and is determined by who we will be in our resurrection.

6.5 Conclusion: Anticipating Who We Are

In the last chapter I set out that the foundation of our identity is found in God's relation to us in Christ. In this chapter I have argued that this is only fully known in new creation. This argument arose from key New Testament texts that indicated that redemption should be understood as orientated towards new creation where Christ relates to us in resurrection. As I explored the work of Kelsey and McFadyen it became clear that a commitment to Christ relating to us in creation was key for maintaining a view of identity that was embodied and embedded, indeed, without it, there was a risk that redemption entails a loss of who we are in anticipation of a disembodied future. However, if this emphasis is maintained, then this allows for a view of new creation in which identity is embodied and embedded, while at the same time conformed to the identity of Christ. In other words, a commitment to God relating to humans in and through the physical creation allows for who we are to be brought together with who Christ is in resurrection.

My final point in this chapter was to use the idea of recontextualisation to propose that our identity is fully known in new creation but only known now in anticipatory form. The question now is how, exactly, does our identity anticipate who we are in new creation? Indeed, is it even possible to imagine that our identity can be rooted in a future reality? And

[558] Pickstock, *The One Story*, p.30; Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, p.160.

what might this say about the nature of time and new creation? These are the questions I shall begin to explore in the next chapter.

7. Resurrection: Identity Back From The Future

Time travel is a mainstay of science fiction literature, television and movies, from H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* to *Avengers: Endgame,* one of the highest grossing films of all time.[559] A typical plotline often involves a character travelling into the past and then having to contend with the ramifications of that in the present. A classic example of this is *Back to the Future,* where Marty McFly plays with a photo of his family pinned to his guitar, which fades as his parents almost fail to kiss at their school prom.[560] The problem with such films is, of course, that few are rigorously conceived in relation to time. After all, if Marty fades from existence, there would be no one in 1985 to travel back in time to interrupt his parent's burgeoning romance, resetting the time-line, until Marty once again travels back from 1985 to 1955 and so on, and so on. This is the so-called Grandfather paradox and is specifically addressed in *Avengers: Endgame* by way of the multiverse. However, other recent films like *Arrival* and *Tenet* demonstrate that exploration within time, must take account of an exploration of the nature of time.[561] Without that, it is difficult to coherently conceive of how the past may affect the future (other than in the straightforward fashion we all experience), let alone how future may affect the past.

This, then, presents a problem to the argument I have set out so far. In the last chapter I argued that our identity is ultimately determined in new creation but may be known in anticipatory form now. While there may be no time machine involved, it does suggest that future eschatology has an effect on who we are in the present. I shall assess proposals from Grenz and Pannenberg of how this might be achieved, but I will argue that neither sufficiently allows for the goodness of creation. I shall then go on to put forward my own proposal; that identity is found in new creation, but that this can be known in the present,

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[559] Wells, H.G., *The Time Machine* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2017); *Avengers: Endgame*, dir. Anthony Russo and Joe Russo (Walt Disney Studios, 2019).
[560] *Back to the Future,* dir. Robert Zemeckis (United International Pictures, 1985).
[561] *Arrival,* dir. Denis Villeneuve (Entertainment One, 2016); *Tenet*, dir. Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros., 2020).

because it is rooted in the resurrection of Christ. In order to make this argument, I will explore the nature of the new creation and the place of resurrection within it.

7.1 A Teleological Approach to Identity

7.1.1 Grenz and Our Shared Narratives in Christ

The work of Grenz brings together a number of the themes we have discussed in the last two chapters. In *The Social God and the Relational Self,* he draws upon a relational view of human nature with a narrative understanding of the self, to argue that our identity is found in the shared narratives of those who are in Christ.[562] Indeed, he puts it that in Christ, the relational self is transformed into the 'ecclesial self' and through this, identity shaping narratives are incorporated into the 'transcending narrative' of Jesus. Ultimately then, 'identity is a shared story.'

It will be apparent that Grenz reflects McFadyen's emphasis on relationality. Like McFadyen he argues that humans are inherently relational and proposes a 'perichoretic understanding of self and others.'[563] Akin to other writers, this is grounded ontologically in the life of the Trinity. This, I have argued, is not a helpful theological basis for understanding human nature and I do not intend to reiterate that discussion here. What is significant at this stage is the distinctive twist Grenz makes, in that he argues that this is not established in creation, but in new creation where 'the new humanity [is] in communion with the triune God.'[564]

One of the implications of Grenz's emphasis on new creation is that for all the centrality of relationality, ultimately, he puts it that the new humanity is a communal rather than relational destiny. He explains this by recourse to the image of God trope, arguing that it should be at the heart of theological anthropology. This is a familiar line of argument and Grenz also interprets the image of God primarily in Christological terms arguing that the work of Christ in the narrative of salvation-history 'marks him as the manifestation of God

[562] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.329-31.
[563] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.310.
[564] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.304-5.

and hence as the *imago dei'*.[565] Once again, the significant development Grenz makes is that he proposes that it is only when humans are conformed to Christ in new creation that they share in the image of God, because through that, they share in the narrative identity of Jesus.[566] It is because of this communal destiny, in which human identity is rooted, that Grenz puts forward that who we are is found in the shared narratives of those who are in Christ in new creation.

The shape of Grenz's thesis is, then, similar to that which I put forward in the last chapter; that our identity is rooted in new creation where, through resurrection, we are conformed to Jesus. Both proposals anchor identity in an individual's relationship with Christ in new creation and both stress how this relationship reshapes the narrative of who she is. Grenz has, of course, put more weight on a trinitarian approach to human nature and the image of God in his argument, both of which I have resisted. What I want to draw out of Grenz's work, however, in particular, is that while he roots identity in new creation, he argues it can be known in the present proleptically, and indeed, it is constitutive of our who we are now in anticipatory form.[567] This was my contention too. Grenz's contribution is that by arguing that the destiny of humans is the image of God, given in creation, known now in part and fulfilled eschatologically, this means that identity can be teleologically rooted in new creation. It is this teleological basis, then, which will be the main point of discussion.

7.1.2 The Importance of Narrative for the Teleological Approach

At the heart of the teleological approach employed by Grenz is the continuous narrative thread he draws from creation to new creation. Without it his approach fails, since the whole idea of phrases like 'destiny', 'fulfilment' and 'God's intent from the beginning' is that there is a unified narrative structure from beginning to end supporting them.[568] It is in this respect that Grenz is wholly at odds with Kelsey, a point frequently noted by the latter.[569] While I have argued that Kelsey's formulation of three distinct canonical narratives is

[565] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self* p.216.
[566] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, p.228.
[567] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.321-22.
[568] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.224, 231, 235.
[569] Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, p.903; 955.

flawed, the question for Grenz is whether there is sufficient *continuity* from creation to new creation to justify a teleological approach.

On the face of it, this represents a problem. Too much continuity between creation and new creation raises a number of difficulties.[570] Indeed, I noted in the last chapter the high degree of continuity between the two meant that McFadyen struggled to recognise how Christ relates to us through the physicality of creation. And yet, if there was less continuity this might undermine how Grenz frames his proposal teleologically. However, by framing creation, redemption and new creation in narrative terms, Grenz's manages to successfully mitigate this potential difficulty.

It is important to recognise that although Grenz applies terms like 'destiny' to creation, continuity from creation to new creation is anchored in the latter, not the former. For example, Grenz holds that Christ is the image of God not because this is established in creation but because of his work in redemption and because he is the one in whom the new humanity is found eschatologically.[571] It is because of this end, that Grenz argues that the image of God in creation represents humanity's destiny. As he puts it, the image of God should be read 'from beginning to end and from end to beginning.'[572] This is possible in a narrative structure because the end interprets the beginning. As Moltmann puts it:

> The earlier is understood in the light of the later, and the beginning is comprehended in the light of the consummation.[573]

Continuity, then, from creation to new creation is possible, but that continuity is only fully present eschatologically. It is thus through a narrative structure that Grenz can argue that human nature is defined not in creation, but in new creation. The new humanity, he argues, is the 'defining moment' of the creation of humans, the climax of the narrative of salvation, but also the means by which we understand humanity.[574] This is echoed in Shults who

[570] Wall, Timothy, 'Is Creation Complete? A Critique of Continuing Creation' in *Challenging Religious Issues*, 15 (Autumn 2019), 29-34, p.31-32
[571] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.18.
[572] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.184.
[573] Moltmann*, God in Creation*, p.226.
[574] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.18.

writes that 'what is most true about human nature is not its primordial past but its eschatological future.'[575]

In the last chapter I argued that our identity in redemption and new creation is determinative for who we are in creation, and since redemption is orientated towards new creation, our identity is ultimately rooted in the latter. The perspectives of Grenz, Moltmann and Shults helpfully elaborate this point further, in that they indicate how an eschatological perspective is determinative for human being in the world. The difference between Grenz's approach and my own, is that Grenz's emphasis on eschatology *relies* on a narrative structure. To put it somewhat crudely, the end is determinative, because it is the end. On the other hand, the approach I outlined in the last chapter emphasised an eschatological perspective because of the work of Christ in new creation. It was his resurrection that was foundational.[576] Both perspectives allow for identity to be rooted in new creation, but the difference is significant when we assess the success of a teleological approach to this.

7.1.3 Creation and Relationality within a Teleological Approach

While teleology allows Grenz to root identity in new creation, ultimately his approach represents an unhelpful way of understanding how who we are in our resurrection determines and defines who we are now. The weakness of his argument is not that it implies too much continuity between creation and new creation, but that creation is characterised as deficient and incomplete. This stems from Grenz's reliance on an inherent narrative structure rather that the work of Christ. In the next three sections, I will set out why this is the case by making specific reference to how Grenz treats relationality. As I do, two familiar problems will emerge.

Grenz specifically roots the inherent relationality of humans in their creation as male and female in Genesis 1 and 2. This is not a particularly novel; it most notably plays a role in Barth's anthropology.[577] Yet Grenz adds two distinctive elements to his treatment. The first

[575] Shults, F. LeRon*, Reforming Theological Anthropology* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), p.242.
[576] A similar point is made by Schwöbel. Schwöbel, *Human Being,* p.144.
[577] Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1*, p.323-324.

is that sexuality, by which Grenz means the creation of humans as male and female, represents the 'incompleteness each person senses as an embodied sexual creature.'[578] It therefore also stands behind the dynamic that draws humans to form relationships and undergirds humanity's inherent relationality.[579] The second is that Grenz proposes that this dynamic finds its fruition, not in marriage, but in the new humanity.[580] The inherent relationality of humanity is, thus, teleological. It is grounded in a communal vision of humanity in new creation and reflected in their creation as male and female.

Now, it isn't exactly clear why sexual difference should lie behind the fundamental human dynamic to form relationships. After all, some of the most central human relationships are predicated not on difference but on continuity, similarity and correspondence, such as the relation between a parent and child.[581] Furthermore, as I argued in chapter five, human relationships are best conceived as being rooted in how Christ relates to us in our embodiment and embeddedness in creation.[582] Indeed, this allows for a wider understanding of relationality that encompasses both 'God, human beings, and the rest of creation,' which is not possible in Grenz's formulation, which is decidedly anthropocentric.[583]

It is important not to misunderstand Grenz here. His argument is not that humans are inherently relational because of their creation as male and female, but because of their communal destiny in the new creation. Therefore, it is not the work of Christ in creation that is determinative, but his role in the new creation. Grenz argues that the *telos* of relational humans is the new humanity, that is, those who are found in Christ.[584] Indeed, he writes that the goal of life together in the new humanity is 'relationship with God and *all creation*.'[585] It is, of course, intrinsic to a teleological approach that more weight will be placed on the end than the beginning. And yet, this does not mitigate how Grenz's

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[578] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.277-278.
[579] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.300-301.
[580] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.280-281.
[581] We might note here the fundamental importance of the mother-child relationship as the self emerges explored in a previous chapter. See also Coetzee, *Yet Thou Hast Made Him Little Less than God*, p.1134.
[582] McFarland, *Difference and Identity,* p.72-73.
[583] Case-Winters, *Rethinking The Image Of God*, p.818-819.
[584] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.326-327
[585] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.280. My emphasis.

teleological approach undermines the goodness of creation. After all, he argues that the creation of humans as male and female represents a fundamental 'incompleteness', which implies that there is a deficit in creation, which can be only made whole eschatologically.[586] Indeed, the link Grenz draws between sexuality and human embodiment suggests that the physical creation itself only has 'potential wholeness.'

While it is right to characterise new creation as exceeding creation, this should not be taken to imply that creation lacks anything or that it is not 'good' or 'very good' in and of itself (cf. Genesis 1-2:3). This point is also made by McFadyen and it raises a familiar problem.[587] It is not that Grenz places too much meaning in new creation, but that he places too much value in it *at the expense* of creation itself. Indeed, he almost sets up a zero-sum game between the two. Yet, as I argued in the last chapter, creation and new creation should not be set in opposition to each other as the work of Christ is central to both. However, I also argued, that the work of Christ from creation to new creation runs through redemption, can Christ's role within that, perhaps, resolve the tension within Grenz's work?

7.1.4 Teleology and Redemption

Grenz's teleological interpretation of creation makes it difficult to discern where redemption fits within it. In new creation, those who are in Christ share in the image of God, but this is their 'destiny' from the beginning.[588] Moltmann offers a similar perspective when he writes that a

> human being's likeness to God appears as a historical process with an eschatological termination[589]

The problem with characterising the move from creation to new creation in terms of a process is that it leaves very little room for redemption because there is seemingly nothing to redeem. There is no disruption in the destiny given to humans in creation and therefore, no room for a 'pivot' upon which the narrative from creation to new creation turns. Indeed, the only way Grenz can characterise redemption is seemingly through how humans are

[586] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.277-280.
[587] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.46.
[588] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.240.
[589] Moltmann*, God in Creation*, p.227.

incorporated in Christ and through this how the 'narrative of sin' is brought together and coalesces with the narrative of Christ into a composite story, which he terms the 'narrative of grace.'[590] While it isn't clear what, exactly, Grenz means by the 'narrative of sin' or how it connects to an individual's own narrative identity, the upshot is that redemption is orientated towards a view of new creation in which his identity is found in the narrative of Christ and those who are also in him.

Despite the ambiguity and unlike Kelsey, there is no suggestion that this sharing of narrative identity entails being subsumed into who Christ is. As Turner explains, through incorporation in a larger narrative, it is possible for disparate sub-narratives to coalesce and find coherence without loss of distinction.[591] The narrative of Jesus in creation, redemption and new creation can provide such an over-arching or 'transcending narrative' such that the narrative identities of those who are in Christ can find unity, even if they represent distinct or diverging experiences of the world.[592] This echoes the idea of recontextualisation, which I set out in the last chapter. In fact, it helpfully suggests that being conformed to Christ does not just bring together the disparate aspects of our own identity, but that it can also be understood to bring cohesion to our identity constituting relationships. We find unity in Christ given that all who are in him are caught up in who he is. This goes some way to answer Harris' concern about the place of deficient or malignant relationships within our identity raised in chapter five.[593] For in new creation, those relationships which constitute who we are, are those which are found in Christ, that is, subject to transformation in terms of who he is in which his love, grace and justice are found.

The difference between Grenz's proposal and my own is that, for him, those who are in Christ find that 'their identity is a *shared* story.'[594] Indeed, Grenz stresses that the Christian identity is 'more than personal.' In other words, it is communal identity. Thus, Grenz faces another familiar difficulty. While an individual's identity may not be subsumed into Christ,

[590] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.255.
[591] Turner, Léon P., 'First Person Plural: Self-Unity And Self-Multiplicity In Theology's Dialogue With Psychology' in *Zygon,* 42:1 (March 2007), 7-24, p.17-18.
[592] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.328-329.
[593] Harris, *Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?*, p.225.
[594] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.330-331

how is she differentiated from others within him when her identity is a 'shared story'? The significance of it is that if who we are is found only in a communal shared identity, then what has become of who we are in creation? If it has been lost, then again, creation is undermined because redemption represents a loss of identity. Grenz, however, is keen to stress that the idea of a shared identity in Christ, that is, an individual's ecclesial identity, does not imply that individuality or particularity of identity is lost.[595] The question is how can particularity of identity be maintained?

7.1.5 *Identity in Teleological Perspective*

There are two potential answers to this question. The first is that particularity of identity could be secured through an individual's unique patterns of relationships with those who are in Christ.[596] The problem is that there is little clarity whether this is possible within Grenz's conception. On the one hand, for all that Grenz has emphasised the inherent relationality of humans, in new creation he argues that the 'relational self is the ecclesial self'.[597] In other words, relationality within our identity is exchanged for communality; a *shared* identity which is not relational in form, but narrative in form and structure. And yet, on the other hand, Grenz also concludes that humans continue to be sexual beings (in terms of being male and female) in new creation, because this lies behind the dynamic to form relationships.[598] Without this, he argues, the basis for community within the new humanity is undermined.

There is confusion here. Putting aside the question of the presence of sexuality in new creation and the problems identified in rooting relationality in the difference between male and female, the presence of male and female in the new humanity seems to undermine Grenz's emphasis on the communal nature of the ecclesial self, as well as his teleological

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[595] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.333.
[596] Turner, *First Person Plural*, p.10.
[597] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.303; 329.
[598] Grenz notes that 'genital sexual expression is left behind'. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.302.

approach as a whole. After all, he argued sexuality represented incompleteness and that the *telos* of humans made male and female was the new humanity.[599] As he put it:

> As humans enter into fellowship with God in community, the design of the Creator in making sexual beings – in creating humans who form bonds – comes to completion[600]

Indeed, it is not even clear that Grenz envisions the new humanity as an end as such, since he goes on to write that this dynamic *continues* to constitute humans 'as the community of the new humanity within the new creation.'[601]

A similar confusion arises when we consider the other alternative, that particularity of identity can be maintained through the body. That is, even though an individual may share her identity with others in Christ, the particularity of her embodiment distinguishes her from them. It has, of course, been a central aspect of my argument, that identity arises from embodiment and embeddedness and if this is the case, then it is very difficult to understand how identity could be shared given distinct embodiment and embeddedness. However, Grenz seems to favour a view similar to McFadyen's two-grid model, in which an individual is distinguished from others by his movement 'through time and space', but whose identity is otherwise independent of this.[602] It is not necessary to repeat the problems with this approach. In any case, the point is that if particularity of identity is to be maintained through the body, then this depends on the physical nature of new creation. Yet, while Grenz does put it that humans 'participate in the resurrection as the embodied persons – male and female – who they are' he also characterises embodiment as 'incomplete'.[603] The place of physicality within new creation, for Grenz, then, is not clear.

The confusion surrounding the presence of relationality and physicality in new creation is symptomatic of two things. Firstly, that it is difficult to maintain that who we are is found ultimately in a 'shared story' alongside a view of identity that is rooted in physicality. After all, the emphasis from the cognitive sciences, that identity emerges from embodied and embedded roots implies that it is rooted in particularity of place and time. Recall, for

[599] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.300-1; 304-5.
[600] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.280-281.
[601] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.302.
[602] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.334.
[603] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.302.

instance, how I argued in chapter two that identity could be context dependent as an individual's body interacts with her environment in different ways. This physical particularity means, as I pointed out in the last chapter, there is no question of who we are being lost or subsumed into Christ as we are conformed to him. While I also argued that this could be held alongside a view of identity that is re-shaped or re-patterned to who Christ is, this is not the same as arguing that it is the *same* as Christ. Indeed, Grenz's point is not just that our identity is shared with Christ, but also shared with all who are in him. As I noted earlier, the basis of this is a perichoretic understanding of humanity, based on the life of the Trinity. But this is not a firm basis for human identity, or a fair representation of the biblical witness, in which our ultimate destiny is found in Christ in resurrection. It does, however, explain the ambiguity in Grenz's thought, since, for him, the presence of physicality and relationality in new creation should reflect, in some way, the nature of physicality and relationality in the godhead.

Secondly, it is symptomatic of the problems of a teleological approach. Grenz has argued that who we are now anticipates who we will be in new creation as our identity is drawn to fulfilment in Christ. The problem with this is that it characterises this prolepsis in terms of incompleteness, and indeed, suggests creation itself is incomplete and therefore, in some way, deficient. This implies that the nature of who we are in creation including our physicality and relationality is also understood to be incomplete, finding its fulfilment in a way of being, akin to the trinitarian life of God. This undermines the goodness of creation, never mind how Christ relates to us within creation in our embodiment and embeddedness. At the same time, Grenz rightly wants to affirm the goodness of relationships and physicality, and therefore in recognising their place within new creation he offers two divergent lines of argument.

Ultimately, this comes down to the problem I noted earlier, that teleology relies on a continuous narrative from creation to new creation, rather than the work of Christ. There is no space for a 'pivot' in the narrative or for re-contextualisation of who we are, because while our identity is transformed in new creation, this is the culmination of a smooth progression. In other words, teleology may root our identity in new creation, but only as the end point of a trajectory that was already present. There is no space for transformation

within that, since the end is ironically determined from the beginning. The view of recontextualisation I set forward in the last chapter is different, since it assumes that being conformed to Christ in resurrection re-shapes and re-centres who we are in creation. In other words, the eschatological work of Christ has a transformational effect on creation as much as it does on new creation. Redemption becomes a pivot in the narrative, established and finding its full meaning eschatologically, but known in the present. There is no smooth transition from creation to new creation; there is continuity between them, but this is established by Christ eschatologically. To put it another way, it is a question of how time is applied. A teleological view assumes a linear progression of time. Pannenberg however, sets forth a different view, and it is to him I now turn.

