

Pathologies in Narrative Structures¹

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Per Aage Brandt, commenting on a passage from Merlin Donald, suggests that there is 'a narrative aesthetics built into our mind.'² In Donald, one can find an evolutionary account of this narrative aesthetics.³ If there is something like an innate narrative disposition, it is also surely the case that there is a process of development involved in narrative practice. In this paper I will assume something closer to the developmental account provided by Jerome Bruner in various works,⁴ and Dan Hutto's account of how we learn narrative practices,⁵ and I'll refer to this narrative aesthetics as a narrative competency that we come to have through a developmental process. I will take narrative in a wide sense, to include oral and written communications and self-reports on experience. In this regard narrative is more basic than story, and not necessarily characterized by the formal plot structure of a story. A story may be told in many different ways, but always via narrative discourse.⁶ Also, having narrative competency includes not just abilities for understanding narratives, but also for narrative

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² P. A. Brandt, 'Narrative models and meaning'. *p.o.v.* Number 18, December 2004 (http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_18/section_1/artc3A.html).

³ M. Donald, *Origins of the Modern mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁴ E.g. J. Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

⁵ D. D. Hutto, 'Narrative Practice and Understanding Reasons: Reply to Gallagher.' *Consciousness and Emotion: Special Issue on Radical Enactivism*, R. Menary (ed.) (2006); D. D. Hutto, 'Folk Psychology without Theory or Simulation', *Folk Psychology Reassessed*, D. D. Hutto and M. Ratcliffe (eds.) (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

⁶ P. Abbott, 'Narrative and the Evolution of Intelligence', paper presented at Department of English, University of California Santa Barbara, April 17, 1998, <http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/projects/esm/PorterAbbott.html>

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understanding, which allows us to form narratives about things, events and other people. To be capable of narrative understanding means to be capable of seeing events in a narrative framework.

The questions that I want to explore are these: what are the cognitive elements that contribute to the development of narrative competency? What do we gain from the deployment of this narrative competency? And what do we lose if something goes wrong with it? In regard to the latter question I will focus on problems found in schizophrenic narratives.⁷ Of course, the attempt to understand how narrative competency goes wrong in schizophrenia can only be one piece of the large and complex task involved in understanding schizophrenia. Furthermore, I do not mean to suggest that narrative analysis is something like a key to this full understanding; rather, it is only one approach that must be combined with others.

Let me also note that my focus will be on self-narratives. Developmentally self-narratives are initiated and shaped by others. Two-year-olds may be working more from scripts established by others than from full-fledged narratives. Indeed, their autobiographical memories have to be elicited by questions and prompts.⁸ This means that 'the child's own experience ... is forecast and rehearsed with him or her by parents ... children of 2–4 years often 'appropriate' someone else's story as their own'.⁹ It is important to see that self-narrative is always already shaped by others, and by those kinds of narratives that are common and possible in the culture surrounding the child. This developmental fact allows us to understand the importance of the role played by self-narrative in our understanding of others, and other-narratives, which include the self-narratives told by others. Pragmatically, in our narrative understanding of others, we make use of our own self-narrative as a repository of experience and, at the same time, as a way to differentiate between self and other. There are other larger narratives available; narratives that help to constitute the shared

⁷ For recent work on narratives in depression and anxiety, see J. Zinken, C. Blakemore, L. Butler, T.C. Skinner, 'Emotions in Syntax: Relations between Narrative Structure and Emotional State', paper presented at *Language Culture and Mind* Conference, Paris, 2006.

⁸ M. L. Howe, *The Fate of Early Memories: Developmental Science and the Retention of Childhood Experiences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

⁹ K. Nelson, 'Narrative and the Emergence of a Consciousness of Self', *Narrative and Consciousness*, G. Fireman, T. McVay, and O. Flanagan (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 31.

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normative practices¹⁰ that inform our cultural and common sense understandings. Together, with these narrative understandings, we go on to invent important institutions, create laws, and engage in complex social practices. This intersubjective setting is something that we need to keep in mind as a balance to what in the following might seem an overly cognitive account of narrative competency.

What are the cognitive elements that contribute to the development of narrative competency? There are four important contributories that act as necessary conditions for its proper (non-pathological) development: the capacity for temporal ordering, the capacity for minimal self-reference, episodic and autobiographical memory, and the capacity for metacognition.¹¹ I'll discuss each of these in turn.

The cognitive capacities for narrative competency

Capacity for temporal ordering

Narrative involves a twofold temporal structure. First, there is a timeframe that is internal to the narrative itself, a serial order in which one event follows another. This internal timeframe contributes to the composition of narrative structure. Paul Ricoeur notes a dialectic of 'discordance' and 'concordance' in the process of narrative.¹² In some way each event in the narrative is something new and different ('discordance'); yet in another way each event is part of a series ('concordance'), determined by what came before and constraining what is to come. Configurations of concordance and discordance compose the basic structure of plot in stories. Even if there is no plot, however, there is always a serial order in the narrative.

One can think of the internal order of the narrative as the serial order of what McTaggart called a B-series, in which one event

¹⁰ Cf. R. B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

¹¹ See S. Gallagher, 'Self-Narrative in Schizophrenia', *The Self in Neuroscience and Psychiatry*, A. S. David and T. Kircher (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 336–357.