7.2 Pannenberg: Rooting Identity in Eternity

7.2.1 *The Primacy of the Future*

Pannenberg sets out a thesis in which the definitive meaning of all things is not rooted in creation but in the eschatological future that God brings about.[604] He thus expresses a view, akin to Grenz's and my own, in which eschatology is 'determinative.'[605] Indeed, he argues that it should be at the heart of systematic theology as a whole.[606] However, while Grenz relies on theology and a linear view of time, Pannenberg's reasoning is quite different. His understanding of time and eternity is the best place to begin.

At the heart of Pannenberg's view of time is how he conceives of eternity. He argues that eternity is not simply the opposite of time. Neither does it represent an elongated period of time. Rather, it is 'positively related' to *all* time, in that it embraces time in its totality.[607] For Pannenberg, this is how God relates to the time of creation, where 'all things are present to

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[604] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), p.531; Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Systemic Theology Vol. 2*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p.146.
[605] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3,* p.531.
[606] Grenz, Stanley, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Cambridge, Eerdmans, 1990), p.257.
[607] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Systemic Theology Vol. 1*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p.408.

[him] in their actuality.'[608] This formulation is not original to Pannenberg; he draws upon Augustine here, and Schwartz similarly emphasises that eternity is primarily ascribed to God in contrast (or we might say, in relation) to creation.[609] Pannenberg's key move is to say that the new creation[610] comes about through the 'entry of eternity into time.'[611] In other words, the 'time-bridging' present of eternity, by which God comprehends all things, becomes realised in creation.

In one sense, for Pannenberg, God *has* to relate to creation eschatologically. After all, if eternity represents the unity of all times, then the only place where this can be comprehended in creation is at the end of time.[612] As Pannenberg puts it: 'the whole is present only in the sense that it hovers over the parts as the future whole.' It indicates that for Pannenberg, even as creator, God always relates to creation from the future.[613] Thus, 'God's future is […] the creative origin of all things.' It is no surprise, then, that Pannenberg usually characterises eschatology as the 'consummation of creation.' There are two important points to draw out from this.

First, because creation is orientated towards the future, it means that determinative meaning is not found in the origin of things, but in their eschatological future. More precisely, it is rooted in God's eternal present, but as I have outlined, for Pannenberg this enters into creation eschatologically and so God's future constitutes the 'definitive meaning and […] nature of all things.'[614] As Thiselton points out, the implication of this is that what we know of creation now is only a fragmentary aspect of what it will be and therefore, what it ultimately is.[615]

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[608] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, 'Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God' in *Trinity, Time, and Church,* ed. Colin Gunton (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 62-70, p.62-64.
[609] Schwartz, Hans, *Eschatology* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), p.293.
[610] Pannenberg does not speak of 'new creation'. Rather, like Kelsey, he writes of 'eschatological consummation.' However, as will become clear, envisioning new creation as consummation is not without difficulty. I will, therefore, continue to use 'new creation' except where it is necessary to use Pannenberg's own terminology.
[611] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3,* p.603.
[612] Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p.76-77.
[613] McClean, John, 'A Search for the Body: Is there Space For Christ's Body in Pannenberg's Eschatology?' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 14:1 (2012), 91-108, p.93.
[614] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.531.
[615] Thiselton, Antony C., *The Last Things* (London: SPCK, 2012), p.10-11.

Second, it will be apparent that there is a teleological character to Pannenberg's assessment, in that God is drawing creation to fulfilment. Indeed, Pannenberg goes on to argue that the new creation has a 'retroactive causality' through which creation is drawn to its eschatological telos.[616] This is a significant claim. As McClean puts it:

> The obvious sense […] is that substance or essence emerges through time. More startling is the claim that the essence which emerges already exists as future, anticipating the completion of becoming.[617]

In other words, creation does not just find fulfilment in the new creation, but is brought to fulfilment by it.

The difference between Pannenberg's teleology and that outlined by Grenz is the nature of time within two approaches. For Grenz, creation finds its fulfilment in new creation; it is a question of destiny and God's intent in creation. On the other hand, Pannenberg begins with new creation, which is both the end and the whole of creation, and from which God draws creation. It is difficult to find an appropriate analogy, as the difference is not one of, say, a trilogy of films that work sequentially towards a climax and a series of films which are may to precede one that is already made,[618] since for Pannenberg that established end point *is* the entirety of what precedes it. It would be as if *Star Wars: Episode IV: A New Hope* was simply made up of the three films that were produced to precede it.[619] That this is both difficult and rather incongruous to conceive demonstrates how Pannenberg resists a straightforwardly linear approach to time and teleology. The question of providence is significant here. It is much easier to fit God's providential action in creation within Grenz's template. On the other hand, it is hard to square Pannenberg's system with, say, the view of God's providential action in creation we observed in Job 38-41 in chapter two, as God can only act within creation in its entirety since the end is also the whole. More could be said on this, but for our purposes, it means that there is scope for identity to be rooted in new

[616] Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, p.106.
[617] McClean, *A Search for the Body*, p.92.
[618] The classic example here being, perhaps, *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace,* dir. George Lucas (Twentieth Century Fox, 1999), *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones,* dir. George Lucas (Twentieth Century Fox, 2002), *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith,* dir. George Lucas (Twentieth Century Fox, 2005).
[619] *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope,* dir. George Lucas (Twentieth Century Fox, 1977).

creation and known in anticipatory or proleptic form now, without the implication that who we are now is somehow incomplete because creation is not 'working towards' fulfilment in new creation. Rather, its fulfilment is aways present in how God relates towards it, indeed, it is that which draws it to fulfilment. However, in order to assess how successful this framework, we must consider how Pannenberg understands identity itself.

7.2.2 The Sum-Total of Life History: Narrative Divorced from Creation

Pannenberg holds that a human is defined by her 'once-for-all-history.'[620] That is, by the sum total of her life, rooted with God in eternity and realised in the eschatological fulfilment of creation.[621] This follows from the preceding argument and there are two specific implications. Firstly, that our identity now (that is, for Pannenberg, our life-history to this point) is a fragment of who we truly are. And secondly, that this fragment is an authentic aspect of our identity, since who we are now will be a constitutive element of who we ultimately are, that is the sum total of our life history. As Pannenberg puts it, we are already in a sense 'what we shall be.'[622]

On the face of it, Pannenberg's identity-defining life history bears a strong similarity to the idea of an identity shaping narrative. Indeed, Pannenberg writes that as creation is drawn to fulfilment from the future, God is present in the narrative sequence of time.[623] Humans are, of course, a part of creation, so their identity is a constituent part of the larger narrative of creation. This bears a similarity to my argument that identity shaping narratives coalesce and find coherence as we are conformed to the narrative identity of Jesus. A problem arises, however, when we consider from what (or whose) perspective these narratives are to be viewed. For Pannenberg the answer is clear; the sum total of our life history is rooted in eternity, that is, the 'undivided present of life in its totality', from which God comprehends all time.[624] In other words, this is a narrative told from a 'God's eye view.' The difficulty is that this is a wholly objective reality. Pannenberg himself speaks of the narrative of time as

620 Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.574.
621 Thiselton, *The Last Things*, p.138.
622 Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3,* p.640.
623 Pannenberg, *Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God*, p.67.
624 Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 2*, p.92.

an 'eventful *actuality*.'[625] And yet, an identity shaping narrative is inherently subjective since, as I have argued, it is rooted in autobiographical memory and the world around us, that is, in the particularity of our embodiment and embeddedness. Furthermore, the notion of 'soft assembly' discussed in chapter two, suggested that identity could also fluctuate according that particularity at any one time.

There would be scope for Pannenberg to incorporate a more subjective element into how he understands identity. Moltmann, for example, does just this. He similarly emphasises 'whole life history' within human identity, but also takes into account 'the whole configuration of the person's life' as well.[626] While this is somewhat vague, it does allow for identity to be found, not just in an objective account, but within a wider narrative context *within* creation. Yet, this is difficult for Pannenberg to do, because while identity may be definitively known eschatologically, it is ultimately rooted in eternity, that is, outside of creation.

7.2.3 Identity: Static, Rigid and Unchanging

It is almost tautological to say that the sum-total of an individual's life history is unchanging. It would not, after all, be the sum-total if anything could be added or taken away. This presents a rather static view of identity. Pannenberg does, however, take into account the changing realities of life, indeed, he argues that because of them, who we are is always changing and we are constantly going beyond what we have been.[627] There is thus, a particular dynamic here that follows from Pannenberg's teleological approach to time. While it may appear that Pannenberg is articulating both a static and dynamic view of identity, in actual fact, identity only changes in the sense that we are progressively participating in our life history and drawing closer to the definitive eschatological perspective.[628]

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[625] Pannenberg, *Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God*, p.67. My emphasis.
[626] Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Coming of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1996), p.75.
[627] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.640.
[628] It is instructive that Pannenberg refers to 'selfhood' here, indicating that he has in mind our changing *experience* of who we are, rather than the objective reality of our rooted identity in eternity. Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.640.

This does enable Pannenberg to easily maintain continuity of identity throughout an individual's life, but it also reveals a particular tension at the heart of his approach. For if an individual's identity is rooted in an eschatological telos, towards which she is progressively participating in, then this seems to paint a rather deterministic view of human nature (and indeed, of God's providence). Wilkinson notes this difficulty and questions whether it allows for any ontological openness to the future or any possibility for human responsibility for it.[629] However, this problem may be alleviated if we understand that the telos in question does not represent the final form of who we are, but our history of becoming, that is, our life history taken together.[630] This is, of course, how Pannenberg has defined human identity, even if some of his writing seems to indicate the more deterministic perspective.[631] Indeed, the criticism might, more accurately, be applied to Grenz's teleology, in which an individual's identity in new creation is destined from the beginning. However, in emphasising the definitive nature of the totality of our history, Pannenberg's retroactive causality becomes more about proleptic participation in the definitive nature of who we are, rather than about being drawn towards a fixed, ultimate future with no ontological room for manoeuvre. However, while this emphasis may alleviate one problem, it creates another.

If in new creation who we are is defined by our whole life history, then as Moltmann points out, it means that 'nothing has ever been lost for God – not the pains of this life, and not its moments of happiness.'[632] This is especially pertinent for Pannenberg, for while a narrative approach may emphasise and contextualise certain parts of our lives, within an objective view, everything is equally present. Indeed, the only context available to Pannenberg is the wider whole of our history, and possibly the whole history of creation. This contextualisation may be able to effect a change in 'the significance of what we experienced' but the effect is surely limited.[633]

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[629] Wilkinson, David, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), p.41.
[630] I am referring specifically to identity, but the point holds for the whole of creation. See Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 2*, p.92.
[631] Wilkinson puts this down to a shift in Pannenberg's thought. Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.41.
[632] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.70-71.
[633] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3,* p.640.

The problem, then, is that Christian eschatology classically holds that in new creation there is healing and restoration in which God will 'wipe every tear from their eyes' (Revelation 21:4). Hence the history we are defined by, for Moltmann, is the 'rectified, healed and completed history' of our lives.[634] This requires some form of transformation. I have argued elsewhere that it is possible to maintain continuity of identity through transformation, yet this is not possible within Pannenberg's scheme because he puts it in such objective terms.

There are then problems either way. If we emphasise the teleological elements of Pannenberg's thought, the new creation is overly deterministic. And if we do not, there is no capacity for transformation in new creation. Either way the flaw is the same; human identity is static and rigid.

7.2.4 Identity in Resurrection: Life, but not as We Know It

It is no accident that we have not yet discussed the role of Christ in new creation. For Pannenberg argues that the epitome of eschatology is not resurrection or being conformed to Christ (he claims these were overemphasised by the early church), but God's coming to consummate his rule over creation.[635] Given that I have argued that the resurrection of Christ is at the heart of new creation and our identity within it, this calls into question Pannenberg's approach.

This is not to say that the resurrection of Jesus is absent from Pannenberg's eschatology. Indeed, he proposes that the coming of the Kingdom of God has been 'made manifest' in the resurrection of Jesus.[636] The consummation of creation and the resurrection of Jesus are, then, not unrelated for Pannenberg. Indeed, Grenz commends Pannenberg for placing such emphasis on the resurrection in his thought.[637] He puts it that Pannenberg is in accord with the 'modern' emphasis on the body as being constitutive of humanness. While we may want to challenge the idea that this is a modern notion, it raises an important question. How

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[634] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.71.
[635] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.527.
[636] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.531.
[637] Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, p.265.

does resurrection fit with Pannenberg's understanding of identity which is both static and disconnected from creation?

The first difficulty, encountered by Pannenberg, arises when he assesses the classic question of how identity is maintained through resurrection. He rightly identifies that resurrection cannot entail 'rebirth to a totally different existence' given that that would mean there is no scope for redemption, as 'we' would be left behind.[638] In other words, there must be some sort of continuity of identity. And yet, Pannenberg questions how this can be possible, if life following resurrection entails any sort of new experience. That, he argues, would mean adding to our 'once-for-all-history', thereby changing or transforming our identity because this occurs beyond the eschatological breaking in of eternity to time. It follows then, that if this was the case, we would be raised, or certainly become, different people than those who lived before their resurrection.[639] This startling view follows on exactly from Pannenberg's static and disconnected view of identity, because it allows for no change or transformation.

This, in turn, raises two further questions. Firstly, where does redemption fit within Pannenberg's scheme? This has been a recurrent problem with a number of those I have engaged with and although the way in which Pannenberg connects creation to new creation is distinct, the place of redemption within his scheme is not obvious.[640] He does suggest that in the eschaton the reconciliation of the world comes to completion in the new life of resurrection.[641] Indeed, redemption, for Pannenberg, is ultimately found in the removal of the separation between us, God and others.[642] This introduces a helpful anticipatory element within creation, in which being 'in Christ' anticipates the determinative relationship we have with Christ in new creation. On the face of it, this may seem to echo McFadyen's understanding of how in redemption our relationships are re-contextualised in anticipation of the relations we will be a part of in new creation. However, Pannenberg's formulation allows for no such transformation. Indeed, there is no scope for how our identity might be

[638] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.573-4; Schwartz, *Eschatology*, p.287-8.
[639] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.576.
[640] Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.47.
[641] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.631.
[642] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.628.

re-shaped or re-interpreted in redemption, because while new creation transforms creation, it entails no novelty in past or future.

What, then, can it mean to be 'in Christ' now in anticipation of our resurrection? Indeed, if there can be no novelty within new creation, what does the life of new creation actually entail? I have already noted how Grenz commends Pannenberg for emphasising the resurrection of the *body.* However, Pannenberg argues that this refers not to the bodies of individuals, but specifically to the body of Christ. He argues that we participate in Christ's resurrection communally, a process which represents the 'removal of the individual autonomy and separation that are a part of the corporeality of earthly life.'[643] In other words, resurrection for Pannenberg, means sharing in Christ's resurrection whereby being 'in Christ' is fully and ontologically realised.

Again, there appears to be a clear parallel with another author, for Grenz argued that identity is a 'shared story', rooted in a communal destiny in Christ. However, there are stark differences in their thought. For one thing, Pannenberg removes any confusion over the place of individuality and physicality in new creation decidedly in favour of a communal, non-physical existence. Indeed, while Grenz ultimately saw identity in new creation in narrative terms, in the end, for Pannenberg, it is an individual's relation to God, through Christ, and with those who are also, 'in Christ', that is determinative for who he is.

Pannenberg's scheme then accords with a view in which redemption represents the removal of separation between an individual, God and others. However, as I noted, this should not be understood in terms of the healing or transformation of distorted relations between individuals and God, but the removal of the separateness between them. It thus represents an end to individuality as a whole. The problem is that Pannenberg misunderstands what being 'in Christ' entails, for while it is corporate, individuality still plays an important role, indeed it is fundamental for a relationship to exist.[644] As Wilkinson puts it:

[643] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.628-9.
[644] Torrance, Thomas F., *Space, Time and Resurrection* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), p.157.

> Surely the biblical imagery of being "in Christ" is very different to seeing the whole consciousness of humanity swallowed up in Christ. Where is the dynamic of relationship in this?[645]

Redemption should not be understood as the drawing together of separation through the removal of individual autonomy, but a restoration of relationships in anticipation of a resurrection in which all those in Christ are conformed to who he is in a recontextualisation of their identity. This level of transformation within who we are is simply not possible for Pannenberg.

Granted, Pannenberg does attempt to argue that 'individual particularity' is maintained through the fact that our identity – our life history – is still held in Christ.[646] And yet the idea that we can have conscious appreciation or participation in God's awareness of our temporal life has been rightly challenged as 'inadmissible from the point of view of the brain science.'[647] Indeed, any view of identity which relies on a central relation to Christ in new creation must allow for the embodiment and embeddedness of that relationship in creation, and therefore, for particularity of identity.

While physical embodiment and embeddedness are decidedly not present within Pannenberg's thought, it has been suggested that what he actually describes is 'bodily existence of a different order […] a higher order self-awareness given by God.'[648] Indeed, Pannenberg himself puts it that because eschatology is outside of our present experience, we should expect conclusions that are beyond human comprehension.[649] While I have, myself, argued that in the new creation 'new possibilities emerge', this suggestion from Pannenberg and Grenz does seem to be something akin to a *deus ex machina*.[650] Indeed, even if it were accepted, it suggests a view of new creation so discontinuous with creation now that, as Volf puts it, even if it were possible, it would hardly seem desirable.[651] To

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645 Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.46.
646 Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.628-9.
647 Hick, John, 'A Note on Pannenberg's Eschatology' in *Harvard Theological Review,* 77 (1984), 421-423, p.422.
648 Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, p.285-6.
649 Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.628.
650 Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.57.
651 Volf, Miroslav, 'Enter Into Joy! Sin, Death and the Life of the World to Come' in *The End of the World and the Ends of God*, ed. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 256-279, p.267–8.

misquote Mr Spock, it is life, but not as we know it.[652] Indeed, this is symptomatic of how Pannenberg introduces too great a level of discontinuity between creation and new creation, which does not just make his proposal undesirable, but unsustainable. This is the final point of discussion.

7.2.5 No Time: Creation Undermined

McClean proposes that the problem with how Pannenberg draws creation and new creation together is that his view of eternity is too static.[653] This is certainly true with respect to new creation (after eternity enters into time, in Pannenberg's view). After all, I have observed how Pannenberg can countenance no new experiences following resurrection.[654] Indeed, while there is some scope for dynamism within how God relates to the time of creation in eternity and thereby draws creation to consummation, this is still a relatively static view. Compare this, for instance, with the suggestion of Wilkinson and Thiselton that God interacts with time through other dimensions in creation and the difference in dynamism is stark.[655]

McClean goes on to suggest that the root cause of Pannenberg's static eternity is that he gives no account of Christ's exalted body in his work.[656] He notes some of the features we have already examined, including how Pannenberg's account of the body of Christ strips it of all its physical particularities and conflates it with community.[657] Indeed, I have observed how this is related to Pannenberg's rigid view of new creation, but it is not quite right to say that he offers no account of Christ's exalted body. Pannenberg does to some extent account for the 'individual corporeality' of the resurrected Jesus in his later appearances to the disciples.[658] Indeed, he has to argue quite strongly that Jesus' resurrection is not of the same order as the general resurrection and that these post-resurrection appearances should be

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[652] The closest Mr. Spock comes to those words is 'It is not life as we know or understand it.' *Star Trek,* 'Operation: Annihilate!', dir. Herschel Daugherty (NBC, 1967).
[653] McClean, *A Search for the Body*, p.93-94.
[654] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.606.
[655] Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.134; Thiselton, *The Last Things*, p.143.
[656] McClean, *A Search for the Body*, p.94.
[657] McClean, *A Search for the Body*, p.96.
[658] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.628-9; McClean, *A Search for the Body*, p.95.

balanced (or 'corrected') by an emphasis on the Pauline concept of being 'in Christ'.[659] Without these two points, it would be hard to hold, as Pannenberg does, that resurrection entails a loss of individual corporeality.

Therefore, while McClean is right that Pannenberg gives no account of the ascension, the issue is not so much that there is a lack of Christ's exalted body, but rather his skewed account of resurrection. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus are, of course, intimately related, thus Paul can write that 'God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places' (Ephesians 1:20). Indeed, while Wright is correct to say that the two should not be conflated, the nature of the ascension depends on the nature of the resurrection.[660] Torrance and Farrow put it the other way, that the nature of the ascension determines how we understand the resurrection of Jesus.[661] However, once it is established that the ascension does not represent a transformation in the nature of Jesus' humanity (as Farrow and Torrance both argue), then it is the nature of the resurrection that is key. Indeed, there is no sense in the biblical accounts of the ascension that Jesus' body is transformed, apart from a change of location having been taken 'out of [the disciples'] sight' (Acts 1: 9-11). Thus, the nature of Jesus' resurrection body is central. If Pannenberg, then, gives no account of Christ's body, exalted in his ascension, this can be traced back to his account of the resurrection. This, in turn, arises from Pannenberg's underlying antipathy towards the physicality of creation and this is best explained by returning to how he understands time.

I have already noted that Pannenberg proposes that in eternity God comprehends the 'undivided present of life in its totality.'[662] This is important for Pannenberg because, for him, the relation of God to time must be as a relation to a unified whole.[663] In other words, there must be an underlying unity to time and Pannenberg finds this in eternity. It is this that then leads him to argue that the only way eternity can relate to creation is

[659] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.579; 628-9.
[660] Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, p.120.
[661] Farrow, Douglas, *Ascension and Ecclesia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p.262-263, Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.25.
[662] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 2*, p.92.
[663] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 1*, p.401-2.

eschatologically.[664] If all this is the case, however, the natural implication is that the temporal dispersion of time – past, present and future as we experience it – is opposed to God's purposes.[665] He is, after all, drawing it to a unified future. Indeed, Pannenberg writes that in the eschaton 'God will *overcome* the separation of the past from the present and the future.'[666]

In this view, new creation represents the 'dissolving of time in eternity.'[667] This is not to say that, for Pannenberg, the distinction of particular moments in time will be erased, rather that they will 'no longer be seen apart.' This is a reprisal of how Pannenberg understands redemption as an eschatological removal of separation between individuals, which is curious because he also puts it that God 'willed time as the form of their [human] existence' in creation.[668] It seems then, that while the distinction of the temporal events of creation does remain in new creation, the temporal process comes to an end.

We may draw from this that time – as in the temporal process – was only ever temporary. This view underlies both the static nature of eternity identified by McClean as well as the problems we encountered in how Pannenberg understands identity in new creation. To put it plainly, if there is no temporal process in new creation, then it is no surprise that any sort of new experience is not possible within it. Furthermore, if time has no place in new creation, then the value of creation is undermined.[669] Indeed, this does not just apply to time, for we cannot speak of time apart from the whole of the physical creation, since space and time belong together.[670] Thus, while new creation is timeless for Pannenberg, it is also lacking in physicality. As McClean puts it,

> a vision of the *eschaton* that is something like a singularity in which space-time is collapsed to a point [...] is so far from what we know as creaturely life that it offers no continuity with historical embodied life.[671]

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[664] Pannenberg draws heavily upon the work of the third century philosopher Plotinus in emphasising the primacy of the future. Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* p.76-77; Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 1*, p.408.
[665] Pannenberg, *Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God*, p.63-4.
[666] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 2*, p.95. My emphasis.
[667] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.607.
[668] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 2,* p.95-96.
[669] Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe,* p.134.
[670] Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.118.
[671] Italics original. McClean, *A Search for the Body*, p.107.

It is significant that Pannenberg commends the work of Tipler, who proposes a view of resurrection in terms of 'emulation', in which our consciousness is transferred to and exists within a computer simulation.[672] Tipler argues that this would not imply that we would experience resurrection as a 'ghostly' or 'insubstantial' existence, but that from our perspective we would observe ourselves 'as having a body as solid as the body we currently observe ourselves to have.'[673] There are number of problems with Tipler's approach, but I will highlight one that is particularity relevant.[674] Tipler assumes that for an individual to be replicated within a computer simulation, it is sufficient for her 'brain memory' to be transferred.[675] Yet, as I have argued, identity arises from our whole embodiment (not just the brain) as well as our embeddedness. Furthermore, life within a computer simulation cannot be said to be embodied (for all that Tipler speaks of it that way, it is only ever an illusion) and while it might be said to be embedded, this embeddedness is wholly different to our embeddedness within the physical creation. The point is, then, that the feasibility of any such transfer of identity is dubious, but more significantly, it implies a wholly different form of existence. Thus Tipler, along with Pannenberg, propose a view of resurrection that is so significantly removed from life as we know it now that it is hard to see how it relates to the hope of resurrection in new creation.

It is, therefore, not the lack of an account of Christ's exalted body that undermines Pannenberg's proposal. This is but one symptom of how Pannenberg undermines the physical creation as a whole. Indeed, Pannenberg puts it that creation can only be said to be 'very good' in light of the eschatological consummation of creation, that is, in its whole course of history, rather than at any given moment.[676] Putting aside the rather dubious interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3, the implication is that creation can only have value within the timeless, spaceless record of its history. It leaves creation as mere scaffolding to be discarded after use.[677]

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[672] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2*, p.160-1; Tipler, Frank, *The Physics of Immortality* (Basingstoke: Doubleday, 1995), p.241-2.
[673] Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality,* p.242.
[674] Wilkinson highlights a number of further difficulties. Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe,* p.19-20.
[675] Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality,* p.241.
[676] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.645.
[677] A view also problematically held by Schwartz. Schwartz, *Eschatology,* p.390.

We are now presented with a problem. I have argued that both Grenz and Pannenberg present proposals that inherently flawed by their failure to ascribe value to creation. Do we, then, have to abandon the notion that identity can be rooted in new creation? After all, this may place too much emphasis on the future, meaning that creation is undermined.[678] In the final section of this chapter, I will argue that identity can be rooted eschatologically, but that resurrection must be at its heart.

7.3 Resurrection: Identity Back from the Future

7.3.1 Out with the Old and in with the New (Creation)?

Moltmann urges caution when using the term 'new creation' within eschatology. After all, he notes, it may be quite misleading if we believe it to refer to a wholly new creation. Instead, he rightly characterises it as a 'new creating' of this creation for the eschatological age.[679] In other words, new creation represents the renewal of creation. Thus, as Polkinghorne puts it, creation comes about not *ex nihilo*, but *ex vetere*.[680] It is no surprise that a prominent biblical image of new creation is childbirth (Romans 8:22). The implication of this is that we should expect to see both continuity and discontinuity between creation and new creation.[681]

The presence of both continuity and discontinuity underscores a point that has arisen in the preceding discussion; that the right eschatological framework is not consummation, but transformation. Consummation can, on the one hand, imply too great a level of continuity than is justified if creation is envisioned as progressing steadily towards an eschatological zenith. On the other hand, it can also suggest too great a level of discontinuity if we take it

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[678] This is the problem Wilkinson ascribes to Pannenberg. Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.47.
[679] Moltmann, *The Coming of God,* p.74-5.
[680] Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World*, p.116; Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.265.
[681] This was recognised to some extent by Pannenberg. However, as I argued there was too high a level of discontinuity and while he attempted to maintain continuity of identity, having disconnected identity from creation, this was ultimately fruitless. Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.47.

to mean that at its fulfilment, creation it is removed like scaffolding to reveal the new.[682] Both have been present in the work of the writers I have discussed. Either way, what is missing is transformation through which creation is not done away with, but renewed, not as the culmination of a process but through a distinct act of God. We can assess this transformation on two levels, the universal and the specific. I will take them in that order.

7.3.2 New Creation: The Transformation of the Cosmos

While the biblical metaphor of childbirth is a useful way of holding on to the fact that new creation is not wholly new, it does not quite capture the transformative quality of new creation. This quality is more clearly expressed in the penultimate chapter of Revelation where heaven and earth are united as the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth and through this God makes his home 'among mortals' (Revelation 21: 1-3). For the author of Revelation, it is through the presence of 'heaven on earth' that creation is renewed and transformed.[683] This is particularly significant for Moltmann who puts it that the difference between creation and new creation is the presence of the creator in the community of the created.[684] In fact, he goes further and adds that new creation represents the 'in-dwelling' of God in creation.[685] This goes beyond transformation, this is a fundamental change in the foundations of the world.[686]

It is hard to assess the exact scope of Moltmann's proposal. He is certainly right to emphasise the universal scale of new creation.[687] However, he does seem to overly emphasise the discontinuity of new creation. For example, he argues that the space of creation – conceded in the creative resolve of God – is withdrawn. In a similar fashion he argues that in new creation the time and history of creation will be 'fanned out' and there will be 'neither the time of transience or the time of futurity.'[688] If this is the case, then

[682] Schwartz, *Eschatology*, p.390.
[683] Wright, *Surprised by Hope,* p.115-117.
[684] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.265-6.
[685] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.280.
[686] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.272.
[687] Schwartz makes this point, but then bizarrely proposes that this might just affect our solar system. The future of the physical universe implies nothing less than the transformation of all things. Schwartz, *Eschatology*, p.404; Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.49-50.
[688] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.294-6.

Moltmann goes too far towards Pannenberg's position, and ultimately undermines creation.[689]

However, we do not need this level of discontinuity to hold that God will be present in the fabric of new creation. Wright comes to this conclusion by drawing upon Isaiah 11:9 and 1 Corinthians 15:28 alongside Revelation 21: 1-3. He puts it that these passages suggest the new creation will be 'filled, flooded [and] drenched' by the presence of God, but that this represents a transformation of earth, not its evacuation.[690] Within this, then, it is easy to see how new possibilities within space and time might emerge. Wilkinson, for example, argues that we should view the new creation as having time, but that we will no longer be constrained by it.[691]

At this point, it is worth pausing to consider how this line of argument differs from that of Grenz and Pannenberg who relied on the idea that eschatology was beyond our human comprehension.[692] The difference is that while new possibilities may emerge in new creation, they should be rooted in what we know of creation now. That is, there should be continuity amidst the discontinuity. This is because, as I argued in the previous chapter, redemption, orientated towards new creation, does not represent the abandonment of creation. Indeed, as Torrance notes, it is precisely because new creation emerges from creation that new possibilities appear that we can in some way apprehend.[693] Thus, the 'pious agnosticism' of Kelsey will not do either. Arguing that God will be 'all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28) does not mean that everything is on the table, but there is a firm basis for what we can say of new creation; the resurrection of Christ, which inaugurates the breaking in of new creation into creation.

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[689] Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.134.
[690] Wright, *Surprised by Hope,* p.112-3.
[691] Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe*, p.47.
[692] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.621; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, p.285-6.
[693] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.177.

7.3.3 *New Creation: Specificity in Resurrection*

The resurrection of Jesus displays all the hallmarks of the relationship between creation and new creation: there is both continuity and discontinuity.[694] For example, the risen Jesus can appear and disappear seemingly at will (John 20:19) and yet his body still bears the marks of crucifixion (Luke 24:39). Indeed, making specific reference to his identity, Jesus instructs his disciples to 'Look at my feet; see that it is myself. Touch me and see [...]' and yet, elsewhere, Jesus seems hard to recognise (John 20:16). In this way the evangelists carefully maintain a tension between continuity and discontinuity. Shwartz is therefore wrong to say that the resurrected Jesus is no longer limited by the physical world.[695] After all, Jesus says he is hungry and eats a piece of broiled fish (Luke 24: 42). It would be better to say that the resurrected Jesus' relationship to space-time has been transformed.

The upshot is that Jesus' resurrection is entirely physical and seems to exist within a temporal process. As Torrance puts it

> In the risen Jesus therefore, creaturely space and time, far from being dissolved are confirmed in their reality before God.[696]

As I put it in the last chapter and have argued in more detail elsewhere, the transformation of resurrection is not one from physical to non-physical, but one from physical to something like more-than-physical or supra-physicality.[697] The same should be said of time. Resurrection is not a transformation to a timeless reality, but to one where the goodness of the temporal process is confirmed and made more real. Wilkinson suggests that this may mean that the time of resurrection is not limited in the same way it is now or that it is no longer linked to decay.[698] Indeed, it is possible that time in new creation is linked to increasing growth, dynamism and flourishing.[699] The point is that Jesus' resurrection confirms the goodness of the space-time of creation through the continuity that is evident, and suggests the in-dwelling of God in the potential discontinuity.

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694 For more see Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences,* p.41-45.
695 Schwartz, *Eschatology*, p.290.
696 Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.127-8.
697 Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences,* p.43.
698 Wilkinson, *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe,* p.134.
699 Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.88; Thiselton, Anthony C., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), p.1279-1280.

The discussion so far has, however, been limited to one particular case of resurrection; the resurrection of Jesus. It could be argued that this is a rather special case of resurrection. Recall, for instance, how Pannenberg argued that the resurrection of Jesus was of a different order than the general resurrection. Can Jesus' resurrection, then, give us a firm basis for understanding new creation in its universal span? There are two reasons to say that it can.

I have already implicitly touched on the first. My argument that resurrection is a transformation to supra-physicality was based on Paul's discussion of the resurrection body in 2 Corinthians 5: 1-5 and 1 Corinthians 15.[700] The second of these passages, where Paul uses the metaphor of first fruits, is instructive. He puts it that Christ is the 'first fruits of those who have died' (1 Corinthians 15: 20). This metaphor implies that Christ's resurrection comes first, but also that his resurrection is a sample (so to speak) of what is to come and a pledge that the resurrection of those who come after him will be '*similar in kind.*'[701] Indeed, the connection is not merely one of similarity between two separate events, but that the resurrection of Jesus and the general resurrection are the same event, separated in time.[702] It is in this sense that Wright speaks of eschatological hope being 'split in two.'[703]

The second reason is that rather than just being one example of new creation, Jesus' resurrection (and by implication the resurrection of us all) is the central act of new creation. For example, as I noted in chapter five, in Colossians 1, Paul equates the role of Christ in creation with his role in new creation, that is, his resurrection as 'the firstborn from the dead' (Colossians 1: 18). In other words, just as Christ was the one through whom all things were created, he is the one through whose resurrection all things will be renewed. It means that new creation is established in the resurrection of Christ. It is in this sense that Torrance speaks of the resurrection of Jesus as the 'irruption of the new creation in the midst of the old'.[704] It is not a preview of what is to come, but the event itself. Thus, what we see and

[700] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.43.
[701] Thiselton, *Life after Death*, p.118.
[702] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.36.
[703] Wright, N. T., *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), p.1048.
[704] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.177.

know of Jesus' resurrection speaks of both our resurrection and the whole of new creation. We can now begin to put some of this together.

7.3.4 Identity, New Creation and Time-Bridging Resurrection

I asked at the end of chapter four how the narratives of God in the world can shape who we are and in what way could it be understood that our identity is determined in the future, as much as the past. In the last chapter I suggested that if we understand redemption as a recontextualisation of who we are, orientated towards new creation, then how God relates to us in our resurrection is determinative for who we are now. Grenz and Pannenberg both suggested schemes which would allow for this, but both relied on an eschatological future set against the goodness of creation. However, a specific focus on how God relates to us in new creation, in the resurrection of Jesus, allows for the integrity of creation and the embodied and embedded roots of our identity to be maintained. Yet, there is also space for transformation, since physicality itself is transformed as the space-time of creation is suffused with the presence of God. This however, should not be understood as a departure from how God relates to creation, but a greater expression of it, since as I argued in chapter five, God relates to creation in Christ 'in whom all things hold together'.

The answer to the questions posed in chapter three, then, is that who we are is ultimately found in our resurrected identity in new creation. This is a resurrection we share with Christ through which we are conformed to who he is and the narrative of how God relates to the world through him. It is in new creation that our identity is 'recontextualised'. The relationships that constitute our identity and the narratives that shape it are transformed, but they are still central to how we understand identity, the embodied and embedded roots from which our identity emerges are still present, but they are now determined by how Jesus relates to us in our resurrection. It is in this sense, then, that Swinton is right to say that 'only in Christ we discover the truth of who we are.'[705] Indeed, as I have set out, resurrection is not located singularly in the future, but has 'broken in' to the history of

[705] Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time,* p.187.

creation.[706] It is a time-bridging event. This is significant in that it means that the reality of new creation is not just focused on the time following Christ's return but has an effect within creation.[707] New creation is, as Torrance puts it

> already impinging upon history […] so that all things visible and invisible are even now in the grip of the final recreation of the universe.[708]

The upshot of this is that that our identity, rooted in new creation through resurrection, is foundational for who we are now. It also means that the transformed nature of time in new creation is present within creation. I drew on Wilkinson earlier to suggest that time in new creation may not be subject to the same constraints as time now. I suggest, then, that this is the basis by which our identity can be rooted in the future, but known now proleptically, without running the risk that identity becomes deterministic or static, as we see in the work Pannenberg and Grenz. Indeed, if who we are is rooted in resurrection, then it is rooted in a reality in which space-time is transformed. Primarily, this means that when we consider identity in new creation, we should be aware of the new possibilities that might be present. But also, it implies that the reality of who we are in new creation may have an effect on who we are now. Thus, identity can be determined by who we are in new creation, because it is predicated upon the resurrection of Jesus which impinges upon creation. The remaining question is what this means for the nature of our identity in the present. Or, if you like, what does it mean for our identity to be rooted in new creation and known proleptically now, if the nature of that prolepsis is based upon the resurrection of Jesus?

7.4 Conclusion: The Transformation of Time in the Resurrection

In this chapter I set out how the work of Grenz and Pannenberg could allow for our identity to be rooted in new creation. However, neither managed to successfully articulate how this could be done without undermining the goodness of creation. The integrity of the physical creation is central if, as I have argued, who we are arises from our embodiment and embeddedness. At the heart of the problems with both proposals was the nature of the new creation, set against creation. Indeed, I argued that there must be both continuity and

[706] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.31.
[707] The return of Christ would, of course, be classically the moment when the dead are raised (except Christ, of course) cf. 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18.
[708] Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p.31.

discontinuity, but that this is determined, ultimately by the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus is not just one element of new creation, but its central act. I then proposed that if we are caught up in this central act of new creation, which stretches back and transforms creation now, as much as in the future, then this was the basis for how identity could be rooted eschatologically but known proleptically.

I began this chapter with a discussion of time travel, noting how difficult it was to conceive of how the future may affect the past. One of the most successful treatments of this theme in recent years is the film *Arrival*, based upon the short story *The Story of Your Life*.[709] Neither include a character being sent back in time, but explore how knowledge of the future may or may not affect the present. Within the narrative, it is a transformed relationship with time, that allows the central character Dr. Louise Banks access to the future. This comes about through language (a plotline that depends on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), but the point is illustrative; if our identity in new creation is not just the summation of who we have been or the end-point of who we will be, but dynamically determines who we are now, then this relies on a transformation of how we relate to time. The time-bridging resurrection of Jesus, which inaugurates the new creation within which time is transformed but not done away with, does just that. The question that remains, which I have just posed, is what this means for our identity now. It is a question that I will answer in the next chapter, by assessing the question of identity for those with dementia.

[709] *Arrival,* dir. Denis Villeneuve (Entertainment One, 2016); Chiang, *Story of your Life*, p.109-173.

8. 'So, who are we? Who have we been? And who will we be?': Dementia and Identity

I remember sitting in church and hearing about the death of the vicar's father. I remember him talking about the pain, the grief and the sorrow, but I also remember something else. The vicar talked about how the loss of his father was eased a little, or was perhaps less sharply felt, because, really, his father had died many years ago. His father had dementia. We shall encounter similar views in this chapter, but this experience always puzzled me. As a child I wondered, how could someone go on living and yet have died? In later years, I would wonder what that meant for whoever (or whatever) was left. As these questions suggest there is a close connection between dementia and identity. Indeed, as Taylor points out, dementia presents itself uniquely to each individual who experiences it.[710] In this chapter I will argue that dementia is not simply a difficult case or practical domain in which we might apply our understanding of identity, but rather that the nature of dementia and identity are similar in kind. Indeed, I will put forward that dementia, like identity, is rooted in the body and in our environmental context and arises from the dynamic interaction between the two.

My argument in the present chapter shall proceed by first setting out the 'standard paradigm' for how dementia is understood, before considering some of the challenges this presents to how I have explored identity thus far. As I set out why dementia does not undermine my thesis, I will draw upon resources that will indicate that the standard paradigm offers an incomplete picture of what dementia is. Rather, this 'revisionist position' suggests that dementia could be modelled akin to a complex dynamical system, as I have suggested identity can be also.

The first half of this chapter represents something of a side-step, but it offers a fruitful avenue with which to address the question raised at the end of the last chapter; namely

[710] Taylor, *Dementia,* p.72.

that if our identity to be found in new creation, what does it mean for who we are now? In the second half of this chapter, I will set this out and argue that while the fullest expression of who we are now is found in our resurrection, we proleptically participate in our identity to different degrees in the present. This helps us understand how the identity of those with dementia can fade or be disrupted, whilst at the same time they can remain who they always have been. The key element in my argument is the proposal that if this is true for those with dementia, then the parallel between dementia and identity implies it is true in general.

8.1 Dementia: Diagnosis, Symptoms, Pathology and Experience

At the outset, it is important to recognise that dementia is not a disease, in and of itself. Rather, it is better described as a syndrome, that is, a group of related symptoms. Dementia is associated with the cognitive impairment caused by a number of specific diseases of the brain; vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies and, most commonly, Alzheimer's disease.[711] Each of these diseases is a progressive illness and when their presence leads to a 'persistent impairment of intellectual faculties, affecting several cognitive domains […] sufficiently severe to impair competence in daily living, occupation, or social interaction', then those symptoms are diagnosed as dementia.[712] More precisely, an individual must be impaired in at least two cognitive domains.[713]

Two points follow on from this definition. Firstly, that an individual is diagnosed with dementia on the basis of the symptoms they exhibit and the suspicion that they are caused by one of the above progressive diseases. It is not possible to confirm the presence of, say, Alzheimer's disease without a biopsy or post-mortem examination of an individual's brain

[711] It is also possible to have a number of these illnesses at the same time, so called, 'mixed dementia.' Taylor, *Dementia,* p.2-3. See also https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/about/ (last accessed 30/6/2024).