¹² P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, (trans. K. Blamey) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

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follows another.¹³ Once established, this is an unchanging order. That is, if event X predates event Y, then it always does so. The American revolutionary war happened before the French revolution, and this fact does not depend on how long ago these events happened. Within narrative, however, a series of events that have a certain objective order may be presented out of order, and this may happen in several ways. First, a narrator may want to create a dramatic effect by presenting event Y first, and then moving back (flashing back) to event X. Events are presented as having the proper serial order, but the order of their presentation is different from the order of their objective happening. Second, it may be the case that the narrator simply does not know the objective order of events and thinks that event Y did happen before event X—a simple mistake rather than a dramatic effect. This has no effect on the internal structure of the narrative, as long as the order is consistently maintained. If the narrative references real events in this way, then it does so in a non-veridical way. Third, it may also happen that a narrator does know the objective order of events but unwittingly confuses the order, sometimes presenting event X as prior to event Y, and other times presenting event Y as prior to event X. This kind of inconsistency is a mark of irrationality.

In contrast to the internal time frame, there is an external temporality that defines the narrator's temporal relation to the events of the narrative. We can think of this as what McTaggart calls the A-series, which is a perspectival or relative time frame. That is, from the narrator's current perspective (the present), the narrated events happen either in the past, the present, or the future. Even if this relation is left unspecified ('Once upon a time ...') it is usually open to specification that these events happened in the past, or will happen in the future, relative to the narrator's present. In the case of fictional events, of course, the events may never have happened and never will happen. We might think of them precisely as not having a specifiable place in time relative to the narrator. With respect to self-narrative, however, this cannot be the case. Even if the event in question never did happen (for example, an event falsely remembered) or never will happen (for example, a planned event that never comes to be actualized) in self-narrative it is still set in a temporal relation to the narrator.

By the capacity for temporal ordering I mean simply the ability to work in these time frames without serious confusion. These are

¹³ J. M. E. McTaggart, 'The Unreality of Time'. *Mind* 17 (New Series, no. 68), 1908, 457–474.

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learned capacities that are based on a more fundamental temporal ordering of experience. I experience event X, and then I experience event Y; I also experience X-followed-by-Y receding into the past and as forming part of my past experience. When I experience X as occurring, I may at the same moment anticipate Y, or perhaps something other than Y. What is unavoidable is that when I am conscious I always anticipate something. Husserl shows that this anticipatory aspect (or 'protention') directed at what is just about to happen is part of the very structure of experience, as is the 'retention' of what has just occurred.¹⁴ Each moment of consciousness has a retention-primal (now) impression-protention structure which allows us to experience the world in an orderly way, characterized with certain degrees of continuity and discontinuity. At every moment I am pre-reflectively aware of what I am experiencing just now, of what I have just experienced (in the previous now), and of what I expect to happen in the next second or so. If this were not so, I would never experience a melody; nor could I form a sentence, or make sense of a sentence that I am reading or hearing. This basic temporal structure of experience is not only a prerequisite for the proper temporal ordering found in narrative, its proper functioning is also a necessary condition for the development of a minimal sense of self, for our ability to remember our experience, and for our ability to reflect on our experience.

Capacity for minimal self-reference

I retain the just-past content of my experience by retaining my just-past experience. What Husserl shows in his analysis of this basic temporal structure of consciousness is that the retentive function retains not only an intentional sense of the just-past note of a melody (or whatever content one is experiencing) but it does so only by retaining the consciousness-of-the-passing-melody. That is, experience always involves a retention of consciousness itself so that we have not only an experience of the melody, but at the same time an experience of ourselves experiencing the melody. This is what phenomenologists call the sense of ipseity, which is a pre-reflective (proprioceptive, ecological) sense of self that contributes to the basic differentiation between self and non-self.

¹⁴ E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des Inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)*, R. Boehm (ed.) (den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

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Iipseity is the sense that this experience is my experience. It is the 'mineness' of experience—a minimal sense of self that is an immediate and present self-consciousness. As such it is the ground for my use of the first-person pronoun, and the basis for my ability to issue reports about my experience.

To begin to form a self-narrative one must be able to refer to oneself by using the first-person pronoun. Without the basic sense of differentiation between self and non-self I would not be able to refer to myself with any specification, and self-narrative would have no starting point. The minimal sense of self is what gets extended and enhanced in the self-narrative.

Certain forms of access that I have to my minimal self (as Wittgenstein says, '*as subject*') cannot be mistaken, and as a result certain uses of the first-person pronoun in self-reference are immune to error through misidentification.¹⁵ For example, if I say 'I think it is going to rain today,' I may be entirely wrong about the rain, but I cannot be wrong about the I. I cannot say 'I' and mean to identify someone else by that word. If I say 'I see that John is at his desk,' I can be wrong about it being a desk; I can be wrong about it being John; and I can even be wrong about my cognitive act (it may be hallucination rather than visual perception). It would be nonsensical, however, to ask me 'Are you sure that *you* are the one who sees that John is at his desk?'

Importantly, even in cases where I do *objectively* misidentify myself (e.g., if I mistakenly claim that I am the one who hit the target, when in fact it was somebody else who hit the target), my use of the first-person pronoun has a guaranteed self-reference.¹⁶ When I say 'I', I am referring to myself, even though I may be wrong about who hit the target. Indeed, I can misidentify myself ('*as object*') in this respect only because I have correctly self-referred. In such cases, it is precisely myself about whom I am wrong. This makes the minimal self an extremely secure anchor for self-narratives.

In a self-narrative I may report what I feel in terms of emotional state, but I often report what I am doing or what I did, or what I plan to do. In other words, action is central to self-narrative. My experience of action may be specified further to include both a sense of ownership for movement (that is, a sense that I am

¹⁵ S. Shoemaker, 'Self-Reference and Self-Awareness.' *The Journal of Philosophy* 65, 1968, 555–567.