[712] Peter Kevern, 'Sharing the mind of Christ: preliminary thoughts on dementia and the Cross' in *New Blackfriars*, 91:1034 (2010), 408-22, p.409.

[713] Weaver, Glenn, 'Embodied Spirituality: Experiences of Identity and Spiritual Suffering among Persons with Alzheimer's Disease' in *From Cells to Souls and Beyond*, ed. Malcolm Jeeves (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 77-101, p.82.

tissue.[714] Indeed, the connection between dementia and brain pathology is not clear.[715] For instance, one of the most noticeable features of the brains of those who have had dementia is that they are smaller.[716] Yet it is also possible for those who have had moderate or severe dementia to have brains well within the normal range for people of that age, just as it is possible for brains to exhibit pathology, without the cognitive symptoms of dementia ever manifesting themselves.[717] This uncertainty around the definition and diagnosis of dementia is significant, as I shall discuss later in the chapter.

The second point is that dementia is inherently subjective. The diagnosis of dementia requires a judgement on whether an individual's cognitive impairment is sufficient to compromise their everyday tasks. This, then, will depend not only on the level of cognitive impairment of a person, but on the support available to her and the nature of her 'everyday tasks.' There is no objective threshold. Diagnosis depends on a reduction in what a person is able to do.[718] Indeed, it is for this reason that dementia is increasingly seen, not as a diagnostic threshold to be crossed at all, but a spectrum of gradually worsening symptoms.[719]

The symptoms of dementia are equally individual. The symptom most associated with dementia is memory impairment, that is, the increasing loss of ability to learn new information or recall previously learned information.[720] However, memory impairment cannot be isolated from other aspects of cognition. Autobiographical memory is, for example, crucial to how we perceive time, and while memory impairment is never absolute for someone with dementia, as memory decays 'perception of time can shrink to a narrow window'.[721] Neither is memory impairment the only, or even a necessary symptom of

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[714] Sabat, Steven R., *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p.7.
[715] Hughes, Julian C., Louw, Stephen J., and Sabat, Steven R., 'Seeing whole' in *Dementia: mind, meaning, and the person*, ed. Julian C. Hughes, Stephen J. Louw and Steven R. Sabat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-39, p.2.
[716] Taylor, *Dementia*, p.24-5.
[717] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.9; Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.35.
[718] Camicioli, Richard, 'Diagnosis and Differential Diagnosis of Dementia' in *Dementia,* ed. Joseph F. Quinn (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 1-15, p.4.
[719] Taylor, *Dementia: A Very Short Introduction*, p.109.
[720] Weaver, *Embodied Spirituality*, p 82.
[721] Hughes et al., *Seeing whole*, p.2; Camicioli, *Diagnosis and Differential Diagnosis of Dementia*, p.4.

dementia. Other cognitive symptoms include disorientation and a loss of spatial awareness, paranoia, hallucinations and apathy. There can also be a deterioration in the ability to control and regulate one's behaviour and emotions including manifestations of confusion, agitation, aggression, disinhibition and abnormal motor behaviour.[722] Those with advanced dementia may have difficulty eating, drinking and speaking.[723] The experience of dementia is, therefore, varied and unique to the individual. Yet, despite this, its effects are progressive, and for many, in the end, the deterioration is catastrophic.[724]

It is important to note, then, that while I will refer to dementia throughout this chapter and the next in general terms, its manifestation can be varied. Indeed, as I have pointed out, there is inherent ambiguity and subjectivity within how dementia is defined and experienced. While it may be assumed that the neurological basis for dementia is more definite given that is arises out of specific brain diseases, significant ambiguity is present there also, as I shall set out.

The brain pathology that leads the symptoms of dementia can be described in broadly general terms. Dementia arises from (or is associated with[725]) 'neurodegeneration'; damage to the nerve cells within the brain (neurons) and to the connections between them (synapses), so that 'previous patterned circuits of nerve signals are scrambled' meaning that 'the brain can no longer uphold major psychological functions.'[726] However, the cause and mechanism behind neurodegeneration is not always clear. For instance, Alzheimer's disease[727] is charactered by 'amyloid plaques' and 'tau tangles' in the brain; fibrous clumps

[722] Byock, Ira and Ingram, Cory, 'Palliative Care in Advanced Dementias' in *Dementia,* ed. Joseph F. Quinn (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 121-136, p.123.
[723] Sabat, Steven R., 'Surviving manifestations of selfhood in Alzheimer's disease' in *Dementia*, 1, 25-36, p.25.
[724] Saunders, James, *Dementia: Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002), p.5.
[725] As I shall explore in this chapter, the idea that dementia can be described in purely medical terms and arises in a straightforward fashion from a diagnosable illness has been criticised. Within that revisionist account, which I shall set out presently, the link between dementia and brain pathology is not a simple causal connection. I have chosen to describe dementia initially in medical terms because this is how it is generally understood. This approach has been criticised in others by Swinton. See Swinton, John, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God* (London: SCM Press, 2017), p.43.
[726] Weaver, Glenn D., 'Senile Dementia and a Resurrection Theology' in *Theology Today*, 42 (1986), 444-456, p.449-50.
[727] Alzheimer's disease is, of course, just one of the illnesses that is associated with dementia. However, it is the most common and is often the case that a writer will refer just to Alzheimer's disease, rather than dementia. I will, however, continue to refer to dementia even when others refer to Alzheimer's disease (unless the difference is substantive) for ease, given that the symptoms and causes of dementia are uncertain anyway.

of proteins and other material that inhibit brain function and damages neurons and synapses.[728] The cause of these plaques and tangles has often been ascribed to a build-up of amyloid in the brain (the so called 'amyloid cascade hypothesis'), but there is no scientific consensus on this point. Indeed, some have even suggested that amyloid is responsible for *mitigating* neurodegeneration that is already in effect.[729]

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the neurological basis, the subjectivity of the diagnosis and the varied nature of the symptoms, it is clear that the emotional, behavioural and cognitive symptoms of dementia can be substantial. Indeed, given their significance, it is perhaps unsurprising that dementia is viewed by some as both being distinct from the normal process of aging (due to the neurodegeneration) and in a different class of illness to any other one might encounter.[730] Sapp notes that while some diseases may deprive an individual of the present through illness, others of the future by limiting life or bringing about death, dementia may rob an individual of the past, present and future.[731] Indeed, for some, the experience of dementia seems to acquire an almost metaphysical character in that those with dementia are viewed as being on 'the raw edges of human experience' or 'on the frontier of reality.'[732] In other words, the symptoms and experience of dementia are so significant that those who have it increasingly inhabit a liminal reality, somewhere between life and death, taking part in a 'funeral that never ends.'[733] Given the significance attached to the experience of dementia, then, it is little wonder that it is often presented as challenging or undermining our identity. Indeed, Keck puts the ideas together: dementia, he argues, is distinct from other diseases precisely because it erodes the essence of the self.[734] The question, then, is precisely what challenge might dementia pose to our identity?

[728] Taylor, *Dementia*, p.24-25.
[729] Taylor, *Dementia*, p.29, 62.
[730] Hopkins, Denise Dombkowski, 'Failing Brain, Faithful God' in *God Never Forgets*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 22-37, p.31-32. This is interestingly spelled out in no-uncertain terms on the website of the National Health Service: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/about/ (last accessed 30/6/2022).
[731] Sapp, Stephen, 'Memory: The Community Looks Backward' in *God Never Forgets*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 38-54, p.40.
[732] Hopkins, *Failing Brain, Faithful God*, p.31-2; Ellor, James W., 'Celebrating the Human Spirit' in *God Never Forgets*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 1-26, p.1.
[733] Hopkins, *Failing Brain, Faithful God*, p.31-32.
[734] David Keck, *Forgetting Whose We Are* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p.15.

8.2 Dementia and Continuity of Identity

8.2.1 The Challenge of Discontinuous Identity

One of the greatest challenges that dementia poses to our understanding of identity is the threat it poses towards continuity of identity. This comes into sharp focus in the belief that someone who has advanced dementia is no longer the same person that they were or that they 'really died' some time ago, even though their biological life continues.[735] This was precisely what I encountered in church as a child as I noted in the introduction. In both cases the underlying assumption is that an individual's identity has changed to such a degree that we should understand it to be discontinuous with her former identity. It has either altered to such an extent that we can say a 'new person' is present, or it has eroded to such a degree that it can no longer constitute human identity and is more akin to death.[736] For ease, I shall refer to the view that dementia can represent a discontinuity of identity as the 'discontinuity hypothesis' and before we consider the merits of the proposal, it is worth setting out some of the challenges it poses.

I have argued that identity arises from our embodiment and embeddedness. However, if we are to accept that dementia may represent discontinuity of identity, it clearly implies that identity can be separated from the body, since the body remains, but one's identity has gone. In this view, dementia may be thought of as a 'hollowing out' of the person, so that only the 'shell' or 'husk' of the body remains.[737] In fact, we can go a little further than that. For if discontinuity of identity stems from neurological damage, then this implies that any form of embodiment that was present, was only found in the brain (or, at least, was dependent upon it) and that this embodiment can be lost, or even, replaced. Given that I have argued that embodiment cannot be limited to the brain and that who we are is also embedded, it will be apparent that the discontinuity hypothesis poses a serious challenge to

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[735] Kevern, Peter, 'What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?' in *Theology,* 113:873 (2010), 174-182, p.174-5.
[736] Keck, *Forgetting Whose We Are*, p.15-16.
[737] Singer, Peter, *Ethics in the Real World* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), p.95; Swinton, *Dementia*, p.115.

the arguments I have set out thus far. Indeed, it is possible to see this in specific relation to the two aspects of identity I have explored in detail: narrative and relationships.

Firstly, narrative. While the discontinuity hypothesis may not be particularly well-defined, given that it variously refers to loss, change or diminishment of identity, it does seem to rely on psychological continuity to maintain continuity of identity through time. I explored this in chapter four and argued that continuity of identity should not preclude change or fluctuation within a dynamic understanding of narrative identity. Nonetheless, dementia still poses a challenge to how we understand identity-shaping narratives given that I argued that they are rooted in autobiographical memory. Memory impairment is one of the characteristic symptoms of dementia and, for Lesser, this is the central reason we might say that an individual with advanced dementia has a new identity; she does not have access to the memories that made up a central plank of who she was.[738] Indeed, dementia may mean that an individual loses his sense of 'being in time'; it may threaten his sense of having a past, present and future, and his perception of time.[739] It has the capacity to undermine the fundamental structure of our narrative identity, since it is difficult to imagine being a part of any narrative if one cannot place oneself chronologically within it. As Swinton puts it, 'if you are no longer able to tell your own story, then you have no story to tell.'[740]

Secondly, the discontinuity hypothesis highlights how dementia challenges any form of relational identity. This partly stems from memory impairment, since memory plays an important part in sustaining a relationship with another.[741] After all, if I cannot remember your name, character or our shared history, it is going to be hard for me to sustain a relationship with you. But we must also take account of the emotional and behavioural effects of dementia. Indeed, it is easy to imagine how aggression, paranoia and confusion can inhibit the relationships between people if one person increasingly exhibits those characteristics, especially if there are novel characteristics. It is instructive that Kevern

[738] Lesser, A. Harry, 'Dementia and personal identity' in *Dementia: Mind, Meaning, and the Person*, ed. Julian Hughes, Stephen Louw and Steven R. Sabat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 55-61, p.57.
[739] Brockmeier, Jens, 'Questions of Meaning: Memory, Dementia, and the Post autobiographical Perspective' in *Beyond Loss,* ed. Lars-Christer Hydén, Hilde Lindemann and Jens Brockmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 69-90, p.70, 74; Weaver, *Embodied Spirituality*, p.82.
[740] Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time,* p.141.
[741] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered.* p.87.

notes that it is often the carer's view in which dementia represents an 'unstoppable leaking away of […] identity.'[742] In other words, those who have the most established relationships with an individual who has dementia are those to whom it is most apparent that her identity-constituting relationships cannot be sustained within it.

If the presence of dementia, then, undermines both the relationships and the narratives that, I have argued, are fundamental to who we are, then it seems to do so in a way that suggests that there is some truth to the discontinuity hypothesis. This is a serious challenge to my thesis, since it implies that identity is not embodied or embedded in the manner that I have suggested. There are, however, good reasons for concluding that the discontinuity hypothesis cannot be upheld, which I shall now set out.

8.2.2 Change and Discontinuity

While the effects of dementia can, no doubt, be significant, it is not clear how they can lead to discontinuity of identity. The first issue that such a proposal runs into is that it is difficult to conceive how identity could be discontinuous within a living being. After all, change may be significant, but this does not imply discontinuity. On the contrary, change implies that through a process of alteration there is continuity. Discontinuity may be easier to imagine for those who suffer brain injury, but dementia is, by definition, a progressive illness; the symptoms develop over time.

There seems to be no possibility, then, of a moment of discontinuity for those who have dementia. Lesser takes from this, then, that however it may appear, an individual with dementia cannot be said to have a wholly different identity to his former self.[743] But could it be that discontinuity arises when identity is lost or fades beyond a certain threshold? After all, this is seemingly implied when dementia is compared to an *ongoing* funeral. Again, Lesser resists this notion. He points out that there are circumstances when we are easily able to conceive of significant change within the identity of an individual without difficulty,

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[742] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.409.
[743] Lesser, *Dementia and personal identity*, p.57.

as she is born, grows, develops and matures.[744] These all involve crossing a number of thresholds of awareness and capacity, but none imply any kind of discontinuity. We must, then, be able to incorporate human decline, no matter how significant, into our conception of human identity without discontinuity.

Lesser actually goes a little bit further than this. He puts it that decline and death are already a part of normal human experience, therefore the decline and impairment of dementia should already be a part of our view of identity. In other words, dementia should not represent a particular challenge to identity, if we have understood it as encompassing the whole of human experience. Underlying this point is the view that dementia is more akin to ageing than how I have presented it so far. There is merit in this observation, which we will explore later in this chapter. However, without wanting to anticipate that argument, to say that dementia is a normal aspect of ageing does somewhat underplay the neurodegenerative basis of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural effects.

There is more to be said on this, but for now, the substantive point is that change does not imply discontinuity. We can see this most clearly if we look at relationships. I noted earlier how there can be a meaningful effect on the relationships between someone who has dementia and those close to them. However, while that relationship may be dramatically altered by dementia, it does not necessarily imply that the relationship has broken down or is of a wholly new character. Indeed, I observed that the carers of those with dementia were more likely to see dementia as a bereavement or to suggest that their loved one was no longer present.[745] Yet, the fact that there are caring for them implies that their relationship is still intact. It may be significantly altered, but it is still present. Indeed, Kitwood attributes many of the emotional and behavioural changes that occur when someone has dementia, not to wholly new features of their personality, but to aspects that were always present but have become exaggerated because of a 'loss of resources and a breakdown of psychological

[744] Lesser, *Dementia and personal identity*, p.59-60.
[745] Kevern*, What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?,* p.174-5; Sabat, *Surviving manifestations of selfhood in Alzheimer's disease*, p.31.

defences.'[746] In other words, the seeds for the changes in identity brought about by dementia may already have been sown.

The realisation that the identity of an individual with dementia may be more continuous with their former self than the discontinuity hypothesis suggests, hints at a deeper problem. Namely, that the discontinuity hypothesis over-emphasises the place of explicit cognition within identity.

8.2.3 A Return to the Self and Implicit Cognition

As I noted above, cognitive impairment is central to how dementia is defined, and for many, this lies behind the notion that dementia entails discontinuity of identity. As Hydén points out:

> Much of the research on dementia has argued that the loss of cognitive and linguistic abilities will result in a loss of selfhood and identity.[747]

In other words, if cognition is lost, identity will be lost too. Within this view, therefore, the discontinuity of identity is located within a loss of cognitive function. The moment of such a loss, is the moment of discontinuity.

Now, leaving aside the fact that dementia is defined by cognitive impairment, rather than loss, it is still perfectly possible to accept that such impairment will have a significant destabilising effect on the self. In chapter two I argued that the self was best understood as a rich psychological construction of content-driven, reflexive cognition. If cognitive function is impaired, then, we might expect the self to be disrupted.[748] However, it is difficult to conclude that this may amount to the loss of selfhood, since as I explored in chapter two the self is both content and process, knower and known, there is therefore more to it than is consciously appreciable.[749]

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[746] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.31.
[747] Hydén, Lars-Christer, Lindemann, Hilde and Brockmeier, Jens, 'Introduction: Beyond loss dementia, identity, personhood' in *Beyond Loss,* ed. Lars-Christer Hydén, Hilde Lindemann and Jens Brockmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-10, p.3.
[748] Weaver, *Senile Dementia and a Resurrection Theology*, p.449-50.
[749] Weaver, *Embodied Spirituality*, p.98-99.

A good example of this is memory. While disruption to autobiographical memory is often a symptom of dementia and while this may undermine an individual's sense of being 'in time', there are other aspects of memory that can remain intact. Musical ability or other learned skills are often retained by those with dementia.[750] Additionally, as Kontos points out, those with dementia can also retain preferences for certain foods, bodily dispositions and religious practices. These are examples of implicit cognition within memory and while they might not represent chronological events, they are nevertheless reflexively encoded, contributing, to autobiographical memory and therefore supporting identity-shaping narratives however disrupted they might be.

Kontos terms this kind of implicit cognition 'embodied selfhood' since it has a physical manifestation, but the notion is developed more broadly by others. Weaver, for example, posits the existence of a 'protoself', located below the cerebral cortex, that gives us the potential for self-identity.[751] Similarly, McKim puts it that 'even when one's rational capacities fade or fail completely, the "I" that consists of much more than those capacities continues to exist.'[752] All of these together echo my discussion of the 'minimal self' in chapter two, where I argued that it should not be thought of as a distinct cognitive system, but the capacity for reflexive cognition, which gave rise the subsequent expressions of the self. In any case, however we define it, the indication is that there may be an implicit foundation to the self that is resistant to the impairment of dementia.

We must also account for implicit cognition, which I argued in chapter two was distinct from the self, but dynamically engaged with it and was also a central aspect of identity. The upshot, then is that while the self may be disrupted by dementia, there is no reason to think that this entails loss of self, and certainly not a loss or discontinuity of identity. But the question remains, might the disruption to the self be so significant, that while implicit aspects of cognition remain, an individual is left so radically different that he is

[750] Kontos, Pia C., 'Musical Embodiment, Selfhood and Dementia' in *Beyond Loss,* ed. Lars-Christer Hydén, Hilde Lindemann and Jens Brockmeier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 107-119, p.112
[751] Weaver, *Embodied Spirituality*, p.92-4.
[752] Sapp, *Memory: The Community Looks Backward*, p.51.

discontinuous with his previous self for all practical intents and purposes? In response to this question, the work of Sabat will prove instructive.

8.2.4 Sabat on the Self

Sabat again begins by noting that among the other effects of dementia 'it has been alleged that the disease also results in a loss of self.'[753] While I have just argued that this ignores key aspects of the self, it is still possible that those with dementia find themselves 'unable to perceive, attend and recall'.[754] Sabat argues that this is not the case. To do this he uses the idea of a 'semiotic subject', that is, an individual who can act intentionally, interpret their environment and evaluate their behaviour and the behaviour of others.[755] In other words, a semiotic subject is someone who is able to engage as an individual with their social and physical environment, even though this capacity 'may not always be realized in speech and action.'[756]

Sabat's central point is that there is evidence that even those whose dementia has resulted in a loss of cognitive abilities according to the standard tests, are still semiotic subjects. He highlights, for instance, that those with severe dementia can react negatively and attempt to avoid situations of embarrassment or humiliation and, indeed, can respond positively to situations that bring self-esteem.[757] In other words, they are acting like individuals who have a sense of self within their social and narrative context. It indicates, firstly, that the identity of those with dementia may be found as much in lived experience than in cognition.[758] And secondly, that the identity of someone with dementia endures beyond the potential failure of their rational capacities.[759]

[753] Sabat, *Surviving manifestations of selfhood in Alzheimer's disease*, p.25.
[754] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.162.
[755] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.171.
[756] Sabat, Steven R. and Harré, Rom, 'The Alzheimer's Disease Sufferer as a Semiotic Subject' in *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 1:3 (1994), 145-160, p.147.
[757] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.160.
[758] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.28-33.
[759] Sapp, *Memory: The Community Looks Backward*, p.51.

However, the question remains; what sort of self does this allow for and how fully realised will the identity of someone with dementia be? To put it another way, someone with dementia may *act* as if they have a sense of self, and the basic structures for that may be neurologically present, but can we be sure that this corresponds to a sense of self that plays a significant role within identity?

The problem with assessing this question is, as Swinton points out, that we cannot know how an individual thinks, let alone judge her sense of self.[760] This is, of course, true of all people, not just those with dementia. It is possible, however, to make inferences from an individual's outward behaviour. If we do that, then, the natural conclusion seems to be that since an individual with dementia acts as a semiotic subject, then they should reasonably be expected to have a sense of self that endures as an aspect of their identity. However, the situation is not as straightforward as it seems.

The problem is that those inferences may be based as much on our preconceptions about those with dementia as they are on the behaviour of someone with the condition.[761] Sabat uses the idea of 'positioning' to explain this; that within dynamic social situations, individuals can be 'positioned' by others in order to make their actions intelligible.[762] In other words, we give others a role that allows us to quickly make sense of their actions, by drawing upon our understanding of that role. For example, we may 'position' someone as a teacher, say, which then makes sense of the fact that they are present with a group of children.

This is significant. For one thing, it highlights the role that narrative plays within our relations with others, since the idea of 'positioning' someone gives them a role within a particular narrative. Swinton makes this point when he puts it that what we believe about someone's cognition is shaped by the narratives of how we see the world.[763] In the case of

[760] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.58.
[761] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.61-2.
[762] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.19.
[763] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.61-2.

those with dementia, if we believe that those with dementia are characterised by impaired cognition, then we will interpret their behaviour in terms of cognitive impairment.

An example may be helpful. Problematic or confused behaviour within cognitive tests is often seen as evidence of impaired cognition for someone with dementia.[764] However, what if this behaviour is actually an appropriate and meaningful response to a stressful and confusing situation? Both are possible, but Sabat argues that the former is preferred, because the individual with dementia is positioned as 'a dementia sufferer'[765] and their behaviour is therefore interpreted with that primarily in mind.[766]

The upshot is that it becomes very difficult to 'see past' an individual's diagnosis of dementia and to recognise that her behaviour may actually reflect the presence of a sense of self within who she is. Is it possible, then, to know anything of an individual based on her behaviour? Does how we position an individual, according to our presupposed narratives, simply mean that his place within those narratives is just reflected back to us? This would represent a significant challenge were it not for the fact that Sabat frames 'positioning' within a dynamic social context. He argues that we constantly re-evaluate how we see and position others, and indeed, the narratives through which we see the world, in accordance with our experience, including our experience of another's behaviour. The problem those with dementia face is that they are unable to fully enter into this dynamic. This may be because of an impairment to their linguistic ability or it may be that they are positioned in such a way to inhibit their entry into a social dynamic precisely because they are not considered to be semiotic subjects. As Sabat puts it, their 'ability to reject undesired forms of positioning may be compromised.'[767]

There seems little warrant to say that those with dementia lose their sense of self. However, the majority of the argument, so far, has had something of an apophatic quality; I have

[764] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.2.
[765] The term 'dementia sufferer' and terms like it are highly problematic, because they emphasise an individual's diagnosis over his humanity. As such I have avoided these terms. However, I am using it here because the dehumanising emphasis offered within an individual's diagnosis of dementia is precisely the point.
[766] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.2.
[767] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.19-20.

argued that it is not legitimate to say that the self is lost, but is there evidence to say that it remains? Sabat, again, argues that there is. From his research he discerns two aspects of the self that are present in those who have dementia and puts it that while a third – the social personae we construct in our lives – is often impaired, it is not necessarily because of neurodegeneration, but because it requires the co-operation of others.[768]

Similarly, Oppenheimer highlights some specific examples in which those with apparent cognitive impairment (not all who have dementia) indicate that they have a sense of self through their behaviour.[769] She concludes that superficial interaction with those with dementia may cause us to underestimate the complexity of their mental life.[770] It seems reasonable, then, with Caddell and Clare, to say that

> Overall, the vast majority of evidence points to the persistence of self, at least to some degree, throughout the course of dementia.[771]

It seems that any diminishment of an individual with dementia's sense of self may be due as much to those around him, as it is to his neurological damage. In fact, it is possible that these two factors are related. That is the subject of the next section. However, before we get to that discussion, two further points should be made.

Firstly, Swinton is right to say that we should give those with dementia 'the benefit of the doubt', that is, that we should assume they are semiotic subjects with an established sense of self.[772] The argument I have presented so far supports this, but it is also the option that presents the least degree of harm to those with dementia. After all, to say that someone has lost their sense of self, their mind or their identity and to describe them as a 'shell' undermines the value and goodness of the individual who remains.[773] Furthermore, this brings into sharp focus the ethical concerns around the use of the language of personhood,

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[768] Sabat, *Surviving manifestations of selfhood in Alzheimer's disease*, p.27.
[769] Oppenheimer, Catherine, 'I am, thou art: personal identity in dementia' in *Dementia: Mind, Meaning, and the Person*, ed. Julian Hughes, Stephen Louw and Steven R. Sabat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 193-204, p.193.
[770] Oppenheimer, *I am, thou art: personal identity in dementia*, p.203.
[771] Caddell, Lisa S. and Clare, Linda, 'The impact of dementia on self and identity: A systematic review' in *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30 (2010), 113-126, p.125.
[772] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.62-63.
[773] Bryden, Christine and MacKinlay, Elizabeth, 'Dementia–A Spiritual Journey Towards the Divine: A Personal View of Dementia' in *Journal of Religious Gerontology*, 13:3-4 (2003), 69-75, p.72.

which I highlighted in chapter two. If such terms are to be used, then it seems to be incumbent to assume that those with dementia have a sense of self, which as we have seen, is often absent from the discussion.

Secondly, it is worth pausing for a moment here to note the similarity between how Sabat describes 'positioning' – narrative roles arising within a dynamic social situation – and how the self emerges through dynamic interaction with others, which emphasised the centrality of relationships to identity. This is not to say that we require the idea of 'positioning' within our concept of identity. Rather, it is to point out how our relational and narrative aspects of identity are drawn together, and how our identity can be affected by others and by the narratives we find ourselves within. I shall return to this.

8.3 Dementia Reconsidered[774]

8.3.1 An Alternative Approach to Dementia

So far, I have outlined how the way in which those with dementia are perceived can affect how their behaviour is interpreted and how we understand the effects of dementia as a whole. Indeed, while dementia is defined in terms of cognitive impairment, I have argued that this should not be taken to imply a loss of self within an individual's identity, not least because of the implicit aspects of the self, which are often not taken into account when considering the cognitive impairment that dementia brings about. This line of argument is, however, only a part of a larger trend that has questioned the nature of dementia itself.

At the beginning of this chapter, I outlined the standard paradigm for understanding dementia in which it is understood in terms of cognitive impairment and progressive illness. However, authors like Kitwood, Sabat and Swinton argue that while this approach has a place, it fails to give an adequate description of what dementia is. Indeed, this revisionist approach argues that emphasising the 'medical model' means that dementia is inevitably

[774] This is the title of Thomas Kitwood's seminal work on dementia.

seen in terms of impairment, deficit and decline.[775] Proponents of this approach suggest that this is not necessarily the case.

One of the strongest critiques of the medical model of dementia is offered by Innes, who writes explicitly from the perspective of the social sciences.[776] She argues that dementia has been 'socially constructed' as a disease in such a way as the emphasise the degeneration and loss of abilities and framed them in biomedical terms.[777] Of course, to some extent Innes is correct to say dementia is not a disease, in and of itself; as I noted earlier, it is a term applied to similar symptoms, arising from similar brain illnesses. However, Innes' main point is that the medical model implies an unjustifiably strong link between illness and symptom, and that this means that the symptoms of dementia are necessarily viewed in medical terms.[778] So, for example, memory loss is understood to arise from neurodegeneration within the hippocampus brought about by, say, Alzheimer's disease, without any consideration of other causative factors, or how it might be affected by social, environment or physical factors; it is simply a symptom of the illness.[779]

This is a startling perspective, as it challenges the very idea of dementia as a disease. At the same time, Innes does admit that there is a place for the medical perspective, but her point is to break the link between the medical illness and the condition that is dementia.[780] However, given the emphasis she paces on severing this link, it is difficult to see what perspective medicine could offer. That is, if dementia is not a disease, then the medical perspective seems to be offered on something wholly other than dementia.

A better approach comes from Kitwood.[781] He too challenges the link between illness and pathology offered by the standard paradigm, but rather than saying that no such link exists, he argues that other factors need to be considered as well as that of medicine. As he puts it,

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[775] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.41.
[776] Anthea Innes, *Dementia Studies: A Social Science Perspective* (London: Sage, 2009).
[777] Innes, *Dementia Studies*, p.4, 8.
[778] Innes, *Dementia Studies*, p.9.
[779] See, for example, Taylor, *Dementia*, p.16-19.
[780] Innes, *Dementia Studies*, p.9, 25.
[781] Kitwood has been criticised by Innes for challenging the standard paradigm, while still accepting that dementia is a disease. Innes, *Dementia Studies*, p.18.

‘we need a framework that can incorporate personal experience and social psychology.’[782] I have already highlighted much of the evidence Kitwood marshals in support of his thesis. For example, he notes the lack of correlation between neurodegeneration and the severity of dementia, arguing that this rules out any notion of linear causation. Indeed, he puts it that the medical model of dementia cannot account for how dementia can suddenly advance (following, say, hospitalisation) whereas neurodegeneration occurs at a steady rate. His point is not that brain pathology plays no role within dementia, but that there is no straightforward causative link between the two; other factors must be considered.[783]

8.3.2 Malignant Social Psychology and Excess Disability

If dementia cannot be described simply in terms of brain illness, what else can account for it? And how might this be related to the brain pathology in question? Again, it is useful to draw upon material I have already discussed. Recall how Sabat argued that those with dementia are often ‘positioned’ as ‘dementia sufferers’ and how this was then used to interpret their actions and behaviour. He argued that this not only led to assumptions regarding the self and identity of those with dementia, but that their sense of self could be compromised in social situations *through* the actions of others. This is one sense of what Kitwood terms ‘malignant social psychology’, that is, the harmful effects of treating those with dementia (or anyone for that matter) as less than full persons.[784] Once again, we run up against the problematic notion of personhood. However, it is possible to avoid this terminology without much difficultly if malignant social psychology is understood as the harmful effects of treating others without the value, dignity and worth we ascribe to other humans. The effects of malignant social psychology are twofold.

The first effect of malignant social psychology is what is commonly termed ‘excess disability.’ This is defined as ‘the discrepancy that exists when the person’s functional

[782] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.35.
[783] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.74-75.
[784] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.46.

incapacity is greater than that warranted by the actual impairment.'[785] In other words, it refers to what an individual is unable to do, not because of the particular biomedical impairment she has, but because of her psychological, social or physical environment. So, for example, someone who uses a wheelchair could be unable to cook in their home because the worksurfaces are out of reach. Or, indeed, as we observed earlier, someone with dementia can struggle to construct social personae, not because of neurodegeneration, but because others may treat him as incapable of full social engagement.[786] These 'dysfunctional social interactions' (or malignant social psychology in Kitwood's terms) then create excess disability in that this symptom of dementia is not attributable to brain illness directly, but to wider social factors.[787]

It must be noted, at this point, that the term 'excess disability' is unhelpful. This is partly due to the potentially offensive connotations that one can have 'too much' disability. However, the more substantial problem is that within disability theory, disability itself is increasingly defined, not in biomedical terms, but in terms of how a person's social and physical environments are disabling.[788] If this is the case, then 'excess disability' disappears, because an individual's 'functional incapacity' *is* their disability.[789] Indeed, it is curious that Sabat, Kitwood and others employ the notion in the first place, since rather than supporting their argument, it actually undermines it. This requires some spelling out.

The implication of saying that malignant social psychology leads to excess disability creates a divide within the symptoms of dementia between those created by the brain illness, which are inherent, and those that arise from social interactions. This is because the notion of excess disability indicates that some aspects of disability are a given for a particular

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[785] Brody, Elaine M., Kleban, Morton H., Lawton, M. Powell, and Silverman, Herbert A., 'Excess Disabilities of Mentally Impaired Aged: Impact of Individualized Treatment' in *The Gerontologist,* 25 (1971), 124-133, p.124; Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.93.

[786] Sabat, *Surviving manifestations of selfhood in Alzheimer's disease*, p.27.

[787] Sabat, *Surviving manifestations of selfhood in Alzheimer's disease*, p.26.

[788] Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p.27.

[789] There is no space here to discuss disability theory in any further detail and it is worth noting that while the social disadvantage theory of disability is helpful, it does tend to detach disability from any physical moorings, which is difficult to substantiate in cases of, say, developmental disability or indeed, severe dementia. It is notable, for instance, that Eisland considers only physical disabilities in her seminal work *The Disabled God.* It is unclear how she distinguishes between physical and non-physical disabilities. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p.27-28.

biomedical impairment, and others are 'added on.' On the face of it, this seems quite reasonable, except that at the heart of Kitwood's argument is the proposal that dementia is a 'psycho-neurological condition' in its entirety and not a neurological condition that may have psychological effects depending on the social situation an individual finds himself in. What we understand as 'dementia' then, is as much the effects of malignant social psychology as it is those symptoms that are directly attributable to brain pathology. As Swinton puts it

> Relationships and care need to become aspects of how we *describe*, *define and seek to understand* dementia.[790]

The use of excess disability does not allow for this and actually aligns better with the medical model of dementia.

While the use of excess disability to explain the effects of malignant social psychology may be flawed, this is not to say that the wider point that Kitwood, Sabat and others are putting forward is wholly unreasonable. In fact, it is possible to reframe the effects of malignant social psychology in a much more helpful way, by recognising that a range of different levels of disability arise from dementia, depending on the social and environmental context an individual finds herself within. Thus, dementia, while rooted in the physical brain illness itself, is found within the actual experiences of the person with dementia. Malignant social psychology represents an aspect of what dementia actually is, rooted in the physical, and manifested in the social, and the cause of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural symptoms attributed to dementia.

Before we move on, it is important to note one further implication of reframing the revisionist position in this way. The suggestion that dementia is found in relation to an individual's social and environmental context indicates that we should not just focus on how malignant *social* psychology contributes to the symptoms of dementia, but also how the wider environmental context can do so as well. Consider, for example, how dementia can advance rapidly following hospitalisation, a point which is highlighted by Kitwood.[791] This seems as much attributable to the effects of the wider environmental context on the

[790] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.83. Italics mine.
[791] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.35.

psychology of the individual with dementia, as her social context is. In any case, it isn't possible to distinguish the two. Oppenheimer similarly draws upon a case study in which a woman with dementia's psychology changed when she moved out of her family home.[792] The point is that an individual's environment and his interaction within it, can have as much an effect on his dementia as his social context.

Now, it is possible to include an environmental aspect within how Kitwood understands dementia because he uses a framework which incorporates 'personal experience' as well as 'social psychology', although this more readily applies to the second effect of malignant social psychology (see below).[793] Indeed, my argument does not undermine the revisionist perspective, but it does indicate that by emphasising the social, the influence of the physical environment may be neglected.

The upshot of this discussion is that many of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural symptoms of dementia are not just attributable to neurodegeneration but to malignant social and environmental psychology. That is, they arise from an individual's wider context as much as from his brain illness. It means, in terms of identity, that changes caused by dementia may not just be attributable to neurodegeneration, but may actually arise from aspects of an individual's own identity. For example, if someone's relationship with a friend is impaired through, say, behavioural change, this may arise not from neurodegeneration alone, but also from the relationship itself, which in-part constitutes who he is. The implication, then, is that dementia may not be a destructive force from outside us, but may actually exacerbate or magnify aspects of our identity that are already present.[794] This, again, is why it is important to recognise the effect of an individual's environmental as well as social context, because, as I have argued, identity is embedded in the world around us. Indeed, Swinton helpfully points out that we need to recognise the 'critical theological aspects' of dementia.[795] This would, again, match the importance of recognising the theological aspects of our identity, the centrality of how God relates to us in Christ and it

[792] Oppenheimer, *I am, thou art: personal identity in dementia*, p.202-3.
[793] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.35.
[794] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.31.
[795] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.9.

begins to demonstrate how our understanding of dementia is intricately linked to how we understand identity. There is much more to be said on this presently. But first we consider the second effect of malignant social psychology.

8.3.3 Malignant Social Psychology and Neurodegeneration; an Involuntary Spiral

As I noted in chapter two, one of the foundations of the cognitive sciences is the link between the brain, cognition and behaviour. The nature of that connection is widely contested, but it is fairly clear that the way our brains are structured is affected by our experience of the world, since we experience it through the mind (whether that is explicit or implicit cognition).[796] Kitwood takes up this link and proposes that the effects of malignant social psychology are not just present in the outward pathology of dementia, but are also found in the neural structure of the brain.[797] As Kitwood puts it

> all events in human interaction – great and small – have a counterpart at a neurological level […] malignant social psychology may actually damage nerve tissue.[798]

Again, Kitwood stresses the social (human interaction) over the environmental (interaction with the world around us), but it isn't a stretch to expand Kitwood's proposal to include both. Dementia is, then, for Kitwood, a dialectical interplay between the physical aspects of neuropathology and its psychological counterparts. In other words, neurodegeneration may lead to increasing malignant social or environmental psychology, which may in turn stymie the development of new neural circuitry or accelerate the advance of further neurodegeneration. This is, as Kitwood puts it, an 'involutory spiral' of decay.[799]

Kitwood's proposal has been criticised for having little evidence to support it.[800] Kitwood, after all, goes beyond the well-established plasticity of the brain according to an individual's experiences, social environment and psychological state.[801] His thesis is that particular

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[796] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.75.
[797] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.49-51.
[798] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.19.
[799] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.49-51.
[800] Greenwood, Dennis, 'A review of: "Dementia reconsidered: The person comes first"' in *The European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling & Health,* 1:1 (1998), 154-157, p.155.
[801] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.77-80.

experiences (being treated as less than a full person), cause particular changes in the brain (neurodegeneration). Demonstrating causation in this case seems challenging. However, it must be acknowledged that other theories that posit causal links with neurodegeneration also struggle to cite strong evidence in their support. The amyloid cascade hypothesis is one such case that has, nonetheless, attracted significant support.[802] Indeed, it is important to note that Kitwood does not argue that malignant social psychology is the sole cause of neurodegeneration, only that it is one of the 'multiple causes'.[803]

One piece of research, often cited in support of Kitwood, is that of Wilson et al., who examined the effect of loneliness upon dementia. A key aspect of their study was not to examine an individual's actual social interactions (where there was already mixed evidence in relation to the association with dementia), but instead to focus on an individual's dissatisfaction with those social interactions.[804] In other words, it was not about how lonely an individual was, but how lonely she *felt*. They found that the perception of being alone was associated with cognitive decline and the development of dementia. Furthermore, Wilson et al. concluded that this could not be accounted for by the normal brain pathologies associated with dementia and that 'novel neurobiological mechanisms may be involved.'[805] This supports Kitwood's notion that dysfunctional social interaction can contribute to neurodegeneration, even if it is one cause among many.

Another study that offers a relevant insight is an old one carried out by Brody et. al. They found that when those with cognitive impairments were treated by a multidisciplinary team, significant positive results were achieved, including even in those who were considered 'senile' or 'untreatable.'[806] This seems to indicate that neurodegeneration, or at least its effects, can be mitigated by positive social psychology, by being treated with respect, dignity and appropriate care. The implication is that malignant social psychology was contributing to cognitive decline and when this was removed, the decline was halted.

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[802] Taylor, *Dementia*, p.49-50.
[803] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.74-5.
[804] Wilson, Robert S., Krueger, Kristin R., Arnold, Steven E., Schneider, Julie A., Kelly, Jeremiah F., Barnes, Lisa L., Tang, Yuxiao, Bennett, David A., 'Loneliness and Risk of Alzheimer Disease' in *Archive of General Psychiatry*, 64:2 (2007), 234–240, p.234.
[805] Wilson et al., *Loneliness and Risk of Alzheimer Disease*, p.240.
[806] Brody et al., *Excess Disabilities of Mentally Impaired Aged*, p.131.

This raises an important point, that while Kitwood has described dementia as an involuntary spiral, there is an indication that it is possible to break the spiral of decline. Indeed, some have suggested that just as malignant social psychology may lead to or exacerbate neurodegeneration, socially beneficial relationships may slow, pause, or even to some degree, reverse, neurodegeneration; so-called 'rementing.'[807] This is often tentatively put, and, while there is a lack of direct supporting evidence, given the brain's capacity to respond to environmental stimuli with new cortical networks, it remains an intriguing possibility.[808]

8.4 Dementia and Identity

To sum-up, malignant social psychology does not merely represent a situational context, which determines the outward pathology of those with dementia, it can contribute to the neural degeneration, in which that pathology is rooted. In other words, it does not just exacerbate the symptoms of dementia, it can contribute to the underlying brain illness. Thus, Kitwood, Sabat and others, propose a view that attempts to draw in social factors to both describe what dementia is as well as how it is manifested, alongside the medical model of progressive cognitive decline due to brain illness. I have argued that their view should include wider environmental factors as well as social if it is going to account for the whole experience of those with dementia.

While Kitwood and others are successful in presenting a view of dementia that better aligns with the range of experiences of those with dementia, there is the potential for confusion here. Consider, for example, how the notion that neurodegeneration is affected by social and environmental factors aligns with a view of dementia that is rooted in a *progressive* brain illness. How, then, might we understand cognitive improvement in someone with dementia? Could this mean that they no longer have dementia but still are diagnosed with, say, suspected, Alzheimer's disease?