¹⁶ P. F. Strawson, 'The First Person—and Others.' *Self-Knowledge*, Q. Cassam (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

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moving) and a sense of agency (that is, a sense that I am the one causing the movement), both of these still on a pre-reflective level.¹⁷ For the construction of self-narrative the sense of agency is the basis for the attribution of action to oneself. In my self-narrative I am either (or alternatively) an agent or a sufferer,¹⁸ and my construal of myself as such depends on my ability to self-attribute action. Thus, even if other aspects of the minimal self are intact a lack of a sense of agency will be disruptive to self-narrative. As we will see, this has importance in considerations of schizophrenia.

Episodic and autobiographical memory

Both the capacity for temporal ordering and the capacity for minimal self-reference are necessary for the proper working of episodic and autobiographical memory, which involves the recollection of a past event and when it took place, and self-attribution, the specification that the past event involved the person who is remembering it. Building on a long philosophical tradition, starting with Locke,¹⁹ which holds that just such memories form the basis of personal identity, narrative theorists contend that personal identity is primarily constituted in narratives that recount past autobiographical events. If there is any degree of unity to my life, it is the product of an interpretation of my past actions and of events in the past that happened to me, all of which constitute my life history.²⁰ If I were unable to form memories of my life history, or were unable to access such memories, then I have nothing to interpret, nothing to narrate sufficient for the formation of self-identity.

Maguire et al. point out that the coherence of narrative depends on two factors: that the story makes sense, and that the person who hears the story has access to prior knowledge.²¹ In the construction

¹⁷ See S. Gallagher, 'Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4, 2000, 14–21.

¹⁸ Op. cit. note 12.

¹⁹ J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. A. C. Fraser (ed.) (New York: Dover, (1690, second edition 1694), 1959).

²⁰ Op. cit. note 12.

²¹ E. A. Maguire, C. D. Frith, and R. G. Morris, 'The Functional Neuroanatomy of Comprehension and Memory: the Importance of Prior Knowledge', *Brain* 122, No. 10, 1999, 1839–1850.

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of self-narrative, autobiographical memory provides the prior knowledge out of which the coherent narrative is formed.²² Likewise, the narrative (and self-narrative) process is not simply something that depends on the proper functioning of episodic (and autobiographical) memory, but in fact contributes to the functioning of that memory. Just to the extent that the current contextual and semantic requirements of narrative construction motivate the recollection of a certain event, that recollection will be shaped, interpreted and reconstructed in the light of those requirements.

In addition, autobiographical memory depends on, but also reinforces a more objective sense of self. One can see this in terms of development. Around the same time as autobiographical memory starts to form, 18 months to 24 months, the child gains capability in mirror self-recognition, which generates an objective sense of self, as well as capability in language, which is essential for the construction of narrative.

By 18–24 months of age infants have a concept of themselves that is sufficiently viable to serve as a referent around which personally experienced events can be organized in memory ... the self at 18–24 months of age achieves whatever 'critical mass' is necessary to serve as an organizer and regulator of experience ... this achievement in self-awareness (recognition) is followed shortly by the onset of autobiographical memory ...²³

Capacity for metacognition

Another important cognitive capacity required for narrative competency is an ability to gain a reflective distance from one's own experience. The process of interpretation that ordinarily shapes episodic memories into a narrative structure depends on this capacity for reflective metacognition or metarepresentation. To form a self-narrative, one needs to do more than simply remember life events. One needs to reflectively consider them, deliberate on their meaning, and decide how they fit together semantically. A life

²² K. Vogele, M. Kurthen, P. Falkai, and W. Maier, 'The Human Self Construct and Prefrontal Cortex in Schizophrenia', *The Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness: Electronic Seminar* (1999), (<http://www.phil.vt.edu/assc/esem.html>).

²³ Op. cit. note 8, 91–92.

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event is not meaningful in itself; rather it depends on a narrative structure that lends it context and sees in it significance that goes beyond the event itself.

Metacognition is clearly essential for the interpretive process that produces the self-narrative. As Merlin Donald puts it, metacognition provides the 'cognitive governance' that allows for disambiguating and differentiating events within the narrative.²⁴ It not only allows for reporting on one's experience, but also for an enhancement of that experience. It is possible, for the sake of a unified or coherent meaning, to construe certain events in a way that they did not in fact happen. To some degree, and for the sake of creating a coherency to life, it is normal to confabulate and to enhance one's story. As Ricoeur points out, narrative identity 'must be seen as an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience'.²⁵ Self-deception is not unusual; false memories are frequent.

What do we gain from the deployment of this narrative competency?

The narrative self

There is a growing consensus, across a number of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience, that narrative competency provides important structure for the development of something more than a minimal (momentary and immediate sense of) self.²⁶ In contrast to the minimal (proprioceptive and ecological) self, the narrative self involves a diachronic and complex structure that depends on reflective experience and on factors that are

²⁴ M. Donald, 'An Evolutionary Rationale for the Emergence of Language from Mimetic Representation', plenary paper presented at *Language Culture and Mind Conference*, Paris, 17–20 July 2006.

²⁵ Op. cit. note 12, 162.

²⁶ Op. cit. note 12; A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Op. cit. note 4; D. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1991); A. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co, 1999); M. Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

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conceptual, emotional, and socially embedded. We conceive of ourselves as extended over time in a narrativized fashion, 'situated in a present that bears the past and projects itself imaginatively into the future'.²⁷

Dennett has proposed a version of narrative theory consistent with recent developments in neuroscience.²⁸ He finds in the brain something analogous to what Hume had found in the mind, a collection of distributed processes with no central theater, no real, neurological center of experience.²⁹ Importantly, however, the brain is capable of generating virtual connections that loop through the human social environment. That is, the brain generates language. Language allows us to weave stories that trace our experiences in relatively coherent plots over extended time periods. In these stories we extend our biological identities through the use of words like 'I' and 'you'.

The narrative self, however, has no substantial reality. Rather, on Dennett's account, the narrative self is an empty abstraction—an abstract 'center of narrative gravity.' A narrative self is an abstract and movable point where various fictional or biographical stories about ourselves, told by ourselves or by others, intersect.

In contrast to Dennett, Ricoeur conceives of the narrative self not as an abstract point at the intersection of various narratives, but as something richer and more concrete.³⁰ He emphasizes the fact that one's own self-narrative is always entangled in the narratives of others, and that out of this entanglement comes a unified life narrative that helps to shape the individual's continuing behavior.

The narrative self may be more than a simple abstract point of intersecting narratives, but also less than a unified product of a

²⁷ J. Phillips, 'Schizophrenia and the Narrative Self.' *The Self in Neuroscience and Psychiatry* T. Kircher and A. David (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 319–335.

²⁸ D. Dennett, 'Why Everyone is a Novelist.' *Times Literary Supplement*, 4459 (September 16–22, 1988), 1016, 1028–29; D. Dennett, *op. cit.* note 26.

²⁹ Hume had used the metaphor of the theater, but immediately set it aside: 'The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance ... The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented ...'. D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, A. Selby-Bigge (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888/1975), 253. Dennett (1991) rejects the notion of a Cartesian theater.

³⁰ *Op. cit.* note 12.

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consistent narrative. It is possible to conceive of the narrative self as a complex product that is not fully unified—a product of incomplete summation and selective subtraction, imperfect memories and multiple reiterations. The self so conceived can provide a good model to explain the various equivocations, contradictions, and struggles that find expression within an individual's personal life. On a psychological level, a narrative model like this could account for conflict, moral indecision and self-deception, in a way that would be difficult to work out in terms of more traditional theories of self-identity. At certain extremes, however, broken narratives may be reflective of certain psychopathologies.

Furthermore, as Ricoeur notes, my own self-narrative is greatly influenced by what others say about me, and is more generally constrained by the kinds of things that can be said, and that are said about persons in my culture. What others say can have an effect on my self-identity from a first-person perspective insofar as it can be related, positively or negatively, with my own self-narrative. What someone else says about me *matters* only so far as it fits or fails to fit into my own self-narrative. The connection between myself and others in the framework of narrative, however, is deeper than this.

Narrative and intersubjectivity

In contrast to standard theory of mind (TOM) accounts of social cognition, based on theoretical stances or simulation models, there is good developmental, neuroscientific, and phenomenological evidence for an interactive-narrative approach. I want to focus on the narrative component involved in this approach, but narrative competency doesn't arise *ex nihilo*. It normally depends on capacities for human interaction and intersubjective understanding that develop in certain embodied practices in early infancy—practices that are emotional, sensory-motor, perceptual, and nonconceptual. These embodied practices constitute our primary access for understanding others, and they continue to do so even after we attain our more advanced abilities for social understanding.³¹

In most intersubjective situations we have a direct understanding of another person's intentions because their intentions are

³¹ See S. Gallagher, 'The Practice of mind: Theory, Simulation or Primary Interaction?' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8, No. 5–7, 2001, 83–108.

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explicitly expressed in their embodied actions and their expressive behaviors. Developmental studies show that human infants have capabilities for interaction with others that fall under the heading of primary intersubjectivity.³² Neonate imitation shows that infants, from the very start, are able to distinguish between inanimate objects and people and are attuned to the latter in a special way.³³ Infants are able to see bodily movement as goal-directed intentional movement, and to perceive other persons as intentional agents. Baldwin and colleagues, for example, have shown that infants at 10–11 months are able to parse some kinds of continuous action according to intentional boundaries.³⁴ The infant follows the other person's eyes, and perceives various movements of the head, the mouth, the hands, and more general body movements as meaningful, goal-directed movements. Such perceptions give the infant, by the end of the first year of life, a non-mentalizing understanding of the intentions, emotions, and dispositions of other persons.³⁵ If human faces are especially salient, even for the youngest infants, or if we continue to be capable of perceptually grasping the meaning of the other's expressions and intentional movements, such face-to-face interaction does not exhaust the possibilities of intersubjective understanding. Expressions, intonations, gestures, and movements, along with the bodies that manifest them, are not free floating; they are found *in the world*, and infants soon start to notice how others interact with the world. Around the age of 9–14 months infants go beyond the person-to-person

³² C. B. Trevarthen, 'Communication and Cooperation in Early Infancy: A Description of Primary Intersubjectivity' *Before Speech*, M. Bullowa (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

³³ S. Gallagher and A. Meltzoff, 'The Earliest Sense of Self and Others: Merleau-Ponty and Recent Developmental Studies', *Philosophical Psychology* 9, 1996, 213–236.

³⁴ D. A. Baldwin and J. A. Baird, 'Discerning Intentions in Dynamic Human Action' *Trends in Cognitive Science* 5, No. 4, 2001, 171–178; D. A. Baldwin, J. A. Baird, M. M. Saylor and M. A. Clark, 'Infants Parse Dynamic Action' *Child Development* 72, No. 3, 2001, 708–717.