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[807] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.73-4.
[808] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.144.

It is helpful to recall here that dementia represents a collection of related symptoms, which even within the medical model and its 'cold hard facts', are inherently subjective.[809] Indeed, Innes was not wholly incorrect to say that dementia is socially constructed; the threshold for diagnosis is determined by humans.[810] The point that the revisionists have been trying to make is not that the medical model should be rejected in favour of their own socially determined view of dementia (replacing amyloid with malignant social psychology, we might say). Rather, they have sought to reject the notion that dementia is *merely* a progressive cognitive disorder arising from a brain illness. The picture is much more complex; dementia should be viewed in psychoneurological terms, arising not just from brain pathology, but from the complex interaction of a person's social and environmental context with that pathology.[811] Therefore, while an individual's brain illness may be progressive, we may still expect the behavioural, emotional and cognitive symptoms of dementia that she exhibits to both deteriorate and improve, as they arise from the changing interaction between her brain pathology and her social and environmental context.

Therefore, while the revisionist position might emphasise the social aspects of dementia, it is important to keep the physical, brain pathology at the centre of how we understand dementia. Kitwood, for instance, puts it that dementia is always caused by a 'lack of well-functioning interneural circuitry through which a person might process the contemporary events of his or her life.'[812] The point is, though, that brain illness is not wholly determinative for what dementia is or how it progresses. This is why Swinton argues that the medical perspective has a place, and yet should not necessarily be the first or only perspective.[813] Take memory, for example; while it is physically rooted in the brain, as Brockmeier points out, it also depends upon a social, narrative and environmental context and cannot be adequately assessed outside of that context.[814] Thus, dementia is physically rooted in the body (not just the brain[815]), but it is only fully determined by the interactions

[809] Swinton, *Dementia,* p.28-33.
[810] Innes, *Dementia Studies*, p.4, 8.
[811] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.84.
[812] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.49-51.
[813] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.45.
[814] Brockmeier, *Questions of Meaning*, p.71-74.
[815] As Kitwood points out: 'Dementia […] is always embedded in the general health picture of each individual.' Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered,* p.34. See also Taylor, *Dementia*, p.40.

between our bodies and the world around us. This is why the actual experience of those with dementia is so important, not just for their care, but for understanding the nature of dementia, because at the heart of that narrative is the interaction between an individual and the world around them.[816]

At this point, it may have become apparent that there are clear parallels between how I have argued we should understand both dementia and identity. After all it seems reasonable to say that dementia is both embodied and embedded; certainly, it seems to arise from the interaction between the two. Indeed, like identity, an appropriate model for this might be found in the idea of a complex dynamical system, in which symptoms arise not simply from a single cause (whether that is physical, social or environmental), but from interaction between them. In this view, dementia is akin to the emerging behaviour within such a system. In considering dementia, then, the question of identity is not simply a 'problem' to be solved. Neither is dementia a 'difficult case' when we consider identity. Rather, the question of what makes me the person I am is fundamentally connected to how we understand a person with dementia to be, because of the parallels between what identity and dementia are.

We should not be surprised at this. After all, it is instructive that Kitwood connects personhood to his view of dementia. As he puts it, 'To see personhood in relational terms is […] essential if we are to understand dementia.'[817] In other words, he argues that if we are going to grasp dementia aright, we need to view identity in relational terms. The problem is that he is working backwards, moving from dementia to a broader thesis on human being. It leaves his work 'strangely ungrounded' in that it lacks the metaphysical, theological or philosophical underpinnings to support it.[818] We are, however, in a position to work from those foundations to assess the question of dementia in light of our work on identity so far and what this might tell us about who we are now.

[816] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.43-44.
[817] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.12.
[818] Kevern, *What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?'*, p.178.

8.5 Dementia: The Fading and Holding of Identity

8.5.1 Kitwood, Relationships and Fading Identity

For all the flaws, it is straightforward to see how Kitwood's relational model of human being comes about alongside his work on dementia. After all, if dementia is descriptive not simply of a neurological condition affecting an individual but the 'whole network of social relationships in which they are embedded', and if treating them as less than a full person is the key driving force behind it, as Kitwood has argued, then it is no great leap to say that human personhood is constituted by that network of social relations.[819] In this view, both human beings and dementia are framed in relational terms.

It is important to note that at the heart of Kitwood's work is not merely an exploration of the nature of dementia, but an argument for 'person-centred care', that is, for individuals with dementia to be treated with care, respect and dignity.[820] Kitwood uses the idea of personhood to make this argument, but as Swinton correctly identifies, there is, in fact, no need to employ notions of personhood, as his thesis can just as easily be framed in terms of care and dignity.[821] Indeed, the argument Kitwood makes applies just as much to identity as it does to personhood. Thus, Kitwood puts forward a view whereby relations with others directly contribute to our identity as they draw together the embodied and embedded aspects of who we are. Just, then, as the care of others is foundational for what dementia is, so how we engage with others is foundational for who we are.

In this way, Kitwood echoes much of the argument I made in chapter three, in which I argued that the social aspects of identity are best expressed through identity-constituting relationships. The point of setting it out again, from Kitwood's perspective, is to observe that for individuals with dementia, there is a disruption within those relationships. The involuntary spiral of malignant social psychology, neurological damage and emotional and behavioural changes all contribute to weakening relationships as those with dementia

[819] Kevern, *What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?,* p.178.
[820] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.69.
[821] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.144.

'withdraw from life.'[822] Given, then, that relationships constitute who we are, it suggests that the identity of those with dementia may weaken or fade over time.

8.5.2 Can the Identity of Those with Dementia Be Held by Others?

The problem with proposing that the identity of an individual with dementia might fade over time as her identity-constituting relationships weaken, is that it implies that her identity might ultimately be lost. It might, so to speak, fade out of sight. This, then, appears to reprise the notion, that I rejected earlier in this chapter, that those with advanced dementia are left as a 'shell' without any of their former self remaining. However, it is precisely because our identity is constituted by our *relationships,* that this implication can be avoided. After all, as I set out in chapter three, a relationship is rooted in two individuals; it is embodied in them and embedded in their wider environmental context.

A number of writers frame this in terms of 'holding', that is, the identity of those with dementia is 'held' by those around them.[823] Relationships, thus, continue to be maintained with an individual with dementia by the people who already participate in identity-constituting relationships with her. Again, this goes alongside the idea that malignant social psychology contributes to an individual's dementia, and therefore also to the disruption of his relationships. In this view, if social relations are improved, the disruption is lessened because the nature an individual's dementia is also affected. However, there is a difference between malignant (or indeed, positive) social psychology and identity-constituting relationships, because how those with dementia are treated or cared for is largely dependent upon the carer, even if that care might be affected by the individual with dementia's behaviour. Relationships, on the other hand are reciprocal, and as I argued in chapter three, they constitute who we are in a way that is both dialectical and dynamic. In other words, relationships depend on both parties.

[822] Taylor speaks of how the stronger the social bond, the more it can endure within dementia, but the underlying point is that those relations are weakened. Taylor, *Dementia*, p.116, 128; Weaver, *Senile Dementia and a Resurrection Theology*, p.90.
[823] For example, Swinton, *Dementia*, p.94-7; Weaver, *Embodied Spirituality*, p.98-9.

The language of 'holding' then, does not always do justice to the reciprocity of relationships. This is recognised by Kitwood when he writes

> identity remains intact, because others hold it in place; thoughts may have disappeared, but there are still interpersonal processes; feelings are expressed and meet a *validating response*[824]

In other words, identity can be held by others in relationship, but this relation cannot be wholly one-sided. An individual with dementia must be able to make some sort of response in order for the identity-constituting relationship to be maintained. It is helpful here to recall the work of McFadyen. He argued that our identity was found in our 'sedimented structure of response.'[825] In other words, it is rooted in our communication history but manifested in how we respond communicatively to others.

The problem is that dementia increasingly affects language and linguistic abilities, with those who have advanced dementia sometimes unable to speak.[826] Of course, communication is more than spoken language and Thomas helpfully points out the importance of body language for communicating with those who have dementia.[827] Indeed, it is important to recognise that those with dementia can often express emotion, respond to kindness and carry a limited kind of conversation; all forms of communication within relationships.[828] However, the physicality of neurodegeneration in which dementia is rooted alongside malignant social psychology, indicates that there are limits to this. Recall that Sabat argued that those with dementia are often positioned so that their ability to communicate is compromised.[829] The upshot is, then, that for those with dementia the reciprocity of their relationships is undermined, and so therefore, are their relationships themselves.

We are again back in the position where the identity of those with dementia could be lost. In fact, Kitwood seems to hold that this is a possibility. He puts it that there may be cases

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[824] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.69. Italics mine.
[825] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.63.
[826] Taylor, *Dementia,* p.110-111.
[827] Thomas, Alan, *Tacking Mental Illness Together* (London: IVP, 2017), p.164.
[828] Post, Stephen G., *The Moral Challenge of Alzheimer's Disease* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p.13.
[829] Sabat, *The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease*, p.20.

where 'the neurological damage is so devastating that even the most excellent care cannot enable personhood to remain intact.'[830] This is framed in terms of personhood, but given how Kitwood has similarly argued that identity is held by others, the point holds. Swinton rightly argues that this conclusion is inevitable given Kitwood's wholly relational understanding of personhood and identity.[831] The remedy for this position, rightly identified by Swinton, is theological; that in order for identity to be retained, we must consider an individual with dementia's relation to God.[832]

8.6 Dementia in Theological Perspective

8.6.1 Relation to God

Swinton is not alone in stressing the importance of the relationship to God within the identity of those with dementia. This theological step is made by a number of authors.[833] One of those most poignant contributions is made by Bryden, a Christian with fronto-temporal dementia. She writes that

> As I lose an identity in the world around me, which is so anxious to define me by what I do and say, rather than who I am, I can seek an identity by simply being me, a person created in the image of God.[834]

In other words, despite significant changes within the relationships she has with others, her relationship with God is a constant element of her identity. In fact, its presence is set against the potential malignant social psychology she faces, thereby potentially lessening the disruption to her identity.

It is interesting to note that Bryden frames her relationship to God in terms of the image of God. McFadyen also used this approach arguing that, in Christ, it represented the call of God and the paradigmatic response from humans.[835] This is helpful, because it implies that our

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[830] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered*, p.67.
[831] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.144. Indeed, it is curious that Kitwood holds that someone with dementia can move to non-personhood, when at the same time he is arguing that treating someone with dementia as less than a full person is constitutive of their dementia.
[832] Swinton, *Dementia,* p.149.
[833] For example, Sapp, *Memory*, p.50, 52-4; Ellor, *Celebrating the Human Spirit*, p.4-5.
[834] Bryden and MacKinlay, *Dementia – A Spiritual Journey Towards the Divine*, p.71.
[835] McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.46.

relation to God does not depend on our ability to respond to his call, but on Jesus. Indeed, the suggestion that an individual must be able to make a conscious, right response to God is unhelpful, not least because of the presence of those in the community who are unable to do so because of, say, their disability.[836] For an individual with dementia, then, this implies that while her other relationships might fade, this does not mean that her relation to God also fades; it remains because it is ultimately dependent upon God, not on her.

Now, I argued that McFadyen's proposal was not wholly successful. I proposed that a better approach was to understand our identity as undergirded by God's relation to us in Christ, in his work in creation, redemption and new creation. However, the point still stands. Indeed, it is emphasised by Swinton who, drawing upon Barth, puts it that 'all that needs to be done has been done in Christ.'[837] Thus, the identity of an individual with dementia is determined by Christ in her resurrection; an act of God, which does not depend upon that individual, but upon the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:11). God's enduring relation to those with dementia in Christ, then, does not represent merely a 'tether' to their former selves, but suggests that despite the apparent fading of who they are, the fullness of their identity is still present. I have argued that it is fully present in their resurrection. However, an alternative proposal is suggested by Kevern; that for an individual with dementia, the fullness of her identity is actually found within her dementia itself. This is worth exploring further.

8.6.2 Kevern: Can Identity Be Found Fully Within Dementia?

Kevern's approach begins by echoing some of the points I have just set out. He emphasises the distinctive nature of the relation to God compared with the other relational aspects of our identity. Without it, he argues, a wholly relational view of identity seems to imply that 'where social interaction ceases […] God's involvement also ceases.'[838] Kevern also focuses on Jesus, and in particular the crucifixion, as the central expression of humanity's relation to God. In particular, he argues that Jesus 'dements' on the cross, that is, the physical demands

[836] Saunders, *Dementia,* p.11.
[837] Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time,* p.187
[838] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.412-3.

of crucifixion mean that Jesus loses self-awareness and was 'only slightly able to function mentally.'[839] Indeed, Kevern suggests that Jesus not only experienced dementia on the cross, but that his dementia is in some ways redemptive. As he puts it

> the assertion that Christ also demented on the cross opens the way for an understanding of dementia as potentially grace-filled; as potentially an agent for union with God, rather than estrangement.[840]

Dementia, in this view then, does not entail a disruption of our relationship to God at all, but its potential strengthening.

Before we move on to discuss Kevern's work further, there are two important points to note. Firstly, while there is an eschatological aspect to how he describes the relation to God ('union with God'), his overriding emphasis is on redemption. For instance, he expresses suspicion of proposals that entertain the 'eschatological and somewhat vague hope that God will somehow make everything all right in the end.'[841] I shall return to this presently.

Secondly, while the proposal that Jesus 'dements' on the cross is striking, it does not, in fact, represent a fair account of what dementia actually is. Granted, Jesus may experience many of the symptoms of dementia on the cross; malignant social and environmental psychology, estrangement, cognitive impairment and so on. None of these, however, are rooted in a brain illness or neurodegeneration. Indeed, working from Kevern's own description, Jesus' experience on the cross lacks the '*persistent* impairment' of dementia.[842] Yet his thesis does not stand or fall on this point, it holds just as well to say that Jesus had significant loss of cognitive awareness on the cross, and this loss reveals the redemptive nature of similar loss in others, including those with dementia.

Having noted these two points, the question is what it might mean for our relation to God to be rooted in Jesus' experience of crucifixion? After all, on the face of it, Kevern's theory

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[839] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.414, 416.
[840] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ,* p.417.
[841] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.411-2.
[842] My italics. Kevern describes dementia as 'an acquired and persistent impairment of intellectual faculties, affecting several cognitive domains, that is sufficiently severe to impair competence in daily living, occupation or social interaction.' He also recognises that this medical definition needs to be supplemented by a wider perspective on dementia as offered by, say, Kitwood. Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.409; Kevern, *What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?*, p.178.

may have a great deal to say about how those with dementia can relate to God, but it is not necessarily clear what it means for how God relates to those who do not have dementia. However, Kevern makes an important point; that on the cross Jesus reveals the true nature of humanity.[843] A similar point is made by Saunders; that sickness and deterioration are necessary and integral aspects of the human condition because we see them in Jesus on the cross.[844] Indeed, this is part of a wider tradition that argues that the human condition is revealed in dependence and limitation, and often draws upon the nature and experience of Jesus' incarnation or crucifixion.[845] The implication is that dementia is not an aberration on authentic humanity, but may be intrinsic to the nature of being human. As Kevern puts it 'when we develop dementia we become more visibly human, rather than less so.'[846]

The consequence of arguing that dementia is part of what it means to be fully human is that it means that the way in which those with dementia relate to God, as seen in the crucifixion of Jesus, is representative of the relation to God for all humans. Kevern draws from this the point I made earlier; that our relation to God is not based on self-awareness, because those with dementia (including, for Kevern, Jesus) often do not have the cognitive capacity to uphold this. Instead, Kevern puts it that the whole narrative of Jesus' life is expressed in his crucifixion, thus our relation to God which undergirds our identity is found in 'the story of a life lived in history.'[847]

There are strong echoes of Pannenberg in Kevern's proposal. He put forward a similar diachronic view of identity as our 'once-for-all-history,' that is, the totality of our lives.[848] Pannenberg, however, roots this eschatologically in eternity. As I noted above, Kevern rejects this approach, favouring to root narrative identity corporately in others. In his words

> the story which comprises one's "identity" in time and space is the product of a collaborative effort, a negotiation between self and others[849]

[843] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.417.
[844] Saunders, *Dementia: Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care*, p.18.
[845] See, for instance, Hauerwas, Stanley, 'Community and Diversity: The Tyranny of Normality' in in *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability,* ed. John Swinton (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004), pp.37-44, p.41.
[846] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.417.
[847] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.419.
[848] Pannenberg, *Systemic Theology Vol. 3*, p.574.
[849] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.420.

For an individual with dementia, then, the holding of her identity ('the burden of narration') increasingly falls on others. It is in this way that those with dementia, for Kevern, inhabit authentic humanity, because their narrative is 'maintained by the choices and intentional actions of others.'[850] He puts it that it is in 'our forgetfulness' that God is found in who we are. Disruption to relationships, then, is no barrier for rooting our identity in others, because it is in that very disruption and loss of self-awareness that our relation to God is strongest. There is space, to put it somewhat baldly, for God to 'take up the slack' of narration.

In this way, Kevern manages to root identity in how God relates to us in the work of Christ, whilst at the same time emphasising the relational and narrative aspects of who we are. Indeed, the idea that Christ reveals true humanity on the cross in his cognitive impairment aligns closely with McFadyen's notion that Christ is the paradigmatic response to the call of God, made on our behalf. In the next section I will highlight some of the problems with Kevern's thesis and how it differs from my own. However, at this point it is helpful to note three important aspects within his argument.

Firstly, Kevern manages to affirm the importance of both relationships and narrative, whilst at the same time running no risk of it being imagined that those with dementia have lost their identity. In fact, he has suggested that disruptions within our identity actually emphasise more of who we are in relation to God. Secondly, by doing this Kevern has demonstrated that attending to the identity of those with dementia reveals something about the identity of all. And thirdly, Kevern's thesis indicates a route to answer the question posed at the end of chapter seven, namely how do we understand who we are now, if our identity is rooted in our resurrection? For if God relates to us more when we lose cognitive awareness, then it is at such times that we are express more of who we most fully are. Furthermore, this suggests that this expression can fluctuate over time. After all, we can become more cognitively aware as well as less, even if we have dementia as I have indicated in this chapter. Perhaps a better way to think about it is that we participate more in our identity, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on our situation at the time. I will pick up

[850] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.418, 421.

these points in the remainder of this chapter. First, I will highlight three significant problems in Kevern's thesis.

8.6.3 Problem One: Eschatology

One of the most obvious differences between Kevern's approach and my own is that there is little to no room for eschatology within his proposal. Granted, this is a deliberate choice, but it means that he fails to give any account of how our identity is rooted in the work of Christ in new creation. Without this, there is no scope for how God relating to us through Jesus' resurrection transforms who we are, in a way that can be known proleptically now. Indeed, Kevern allows for no sense of transformation of relationships or narrative, only who holds the burden of narration.

The lack of an eschatological perspective means that ultimately the relation to God is weakened. To see that, recall how Grenz argued that our identity is found in the shared narratives of those who are in Christ.[851] This proposal is not too far from Kevern's notion of how others share in the narration of our identity, especially when we consider how he argues that remembering Christ constitutes a 'leaking' of his identity into ours.[852] Yet, the foundation of Grenz's thesis is new creation, and especially the work of Christ within it; our identity shaping narratives are incorporated into his.[853] With Kevern's proposal it almost seems the other way around, that those who remember Christ hold his narrative identity and potentially transform *it* as they are involved in the work of redemption themselves. This is symptomatic of an underlying difference in approach. Whereas I have emphasised the relation of God to humans in Christ as the foundation of our identity, Kevern starting point is how those with dementia relate to God through the experience of Jesus on the cross.[854]

Furthermore, rejection of an eschatological approach means that Kevern gives no account of the significance of Jesus' resurrection, which surely has more bearing on his identity-shaping

[851] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational,* p.331.
[852] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.420.
[853] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self,* p.330-1.
[854] The idea of God relating to humanity, was of course, central to Kelsey's approach.

narratives than, say, how he is remembered in the early church.[855] Weaver, on the other hand, argues that if our identity is held by others , then this goes hand-in-hand with being held by God in the hope of resurrection.[856] Indeed, I suggest that it relies on our future resurrection, because it is in the resurrection of Jesus that God relates to humans, as a community, in new creation. Kevern's proposal has no place for this, merely continued narrative identity in the narratives of others.

8.6.4 Problem Two: Disability

The second problem with Kevern's thesis is that he places those with dementia in a uniquely privileged position in their relation to God. He argues that because Jesus experiences dementia on the cross, those with dementia reveal the true nature of humanity. This is more than saying that the crucifixion of Jesus indicates that weakness, sickness, dependence and limitation are a part of the human condition, or indeed that, in Jesus, God shows 'solidarity' with those who have dementia.[857] Rather that we are united to God in who we are, most truly in our dementia and that, therefore, those with dementia are in a 'grace-filled' position.