³⁵ T. Allison, Q. Puce, and G. McCarthy, 'Social Perception from Visual Cues: Role of the STS Region' *Trends in Cognitive Science* 4 No. 7, 2001, 267–278; D. A. Baldwin, 'Infants' Ability to Consult the Speaker for Clues to Word Reference' *Journal of Child Language* 20, 1993, 395–418; S. C. Johnson, 'The Recognition of Mentalistic Agents in Infancy' *Trends in Cognitive Science* 4, 2000, 22–28; S. Johnson, V. Slaughter and S. Carey, 'Whose Gaze Will Infants Follow? The Elicitation of Gaze-Following in 12-Month-Old Infants', *Developmental Science* 1, No. 2, 1998, 233–238.

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immediacy of primary intersubjectivity, and enter into pragmatic *contexts* of shared attention in which they learn what things mean and what they are for.³⁶ Trevarthen and Hubley call this 'secondary intersubjectivity'.³⁷ Infants begin to perceive others as agents whose actions are framed in pragmatic contexts. It follows that there is not one uniform way in which we relate to others, but that our relations are mediated through the various pragmatic circumstances of our encounters. In this regard, to understand another person, we do not need to gain access to their hidden minds by some kind of inference; we are rather pulled into their world as we engage in what they are doing.

It is clear that although we do not leave primary and secondary intersubjective capabilities behind, these embodied, sensory-motor (emotion informed) interactions are not sufficient to address what are clearly new developments around the ages of 2, 3 and 4 years. A developing narrative competency during this time moves the process forward and transforms it. For narrative, language acquisition and the development of a more objective sense of self, autobiographical memory, and metacognitive abilities, are important, and narrative competency has its beginning around 2–4 years as we gain increasingly linguistic and nuanced understanding. Narrative competency operates in two ways to further our intersubjective understanding. First, through narrative practice, in the form of the stories that others tell us, and, with the help of others, we start to tell about ourselves, we gain access to folk psychological concepts. This is what Hutto (2004) calls the 'narrative practice hypothesis'.³⁸ Second, it is also possible to use narrative as a way to make sense of another person's actions without employing folk psychological concepts, but rather by framing their behaviors, actions, expressions in meaningful contexts. In this process, as McIntyre points out, 'It is because we live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives that we live out, that the form of

³⁶ W. Phillips, S. Baron-Cohen, and M. Rutter, 'The Role of Eye-Contact in the Detection of Goals: Evidence from Normal Toddlers, and Children with Autism or Mental Handicap', *Development and Psychopathology* 4, 1992, 375–383.

³⁷ C. Trevarthen, and P. Hubley, 'Secondary Intersubjectivity: Confidence, Confiding and Acts of Meaning in the First Year', *Action, Gesture and Symbol: The Emergence of Language*, A. Lock (ed.) (London: Academic Press, 1978), 183–229.

³⁸ D. D. Hutto, 'The Limits of Spectatorial Folk Psychology', *Mind and Language* 19, 2004, 548–573.

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narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others'.³⁹ With narrative competency, then, we gain not only a more complex and extended sense of self, we gain a sophisticated understanding of others.

What do we lose when something goes wrong with narrative?

Narratives can fail either in regard to content or structure. On the one hand, the content of self-narrative is provided by autobiographical memory and our actions, but content is also shaped by expectations and plans. Without content, narratives are impoverished. The contribution of autobiographical memory to self-narrative content is significant, as is apparent from cases in which such content is lost, as in amnesia or Alzheimer's disease. Bruner points out that dysnarrativia (encountered for example in Korsakoff's syndrome or Alzheimer's disease) is destructive for the selfhood that is generated in narrative.⁴⁰ In addition, dysnarrativia involves the loss of the ability to understand others' behavior and their emotional experiences.

Narrative structure, on the other hand, can mean different things although it is generally related to how narrative gets generated. Per Aage Brandt, for example, understands structure as 'a textual architecture' where aspects of narrative structures depend on utterance-based local microstructures.⁴¹ Lysaker and Lysaker suggest that narrative structure derives from an internal self-dialogue which generates the self: 'The self is inherently 'dialogical', or the product of ongoing conversations both within the individual and between the individual and others'.⁴² James Phillips⁴³ equates narrative structure with the temporal structure implicit in narrative, but, similar to Roe and Davidson,⁴⁴ understands this as

³⁹ Op. cit. note 26, MacIntyre 1984, p. 212.

⁴⁰ J. Bruner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 86 and 119; See also K. Young, and J. L. Saver, 'The Neurology of Narrative' *SubStance* 30, No. 1 and 2, 2001, 72–84.

⁴¹ Op. cit. note 2.

⁴² P. H. Lysaker, and J. T. Lysaker, 'Narrative Structure in Psychosis: Schizophrenia and Disruptions in the Dialogical Self', *Theory and Psychology* 12, No. 2, 2002, 207–220, 201.

⁴³ Op. cit. note 27.

⁴⁴ D. Roe. and L. Davidson, 'Self and Narrative in Schizophrenia: Time to Author a New Story', *Medical Humanities* 31, 2005, 89–94.

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the ordinary plot structure: that a narrative has a beginning, middle, and end. I think Phillips is correct that narrative structure derives from the various kinds of temporality involved in narrative, but this structure is not necessarily equivalent to plot. Capabilities related to temporal integration and the linear ordering of events within a temporal framework are essential to the formation of the narrative perspective and to the sequential order that characterizes narrative. These aspects of temporal structure appear to be necessary conditions for capabilities that involve minimal self-reference, and episodic-autobiographical memory.