This approach aligns with a wider theological trend that suggests that those who are disabled occupy an unusual relationship with God.[858] This can be expressed by holding that disability denotes either a blessing or a curse, but is a distinctly problematic notion either way. It dehumanises those with disability, implying that their relationship with God relies more on the fact of their disability than the people they are.

This is a problem with the work of an author like Hauerwas at times. He writes that those with developmental disabilities have almost been 'given a natural grace to be free from the regret most of us feel for our neediness'.[859] At the same time he also writes that it would be

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[855] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.420-421.
[856] Weaver, *Embodied Spirituality*, p.99.
[857] Kevern, *What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?'*, p.180.
[858] Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p.70.
[859] Hauerwas, Stanley, 'Suffering the Retarded: Should we prevent Retardation?' in *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability,* ed. John Swinton (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004), pp.87-106, p.102.

a 'profound mistake' to imagine there is a strong distinction between those with developmental disabilities and those without them.[860] In fact, this is a tension throughout his work. It seems to arise because he understands the presence of those with developmental disabilities to reveal that the natural human condition is dependence, rather than autonomy, in contrast to liberal society.[861] However, the problem is that talk of revelation all to easily slips into language of purpose, that is, it becomes the purpose of those with developmental disabilities to help us understand the human condition more. Thus, no matter how carefully he phrases it, it is not helpful to employ the metaphor of a 'canary […] in a mine.'[862] The point is that it is by placing those with developmental disabilities in a uniquely privileged position that Hauerwas struggles to hold that they do not exist for 'our' benefit.[863] It is hard to escape the conclusion that this is exactly what Kevern is proposing when he suggest that dementia is an 'agent' of union with God.

It is difficult, then, to accept that those with dementia have a uniquely privileged position with respect to their relation to God.[864] This is certainly not reflected in the experience of many with dementia. To take one example, Davis, a former Presbyterian minister who developed dementia writes of his misery of losing the ability to undertake those spiritual disciplines that undergirded his relationship with God.[865] Even Bryden puts it that as her dementia progresses this may entail 'dissolution of […] my relationship with God.'[866] Neither perspective seems to indicate the position that those with dementia occupy is particularly 'grace-filled'.

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[860] Hauerwas, Stanley, 'Reflection on Dependency: A Response to Responses to My Essays on Disability' in *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability,* ed. John Swinton (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004), pp.191-198, p.193.
[861] Hauerwas, Stanley, 'Suffering, Medical Ethics, and the Retarded Child' in *Critical Reflections on Stanley Hauerwas' Theology of Disability,* ed. John Swinton (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004), pp.135-140, p.138-139.
[862] While Hauerwas' use of problematic language around disability (retarded, mentally-handicapped etc.) can be excused by the period in which he was writing, the metaphor he employs here is still distasteful. Hauerwas, *Reflection on Dependency: A Response to Responses to My Essays on Disability*, p.194.
[863] I write this as someone who is not disabled, but as Eisland points out, I am only ever 'temporarily able-bodied'. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, p.24
[864] This is explored, along with the importance of discipleship for those with disabilities in Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time*, p.93-96, 161.
[865] Davis, Robert, *My Journey into Alzheimer's Disease* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1989), p.53.
[866] Bryden and MacKinlay, *Dementia – A Spiritual Journey Towards the Divine*, p.74.

The problem here can be traced back to the correspondence Kevern draws between loss of cognitive awareness and our relation to God. Now, as I set out above, an individual's relationship with God depends upon God more than his appreciation of it. However, Kevern is not right to say that dementia necessarily entails a loss of self-awareness of who we are; the examples above and the approach to dementia taken in this chapter indicate that this is not the case (although it might be for some with dementia). In fact, it is curious that Kevern does not take more account of the experience of those with dementia, when this is precisely the criticism he levels at others.[867] The experience of dementia, and indeed, loss of cognitive awareness, is more complex that Kevern allows for.

In fact, we can take the experience of Jesus on the cross as a case in point. Jesus does not have dementia but does experience a disruption of his relationship with God. Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus crying in a load voice '"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"' (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). The other gospel writers do not indicate that Jesus experiences this disruption, but they do portray him as evidently self-aware, especially with respect to the relationships he has with others (see, for instance, Luke 23: 34, 43, 46 and John 21:26-27). Indeed, even in Mark and Matthew, although disruption is present, Jesus is keenly aware of it. The point is that those with dementia, or for that matter, any cognitive impairment, do not necessarily experience a strengthening of their relation to God, even as their key relationships with others are disrupted. Furthermore, as I have set out, those identity-constituting relationships are not wholly dependent upon one individual's level of cognition, but are embodied in both parties and embedded in the world around them.[868] Dementia arises from similar embodied and embedded roots. The disruption within an individual's relationships, then, caused by dementia, is not of a different order as any other disruption, fluctuation or change in our key identity-constituting relationships. We should not expect the presence of dementia to alter how our identity is undergirded by the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. In other words, just as there is no warrant to root our relation to God in any form of cognitive impairment, and because dementia and

[867] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.411.
[868] Ellor makes a similar point to this. Ellor, *Celebrating the Human* Spirit, p.4-5.

identity are similar in kind, dementia does not fundamentally alter how the identity of an individual finds its fullest expression in her resurrection.

8.6.5 Problem Three: Narrative

The final problem I want to highlight with Kevern's analysis is that while he makes use of narrative within identity, he allows no space for autobiographical memory to be a part of that. He puts it that identity is a 'collaborative effort, a negotiation between self and others', which quite rightly allows for relationality and narrativity to be held close together.[869] Kevern roots this in actual practices and instances, thus Jesus' death is expressive of the narrative that shaped who he is since it is causally connected to everything that has gone before. Others can, therefore, contribute to our identity-shaping narrative through interaction and through the continuation of their narratives if they are causally connected to our own. However, in a similar fashion to McFadyen's 'two-grids' approach, this implies that our narrative identity is based on objective reality, that is, a 'God's eye' view of events and their casual connections. On the other hand, I have argued that identity is shaped by a number of connected, sometimes dissonant, narratives which are rooted in autobiographical memory, that is, in one's perspective of events, not their actual fact. An objective view of narrative within who we are, struggles to take into account how my view of an event may differ from yours, and yet how both can be equally identity-shaping irrespective of their veracity.

There are, of course, clear advantages for Kevern's approach when we consider those with dementia, since it allows the emphasis on narrative identity to move from ourselves to others. It also takes account of how, say, family members can act as a 'surrogate memory' for those with dementia and how we invest memories in objects and our surroundings.[870] In other words, it gives a good account of how identity-shaping narratives are embedded, but by side-lining autobiographical memory, it offers little scope for their embodiment. And yet, the two are fundamentally connected; just as dementia arises from embodied and

[869] Kevern, *Sharing the mind of Christ*, p.419-420
[870] Ellor, *Celebrating the Human* Spirit, p.4.

embedded roots, so does identity. The upshot is that for many with dementia, there is disruption to their identity through memory loss. Indeed, the role of malignant social and environmental psychology within dementia mean that a number of individuals with dementia will experience disruption within their key relationships, it is hard to envision as seamless a translation of identity-shaping narratives from an individual with dementia to those around him as Kevern suggests.

The point is that the physical roots of dementia and identity mean that dementia will, necessarily, disrupt an individual's identity, leading to change and loss. However, as I have just put forward, this disruption is not of a different order than any one (who for the present time is) without dementia may experience, for all it may be more severe. This highlights the central point of my thesis that God's relation to an individual is ultimately found in her resurrection. Who we are in new creation is foundational for who we are now. This allows for stability within our identity through change, whether that can be characterised as disruption or consolidation. It suggests that we do not participate in our full identity more in times of cognitive impairment, but whenever we actively anticipate more of who we will be in our resurrection. That is, when we express more of how God relates to us in new creation. How might this best be envisioned? To answer this question, we turn to the work of Swinton.

8.7 Proleptically Participating in Who We Are

8.7.1 Swinton: The Memory of God

For Swinton, the relation of God to humans is fundamental when we consider identity, especially for those with dementia. He employs the idea of being 'remembered' by God, so that in the midst of dementia 'our identity is safe in the memory of God.'[871] Now, it is important to recognise that 'remembering' and 'memory' here are being employed metaphorically and do not refer to neurological acts as they would do for humans. Rather, when Swinton speaks of God remembering an individual, what he means is that God

[871] Swinton, *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*, p.219.

sustains, holds, and restores her to wholeness of being. In other words, it connotes the way in which God relates to humans. In fact, for Swinton 'to be human is to be held in the memories of God.'[872]

It may be apparent that it is not just those with dementia who are the subject of God's remembering but it is constitutive of the identity of every person. As Swinton puts it 'we are who we are now because God remembers us and holds us in who we are.'[873] Therefore, while Swinton utilises this notion in relation to those who have dementia, it does not just apply to one group of people, rather it provides a theological foundation for the identity of all humans. Indeed, the power of Swinton's proposition is that amid any disruption of identity 'God never forgets.'[874]

This being said, a potential issue with Swinton's thesis is that it presents a rather passive view of God's relation to us. Kevern, for instance, argues that this implies that those with dementia, for all that they are not lost to God, are alone in their struggle.[875] However, this misunderstands how Swinton uses the notion of remembering, which, for him, is anything but passive; it specifically refers to the *ongoing* creative work of God as he sustains our being and identity. Furthermore, Swinton writes of how being remembered by God is also a way of speaking of God's 're-membering' of who we are, that is, bringing back together the disrupted and fragmented aspects of who we are.[876] Here, then, God's remembering is placed in the context of redemption and humans are brought back to wholeness. This echoes how, alongside McFadyen, I argued that redemption represents a recontextualisation of our identity, within which God relates to us in a manner that allows for reconciliation, healing and restoration.[877]

Now, I argued in chapter six that this recontextualisation of our identity is directed from, and ultimately rooted in, new creation. There is also, for Swinton, an eschatological aspect

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872 Swinton, *Dementia,* p.210-211.
873 Swinton, *Dementia*, p.218.
874 Sapp, *Memory*, p.52-54.
875 Kevern, *What sort of a God is to be found in dementia?'*, p.177.
876 Swinton, *Dementia*, p.216.
877 McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood,* p.114.

to God's remembering, although he is careful to argue that this is not the primary sense.[878] This may be because the idea of being remembered by God is most commonly employed with respect to those who have died and who are yet to be resurrected.[879] I have discussed the issues surrounding how continuity of identity is maintained through resurrection elsewhere, but as I put forward in the last section, our identity is subject to change and disruption throughout life, not merely in death.[880] Therefore, Swinton's emphasis on how God remembers us in life is helpful as it recognises that whatever happens 'our identity is safe with God.'[881] This being said, I have argued that our identity is ultimately rooted in our resurrection. This is reflected in Swinton's scheme to some extent in that he makes it clear that the commitment God shows to humans in creation and redemption continues into the future, as humans move from life to death and time to eternity 'wherein our true identity is preserved in the memory of God.'[882] However, while he doesn't perhaps allow our identity in new creation to dynamically determine who we are to the extent that I propose, he does emphasise the centrality of our eschatological identity in who we are now.[883] It is helpful to explore this further in two ways.

8.7.2 Resurrection: The Full Expression of Our Identity

Swinton's thesis enables me to draw together many of the strands of my argument so far. As I have done, Swinton proposes a view of identity which is rooted in our relation to God, known eschatologically and yet allows for change and disruption through life. However, one drawback of his proposal is that it is not necessarily clear how our identity, rooted in embodiment and embeddedness, relates to the identity that is held by God. Consider memory and narrative, for example. Swinton quite rightly notes that our autobiographical memory is a 'selective and highly constructed perspective on what we believe happened.'[884] However, he frames this in terms of 'deception and distortion' which means that there is a 'real sense in which we can never know who we are.' This seems to imply that our true

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[878] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.216.
[879] Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World*, p.108.
[880] Wall, *Resurrection and the Natural Sciences*, p.51-53.
[881] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.219.
[882] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.218.
[883] Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time*, p.191.
[884] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.207-11.

identity – 'who we *really* are'[885] – is disconnected from the embodied roots of our identity. Thus, while Swinton holds that 'to be human is to *be* a body that finds its life and existence in the creative and sustaining actions of God', there is also a 'significant dimension of what and who human beings are that isn't determined by our neurological and biographical history.'[886]

Granted, there is a sense in which our relationship with God transcends the body and I have argued that embodiment refers to more than just cognition or the brain.[887] However, as I have also set out, embodiment is fundamental to our identity since our bodies, and particularly our brains, are the means through which we are present in, experience and interact with the world.[888] It is through embodiment that we have understood how identity is constituted by relationships and given shape, content and meaning through narratives. It would, therefore, seem to imply some form of discontinuity of identity for this not to be a part of how our identity is rooted in God. This, of course, does not rule out transformation. Indeed, it is through this that our selective and constructed narratives are not replaced, but recontextualised within the new creation. This is why it is key for God's relation to us in new creation to be specifically located in our resurrection; an embodied and embedded future, which allows for continuity with our identity now, but also transformation. In fact, it is through that continuity and transformation that who we will be reflects God's relation to us in creation, redemption and ultimately, in new creation, as we are conformed to Christ in resurrection.

We are left with a question. What bearing can our identity in new creation can have over us now? I have argued that we can know it in promissory or anticipatory form, but does this just mean that who we are now will be a part of who we will be in resurrection, or can we in some way have access to who we most fully are? Swinton offers two possibilities. The first is that he argues that we can connect with God's memory through 'extended memory', that is,

[885] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.165. Emphasis original.
[886] Swinton, *Dementia*, p. 243.
[887] Weaver, *Senile Dementia and a Resurrection Theology*, p.444; Ellor, *Celebrating the Human* Spirit, p.4-5; Swinton, *Dementia*, p.243.
[888] Sapp, *Memory: The Community Looks Backward*, p.49.

memory which is found outside of explicit cognition.[889] Now, Swinton's rationale for this is not clear, neither is it obvious why autobiographical memory is excluded. Indeed, on the face of it, this possibility is helpful as a reformulation of the idea that the narratives that shape our identity are embodied and embedded. However, I shall return to this presently.

The second, and the most significant among the two possibilities for Swinton, is that we can access God's memory communally within the church, or as Swinton puts it, in the 'community gathered around the resurrected Christ.'[890] This is specifically focused on the Eucharist, but only so much as it reflects attention to God and to the common life shared by the community. Swinton writes that

> God's active memory finds embodiment in the community of memory and resurrection. It is there, within the community, that we can discover what God's memory looks like.[891]

There are echoes of Grenz here. Recall that he suggested that our identity was found in the shared narratives of the people of God in new creation.[892] Both Swinton and Grenz, then, argue that our identity is ultimately found eschatologically, but can be known now (in part, at least) through the community of faith. This, of course, reflects the teleological approach which underlies Grenz's work. Indeed, the advantage of his scheme is that we can look to who we are within the community of faith now as an embryonic reflection of who we most fully will be within new creation. However, as I argued in chapter seven, this approach is misguided because it is based on an inherent narrative structure, rather than the narrative of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. Indeed, for someone with dementia whose relationships with others are disrupted, it is hard to see how they are foreshadowing their 'destiny' in the new humanity.

The underlying structure of Swinton's approach is, however, found in Christ's work in creation, redemption and new creation. Admittedly, he employs less Christocentric language than I have used, but the key is that he argues it is the resurrection of Jesus that underpins how the community embodies the memory of God. If that is the case, the

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[889] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.250

[890] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.225.

[891] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.226.

[892] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, p.331.

church's memorial practices naturally reflect the work of Christ in creation and redemption, just as who we are in new creation encompasses how God relates to us in creation and redemption.[893] To remember Jesus, then, is to express more of who we will be, that is, more of who we truly are. In this way, to use the example from chapter four, just like Joseph, we may truly remember that which is to come.

The danger of this approach is that it seems to imply that we can only access who we are in new creation through the church, or through our relationships with others in the community of faith. But our identity is not rooted in a resurrection which merely comprises renewed relationships with God and others in eternity outside of time and space. As I argued in relation to the work of Pannenberg, that presents a deeply unsatisfying view of new creation. Rather, the hope of resurrection, predicated on the resurrection of Jesus, is the hope of who we are being a part of the renewal of all things. This is where Swinton's first possibility is helpful, albeit perhaps not in the way he intended, because it is a reminder that in Christ, God relates to how our identity is rooted in embodiment and embeddedness. This was a central aspect to how Christ relates to us in creation, and it is taken up in how he relates to us in new creation in which the physical matter is sufficed with the presence of God. When the world around us, then, reflects its relation to God in Christ, then we also discover more of who we are in our fullest sense.

The point is that we do not participate in our identity rooted in the resurrection in ever increasing degrees, as a teleological approach would indicate. Neither do we do so merely when our relationships within the community of faith reflect our relationship to the resurrected Jesus, for all that is true in part. Who we are now, participates in who we ultimately are whenever our embodiment and embeddedness are taken up in how God relates to creation, how he redeems it and, ultimately, how he will renew it in new creation. This is a participation which anticipates what is to come, but allows for change and disruption now. This offers hope to those who have found their identity disrupted, for as Weaver points out, the power of resurrection has a present reality that 'upholds human

[893] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.225.

identity.'[894] Thus, we proleptically participate in our identity which is rooted in our resurrection within God's new creation. If this is the case, then it is not that there are parts of who we are that are known to us, and parts that are not, but that we participate in different degrees in our resurrection identity. A resurrection, that as Bryden points out, will express each facet of our personality – who we are – to the full.[895]

8.8 Conclusion: A Faithful, Proleptic, Partial Participation

This has been a long chapter. I began by discussing the nature of dementia, largely following the revisionist position put forward by Kitwood, Sabat and Swinton. Their approach allows for dementia to be understood in more than medical terms and recognises that social, and I have argued, environmental, factors do not just represent the societal implications of dementia but are inherent to what the disease is. When dementia is understood in these terms the strong parallel with identity is apparent; both are rooted in the body and the environment. Indeed, both dementia and identity arise from the dynamic interplay between our embodiment and embeddedness. Thus, dementia is not just a 'tricky case' for the question of identity, but is at the heart of the matter.

Granted, dementia often leads to a disruption in an individual's identity, but if his identity is rooted in the resurrection, then it is perfectly possible for it to be significantly disrupted yet remain present. In fact, I argued that not only did this imply that those with dementia participate in who they are in different degrees, but that this was true for all humans. If we anticipate who we will be in the resurrection to different degrees throughout our life, then this allows for change, development, growth and disruption of who we are in the present. This indicates why the approach I took in earlier chapters was successful, for who we are in new creation should be rooted in embodiment and embeddedness. At the same time a teleological approach does not allow for the disruption of conditions like dementia. Rather, in the resurrection, who we are in new creation, is present in who we are now, so that our identity as we see it now is a faithful, proleptic, yet always partial reflection of who we will

[894] Weaver, *Senile Dementia and a Resurrection Theology*, p.453.
[895] Bryden and MacKinlay, *Dementia – A Spiritual Journey Towards the Divine*, p.72.

be and who we most fully are. It means that we can be more of who we are whenever we are a part of how God relates to creation in the creative, redemptive and renewing work of Christ.

9. Known and Loved by God: Drawing the Threads Together

In this final chapter I will explore some of the implications of my argument for Christian ministry. This reflects my commitment to praxis and my experience as a Christian minister. I will first offer some more general points on the importance of pastoral care for those who are unwell before focusing specifically on end-of-life care and funeral ministry, focusing in particular on funeral liturgy and practice.

Having done so, I will offer some concluding remarks and return to the question posed at the beginning of this study: to what extent was the man treated by Dr. Harlow 'no longer Gage'?

9.1 Implications for Christian Ministry

9.1.1 Pastoral Care: Friendship Orientated Towards Resurrection

The commitment to praxis is shared by a number of the authors that we considered in the last chapter.[896] The point of Kitwood's seminal work on dementia is not just to offer a reappraisal of the condition but to argue for 'person-centred care'.[897] Swinton offers a similar approach within his larger body of work, which is often directed towards those who are in need of mental health care and support After all, it is not just those with dementia who face malignant social psychology; those with mental health conditions may also face 'relational deprivation, false ideologies, stigmatising attitudes, social marginalisation, and material, relational and spiritual poverty.'[898] It is worth, then, considering Swinton's work on this subject in a little more detail, before I draw out some of the implications of the argument I have set forward for the care of those who have mental health conditions.

[896] Swinton, *Dementia*, p.13-15, 72.
[897] Kitwood, *Dementia Reconsidered,* p.69.
[898] Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, p.16-17.

Swinton identifies that many of the 'problems' those with mental health conditions face, in a similar way to those with dementia, stem from being defined by their pathologies.[899] We may talk, for example, of 'manic-depressives' or 'schizophrenics', and for all that terminology is increasingly viewed as unhelpful, even within their medical care, those with mental health conditions may still be treated according to their condition, rather than as a person first and foremost. The solution Swinton offers is a model of pastoral care with friendship between those within the church community and those with mental health conditions at the heart of it.[900] He argues that this offers the 'real possibility of therapeutic change' in which an individual can be 'resurrected,' that is, liberated from the stymying effects of malignant social psychology.[901]

It is useful to note two things at this point. Firstly, the issues that Swinton identifies surrounding those with mental health conditions highlighted above are all issues of identity disruption. Furthermore, the solution he proposes is pastoral ministry through friendship, within which the circumstances and events of a person's life may be positively reframed. In other words, those whose identities are disrupted, may find resolution or healing in the strengthening of their relationships and a recontextualisation of the narratives within their identity.

The second thing is that Swinton roots his proposal eschatologically. Of course, to some extent, all Christian ministry is rooted in the belief that death is not the end, especially ministry to those who are unwell.[902] However, Swinton specifically employs the motif of resurrection and the manner of how he does so is central. He puts it that the resurrection of Christ provides the 'ground for all hope and new possibilities for the future.'[903] The liberation of those with mental health conditions through friendship, however, only comprises their resurrection in a metaphorical sense. In other words, Christ's resurrection

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[899] Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, p.9-10.
[900] Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person,* p.138.
[901] To be clear, 'malignant social psychology' is not a term Swinton uses in *Resurrection the Person*, but it is a helpful summary of the issues faced by those with mental health conditions.
[902] Jupp, Peter C., 'The Context of Christian Funeral Ministry' in *Death Our Future*, ed. Peter C. Jupp (London: Epworth, 2008), 7-19, p.8.
[903] Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, p.138.

offers the possibility for hope in the lives of those who have mental health conditions (as it does for all), but the nature of that hope reflects resurrection in a metaphorical sense.

9.1.2 Becoming More Who We Are Inside the Church and Outside of It

We can now put these points together with the argument I have set out and while there is a great deal of similarity, there is a subtle difference. If pastoral ministry through friendship strengthens identity, then it also indicates that those with mental health problems are anticipating the fullness of who they are, which is rooted in their resurrection, to a greater degree. That is, strengthening relationships and reframing narratives so that they bring therapeutic change and liberation, is not just possible because of Christ's resurrection, nor are they merely similar to our future resurrection, rather they anticipate it and proleptically are caught up within it.

One potential difficulty with this argument is that it is not self-evident that a strengthened relationship is anticipatory of the relationships that find their fullest expression in resurrection. It may be strengthened, but this may reflect strengthening of an ultimately damaging character. Similarly, a narrative may be reframed in an unhelpful or degrading manner. This is why it is central, for Swinton, that the context of this is pastoral care within Christian ministry. While that ministry may, at times, be damaging, it is ultimately rooted in how God relates to us through the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. The hope of resurrection is not just the impetus for pastoral ministry to those with mental health conditions, or the basis by which it is conducted, but also the means by which it may prove fruitful.

I have argued, however, that we do not just anticipate our identity in new creation through relationships within the church; we also do this through participation in how God relates to the world around us in Christ. There is space, then, for those with mental health conditions to anticipate the fullest expression of who they are in strengthened relationships outside the church, through engagement with the physical world, and in application of prescribed healthcare and the like. Granted, there is perhaps more scope for these not to reflect who an individual is in new creation, but that possibility is also present within the ministry of the

church. The point is that we should not imagine there is a dichotomy between pastoral care within the church, primarily accessed through friendships, and effective care and treatment outside of the church; both have the potential to be rooted in the fullest expression of who we are and the resurrection is the means by which *both* may prove fruitful.

None of this represents an argument against Swinton's model of pastoral care for those with mental health conditions through friendship. If anything, it offers the potential to extend his ideas. Swinton's argument is grounded on the 'radical friendship of Jesus', but we must also take account of the radical resurrection of Jesus; the redemption of all of creation, through its renewal in new creation, within which the model of friendship offered by Jesus is based. Furthermore, we should not imagine that the possibility of strengthened relationships and reframed narratives is just present for those who have mental health conditions or who have experienced any kind of dehumanising social situations. On the contrary, if we proleptically participate in the fullest expression of who we are to different degrees at different times, then it follows that anyone could find their identity strengthened through pastoral ministry based around friendship, as well as partaking in God's relation to the world around us in Christ. This means that just as any dichotomy between care within secular and spiritual contexts is false, so is any such dichotomy any between those who offer care and those who we suppose are 'in need'. To be sure, at different times our need may be more substantial, but care rooted in our identity in new creation is always mutual and reciprocal. For one thing, this is implied by the dynamism of how identity arises from embodiment and embeddedness. For another it is emphasised by the friendship model offered by Swinton, over and above a generic model of 'pastoral care', for all its foundation may be self-awareness.[904] Furthermore, when we engage with creation as it is related to by God in Christ, whether or not that is found in human relationships, it is always the case that, as Swinton puts it, 'hope inspires hope.'[905]

[904] Kelly, Ewan, *Personhood and Presence* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), p.1.
[905] Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, p.140.

There is more that could be said following this discussion on a range of subjects, but I will focus on one in particular, to demonstrate the practical implications of the argument I have set out.

9.1.3 Funerals: How Relationships and Narrative Point to Resurrection

Just as dementia or a mental health condition can disrupt an individual's identity, a terminal diagnosis can do the same. Alongside the 'isolation, loneliness and terror' a dying person may experience, relationships can be disrupted as those around the dying individual perhaps focus more on the diagnosis rather than the person. Indeed, a terminal diagnosis may also disrupt some of the narratives that shape an individual's identity, since our sense of narrative does not just reflect our history, but also our projected, anticipated and hoped-for future. The conclusion of an individual's life may have to be re-envisioned and the diagnosis may even introduce new, possibly conflicting, narrative threads within her identity.[906] Harper writing as someone living with a terminal illness reflects that his diagnosis reshaped his attitude to both his past and his present, as well as his future. As he puts it, 'my past expands as my future contracts.'[907]

The presence of death, then, raises a number of questions surrounding how our identity, rooted in new creation, can be anticipated in the present. One possible area of reflection within this is end-of-life care. Indeed, Swinton's model of pastoral care through friendship seems particularly appropriate here, as does, perhaps, how the hospice movement reflects a wider understanding of Christian therapeutic care, which encompasses the physical creation as much as relationships.[908] While many of these practices are well-established,

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[906] Balswick, Jack O., King, Pamela Ebtyne and Reimer, Kevin S., *The Reciprocating Self* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), p.278; Scheib, Karen D., '"Make Love Your Aim": Ecclesial Practices of Care at the End of Life' in *Living Well and Dying Faithfully,* ed. John Swinton and Richard Payne (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 30-58, p.47-8.

[907] Harper Jr., George Lea, *Living With Dying* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p.16.

[908] Swinton's definition of recovery as the 'ability to live one's life to the full with the constraints of the particular mental health problem' is particularly apt. Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, p.189. See also Balswick et al., *The Reciprocating Self*, p.277; Swinton, John and Payne, Richard, 'Christian Practices and the Art of Dying Faithfully' in *Living Well and Dying Faithfully,* ed. John Swinton and Richard Payne (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), xv-xxiv, p.xvii; Wharton, Bob, *Voices from the Hospice* (London: SPCK, 2015), p.23; Pauw, Amy Plantinga, 'Dying Well' in *Living Well and Dying Faithfully,* ed. John Swinton and Richard Payne (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 17-29, p.18-19.

Scheib argues that there has been a shift in end-of-life care away from the communal dimensions of preparing a dying individual for his death towards a bifocal approach, split between assisting him to accept the reality of death and offering pastoral care for his family and friends.[909] This raises a larger question of how the identity of an individual approaching death is understood in relation to those around her.

While it would be possible to explore this question of identity in relation to end-of-life care, it will be more fruitful to consider it in the context of funeral ministry and how the identity of a deceased person is understood within that. The link is detected by Scheib, who argues that the increasingly bifocal nature of end-of-life care, is reflected in an approach to funerals in which where there was once a focus on the deceased, there is now an emphasis on the bereaved.[910] The increase in biographical material within a funeral is highlighted as a good example of this, as is the growing popularity of memorial services. Jupp argues that this has arisen in the United Kingdom following the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997, but given that it does not seem to be an exclusively national phenomenon but rather reflects a wider cultural shift, this seems unlikely.[911] Another related practice is a move away from traditional burial practices to the disposal of cremated remains in a place of personal significance for the deceased or the bereaved.[912] It is from this that Davies draws a wider theological point, that these practices suggest a drive for 'contemporary fulfilment of identity for the living' and 'retrospective fulfilment of identity for the dead', and away from the traditional Christian view of 'eschatological fulfilment of identity.'[913] This requires some further explanation.

Davies notes that historically funeral rites have sat within a theological framework that views 'human identity as coming to fruition only in life after death.' This was then reflected in burial practices that emphasised resting and waiting as well as an emphasis on the reality of death and the hope of resurrection within the funeral service.[914] The disposal of

[909] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.38-40.
[910] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.39.
[911] Jupp, *The Context of Christian Funeral Ministry*, p.15.
[912] Davies, Douglas, *Death, Ritual and Belief,* 3rd edn. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.69.
[913] Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, p.162-3.
[914] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.49; Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, p.162-3.

cremated remains in a place of personal significance and the concentration on biographical material within the funeral service, do not just represent a change in practice, then, but a change in theological framework. Within this, identity is not fulfilled eschatologically, but in the funeral practices themselves. Indeed, we can understand how this fulfilment might be achieved in two ways. Firstly, in terms of narrative. The scattering of an individual's ashes at a place a personal significance to them may be understood to bring the narrative of her life to an appropriate end. Similarly, the use of biographical material in the funeral service suggests a retelling of the narrative of her life in such a way as to give it closure and fulfilment.

The second way is in terms of relationships, for both practices are highly dependent upon those who were closest to the deceased individual to dispose of the cremated remains and to contribute, frame and give meaning to the story of his life within the funeral service. However, given the reciprocal nature of relationships, any retrospective fulfilment of identity for the dead implies some form of 'contemporary fulfilment of identity for the living' as the aspect of their own identity found within the relationship with the deceased is brought to fulfilment.[915] Indeed, Pauw puts it that the dead are 'absorbed redemptively into the community that remains.'[916] While it is not exactly clear how she envisions redemption taking place, the implication is that some sort of fulfilment takes place within the community's memory of those who have died. This is the reason Scheib puts it that funerals within this framework emphasise the bereaved to such an extent that the deceased are no longer present except as a 'spiritualized memory' whereas the 'real action' takes place in the psyche of the mourner.[917]

Some of the potential reasons for this shift in theological praxis are highlighted by Davies. One is the connection that many who are bereaved continue to have with those who have died. For instance, he notes that a third of Britons reckon to have some experience of the dead after bereavement.[918] This connection is also increasingly recognised through the

[915] Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, p.163.
[916] Pauw, *Dying Well*, p.20.
[917] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.39.
[918] Davies, Douglas J., 'Resurrection and Immortality of the Soul' in *Death Our Future,* ed. Peter C. Jupp (London: Epworth, 2008), 82-r92, p.87.

theory of ‘continuing bonds’, that is, the idea that instead of withdrawing from the deceased or ‘letting go’, those who are bereaved continue to have some sort of attachment, connection or relationship with them.[919] There is a strong parallel here with the Christian notion of the ‘communion of the saints’, however it is significant that the theory of continuing bonds places the emphasis on the continuation of the relationship within the living, whereas the communion of the saints firmly holds that the relationship is still mutually present in Christ.[920] The focus, then, within the funeral practice moves to the bereaved, rather than the ‘saint’ who has died.

A second reason is simply that within an increasingly secular society or, at least, where the majority do not find their life shaped by the rites of the church and where there is no predominant view of life beyond death, it makes sense to create a ritual discourse that conveys life-values and reflects family, friendships and other relations.[921] It may be no surprise, then, that eschatological fulfilment of identity may give way to some sort of retrospective fulfilment, since there is no firm eschatological hope to draw upon. It may be apparent how this, and the shift from the deceased to the bereaved within the funeral is, for some, contrary to the Christian theology of death, since both our eschatological hope and the communion of the saints seem to be fundamentally undermined.[922] However, despite some potential misgivings, I suggest that they are not, and that a focus on the bereaved and the life of the deceased may be perfectly in line with a Christian understanding of death, identity and hope. Indeed, I propose that many of the practices supposed to imply a retrospective fulfilment of identity are actually indicative of our identity, rooted and established in our resurrection.

Recall that I argued that while our identity is established and rooted in our resurrection and we participate in it, to different degrees, throughout our lives. Identity is, therefore, is not a matter of participating in steps on a trajectory that finds its completion in resurrection, but

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[919] Holloway, Margaret, *Negotiating Death in Contemporary Health and Social Care* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2007), p.75

[920] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.44. The distinction is not quiet drawn out by Kelly. Kelly, Ewan *Meaningful Funerals* (London: Mowbray, 2008), p.141

[921] Davies identifies baptism and the Eucharist as practices within the church that form a sense of identity in life. Davies, *Resurrection and Immortality of the Soul*, p.89.

[922] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.38-9.

rather, the fullness of who we are is found in our resurrection and known in part throughout our lives. There is, therefore, a deep connection between both the narratives of our lives and the relationships we are a part of now and our resurrected selves. Indeed, for all that our resurrection may involve a recontextualization of the narratives that shape us and the relationships that constitute who we are, there is sufficient continuity so that it is still *our* narratives and *our* relationships. This indicates that to reflect on who we are throughout our lives, is implicitly eschatological in nature, in that it points to our resurrection.

The use of biography within a funeral, then, is not antithetical to the hope of resurrection, since reflecting on the life of the deceased need not imply retrospective fulfilment of their identity at all, but instead is deeply indicative of the resurrection where those narratives are rooted. In fact, the inclusion of narratives that speak of who the deceased was, within the context of a funeral (which by its nature should, as Davies points out, engage with questions of eschatological hope), should emphasise the greater narrative of new creation, which will ultimately recontextualise who we are in resurrection.[923] A good example of this is found in *Common Worship*, introduced within the Church of England in 2000.[924] Lloyd, who worked on its development, points out how the pastoral and liturgical resources offered in and around a funeral create a sense of movement precisely in order to reflect the journey of the deceased through life, ultimately finding fulfilment in their resurrection.[925] Here biography and hope can be weaved together.[926]

Of course, if biographical material is included in such a way as to deny the reality of death, then this represents an unhelpful practice. For one thing, it excludes a central aspect of an individual's narrative, that is, her death. For another it seems to run contrary to her embodiment and therefore can only ever present a skewed version of who she was, since our identity is rooted in embodiment, now and in new creation. Neither does it allow for

[923] Davies, *Resurrection and Immortality of the Soul*, p.85-6.
[924] The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, *Common Worship: Pastoral Services* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000).
[925] Lloyd, Trevor, '*Common Worship* Funeral Service' in *Death Our Future,* ed. Peter C. Jupp (London: Epworth, 2008), 158-167, p.160.
[926] Lloyd explains how there are elements in the Common Worship funeral service that can offer flexibility for memoires to be shared and the decease's life to be recounted. Lloyd, *Common Worship Funeral Service*, p.162, 165.

healthy mourning among the bereaved.[927] Indeed, the point is not that the inclusion of 'a display of photographs, personal sharing about the deceased […] and a celebration of life' should replace explicit reference to Christian hope.[928] Reflection on the density of individuals beyond death should quite properly be expected to be the focus for funeral sermons, and not merely be relegated to undergirding the Christian minister's practice. But, once again, this is not a zero-sum game; the place of biography and the hope of resurrection within a funeral can and should affirm one another.

Similarly, focusing on the bereaved and keeping the deceased at the centre of the funeral rite, are not mutually exclusive. For to give attention to the deceased and to the hope of resurrection is necessarily to give attention to those relationships constitute who they are in new creation, as I explored above. This makes good sense of ministerial practice in which the minister draws in others to 'co-construct' the funeral because to involve those who share in the relationships that have partly constituted the identity of an individual is to indicate that those relationships will be expressed his resurrection.[929] It is also a way in which we can draw together the Christian affirmation of the 'communion of the saints' and the idea of 'continuing bonds.' Those who are bereaved still share a bond with a deceased individual because their identity is still constituted in part by the relationship they shared with her. After all, it is not that the relationship is now broken, for all we might rightly say it is disrupted, because it was always anticipatory of its fullest expression in the resurrection. Thus, Kelly is incorrect to say that a 'new relationship' has been formed or to put it that the deceased are 'absorbed' into the living.[930] Rather, a relationship that always anticipated its expression in the new creation, still does so, albeit expressed in a different degree. In the same way the communion of saints takes its basis within the resurrection and, in particular, the resurrected Christ, and yet can be known and experienced now proleptically.

The consequence of this discussion is that funeral ministry that encompasses reflection on the life of the deceased, and takes account of the bereaved within it, does not run contrary

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[927] Jackson, Edgar N., *The Many Faces of Greif* (London: SCM, 1972), p.102-3; Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals,* p.139.
[928] Scheib, *Make Love Your Aim*, p.49.
[929] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.95.
[930] Kelly, *Meaningful Funerals*, p.141.

to the Christian theology of death. For while identity is fulfilled eschatologically, it is also known in part in life, in such a way as to anticipate our resurrection. Thus, to speak of who we are in life, within the context of Christian ministry, is to speak of who we fully are in our resurrection. And to speak of our resurrection is to speak of who we are now. Indeed, funeral practice that does not affirm who the deceased individual was and how this was known in narrative and relationships, runs the risk of introducing too high a level of discontinuity between her and her resurrected self. Christian ministry, then, should recognise the importance of affirming who individuals are and how this points forward to who they will be.

Take one final example. Harper, whose story we briefly touched upon earlier, writes of choosing a burial plot that reflects who he and his wife are; one that connects them to particular moments of connection in their lives, with their family and with God. As he puts it:

> As Christians, then, our burial plots are important to us. They can reflect our personalities and our life values. They are links with our families, past and future. They remind us of our mortality. Yet they are not ultimate.[931]

Thus, in choosing a place of significance, Harper encapsulates who he is, his identity as he knew it and as it was known by those around him, as well as the 'divine ground beneath [him]' throughout his life, and sets them in the context of his mortality, but also in the context his resurrection, which they ultimately anticipate.

9.2 Phineas Gage: Known and Loved by God

I began this thesis with an account of the case of Phineas Gage. Gage is, of course, much more than a 'case' or a line in a textbook, he is a man who was known and loved by God as much before his life-altering brain injury, as he was after it. However, little is known of Gage's life apart from the accident and its consequences. Mystery should not diminish its significance, but it was the events surrounding Gage's injury that raised the questions that served as the foundations of this thesis. Indeed, for all that this study was about much more

[931] Harper Jr., *Living With Dying*, p.94-5.

than those questions, we are now in a position to suggest an answer and it feels remiss not to do so. So, were his friends right to say that this man was 'no longer Gage?'

I have argued that the fullest expression of our identity is found in our resurrection. Who we are now participates proleptically in who we are in new creation, but to different degrees throughout our life. Thus, Phineas Gage before and after his accident was still Phineas Gage, but neither the capable and responsible foreman or the fitful, irreverent drifter expressed fully who he was. Both were aspects of his identity, true but partial participations in who he will be in new creation. In his resurrection, those perhaps contradictory elements of narrative find resolution and the fragmented relationships that constituted his identity so differently at different times, are mode whole and find their full meaning. All of this is possible because of how God relates to Gage in Christ, so that in his resurrection, he is conformed to who Christ is.

This may be too much to say of an individual of whom we know so little, but it does indicate the basis upon which we may build answers to the questions I posed at the beginning. At the heart of my thesis is that who we are is founded upon our relation to God, which is found in the work of Christ in creation, redemption and new creation. This is ultimately expressed in our resurrection. By rooting identity in resurrection, this allows for the perspective of the cognitive sciences to be accounted for, which indicated that identity arises from embedded and embodied roots, is constituted in relationships and given content and meaning through narrative.

9.3 Looking Ahead

I discussed earlier in the study how science and theology might be related. I argued that the concept of dialogue, to which my approach was most closely aligned, did often not suggest purposeful engagement. On the other hand, science engaged theology too narrowly defined the role of science. Engagement with the cognitive sciences was not a necessary part of this study. It would have been perfectly possible to offer a purely theological discussion of identity. However, drawing upon scientific perspectives has enhanced and shaped the theological work. It has emphasised the importance of physical embodiment and

embeddedness, from which our identity emerges, and highlighted how a theological exploration of identity has to account for how relationships and narrative are rooted in them. Furthermore, drawing upon the social sciences on the subject of dementia opened up the question in ways that theology struggled to do alone. It demonstrates the importance of engaging with scientific perspectives on their own terms. While I argued for the specificality of this argument, there is the possibility of structuring this approach for the wider interface between science and theology, but this would require more work.

The commitment to praxis in this study has materialised in my engagement with the subject of dementia, a potential wider understanding of pastoral care within Christian ministry and a new appraisal for the role of relationships and story within Christian funerals. More could have been said on these subjects, but I hope that my argument provides the basis for Christian ministry that is rooted in the reality of new creation. In a previous work I have discussed the presence of disability in new creation. My thesis here would further develop that argument. Indeed, there are a number of ethical questions, from assisted suicide to how Christians engage with the climate crisis, upon which this thesis could have a bearing, if we hold that who we are is not fully found now but embodied and embedded in new creation. If that is the case, then more attention should be given by theologians to God's promised future, for there we do not merely find the hope of seeing Jesus face to face, but also the promise of sharing his resurrection.

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