As I indicated above, the construction of narratives involves a perspectival A-series—the temporal position of the narrated events relative to the narrator, a perspective that is external to the narrative itself. That is, the narrated events may be in the past or the future, or may be happening now, relative to the narrator. Narrative competency also involves the ability to deal with a non-perspectival B-series—the internal order of events that are told in the narrative and that may or may not make up a plot. In addition, we noted that these temporal aspects also depend on a more basic time-consciousness, the coherent flow of experience which includes retentions and protentions and which structures the minimal self, including sense of agency.

Schizophrenic subjects often experience problems pertaining to temporal experience in ways that interfere with both internal and external temporal frameworks and the basic aspects of time-consciousness.

- Disruptions of the external A-series may be due to the fact that future time-perspective is curtailed in schizophrenia⁴⁵ and subjects act ‘without concern for tomorrow.’ One patient states: ‘There is an absolute fixity around me. I have even less mobility for the future than I have for the present and the past. There is a kind of routine in me which does not allow me to envisage the future. The creative power in me is abolished. I see the future as a repetition of the past’.⁴⁶
- Disruptions of the internal B-series are also apparent in schizophrenics who experience difficulties indexing events in

⁴⁵ C. Dilling, and A. Rabin, ‘Temporal Experience in Depressive States and Schizophrenia’ *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 31, 1967, 604–608.

⁴⁶ Quoted in E. Minkowski, *Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychological Studies*, trans. N. Metzler, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1933/1970), 277.

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time, which is positively correlated to symptoms of auditory hallucinations, feelings of being influenced, and problems that involve distinguishing between self and non-self.⁴⁷

- Reflecting possible disruptions of the more basic temporal flow of experience, some schizophrenic narratives are characterized by a derailing of thought; by constant tangents, the loss of goal, the loosening of associations, or the compression of a temporally extended story to a single gesture.⁴⁸

Self-narratives of schizophrenic patients reflect general problems in the sequencing of events and self-placement in appropriate temporal frameworks. One patient during a lucid period reports:

I felt as if I had been put back, as if something of the past had returned, so to speak, toward me so that not only time repeated itself again but all that had happened for me during that time as well... . In the middle of all this something happened which did not seem to belong there. Suddenly it was not only 11:00 again, but a time which has passed a long time before was there ... In the middle of time I was coming from the past toward myself... . Before there was a before and after. Yet it isn't there now... . [When someone visits and then leaves] it could very well have happened yesterday. I can no longer arrange it, in order to know where it belongs.⁴⁹

Schizophrenics have difficulty planning and initiating action,⁵⁰ problems with temporal organization,⁵¹ and experienced continuity,⁵² and a variety of impairments of 'self-temporalization'.⁵³

⁴⁷ F. T. Melges, 'Time and the Inner Future: a Temporal Approach to Psychiatric Disorders' (New York: Wiley, 1982); F. T. Melges, and A. M. Freeman, 'Temporal Disorganization and Inner-Outer Confusion in Acute Mental Illness' *American Journal of Psychiatry* 134, 1977, 874–877.

⁴⁸ J. Cutting, *Psychopathology and Modern Philosophy* (London: Forest Publishing Co, 1998).

⁴⁹ Op. cit. note 46, 284–286.

⁵⁰ S. Levin, 'Frontal Lobe Dysfunction in Schizophrenia—Eye Movement Impairments' *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 18, 1984, 27–55.

⁵¹ R. A. DePue, M. D. Dubicki, and T. McCarthy, 'Differential Recovery of Intellectual, Associational, and Psychophysiological Functioning in Withdrawal and Active Schizophrenics', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 84, 1975, 325–330.

⁵² E. Pöppel, 'Temporal Mechanisms in Perception' *International Review of Neurobiology* 37, 1994, 185–202.

⁵³ P. Bovet, and J. Parnas, 'Schizophrenic Delusions: A Phenomenological Approach', *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 19, 1993, 579–597, 584.

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Basic retentional-protentional structures of experience are reflected in the neuropsychological concept of working memory, which involves the temporal integration of experience over very short periods of time. Studies of spatial and verbal tasks in schizophrenics show marked deficits of working memory⁵⁴ which sometimes manifest themselves as ‘formal thought disorders’—a breakdown of the temporal organization of reasoning and speech,⁵⁵ ‘cognitive dysmetria’,⁵⁶ relatively slow speeds of cognitive processing.⁵⁷ Problems that some schizophrenics have in keeping track of recent actions,⁵⁸ and with respect to the sense of agency, may involve their inability to anticipate or sequence in working memory their own actions.⁵⁹ All of these problems can interfere with the formation of self-narratives. One patient reports: ‘sometimes everything is so fragmented, when it should be so unified. A bird in the garden chirps, for example. I heard the bird, and I know that he chirps; but that it is a bird and that he chirps, these two things are separated from each other’.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ See Vogeley et al., op. cit. note 22, for a review.

⁵⁵ J. M. Fuster, ‘Commentary on “The Human Self Construct and Prefrontal Cortex in Schizophrenia” ’ (Vogeley et al. op. cit. note 22), *The Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness: Electronic Seminar* (1999), (<http://www.phil.vt.edu/assc/esem.html>).

⁵⁶ N. C. Andreasen, S. Paradiso and D. S. O’Leary, ‘Cognitive Dysmetria as an Integrative Theory of Schizophrenia: a Dysfunction in Cortical-Subcortical-Cerebellar Circuitry’, *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 24, 1998, 203–218.

⁵⁷ S. Tauscher-Wisniewski, ‘Cognitive Processing Speed Slows before Schizophrenia’, Poster session, *Society of Biological Psychiatry*; reported by M. A. Moon, *Clinical Psychiatry News* 27, No. 7, 1999, 1; See J. M. Fuster, ‘Network Memory’, *Trends in Neuroscience* 20 (10), 1997, 451–458; and J. M. Fuster, ‘The Prefrontal Cortex and Its Relation to Behavior’ *Progress in Brain Research* 87, 1991, 201–211.

⁵⁸ J. Mlakar, J. Jensterle, and C. D. Frith, ‘Central Monitoring Deficiency and Schizophrenic Symptoms’ *Psychological Medicine* 24, 1994, 557–564.

⁵⁹ S. Gallagher, ‘Self-Reference and Schizophrenia: A Cognitive Model of Immunity to Error Through Misidentification’, *Exploring the Self: Philosophical and Psychopathological Perspectives on Self-experience*, D. Zahavi (ed.) (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000); and op. cit. note 22.

⁶⁰ Cited by Minkowski 1933, op. cit. note 46, 285.

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We can see how narratives break down in the cases discussed by Phillips⁶¹ and by Lysaker and Lysaker.⁶² Phillips distinguishes three styles of schizophrenic self-narrative.

1. Impoverished and fragmented self-narrative
2. Impoverished because focused (on illness)
3. Flamboyant delusional narratives

Lysaker and Lysaker consider 1 and 3 but add a fourth:

4. Monological and rigid narrative with sustained delusions

Phillips describes a patient, Mr. B, as providing *impoverished and fragmented self-narratives* that are characterized as involving disordered and incomplete thoughts, interruptions of ongoing narrative ‘with statements about how it all started,’ a lack of a coherent sense of self, a minimal sense of future.⁶³ In effect, this kind of narrative demonstrates problems with all four capacities required for narrative competency:

- *temporal structure* (internal temporal disruptions and disorganization)
- *ipseity* (incoherent sense of self)
- *autobiographical memory* (impoverished content)
- *metacognition*.

I note here that problems with metacognition may involve either a failure to monitor one’s experience,⁶⁴ or an inclination to over-monitor one’s experience in a kind of hyper-reflection.⁶⁵ Mr. B seems to have problems with over-monitoring rather than a Frithian failure of monitoring, at least in regard to interrupting and sending the narrative back to ‘how it all started.’

Phillips’s patient Mrs. M. provides an example of someone who produces *impoverished because overly focused narrative*, and this

⁶¹ Op. cit. note 27.

⁶² Op. cit. note 42.

⁶³ Also see P. H. Lysaker, A. Wickett and L. Davis, ‘Narrative Qualities in Schizophrenia: Associations with Impairments in Neurocognition and Negative Symptoms’ *Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease* 193, No. 4, 2005, 244–249.

⁶⁴ C. D. Frith, *The Cognitive Neuropsychology of Schizophrenia*. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992).

⁶⁵ L. Sass, ‘Schizophrenia, Self-Consciousness, and the Modern Mind’, *Models of the Self*, S. Gallagher and J. Shear (eds.) (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 1999), 319–341.

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again reflects a problem with metacognition involving a hyper-reflective concern for her illness and medication and what it does to her.

In the case of Phillips's patient Mr. S we find *flamboyant delusional narratives*—'He believed that his entire mental life was controlled by other people ... he would regularly misinterpret the actions and motivations of others, assuming that events or actions were intended for him that bore no relation to him'.⁶⁶ Although he had good autobiographical memory and his self-narratives reflected a coherent pattern, they were always presented in the passive voice and he identified with historical figures. His primary problems involved his sense of agency and self-identity.

Lysaker's patient C produces *monological and rigid narrative with sustained delusions*. He interpreted all events in terms of a delusional belief, i.e., that he was the subject of persecution by a former high-school teacher. 'C drove past provocative graffiti on the highway and saw a message from his persecutor.'⁶⁷ The narrative is fixed and absolute; to challenge it is perceived as further persecution organized by the teacher, and this simply becomes part of the narrative. In this regard new events in the subject's self-narrative are dominated by events (veridical or not) that are past. His self-narrative is nicely characterized by the same terms expressed by Minkowski's patient: absolute fixity and the lack of motivation that would enable him to envisage a future that would be different from the past, reflecting problems with temporal structure specifically in regard to the external, perspectival A-series.

On a more basic level problems with retentional-protentional structure can result in narrative disruptions known as clang associations. In the case of clang associations, schizophrenic subjects can lose their way and get ensnared in a current (present) aspect of language or the narrative itself; subjects are captured by semantically non-relevant aspects of the story and go off on extreme digressions. Clang associations are usually explained in terms of rhyming words—'whip', 'tip', 'lip'—where patients are more likely to connect words because of similarity of sound, rather than by meaning. This is something often seen in clinical interviews. Susan Duncan shows that it also occurs in gesture, where a particular iconic gesture will lead the patient into

⁶⁶ Op. cit. note 27, 330.

⁶⁷ Op. cit. note 42, 214.

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digression—and she appeals to problems with protention (loss of a sense of where the narrative is going) to explain this.⁶⁸

These various examples suggest that schizophrenic narratives reflect problems in the same capacities that give us narrative competency. The result is not simply disruptions in narrative structures and content but disruptions in the narrative self. There is also evidence to suggest that dysfunctions in narrative abilities in some schizophrenics have an effect on their ability to understand others. This is a complex issue that depends on how one conceives of the role of narrative versus mentalizing abilities in understanding others.⁶⁹ Frith and Corcoran, for example, conducted theory of mind (false belief) tests on schizophrenic patients by presenting stories and cartoon pictures (narratives are involved in the majority of false belief tests).⁷⁰ They were able to show that patients with paranoid delusions and those with negative symptoms or incoherence were impaired on questions concerning the mental states of others. For a good review of the complex issues associated with this question, see Brune's article.⁷¹ No matter how we interpret the results of these tests, however, it is clear that schizophrenics often have problems understanding others, and at least one possible way to explain this is in terms of a failure of narrative competency.⁷²

We can ask whether pathological disruptions in narrative simply reflect or also contribute to disruptions in the sense of self and/or

⁶⁸ S. Duncan, 'Spatiomotor Imagery, Affect, and Time in Discourse', *Deuxième Congrès de l'International Society for Gesture Studies (ISGS): Interacting bodies*. (Lyon, France, 15–18 June 2005).

⁶⁹ See S. Gallagher, and D. D. Hutto, 'Understanding Others Through Primary Interaction and Narrative Practice' *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*, J. Zlatev, T. P. Racine, C. Sinha and E. Itkonen (eds) (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, in press); and S. Gallagher and D. Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

⁷⁰ C. D. Frith and R. Corcoran, 'Exploring "Theory of Mind" in People with Schizophrenia', *Psychological Medicine* 26, No. 3, 1996, 521–530.

⁷¹ M. Brune, '“Theory of Mind” in Schizophrenia: a Review of the Literature', *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 31, No. 1, 2005, 21–42.

⁷² For the connection between narrative ability and false-belief tests, see N. R. Guajardo and A. Watson, 'Narrative Discourse and Theory of Mind Development', *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 163, 2002, 305–325; and L. Abbeduto, K. Short-Meyerson, G. Benson and J. Dolish, 'Relationship between Theory of Mind and Language Ability in Children and Adolescents with Intellectual Disability', *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 48, No. 2, 2004, 150–159.

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intersubjective processes. The answer appears to be both. On the one hand, it seems clear that in some cases something goes wrong at the metacognitive level and problems with ipseity are generated in the resulting narrative. As Stephens and Graham suggest, some aspects of self-agency are based on 'our proclivity for constructing self-referential narratives' which allow us to make sense of our behavior retrospectively.⁷³

[Normally] the subject's sense of agency regarding her thoughts ... depends on her belief that these mental episodes are expressions of her intentional states. That is, whether the subject regards an episode of thinking occurring in her psychological history as something she does, as her mental action, depends on whether she finds its occurrence explicable in terms of her theory or story of her own underlying intentional states.⁷⁴

Our own self-narratives provide a coherence to our lives and if they are disrupted by inexplicable episodes, or failures in content or structure, the coherence of the narrative self is threatened. On the other hand, narratives may be veridical reports of what the subject actually experiences. Disruptions in first-order experience connected with self-agency and the perception of the actions of others may involve failures in neurological processes that ultimately get reflected in the self-narrative.⁷⁵

Whether delusions are generated by problems with metacognition / metarepresentation,⁷⁶ the failure of some aspect of rational belief procedures—e.g., belief revision,⁷⁷ neurological disruptions of first-order experience,⁷⁸ or failure to register that one is

⁷³ G. L. Stephens and G. Graham *When Self-Consciousness Breaks: Alien Voices and Inserted Thoughts* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000).

⁷⁴ G. Graham and G. L. Stephens, 'Mind and Mine', *Philosophical Psychopathology*, G. Graham and G. L. Stephens (eds.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 91–109, 102.

⁷⁵ See S. Gallagher, 'Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science', *Trends in Cognitive Science* 4, 2000, 14–21; Gallagher 2003 (op. cit. note 11); and I. Gold and J. Hohwy, 'Rationality and Schizophrenic Delusion', *Mind & Language* 15, 2000, 146–167.

⁷⁶ Op. cit. note 64.

⁷⁷ G. Harman, *Change in View: Principles of Reasoning* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, G. 1986).

⁷⁸ Op. cit. note 75: Gallagher 2000, and Gold and Hohwy 2000.

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imagining rather than perceiving,⁷⁹ these various possibilities feed into, are sustained, and may be exaggerated by narrative.

Conclusions

The study of schizophrenic narratives throws light on the construction and mis-construction of self-narrative and the narrative self, but also cautions us to refrain from any quick generalizations. Not all schizophrenic narratives go wrong. For example, someone suffering from schizophrenic symptoms of thought insertion or delusions of control may correctly complain or describe these feelings in a coherent narrative. Furthermore, not everything about schizophrenic narratives goes wrong. Many of them may be well-formed and in good order, demonstrating a controlled metacognitive grasp on their experience. Sass cites a good example. A patient states:

I get all mixed up so that I don't know myself. I feel like more than one person when this happens. I'm falling apart into bits ... I'm frightened to say a word in case everything goes fleeting from me so that there's nothing in my mind... . My head's full of thoughts, fears, hates, jealousies. My head can't grip them; I can't hold on to them. I'm behind the bridge of my nose – I mean, my consciousness is there. They're splitting open my head, oh, that's schizophrenic, isn't it? I don't know whether I have these thoughts or not.⁸⁰

Just as it is important to understand that the logic of inserted thoughts requires that there be some thoughts that are not experienced as inserted (e.g., the patient's thought that a particular thought is inserted is not experienced as inserted), so examples of narratives from schizophrenic subjects suggest that it may be equally important to understand those things that don't go wrong in schizophrenic narrative.

⁷⁹ G. Currie, 'Imagination, Hallucination and Delusion', *Mind and Language* 15, 2000, 168–183.

⁸⁰ L. Sass, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 70.